



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

From Workplace to Habitat

**Design explorations from case studies of coworking
environments for nomadic workers**

Master of Science in Interior and Spatial Design

Politecnico di Milano | Scuola del Design

Supervisor | Prof. Silvia Luisa Pizzocaro

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A.Y. 2025-2026



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Abstract (ENG)

The changing work culture following the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the development of wireless communication technologies, widespread internet access, and increasingly accessible global mobility, has contributed to the growth of digital nomadism. Among contemporary nomadic workers, a new subgroup of corporate nomads is emerging, representing employees who combine professional work with geographic mobility. As a result, conventional office environments are being challenged by new forms of flexible workplaces that support mobility, productivity, and social interaction.

This thesis investigates the relationship between contemporary nomadic work culture and coworking environments. The research explores the characteristics, needs, and working preferences of digital and corporate nomads, with particular attention to the role of hybrid workspaces as alternative working environments. The study examines the evolution of workspaces from traditional offices toward more flexible and hybrid working environments that combine professional, social, and lifestyle-related functions.

To understand how coworking spaces respond to the needs of nomadic workers, a comparative case study analysis was conducted in two European cities: Milan and Zurich. Selected coworking spaces were visited and analyzed through direct observation. The research focused on spatial organization, design approaches, functional zones, user behavior, services, and membership policies. The comparison also considered cultural and economic differences influencing the development of coworking environments in the two cities.

Based on the findings, the thesis identifies key similarities and differences between coworking spaces in Milan and Zurich and proposes a set of design guidelines for the development of user-oriented coworking environments.

Abstract (ITA)

L'evoluzione della cultura del lavoro successiva alla pandemia di COVID-19, insieme allo sviluppo delle tecnologie di comunicazione wireless, alla diffusione dell'accesso a Internet e a una mobilità globale sempre più accessibile, ha contribuito alla crescita del nomadismo digitale. Tra i lavoratori nomadi contemporanei sta emergendo un nuovo sottogruppo, quello dei corporate nomads, costituito da professionisti che combinano lavoro e mobilità geografica. Di conseguenza, i tradizionali ambienti d'ufficio vengono progressivamente sostituiti da nuove forme di lavoro flessibile che supportano mobilità, produttività e interazione sociale.

Questa tesi analizza il rapporto tra la cultura del lavoro nomade e gli ambienti di coworking. La ricerca esplora le caratteristiche, le esigenze e le preferenze lavorative dei nomadi digitali e dei corporate nomads, con particolare attenzione al ruolo degli spazi di lavoro ibridi come alternative agli uffici tradizionali. Lo studio esamina l'evoluzione degli spazi di lavoro verso ambienti più flessibili e ibridi, capaci di integrare funzioni professionali, sociali e legate allo stile di vita.

Per comprendere come gli spazi di coworking rispondano alle esigenze dei lavoratori nomadi, è stata condotta un'analisi comparativa di casi studio in due città europee: Milano e Zurigo. Gli spazi selezionati sono stati visitati e analizzati tramite osservazione diretta. La ricerca si è concentrata sull'organizzazione spaziale, sugli approcci progettuali, sulle aree funzionali, sul comportamento degli utenti, sui servizi offerti e sulle politiche di adesione. Il confronto ha inoltre considerato le differenze culturali ed economiche che influenzano il coworking nelle due città.

Sulla base dei risultati ottenuti, la tesi identifica somiglianze e differenze tra gli spazi di coworking di Milano e Zurigo e propone linee guida progettuali per lo sviluppo di ambienti di coworking orientati alle esigenze degli utenti.

1. Nomadism in Work Contexts

1.1. Modern nomadism

1.1.1. Definition of modern nomadism

1.1.2. Historical roots of nomadic lifestyle

1.1.3. Benefits, challenges, and cultural impacts of the nomadic lifestyle

1.2. Statistical overview of digital nomads

1.3. Corporate nomads as a new subtype

1.1. Modern nomadism

1.1.1. Definition of modern nomadism

Britannica defines nomadism as “the way of life of peoples who do not live continually in the same place but move cyclically or periodically. It is distinguished from migration, which is noncyclic and involves a total change of habitat. Nomadism does not imply unrestricted and undirected wandering; rather, it is based on temporary centers whose stability depends on the availability of food supply and the technology for exploiting it” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d. year and page).

Urban nomads are a section of society that lives and works within the urban area, but do not prefer to be a resident in any way either as a house owner or a tenant, and do not stay in one place for a long time and permanently. The urban nomads live and work in urban areas with their laptops and phones. Instead of renting offices, they prefer to seat in coffee shops or coworking spaces where they can work in peace. They have flexible work schedules, they are mobile, they change one apartment for another.

However, it is important to note that nomadism is a chosen way of life, which is the opposite of being a «refugee», and it also implies that nomads feel they have a home, as opposed to the «homeless». Not being tied to a location is an intentionally made preference by urban nomads, it is different than that of being non-tied due to necessity in the case of homeless people and forced migrants. Urban nomads are a new generation of worker-travelers who are voluntarily relocating to new cities around the world (Hamurcu, 2018).

By definition, nomadism is explained in terms of location and place dependence: moving for certain reasons and not living in the same place for long periods (Baron, year n.d.). Modern nomadism is a way of living in which people travel frequently while working remotely. This lifestyle became possible and gained popularity due to the development of digital technologies and the internet. Modern urban nomads are often remote workers who can work from anywhere without being tied to a specific physical location. This phenomenon has been increasingly gaining popularity, especially among young professionals who seek flexibility and work-life balance (Tavo et al., 2024).

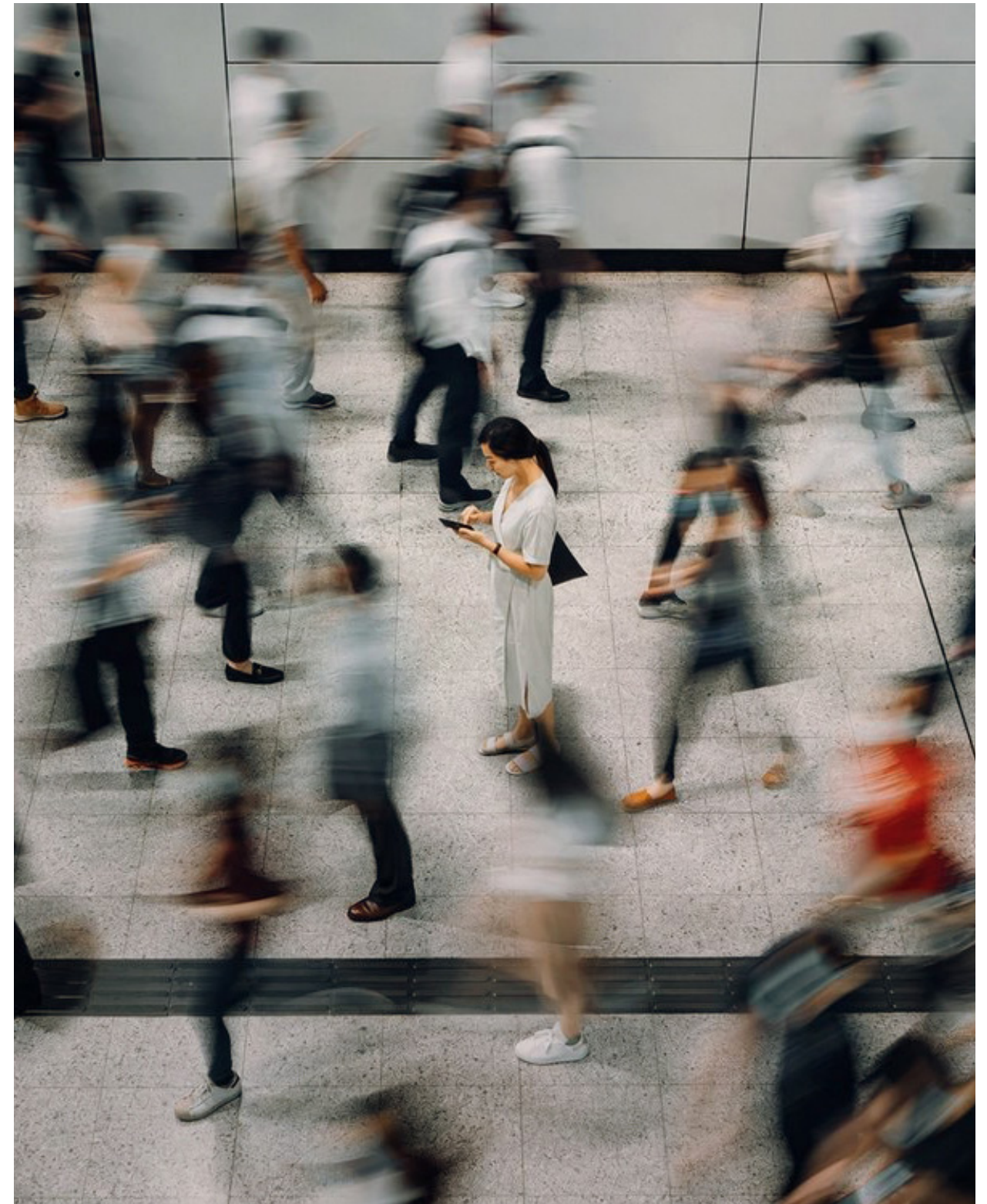


Figure 1: Individual standing within a moving urban crowd.
Note. From Pinterest.
<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/829154981439547881/>

Unlike traditional nomadic activities (e.g. rural pastoralism or other tradition works), this modern version is motivated by an interest in diverse experiences, with individuals typically working in fields such as technology, content creation, or design.

Such advantages have led to the rise of a specific subgroup within modern nomadism, which is represented by digital nomads. Digital nomads are individuals who use digital technologies to earn a living and perform their work remotely while continuously traveling or changing locations. Digital nomads do not have a permanent office or home; they work from different countries, towns, or even buildings using an internet connection (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d. year and page).

They typically work from laptops or smartphones and operate from various environments, including cafés, coworking spaces, temporary accommodations, or even mobile living units such as recreational vehicles (RVs). In most cases, digital nomads are freelancers or independent professionals who do not follow standard office hours.

According to m-work (2024), a way of working in which individuals perform professional tasks while constantly moving from one place to another, using technology to stay productive and connected, is called “nomad work,” also known as “roaming work” or “digital nomadic work.”

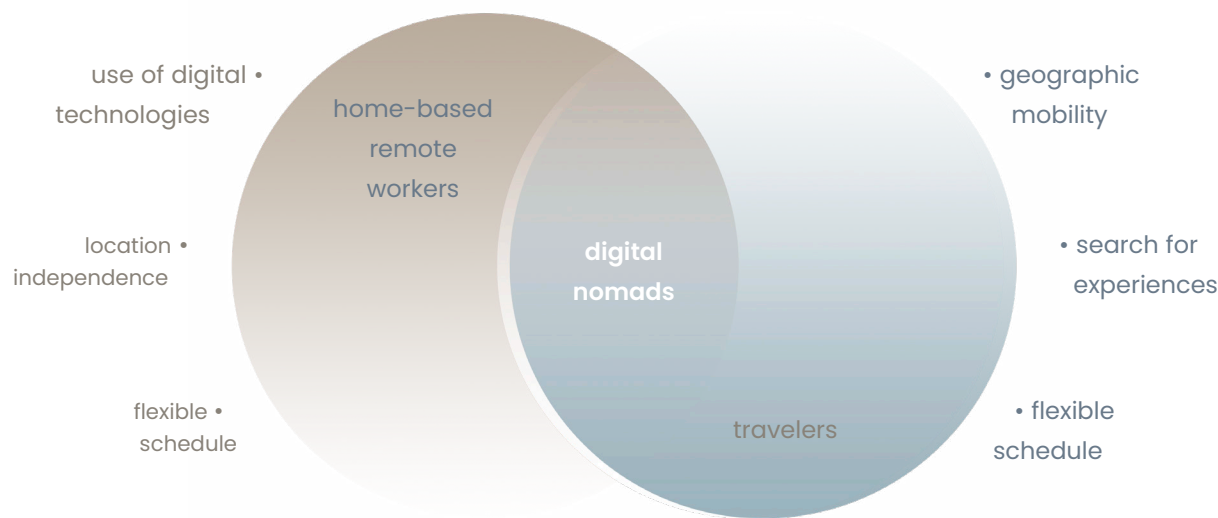


Figure 2: Digital nomadism as the intersection of remote work and travel.

1.1.2. Historical roots of nomadic lifestyle

Historically, until about 12,000 years ago, communities lived nomadically mainly due to environmental and climatic conditions. With the advent of agriculture, people began to establish permanent settlements and cultivate crops. Today, nomadism is not only a cultural practice but also a modern lifestyle that urban dwellers increasingly adopt by choice. Modern nomads live life on their own terms, driven by the desire to travel (Baron, n.d.).

During the 1960s, the world was experiencing the rise of the hippies, a free-spirited generation that challenged social norms. Some hippies lived a nomadic lifestyle; they traveled from place to place and lived in intentional communities. Today, the modern nomadic lifestyle is gaining popularity. It is not as free-spirited and revolutionary as in the 1960s, because the contemporary nomadic way of life is associated with economic freedom, location independence, and the ability to work and live anywhere. Moreover, a new trend is emerging in which families and communities, rather than only single individuals, are adopting nomadic lifestyles (Baron, n.d.).

The rise of contemporary urban nomadism

In 2008, *The Economist* devoted an issue to the new phenomenon of urban nomadism. Several articles described an emerging trend of individuals traveling among cities, looking for a table to work at, outlets to recharge laptop and smartphone batteries, and social spaces to network with other professionals. Urban nomads had become a new type of figure on the streets of megacities at the beginning of the 21st century. In coffee shops with Wi-Fi, urban nomads encouraged people to perceive work not as a series of tasks to be completed, but as a process of creating something useful or interesting. This new approach to work habits evolved into a highly flexible working style, influencing many aspects of urban life. Today, individuals perceive work in a completely new way and, more importantly, work takes on a new position in urban space, which leads to the emergence of new urban forms and functions (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 64).

Over the past decade, coffee shops have again become popular, serving as a new office for young urban professionals. These modern nomads not only aim to escape traditional offices, but also seek to make flexible working habits an important part of their increasingly nomadic lifestyle. The restraining environment of the office is being replaced by inspiring new public urban arenas and informal “living rooms.” These spaces can be classified as third places, a term coined by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg to describe social environments separate from the conventional settings of home and work (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 64).

At the moment, over 35 million people lead a nomadic lifestyle, and this number is estimated to reach 60 million by 2030 and one billion by 2035. For some modern nomads, the appeal of the lifestyle lies not only in traveling but also in fulfilling the ancient need for community. People meet each other, make new friends, and choose whether to stay or move on to the next adventure (Baron, n.d.).

However, in the 21st century, nomadic culture re-emerges not only as a continued tradition from ancient lifestyles or community traditions, but also as a way of life for modern urbanites. Due to technological developments, individual mobility has increased, limits and boundaries have been reduced, and spatial dependencies have weakened, expanding and facilitating human movement. Today, there is an increasing number of urban nomads who are trying to occupy their space in the city. In addition to the development of products designed for the everyday needs of urban nomads, including adaptable housing, flexible workspaces, and mobility-oriented personal items, there is a growing number of initiatives and planning approaches that aim to improve their living and working conditions. This development requires particular attention from professionals who plan, design, and interact with urban environments (Hamurcu, 2018).



Figure 3: Evolution of nomadism.

1.1.3. Benefits, challenges, and cultural impacts of the nomadic lifestyle

This modern nomadic lifestyle attracts a large number of young professionals who choose flexibility and a healthier work-life balance. Flexibility at work allows nomadic workers to have greater freedom, but such freedom at the same time can cause difficulties in building deep and stable social relationships, routines, and motivation. After the emergence of urban nomadism, the way remote workers interact with their surroundings has changed. Urban nomadism entails complex cultural changes for remote workers: the cultural identity of remote workers becomes more multicultural and dynamic. However, along with benefits such as flexibility, freedom, adventure, and the chance to see the world, this lifestyle may also bring challenges, for example, feelings of alienation from the local community (Tavo et al., 2024). According to Tavo et al. (2024), there is a need to find effective ways to create mutually beneficial relationships between remote workers and local communities to support social sustainability, social connections, and the cultural integration of nomadic workers in host countries.

Moreover, the emerging trend of urban nomadism brings significant cultural implications and changes for remote workers and the communities in which they live (Tavo et al., 2024). On one side, nomadic workers tend to learn new languages, cultures, and traditions, and they strive to integrate into the communities of the host country. On the other side, local residents can benefit from nomadic workers, since they bring knowledge, approaches, and skills.

Meanwhile, it is important to distinguish between remote workers and urban nomads. While urban nomads are a subgroup of remote workers, not all remote workers can be considered nomadic. Remote workers may work from home or from a fixed location, whereas urban nomads are characterized by continuous mobility and the absence of a permanent place of residence.

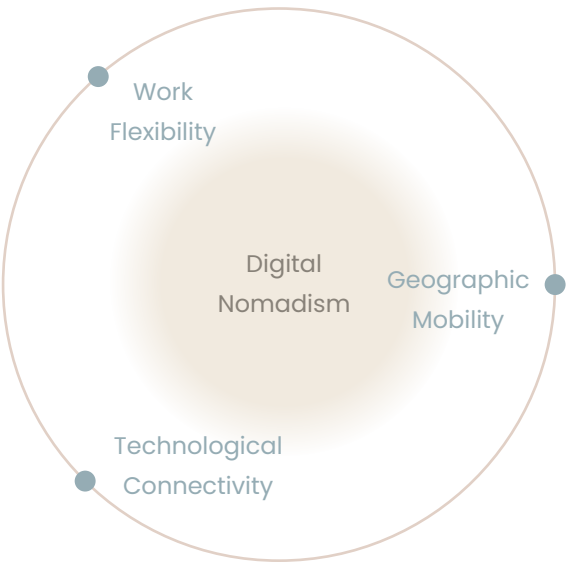


Figure 4: Key characteristics of digital nomadism.

Many studies, according to Tavo et al. (2024), have demonstrated that individuals who work remotely have higher job satisfaction and productivity. They are also more likely to be happier with their life and more engaged in their work tasks than individuals who work in offices daily. High job satisfaction among nomadic workers may be due to the opportunity to work from different locations that provide a good quality of life. Factors such as cost of living, climate, and supportive local communities play a crucial role in attracting remote workers to certain locations (Tavo et al., 2024). Tavo et al. (2024) suggest that nomadic workers seek a

flexible work environment and conditions that promote work-life balance.

In addition, such a nomadic lifestyle allows workers to explore new places, countries, and cultures, which can contribute to personal growth by learning new things and meeting people from all over the world. According to some research, exploring different cultures may boost a person's innovation and creativity at work. Thus, workers can lead a more diverse and enriching lifestyle with unique experiences, working from various locations (Tavo et al., 2024).

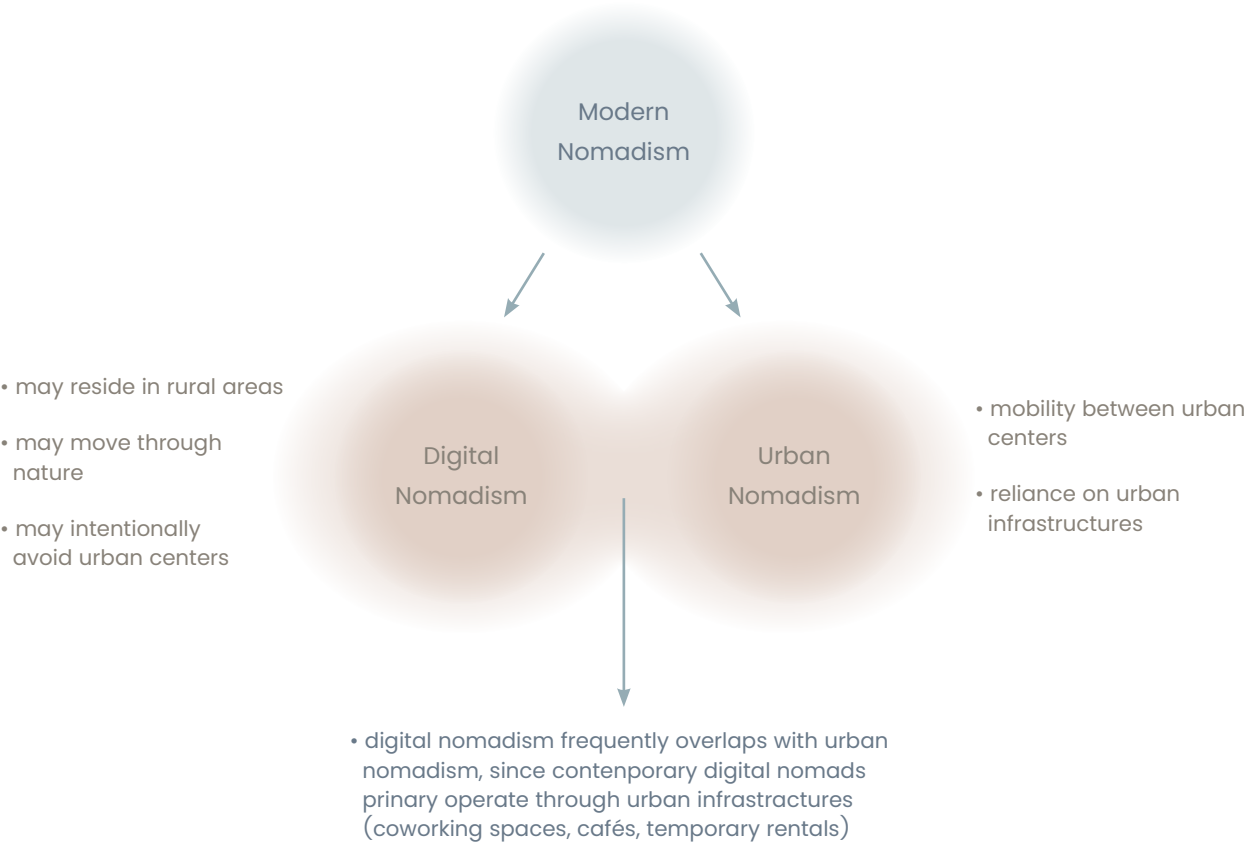


Figure 5: Overlap between digital nomadism and urban nomadism.

Interviews with remote workers in five significant cities, such as Bali, Chiang Mai, Barcelona, Lisbon, and Medellín, conducted by Tavo et al. (2024), provide additional insight into their experiences adopting urban nomadism lifestyles. The majority of respondents claimed they chose this lifestyle mostly due to work flexibility. They value the opportunity to work from different locations, which allows them to discover new cultures and enrich their personal experiences.

Thus, the primary motivation of remote workers in adopting an urban nomad lifestyle is the flexibility and freedom it offers. They feel that this lifestyle allows them to balance work with cultural exploration and travel, which improves their overall quality of life. In this way, work flexibility and work-life balance are two main factors that attract remote workers (Tavo et al., 2024).

However, urban nomadism also brings some difficulties. One of its main challenges is building and maintaining strong social relationships, especially friendships. Nomadic workers often feel lonely and isolated because of a lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues, and it is usually quite hard to be integrated into the local community due to language barriers. Difficulties in building deep social relationships and loneliness can be damaging to workers' mental health and overall well-being (Tavo et al., 2024).

Attempts to socialize may also be quite challenging for nomadic workers, since local communities are not always open to interaction with foreigners. Urban nomads who are constantly moving may find it difficult to integrate into the communities of the places where they are temporary residents. Thus, nomad workers may feel alone without family and old friends nearby; this situation can bring them a feeling of alienation and solitude, affecting their quality of life and satisfaction.

In research conducted by Tavo et al. (2024), many respondents reported difficulties in building deep social relationships. Frequent relocation makes it challenging to build strong, lasting bonds with local communities. These difficulties can make nomad workers feel lonely and alienated, which can lead to a significant deterioration in their quality of life in the long term. These findings suggest that while urban nomadism as a lifestyle has many benefits for workers, social issues also need to be addressed.

While much is known about the benefits and challenges of remote work, there are also some cultural impacts of the urban nomad lifestyle. Thus, digital technologies play an important role in the urban nomadic lifestyle today. Remote workers who have access to appropriate technology are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs because these technologies allow them to work more flexibly and efficiently (Tavo et al., 2024).

Some urban nomads described the challenges of a nomadic lifestyle, particularly in building deep and lasting social relationships. Frequent relocation makes it difficult to form strong connections with local communities, which can lead to loneliness and alienation, even despite access to a vast digital community. In this way, nomadic workers often form their own communities and host networking and collaboration events that enrich their work experience. The rise of urban nomad communities has also created new social dynamics in cities popular among working nomads. This trend creates new opportunities for social and professional interaction that foster innovation and creativity (Tavo et al., 2024).

Remote workers also highlight the importance of community in sustaining their lifestyle. Many of them join digital nomad communities and coworking spaces to access both social and professional support. These networks help individuals manage the challenges of remote work and maintain productivity. Interviews with nomadic workers show that such communities provide essential emotional, social, and professional support, contributing to their well-being (Tavo et al., 2024).

However, participatory observations indicate that nomadic workers' interactions often remain limited to their nomad communities, with little engagement with local residents. This creates a unique social dynamic in which nomadic workers form sub-communities that are separated from the general public. These findings suggest that despite the many benefits of urban nomadism, building deep and

meaningful social relationships poses significant challenges (Tavo et al., 2024).

The importance of community in supporting nomadic workers was also a key finding in the study conducted by Tavo et al. (2024). Digital nomad communities and coworking spaces provide social and professional support to help nomadic workers overcome the challenges of remote work.

Moreover, it is essential for working nomads to have a solid network to maintain their productivity and mental well-being. This demonstrates that community is an integral part of the urban nomad's lifestyle.

In this way, digital nomad communities and coworking spaces are important elements in the nomadic lifestyle for workers. While digital technologies provide efficiency and flexibility in work, social support from such communities is vital to maintaining psychological well-being and productivity. The study highlights the importance of creating a supportive social environment for nomadic workers that allows them to build meaningful social relationships (Tavo et al., 2024).

Additionally, more and more countries around the world have started to introduce digital nomad visas that allow nomadic workers to stay legally in host countries. This also spurs new digital nomad health insurance, co-living options, new company policies, and tax policies that can be very beneficial for both nomadic workers and host countries.

Several countries have introduced visa programs specifically to attract digital nomads, offering legal pathways for remote workers to live and work while contributing to the local economy. These programs often provide nomads with benefits such as simplified application processes, affordable fees, and tax incentives. It is a relatively new phenomenon created to accommodate the growing number of people who work remotely. These programs invite professionals to perform their jobs while traveling or living abroad, and thus these visas benefit both nomads and host countries, creating a mutually advantageous arrangement.

As a benefit, nomads usually receive legal residency, which provides clarity and legal status, allowing them to stay longer than with a regular tourist visa without fear of overstaying. Holders of the visa often gain access to banking, healthcare, and local amenities, making life abroad easier. Nomads gain stability as well, as their long-term stay allows them to immerse themselves in local cultures, build connections and networks, and develop routines in new environments. Some programs also offer tax advantages, incentives, or exemptions, reducing expenses for remote workers.

Meanwhile, host countries receive economic benefits as digital nomads contribute to the local economy by spending money on accommodation, food, transportation, and entertainment. Moreover, nomads often serve as informal ambassadors, promoting tourism, sharing their experiences online, and encouraging others to visit the country. Remote workers can diversify a country's workforce by bringing skills, innovation, and global perspectives that can enrich local economies. To meet the needs of nomads, host countries may improve internet connectivity, coworking spaces, and urban amenities, which will benefit locals as well.

When it comes to the key features of digital nomad visas, they are typically valid for 6 months to 2 years, with options for renewal in many cases. To ensure applicants can support themselves, most visas require proof of a stable income, often between € 1,000 and € 5,000 per month depending on the destination. Many countries require applicants to have valid health insurance for the duration of their stay. In addition, applicants must demonstrate that their work is independent of the host country (e.g., freelance, self-employed, or employed by a foreign company).

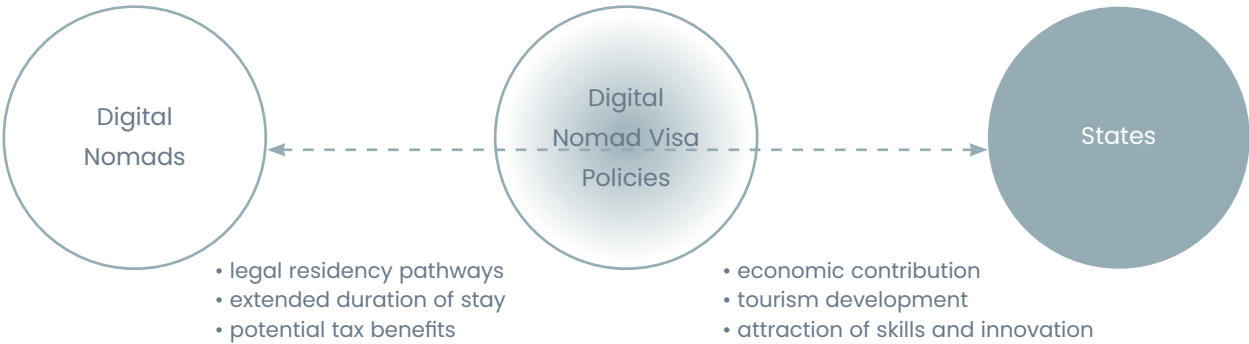


Figure 6: Mutual benefits of digital nomad visa policies for digital nomads and states.

Europe has become a hub for digital nomads, thanks to its diversity, rich culture, and modern infrastructure. One of the first digital nomad visa programs in the world was introduced by Estonia, allowing stays of up to 1 year. Estonia's reputation as a leader in digital infrastructure makes it an ideal choice for tech nomads.

Moreover, the first digital nomad village opened in Madeira. However, this lifestyle brings not only positive aspects but also certain drawbacks even for host countries. For example, the shift toward a nomadic lifestyle impacts local economies, particularly in Portugal, Spain, and Mexico, where the nomadic population has increased dramatically. As housing and living costs rise, local residents become increasingly dissatisfied (Baron, n.d.).

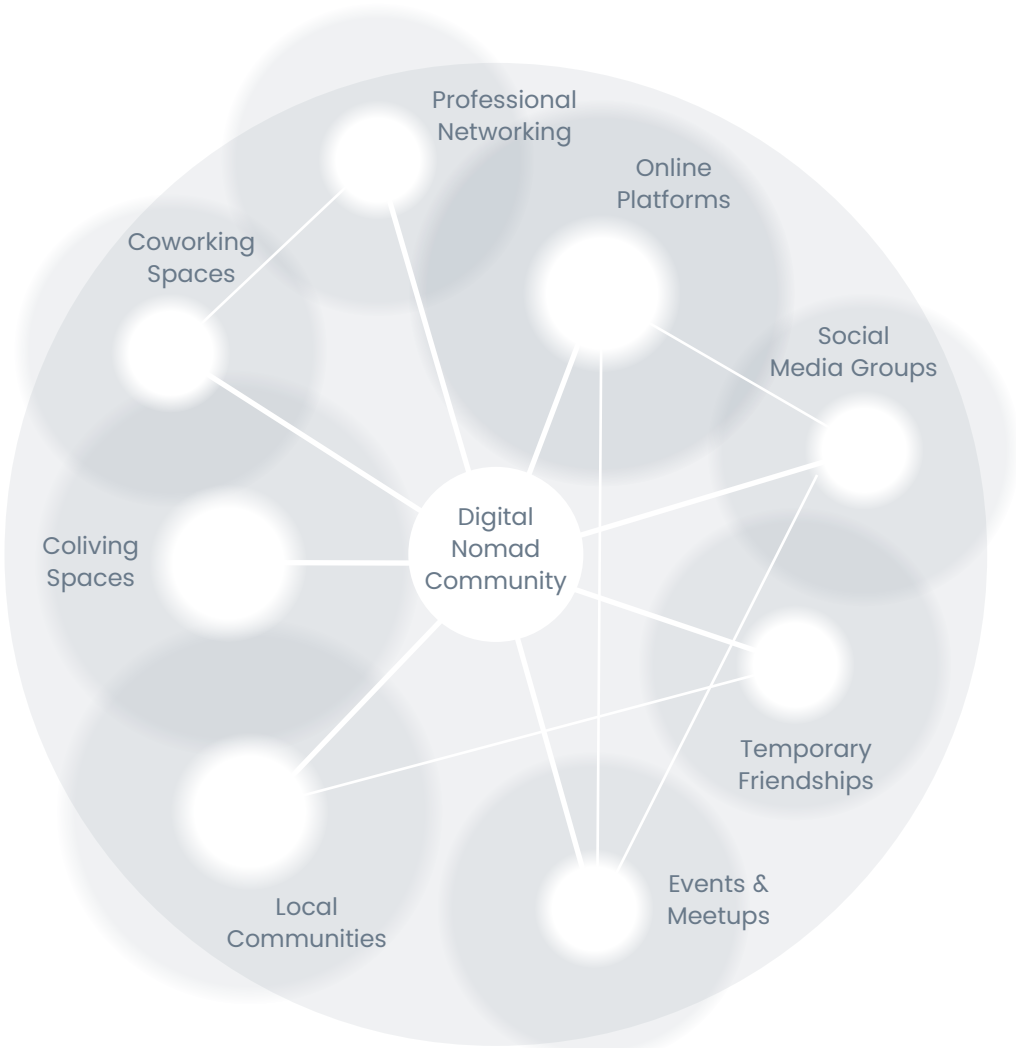


Figure 7: Digital nomad community ecosystem.



Figure 8: Digital nomad working in an airport.
Note. From Pinterest. Image edited by the author.
<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/829154981439547891/>

1.2. Statistical overview of digital nomads

Remote work is currently growing rapidly, and with this growth, a large number of individuals newly working remotely from home, a café, or a coworking space have begun to realize that they are now location independent and can constantly travel or move to new locations. This report attempts to find out who these remote workers are, what work they do, and how they spend their lives based on data from Nomads.com members. Nomads.com is a paid membership community; therefore, individuals who do not or cannot pay are not included in the dataset. On the other hand, free digital nomad communities, such as those on Facebook, require no commitment to join, so it is unclear whether the people in those groups are aspiring or active nomads. The page is live with data updated daily, ensuring it is always up to date (Nomads.com, n.d.).

Moreover, Nomads.com ranks destinations suitable for digital nomads based on factors such as cost of living, weather, and internet speed. This allows people to learn about different countries and cities by checking the rankings from other community members and selecting their next destination.

One of the graphics on the website is titled «Nomads by age» and displays the percentage distribution of a group of people, referred to as «nomads,» by their ages. The chart represents the percentage of individuals for each age group from 19 to 44 years old. The data were collected from 1,207 individuals and summarized as follows: ages 19–23 have the lowest representation, each with 0,2% or 1%. Starting at age 24, there is a slight increase, with percentages ranging from 1% to 2% for ages 24–28. Age 29 marks a rise to 3%, and age 30 further increases to 4%. The ages 31–35 have the highest representation, with percentages ranging from 6% to 7%. After age 35, the representation gradually decreases. Ages 36–39 range between 4% and 6%. Ages 40–44 show a downward trend, with percentages dropping to as low as 2%. This chart demonstrates that the majority of the nomads belong to the age group between 31 and 35, while the younger and older age groups are less represented. Thus, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the majority of digital nomads are millennials.

Around 70% of digital nomads are men. When it comes to ethnicity, only 14% of nomads are Asian, 12% are Latin, 7% are Black and 5% are Indian. Representatives of the peoples of the Middle East and the Pacific region accounted for 3% and 1%, respectively. The majority of nomads are white, representing 59% of the sampled nomads.

Another graphic «Nomads by nationality» shows the distribution of nomads based on their country of nationality. The data covers 30 countries along with the corresponding percentage of the population in a total sample of 25,338 individuals. The United States dominates the list, representing 44% of the total sample. The United Kingdom comes next with 7%. Russia and Canada each represent 5% of the sample. Germany and France follow with 4% and 3%, respectively. Countries such as Brazil, Australia, and the Netherlands account for 2% each. India, Ukraine, and Italy also show 1% representation. The remaining countries (e.g., Poland, Switzerland, Austria, and others) each contribute 1% or less to the total.

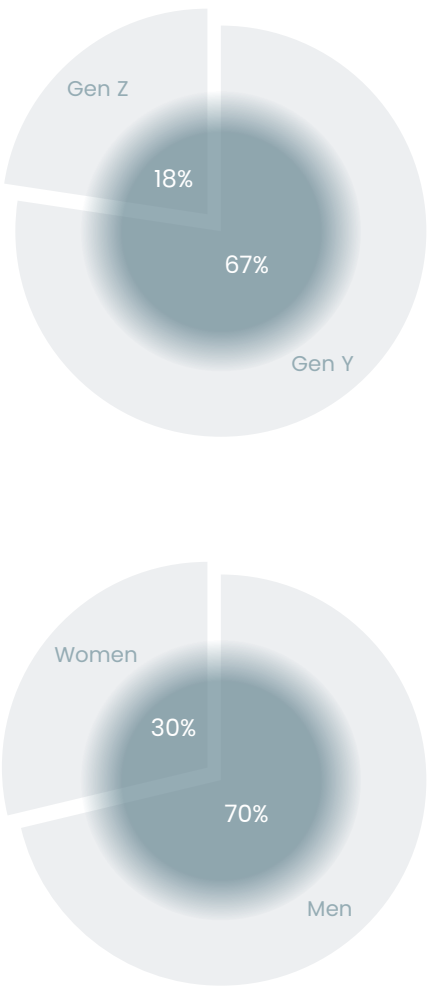


Figure 9: Age and gender distribution of digital nomads.

Notable countries with smaller shares include South Korea, Mexico, Portugal, and New Zealand, all with less than 1%. The data reveals that the majority of nomads come from Western countries, with the United States having a dominant share, while other nationalities make up much smaller proportions.

In terms of religious views and beliefs, slightly more than half the sample (53%) identifies as non-religious, while 28% as spiritual, but do not necessarily follow a specific religion. Christianity took 9% and Buddhism represents 3%.

The lifestyle is mostly attractive to singles, who make up 67% of the sample, while 33% are in a relationship. Only 5% of digital nomads are gay or lesbian, 8% are bisexual. Heterosexuals represent 87% of digital nomads surveyed.

When it comes to education, only 10% of digital nomads have completed high school as their highest level of education, but the majority, 90%, have attained higher education degrees. Thus, more than half (54%) have a bachelor’s degree, making it the most common level of attainment. While advanced degrees (Master’s and PhDs) are less common, they still make up a significant share (34% and 3%, respectively).

When asked what nomads look for, an almost equal percentage of interviewed said they are looking for friends (35%) and travel buddies (32%). While only 13% were looking for a relationship. 15% of respondents are looking for casual dating and only 4% for polygamous dating.

In terms of what they do for a living, more than a third of digital nomads (39%) are full-time employees. While 18% are equally freelancers or startup founders. The minority of the list is represented by part-time jobs, which are around 2%. In terms of income levels, the graphic, titled «Nomads by income,» shows that only 6% of the group earns less than \$ 25,000 annually. 15% of the group have incomes in the range of \$ 25,000 to \$ 50,000 per year. A significant portion, 34%, earns between \$ 50,000 and \$ 100,000 annually. Another large segment, 35%, earns between \$ 100,000 and \$ 250,000 per year, making this the most common income category. The remaining categories, respondents with incomes in the range of \$ 250,000 to \$1 million per year and over \$1 million per year, account for 9% and 2%, respectively. The average income is \$ 124,085 per year, driven higher by a few high earners, while the median income of \$ 85,000 per year represents the midpoint of the income distribution within the group. Regarding home ownership among nomads, the survey shows that almost half of the sample (46%) do not own a house, while the other half (54%) do.

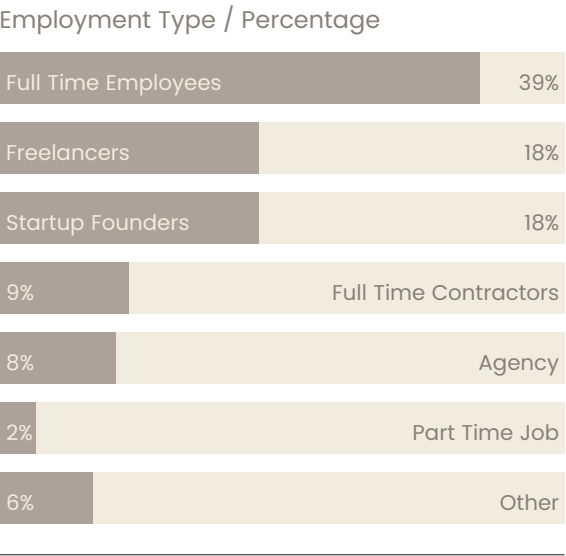
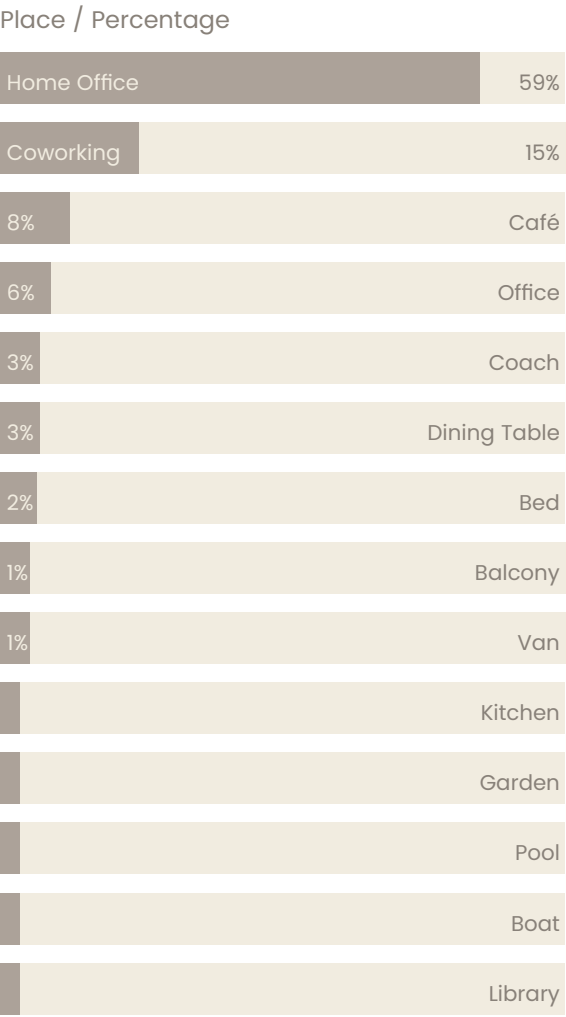


Figure 10: Employment type distribution of digital nomads.



Figure 11: Digital nomad working in a café.
Note. From Pinterest. Image edited by the author.
<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/829154981439547927/>

When it comes to where nomads prefer to work, it turns out the majority 59% prefer to work from a home office, while only 15% prefer coworking spaces. 8% of individuals work from cafes, while only 6% prefer to work from real offices. The group of nomads working at a dining table, on a couch, in a bed, on a balcony or in a van shows a slight decline: the percentages dropped to 3% – 1% for each category. A minority (less than 1%) of respondents claim they prefer to work in a kitchen, in a pool, in a garden, on a boat, or in a library.



Regarding the lifestyle and sports preferences of male and female nomads, among men, the most popular activities are fitness (49%) and hiking (48%), followed by running (29%), cycling (25%), swimming (24%), and yoga (21%). Other notable activities include surfing, climbing, snowboarding, diving, and skiing, each attracting between 15% and 18% of male participants. Less common sport activities for men include tennis (14%), motorcycling (13%), fight sports (11%), and CrossFit (9%). For women, hiking leads as the most preferred activity (51%), followed by yoga (44%) and fitness (40%). Swimming (24%), running (21%), and cycling (17%) are also widely enjoyed. Diving (15%), surfing (14%), and climbing (13%) are moderately popular, while skiing (12%), tennis (10%), and snowboarding (9%) attract less participation. Activities like CrossFit, motorcycling, and fight sports are the least popular, with only 5% of women participating in each.

Moreover, in the survey, interviewees described themselves as coffee lovers (40% of male nomads and 31% of female nomads), as English speakers (32% of men and 26% of women), as optimists (32% of men and 24% of women), as outdoor enthusiasts (27% of men and 25% of women), as dog lovers (26% of men and 24% of women), as early risers (25% of men and 19% of women), as lovers of reading (24% of men and 21% of women), and as open-minded people (24% of men and 20% of women).

Figure 12: Preferred work locations of digital nomads.

In terms of nutrition, three quarters (76%) of nomad men eat meat, while slightly over half of nomad women (57%) claim they include meat in their diet. Thus, 24% of male nomads do not eat meat, including those who identify as vegan (10%), vegetarian (10%) and pescetarian (4%). Nomadic women who do not eat meat represent 43%, of which 18% are vegetarian, 14% vegan and 10% pescetarian.

From the survey it is possible to draw conclusions about the frequency of migration of nomadic individuals both between cities and between countries. Thus, most of the respondents (46%) prefer to stay in one city for less than 7 days. About a third of nomads (33%) like to stay in one city from 7 to 30 days. 14% of persons choose to stay in the same city from 30 to 90 days, and the minority of people (6%) stay in one city for more than 90 days. In this way, on average, nomads stay in the same city for about 2 months and then change their location, while the median number of days in one city is 7. When it comes to the length of stay of nomads in one country, the study reveals that more than half of respondents (60%) prefer to stay in one country from 7 to 30 days. Slightly less than a third of nomads (27%) stay in the same country between 30 and 90 days, while only 13% of respondents prefer to

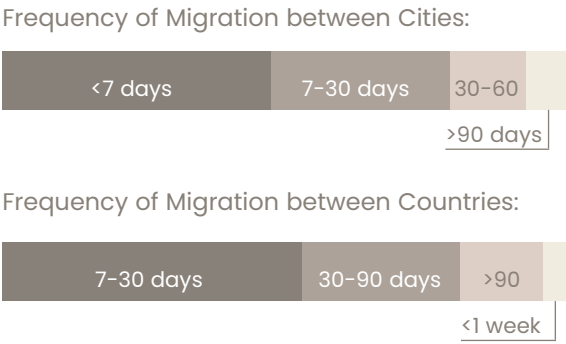


Figure 13: Frequency of relocation among digital nomads between cities and countries.

remain in one country for more than 90 days. A minority of nomadic people (under 1%) stay in one country for less than 1 week. Thus, the average length of stay in the same country is approximately 6 months (175 days).

The page illustrates city preferences between men and women as well, the analysis is divided into two categories: the most liked cities by men and by women, with each city accompanied by an average rating that reflects its level of appeal. Among men, Madrid has become the top-rated city, with a rating of 4.62. It is closely followed by Mexico City (4.58) and Tbilisi (4.55), showing the global diversity in male preferences. The top five is rounded out by Tokyo (4.50) and Seoul (4.44), demonstrating the significant attractiveness of urban and cultural centers in Asia as well.

European cities dominate the male ranking, with eight entries, including Warsaw, Paris, Porto, Athens, Munich, Prague, Valencia, and Vienna. Other notable cities include New York City (USA) and Penang in Malaysia. The list of cities most liked among male nomads suggests that men tend to prefer destinations with rich cultural heritage, historical significance and vibrant urban lifestyles around the world. In contrast, the cities most liked by women present a different geographical pattern. Medellín (Colombia) stands out as the top-rated city with a score of 4.00, followed by Chiang Mai (Thailand), Budapest (Hungary), and Los Angeles (USA) with ratings of 3.75 respectively. The remaining cities – Mexico City (3.33), Da Nang (Vietnam, 3.00), and Buenos Aires (Argentina, 2.50) – reflect a preference for destinations in Latin America and Asia.

Unlike men, nomadic women’s preferences include fewer European cities, with Budapest as the only European entry. Instead, there is a stronger representation of cities in Latin America (Medellín and Buenos Aires) and Asia (Chiang Mai and Da Nang). This pattern suggests that women might prioritize cities offering unique cultural experiences, safety, or lifestyle-focused amenities. Medellin is currently recognized as one of the safest and most progressive cities in Latin America, with a thriving tourism industry, increased police presence in tourist areas, and lower crime rates (Two Travel, n.d.). Chiang Mai is also considered a generally safe city with a low overall risk level (Travel Safe Abroad, n.d.), as is Budapest. Cities like Medellín, Chiang Mai, and Da Nang are also known for their affordability, especially for accommodation and food, offering a high quality of life at a lower cost, what makes them attractive for long-term stays, remote work, or solo travel. While many cities on the male list, such as Paris, New York City, and Munich, are known for higher living costs.

Men may be more willing to spend larger budgets on urban hubs that offer vibrant nightlife, dining, and cultural opportunities. For example, monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in the city center is approximately € 429.92 in Medellín, € 377.17 in Chiang Mai, and € 610.85 in Budapest, while rent in the top three cities popular among male nomads—Madrid, Mexico City, and Tbilisi—costs € 1,363.78, € 908.00, and € 674.14 respectively (Numbeo, n.d.). Cities like Tokyo, Seoul, and New York City are global economic and business hubs. Male nomads may tend to choose cities with strong job markets in technology, finance, or industrial sectors, where men usually have

higher representation. Cities such as Medellín or Chiang Mai are hubs for the digital nomad community, with opportunities for remote work, these locations may appeal to women who prioritize work-life balance and flexibility over traditional office work. Such cities also may attract female travelers with wellness retreats, cultural experiences, Instagram spots, and eco-tourism options that are often marketed as «feminine-friendly.» Cities like Tokyo and Munich may attract male visitors through high-tech business conferences. Male preferences may be linked to destinations that offer experiences with a higher price tag, but also greater perceived prestige or enjoyment.

The survey also highlights differences in scores between nomadic men and women in the city rankings. Mexico City is the only city featured on both lists, although its score among men (4.58) is significantly higher than among women (3.33). Men tend to like European cities, which feature prominently in their rankings, while women choose destinations in Latin America and Asia. Additionally, the ratings for men’s top cities are generally higher, with all cities scoring above 4.17, whereas the ratings for women’s preferred cities range from 4.00 to 2.50.

The portal provides insights into the travel preferences of male and female nomads in general, focusing on the most visited cities and countries. Based on a dataset of 362,718 participants, the analysis highlights the destinations that best suit the nomadic lifestyles, showing trends shaped by cultural, economic, and geographic factors, as well as detailed surveys about each city or country.

quality of life, vibrant nightlife, and a strong nomad community, making them ideal for digital nomads seeking connectivity and diverse experiences.

Overall, the list of the most visited cities is dominated by European cities, with 13 positions. London, Bangkok and New York City are followed by Barcelona and Berlin (1.49% each), Paris and Lisbon (1.47% each), and Amsterdam (1.23%). These cities offer a strong community networks, high standards of living, and plenty of coworking spaces, making them popular among nomads. Other North American cities took 9th (San Francisco at 1.17%) and 16th place (Los Angeles at 0.85%), reflecting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem and high income. Mexico City ranks 11th with 1% of participants reporting visiting the city and rating it positively for its affordable cost of living and community network, but highlighting negative aspects such as high crime rate and lack of safety. Chiang Mai, known as a hotspot for digital nomads in Asia, ranks 10th with a rate of 1.08%, highlighting its reputation as an affordable, community-focused destination. Other notable Asian cities include Singapore (0.91%), Canggu (0.9%), Tokyo (0.88%), and Phuket (0.53%) each appealing to nomads with their unique blends of modernity, tradition, and lifestyle opportunities. Leisure destinations like Phuket and Canggu also suggests that many nomads value a balance between work and relaxation, often seeking destinations with beautiful nature and recreational activities. Dubai is ranked 20th with a score of 0.74%, where nomads noted safety and virtual absence of crime, as well as a high community score, but poor nightlife.

When it comes to most visited countries, the United States ranks as the most visited country, with 14% of respondents having been there. This reflects its diverse range of cities, natural landscapes, and opportunities for networking and professional growth. Spain and Thailand follow (5% each), emphasizing their rich cultural experiences with nomad-friendly environments. Next come United Kingdom, Germany and Mexico, each of which was visited by 4% of respondents. France, Italy and Portugal follow with 3% each. European countries remain perennial favorites, thanks to their rich histories, infrastructure, and variety of cities that welcome nomads. Similarly, Asian countries, including Indonesia (2%), Japan (2%), and Vietnam (2%), appeal to nomads for their vibrant culture and growing digital nomad communities. Mexico stands out in the Americas, with its mix of cosmopolitan cities and coastal retreats that offer a laid-back lifestyle, ideal for remote workers. Emerging destinations like Colombia (1%), Poland (1%), and Malaysia (1%) are gaining popularity among nomads, attracting remote workers with affordable living costs, visa programs, and modern amenities. Argentina (1%) and Greece (1%) also appear on the list, offering a mix of affordability and cultural richness that resonates with nomads seeking long-term stays.

Nomadic preferences show a strong correlation between popular cities and the appeal of their countries. Cities like London, Bangkok, and New York City align with countries that rank high in overall visits, showing that nomads often choose urban hubs as bases for work and exploration.

However, some countries, such as Italy, Brazil, and Canada indicate high attractiveness, with nomads spreading out across a variety of cities and rural areas. Thus, these countries rank high on the list, but their cities rank low or are not represented at all on the popular cities list. Furthermore, Europe’s dominance is apparent in both city and country rankings, reflecting the continent’s strong support for nomads through visa programs, modern coworking spaces, and large communities. Asia, while featuring fewer cities in the top ranks, is steadily growing in prominence with affordable, culturally immersive destinations that support the digital nomad lifestyle. The Americas, led by the United States and Mexico, highlight the appeal of countries with diverse options for work and recreation.

When it comes to the countries that are most and least liked by digital nomads, Japan leads the rankings with a stellar rating of 4.85, indicating its strong appeal to nomads. Croatia (4.55) and Bosnia (4.55) follow closely, showcasing the popularity of the Balkans. Other highly rated countries include Czechia (4.5), Poland (4.45), and Greece (4.45), indicating that Central and Eastern Europe are particularly attractive to digital travelers. South Korea and Estonia (both 4.4) are notable for their advanced digital infrastructure. Estonia, for instance, has a robust e-residency program, making it easier for nomads from all over the world to work there. Switzerland (4.3) comes next, despite its high cost of living, which suggests that quality of life factors such as safety, stability, well-developed public transport, and beautiful nature are highly valued by nomads. These countries are followed by South Africa (4.25), Singapore (4.25) and Finland (4.15).

South Africa is the only African country in the top 15, suggesting its appeal as a unique destination with a favorable climate and natural attractions. The last 3 countries on the list are Kazakhstan, Israel and Lebanon, with 4.15 each. Emerging destinations like Kazakhstan and Lebanon showcase growing interest in less traditional locations for nomads. In this way, Europe dominates this list as well, but at the same time Asia has strong representation with countries like Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, which are hubs for technology and innovation.

Cuba ranks last with a rating of 1, likely due to challenges like limited internet access, political restrictions, and logistical difficulties for remote workers. Ethiopia, Iran, and Honduras (all 1.65) face similar issues, including unstable infrastructure, safety concerns, and lack of digital connectivity. The following countries like Sri Lanka (1.8) and Malta (2.15) may have low scores due to perceptions of limited opportunities for digital nomads, or in Malta’s case, high cost of living and overcrowding. South America and Africa are represented with countries like Chile, Somalia, Tanzania, and Venezuela (all 2.5), which may struggle with attracting nomads due to infrastructure challenges, cost considerations, or safety issues. Luxembourg and Gibraltar (both 2.5) stand out as surprising entries on the list of least liked countries. Despite their modern infrastructure and safety, their low rankings might be due to a perceived lack of cultural or professional opportunities for nomads.

Thus, the most popular countries for digital nomads usually stand out in either digital infrastructure (like Japan, South Korea, and Estonia) or affordability and lifestyle (like Bosnia,

Croatia, and Kazakhstan). In contrast, the least popular countries are often weak in both areas, making them less attractive. When it comes to regional representation, Europe leads the «most liked» list, while countries in Africa, South America, and regions with poorly developed connectivity often rank lower. Places like Cuba and Ethiopia show how crucial good internet and infrastructure are for digital nomads. The rankings show that nomads value a mix of affordability, quality of life, and reliable digital infrastructure. Well-known spots like Japan and Croatia stay favorites, while newer options like Kazakhstan and Lebanon are becoming more popular. Countries with unstable conditions or poor connectivity are less likely to attract digital nomads.

By analyzing what nomads do for work, the website also highlights the differences in professional roles between nomadic men and women, based on data from 19,295 men and 5,758 women. Among men, the most common professions are technical and entrepreneurial, with 34% working as software developers, 28% as web developers, and 27% as startup founders. Men are significantly more likely than women to work in these fields, being 251%, 264%, and 137% more likely, respectively. Other notable roles for men include marketing (15%), SaaS (13%), creative fields (11%), UI/UX design (11%), and mobile development (11%) with men dominating in SaaS (193% more likely) and mobile development (348% more likely). Men are also overrepresented in fields like product management, crypto, and data, each attracting 11% of men. Less popular roles among male nomads include finance (10%), ecommerce (9%), sales (7%), and education (6%).

For female nomads, the most common roles are marketing (16%) and creative fields (15%), with women slightly more likely than men to work in marketing (1% more) and 23% more likely to work in creative roles. Startup founder roles attract 12% of women, although they are 58% less likely than men to pursue this path. Women are underrepresented in software development (10%, 72% less likely than men) and web development (8%, 73% less likely), but they are

more likely to engage in community-oriented or creative professions such as blogging (8%, 23% more likely), community roles (8%, 23% more likely than men), education (7%, 11% more likely than men), and coaching (7%, 25% more likely than men). Less popular roles among women include data (5%), SaaS (5%), finance (4%), and ecommerce (4%), where they are significantly underrepresented compared to men.

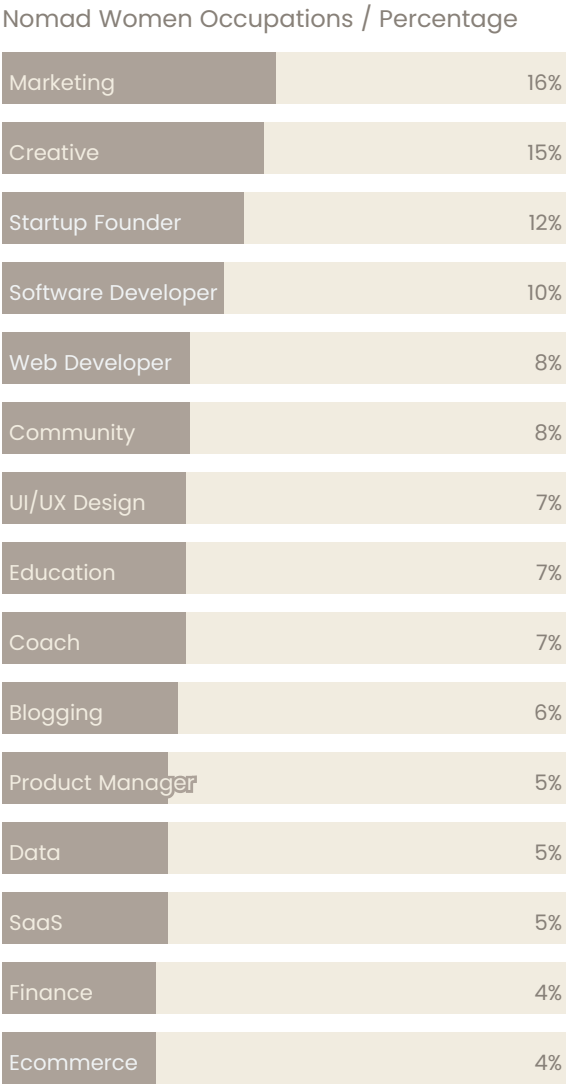
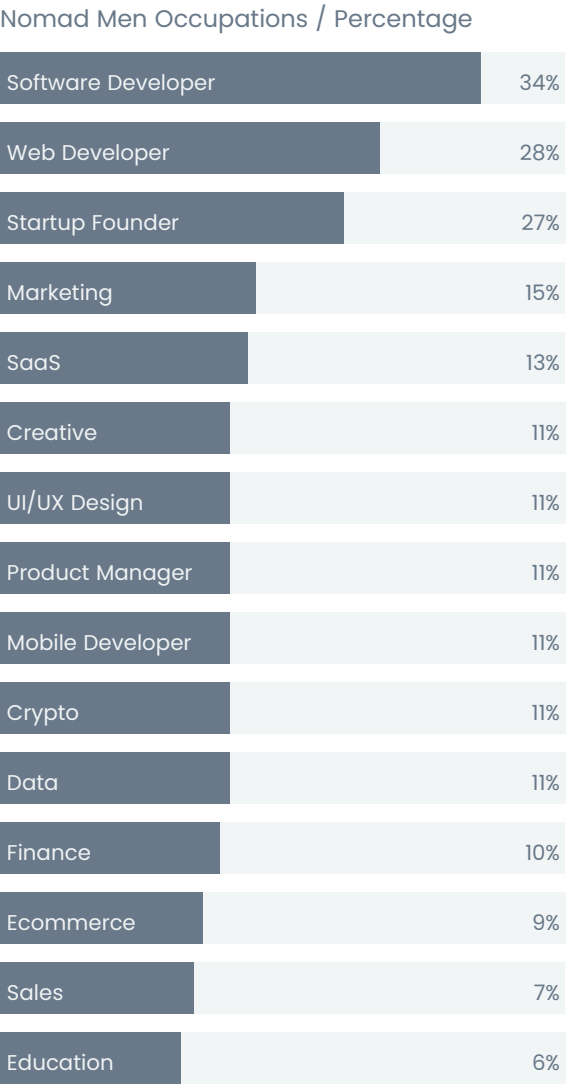


Figure 14: Occupational distribution of digital nomads by gender.

Overall, it is possible to make a conclusion, that men dominate in technical and entrepreneurial fields like software, web and mobile development, SaaS, and crypto, while women are more prevalent in creative, marketing, blogging, coaching, and community-focused roles.

In conclusion, it is clear that the digital nomadism lifestyle is still not as inclusive as it could be. There is a need to make travel easier and safer for women, promote LGBTQ-friendly destinations, or lower the minimum requirements for digital nomad visas to make them more inclusive across income levels, gender, and ethnicity.

The gender imbalance among digital nomads, where men outnumber women, can be explained by several social, cultural and structural factors. One key reason is the dominance of tech-oriented roles in the digital nomad community, such as software development and web development. These fields have historically been male-dominated due to longstanding gender imbalances in STEM education and careers. Similarly, entrepreneurship, another common path for digital nomads, is an area where men are more active, partly due to societal expectations, greater networking opportunities, and easier access to funding. Women entrepreneurs often face additional barriers, such as limited access to capital and support networks, and prejudices.

The nomadic lifestyle may also appear less attractive to women due to various risks and social pressures. Frequent travel, financial uncertainty, and personal safety concerns can make the lifestyle less appealing, especially for

women who may face cultural expectations or pressure to follow traditional life paths like marriage and family, caring for children or older family members. Safety concerns, especially for solo female travelers, add more doubt and fears, as well as the lack of women-friendly communities in some destinations.

The gender wage gap and systemic barriers to high-income professions compound the issue, making it harder for women to save the resources needed to lead a nomadic lifestyle. Women are often underrepresented in high-paying fields like tech and finance, which dominate the digital nomad workforce. Additionally, the male-dominated nature of many nomadic communities and the relative lack of female role models in this area can discourage women from pursuing this lifestyle.

Cultural norms around travel and independence are also significant. In many societies, women are discouraged from traveling alone or living independently, which conflicts with the flexibility and self-reliance required of digital nomads. These challenges create barriers for women, making it harder for them to join the nomadic community in equal numbers.

Closing this gender gap requires structural and cultural changes, such as promoting women in tech and entrepreneurship through mentoring and education, encouraging women-friendly nomadic networks, and providing safer travel environments. By removing these barriers and encouraging diverse representation, the digital nomad community could become more inclusive and balanced over time.

1.3. Corporate nomads as a new subtype

As digital nomads become more common, more types and subtypes of location-independent workers are emerging. Thus, one such type is the corporate nomads. Many blogs and articles suggest that this type of nomadism may one day become the dominant form of digital nomadism (Flatio, 2022). Thus, Fernández-Aroz (2022), writing in the Harvard Business Review, describes the corporate nomad lifestyle as «a career option that will become increasingly popular and attractive in the years to come,» highlighting its growing relevance in post-pandemic work culture where remote and hybrid work become more accepted.

The term «corporate nomads» refers to location-independent workers employed full-time or part-time by corporate organizations. When it comes to the main difference between a classic digital nomad and a corporate nomad, it is important to note that the term «digital nomad» primarily referred to entrepreneurs and freelancers. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns that the pandemic caused, various companies have realized that it can be quite profitable to hire location-independent workers for full-time positions. In some circumstances, the corporate nomad subtype may also include part-time employees. For example, if richer countries hire part-time workers, the worker's

salary may be comparable to salaries in many second- and third-world countries. In a sense, the key distinction is that corporate nomads are employed by and remain connected to one specific company (Flatio, 2022).

With the global trend toward remote work, many job postings are now offering both hybrid and fully remote positions, particularly in IT, teaching, writing, visual design, audio and video editing, and more. Many companies have already switched to fully remote work, sometimes with only essential meetings held in the office, or to hybrid work, which involves working in the office several days a week (Flatio, 2022). To be hired for a fully remote position, according to Flatio (2022), the candidate should demonstrate knowledge not only of the benefits but also of the challenges of remote work. Thus, one of the important skills is the ability to do quality work on time without in-person supervision.

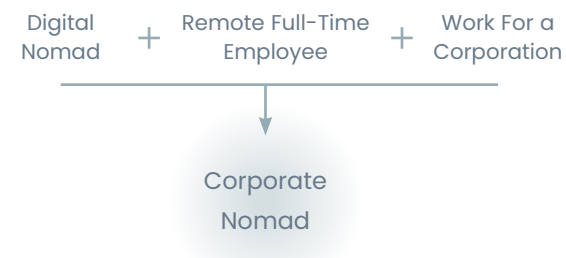


Figure 15: Key features of corporate nomads.

In this way, corporate nomads seek to balance their lives between travel and a corporate career. They do not want to make a choice or give up a promising career path. Corporate nomads, just like digital nomads, can work from their laptops, sit in cafes, and travel full time. However, they cannot maintain such a relaxed, carefree attitude, as their schedules are much more rigid, with meetings to attend, to-do lists to manage, and group chats with colleagues. A corporate nomad is a person who uses modern technology to work for (or with) a corporation, either fully or partially remotely, and who uses this flexibility to be location independent. They differ from digital nomads, their counterparts who make their way exclusively in the digital space, using their skills to secure jobs and contracts and to deliver computer-based products online. In contrast, corporate nomads are more likely to work in white-collar professions such as law, accounting, or finance. They work as part of companies, just like their colleagues in offices.

Moreover, since corporate nomads work within organizations, they usually have to collaborate with colleagues and work in teams, unlike digital nomads, whose work is often independent and individually driven. Corporate nomads typically have regular, day-to-day responsibilities within a company, making the need to stay constantly

and reliably connected even more important (Kelli, 2022).

Overall, this type of nomadic lifestyle allows individuals to have a stable income, stability in job, satisfaction of being part of a high-performing team, and to live where and how they want. They do not have to consider the location of their office or the amount of time they spend commuting each week. The most obvious advantage is that job flexibility allows corporate nomads to travel without sacrificing their career or the benefits that come with that (Kelli, 2022). However, the corporate nomad lifestyle along with benefits such as greater flexibility and mobility, also brings challenges like coordination across time zones, maintaining organizational culture, and managing performance remotely (Fernandez-Aroz, 2022).

Kelli (2022) suggests that companies adapting to new work trends and recognizing the value of flexibility will gain an advantage in attracting independent and motivated professionals who can work effectively outside the traditional office setting. Such organizations are likely to thrive in the future, while those that limit themselves to the traditional nine-to-five, Monday-to-Friday office model risk being left with a shorter list of candidates (Kelli, 2022).

During the workweek, corporate nomads lead a fairly normal life, except that they can be located anywhere in the world, as long as they have a suitable place to work, such as a small room, a café, or a coworking space. Another benefit of this lifestyle, though not so obvious, is improved work-life balance. Time differences and limited connectivity help maintain boundaries and balance (Kelli, 2022). Living this way, individuals do not have the opportunity to dedicate their extra time to work. Moreover, individuals who choose to be corporate nomads can benefit from savings, for example, when working for a company in a relatively wealthy country while living in places with lower costs of living. In addition, they do not travel constantly, as they need to be available from Monday to Friday (Kelli, 2022).

When it comes to the challenges of a corporate nomad lifestyle, along with working in different time zones, which can lead to working at inconvenient hours, it is important to note that video meetings are not equal to in-person conferences. Virtual meetings can limit the ability to establish rapport and trust, and they may become an obstacle to developing deeper connections with colleagues and managers. Moreover, without access to in-person corporate conferences and training workshops, maintaining and expanding one's network can be more difficult. In addition, work performance depends on the quality of the internet connection, so technical issues can cause difficulties, especially when it is necessary to be present in online presentations or collaborate with colleagues. Another potential challenge is that it is more difficult to create a comfortable, dedicated workspace comparable

to an office with ergonomic chairs and desks. Furthermore, there is no external motivation for a corporate nomad, no weekly progress meetings, no managers who monitor work progress and no colleagues nearby. It is very important to be a self-motivated, responsible, and punctual person; otherwise, it will be hard for an organization to justify their choice of a permanently remote employee (Kelli, 2022).

According to Kelli (2022), in order to become a corporate nomad, it is important to note that while individuals are not starting their careers over, they may still need to prove themselves as people who can work remotely and independently before anyone will give them a real chance. It is necessary to be prepared for new job openings that may lead to valuable prospects or connections. However, Kelli (2022) suggests that the timing has never been better. Employees everywhere have experienced the freedom and lifestyle that remote work can offer, and many are unwilling to return to the office on a full-time basis. As a result, companies that want to retain the best talent will need to consider adopting flexibility for remote and location-independent roles.

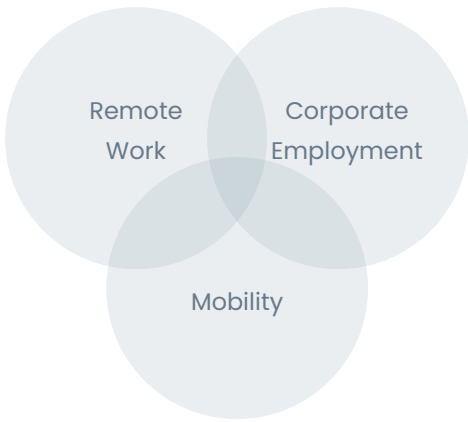


Figure 16: Core elements of corporate nomadism.



Figure 17: Digital nomad working in a van.
Note. From Pinterest. Image edited by the author.
<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/829154981439549699/>

As Kelli (2022) notes, in order to approach the challenge of becoming a corporate nomad, it is important to be patient, since it might not happen instantly. Even companies seeking to adopt new flexible working models may face difficulties, particularly regarding bureaucracy. With remote and hybrid work models rapidly evolving, governments and businesses are still trying to manage the tax and legal implications of location-independent work. Nevertheless, there are possible ways around the bureaucracy, and more opportunities are emerging every day as countries and organizations respond to the changing labor market situation. Furthermore, it is important to consider the concerns that businesses might have, such as an employee's productivity, availability, and the risks related to tax compliance. Before starting this lifestyle and proposing such a working model to a current or potential employer, it is necessary to understand these concerns and be prepared to address them. In this way, according to Kelli (2022), it is also essential to be flexible, since the ideas of the individual and those of the company regarding corporate nomadism may differ. Thus, it is possible to find a compromise that can work in the long term.

As Kelli (2022) points out, finding an organization that accepts the working mode of a corporate nomad is only half the battle. Another challenge is organizing corporate life while constantly being on the move. To succeed in a career as a corporate nomad, an individual should be indispensable to their company. Such workers must demonstrate their presence through the significant contributions they make to the team on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, it is important for a corporate nomad to schedule «office hours» when they are available for calls and team collaboration. Since a corporate nomad may not be working in the same time zone as their colleagues, it is important to be consistent and reliable with these hours, and at times, to show flexibility toward the organization and the team. This consistency provides the employer with a sense of stability.

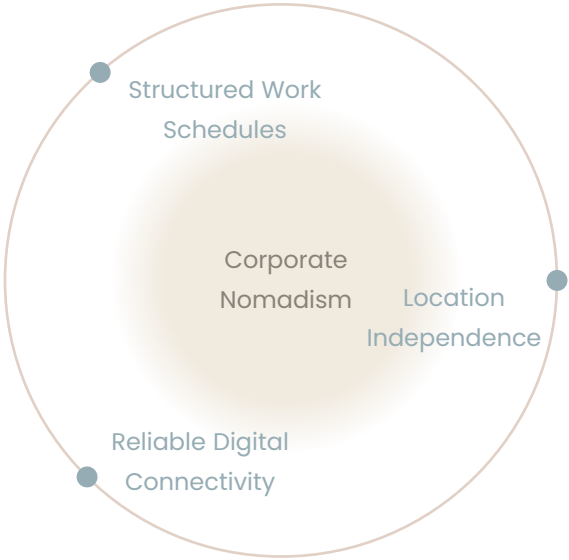


Figure 18: Key characteristics of corporate nomadism.



Figure 19: Coliving and coworking environment for digital nomads.
Note. From *Pinterest*. Image edited by the author.
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Another important thing to keep in mind for corporate nomads, as Kelli (2022) suggests, is that it is a working lifestyle, not an endless holiday. Taking a job on the road to explore bucket-list destinations is a privilege, but it differs from traveling for leisure. For corporate nomads, travel usually happens at a slower pace, as they need to spend more time in each place to complete their work while also experiencing the location. The downside is that they have to work hard, even when there are exciting new places waiting to be discovered. Therefore, everything depends on one's priorities and self-organization. Balancing work and travel can be challenging and distracting, especially at the beginning. However, it can also be motivating to finish tasks earlier in order to enjoy the rest of the day.

For corporate nomads to be successful and develop their careers, it is also very important to maintain and expand their professional networks. This becomes more difficult without face-to-face contact with colleagues and without attending lectures, meetings, and conferences. These challenges can be addressed by occasionally traveling for work meetings or larger industry events, or by taking advantage of virtual networking opportunities. Another effective way to connect with other corporate nomads is by visiting coworking spaces. Coworking spaces are now appearing all over the world, often offering networking and community activities for digital and corporate nomads. Such spaces help build a sense of community within these environments and assist nomads in finding potential collaborators (Kelli, 2022).

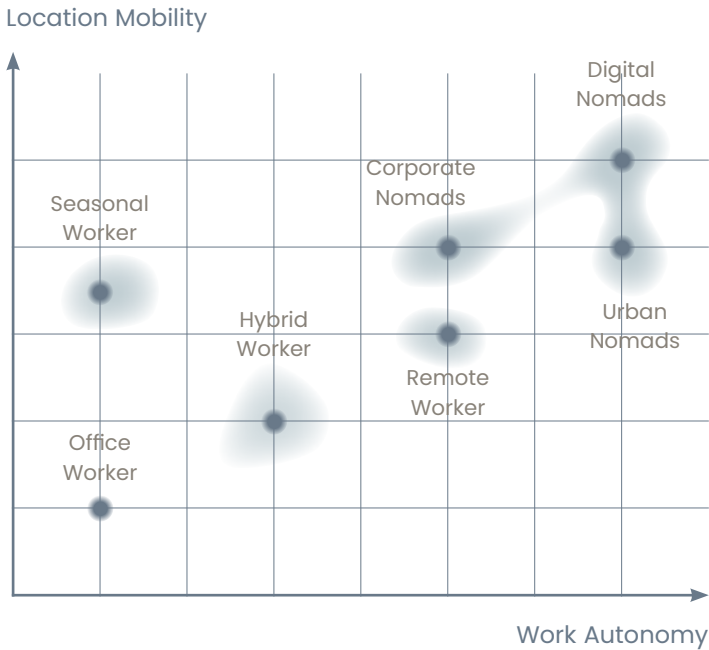


Figure 20: Conceptual positioning of worker types by location mobility and work autonomy.



Figure 21: A House Leading to the City project by Studio Velocity.
Note. From *Habitable City*, by M. Rodriguez (2020).
<https://habitable.city/architecture-and-urban-nomadism-in-contemporary-japan/?amp=1>

2. Hybrid Workspaces

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2.5. Overview of the historical transformation of workspace

2.1. The evolution of office space

Coordinated and functional design of offices was developed at the turn of the XIXth century. The rationalization of workspaces in the service sector has in most cases followed Fordism in its industrial organization (Lecce, 2016). Since Fordism was a specific stage of XXth century economic development, this term was widely used to describe the system of mass production that was pioneered in the early XXth century by the Ford Motor Company in advanced capitalism (Jessop, 2025). It is possible to consider the office as one of the first examples of a modern interior, where the space design was almost exclusively determined by functionality rather than style or aesthetics (Lecce, 2016).

The office of XIXth century, a dark, gloomy space furnished with tall desks made of wood, was turned into an aseptic, rational place. These changes were inspired by the era of new machines supposed to revolutionize and rethink working conditions. The expansion of commercial activity in the Western world in the second half of the XIXth century led to the emergence of large companies requiring more spacious environments (Lecce, 2016).

According to Lecce (2016), four key elements led to the creation of coordinated contract designs for office interiors in the XXth century. Nowadays,

however, additional elements have emerged. The first element was the division of the working space into operational workstations and executive offices. While operational workstations were furnished with standard furniture focused primarily on functionality, executive offices were custom-made and represented the company's public image. In the late XIXth century, the principles used by Henry Ford in factories, particularly the assembly line, were adopted and applied to office environments. As in factories, office work was divided into separate tasks, which became organized into departments. New large office spaces featured open-plan layouts with standard, flat-topped desks arranged in straight rows, making it easier to monitor productivity and work efficiency. This approach could be seen in interiors such as the Larkin Administration Building designed in 1904 by Frank Lloyd Wright in Buffalo, New York. During the interwar years, European modernists used standardization to support their democratic and egalitarian ideals in the design of objects and spaces. In the United States, industrial designers Raymond Loewy and Norman Bel Geddes, both of whom began their careers in advertising, adapted standardized industrial production for commercial purposes by developing coordinated collections of office furniture for specialized companies.

During this economic period, alongside standardized office departments, another type of interior furnished with high-quality materials was in demand to maintain a strong public image. These aesthetically unified environments were equipped with furniture that was either custom-made or selected from a retailer's catalogue. Such interiors played an important role in creating the atmosphere and projecting the specific image that companies wanted to communicate to the outside world (Lecce, 2016).

The second element that led to the emergence of contract interiors was the use of metal in office furniture. Initially, this element appeared because of the need to protect documents from fire, which later drove the development of metal furniture in the workplace. Important factors in offices at that time were the large number of archival documents and the widespread habit of smoking. In addition, the use of metal in office furniture created a modern appearance in the spaces where it was used, making them look more like factories than domestic interiors. For instance, founded in 1912, the Metal Office Furniture Company (later Steelcase Inc.) was selected by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1936 to produce furniture for the Johnson Wax headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin. Wright designed a coordinated environment in which

the space and furniture formed a unified whole. The tables and chairs were manufactured by the Metal Office Furniture Company as a contract project, and the company subcontracted all non-metal components to other manufacturers (Lecce, 2016).

The third fundamental element was the effort to increase work efficiency by carefully designing workspaces and the objects within them. Employers realized that workers' productivity was closely linked to their physical comfort. As a result, greater attention was given to workplace design and to what later became known as ergonomics. The goal was to improve the quality of the working environment through well-designed equipment and furniture. In the mid-1930s in the United States, improved working conditions, increased efficiency, and advances in design research led forward-thinking designers to create comfortable products that could be adapted and personalized, while still maintaining the modularity and simplicity suitable for offices and retail spaces. Major contributors to this development included American companies such as Herman Miller, ICF, Haworth, Knoll, and Steelcase (Lecce, 2016).

The fourth element emerged in the post-war period, when interior spaces began to align more closely with the architectural structures in which they were located. American designers and architects such as Charles and Ray Eames, George Nelson, Eero Saarinen, Alexander Girard, Harry Bertoia, and Hans and Florence Knoll reinterpreted modernist principles within corporate interior design. The work of the Eameses for Herman Miller and Florence Knoll's motto, "Good design is good business," embodied at Knoll International, became two defining approaches in the history of design. This shift led to the large-scale production of office furniture based on research and development (Lecce, 2016).

According to Lecce (2016), work environments have changed significantly since the early 2000s. One of the most influential developments has been the rise of coworking spaces, where individuals with different career backgrounds and from various professional fields share a communal environment. Initially an experimental office concept for freelancers and startups, it is now becoming a strategy adopted by more and more companies. Thus, offices, once repetitive and monotonous environments, have changed radically. Over the past decade, both large multinational corporations like Coca-Cola and young tech giants such as Facebook and Google have recognized the potential of flexible and interconnected work environments where different specializations diversify and expand business opportunities.

In this way, the modern workspace has become a place of informal collaboration and exchange. Today, the workplace is practically a public space where conversations and ideas flow freely. Workers now have the possibility to collaborate on-site or off-site, or to work from home. During this transformation, furniture manufacturers and designers have played a key role in defining the direction of office design and have contributed to the development of workspace culture (Lecce, 2016).

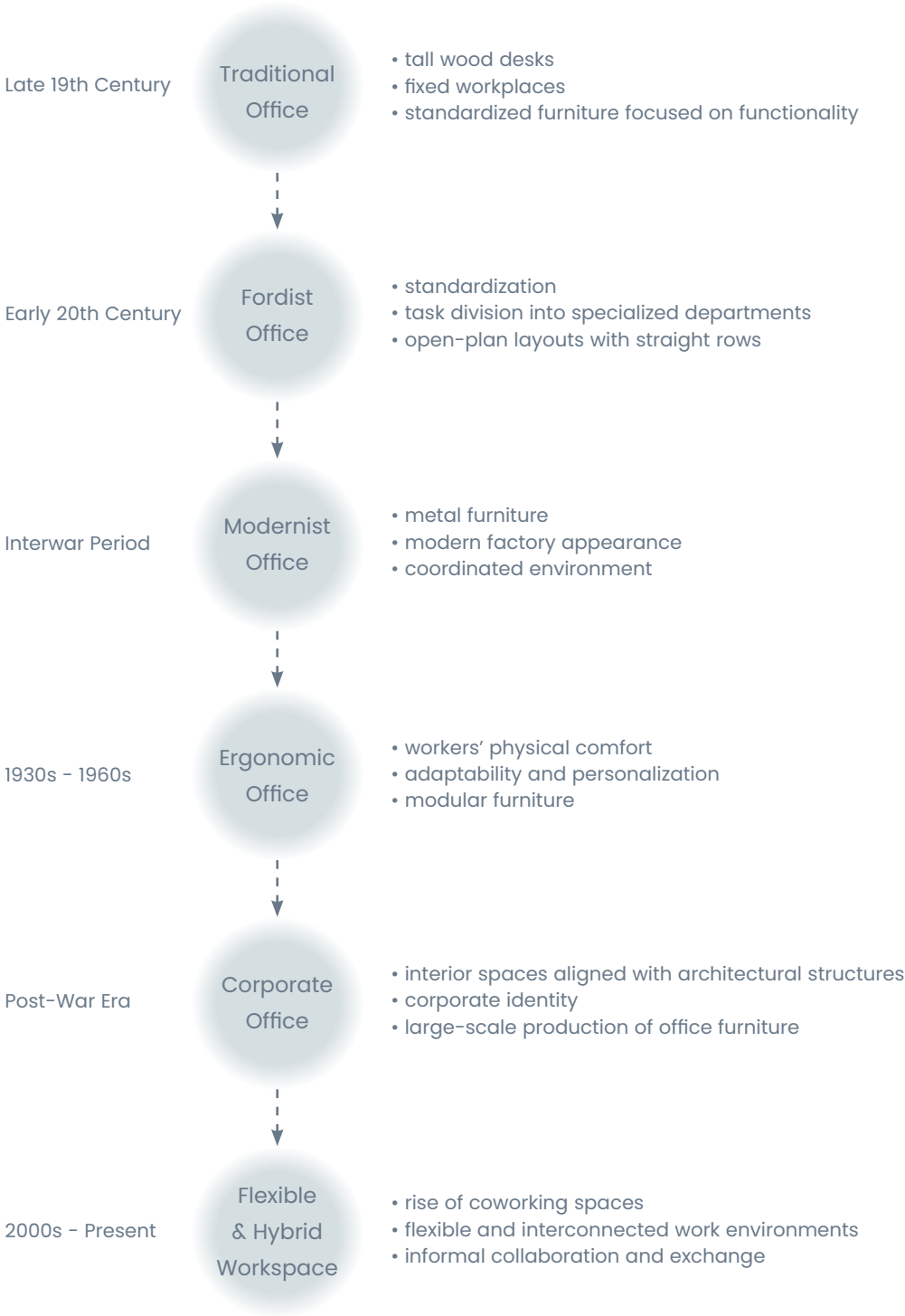


Figure 22: Evolution of office space from traditional offices to flexible and hybrid work environments.

2.2. The development of hybrid work model

Findings from a McKinsey & Company survey conducted in mid-2021 indicate that remote work increased dramatically, with more than 70% of knowledge workers working from home or other locations part-time, compared to less than 20% before 2020. This rapid transition was enabled by the widespread adoption of video conferencing platforms, cloud-based office applications, and digital collaboration tools. As companies shifted employees from centralized office spaces to their homes, the previously unquestioned nine-to-five, office-centric model became less rigid and increasingly subject to reconsideration (Naqshbandi, 2025).

Currently, organizations are at a critical stage in determining how to combine the advantages of in-person collaboration with the lessons learned from remote work. This convergence has generated growing interest in the hybrid working model, in which employees divide their working time between shared physical workspaces and remote locations, typically home offices (Naqshbandi, 2025).

Hybrid work also raises important questions for management scholars and practitioners. This emerging work model requires a rethinking of traditional approaches to collaboration, organizational culture, and supervision. The

spatial and temporal separation of work from fixed physical locations prompts a reevaluation of trust, managerial control, and performance metrics. At the same time, when thoughtfully designed and implemented, hybrid configurations can offer increased flexibility, autonomy, and inclusivity (Allen et al., 2015).

Overall, flexibility in work location and schedule is not a new concept, as some companies began experimenting with teleworking as early as the 1970s. The original idea was that employees could use telecommunications technologies to complete tasks outside traditional office settings (Leonardi, 2021; Nilles, 1988). However, infrastructure limitations such as slow internet speeds, the absence of reliable virtual private networks, and managerial skepticism prevented widespread adoption. In the 1990s, the gradual expansion of broadband Internet and the rise of personal computers encouraged some organizations to offer part-time telework.

By the early 2000s, flexible work became more common in knowledge-intensive fields, especially in information technology and professional services, where remote access to organizational systems was feasible. Empirical research from that period (cf. Bailey & Kurland, 2002) did not provide sufficient evidence that telework consistently improved job satisfaction or productivity. Instead, it highlighted concerns related to blurred work and life boundaries and increased social isolation. These early findings helped establish a foundation for evaluating alternative work arrangements not as temporary conveniences but as strategic organizational decisions. The hybrid work model represents a significant reconceptualization of the work system. At its core, hybrid work reflects an ongoing response to the need for flexibility and coordination.

In a hybrid model, employees typically work several days per week remotely, often from home, and spend the remaining time in a shared physical workspace. According to Naqshbandi (2025), hybrid work arrangements can take several forms. One common model is the office-first approach, in which employees are expected to be on-site three to five days per week, with the remaining days worked remotely. Another version is the remote-first model, where remote

work is the default and employees come to the office only for specific purposes such as team meetings or occasional collaborative sessions. A third approach involves split teams, in which certain roles or departments, such as laboratory staff or facilities management, are primarily on-site, while others work mostly remotely and meet periodically for coordinated tasks (Naqshbandi, 2025).

2.3. Definition of hybrid workspace and its main characteristics

The hybrid work model challenges long-established principles of office interior design and ergonomics. Companies have had to rethink how office environments should function in order to bring employees back after extended periods of home-based work. The coronavirus pandemic, as a paradigm-shifting crisis, fundamentally transformed not only daily life but also the way people work. Today, many office-based employees have the option to work remotely for part of the week, which has contributed to the rise of flexible hybrid office interiors that support both remote and in-office staff. As more companies adopt adaptable working arrangements in the post-pandemic period, it is reasonable to suggest that offices around the world will continue to become increasingly flexible (Lecce, 2024).

The features of a hybrid office interior design include that an office become flexible space with modular furniture that allow for reconfiguration. In addition, spaces are equipped for virtual collaboration. Hybrid office spaces have more huddle rooms (smaller meeting rooms) for less physical meetings, hotdesking and co-working spaces, and a greater variety of desking options (Lecce, 2024).

Now that working from home has become the norm, companies are also taking into account the preferences of employees seeking a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the office. For employees it might be tough to enjoy hours in an office if they are facing a cold, corporate environment. That's why a growing number of companies, from BBC Studios, Nu Skin to Keurig, are choosing office designs that incorporate more modern lifestyle elements. Some call it "resimercial" design, which combines residential and commercial aspects of interior design. In fact, it is a corporate office that has been given a more inviting home-like look (Lecce, 2024).

As the features of a modern "resimercial" office it is possible to highlight areas that promote communication and aim to foster socializing of workers, encouraging employees to bond, collaborate and interact with each other. A cozy office interior design creates a more accessible and welcoming atmosphere. Moreover, the more comfortable the work environment, the lower the level of absenteeism among employees (Lecce, 2024).



Figure 23: NapLab coworking space in Bangkok, Thailand.
Note. From *The World's 4 Most Unusual Coworking Spaces*, by E. Huen (2019).
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/eustaciahuen/2019/05/14/coworking/>

2.4. Selection of exemplary workspace case studies

2.4.1. Frank Lloyd Wright, S.C. Johnson and Son Company Administration Building, Racine, Wisconsin (1936–1939)

The Johnson Wax Administration Building, inspired by the organic architecture style, is one of the first examples of a contract project featuring innovative furniture designed by Wright in collaboration with the Metal Office Furniture Company. The futuristic building, being an experiment both in construction and design, was created in 1936–39 as “a socio-architectural interpretation of modern business at its top and best” with the main goal to be an inspiring place to work in.

It was Wright’s first project to create a single, open-plan space where employees worked side by side. The building itself is designed as a closed, curvilinear structure that is clad externally with a continuous surface of bricks. The architecture is illuminated through the use of Pyrex glass tubes that diffuse natural light inward, preventing the interior from being seen from the outside. The interior space was continuous and connected. Before designing the shape for Johnson Wax’s project, Wright studied how office workers performed their tasks and

how different departments interacted with each other to create the right conditions for quality work and workers wellbeing.

The most challenging part of the experiment project was the vast workroom, a large open space 40 by 60 meters in plan and 6 meters tall supported by hollow tree-like columns that were “stems standing tip-toe...bedded at the floor level”, called “lily pad” columns. This «forest» of thin white concrete pillars, widening towards the top, formed the ceiling. In the spaces between these circles there are skylights consisting of bundles of glass tubes. At the corners, where the walls join the ceiling, the wall surface is interrupted to become of the same material as the skylights, namely glass tubes, generating a continuous surface. At the corners where the walls meet the ceiling, the wall surface is interrupted and becomes of glass tubes, the same material as the skylights, creating a continuous surface.

In 1937, Wright designed a desk and chair that would conceptually fit into the architecture of the Johnson Wax Building. Their straight and curved forms reflected the building’s orthogonal and circular geometry, while the cantilevered desk surfaces echoed the structure’s engineering. Elements such as the frame stretchers aligned with the glass tubes and brick courses, and the chair’s circular components referenced the dendriform column capitals.

Beyond formal coherence, Wright introduced several features to improve worker comfort. The desk offered three distinct work surfaces: a lower semicircular section for typing, a large central surface much longer than a standard desk, and an elevated cantilevered shelf for writing tools and temporary papers. The semicircular metal drawers, stacked on top of one another, were attached to the side of the frame with a single pivot, allowing them to rotate silently.

However, the most controversial and discussed element of the project was the chair. Wright proposed an unusual idea: to make it three-legged, with two legs in the back and one in the front. This decision was not made for aesthetic reasons but because Wright argued that the front legs of standard chairs interfered with the user’s legs, and that his design would promote

proper posture, becoming unstable only if the user sat incorrectly. The seat and back featured foam-rubber padding and could be easily adjusted. The backrest was mounted on a pivot, with fabric on both sides to improve comfort and reduce fabric wear.

In June 1938, Metal Office Furniture Company was commissioned to produce the furniture. This collaboration between the company and Wright resulted in a complete furniture system that satisfied all the requirements and functions of an administrative building.

Nine basic desk models were developed for office workers, each designed to accommodate different tasks. Shortly before the building opened, Wright designed a large four-legged lounge chair, which he called the “officer’s chair.” He may have created it to address concerns that visitors would struggle when sitting for the first time in the unstable three-legged chairs. The company later added two front legs to most of the remaining chairs, following a design approved by Wright. This furniture marked an early example of contemporary open-office design, as Wright produced practical ideas that were far ahead of their time, creating furniture specifically suited to the architectural environment he designed.

The materials used for the furniture included welded tubes of die-cast aluminum, magnesite, maple for the staff desks in the great workroom, and American walnut for the executives' desks in the penthouse.

Wright also selected four fabric colors: blue for the house records department, red for the credit department, beige for the sales promotion department, and green for the billing department. The chair cushions provided a touch of color within the otherwise monochrome workspace. The metal furniture frames were painted Cherokee red to complement the brick walls and the rubber tile floors.

Although the concept of contract furniture was not yet formally defined at the time, this project is considered one of its earliest examples.

Metal Office Furniture Company coordinated production by subcontracting different components to specialized manufacturers: Stow-Davis made the wooden work surfaces, the American Seating Company in Grand Rapids produced the tubular frames, and the Chase Furniture Company supplied the fabric upholstery. Metal Office Furniture Company itself handled the sheet-metal elements, as well as the final finishing and assembly.

Before collaborating with Wright, the Metal Office Furniture Company was known for producing heavy, standardized metal office furniture. Working on this project, however, pushed the firm in a new direction and laid the groundwork for what would later become the first modular and adaptable office furniture systems developed after World War II.



Figure 24: Interior view and furniture of the S.C. Johnson and Son Company Administration Building.
Note. From *The world's most modern office*, by Lecce (2018).
<https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/orgatec/2018/the-worlds-most-modern-office.html>



Figure 25: Interior view of the S.C. Johnson and Son Company Administration Building.
Note. From *The world's most modern office*, by Lecce (2018).
<https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/orgatec/2018/the-worlds-most-modern-office.html>

2.4.2. Taylorism and its demise (c. 1930)

The early 20th century workplace was influenced by a management theory known as Taylorism, named after its founder Frederick Winslow Taylor, which focused on the scientific management of labor resources. Taylorism was a highly influential theory that dominated workspace design at that time. It was also arguably the first attempt to create the office as it is known today: a communal space, typically owned by the company, where employees worked under managerial supervision.

Frederick Taylor's concept of scientific management centered on the rationalization of production processes to achieve greater efficiency, particularly in the design and construction of office buildings and in the management of the growing administrative activities within them (Duffy, 2008–2009).

The principles of Taylorism were inspired by the efficiency of the industrial factory model and sought to optimize the productivity of each worker per square meter. Typically, each employee was given only the amount of space necessary to perform their tasks, and office layouts were organized so that management could easily monitor individual performance. Workers carried out clerical tasks under close supervision, which resulted in a dehumanized workplace that was hierarchical, status driven, and separated people and functions. Success was measured primarily in terms of efficiency. Limitations in building technology at the time also had a significant impact on office building typologies.

The systematization of the workplace into a hierarchical model of labor management led to rigid office layouts, with managers positioned around rows of desks occupied by clerical workers. Long, narrow floor plans were designed to maximize natural light and to accommodate limited structural spans, and this created corridors with double loaded office layouts and repetitive desk arrangements in open plan areas. The pursuit of maximum efficiency neglected human and social factors, and this resulted in a dehumanizing work environment. Throughout the 20th century, the global dominance of North American high-rise and low-rise office buildings was nearly total. The appearance of cities around the world, as well as the physical and social structure of many suburbs, reflects this enormous economic, technological, cultural, social, and architectural achievement.

A UK government report stated: "For intellectual work, separate rooms are necessary so that a person who works with his head may not be interrupted; but for more mechanical work, the working in concert of a number of clerks in the same room under proper supervision is the right mode of meeting it." This rigorous approach is reflected in scientific management, the management theory that analyzed and systematized work processes.

After World War II, emerging research on employee motivation and interpersonal relationships demonstrated that improved morale increased motivation and productivity. In addition, the social democratic environment in many Northern European countries fostered an egalitarian approach to management, in which all employees were regarded as having equal responsibility and authority. Taylorist offices, with their rows of desks and strict hierarchies, came to be seen as inefficient and in need of change.

Duffy (2008–2009) argues that typical Taylorist office buildings, whether high-rise or low-rise, are no longer sustainable. They are under occupied and inefficiently used, unsuitable for new ways of working, and difficult to repurpose. They limit

opportunities for emerging enterprises and fail to support intercompany collaboration, mobile work, or overlapping activities. The more office work evolves, the more inadequate traditional office typologies become.

Today, according to Duffy (2008–2009), information technology, when used wisely, can offer people the ability to manage time and space more flexibly and sustainably. However, to keep pace with new working practices and achieve greater environmental efficiency and personal autonomy, it is necessary to develop new spatial and temporal conventions, which presents many challenges for both clients and architects.



Figure 26: Taylorism – Ingersoll watch and clock factory.

Note. From *Workplace Evolution: A Retrospective on Office Design from the Industrial Revolution to the Knowledge Economy*, by D. Tseng (2018).

<https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>

2.4.3. The post-war office landscape, the Bürolandschaft (c. 1950)

In the 1940s and 1950s, a cautious and hesitant attitude toward innovative forms of office design prevailed across Europe due to the devastating consequences of the First and Second World Wars (Lecce, 2024). Until the 1950s, most offices in Europe consisted of closed cubicles and were scaled-down versions of the large “bullpen” office spaces found in skyscrapers in the United States. However, in the post-war period, interest in the subjective aspects of human relations increased.

Emerging studies in the field of interpersonal relationships and employee motivation showed that improving social connections increased employee morale, which in turn enhanced productivity and motivation. New workplaces began to offer spaces focused on employee comfort. Although the Taylorist separation of managers and workers continued, work was increasingly organized into task-based groups, and office space was structured around clusters of individual workstations.

At the same time, the post-war environment was favorable for economic growth due to large-scale reconstruction, and Germany was one of the countries that experienced particularly rapid development. The expansion of the manufacturing industry, combined with a desire to distance society from the brutal past, opened Germany to new ideas. This openness led to the emergence of a concept that quickly spread throughout Europe and North America.

In 1958, the German management consulting firm known as the Quickborner Team was founded by two brothers interested in office space planning, who studied office layouts in terms of information processing and the movement of paperwork. They identified the limitations of existing office designs, which were based on scientific management principles and characterized by repetitive rows of desks and strict hierarchies. Their aim was to create a more human-centered system by replacing rigid grids of corridors and desks with a more natural and organic layout. This approach became known as Bürolandschaft, a German term meaning “office landscape.”

With the introduction of unobstructed, continuous deep floor plans known as Bürolandschaft, traditional rigid layouts were gradually replaced. By the late 1960s, open plans supported by side cores and modular building structures and facades allowed for greater flexibility. The main objective was to encourage interaction among employees and reduce visible hierarchies, reflecting broader political and social changes. Interior partitions and walls were removed, creating some of the first fully open-plan office environments with a high degree of flexibility. Floor depths were increased to ensure closer spatial continuity between workers. To mitigate the sense of isolation from the exterior, elements of office landscaping were introduced. Load-bearing structures were either evenly distributed across the floor area to ensure uniform operation or placed around the perimeter to minimize obstructions.

Alongside the decline of the Taylorist approach to office design, advances in building technology opened new possibilities for architects. Innovations such as curtain wall facades, uniform lighting and air distribution systems, suspended ceilings, and deeper floor plates transformed office construction. Building cores were either evenly distributed to provide uniform services across the floor plate or positioned at the perimeter to reduce spatial interference. The Seagram Building in New York City, designed by Mies van der Rohe and completed in 1958, is often cited as a key example of this development.

Glass-walled offices were also introduced to maintain continuous visual contact across workspaces. Curtain wall facade technology significantly increased the amount of natural light reaching interior spaces. Parallel advances in ventilation, heating, air conditioning, suspended ceiling systems, and fluorescent lighting enabled a more even distribution of energy and light, making it possible to design deeper and more flexible floor plates.

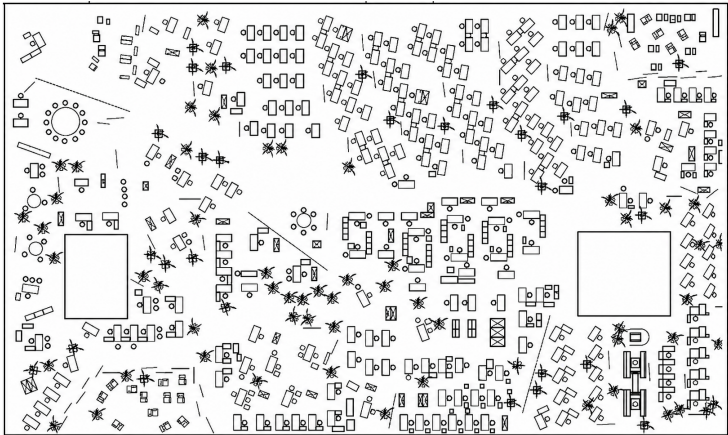


Figure 27: Layout of Bürolandschaft. Note. From Workplace Evolution: A Retrospective on Office Design from the Industrial Revolution to the Knowledge Economy, by D. Tseng (2018). <https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>



Figure 28: Interior view of Bürolandschaft. Note. From The Evolution of Office Spaces: From Office to Club, by M. Yushkevich (2021). <https://prorus.ru/interviews/ot-kontory-do-kluba-ili-istoriya-ehvolyucii-ofisnyh-prostranstv/>

2.4.4. Action Office (1960–70s)

One of the first proponents of the office landscape was Robert Propst, head of research at Herman Miller, who developed ideas for flexible office space design. After years of studying how people work and creating prototypes, he set out to improve the open bullpen office design that had dominated much of the 20th century.

Thus, in 1968, Propst, together with Herman Miller, designed the “Action Office 1,” a system featuring spacious work surfaces. The released system included partitions for privacy and pin-up boards, display shelves, and adjustable desk heights that allowed employees to work while standing, enabling them to change position, encouraging blood circulation, and helping to prevent exhaustion. It was designed as a customizable environment, offering the openness and flexibility of the Bürolandschaft while providing greater personalization and privacy for workers.

Created by Robert Propst, the Action Office was a response to the often distracting and chaotic nature of the Bürolandschaft and the rigid, oppressive environment of Taylorism. Propst’s flexible, modular kit of elements addressed these problems efficiently but was not widely adopted, possibly due to the large amount of floor space required per employee at a time when economic pressures demanded higher efficiency, or because of its relatively high cost. Although it was not widely adopted, the Action Office inspired some of the most iconic office layouts to date. Employees were provided with a generous amount of workspace, approximately 18 m² per employee, although this could have

been reduced by using separate cubicles, accommodating around 12 employees per 100 m² (Lecce, 2024).

During the 1970s, the rapid growth of white-collar employment coincided with rising real estate costs, which significantly increased the expense of modifying office buildings. As a result, the physical office environment began to be perceived as a financial burden on corporate budgets. At the same time, fiscal policies introduced by the U.S. Treasury encouraged business investment by allowing office furniture and equipment to be depreciated over a much shorter period than buildings or permanent interior constructions. While fixed office structures were assigned depreciation periods of nearly four decades, furniture systems could be written off in approximately seven years. This created a strong economic incentive for companies to invest in modular office systems rather than permanent spatial configurations, allowing companies to recover their costs more quickly.

Within this context, Herman Miller introduced Action Office 2, a more affordable successor to the original Action Office concept. Unlike its predecessor, which emphasized flexibility and adjustability, the new system prioritized cost efficiency through standardized, enclosed modular workstations. These systems were quickly adopted across corporate offices in the United States. As Herman Miller’s former marketing executive Joe Schwartz noted, the system was not originally intended to densely pack employees into small spaces but was shaped by economic pressures.

The commercial success of Action Office 2 ultimately marked a departure from Robert Propst’s initial human centered vision, as

economic efficiency came to dominate office design priorities.



Figure 29: Action Office 1.
Note. From *TWorkplace Evolution: A Retrospective on Office Design from the Industrial Revolution to the Knowledge Economy*, by D. Tseng (2018).
<https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>

2.4.5. The cubicle farm (c.1980)

Later, a more cost-efficient version of the Action Office project was created to suit the demands of the mass market. However, budget restrictions were not the only factor contributing to the development of cubicle offices. Another reason was the rise in the number of skilled professionals, which created a demand for square or rectangular buildings that maximized the perimeter for cellular offices. Instead of large open floor plates, a smaller and more consistent depth from the central core to the outer wall was preferred. Technological influences included column free floor spaces and the standardization and commercial availability of proprietary facade technologies.

When Herman Miller's competitors, such as Knoll, Steelcase, and Haworth, introduced their own versions to the market, it became clear that corporate America was not primarily interested in providing employees with comfortable working environments. Instead, companies favored cost efficient solutions that allowed as many employees as possible to be placed within a given space.

The initial layout of this furniture system imitated the organic forms of the office landscape, providing varying degrees of density, privacy, and storage capacity. However, over time, clients continued to shrink the Action Office system until it was transformed into cubicle modules. The original concept of Action Office by Propst became a regimented sea of standard issued cubicles, reminiscent of Taylorist style offices. What began as an innovative idea eventually turned into what Propst himself described as "monolithic insanity."

From the mid-1970s through the 1990s, office cubicles effectively displaced the office landscape, becoming the dominant workspace typology. However, this model was later challenged by the emergence of new approaches to office design. By the 2010s, cubicle offices had gained a reputation for being dehumanizing and soulless, as partitions limited collaboration and blocked access to natural light in deep floor layouts. Nevertheless, following the rise of open plan offices in the 1990s, a sense of nostalgia emerged for personal space, privacy, sound insulation, and reduced managerial oversight once provided by cubicle partitions (Lecce, 2024).

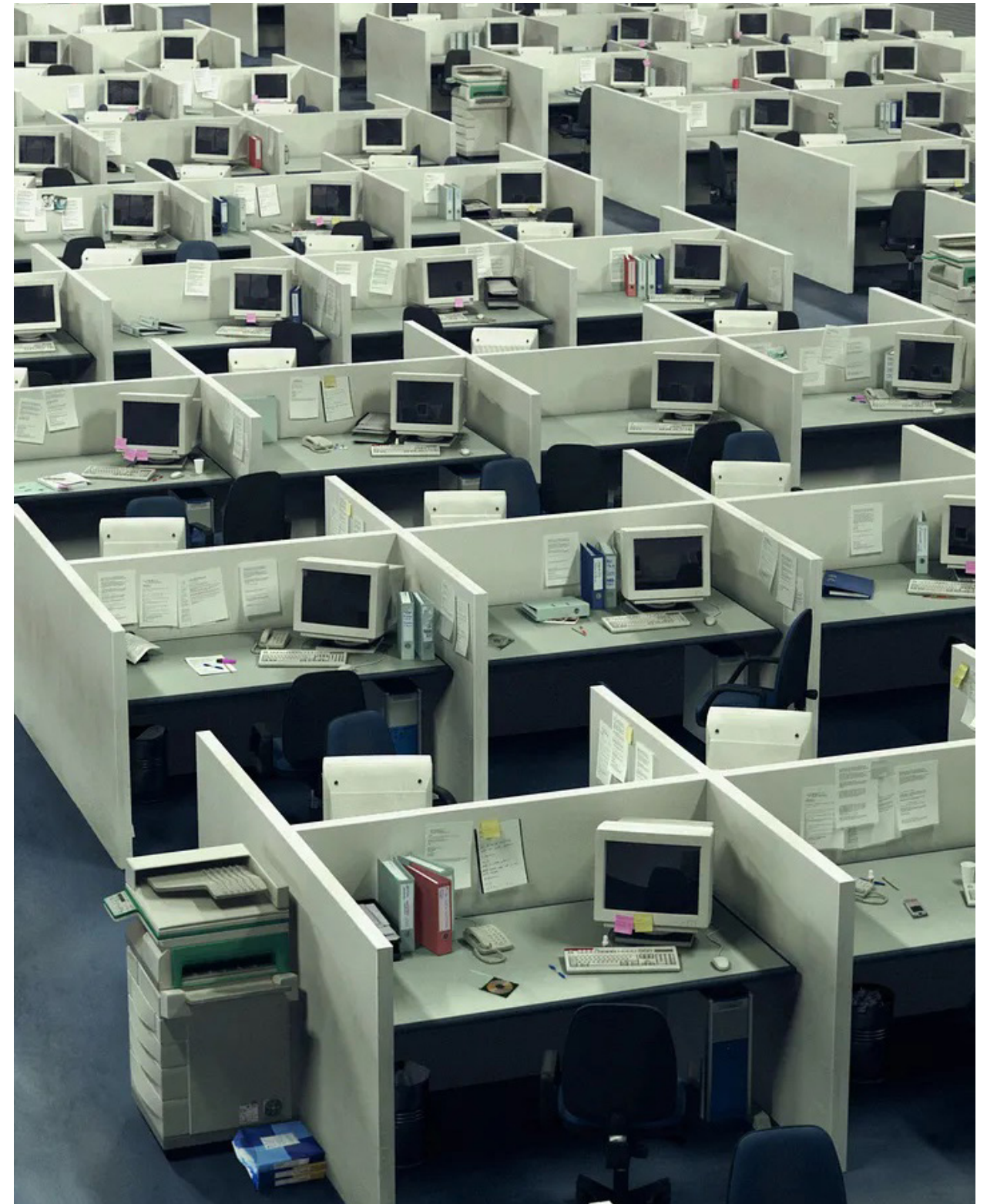


Figure 30: Cubicle Farm.

Note. From *Workplace Evolution: A Retrospective on Office Design from the Industrial Revolution to the Knowledge Economy*, by D. Tseng (2018).

<https://medium.com/@danshaoc/workplace-evolution-a-retrospective-on-office-design-from-the-industrial-revolution-to-the-7fdaaea408ae>

2.4.6. Clive Wilkinson Architects, Pallotta TeamWorks Headquarters, Los Angeles, United States (2002)

Later, a more cost-efficient version of the In 2002, Clive Wilkinson Architects designed the headquarters for Pallotta TeamWorks, a charitable event company, within a raw industrial warehouse in Los Angeles. With a remarkably low budget of just \$40 per square foot, the architects faced significant design constraints—particularly the inability to install conventional air conditioning or heating across the entire 47,000-square-foot facility. Rather than treating these limitations as setbacks, the firm embraced them as an opportunity for innovation, ultimately creating a pioneering example of hybrid and adaptive workspace.

Faced with limited resources, the design strategy focused on modularity, reuse, and localized climate control. Instead of attempting to condition the entire warehouse, the team created “breathing islands”—tent-like micro-environments that housed air-conditioned zones for focused work. These structures, situated within the unconditioned shell of the warehouse, allowed for spatial flexibility and climate efficiency, echoing the principles found in temporary shelters and mobile housing.

The breathing islands were built around and anchored by repurposed shipping containers, which were used as private offices and meeting rooms. These containers were stacked and clustered to form “neighborhoods” within the larger workspace, with a central tower of three containers serving as the “executive tower.” The resulting layout functioned much like a miniature

city, complete with urban-like circulation routes, semi-public social zones, and quiet work areas. This technique not only created an intuitive internal logic, but also reflects the nomadic model of clustered micro-communities and flexible occupation of space.

The project was also notable for its environmental sensitivity and resource-conscious construction. Most of the warehouse structure was left untouched, reducing material waste and construction impact. The installation of skylights provided natural daylighting, further reducing the need for artificial lighting. Basic materials such as plywood, untreated timber, and recycled elements were used throughout the project.

Despite its budget constraints, the Pallotta TeamWorks Headquarters delivered a visually engaging and dynamic work environment. The colorful interiors, custom-designed furniture, and open social areas created an atmosphere of energy and creativity, an environment that supported collaboration, movement, and personal agency. These qualities are central to contemporary hybrid workspace design, which seeks to accommodate diverse user needs, from focused solo work to spontaneous group interaction.

From a theoretical point of view, this project aligns with the architectural principles central to modern nomadism. It demonstrates how architecture can respond to limitations through modular design, temporary spatial logic, and user-centered adaptability.

Just as mobile homes or prefabricated pods provide shelter tailored to change and movement, Pallotta’s workspace offers a similarly responsive model for working environments where spatial conditions are shaped by daily rhythms, occupant needs, and environmental realities.

The design was widely praised and received an AIA Honor Award for its innovative approach

to workspace design and sustainability. Jurors highlighted its creative use of recycled materials and effective spatial programming, calling it a “truly California concept – recycling and sustainability at its highest level.” Today, it remains a benchmark for adaptive reuse projects, demonstrating that mobility, flexibility, and environmental intelligence can coexist with creativity and comfort in the workplace.



Figure 31: Interior view of Pallotta TeamWorks Headquarters workspace.
Note. From *Pallotta TeamWorks Headquarters*, by Clive Wilkinson Architects (2002).
https://clivewilkinson.com/portfolio_page/pallotta-teamworks-headquarters/

2.4.7. Izaskun Chinchilla Architects, Utopic_US Conde de Casal, Madrid, Spain (2016)

The co-working space Utopic_US Conde de Casal in Madrid, designed by Izaskun Chinchilla Architects in 2016, presents a dynamic and culturally rich interpretation of hybrid workspace design. With 900 square meters of interior space accommodating up to 100 users, the project responds to the evolving demands of flexible work environments in dense urban contexts. As part of Madrid's growing network of collaborative hubs, the space supports a creative ecosystem centered around adaptability, personalization, and interaction.

Informed by the cultural momentum of the millennial workforce and its alignment with the sharing economy, the design is rooted in a forward-thinking, playful vision. Izaskun Chinchilla drew symbolic inspiration from two global cities – New York and Tokyo – to represent openness, reinvention, technology, and tradition. This conceptual foundation informs the spatial organization and material palette of the project, contributing to an environment that encourages surprise, exploration, and social connection. The architects employed DIY (do it yourself), mobile aesthetic, developing a system of versatile and transportable furnishings. Rather than relying on conventional office infrastructure, the project adapts industrial and domestic furniture for new functions. IKEA components like the Svärta bunk bed, Fjellse bed, and Beddinge bed drawer were reconfigured into desk systems, Skype rooms, and other semi-private areas. This reimagining of off-the-shelf items speaks to a broader interest in temporary, user-driven spatial

solutions and sustainable, cost-effective design practices. Playful and imaginative features define the spatial experience. Raised tatami-style zones reference traditional Japanese ryokan meeting rooms, low ceramic tables encourage informal conversation, and swings in the waiting area offer moments of levity. The main hall evokes New York's Broadway through theatrical lighting and stage elements, while details such as koinobori kites and suspended netting introduce whimsical visual cues. A small stage allows for impromptu performances and social events, encouraging community bonding and spontaneous creativity. These components turn the workplace into a canvas for expression, emphasizing emotional engagement and creative agency. Materiality also plays a central role in shaping atmosphere and identity. Bright colors, mixed textiles, patterned ceramics, and painted wallpapers contribute to a tactile, vibrant, and non-hierarchical environment. The architects intended every element to suggest transformation—a reminder that workspaces should evolve with their users. This flexible and expressive quality aligns well with broader shifts in workspace culture, where rigid, institutional environments are giving way to more residential, adaptive, and human-centered models.

The architectural intervention also highlights an important conceptual dimension: the intersection of workspace with urban culture. Chinchilla's design is not just responsive to user needs but actively participates in redefining Madrid's urban identity. By drawing from both local context and global references, the space becomes a microcosm of contemporary nomadic urbanism celebrating both rootedness and fluidity.

Utopic_US Conde de Casal stands out as an urban model for stationary yet fluid cohabitation of work and social life. Though it is not mobile in the physical sense, its spatial logic, reconfigurable systems, and symbolic openness reflect the nomadic mindset: fluid identities, multifunctional environments, and the dissolution of traditional boundaries between living, working, and leisure. Moreover, the use of repurposed, modular furnishings supports both sustainability and personalization, which are core values in modern nomadic culture. It provides a framework where users are

encouraged to adapt and reinterpret space depending on their needs, echoing nomadic strategies of temporary settlement and resourcefulness. As such, this project not only reflects a shift in workplace design but also contributes to the larger discourse on mobility and flexibility in contemporary urban living. By fostering creativity, social connection, and adaptability, Utopic_US Conde de Casal offers a valuable precedent for understanding how interior architecture can support the evolving needs of nomadic professionals in the 21st century.



Figure 32: Interior view of Co-working utopic_US Conde de Casal designed by Izaskun Chinchilla Architects. Note. From *Co-working utopic_US Conde de Casal*, by Izaskun Chinchilla Architects (2016). <https://www.archdaily.com/794909/co-working-utopic-us-conde-de-casal-izaskun-chinchilla-architects>

2.4.8. Working in a bar

During the past decades, technological developments have contributed to the decline of the traditional office, allowing people to use public spaces for work. Over recent years, the Internet has evolved from a parallel world into a system seamlessly integrated into daily life (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 65).

Personal communication devices have transformed into crucial tools for productivity and social interaction. Moreover, they have become increasingly mobile and powerful. Affordable laptop prices, technological innovations, and the rise of high-capacity mobile Internet networks, tablets, and smartphones have made it possible to work from virtually anywhere. Thus, in 2005, for the first time in the United States, sales of laptops exceeded sales of desktop computers. Work could then be redirected outside the office building, leading not only to employees performing tasks in locations other than traditional office spaces, but also to fundamentally new ways of delegating work, opening the path to new forms of cloud-based labor (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 65).

Physical presence in the office became unnecessary due to cloud-based data storage technologies. This trend led to the emergence of new forms of entrepreneurship based on online connections and to a significant expansion of international business travel networks. Technological advances also enabled the division of work into smaller components, creating so-called micro jobs. In this model, project tasks are broken down into small units and distributed among a large number

of workers. In this sense, microwork can be understood as a virtual assembly line of knowledge-based labor that requires human intelligence rather than machinery (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 65).

An increasing number of workers and employers have turned toward flexible employment arrangements, which have become more attractive across various sectors. For example, in 2012, 39 percent of people aged 15 to 24 in the Netherlands had flexible employment contracts, compared to 25 percent in 2002. At this point, flexible contracts began to challenge the dominance of permanent employment. Freelancers, in particular, have the freedom to choose where they work. While many work from home, this often limits interaction with colleagues and reduces opportunities for collaboration and networking. As a result, the search for social interaction and professional exchange has led many freelancers to work in public or semi-public spaces (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, pp. 65, 71).

While early generations of mobile workers found working in cafés convenient, many are still discovering it as a new way of working in a friendly atmosphere. Despite challenges such as background noise, social pressure to consume beverages, or discomfort related to staying too long, working in these traditionally social spaces has become increasingly popular. The emergence of cafés where visitors pay an entrance fee in exchange for unlimited coffee and access to an inviting environment represents just one of many workspace types that combine social and professional functions (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 71).

Other public spaces are also being transformed into potential workplaces, partly due to improvements in mobile network infrastructure. Cities now provide technologies such as fast 4G connections or publicly accessible wireless Internet in public parks, making them attractive locations for working outdoors. Athens, for example, was among the first cities to equip a public park with wireless Internet in 2009. By 2013, New York City had provided Wi-Fi access in 60 public parks through a public private partnership. In the private sector, multinational chains such as McDonald’s and Barclays offer free Wi-Fi in their branches, while airports and libraries have taken on new roles as temporary workplaces for urban nomads, enhancing visitor productivity. As a result, this new generation of workers experiences an increasingly fragmented relationship with the city. They may work from home, public transport, parks, cafés, benches, or even laundrettes, using multiple devices connected to a single cloud-based profile. The office exists in the cloud, and workstations are dispersed throughout the urban environment (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 71).

Across cities, new spaces have emerged that support both working and social interaction. One example is Betahaus in Berlin’s Kreuzberg neighborhood, which combines elements of a coworking space with those of a social community. It represents a hybrid between an atmospheric café and a library, open to a wide public and catering both to focused individual work and to social collaboration. Members can rent flexible desks or become more deeply involved by participating in collaborative projects. Betahaus is based on the idea that workers benefit from a constantly changing workspace (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 66).

Another unconventional example emerged in Stockholm, Sweden. Between 2010 and 2012, the Nightowls Club offered a workspace designed specifically for late-night work. Stockholm Nightowls provided an open space during evening and nighttime hours, encouraging nattuglor, literally night owls, to work at desks with their laptops while the city slept (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, p. 70).



Figure 33: Stockholm Nightowls.
Note. From *Pop-Up City: City-Making in a Fluid World*, by J. Beekmans and J. de Boer (2014).
<https://popupcity.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Pop-Up-City-City-Making-in-a-Fluid-World-Preview.pdf>

2.5. Overview of the historical transformation of workspace

The historical evolution of workplace development shows a gradual shift from clearly defined and fixed working places toward more flexible spaces and, further, hybrid working environments. Early office models were based on stable, localized workplaces with strict spatial organization and hierarchical structure. Over time, these models evolved into more open and dynamic working spaces, reflecting changes in organizational culture and working practices.

As discussed in the XVII Triennale di Milano (1986), the evolution of work itself can be understood as a transition from manual labor toward systems of remote control and digital coordination, where work is no longer tied to a fixed place but becomes increasingly flexible and distributed.

As discussed by Filippo Tartaglia in the context of the XVII Triennale di Milano (1986), the evolution of work environments is influenced not only by technological progress but also by human aspirations for comfort, well-being, and contact with nature. Historically, workspaces were often separated from residential environments due to unfavorable conditions such as noise, pollution, and poor living quality. However, contemporary

technological advancements and increasing attention to ergonomics and human-centered design make it possible to integrate work and living functions within the same space.

This shift reflects a broader tendency to combine work with everyday life, where individuals seek flexible environments that support both professional activities and personal well-being. In this sense, work is no longer perceived as a separate activity but becomes integrated into a more holistic lifestyle, where spatial boundaries between living and working environments gradually disappear.

In contemporary conditions, work is no longer limited to a specific physical location but takes place within flexible environments that can extend across multiple settings, including offices, homes, coworking spaces, and digital platforms. This transformation leads to the emergence of hybrid working milieus, where spatial, social, and digital aspects of work are combined.

Thus, the evolution of workspaces can be understood not only as a change in physical form but also as a shift in the perception of work itself, from a fixed physical place to a flexible and distributed environment. This transformation reflects a broader shift from fixed working places toward flexible working spaces and, ultimately, toward hybrid working environments and milieus.

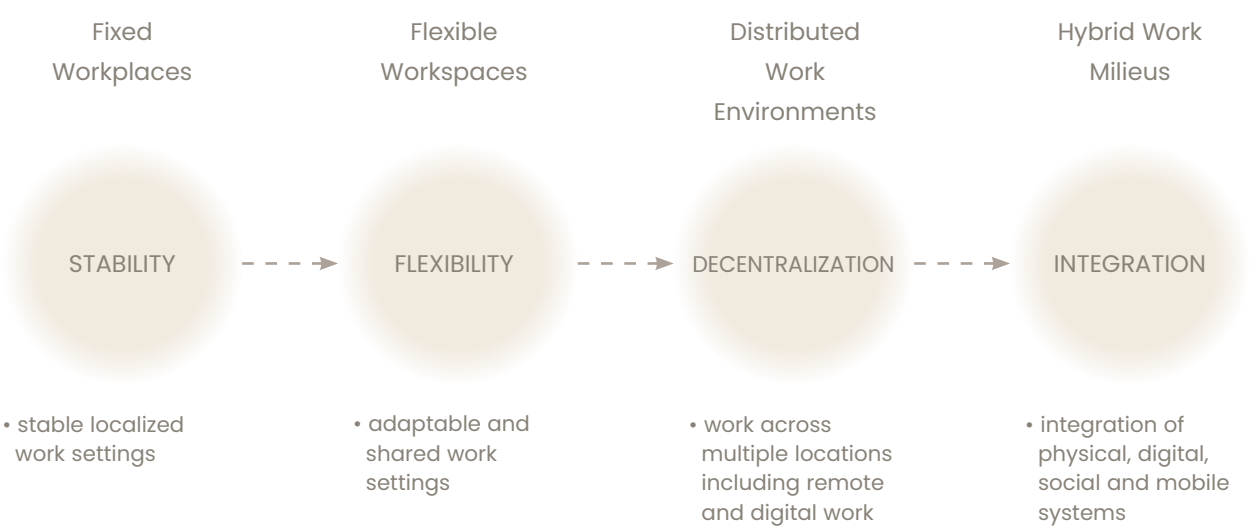


Figure 34: Transformation of work environments from fixed workplaces to hybrid work milieus.

3. Notion of Coworking Spaces

3.1. Definition of coworking

3.2. Advantages of coworking spaces

3.3. Disadvantages of coworking spaces

3.4. Activities in coworking spaces

3.5. Types of coworking spaces

3.6. Users of coworking spaces

3.7. Evolution of coworking

3.8. Coworking as a third place

3.1. Definition of coworking

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2025) defines coworking—or less commonly co-working—as “being, relating to, or working in a building where multiple tenants (such as entrepreneurs, startups, or nonprofits) rent working space (such as desks or offices) and have the use of communal facilities” (Merriam-Webster, 2025). In other words, coworking is an arrangement in which employees from diverse companies share the same office space.

According to Indeed (2025), coworking is a relatively new concept that is becoming increasingly popular as it offers users a professional community while avoiding the drawbacks of a traditional office environment (Indeed, 2025). Such disadvantages include limited flexibility, rigid structure, and lack of autonomy. Instead, in an attempt to address these shortcomings of traditional offices, coworking spaces can increase productivity, offer flexibility, provide shared, adaptable environments, and create opportunities for networking.

Wework (2021) describes coworking environment as a place that is designed for workers from various companies and professions to come and do their work. It serves as a community center, a place for collaboration, and a social

environment where professionals from diverse backgrounds can share ideas, skills, and knowledge.

Coworking enables occupants to reduce costs and increase convenience by using common infrastructure like office equipment, security and front desk services, and sometimes beverages and parcel acceptance services. Moreover, coworking spaces typically offer all the amenities users need to perform their jobs including furniture, high-speed internet, printing and scanning equipment, leisure areas, meeting rooms and a visually appealing environment. These spaces are often designed to resemble cafes or a casual office environment.

Coworking environments are not always specifically designed to create community. Spaces focused on community-building often attract specific professional groups, such as software developers or product designers. Those designed for corporate use only provide the amenities necessary for occupants' jobs. However, over time, users can naturally develop a community around their work through shared activities and collaboration.



Figure 35: Supermetall coworking office space by YoYo Bureau, Moscow, Russia.
Note. From *Supermetall Offices* / YoYo Bureau, by ArchDaily (2022).
<https://www.archdaily.com/976361/supermetall-offices-yoyo-bureau>

3.2. Advantages of coworking spaces

According to WeWork (2021), the ongoing growth of coworking offices worldwide is explained by a number of economic factors. For example, the financial crash of 2008 caused a boom in freelancers and self-employed entrepreneurs who needed a place not only to work, but also to meet with clients and collaborators—something their own apartments often could not provide.

Then, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the trend of working from home, as due to restrictions, some professionals worked from home and found it comfortable. Nowadays, workers want to have more flexibility in how and where they perform their work. In this way, the image of the traditional office is changing and being reimagined as a «collaboration hub, a creative space, and a hybrid workspace» (WeWork, 2021).

Coworking spaces not only benefit independent workers but also attract companies that prefer a flexible approach to work. These environments offer several key advantages.

One of the most notable advantages, according to WeWork (2021), is flexibility—most coworking spaces provide users with short-term contracts and flexible pay-as-you-go terms. Thus, renting an office-like environment becomes affordable

for young professionals and new companies that cannot afford a long-term lease.

Another important benefit of coworking spaces is that they create a sense of community among users. Such spaces connect people with like-minded professionals, allowing workers to meet, expand their networks, or find collaborators. Coworking spaces, originally designed for early internet entrepreneurs, continue to be places of community and socialization but now serve much broader roles (WeWork, 2021).

In this way, another advantage of coworking spaces can be highlighted: the seamless establishment of business contacts. Since professionals share a physical space with other workers from various fields, they have the potential opportunity to develop strong connections with new people (WeWork, 2021).

Coworking spaces offer many opportunities to participate in advanced training, workshops, and collaborative projects with industry leaders, allowing members to learn and grow professionally. This environment also helps coworkers meet potential mentors and build connections that can benefit their professional lives.

Moreover, coworking helps individuals work more productively. Being in the same space with a group of people focused on their tasks can boost a person’s productivity. Additionally, physically moving into a space dedicated to work helps stabilize the worker’s schedule (WeWork, 2021).

Finally, one of the most significant benefits is cost efficiency. Sharing space, services, and common office facilities helps to lower costs and reduce many service-related expenses.

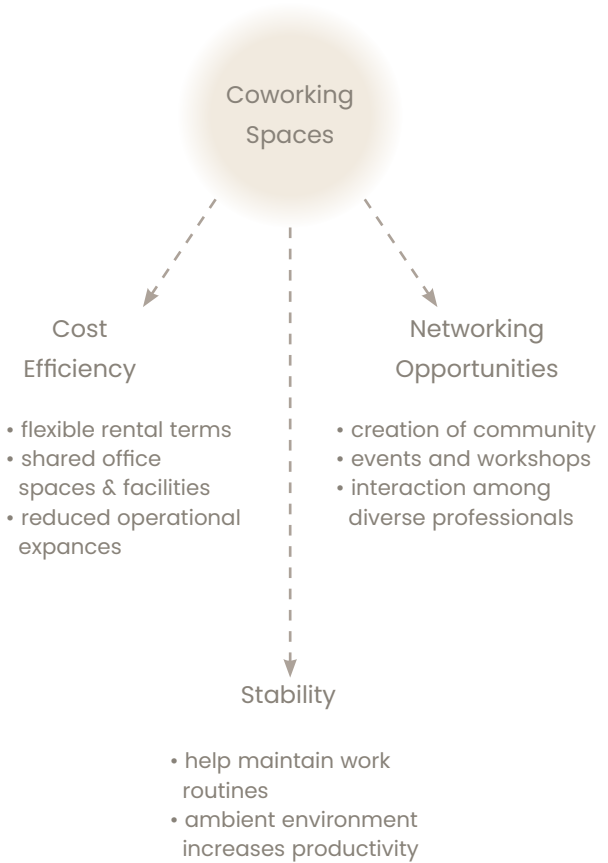


Figure 36: Key advantages of coworking spaces.

3.3. Disadvantages of coworking spaces

However, a coworking space may not be suitable for every person or every type of business. WeWork (2021) highlights some disadvantages of coworking and suggests ways to mitigate these downsides.

One of the disadvantages of coworking environments is limited customization. Typically, coworking space members cannot make changes to the layout or design, nor can they request certain utilities (WeWork, 2021). Therefore, if a coworking space does not meet a person’s needs, the worker must look for a more suitable option.

Another aspect is that, since coworking spaces are community-oriented social hubs, they provide less privacy for people working there. This type of environment may not be suitable for organizations working on sensitive projects or with confidential user data, as they cannot risk having strangers nearby who might see their screens or overhear meetings (WeWork, 2021). To address this issue, some coworking environments allow organizations to rent entire floors with equipment accessible only to their employees, thereby enhancing privacy (WeWork, 2021).

In addition, according to WeWork (2021), coworking spaces often have restrictions on placing company logos in the shared office. Thus, companies have limited opportunities to impress potential employees or clients. However, some coworking spaces offer the possibility of creating a branded entrance and providing large, stylish meeting rooms (WeWork, 2021).

Finally, another con of coworking, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2025), is the reliance on shared resources and equipment. Users are dependent on shared internet, common printers, and meeting rooms, which could occasionally result in slower speeds or cause booking conflicts. This demands flexibility and adaptability from members.

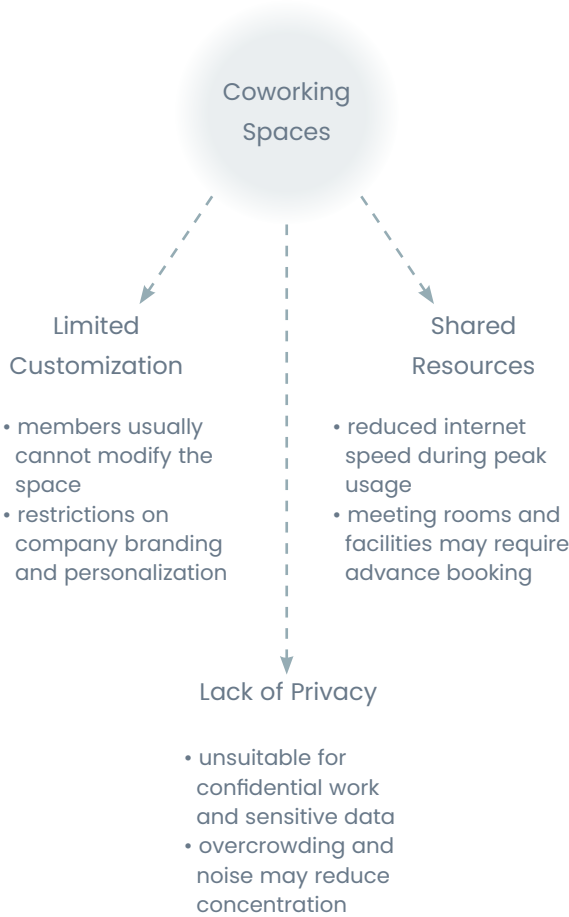


Figure 37: Possible disadvantages of coworking spaces.

3.4. Activities in coworking spaces

Coworking spaces operate by offering shared, flexible work environments where businesses and individuals can rent workstations, entire floors, or private offices on a long-term or short-term basis (MyHQ, n.d.). Members have access to a number of shared amenities, including high-speed internet, meeting rooms, and office equipment. With different membership plans available, users can select options that best suit their needs, whether it is a hot desk for occasional use or a dedicated office for a growing team (MyHQ, n.d.). This model combines cost efficiency with operational flexibility, making it an appealing choice for freelancers, startups, and established companies.

However, a coworking space is not just a physical place to work from. One of the main values of coworking lies in creating a community of members (WeWork, 2021). People in coworking offices communicate, socialize, make friends, and help each other with professional matters.

In a coworking environment, workers from various fields come together to work side by side. Typically, people get involved, ask for advice, share ideas, and brainstorm together. Although they may have unrelated jobs, some users even work on projects together because coworking offices encourage collaboration among their members.

Moreover, coworking environments encourage people to network and socialize by hosting social and professional events. For example, breakfasts or lunches, workshops, classes, or other educational events allow members to share skills and knowledge.

Additionally, coworking spaces design physical areas to encourage people to meet and socialize. Coffee machines, kitchens, and bars are strategically placed to cause spontaneous gatherings (WeWork, 2021). In these areas, participants often encounter each other and engage in conversations of both a personal and professional nature. Overall, coworking spaces create an environment where people have the opportunity to build genuine connections.



Figure 38: Sanno office by Studio Velocity, Okazaki, Japan.
Note. From *Office in Sanno* / Studio Velocity, by ArchDaily (2026).
<https://www.archdaily.com/1008355/office-in-sanno-studio-velocity>

3.5. Types of coworking spaces

According to the function and community the space serves, it is possible to divide coworking spaces into different types. Here are examples of some popular types of coworking spaces described.

Traditional coworking spaces are designed to meet the needs of each individual or company, but they are typically intended for small groups since tenants tend to have a small staff (Indeed, 2025). The design of traditional coworking spaces is open, promotes collaboration, and encourages a spirit of community. These environments are usually small because they typically serve businesses with a few employees. Traditional coworking spaces provide their users with some basic essentials, such as fast internet, office equipment, and furniture. They may also have separate rooms where members can hold meetings or make calls.

Another type of coworking space is coworking coffee shops or “coworking cafes,” which provide all the basics to users but with access to coffee. Before, remote workers and freelancers used coffee shops to work on their projects and avoid staying at home (Indeed, 2025). Nowadays, some coworking environments combine office functionality with the amenities of coffee shops, which freelancers have become accustomed to.

Professional coworking spaces serve corporate tenants who need a comfortable environment for their employees to do serious work (Indeed, 2025). These facilities have appealing interior design, office equipment, and friendly staff. They often feature good lighting, ergonomic furniture, and meeting rooms that allow companies to meet clients and hold events.

Specialized coworking spaces offer companies all the amenities needed to create and develop products and services, as well as to build partnerships and collaborations. People choose to work in these spaces because it gives them an opportunity to meet a like-minded community and grow their network. Big tech brands like Uber and Instagram got their start through these types of coworking spaces (Indeed, 2025).

Another type of coworking environment is the lifestyle coworking, which provides a range of amenities to create a home-like atmosphere where tenants can increase productivity while enjoying a vibrant community (Indeed, 2025). These spaces often require membership fees but offer exclusive rewards such as discounts at gyms, restaurants, and access to special training courses.

Finally, community-focused coworking spaces are collaborative, supportive, and rooted in local culture. They aim to transform work into shared infrastructure for personal and professional growth, fostering genuine connections, belonging, and mutual support. These spaces have clear values, high engagement, and a strong community-first vibe (Johnson, 2025).

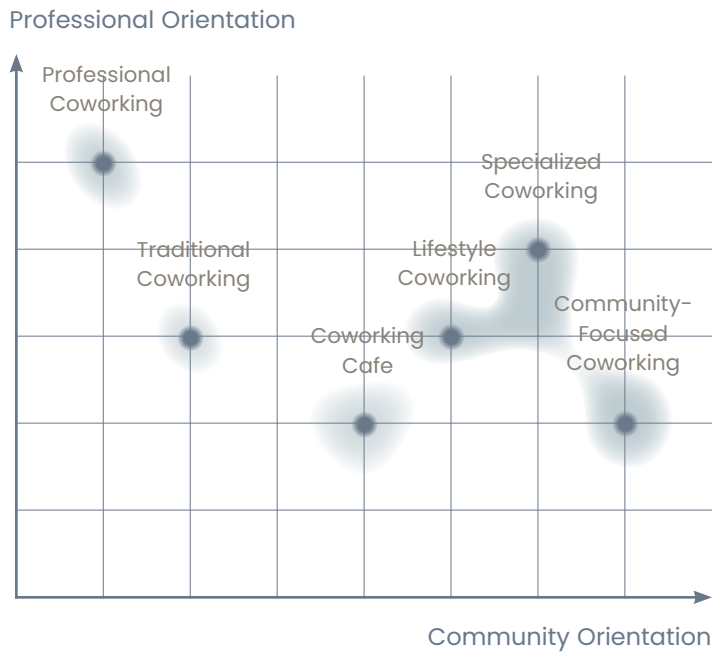


Figure 39: Spectrum of coworking space types according to professional and community orientation.

3.6. Users of coworking spaces

Coworking spaces are used by a wide range of users, including individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations looking for an affordable and flexible workspace equipped with all the necessary amenities to carry out their work activities and achieve their objectives. Coworking spaces often attract a variety of professionals, including independent contractors, scientists, remote workers, students, freelancers, entrepreneurs, digital nomads, and people who travel frequently. Although these environments can also offer significant benefits to startups and larger corporations.

For digital nomads and frequent travelers, coworking spaces offer an opportunity to carry out their professional tasks, as they provide all the professional services and technology typically found in traditional office environments, but without a rigid schedule. This allows travelers to work in a productive atmosphere in the presence of other working people. Coworking spaces also tend to be more private than public internet cafes and coffee shops, and they can offer comfortable discrete workspaces. Additionally, coworking helps workers avoid the feelings of social isolation they may experience while working remotely or traveling, as coworking facilitates informal communication and networking among various professionals.

Moreover, coworking spaces stimulate the working process and eliminate distractions associated with working from home. Most coworking spaces charge membership fees but also offer flexible options, such as short-term plans and pay-as-you-go memberships, which are especially beneficial for frequent travelers.

Freelancers remain an integral part of the coworking ecosystem (Workbar, 2025). For freelance professionals coworking provides structure to their flexible schedule. Despite the autonomy that freelancing offers, many workers struggle with limited opportunities for networking. Coworking spaces offer access to productive work environments and a community where individuals can learn, expand their networks, and develop their skills (Indeed, 2025).

The core of this community is made up of remote workers who have chosen to work in a shared, office-like space instead of isolating themselves at home (Workbar, 2025). Remote workers helped coworking spaces gain popularity and made the concept well-known among professionals (Indeed, 2025).

For remote workers, the coworking environment provides an opportunity to be part of a community and to socialize, since they typically do not meet their colleagues in person. In this way, they can work in a dynamic environment while enjoying the benefits of a shared workspace.

Students get some benefits from coworking spaces as well. Since they want to enter the job market in the future, coworking spaces can help them meet, socialize, and collaborate with experts from diverse fields (Indeed, 2025). In this way, students have a chance to improve their network and support their career growth.

The coworking environment is also a popular place for startups, as it offers affordable rent and a flexible work lifestyle. Since new companies often meet potential partners, investors, contractors, and collaborators from different fields, coworking spaces are well-suited to startup culture (Indeed, 2025). They also provide an opportunity to grow a network and promote a new company.

Many small businesses and founders prefer this work environment, as coworking spaces offer short-term memberships that allow small teams to grow without the restrictions of a long-term

lease. Some coworking spaces even provide office space and equipment to entrepreneurs in exchange for a stake in their company (Indeed, 2025). In this way, coworking helps small teams to grow, find partners and promote themselves.

Large corporate teams are also starting to join the coworking movement for off-site meeting rooms, collaborative activities, or simply to escape the rigid corporate office for fresh inspiration. Many corporations use coworking to improve employee well-being and productivity. It provides all the comforts of a classic office without the competition and internal politics. Coworking offers an open atmosphere where people can collaborate, share ideas and network. It also helps corporate tenants reduce the cost of office rent, printers, furniture and other overhead expenses, since companies typically pay for the space and equipment they use (Indeed, 2025).

In conclusion, coworking spaces are characterized by a diversity of users—from students and entrepreneurs to digital nomads and remote workers. This diversity fosters not only networking among members, but also cultural and professional exchange and growth (Workbar, 2025).

3.7. Evolution of coworking

Being founded by hackers in 1995 in Berlin, the first coworking space acted as a place to share knowledge to work on coding projects together. Adding of seminars and social events in some hackerspaces transformed the spaces into hubs for coders and soft engineers and made the places extremely popular. Being often community-oriented hackerspaces can be considered one of the first prototypes of coworking spaces. Thus, by the end of 1995 more coworking were opened in California and New York, and trend continued to grow. The term «coworking» was originally coined in 1999 by Bernard DeKoven, an American game designer, author and lecturer, who embodied the concept of “collaborative work among equals”. It was conceived as a scenario in which freelancers or remote workers from different companies could work together, exchanging insights and ideas within a communal network. He realized that working in companies is isolated and hierarchical, while coworking aims to create a non-competitive environment and give people the opportunity to work on their own projects. In this way, the concept of “coworking” initially meant the process of collaborative work rather than dedicated office spaces that are associated with the term nowadays. This early concept laid the foundation for the evolution of coworking, highlighting the important role

of community and knowledge sharing in the workplace (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013).

In 2002 in Vienna was opened a community center for entrepreneurs, named Schraubenfabrik. The center later was expanded, repurposing the spaces of old factories and becoming the first local network of coworking spaces in Austria. The goal of the project was to create a collaborative environment where entrepreneurs could come after working independently and cooperate. Schraubenfabrik quickly became a community hub where like-minded professionals could brainstorm and create together. It was a popular space for freelancers and startups from different fields, which facilitated networking and collaboration. Moreover, this approach has become an example of the core principles of coworking, such as community centeredness, knowledge sharing and mutual support among various professionals (Helio, n.d.).

In 2005 the official first coworking space was opened in San Francisco by the programmer Brad Neuberg, who considered working at home offices unproductive and business centers are unsocial. The space offered five to eight desks 2 days a week, free Wi-Fi, shared lunches, meditation breaks and massages, bike tours, and a strict closing time of 17:45.

That same year, the first coworking space called Hub opened in London. Since then, the Hub franchise network has opened more than 40 coworking spaces on five continents, making it the largest coworking network to date. In Germany, St. Oberholz company opened one of the first free internet cafés in Berlin, where people could work on their laptops as guests. Nowadays, St. Oberholz remains a meetup point for startups in Berlin and offers a real coworking space above the coffee shop. Thus, in Germany, the new form of work gained popularity and the coworking movement was born (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013).

In 2006 the San Francisco Coworking Space, initially launched by Brad Neuberg, was rebranded as the Hat Factory and transformed into a full-time space that was called a “coworking space”. The Hat Factory became a live-work loft and set a new standard for coworking spaces where technology and individuals of creative professions could collaborate in a shared environment. The same year, started the first Jelly events, free informal gatherings where a small group of freelancers, home-based workers, and small business owners come together to collaborate and meet new people within a social environment. Jelly gained popularity in New York City and attracted

media attention around the world, inspiring others to form Jelly groups in their cities. Thus, a year after, Jelly groups continued to grow in cities of USA, leading to development of communities and permanent coworking spaces (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013).

In 2007 the word “coworking” first appeared on Google and the number of searches increased significantly. In addition, the term “coworking” became established and entered the English version of Wikipedia. The concept of coworking became a part of mainstream media in the USA. However, the term was limited to the United States only until about 2009–2010. By the end of 2008, there were about 160 coworking spaces in the world and their number continued to grow. Then, was born the Coworking Visa, an agreement between many coworking spaces allowing members of other spaces to visit them for free. Cubes & Crayons has opened its first coworking space alongside facilities for children with the age ranging from a few months old to preschoolers (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013).

In 2009 the first book about coworking, the people and places that started the American workplace revolution, was published. The book was called «I’m Outta Here! How coworking is making the office obsolete» (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013). In the same year, in Germany was opened the biggest coworking space in Europe up to that point and named Betahaus. Germany became a leader in coworking development in Europe. A year later, the first coworking conference took place in Brussels and WeWork was founded, which later became the world’s leading provider of coworking spaces, including physical and virtual shared spaces (Helio, n.d.).

In 2011 big companies began to experiment with their own coworking spaces, specializing in corporate coworking. By 2013, there were nine coworking networks operating in more than five locations, such as The Hub, NextSpace in the US or Urban Station in Latin America. However, most coworking spaces were independent and had only one or two locations. To create more value for their members, some of them are organized in associations (Foertsch & Cagnol, 2013).

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In 2015, the “workcation” trend began to develop for digital nomads who could work from their laptops anywhere in the world. Moreover, The New York Times wrote the article “Co-Working on

Vacation: A Desk in Paradise” about a new idea of combining coworking with traveling and co-living. The article was dedicated to the Canary Islands, where the surf office originated and subsequently gained popularity. This year also saw the emergence of the “workcation” trend, where people or so-called digital nomads began to work from anywhere in the world (Helio, n.d.).

In 2016, large companies such as HSBC and Microsoft began renting coworking spaces for their employees or allowing them to work in coworking spaces, and the trend continued to grow. Moreover, the combination of co-living and coworking continued to evolve. Thus, WeWork launched co-living in New York with furnished micro-apartments with one or two bedrooms. Each co-living unit also had a community manager who handled practical issues or planned events. By 2017, WeWork became one of the most valuable tech companies in the US, alongside Uber and AirBnB (Helio, n.d.).

In 2019, WeWork went bankrupt after a failed initial public offering (IPO), leading to a change of its management. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the industry, however, in 2020 the coworking industry recovered, witnessed growth and expansion. The number of coworking spaces increased globally by 28.3%, moreover, the diversity and spread of these spaces across continents and countries enlarged.

Expansion was particularly noticeable in Europe, Asia and North America, with the US, India and the UK leading the way in opening new coworking spaces. This trend not only highlighted the recovery of the industry from the pandemic’s impact but also showed a broader change in the global workforce shifted towards more flexible working environment. The coworking industry’s resilience and adaptability has marked a fundamental shift in the way people and organizations approach workspaces, highlighting the growing importance of flexibility, community, and a sustainable work environment in the post-pandemic era (Helio, n.d.).

In 2023, the coworking sector continued to develop, and its evolution was influenced by the WeWork’s bankruptcy which led to positive changes in the industry. The closure of WeWork locations gave opportunities for smaller and more flexible coworking spaces to fill the void and offer more diverse and specialized services to meet the specific needs of the various communities. This shift marked not only a spatial rethinking, but also an evolution of the coworking concept itself, with an emphasis on niche and hyper-localized offerings. Moreover, 2023 witnessed a trend for lifestyle-integrated coworking environments, the introduction of digital technology, and the increasing popularity of co-living spaces. This trend represents an increasing demand on hybrid working models and more flexible work arrangements. Nowadays, the coworking market continues to develop and plays a significant role in the future of work (Helio, n.d.).

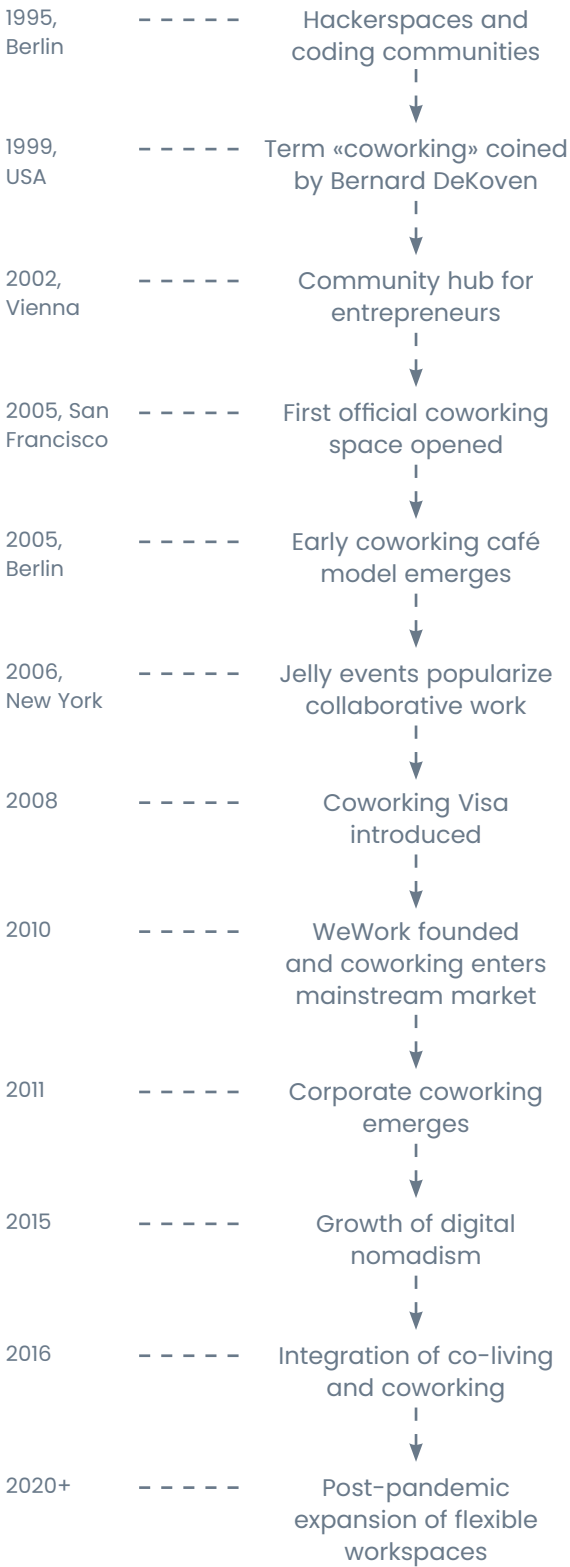


Figure 40: Key milestones in the evolution of coworking spaces.

3.8. Coworking as a third place

According to Johnson (2025), coworking, being technically a workspace, goes far beyond this term, functioning as a third place, where individuals and communities have a chance to connect, learn and share their knowledges and skills.

In sociology, a person's «first place» is called home and the people with whom the person lives. The «second place» is the workplace, where people may spend most of their time. Third places are called specific environments that are not home neither work. The term of a «third place» was introduced by the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his 1989 book *The Great Good Place*. The notion referred to a free space suitable for informal social interactions, for example, coffee houses, libraries or beauty salons. The concept of the «third place» has unexpectedly become widely popular over time and has quickly entered the common lexicon (Oldenburg & Christensen, 2023).

In other words, the third place is where an individual can relax in public, encounter familiar persons and make new acquaintances. Third places promote and facilitate broader, more creative interaction between people from different backgrounds and encourage a sense of warmth, conviviality, and the special kind

of human sustenance called community. Membership in a third place contributes to a sense of belonging in a community. Thus, after the Ray Oldenburg's book people started to search ways to promote social cohesion by designing physical spaces that foster a sense of community, since online meetings could not replace face-to-face interaction during COVID-19 lockdowns (Oldenburg & Christensen, 2023).

However, not all the public spaces, such as street markets or pedestrian shopping streets, have a potential to become a third place. The third place is usually a bar of some kind where the main activity is conversation. Usually, beverages tend to play such an important role that they become true social sacraments. Indeed, most third places in the world derived their identity from the drinks they served (UNESCO Courier, 2023). In coworking spaces beverages also play a significant role, especially in coworking cafes.

Coworking spaces, especially those specifically designed for this purpose, have the potential to become third places in this new era of working. Third places, according to Ray Oldenburg, have a number of common features, for instance, such places are a neutral ground, where anyone can enter without an invitation and leave without obligation. Third places are unstructured and open to all interested individuals, regardless of social status. Moreover, such places do not have high prices and they are focused on conversation, not transactions. Conversation is the main activity there, which performed through informal interactions between members. Another feature of third places is that they are accessible, ideally, near the home or work place, and comfortable to stay in. Moreover, a third place has regulars that keep coming back, but strangers are welcomed as well. The atmosphere of this type of spaces is informal and relaxed, where visitors can chat and joke (Oldenburg & Christensen, 2023).

Third spaces have been existing throughout the whole human history. For example, in England during the 17th century coffee houses played a role of a third place for individuals. Coffee houses gained popularity because of their democratic atmosphere and prices, such places became the preferred location for political debate. Thus, according to Oldenburg and Christensen (2023), at that time, coffee houses became places of free speech with a certain level of equality and could be considered harbingers of democracy. Moreover, it was a place to read newspapers, a center of cultural life and business, and a forum for human association and community that is both practical and deeply satisfying (Oldenburg & Christensen, 2023).

Nowadays, however third places became very rare, there is still a need for such environments. The growth of coffee house chains in the early 1990s was partly based on the idea of a friendly and vibrant third-place experience. However, the pandemic and the development of mobile technologies have radically changed the business model. About 80 percent of chain coffee shops now offer takeout and mobile ordering.

The idea to turn a mobile app into a virtual third place was met with considerable skepticism. This trend has opened up new opportunities for other companies with the potential to become third places, as factors that contribute to the thriving of a third place can be identified, such as atmosphere, location, and views (Oldenburg & Christensen, 2023).

A nowadays smart cities provide smart workplaces that contribute to increased productivity and the development of community and social values. Thus, office workers often prefer to stay in public spaces, such as cafés, to continue their office work. This reflects the shift of office functions, traditionally associated with “second places”, into cafés or public spaces, which now also serve as “third places” for socializing. This trend is currently growing as more people choose to work in urban public spaces rather than in their official workplaces. Thus, a public space can be considered a “third place” depending on how individuals perceive and use it. A third place can be seen as a cluster of possibilities where various activities and functions overlap and complement each other (Firdaus & Fuad, 2021).

The shifting roles of spaces between “second places” and “third places” create a blend of features drawn from home (first place), the workplace (second place), and social spaces (third place). Coworking spaces and creative offices exemplify this mix, as they support not only work but also opportunities for socializing and relaxation. In addition, coworking spaces embody aspects of a smart city by fostering interaction between people and the economy. They can reduce office rental costs while helping

workers to focus on innovation, mobility, and other professional needs. In this context, multiple functions overlap through a series of “nested affordances,” where one function is embedded within another. These affordances can be observed in the physical layout, spatial and social boundaries, behaviors, and interaction possibilities within the space (Firdaus & Fuad, 2021).

According to Firdaus and Fuad (2021), spatial configuration strongly influences worker behavior. As stated by the US Gensler Workplace Survey (2008), this behavior can be understood through four modes of work: Focus, Collaborate, Socialize, and Learn. These modes are shaped by physical elements and partitions, such as walls, screens, or objects, that provide various levels of privacy for individuals and groups (Firdaus & Fuad, 2021).

Coworking spaces embody this complexity, functioning simultaneously as workplaces and social spaces while also reflecting the qualities of a smart city. They address diverse needs such as working, socializing, and resting. Importantly, the functions of a space are not fixed, a place may contain multiple overlapping or “nested” affordances. For example, a coworking space can serve both as a “second place” (work) and a “third place” (social interaction), depending on use. Understanding this variability helps to generate new concepts to design future workplaces that more effectively meet diverse activities and needs (Firdaus & Fuad, 2021).

Third places are multifunctional spaces that appeal to flexible individuals, whether they want to finish a project or relax. Such spaces do not compete for a single defined function but instead for their attractiveness. For example, some well-known Internet startups have transformed large campus-style headquarters into environments that resemble playgrounds. In these settings, work blends closely with lifestyle. The third places that are most in demand among flexible workers are hybrids between offices and coffee bars. While offices today tend to be designed like bars with high-top tables and designer chairs, more and more bars are beginning to resemble offices, offering large communal tables and power outlets near seating areas. Coworking spaces are a particularly popular concept that meets the needs of urban nomads seeking such multifunctional environments. With their hybrid appearance and functions, coworking spaces provide an alternative work environment that is both casual and formal, enabling visitors to create high-quality work in an evolving setting with access to broad professional networks. Some coworking chains, such as The Hub, NextSpace, and Urban Station, have expanded into various cities, while others, such as Betahaus in Berlin, focus on serving the needs of their specific communities. These spaces minimize costs for workers and bring together individuals from diverse professions to work at the same desk (Beekmans & de Boer, 2014, pp. 64–65).

When it comes to visitors, according to Swinburne University of Technology (2023), around half of remote workers spend time of their workday each week in cafes or other third places. Working from cafés and other alternative locations has long been common

among freelancers. However, with the rise of hybrid work models, using third places as work environments has become an increasingly popular and normalized practice. This trend is particularly popular among Generation Z workers, 10 percent of whom claim that third places their preferred places to work (Swinburne University of Technology, 2023).

The research conducted by Swinburne University of Technology (2023) demonstrates that cafés are the preferred option among other types of third places. However, participants mentioned they sometimes also work in other third locations, for example, libraries, pubs, parks and coworking spaces. On average, the researchers stated that people working in third places typically do so 2–3 times a week. They stay in third locations between 15 minutes and 4 hours and spend between \$4 and \$30 each visit. Most of the time people visit third place on their own, but when they go to a third location for small meetings, the size of the group does not often exceed 2 or 3 people (Swinburne University of Technology, 2023).

The most common work tasks performed outside the home and office include deep individual, creative or thinking work, reading, paperwork, administrative tasks, email, informal phone calls, and small meetings. During the research conducted by Swinburne University of Technology (2023) were identified 4 types of third place users.

Thus, ‘Device Disconnectors’ are those who choose to stay in third places to take a short break from technologies. Another type, ‘Caffeine Creatives’, tend to change locations for a psychological recharge, inspiration, and a new dose of creativity. ‘Suburban Socialites’ alleviate the sense of isolation that often accompanies remote work by making short, regular visits to nearby third places. Finally, “Lunchtime Liaisons” use third places as meeting points with clients or colleagues, often combining professional meetings with lunch or breakfast (Swinburne University of Technology, 2023).

When it comes to factors that attract workers to a third location, it might be good beverages, especially coffee, affordable prices, privacy, nice music, or outdoor space. However, according to Swinburne University of Technology (2023), feeling welcome, Wi-Fi, power sockets and reviews were the most popular factors. In this way, the majority of remote workers and freelancers seek for a pleasant, friendly environment, where there are no crowds or noise, and where employees do not force visitors to leave after a certain time. In general, third places that have a potential to attract these types of workers might have a friendly welcoming staff, dedicated working space, free Wi-Fi, and special offers, for instance, two-hour package with unlimited drinks and a sandwich (Swinburne University of Technology, 2023).

In terms of food, the research conducted by Swinburne University of Technology (2023) highlights that in third places workers prefer to eat snacks and light meals. Moreover, more than half of individuals who regularly visit third places claim to buy only items they can eat with one

hand. Cookies, muffins, pastries and sandwiches are the most popular choice.

According to the research, the main advantages of working from third places include the opportunity for a mental refresh, stronger social and community connections, and quality food and coffee. Participants reported that working in such environments had a highly positive impact on their overall wellbeing, with an average rating of 86%. Furthermore, 98% of respondents indicated they were likely to continue using third places for work in the future. However, the study also revealed that these spaces are not ideal for every task, particularly those involving confidential information, large or longer meetings, or activities requiring larger screens and specialized equipment (Swinburne University of Technology, 2023).



Figure 41: Community centre and coworking space by Spaced Agency, New York, USA.
Note. From Spaced Agency references «iconographies of Chinatown» for New York social hub, by E. Eberhardt (2025).
<https://www.dezeen.com/2025/08/14/spaced-agency-welcome-to-china-hub/>

4. Coworking Spaces in Milan: Case Studies and Spatial Analysis

4.1. Research methodology and scope

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4.6. Overview of the coworking spaces in Milan

4.1. Research methodology and scope

In order to support the research and offer an analysis into the field, various types of coworking spaces were visited in two European cities that are quite popular among digital nomads: Milan and Zurich. The general description of both Milan and Zurich shows that these cities are also among the preferred choices of Nomads.com members. In order to visualize the actual usage of coworking spaces, the environments were observed during working days, together with their visitors and members, focusing on their modes of working, collaboration, and cooperation with each other. Thus, the author's observations explored both the physical environment and interior organization of the spaces and the ways users interacted with them. At the end of the study, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify divergent or convergent features between the two cities.

The first part of the research investigates contemporary coworking spaces in Milan in order to understand how hybrid work models are organized, both spatially and socially. Milan was chosen as the city for the study due to its role as an international economic and design hub, with a particularly strong presence of creative and knowledge-intensive industries. In addition, thanks to the high level of tourism and frequent business meetings, Milan has a well-developed

coworking ecosystem.

The study is based on a research methodology combining direct observation, photography, informal interviews with staff, workers, and members of coworking spaces, as well as secondary data analysis, including reviews and official websites. Four coworking spaces of different typologies were selected by the author to understand the diversity of coworking environments present in the city. These included spaces oriented towards corporate nomads, working travelers, creative professionals, freelancers, students, and hybrid users.

Data collection was conducted through site visits to coworking spaces, during which the author spent at least half a working day in each location, observing and documenting the spatial layout, taking into account interior design features and usage trends. Informal conversations with staff members provided insights into user types, spatial zoning, day-to-day operations and activities carried out on site, as well as policies and membership structures. In addition, online visitor reviews and publicly available information were analyzed to complement the observational findings and to understand user satisfaction and opinions.

The analysis focused on several main elements, such as the spatial organization and interior design of spaces, furniture choice, zoning, flexibility of workspaces in general, availability of shared and private areas, professional amenities, relaxing home-like spaces, and the ways people interact within each coworking area. While the study does not aim to obtain a statistically representative sample, it offers an in-depth qualitative understanding of how coworking spaces in Milan support hybrid work arrangements. Specifically, it aims to identify the preferences and expectations of working nomads by observing how they select, use, and interact with coworking spaces.

The research shows what attracts users to specific workspaces, which spatial characteristics and amenities are most valued, and how people organize their workspaces throughout the day. It also explores users' behavior, their social interaction, collaboration, and solitude, as well as the balance between focused work and informal interaction. Based on these observations, the study emphasizes the importance of interior design, spatial flexibility, and atmosphere in organizing a productive and comfortable work environment for hybrid and mobile workers.

4.2. Talent Garden Milano Calabiana, via Arcivescovo Calabiana 6

General information: Talent Garden is one of the largest coworking hubs in Europe, focused on tech, digital innovation, and creative industries. The space, covering 7,500 m², is designed to generate new ideas, projects, and connections. It is equipped with all the necessary amenities of a professional office; however, it also offers features of a community-focused coworking hub by providing various events and courses for learning and networking. It is a community-oriented space, as its aim is to encourage learning, promote experimentation, and engage its members (Talent Garden, n.d.). Talent Garden welcomes different types of users, such as freelancers, startup members, and representatives of large companies and corporations. Furthermore, it provides event spaces and outdoor environments, including a garden and a terrace. Every week, the space hosts events and workshops to bring the community together.

Location: The address of the space is Via Arcivescovo Calabiana, 6, 20139 Milan, Italy. The space is situated in the southeastern periphery of Milan, approximately 5 kilometers from the historic city center. The area is a mix of residential and post-industrial architecture, where urban redevelopment is taking place,

making the location an alternative to traditional central business areas. It is well connected by public transport, including a metro line. The campus, one of the largest in Europe, is five stops from the Duomo and located behind the Fondazione Prada; the nearest metro station is about a 10-minute walk from the coworking space. Therefore, it represents an alternative to the historic and consistently busy city center, being in a well-connected yet slightly remote area that is quieter and calmer.

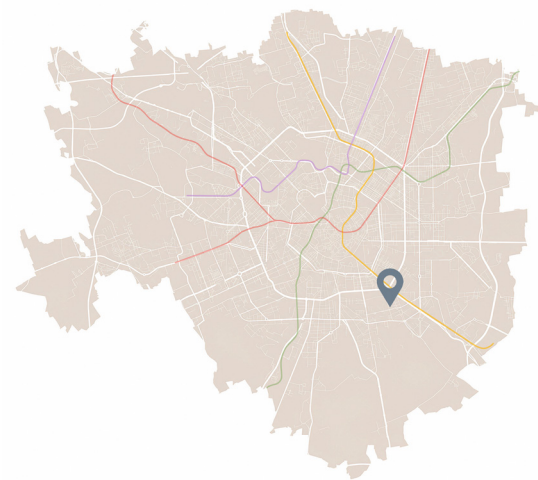


Figure 42: Geographical position of the Talent Garden Milano Calabiana coworking space.



Figure 43: Interior photos of Talent Garden Milano Calabiana coworking space: open coworking area (top) and enclosed team offices (bottom). Note. Photos taken by the author.

Type of coworking space: Talent Garden can be classified as a hybrid coworking space, combining several coworking typologies rather than fitting into a single category. Firstly, it has features of professional coworking, since the coworking space provides all the office equipment, meeting rooms, and office services comparable to a conventional professional office. Moreover, it hosts employees of large companies and startups that rent working rooms on a long-term basis. In addition, the space provides training courses and educational programs.

However, at the same time, it incorporates the characteristics of community-focused coworking spaces, as it promotes networking, collaboration, and community building among its members, provides various workshops and social events, and offers shared spaces, informal areas, and outdoor environments that encourage informal interaction among users.

Design and concept: Located within a former industrial building, the space can accommodate up to 400 professionals and features three event spaces with a total capacity of over 1,000 people, as well as a rooftop terrace with outdoor activities, a swimming pool, the TAG Café, and an aperitif area. It is oriented towards creative work and idea manufacturing and aims to foster entrepreneurial interaction and growth. The goal of Talent Garden is to become a place to experiment with new ways of working.

TAG Milano Calabiana is located in the historic printing house. Subsequently renovated by Italian entrepreneur Marina Salamon, it was initially used as a showroom. The architectural project,

which aimed to reimagine the workspace at the intersection of digital production and cross-disciplinary contamination, was designed and implemented by the Carlo Ratti Associati studio, under the direction of Professor Carlo Ratti. The campus was designed to facilitate the meeting and growth of businesses and individuals. It is directed not only towards software but also towards hardware, as TAG aims to become a meeting place between manufacturing and digital innovation through its concept of a large fablab, where people can produce and develop their own ideas. A fablab is a place where ideas can be developed in all their phases, thanks to strategic partnerships with key players in the technology and creative sectors. The space includes a café, a lounge area, brainstorming spaces, and a cinema corner, stimulating creativity and the desire for innovation among professionals. The space is open 24/7 and is connected in real time with the other nine Italian TAG campuses (Bergamo, Brescia, Cosenza, Padua, Genoa, Pisa, Turin, Pordenone, and Rome), as well as those in Barcelona, Tirana, and Kaunas (Lithuania).



Figure 44: Exterior photo of Talent Garden Milano Calabiana coworking space: outdoor patio dining and entertaining zone.

Note. Photo taken by the author.

Talent Garden aims to offer an open-space and open-minded environment where talents can be stimulated, grow, share ideas, and change the world. The interior design by the Carlo Ratti Associati studio also contributes to this objective, with a modern, open, energetic, and dynamic atmosphere. The chosen material, fir wood, an evergreen tree, represents the power of life and the connection between different forces, mirroring the philosophy of Talent Garden and reinforcing this concept. All furnishing elements, such as offices, tables, and reception desks, are custom-made by Bruno Spreafico, adapting to the unique characteristics of the space and, by extension, to open-space environments.

The significant presence of wood creates a contemporary industrial atmosphere, and the finishes, which vary from room to room, enhance this valuable and vital material in constantly new forms. Each piece is unique and provides continuous inspiration for the talents who inhabit the space, while conveying the energy of a living material (Bruno Spreafico, n.d.). The exposed, or “true,” ceiling, with its visible structural elements and service pipes, adds a modern industrial character to the space.

The visible infrastructure highlights the adaptive reuse of the building while accommodating contemporary coworking activities.

Overall layout: The overall layout of the space appears open, with working, community, and relaxation areas mixed throughout. In general, the coworking space can be divided into three types of functional zones: areas for work or events, areas for relaxation, and areas for eating and informal activities. Some zones can be used

for multiple functions; for example, the terrace can be booked for events, but during the day members can go there with a meal and have lunch.

Zoning: On the first floor near the entrance, there are a café and a bistro, and further inside there is an area for solo and group workers in the middle of the large hall. This coworking zone is highlighted with a green carpet and has seven large wooden tables with comfortable office chairs. This is a zone for working in groups, collaborating, and meeting among various professionals. Following the perimeter of this large hall, there are room-like boxes with glass walls and wooden frames that are rented to member organizations. There, workers can decorate their spaces according to their own taste; thus, each room becomes a kind of small office space for the organization’s team. However, the space does not provide full autonomy and privacy, since the rooms have transparent walls and it is possible to walk through the rows of boxes and see what is happening inside each of them. Nevertheless, member companies are free to decorate the entrance doors to their offices and display their logos, names, and websites. In addition, to highlight informal areas such as the bistro or relaxation zones, red was used, while areas dedicated to work mainly use calm colors such as grey, green, and beige wood.

Amenities: The space provides all the necessary amenities for office work, including unlimited Wi-Fi and even car parking. Moreover, when accessing the Wi-Fi, it is possible to see all the amenities and navigate within the space to orient oneself, since the space is large.

Kitchen/bar areas: The coworking space provides two areas where members can have a meal. The café and bistro area, where members can order food or drinks, is located near the reception area. It is a large space with many tables and chairs and continues outdoors as a terrace with large umbrellas, greenery, a lawn, and outdoor tables and chairs. The community kitchen is located downstairs and does not have many amenities; however, workers can use a microwave to warm up food. The kitchen also has a large number of tables and chairs.

Meeting rooms: There are several meeting rooms available to members with long-term memberships. Otherwise, people can contact the community manager of the space to rent a specific room for their needs.

Lighting: The space in general is well lit. Especially the working areas have strong office lighting, and the building itself has large windows, so during the day natural sunlight also enters. The downstairs areas have smaller windows; therefore, the light is dimmer. To compensate for this, stronger lamps were used.

Acoustics: During the visit, the main coworking hall was full of people, as were almost all of the box mini offices. Thus, the environment was quite noisy, since some people were chatting with each other, while others were talking on the phone.

Atmosphere and users’ interaction: In general, the atmosphere is calm and friendly; however, it is clear that members are engaged in serious work tasks and remain highly concentrated. During working hours, the members were busy

with their work tasks, while during lunchtime the majority of workers went to eat and socialize, sitting on the terrace, chatting, or playing outdoor games such as ping pong.

Presence of events or community activities: The campus also houses the TAG Innovation School, founded by Talent Garden, which provides members with educational courses and training in various fields such as Design, Marketing, Artificial Intelligence, Business and Innovation, Tech and Data, and HR and People Management, preparing students for professions of the future. In addition, it hosts events and workshops designed to promote knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, and interaction across different sectors and professional levels.

Users and their behavior: Like its other branches, Talent Garden Calabiana is focused on digital innovation and is open to the entire ecosystem of innovators, from freelancers and startups to investors, companies, journalists, visionaries, makers, and other creators. Many members were working in teams, even in the central coworking area. Even when individuals share a table with other solo workers, communication emerges and small talk can occur. During lunchtime, a lot of informal communication among members was observed, as there are many recreational amenities such as table hockey and ping pong, which stimulate interaction between individuals. During lunch breaks, almost all workers went to the terrace to spend time outdoors, which further encouraged communication and a sense of a united community.

Special socializing areas: There are many socializing areas across all levels of the facility, including game areas for breaks, small indoor relaxation zones with armchairs, and spacious outdoor areas such as the terrace, the courtyard near the bistro, and the pool.

Policies and accessibility: The coworking space is quite easy to access. The reception welcomes new visitors from Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 18:00. The Talent Garden coworking provides several membership options, including one-day access during reception hours, which can be an advantageous option for working nomads if they come to spend just a couple of days in the city. The remaining three options may be more suitable for corporate nomads, as they provide access to meeting rooms, a private desk, or a desk in a private office.

Thus, long-term options include TAG Flex (from 40 hours per month), TAG Full (unlimited access), and TAG Office (unlimited access), and they provide 24-hour access to a selected campus, free use of phone booths and available meeting rooms, team hospitality to assist in managing guests, mail, and corporate packages, access to all community-exclusive events, and access to other campuses in Europe during reception hours. Moreover, the TAG Office membership offers from 4 to 35 workstations, a dedicated community manager for building opportunities and connections, and access to exclusive and customizable events and workshops. This membership can be a suitable option for startups and entrepreneurs. Another useful feature is that when users connect to the coworking Wi-Fi, it is possible to see all the available amenities, such as the community kitchen, car parking, mail and

package handling, printing and scanning, and others. Once the membership is activated, users receive a plastic card that allows access to the coworking zones.

Personal impression: The space gives the impression of a serious coworking environment where motivated people get their work done, unlike a coworking café where people tend to carry out freelance tasks in a more relaxed mode. Here, the space and atmosphere motivate people to work, follow schedules, and stay organized, as during the lunch break almost everyone stopped working for an hour and went to eat. Moreover, the design uses many natural materials such as wood; the green carpet simulates the lawn of the terraces, and numerous potted plants give visitors a feeling of being in a garden, which is quite pleasant. The space is very bright, and there are many different hidden zones that are interesting to discover, as the facility is very large.

Suitability for nomadic workers: The Talent Garden coworking space appears suitable for nomadic workers, especially corporate nomads. As there are many teams from various companies, it gives the impression of being in a real office among other serious professionals.

Strengths and weaknesses: Some users mentioned limited food choices at the bar, such as a lack of vegetarian options. Others criticized the limited number of bathrooms for a venue with such a spacious hall used for events with a large number of people. Some users pointed out drawbacks related to the location, stating that the area is not sufficiently developed. In addition, a lack of privacy was mentioned, as well as the issue that the space can sometimes become crowded, noisy, and chaotic.

However, the majority of users enjoyed the place, noting that it is a suitable location for meeting people, growing a startup, or holding meetings with colleagues and business partners. The wide range of events, collaborative marketing opportunities, and inviting multi-work atmosphere for people under 30 were also highlighted, although some noted that the space might be too noisy for certain types of work. Additionally, users highly appreciated that the venue is suitable for various meetings, workshops, events, and courses, and that it is an inspiring place for projects and ideas.

4.3. oTTo, via Paolo Sarpi 8

General information: oTTo is a coworking café located in Milan's Chinatown district, where the line between coworking and cafeteria becomes very thin. The space is open to everyone, whether someone comes for brunch or brings a laptop to work. During the day, it functions as a coworking space with a break for lunch, welcoming freelancers with their laptops. However, during the aperitif, the place functions as a bar, and laptops are replaced by cocktails.

Location: The address is Via Paolo Sarpi 8, 20154 Milan, Italy. It is located in the Chinatown district, a vibrant area with various shops, cafés, and restaurants, making it an attractive location for both work and leisure.

Type of coworking space: It can be classified as a typical coworking café; however, it also has some features of a community-focused coworking space, as it has introduced summer camp activities.

Design and concept: Otto aims to be a welcoming, pleasant, and comfortable place where people can come with their laptops to do some work or meet for a drink, afternoon tea, or a business lunch. Iris Roth and Roberto Marone oversaw the interior design project, drawing inspiration from various travels, including Berlin, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London. They decided to combine new furniture, custom-made by Piedmontese craftsmen, including

tables with iron frames and light wood tops, geometric shelves, and a large concrete counter with a plywood top, with vintage furniture from all over the world, particularly from California, to give the place a modern, cosmopolitan, calm, and welcoming mood. Thus, they created a place where good, simple food, a passion for interiors, conversation, and art blend harmoniously. The space, designed for coworking as well as for screenings, business meetings, exhibitions, and more, can be separated from the rest of the venue with a large movable partition if necessary. The outdoor area is furnished with white tables and chairs, and large Mediterranean plants, creating a southern coastal atmosphere. There are also typical beer hall tables and benches. In addition, special attention was paid to the interior greenery: a large vertical wall of plants, handmade hemp macramé, and a large palm tree create a dramatic visual impact.

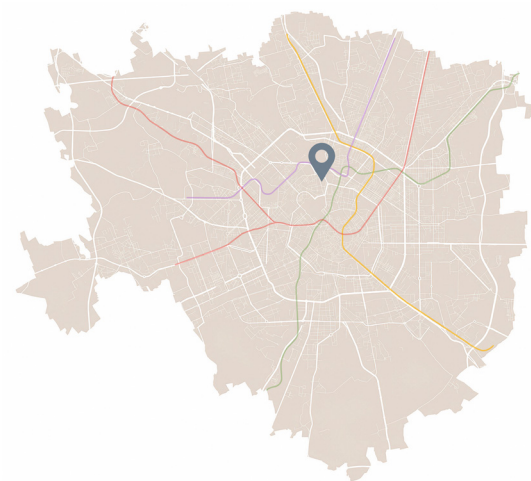


Figure 45: Geographical position of the oTTo coworking space.



Figure 46: Interior photo of oTTo coworking space: shared coworking and dining area. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Among the interior design project’s most distinctive details is one of the glass windows, designed as a showcase for art exhibitions. There’s also a cork-covered wall to the left of the main entrance for pinning any type of message or announcement. Even the bathrooms have a simple design: a large iron sink with exposed water pipes. Customers can leave messages on the white walls (Interni Magazine, 2015).

Overall layout: It is a small café-like space hidden in one of the streets of the Chinatown district, with a small outdoor area featuring lots of greenery, several small tables for 1–2 people, and some larger tables for groups of 4–6. There are also benches and hanging chairs. The indoor area is slightly bigger, offering more comfortable seating, such as armchairs and larger tables. At the entrance, there is a bar where workers can buy drinks and food or pay for a day or half-day in the coworking space. Inside, near the glass wall, there are also high bar tables with bar stools.

Zoning: The space is not divided into specific zones; users are free to choose where to sit. There are two relaxation areas with armchairs, swings, and sofas outside, high seats in front of the windows for those who want to work on a laptop, larger tables for groups of friends, and a high table (Interni Magazine, 2015). However, the outdoor area is more suitable for groups, people who come just to eat or drink coffee, or workers who only need to complete light tasks. It is a bit noisier, as it is outside—street noise and conversations can be distracting for workers. The indoor area is calmer, with only the sounds of the bar and low background music. Therefore, the indoor space is more suitable for

concentrated work.

Amenities: The space offers power outlets and free Wi-Fi, the internet is quite fast.

Kitchen/bar areas: The bar is near the entrance, and closer to the entrance door there is a hidden kitchen. The bar is in a separate space, like another room, leaving the hall as a large open area with tables for workers, thus separating it from the noise of the bar.

Meeting rooms: There are no specialized spaces for meetings. Therefore, if users need to hold an important meeting or a private video call, this location may not be the best choice. The overall noise level, coming from the bar, background music, and conversations, can make it less suitable for meetings or group work that requires high concentration.

Lighting: The space is bright, with both indoor and outdoor areas equipped with sufficient lamps, making it suitable not only for working on a laptop but also for reading and writing notes.

Acoustics: The place is generally calm and not noisy, as most visitors come to work. Just before the lunch break, it becomes slightly louder due to the kitchen staff preparing food. The indoor area has background music, but it is not disturbing. The outdoor area, however, can be noisier because of street sounds. Moreover, the location in the Chinatown district is usually crowded, as it is a popular spot for young people in Milan. The numerous nearby bars and shops also create background noise.



Figure 47: Interior and exterior photos of oTTo coworking space: shared coworking area (top) and outdoor coworking and social areas (bottom).
Note. Photos taken by the author.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: The general vibe of the place is informal and relaxed. According to Foresti (2022), Otto is a simple and authentic space, decorated with vintage pieces and green walls. The idea behind the project, which dates to 2015, was straightforward: to bring people together in a beautiful, genuine space that could serve several functions, such as coworking, projections, business meetings, exhibitions, and more. Over the years, these needs have simply evolved. Workers here tend to feel relaxed and focused. They work mostly in silence and do not interact with other coworkers, only with staff to ask questions or order drinks. Of the 15 observed individuals, only 4 worked in groups and interacted with each other, but these people had arrived together. Most users are highly focused on their own tasks and do not engage with other visitors in the space.

Presence of events or community activities: This space does not create a strong sense of community, but rather resembles a cafe where people come to have coffee and work. However, the oTTo project has evolved over time, expanding with oTTo cose, a store selling home objects and accessories. In addition, the summer version of oTTo, oTTo a mare, was launched in Stromboli (Foresti, 2022). oTTo has also created an online guide for those spending their holidays on the island. The summer location is open from June to September (oTTo, n.d.). The Aeolian Island hosts a cycle of nine workshops, ranging from photography to new media, design, and performance. The workshops take place from June to July at the oTTo a mare (Foresti, 2022). Each week there is a thematic master class led by professional instructors, combining various types of activities and experimental moments.

In some weeks, several workshops with related themes, such as directing and photography, run simultaneously. The isolated setting allows participants to immerse themselves in their passions without distractions, surrounded by new people and beautiful natural (Foresti, 2022).

Users and their behavior: The space is mainly visited by freelancers and students, with a wide age range. In addition to young people aged 20–30, there are also more senior freelancers around 40–50 years old. Almost all users work individually with laptops (10 out of 15 people), while one person was studying notes. The members include both Italians and foreigners. Most users work solo, with only two groups of two people observed. For larger companies, this space may not be ideal, as its small size means that discussions could disturb individual workers. Moreover, there are no private rooms.

Special socializing areas: There is no special areas designed specifically for socializing, and users generally look highly focused on their work. However, the staff is friendly and speaks English.

Policies and accessibility: oTTo does not provide any long-term membership options, it operates on a pay-as-you-go basis, with half-day (€6.50) and full-day (€11.00) passes that include unlimited coffee and water. Service is self-serve, with additional orders placed at the bar or via QR codes on each table, allowing customers to view the menu and place orders online by providing their table number. It is not possible to book a table for coworking in advance, though dining tables can be reserved, and the entire space can be booked for corporate events.

However, joining without a booking is easy, as there are many small tables. The venue is also dog-friendly. Opening hours are Monday–Wednesday 08:00–22:00 and Thursday–Friday 08:00–00:00. Coworking hours are 09:30–12:30, followed by a lunch break during which laptops must be closed, and then from 14:00–18:00. After 18:00, the venue operates as a bar. According to Foresti (2022), oTTo aims to offer a new model for smart working—hybrid, calibrated, and more structured—preventing the café from becoming a chaotic public space, as it was initially.

Personal impression: The café looks nice and comfortable for spending a day drinking coffee and doing some work. The outside area is like a small garden, where it can be very enjoyable to sit among the plants and interesting outdoor furniture. It might attract people who prefer a more informal setting over traditional coworking offices, where after working hours, it is possible to have a drink or enjoy an aperitif. The atmosphere, in general, is positive and peaceful, and the time spent there was relaxing.

Suitability for nomadic workers: From personal experience, it is possible to suggest that oTTo can be attractive for nomadic workers, as it is very easy to access and there is no need to buy a membership. Moreover, there were many people working with laptops; thus, the atmosphere can also stimulate work. The area is vibrant and easy to access, and the overall atmosphere of the place is quite enjoyable. Nevertheless, the place may not be the best choice for those nomadic workers who want to meet clients, collaborators, or do video calls, because there is no separate room for this purpose.

Strengths and weaknesses: The positive side includes the peaceful atmosphere and pleasant ambience, as mentioned by visitors in Google reviews. In addition, some participants noted the beautiful terrace, suitable for summer days, and that the space is well furnished. Even though the design is not unique, visitors enjoyed the good vibe of the place and the affordable price for coworking, with unlimited coffee and water as additional pluses. However, prices for food and drinks are slightly above average, especially for Chinatown area of Milan. Some visitors also found the space not flexible enough because of its strict limitation of coworking hours, as they were looking for a café where they could work at certain hours or on weekends, which is not possible at oTTo. Thus, the majority of negative reviews came from people not familiar with the place's policy. Another negative aspect is the absence of private rooms, as for more serious and concentrated work, the noise from the bar and other users' conversations can be distracting. Nevertheless, most visitors mentioned their positive experiences, enjoyable atmosphere, and pleasant boho design style of oTTo.

4.4. QF/QWork + QBABY, via Procaccini 11

General information: QF/QWork + QBaby is a hybrid coworking space designed for creative working parents. The space combines private offices and conference rooms (QWork) with a nursery for children aged 0–3 years (QBaby), as well as psychological counseling services and a relaxation room (QMind).

Location: The address is Via Procaccini 11, 20154 Milan, Italy. It is located in the lively Chinatown district of the city. However, being on the border of the district, it is situated in a relatively calm area. It is well connected by public transport and is easy to access. It is also quite close to a metro line, around a 10-minute walk away.

Type of coworking space: Overall, the aim of the space is to offer a mix of coworking and flexible childcare, supporting productivity while integrating parenting and community life, much like the lifestyle coworking model. The space is defined less by who works there and more by how work is integrated with daily life and well-being.

Design and concept: The space provides private offices, a coworking area, daycare, and a psychologist all in one place. It offers classic coworking services, but with one key feature: care for children. This aspect is part of the

project, forming its core; the dedicated room is a place for play, entertainment, and sleep, but above all, responsible care for the little ones. The project occupies a renovated space and features a contemporary design with large hand-finished wooden desks, minimalist private offices and conference rooms, and a playful design with vivid colors in the children's area. The layout is flexible, allowing desks to be moved to suit different team needs. The nursery school is 160 m² and designed to accommodate up to 18 children; it is open from 8:00 to 18:00 from Monday to Friday all year round, also offering daily and hourly solutions. It is suitable for children from 3 months to 3 years.

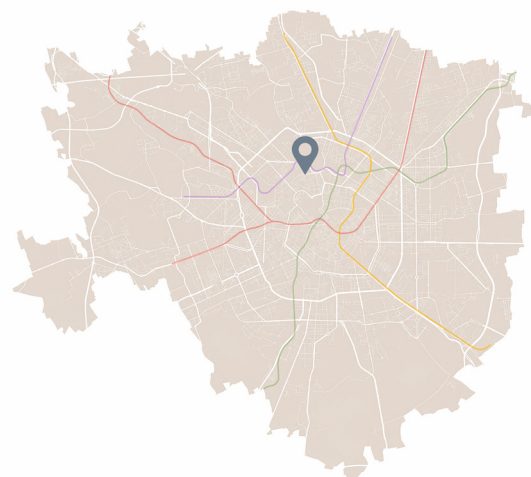


Figure 48: Geographical position of the QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space.

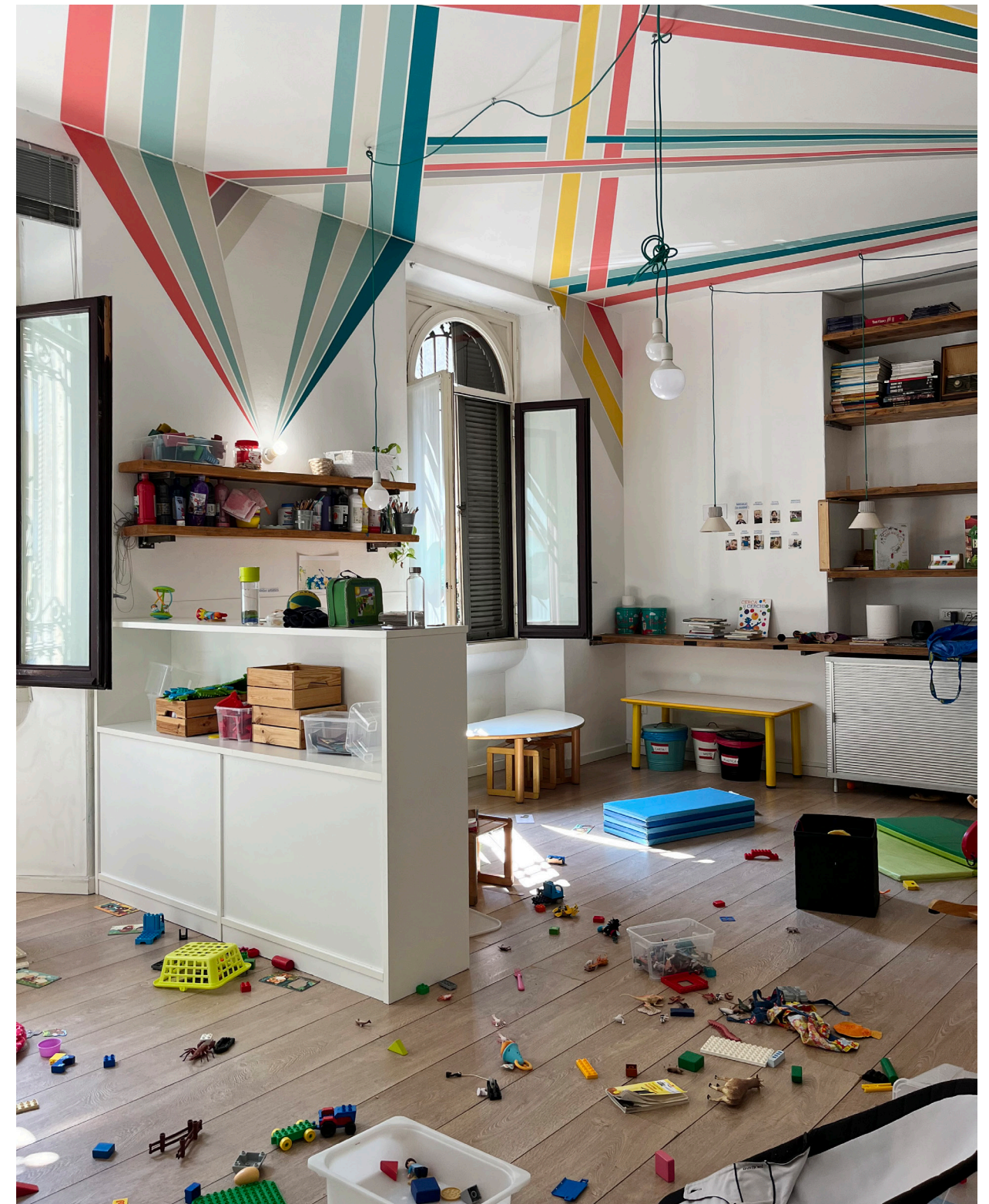


Figure 49: Interior photo of QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space: children's play area. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Overall layout: The workspace and childcare areas are physically connected but distinct, being located on different levels. There is an area entirely dedicated to children, allowing parents to work just 13 steps away from them.

Zoning: After COVID, the coworking layout was changed. Previously, the spaces were all together; now they are split between the first and second levels. Near the entrance, there is a nursery area with several rooms and a large playground, while the coworking and office rooms are located on the upper level. On the second level, there are three private rooms and one larger room used as a coworking space. Currently, there is high demand for private rooms. Meanwhile, infants are accommodated on the first level.

Amenities: The space provides professional equipment necessary for work, such as Wi-Fi, a printer, and a scanner, as well as kitchen equipment like a microwave, kettle, and coffee machine. In addition, there is a fully furnished and equipped nursery school.

Kitchen/bar areas: The space does not have a specially dedicated kitchen area for adults; however, there is basic equipment to heat food and make coffee or tea. In the nursery school area, there is a special room where children have their meals.

Meeting rooms: On the second level, there are three private rooms that can be booked for meetings and conferences. The meeting rooms are quite small, with a maximum capacity of six people. They are equipped with office desks and chairs.

Lighting: The building in which the coworking space is located has large windows; thus, on sunny days the space looks bright and well illuminated. However, there are no strong artificial lighting systems typical of office environments. Instead, the lighting is more similar to a home environment, with a single ceiling lamp in the center of each room.

Acoustics: The space is divided into two levels, with the first level used for children and the second level housing meeting rooms and the shared coworking area. As a result, users working on the second level do not hear noise that could distract them. Overall, the space was calm and quiet, as its capacity is limited and does not accommodate a large number of visitors.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: The space itself felt like a hub for a small community, where people gather also to talk and stay in company, because probably most of the users have recently become parents. Thus, it is a good opportunity to socialize and find like-minded people or persons with the same rhythm of life, goals, and problems. It really feels like a third place, where users seek company. Moreover, the majority of visitors were women, which makes communication even easier.

Presence of events or community activities: On Friday evenings, the QBaby Night service is active from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. At weekends, the space offers "Help Family" activities and workshops. It is also available for birthday parties and pajama parties. Reservations are required. There is also the QSummer Camp.



Figure 50: Interior photo of QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space: shared coworking room with home-like furnishings. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Users and their behavior: QF is for freelancers, professionals, fathers, mothers, solo workers, or people seeking social interaction – anyone who wants to get involved. While on the first floor the atmosphere is quite vivid, because parents are checking their infants and communicating with each other, the second level is calm, and each member was concentrated on their working tasks.

Special socializing areas: There is no space dedicated exclusively to socializing; however, there is a playground for kids, where parents can also stay and communicate.

Policies and accessibility: Members can rent a private office with access to shared conference rooms, common areas, and amenities, which is ideal for freelancers or micro-businesses. Various options are available for 1 to 6 people with unlimited 24/7 access. There is also a private room ideal for meetings, client conferences, or teamwork sessions. Access is available by the day or hour (1, 4, or 8 hours), with a maximum capacity of 6 people. Regarding the coworking area, a welcoming, fully equipped shared room offers flexible access from Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. A single entry costs €30, and a half-day entry costs €20. In addition, the space provides subscription tariffs. Moreover, psychological counseling is available through Spazio eBalance, a service that aims to help people find a better balance in their lives. Spazio eEquilibrio is a place where people seek to develop more suitable intervention strategies to facilitate change, growth, and personal fulfillment. The areas addressed by Spazio eEquilibrio include issues related to family, work, stress, and relationships.

Personal impression: The coworking place gives a positive impression during a personal visit. It is a bright space with a warm, welcoming atmosphere. It was also quite calm and tranquil, not chaotic, as sometimes happens in places with children.

Suitability for nomadic workers: QF coworking can be suitable for nomadic workers, as it is a good home-like alternative where people can bring their children as well. Moreover, it has a very serene and pleasant atmosphere, with friendly visitors and staff.



Figure 51: Interior photo of QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space: children's dining area.
Note. Photo taken by the author.

Strengths and weaknesses: When it comes to visitor reviews, the majority of them are very highly rated and positive. As positive aspects, users highlighted a wide range of activities for children, a strategic location, an elegant coworking space, and the opportunity to dedicate time to work while also having their children close by. Visitors appreciated the flexibility of the space, the helpful staff, and the professionalism of the carers. Almost all users noted that being there feels like being at home. Women highlighted that the place helps them achieve a balance between working and being a mother; moreover, the staff helped

them navigate their first steps as mothers. As weaknesses, it can be noted that there is not much space in the coworking area, and that there are not many private rooms available. In addition, the staff noted that the meeting rooms are fully booked for long periods, which could indicate that the space is very popular and in high demand, but not easily accessible due to its limited capacity. In general, the coworking space appears to be a useful hybrid environment that allows workers to combine their professional life with family time, which is also highly appreciated in reviews.



Figure 52: Interior photos of QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space: reception area and children's sleeping room.
Note. Photos taken by the author.

4.5. BASE Milano, via Bergognone 34

General information: BASE Milano is a creative hub, a hybrid cultural center that combines coworking with cultural activities and events, attracting freelancers and professionals in the creative industries. It spans 12,000 square meters across three levels. According to its official website, BASE is more than a typical coworking space, as member organizations are selected based on shared values, project alignment, and contribution to an evolving community. Individuals can also do smart working at BASE. The Ground Hall offers a coworking area with free access and a bistro, while outdoor spaces with tables are also available for work (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Location: The address is Via Bergognone 34, 20144 Milan, Italy. It is located in the center of the Tortona district, near the Navigli area, an evolving creative district. This zone is well known for its industrial past and ongoing transformation into a cultural and creative hub. Nearby are other repurposed industrial buildings, such as Armani/Silos and MUDEC, which now house design studios, galleries, and cultural spaces.

Type of coworking space: BASE Milano can be classified as a hybrid, community-oriented coworking space that also has professional coworking features, particularly for creative

and cultural professionals. BASE places strong emphasis on community building, cultural and social interaction. It hosts exhibitions, workshops, performances, and public events, making it a social and cultural hub rather than only a workplace. At the same time, BASE provides structured workspaces, studios, and offices used by designers, artists, researchers, startups, and creative professionals. The users are not casual café workers but people engaged in serious creative and knowledge-based work, often on long-term projects.

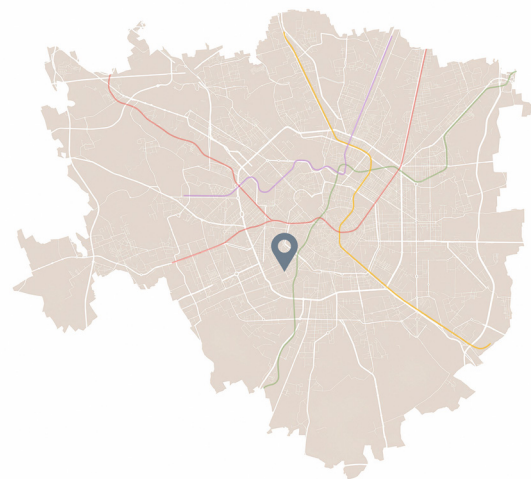


Figure 53: Geographical position of the BASE Milano coworking space.



Figure 54: Exterior photo of BASE Milano coworking space: entrance area. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Design and concept: Located in a former industrial plant, BASE Milano is one of the largest urban regeneration projects in Europe. Onsite Studio revitalized the abandoned building by creating new ways of bringing public and private enterprises together. Originally built between 1904 and 1923, the complex operated as a mechanical firm before being acquired by Ansaldo in the 1960s for engine production. Abandoned in the 1970s, it was later purchased by the Milan City Council, which began redeveloping the area for cultural purposes. The Scala Theatre workshops were relocated to the site in 1994, followed in 2015 by MUDEC, the Museum of Cultures. Onsite Studio's renovation maintained the industrial character of the site while introducing flexibility for diverse programs, activities, and scenarios. The architectural intervention emphasized conserving spatial qualities such as atmosphere, materials, proportions, spans, and strong industrial character. A limited catalogue of materials, including exposed brick and cement floors, was used to preserve the factory look while keeping attention focused on cultural events and people (Designboom, 2016).

Overall layout: It is a large open building, conceived as a dialogue between different objects, their shapes and materials, and the various events and activities it hosts. The project's goal was to make the building radically public in character. The intervention focuses on the relationship between the expansive industrial spaces and a series of volumes of different sizes that contain service elements. These volumes are carefully arranged to create a kind of city, a micro-urban setting composed of plazas and streets of varying scales, reinforcing the idea of

urban life contained within the wide range of activities. Designed as small buildings, the new volumes display distinct facades and roofs that indicate their different functions. The tension between these insertions and the existing industrial space produces not only opposition but also complementarity: distance but also dialogue, proportion with unpredictability (Designboom, 2016).

Zoning: The building occupies three levels. The courtyard features an open-air bar, tables, seating, and a stage for live performances, built around a large tree. The Ground Hall is a versatile, multifunctional space with access from the courtyard. It can either be used in continuity with BistroBASE or separated by movable walls along the colonnade.



Figure 55: Interior photo of BASE Milano coworking space: open coworking area with shared tables. Note. Photo taken by the author.

The Bistro, located on the mezzanine floor, is open daily and also serves as a free coworking space. During summer, BistroBASE moves to the courtyard, where additional outdoor coworking tables and chairs are provided. Room1400, a 1,400 m² space on the mezzanine floor, is used for exhibitions, live music, projections, shootings, and conferences. It offers 100 seats, independent access, and a bar with catering service on request. Room2100, located on the second floor, has a 1,900 m² area with independent access. It can function as one large hall or be divided into two spaces with movable walls for exhibitions, workshops, conferences, and shootings. Also, on the second floor is BURÒ, home to the BASE team and a coworking area for members chosen based on shared values. The third floor hosts Cariplo Factory, an innovation hub that fosters talent development through experiential training, entrepreneurial support programs, open innovation projects, venture capital investment, and internationalization initiatives. The third floor also includes 600 m² music rooms, designed by Geza Architectural Studio, which are used for training, events, showcases, backstage, and coworking stations for music professionals, freelancers, and startups in the music industry. Two learning rooms on the same floor provide additional meeting and workshop space, furnished with tables and chairs. Finally, the rooftop hosts a 500 m² terrace available for events, shootings, and filming (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Amenities: The space offers essential amenities such as power outlets, free Wi-Fi, and high-speed internet. The music rooms are fully equipped with software, cameras, microphones, and other tools for professional use. Additional

services provided by BASE include cleaning, technical support for audio, lighting, and video, as well as catering, guest accommodation, and hostess and wardrobe services (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Kitchen/bar areas: The Bistro at BASE, located on the mezzanine floor with an area of 120 square meters, is open daily for breakfast, lunch, aperitifs, dinner, and cocktails. It can also be used for private events with catering services and, on request, extended into the Ground Hall bar area. During the summer, BistroBASE moves to the courtyard. CasaBASE provides a common area with a kitchen and dining room. Finally, the rooftop terrace, with a capacity of 66 people, is equipped with tables, seating, and a bar area (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Meeting rooms: There are two learning rooms on the third floor, measuring 50 and 115 square meters, designed for meetings, talks, training sessions, or workshops. Both rooms are furnished with tables and chairs and share a common reception and break area. Room 1 can be arranged with a single central table for meetings (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Lighting: The artificial lighting, designed by Studio Voltaire, emphasizes both the tone and character of the original building while highlighting its new functions. Workstations are illuminated with linear luminaires mounted on large desks, complemented by indirect lighting that softens the overall atmosphere. Next to these areas is a separate reading space, enclosed with wooden and glass partitions that form meeting rooms, which are illuminated by projectors.

Beyond the desks, the layout transitions into open relaxation zones and informal working areas furnished with colorful sofas, shelves, seating under the windows, and a table football game. Here, more intimate lighting solutions, such as laser lighting, were used to create a cozy atmosphere. A dedicated break area further supports informal social interaction, offering space for coffee or games. On the third floor, where the Fondazione Cariplo offices are located, luminaires with micro prismatic screens provide direct, uniform lighting to foster concentration and productivity. Track lighting and grey projectors are installed in event-oriented spaces, such as the presentation room and multi-purpose areas, to adapt to diverse functions. The Music Rooms have different lighting solutions depending on their purpose. Thus, in the coworking area with large tables, high contrast and laser pendant luminaires have been used to focus light on the worktops. Overall, this careful combination of direct, indirect, and adaptive lighting adds character to the space, balancing functionality with atmosphere. It creates a warm, inviting ambient in leisure areas while maintaining focus and clarity in work and cultural zones (iGuzzini, n.d.).

Acoustics: The open coworking area at BASE is spacious and generally quiet, creating a suitable environment for concentration. Due to the large area of the space, tables are placed at a significant distance from each other, which helps limit the overlap of sounds and reduce distractions during communication. Moreover, the indoor bar is designed to minimize sound penetration into work areas, preventing distraction from background noise. However, the lack of fully isolated individual rooms means the

acoustics may not be ideal for tasks that require privacy, video calls or high concentration.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: The space feels like a huge hub for creatives; the atmosphere is friendly and calm. The design of the free coworking space also aims to promote interaction between workers, as the tables are very long with peculiar curved shapes. Thus, coworkers have to sit at one table, which can foster interaction and a sense of community. Moreover, people were not afraid to interact with each other, asking for help, for example, to borrow a charger.

Presence of events or community activities: Almost every day, various events are held that are open to the public, such as exhibitions, workshops, and open lectures. In this way, BASE offers artistic people an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and expand their network. Visitors can also subscribe to newsletters to stay updated about current events.

Users and their behavior: The members of an open coworking zone are mostly freelancers, remote workers, and students, typically between 20 and 40 years old, with 30-year-olds prevailing. Almost all members were working with laptops (13 out of 15), and only one person used both a laptop and headphones. There were three pairs working together; in two of these groups, individuals shared one laptop while discussing their work. Many users had an extravagant or creative appearance, expressed through clothing, accessories, or hairstyles, which reflected their connection to artistic industries.



Figure 56: Interior photo of BASE Milano coworking space: open coworking area with shared tables and integrated bar area.

Note. Photo taken by the author.

However, the atmosphere overall felt more individualistic, with most people focused on their own projects. However, professional workspaces and studios used by creative professionals, such as designers, artists, researchers and startups.

Special socializing areas: BASE has many spaces open to the public, including indoor and outdoor coworking areas. Different events and workshops also take place, aiming to encourage socializing and meeting new people. In general, the hub is open to visitors, so anyone can come and explore the building and its various areas.

Policies and accessibility: On the second floor, there is BURÒ, home to the BASE team and a coworking space for BASE members selected to collaborate for at least one year. It aims to welcome professionals from creative industries, such as illustrators, architecture and design studios, digital art, research, consulting, technology, web marketing, and more. According to the BASE website, it is more than an ordinary coworking space, as the organizations working here are carefully selected based on their alignment with BASE projects, vision, values, and community, fostering collaboration on shared projects. To join Project House, a person can submit a request through the contact form, describing their work, projects, vision, and how they can contribute to the BASE community. Project House meeting rooms are available exclusively to resident organizations. However, there is also a coworking space in the Ground Hall that is open to everyone and free to access, where visitors can do smart working from 9 a.m. until midnight every day (BASE Milano, n.d.).

Personal impression: The size of the space is immediately impressive; it is a large, modern hub offering a wide range of activities. Friendly and welcoming staff creates a cozy environment. The atmosphere is creative, with careful attention to design details. There are plenty of outdoor tables and engaging areas inside, encouraging visitors to return or bring friends. Overall, the space is suitable for both work and relaxation.

Suitability for nomadic workers: As a multifunctional complex, BASE Milano allows visitors to participate in events and activities according to their interests. The space also encourages interaction, collaboration, and connections with like-minded individuals. Therefore, BASE Milano can be considered an attractive location for digital nomad workers.

Strengths and weaknesses: According to Google reviews, some visitors noted a few weaknesses, such as occasional weak internet connection, which can make it difficult to join the Wi-Fi, especially in the free Ground Floor coworking space that can get crowded. Other issues mentioned included a poor heating system, bars closing before the end of events, and occasional disorganization during night events. However, the majority of people highly rated the coworking space for being free, easily accessible, and full of young people with positive energy. Visitors also appreciated that the location offers opportunities to eat, drink, listen to music, and socialize all in one place.



Figure 57: Interior photo of BASE Milano coworking space: entrance to the open coworking area. Note. Photo taken by the author.

4.6. Overview of the coworking spaces in Milan

Overall, all the studied coworking places in Milan aim to become for its visitors a third place. It can be made by creating various events, not related even to work specifically, but also by performing special activities or even camps and trips, like in oTTo or Qwork.

Coworking spaces in Milan are often located in central districts as well as in former industrial areas undergoing regeneration. Many of these spaces occupy renovated buildings, combining contemporary interior design with historical architectural elements or elements of a precedent factory.

However, coworking environments in Milan is very diverse and ranges from highly corporate and structured spaces to informal, community-driven ones, it is possible to see the trend towards corporate nomadism, since the requests for private offices are rising. In addition, most of the time, the phone booths were very busy, as the workers had to do phone calls or video calls. The meeting rooms were also busy and quite popular among coworkers according to managers of the coworking spaces.

In terms of spatial characteristics, coworking spaces in Milan typically offer a mix of open-plan work areas, private offices that are more professional with specialized equipment,

meeting rooms, and informal social spaces. Usually, the space for workers that rent just a desk is in the hall, where users sit close to each other at big desks, what can foster collaboration between them. Attention is often given to interior aesthetics, reflecting design culture, with carefully curated furniture, materials, and lighting playing a central role in shaping the work atmosphere.



Figure 58: Key conceptual characteristics of Milan coworking spaces.



Figure 59: Typical spatial configuration of Milan coworking spaces.

Usually, the coworking zone is highlighted with vivid colors, while the private offices have more standard office look. Flexibility and adaptability are key features, allowing spaces to accommodate both individual focused work and collaborative activities.

From an organizational perspective, Milan's coworking spaces support a wide spectrum of users, including freelancers, startups, creative professionals, remote employees, and corporate teams. Even though some coworking spaces are promoted as working stations and hubs for specific specialties, for example, BASE for creatives and Talent Garden for tech specialists, they are still open to everyone from any field of expertise. Many spaces emphasize community-building through networking events, workshops, and social activities, while others prioritize privacy and efficiency for professional users. Together, these characteristics illustrate how coworking in Milan functions as an important component of the city's hybrid work infrastructure.

5. Coworking Spaces in Zurich: Case Studies and Spatial Analysis

5.1. Research methodology and scope

5.2. Citizen Space Zurich, Heinrichstrasse 267n

5.3. Westhive, Seestrasse 353

5.4. Kraftwerk, Selnaustrasse 25

5.5. Coworking Seefeld, Reinhardstrasse 19

5.6. Overview of the coworking spaces in Zurich

5.1. Research methodology and scope

The analysis of coworking spaces in Zurich follows the same research methodology and analytical framework described in Chapter 4.1. As in Milan, the study is based on site visits, direct observation, informal interviews, and secondary data analysis. This methodological consistency allows for a structured comparison of coworking spaces in the two cities.

Zurich was selected as a case study city due to its role as an important financial, economic, and cultural hub, as well as one of Europe’s leading global financial centers, hosting numerous international companies, meetings, and events. The city is characterized by a strong knowledge-based economy and a high concentration of corporate headquarters, startups, and innovation-driven industries.

In addition, Zurich consistently ranks among the cities with the highest quality of life, which influences work culture, spatial expectations, and the organization of workplaces. The prevalence of flexible and hybrid work models, combined with high real estate costs and a strong tradition of efficiency and privacy, makes Zurich an interesting counterpoint to Milan when analyzing contemporary coworking environments. Studying Zurich alongside Milan enables an exploration of how different

economic structures, cultural attitudes toward work, and urban conditions shape coworking spaces and user behavior.

5.2. Citizen Space Zurich, Heinrichstrasse 267n

General information: Citizen Space Zurich is a creative and flexible hub with a retro design, suitable for freelancers and small teams. It offers daily tickets, various membership options, and the opportunity to book a free trial day. Citizen Space Zurich has grown steadily since 2007 and currently occupies a total area of 1,300 square meters at its main location, providing both coworking and private office spaces. In addition, it offers an event space equipped with rentable furniture, mobile walls, and flexible areas designed to give users freedom and help reduce costs (Citizen Space, n.d.).

Location: Citizen Space Zurich is situated at Heinrichstrasse 267n in a district close to the historic center of the city. The area is characterized by a mix of office centers, retail spaces, business skyscrapers, and residential buildings. The neighborhood has a former industrial character and is well connected to the city center by tram and bus lines. In addition, it is located within a short transit distance of Zurich's central railway station, which makes it a convenient location for professionals arriving in the city or attending business meetings. Furthermore, the location may be attractive for users seeking an accessible yet more affordable workspace outside the most expensive central zones.

Type of coworking space: Citizen Space Zurich can be classified primarily as a professional coworking space. It is oriented toward entrepreneurs, startups, corporate teams, and independent professionals who require a structured, office-like working environment rather than a casual or social one. Although Citizen Space Zurich incorporates elements of community building through shared spaces and networking opportunities, these aspects serve mainly to support professional collaboration. Therefore, the coworking space aligns more closely with the professional coworking model than with community-focused or lifestyle coworking typologies.



Figure 60: Geographical position of the Citizen Space Zurich coworking space.



Figure 61: Interior photo of Citizen Space Zurich coworking space: coworking area «Space 7». Note. Photo taken by the author.

Design and concept: Founded in 2007 by Jürg Rohner in the former Steinfels soap factory, it offers a dynamic coworking environment with a mix of retro and modern design elements. Its motto, «Design meets Retro,» reflects the distinctive atmosphere of Citizen Space. From designer furniture by Vitra to barista coffee machines by Elektra and the beautiful original coffee tables, Citizen Space, located in former industrial halls, offers every customer a unique visual and spatial experience (Citizen Space, n.d.). It has five coworking areas inside the facility: Space 504, Space 2015, Space E7, Space 07, and Space P5. Industrial charm flows throughout, especially in the old Steinfels factory-inspired Space 2015, where work islands and pop-up stores create a lively atmosphere. Meeting rooms and a café add to the convenience, while the unique design fosters creativity and collaboration. The design is retro, with sometimes unexpected elements, such as vaulting bucks, and a large amount of wooden furniture.

Overall layout: The coworking itself has open-plan spaces and occupies several areas on different floors of the building, along with other organizations and small companies. Each space is organized in a similar way, incorporating working and resting areas, with the various zones interconnected. Every zone has islands with tables organized for both group and individual work, relaxation and welcoming areas with coffee tables and comfortable sofas or armchairs, a bar area, a home-like kitchen corner, meeting rooms, and phone booths.

Zoning: The spacious layouts, such as Space 504 and Space P5, provide flexible working solutions

with dedicated desks, cozy lounge areas, and kitchen and bar areas for breaks. Space 2015 offers a large area with work islands containing both fixed and flexibly bookable places; there are also two equipped meeting rooms. Toilets are located inside the coworking space, even though it is situated within a large office building. The office manager receives and delivers mail and orders for members. Space E7, a former showroom, also provides an open-plan space for coworkers and flex-desk users and offers the opportunity to relax in the lounge. Space 07 offers both flexible and permanent tenants a more private place to work. Connected to Space 2015 and the ground floor by a lift, it offers direct and autonomous access from the outside.

Amenities: The space provides high-speed Wi-Fi. Each table has connected plugs and a monitor that workers can use. The desks and office chairs are quite comfortable, similar to those in standard offices. There are also amenities for paperwork, such as printers and scanners. Moreover, there are special soundproof booths where a person can sit to make a call. Another more private room for calls is available and is called the Callbox; it is larger and more equipped, without glass doors.

Kitchen/bar areas: As for refreshments, there is a wide range of coffee machines and unlimited free coffee provided to members, as well as small snacks. Moreover, there is a full kitchen unit with a dishwasher, sink, fridge, and microwave in the E7 space on the second level. Space 2015 has its own bar zone with a bar table and kitchenware.



Figure 62: Interior photos of Citizen Space Zurich coworking space: coworking area «Space 2015» (top) and ocoworking area «Space E7» (bottom).
Note. Photos taken by the author.

Meeting rooms: The coworking provides several event spaces, such as the Marrakesh workshop space, which offers 50 sqm and can accommodate up to 20 people (up to 40 people with cinema-style seating), as well as the Rio de Janeiro and Accra meeting rooms (6–8 people, 20 sqm each), and the Jaffna meeting room (up to 10 people, approximately 22 sqm). Anyone interested can book a room from one hour up to eight hours. The rooms also include beverages and snacks, coffee for breaks, and water. In addition, Space 2015 offers two equipped meeting rooms for around six persons each, and Space 07 also has a small meeting room.

Lighting: The lighting is dimmed and not as strong as in ordinary office spaces, which makes the atmosphere more pleasant, warm, and home-like.

Acoustics: The coworking space is calm and serene, and not overcrowded. The space provides large areas and special booths for business calls. However, the open-plan organization and kitchen area can cause additional noise.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: Because of the open plan, it was possible to observe how other people work and collaborate. Since some companies also rent tables for their employees, some people work in groups. In general, the atmosphere was calm and friendly; people greet each other and welcome new members.

Presence of events or community activities: Citizen Space does not organize community activities, events, or workshops.

Users and their behavior: According to a staff member, the coworking is rented by both companies for long-term periods and by nomadic workers who come for only a few days. For example, three large tables were rented by the same company, consisting of around ten people who periodically talked and collaborated with each other. However, there were also several workers (around five) who worked individually. Usually, Wednesday and Thursday are busy days, according to the office manager, when Citizen Space is full, while on Monday and Friday people usually work from home. The place is also dog-friendly; thus, one coworker brought a small dog.



Special socializing areas: There are also large comfortable sofas and armchairs, including two armchairs in a working zone with desks, monitors, call booths, one private glass room, and a conference room. Another zone, located between the kitchen area and the main working area, has two standard desks and one bar table with higher benches; there is also a large screen, but no monitors. Near the entrance, on the right, there is a resting zone with comfortable sofas. As decoration, there are sports amenities, retro items and devices, plants, and letter-shaped lamps on the walls.

Policies and accessibility: Anyone interested in becoming a member can book a free trial day or schedule an appointment for a tour. In addition, Citizen Space offers six membership plans. There is an option for a daily pass that includes a flexible desk, free coffee, and Wi-Fi, costing 29 CHF. Another option with the same benefits but for a monthly period is the Flex Desk (350 CHF), and Flex Desk Plus (370 CHF), which includes unlimited coffee or standard printing. The Member option offers a fixed desk, 24/7 access with a key, free Wi-Fi, and meeting room access, costing 500 CHF per month. Two additional options, Member Plus and Member Deluxe, cost 520 CHF and 540 CHF per month respectively. Both offer a fixed desk, 24/7 access, Wi-Fi, and meeting room access, while Member Plus includes unlimited coffee or printing, and Member Deluxe includes both benefits.

Personal impression: The staff and coworking users are friendly and ready to explain the rules and assist new visitors. The space attracts attention with its retro design and vintage elements. The place sometimes feels like a

professional office, since there is full professional equipment and furnished conference rooms, while at the same time it feels like a home environment with a comfortable kitchen, warm lighting, and sofas. Some areas resemble a hotel lounge with coffee tables and armchairs, while others resemble a café with bar tables and chairs.

Suitability for nomadic workers: It can be suggested that Citizen Space is suitable for nomadic workers of various profiles, since it provides both daily and long-term membership options. It offers the necessary equipment for paperwork. Finally, it has an easily accessible location not far from the city center.

Strengths and weaknesses: According to users' reviews, the space is appreciated for its creative retro design, friendly staff, responsive management team, and good coffee. Moreover, some users mention that it is one of the oldest coworking spaces in the city, with its own history and a relaxed atmosphere. However, they also note that it can sometimes become loud. Many users highlight the warm and welcoming ambiance, spaciousness, reasonable prices, convenient location, and workshop spaces. It is also mentioned as a good option for both temporary and permanent workspace.

Figure 63: Interior photo of Citizen Space Zurich coworking space: coworking area «Space E7» with phone booths. Note. Photo taken by the author.

5.3. Westhive, Seestrasse 353

General information: Westhive is a large, corporate-style coworking provider with multiple locations in Zurich. Westhive Zurich Hardturm is its largest location, situated in the tech district of Zurich West. The chain offers team offices and workstations, two restaurants, a large event venue with workshop and breakout rooms, a podcast studio, a rooftop terrace, a fitness room with showers, a gaming room, and more. All Westhive members have access to the infrastructure at any location at member prices. The space offers various membership tariffs, and it is possible to book an online tour or a trial day (Westhive, n.d.).

Location: The location is quite comfortable to reach. It is not far from the city center, but the area is calm and serene. It is very close to Lake Zurich, just 300 meters away. Wollishofen railway station is 180 meters away. The airport can be reached in 23 minutes.

Type of coworking space: Westhive can be classified as a hybrid coworking space, since it mixes professional workspace characteristics with community-oriented and lifestyle coworking features. While the Seestrasse location primarily focuses on professional work, it is part of a broader Westhive network that emphasizes the well-being of its members, social interaction, community events, and the integration of work into everyday life.

Design and concept: As the main idea, Westhive promotes collaboration between startups, corporates, and professionals. Members can benefit from collaborating with others, expanding their network through various events, and getting involved themselves. The coworking offices combine the advantages of an office with the benefits of a coworking space. On the one hand, they ensure that meetings and documents remain confidential by securing the doors with locks that only workers with a plastic card can open. Companies can also place their logos on the doors. On the other hand, they offer access to the entire Westhive infrastructure and the Westhive community.



Figure 64: Geographical position of the Westhive Seestrasse coworking space.



Figure 65: Interior photo of Westhive Seestrasse coworking space: open coworking area.
Note. Photo taken by the author.

All Westhive offices are fully equipped with height-adjustable desks, office chairs, dimmable lighting, air conditioning, and filing cabinets. When it comes to interior design, the floors and tables are made of wood with a warm tone, and some walls are furnished with brown wood panels. The interior design style is industrial with some loft elements, for example, the true ceiling, where it is possible to see wires, tubes, and construction materials. Together with the furniture, rugs, shelves with various objects and books, and potted plants, the warm materials and lighting create a cozy, home-like atmosphere. In addition, the space has standing desks in every office, which help keep workers active.

Overall layout: In general, the layout is open, with only the kitchen unit separated by walls, creating a small kitchen room. The private offices are separated from the main space with satin glass; thus, confidential data remains private. For the rest, all zones are open and visible, combining areas for various activities, such as the coworking area, bar table, lounge zones, and reception.

Zoning: At the entrance there is a reception office with a desk and an office manager. On the left from the entrance there is a conference room, several private team offices, and a lounge zone with coffee tables, a sofa, and armchairs. Outside, there are tables with chairs and umbrellas. On the right from the entrance, there is a large lounge area with several sofas and armchairs, rugs, and coffee tables; then there is a bar table, a coworking area, and other private offices. The coworking area is designed as an open space between the private offices and

the reception area and has four large tables made of ten small table modules. Thus, people can come to work in groups and organize themselves, or a nomadic worker can sit and share a table with others.

Amenities: There is free Wi-Fi for users, which they can access via a QR code, but unfortunately there are no plugs near the open space with tables. There are common printers and scanners that members can use. The coworking space also provides its members with the possibility of receiving letters and orders, since everyone can have their own mailbox and display their or their company's name on it. Moreover, the office provides shower cabins and phone booths.

Kitchen/bar areas: There is a kitchen with microwaves and cutlery available to everyone; moreover, there are coffee machines, water filters, refrigerators, and a sink. In addition, there are drinks, snacks, and sweets that users can purchase via a QR code.

Meeting rooms: There are also two conference rooms. One is inside the main building with a large desk at the center and a TV, while the other has its own private entrance. The second conference room is larger, with many tables and a large screen, and can be rented for workshops and formal presentations with clients. For both rooms, the organizers, either a private person or a company, can arrange catering services for snacks or lunch.



Figure 66: Interior photo of Westhive Seestrasse coworking space: shared lounge area.
Note. Photo taken by the author.

Lighting: The lighting is not as strong as in standard offices, but there are many spotlights mounted on rails. The light is dimmed and warm, while the windows are large and allow a significant amount of natural sunlight to enter the space.

Acoustics: The space was serene and quiet, even though many people were working in the private offices. There are also five soundproof cabins for calls, each equipped with a small table and a seat. Some of them are built into a thick wall between rooms, while others are designed as parallelepiped-shaped movable modules on small wheels. Thus, users can make phone and video calls without creating noise or distracting other coworkers.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: The atmosphere was very calm and home-like. The space feels almost like a hotel combined with professional office environments. Workers in team offices were collaborating with each other and making calls, while solo workers were distributed throughout the space, resting on sofas or using phone booths, the kitchen, or bar tables. No collaboration between solo workers was observed; everyone appeared focused on their tasks, although interactions with new members remained friendly.

Presence of events or community activities: Westhive fosters networking among its members, encourages interaction, and brings together companies, startups, research and education actors, as well as selected service providers. This creates a distinctive network of organizations and individuals in which ideas can emerge and develop, and business models

can be tested. Westhive events function as a platform for engaging with the community. Some are thematically focused, while others are designed simply to meet, celebrate, and socialize. These events bring members together and promote inspiring exchanges. As a result, various events are organized weekly across different Swiss cities.

Users and their behavior: According to staff, the rooms are typically rented by companies, and the coworking policy allows them to display their logos on the entrance doors. The open spaces are accessible to all members. Staff noted that the coworking community is diverse; however, it primarily consists of companies, particularly startups, since renting a coworking space is generally more flexible and cost-effective than leasing a traditional office.

Special socializing areas: There are several lounge areas furnished with large, comfortable sofas and armchairs, where users can rest but also continue working in a more relaxed posture. In addition, there is an outdoor terrace equipped with two large tables with benches, several small round tables with chairs, umbrellas, and pots with plants, creating an informal environment suitable for breaks, conversations, or outdoor work.



Figure 67: Interior photos of Westhive Seestrasse coworking space: conference room (top left), private team office (top right), shared coworking area (bottom left) and open office workspace (bottom right).
Note. Photos taken by the author.

Policies and accessibility: At the Westhive Seestrasse location, it is possible to book a half-hour tour with an office manager as well as a trial day. The space offers four types of coworking memberships designed to cover the individual needs of members, allowing them to choose how frequently they wish to work at Westhive while benefiting from a fully equipped office environment. The Virtual Office membership (208 CHF per month) allows users to register an official company address at Westhive and includes a mailbox with optional mail handling services, along with five days per month of access to the open-space area. The Flexible Desk membership offers access to a variable workspace within the open-space area from Monday to Friday, between 07:30 and 20:00. This membership includes discounts of up to 40% on food and drinks and optionally provides a company address and mailbox with mail service. It is structured according to different usage needs and includes four tariffs: day pass (39 CHF), 5 days per month (188 CHF), 10 days per month (308 CHF), and full month access (498 CHF). The Fix Desk membership (699 CHF per month) provides a dedicated workspace and access to the entire members' area, with 24/7 access, a monthly credit for meeting room bookings, discounts of up to 70% on meeting room rentals, and up to 40% discounts on food and drinks. Optional services include a company address, mailbox, and mail handling. Finally, the Team Office membership (3260 CHF per month) offers the same benefits as the Fix Desk membership, while additionally providing a private office suitable for teams of 2 to 14 people and access to the full members' area (Westhive, n.d.).

Personal impression: The location, together with the stylish and high-quality interior design and furnishings, immediately creates a positive impression. The space felt pleasant to stay in, as the overall atmosphere was serene and calm. However, the team offices appeared significantly more formal and better suited for focused work compared to the open coworking area. The coworking area is furnished with relatively simple desks and chairs and is positioned near the reception, which did not create a strong sense of privacy.



Figure 68: Interior photo of Westhive Seestrasse coworking space: shared lounge area near the terrace.
Note. Photo taken by the author.

represents a valuable alternative for individuals tired of working exclusively from home.



Suitability for nomadic workers: The broad range of membership tariffs and the flexibility regarding the number of days per month make Westhive highly suitable for nomadic workers. Furthermore, the space is easily accessible and provides the essential amenities required for desk work and paperwork. In addition, the organization of events may foster professional networking and opportunities for collaboration.

Strengths and weaknesses: Most users highly evaluated the location and the overall atmosphere of the workspace, frequently noting the attractiveness of being close to the lake. Members particularly appreciated the efficient and friendly staff, the stylish interior design, the pleasant open-space areas, and the well-designed meeting rooms. However, some users noted that the member base consists largely of startups and corporate innovation departments. Additionally, certain visitors criticized the pricing, suggesting that the cost may be disproportionate to the equipment provided in the coworking area. Reports indicated that when the space becomes crowded, Wi-Fi performance may deteriorate. Moreover, within the open coworking area, desks and chairs are of lower quality and less comfortable than those provided in private offices. The space does not provide computers or monitors, there are no power outlets consistently available near the desks, which may create inconvenience for users working on personal laptops. Despite the comparatively lower evaluation of the open coworking area, the meeting rooms received very positive feedback. Users also described the space as suitable for informal meetings and focused work, noting that it rarely becomes overcrowded. Several members indicated that it

Figure 69: Interior photos of Westhive Seestrasse coworking space: reception area (top) and shared kitchen facilities (bottom).
Note. Photos taken by the author.

5.4. Kraftwerk, Selnaustrasse 25

General information: Kraftwerk is a former power station that turned into an industrial style coworking environment that also functions as a café and event venue, providing a hybrid space in the heart of Zurich for creatives. Kraftwerk was initiated by the four partners Impact Hub Zurich, Engagement Migros, EWZ and Digital Switzerland and nowadays it is a unique space encouraging innovation and collaboration (Tschopp, n.d.). All rooms are located in the central base camp, a structure made of 21 shipping containers equipped with everything needed for comfortable work (Kraftwerk, n.d.). The space offers a cozy atmosphere where users can enjoy vegetarian dishes and coffee (Kraftwerk, n.d.). Here, people have the opportunity to make inspiring connections, collaborate, and generate new ideas. In addition to meeting, workshop, and event rooms, Kraftwerk features an event hall, café, restaurant, and bar. It also includes a sun-drenched terrace for outdoor work, lunch, drinks, aperitifs, and parties (Kraftwerk, n.d.). It is possible to book meeting rooms, event spaces, or even the entire terrace.

Location: The address is Selnaustrasse 25, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland. It is located in the center of Zurich, 10 minutes of walk from Zurich railway station.

Type of coworking space: It can be categorized as a coworking café. However, it also has

some characteristics of a community-oriented coworking space, as it organizes events and festivals.

Design and concept: The space, formerly a transformer hall of the Zurich municipal electricity works and now under monument protection, was repurposed into a temporary «innovation power plant»—an open, urban, multifunctional platform aimed at serving forward-thinking people and ideas. Architect Michal Krzywdziak, in collaboration with project partners, developed a concept centered on redesign and upcycling. To zone the space and create shells for the meeting rooms, they used decommissioned shipping containers.



Figure 70: Geographical position of the Kraftwerk coworking space.



Figure 71: Interior photo of Kraftwerk coworking space: entrance area with café-bar and private offices integrated into shipping containers.

Note. Photo taken by the author.

Additionally, second-hand furniture sourced from local shops was used to furnish the space. Due to constraints related to budget, time, and monument preservation, the team implemented creative and unconventional solutions. The reuse of shipping containers and upcycled furniture added a distinct design value to the space (Design Preis Schweiz, n.d.). However, according to Google reviews, some users noted that the design has certain shortcomings in the operation of the air conditioning system, namely, the space becomes cold in winter and too hot in summer, especially in the meeting rooms made from containers. The interior design combines industrial and cozy elements. The cozy elements include informal seating areas without tables for relaxation, as well as smaller, quieter zones with three to four tables and couches located further from the entrance.

Overall layout: It is an open, café-like space with a small outdoor area featuring tables for 1–2 people, and a large indoor area with a bar on the ground floor. At the entrance, there is a big bar where visitors can purchase drinks and food. Nearby, a lounge zone with soft sofas and coffee table provides a relaxed seating option. The rest of the space includes small tables suitable for 1–2 people, although groups can easily push tables together for a collaborative work. On the upper 2 levels above the bar, several shipping containers have been converted into private rooms that users can book for focused work or meetings.

Zoning: The space is generally divided into three main zones. The first floor and the outdoor area are intended for more relaxed work, casual meetings, or meals such as breakfast, lunch, or

aperitifs. The terrace can accommodate around 100 individuals or small groups. The second and third floors are designed for more focused work, meetings, group collaboration, or phone calls. These levels contain six meeting rooms ranging from 10 to 25 square meters, accommodating up to 25 people. The shipping containers on these levels have glass doors, providing sound isolation from the café area. Additionally, there is an event hall located behind the bar area, which remains empty during the day. The event hall can be used for a general meeting, conference, presentation, panel discussion, charity event, concert, party. Possible room setups include theater seating for up to 175 people, table islands for up to 80, seated dinners for up to 100, flying aperitifs for up to 250, and parties for up to 500 guests. Behind the event hall, there is also a large command room that can accommodate up to 50 people for group work.



Figure 72: Interior photo of Kraftwerk coworking space: entrance area with café-bar and a group of coworkers. Note. Photo taken by the author.

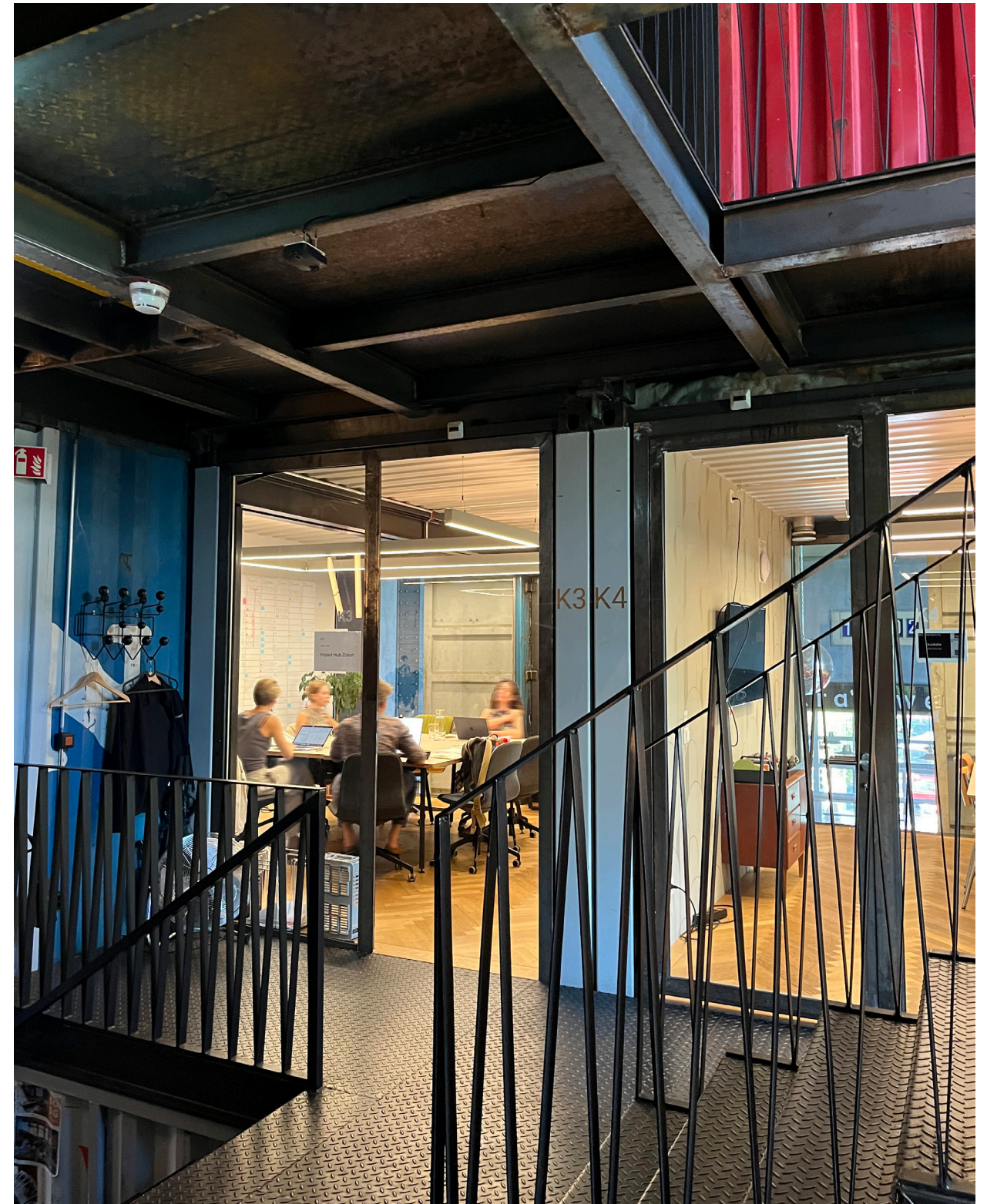


Figure 73: Interior photo of Kraftwerk coworking space: private offices integrated into shipping containers. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Amenities: The space offers essential amenities such as power outlets, free Wi-Fi, and high-speed internet. The event space is equipped with a stage and a professional audio-visual system, which can be booked additionally. The meeting rooms have high-quality screens, whiteboards, flipcharts, various connectors and adapters for devices, and other digital and analogue tools.

Kitchen/bar areas: The bar is located at the center of the space and features a distinctive design that attracts attention. The kitchen is situated behind the bar. On the first floor, users can order drinks either online or directly from the staff. Each table has a sticker with a QR code that links to the menu. Additionally, staff members approach newly arrived workers to ask if they would like to order a drink.

Meeting rooms: The meeting rooms are equipped with large tables for group work, whiteboards, and TV screens. Each room has glass doors to isolate users from the ambient noise of the bar and conversations. In general, this area appears more office-like and formal. Moreover, the lighting is stronger due to LED lamps, and some rooms are furnished with office chairs.

Lighting: The area around the bar is dimly lit, with limited natural light from small windows and minimal artificial lighting. This creates a cozy atmosphere, different from a typical office environment. In contrast, the private rooms on the upper levels are more brightly lit, featuring powerful LED lamps that resemble standard office lighting.

Acoustics: Although the ground floor resembles

a café, the overall noise level remains relatively low. Background noise typically includes sounds from the bar and kitchen, conversations among workers, and occasional phone calls or group discussions. Staff communication can also be heard. These factors can make it difficult to concentrate on work. However, the meeting rooms offer improved acoustics and better sound isolation, making them more suitable for focused work.

Atmosphere and users' interaction: The overall vibe of the space is informal, creative, innovative, and relaxed. It may not be ideal for those who require a highly focused working environment, as reviews on Google suggest that many people choose this place to hang out, relax, and get some work done.



Figure 74: Interior photo of Kraftwerk coworking space: shared coworking area and staircase leading to private offices.
Note. Photo taken by the author.

prevalent on the first level, whereas group work dominates the upper levels.

Special socializing areas: There is no space exactly for socializing during working hours, but as people sit at small tables close to each other, it encourages interaction and conversation. Some people accidentally bump into each other while walking through the space and start small talk. In general, the environment is friendly, and both staff and users speak English. However, during evening events, members socialize much more, since there are special festivals and workshops aimed at boosting collaboration among workers.

Policies and accessibility: The space does not require any memberships; access is free. It is easy to join without a booking, as there are many small tables available. In the morning, approximately 60% of the space was unoccupied. The place is also dog-friendly. Opening hours are Monday to Wednesday from 8:00 to 22:00, and Thursday to Friday from 8:00 to 00:00.

Personal impression: The atmosphere is friendly and cozy. The design of the space catches attention, and it is interesting to explore all the zones. Moreover, there are some hidden areas, for example, an underground space for bathrooms and small relaxing zones with soft couches and dim lighting. The overall atmosphere encourages repeat visits and might even inspire users to bring friends. In general, the experience was positive.

There are many solo workers who mostly work silently without interacting with others for advice or collaboration. Most communication occurs between users and the staff—for example, to place orders or ask questions. In general, the atmosphere is quite friendly; users greet each other or help to find a room, but interactions are typically brief.

Presence of events or community activities: Almost every Thursday and Friday, organizers host various events open to everyone – usually, the tickets are free. Interested people can book tickets online and check the event agenda on the official website of the space. The events include art exhibitions, club nights, workshops, and conferences that aim to boost collaboration and networking among members. The space also offers the possibility to rent the terrace or the event space for both collaborative and private events, such as customer events, corporate events, team celebrations, private birthday parties, or weddings. The capacity ranges from 10 to 800 people (Kraftwerk, n.d.).

Users and their behavior: The members are mostly freelancers and students between the ages of 20 and 40. On the first floor, almost all users work with laptops (16 out of 20), while some use their phones (4 out of 20), and two individuals wear headphones while working. Most users on the first floor work individually, with only one group of two and another group of four working together. On the upper levels, users mainly work in groups of 2 to 6 people, with only one person seen using a meeting room for a video call. Overall, the number of users working individually (15) and in groups (14) is nearly equal. However, individual workers are more

Suitability for nomadic workers: Based on personal impression, this place could be attractive to nomadic workers, as many young people work there in a very informal and comfortable way. Users are free to choose where they want to sit and are allowed to move around and do what they want. Moreover, the creative design and friendly staff contribute to a positive, community-like atmosphere. The environment is also motivating, as everyone around is engaged in work.

Strengths and weaknesses: According to users' reviews on Google, the positive aspects of the space include its unique design, innovative atmosphere, plenty of seating both indoor and outdoor, numerous charging spots, and reasonable prices for Zurich. In addition, users

noted its convenient location in the center, close to the train station, and the good quality of drinks. As for weaknesses, the noise from the bar and other users' conversations can be distracting for those looking for a more focused work environment. Since users do not pay for access to space, they are expected to purchase drinks. Staff kindly offer drinks and food, but even if someone does not want to order, they may feel pressure to do so in order not to occupy a seat for free. Some reviews also mentioned poor ventilation, and when the space is very busy, it may take a long time for orders to be delivered. The quality of food is also rated as average. However, overall reviews of Kraftwerk as a coworking space are positive, with users impressed by its unique design and creative atmosphere.



Figure 75: Interior photos of Kraftwerk coworking space: outdoor dining and coworking area (left) and entrance area adjacent to the café-bar (right). Note. Photos taken by the author.



Figure 76: Interior photo of Kraftwerk coworking space: informal social area in the basement level. Note. Photo taken by the author.

5.5. Coworking Seefeld, Reinhardstrasse 19

General information: Coworking Seefeld is presented as a family-like coworking space designed for individuals seeking a welcoming work environment and opportunities to exchange ideas with professionals from various industries. The space offers fully furnished open workspaces, private offices, meeting rooms, and virtual office services, as well as a free trial day. Additionally, members benefit from 24/7 access, which may be advantageous for users who occasionally work late at night or during weekends (Coworking Seefeld, n.d.). Available amenities include in-house printing facilities, a lounge area, high-speed internet, a kitchen, and a coffee machine.

Location: The coworking space is located approximately five minutes from Stadelhofen train station, a two-minute walk from the Kreuzstrasse bus stop, and seven minutes from Lake Zurich. It is also relatively close to the city center, which can be reached within approximately twelve minutes by public transport. Overall, the area is well served by public transportation.

Type of coworking space: Although the space promotes collaboration and the exchange of ideas between members and offers full-time access, which may appeal to users working

during evenings or weekends, it can be classified primarily as a classic professional coworking space. The space does not emphasize community-building activities or regular events, focusing instead on providing a stable and functional working environment.

Design and concept: The concept of Coworking Seefeld is centered on creating a “family-like” atmosphere and bringing together specialists from various industries. All workstations are fully furnished with oak tables and office chairs; however, the space does not provide PCs or monitors.



Figure 77: Geographical position of the Seefeld coworking space.

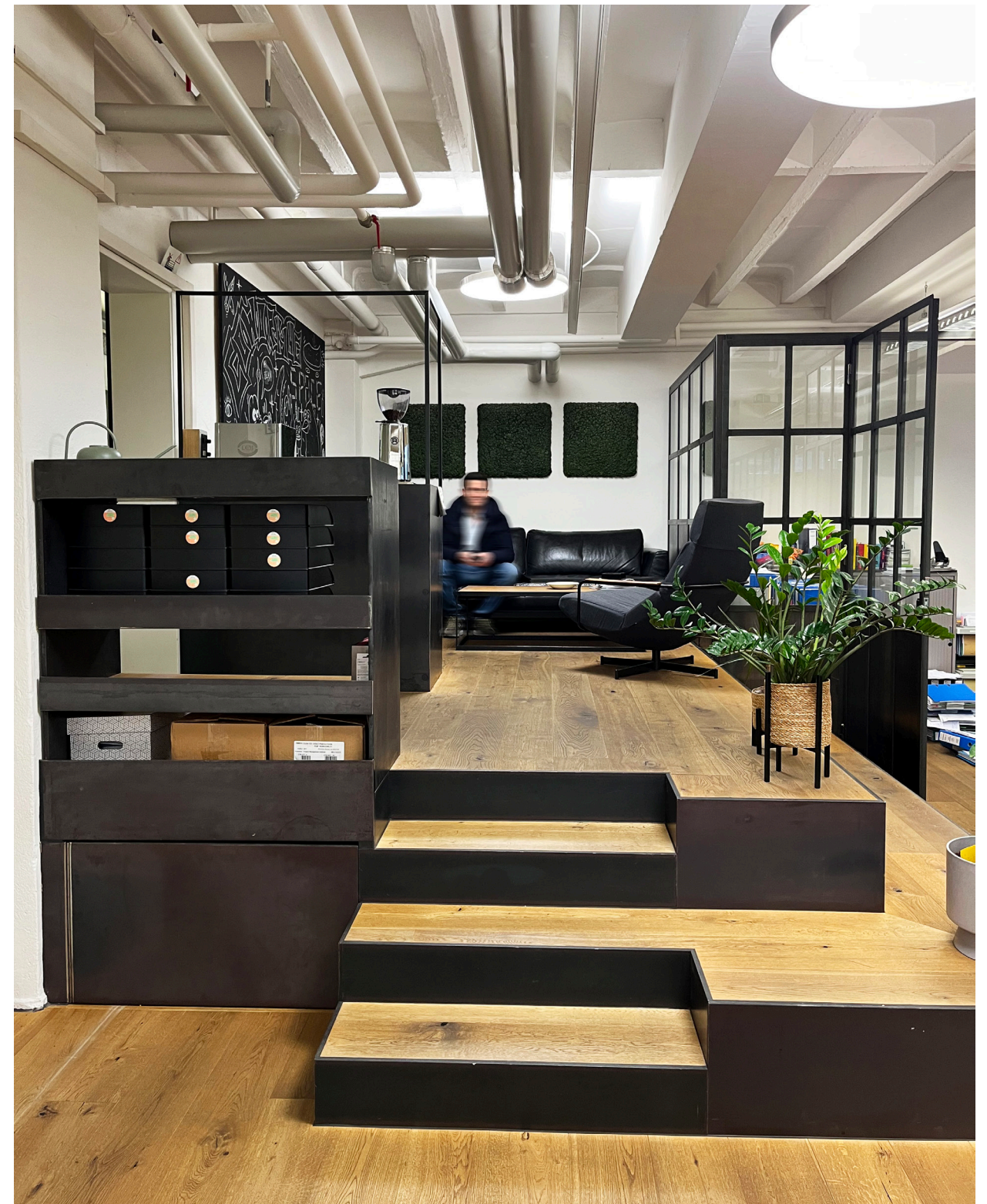


Figure 78: Interior photo of Seefeld coworking space: entrance area with lounge seating. Note. Photo taken by the author.

The coworking offers nine open workspaces and three lockable offices, each accommodating two workstations, all accessible on a 24/7 basis. The design combines industrial materials and elements, such as an exposed (“true”) ceiling, with the warmth typically associated with high-end residential interiors. Unlike larger, corporate coworking hubs, this space emphasizes a homely and intimate atmosphere intended to foster closer interpersonal connections. The interior features a distinctive combination of custom oak wood furniture, raw steel accents, and traditional parquet flooring, resulting in a professional yet cozy studio-like environment. Overall, the project appears to prioritize long-term members and a “quality over quantity” philosophy, offering a quieter and more personal alternative to larger, high-traffic coworking spaces.

Overall layout: The space follows an open layout, with zones separated by glass partitions that maintain visual continuity throughout the interior. This configuration allows users to intuitively perceive the functional divisions while preserving the impression of a cohesive spatial environment characterized by consistent design elements.

Zoning: The entrance area is positioned four steps above the main level of the space. Adjacent to the entrance is a lounge area equipped with a sofa, a coffee table, and a small minibar with a coffee machine, serving users waiting for meetings or taking short breaks. The coworking includes three lockable office units, each containing two workstations, designed for teams requiring greater privacy or for meetings with clients. In addition, there are two open-

plan areas functioning as coworking zones that accommodate different working preferences, enabling members to work individually, in groups, or at shared large tables.

Amenities: The space provides Wi-Fi, administrative support, reception services, mail handling, and telephone answering services, contributing to a more efficient workday. Storage facilities are available to ensure that members’ belongings remain safe and organized. The building itself offers supplementary amenities that enhance the overall working experience, including air-conditioning, on-site parking, disabled access, building security, and concierge services. Additional facilities include bike racks and on-site showers.

Kitchen/bar areas: While the space does not have an area dedicated to a kitchen where users could warm food and dine together, the coworking provides a small bar area with an espresso machine offering unlimited coffee and tea.

Meeting rooms: There are 3 lockable meeting rooms, each containing 2 workstations. They are separated by glass partitions from the open coworking area and appear as small units. Mainly, they are used by small companies or startups to meet clients or partners. Each meeting unit has 2 office desks and 2 ergonomic chairs.

Lighting: The lighting was chosen to be quite cold, similar to standard office buildings.

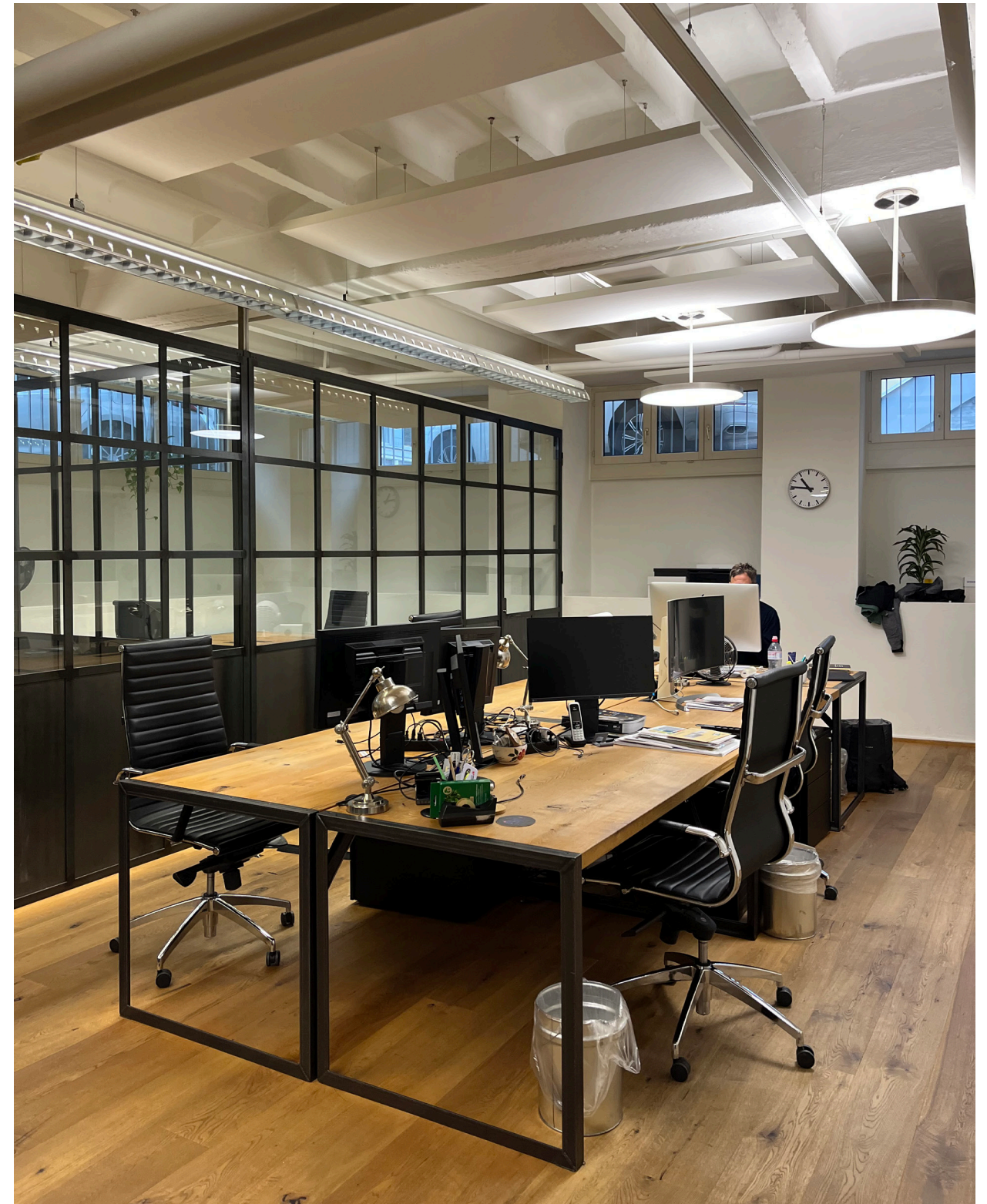


Figure 79: Interior photo of Seefeld coworking space: open coworking area with shared desk and private offices. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Acoustics: Since the space is small and the policy is focused more on long-term relationships with clients rather than on the number of visitors, the space never gets crowded or noisy. However, there are no dedicated phone booths for calls.

Atmosphere and users’ interaction: The space was very serene with a calm atmosphere. Even though the workers did not collaborate with each other and were focused on their own tasks, it felt like a small community because everyone knew each other.

Presence of events or community activities: The coworking does not organize special events, workshops, or extra activities after working hours.

Users and their behavior: According to users, the members of this coworking space are mainly entrepreneurs, freelancers, small business owners and startups. When it comes to professions, most are web developers. What caught attention was that even on Friday there were people working early in the morning, even though the staff and office administrator were not in the office. The coworkers were around 35–40 years old and had been working in this space for a long period. Thus, everybody knows each other, making it feel like a small community of people working together, even though on different tasks without collaborating. According to users, the coworking area is more in demand, while meeting rooms are rented out by companies mainly on a long-term basis and are used for meetings with clients several times a week.

Special socializing areas: The small lounge area with coffee machines can serve as a socializing

area for the members.

Policies and accessibility: The office space is available 24 hours a day, ensuring that its members can work whenever they want or need. By having their own key, individuals can use the space during the night or on weekends due to a heavy workload. The space offers a trial day and variable memberships with flexible pricing options. Thus, the Open Workspace membership (575 CHF per month) offers a table, a chair, a rolling container, a personal key with 24/7 access, and shared use of the lounge, kitchen, and meeting room. Every coworking membership includes access to 10 hours per month of meeting room use. The Private Office membership has options for 2 persons (1350 CHF per month) and for 4 persons (2700 CHF per month), offering the same advantages as the Open Workspace membership, plus a personal shelf or storage unit. In addition, Coworking Seefeld has a Virtual Office option (115 CHF per month) that provides its holders with a business address and a post office box at the Coworking Seefeld space, as well as a 10% discount on day passes and meeting rooms. A meeting room costs 45 CHF per hour and provides space for up to 6 people, including coffee, a TV with streaming capabilities, and a flipchart/whiteboard. Workspaces for 10 or more people are available upon request.

Personal impression: The space gives a good impression, as it is very easy to reach and the location is pleasant. Even though the coworking space itself is small, it still provides motivation to work, as all the members were very concentrated and focused on their tasks. Due to the limited size of the area, there were not many zones for resting or lounge areas that are interesting to explore; however, the interior design was quite warm and welcoming.

Suitability for nomadic workers: It might be suitable for nomadic workers, as it is easy to access, easy to reach, and it is also possible to do a trial day. However, since the space does not provide any events or collaborative workshops, it may not be a suitable place to network and meet new people. However, for corporate nomads, it might be a suitable option.



Figure 80: Interior photo of Seefeld coworking space: open coworking area with shared desk. Note. Photo taken by the author.

Strengths and weaknesses: According to users’ feedback, the strengths of the Seefeld coworking space are its convenient location, easy access, enjoyable atmosphere with friendly people, and helpful administration. Users suggest that the place is good for meetings and remote work, as it has a good working atmosphere. Among the negative aspects, it is possible to mention the lack of a kitchen space that could increase comfort for workers who want to bring their own food, as well as the lack of phone booths. In addition, the administration of the space does not organize any collaborative events, which could be a negative point for those who want to expand their network, since the space itself is small and has a small number of long-term members.

partners, developed a concept centered on redesign and upcycling. To zone the space and create shells for the meeting rooms, they used decommissioned shipping containers.

5.6. Overview of the coworking spaces in Zurich

Overall, in Zurich, professional office-like spaces prevail over coworking cafés or community-focused working spaces. However, it is notable that most coworking spaces mix professional equipment with home-like elements, for example, incorporating kitchen units, dining areas, or shower cabins in the planning, such as Citizen Space Zurich or Westhive. In general, spaces have clearly structured zoning and usually a dedicated reception area.

Coworking spaces are often located in central city districts that are easy to reach by public transport and not far away from railway stations or the airport. It is also possible to witness the adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings that have been redesigned.

In terms of spatial layouts, the spaces combine open shared areas with private offices, providing enough privacy for separated units, such as doors with locks or satin glass partitions allowing users to work with sensitive data. Thus, even café-like coworking spaces insert private rooms into their layout, as, for example, Kraftwerk. In addition, large lounge zones are usually incorporated into the layout, providing more comfortable places to sit and rest.

When it comes to interior design, many Zurich

coworking spaces have restrained, minimalist aesthetics characterized by neutral color palettes, natural materials, and clean spatial compositions. Chairs and tables are usually office-oriented and professional, especially in private office rooms, while open coworking areas can be furnished with less comfortable equipment.

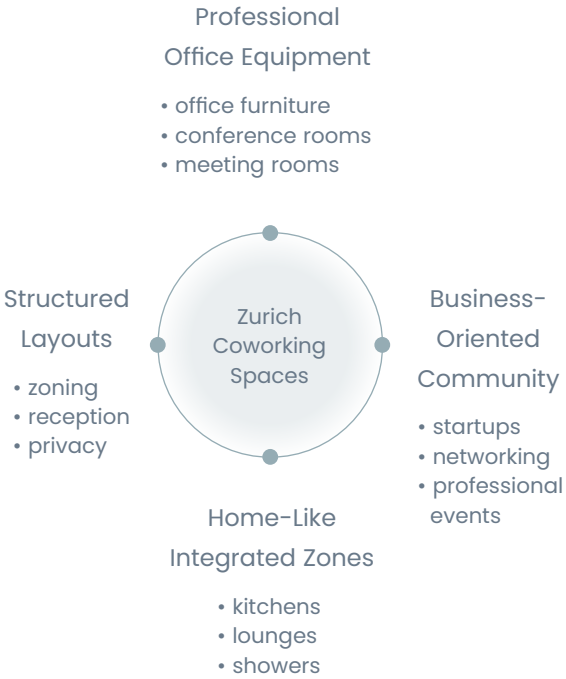


Figure 81: Key conceptual characteristics of Zurich coworking spaces.

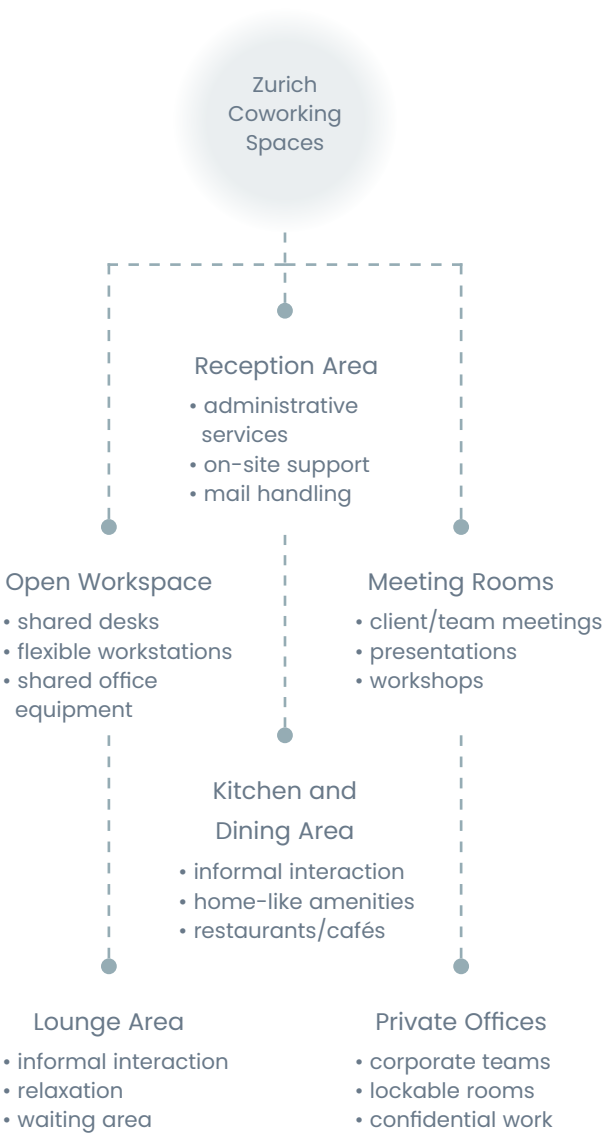


Figure 82: Typical spatial configuration of Zurich coworking spaces.

In terms of users' interaction and behavior, it is possible to highlight that people in Zurich prefer to work from home on Monday and Friday, while from Tuesday to Thursday coworking spaces are more occupied. Moreover, overall, users of coworking spaces were very focused on their own tasks without collaborating with others. In addition, community-building events are present, but they often play a secondary role in coworking spaces. Organized activities tend to be business-oriented rather than socially or culturally driven.

Many spaces target startups and corporate teams as their main user segment, while casual drop-in users can be a minority and rather occasional guests. Another distinct feature of Zurich coworking spaces is the virtual office membership that provides the owner with an official company address and mail service, which can also be advantageous for startups.

When it comes to market pricing, coworking spaces in Zurich align with the city's high-cost economic environment. Membership fees are often comparable to traditional office rentals, highlighting the perception of coworking as a professional workplace solution rather than an informal alternative; however, they still remain cheaper than office rent.

6. Comparative Analysis of Coworking Spaces in Milan and Zurich

6.1. Spatial and functional comparison

6.2. Design and atmosphere

6.3. Amenities and services

6.4. Users and work culture

6.5. Economic and market positioning

6.6. Key similarities and differences (synthesis)

6.1. Spatial and functional comparison

Both cities demonstrate open-plan structures with an intuitive division of space into various zones with diverse activities, such as lounge zones for calm relaxation, interaction zones with some indoor or outdoor games, kitchen and dining areas, reception, phone booths, and others. Both cities provide two types of zones dedicated to work: an open coworking area, usually with large shared tables, where people sit with their laptops open for collaboration, and private office rooms for meetings with clients, individual or team work.

In both Milan and Zurich, coworking spaces are not limited to individual desk work. They accommodate a mix of activities, including meetings, events, informal collaboration, learning sessions, and social interaction. This reflects the hybrid nature of contemporary work, where professional, social, and educational functions increasingly overlap. Spatial flexibility is also evident through movable furniture, multi-purpose areas, and zones that can be adapted for different activities throughout the day.

Both cities include informal work areas such as lounges, cafés, terraces, or kitchen spaces. These areas support spontaneous interaction and allow users to alternate between focused work and relaxation, reinforcing the idea of

choice within the workspace.

A notable divergence emerges in the functions that coworking spaces add to working activities. Thus, in Milan, spaces tend to function like community hubs, adding areas for socialization, informal lounge areas, game zones, and outdoor terraces for aperitifs after working hours. In Zurich, coworking spaces tend to mix office environments with home-like features, adding kitchen and bar areas, gyms, shower cabins, sofas, and armchairs for resting or more comfortable work. In this way, both cities provide hybrid workspaces where functions and various zones for diverse activities blend with each other in one space.

Although Zurich spaces tend to provide higher levels of spatial privacy through separated team offices, allowing startups and established companies to have lockable doors, non-transparent partitions that divide private offices from the open space, their own equipment for paperwork, and personal badges to open doors, Milan spaces tend to maintain the feeling of an integral open space, providing less security for private offices. In this way, Zurich coworking environments might be more suitable for individuals working with confidential and sensitive data, as the rented unit can be

accessed only by members of the renting organization. Thus, spaces include enclosed private offices accessible only to members of a specific organization, whereas coworking environments in Milan more frequently prioritize open or semi-open layouts that encourage interaction among different user groups.

Moreover, in Zurich, even coworking cafés provide private units for team work that can be rented upon request, while in Milan separated rooms can be seen only in professional coworking environments, and coworking café spaces typically have open layouts similar to normal cafés and bars.

The organizational and spatial characteristics of Zurich coworking spaces in general appear to reflect broader aspects of Swiss work culture, including an emphasis on efficiency, order, privacy, and acoustic control. Coworking spaces increasingly function as intermediary environments within hybrid work models, accommodating professionals who would like to work in an environment between home offices and corporate headquarters.

Coworking spaces in both cities demonstrate an opportunity for personal customization of private offices. Thus, in both cities, startups

and organizations place their logos on private offices. However, in contrast to Zurich, where customization is very limited, Milan companies are freer in their design choices and ideas. While in Zurich companies are allowed to place only a small logo near the entrance door to maintain the minimalist aesthetic of the space, in Milan companies can organize rented office units according to their needs and preferences.

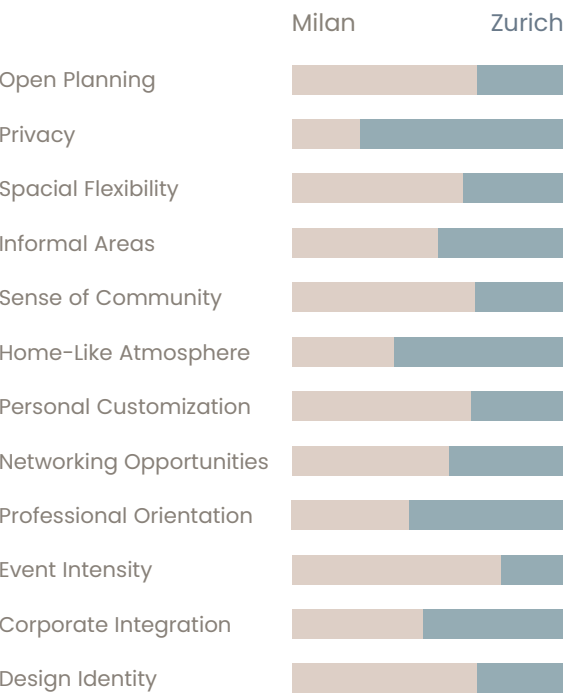


Figure 83: Comparison of key coworking space characteristics in Milan and Zurich.

6.2. Design and atmosphere

Both Milan and Zurich demonstrate a tendency toward the adaptive reuse of former industrial or non-office buildings, transforming them into contemporary coworking environments. However, the historical past of the buildings remains present. In both cities, older architectural structures are reinterpreted as hubs for creative work, collaboration, and events, allowing the historical character of the buildings to coexist with modern functions.

A shared design feature in coworking spaces across both cities is the use of exposed, or “true,” ceilings. Visible structural elements contribute to a modern industrial aesthetic while simultaneously highlighting the architectural history of the buildings and their transformation for contemporary use.

Both cities demonstrate overall attention to interior design and the atmosphere of the space. In both cities, coworking spaces are distinct from the typical cold office environments with rigid hierarchical structures. In both Milan and Zurich, coworking spaces use interior design as a tool to communicate identity and values. Materials, lighting, furniture, and spatial layout are used to create a recognizable atmosphere that distinguishes coworking spaces from traditional offices.

Despite these similarities, notable differences emerge in the overall atmosphere and

functional priorities of coworking spaces in the two cities. In Milan, coworking environments tend to place stronger emphasis on creativity, social interaction, and cultural events, becoming a third place for individuals. Many spaces appear oriented toward creative professionals and actively host workshops, exhibitions, and networking activities that blur the boundaries between work and social life.

In contrast, coworking spaces in Zurich generally present a more professional and office-like character. While home-like zones and informal areas are integrated, the overall impression is often more structured and quieter, reflecting a stronger focus on concentration, efficiency, and privacy. Functionality and efficiency become central design priorities. Spaces emphasize acoustic comfort, reliable digital infrastructure, and clearly structured zoning, supporting focused individual work and confidential business activities.

The integration of home-like elements (lounges, kitchens, sofas) works differently in each city. In Milan, these zones mix work and leisure, supporting socialization. In Zurich, similar elements fit seamlessly into a structured professional environment, increasing comfort without changing the perception of the space as a workplace.

In terms of interior design, many Zurich coworking spaces have minimalist aesthetics characterized by neutral color palettes, natural materials, and clean spatial compositions. Compared to Milan, experimental or expressive design concepts appear less frequent. While in Milan, a more playful design is used in almost every space, very distinct from the plain office-like style and highlighting zones for interaction with vivid colors, in Zurich all zones throughout the space maintain the same stylistic minimalism, reminiscent of hotels or home environments.

Material choices further highlight these differences. Milan spaces frequently integrate vivid colors, experimental textures, and eclectic furniture selections, creating visually stimulating environments. Zurich coworking spaces prefer natural materials such as wood, glass, and metal within restrained palettes, creating cohesive, minimalist interiors associated with professionalism and clarity.

A difference can also be seen in approaches to brand identity. Milan coworking spaces often create strong visual identities through graphic elements, colors, and thematic components. Zurich spaces tend toward spatial neutrality, where branding is subtle and integrated into the overall minimalist composition.

In addition, in both cities coworking spaces can also function as third spaces to find like-

minded individuals, expand networks, and collaborate with other specialists. However, in Milan coworking spaces are more focused on collaboration and socializing, while in Zurich this remains more of a secondary option.

Differences are also visible in lighting strategies. Milan coworking spaces often prefer warmer, dimmed, decorative lighting schemes that highlight an informal, creative atmosphere. Zurich spaces, by contrast, tend to prioritize neutral or cooler lighting designed to enhance visual comfort, concentration, and task efficiency. This contrast reflects different priorities between ambiance and functional performance.

Thus, the overall atmosphere of coworking spaces in Milan is more vivid, with higher noise levels, as people chat, make calls, and interact with other members, while in Zurich the atmosphere is generally serene and quiet, focused on work tasks and performance. In Milan, while acoustic solutions are present, the environments often tolerate higher ambient noise levels, consistent with a more socially dynamic and interactive atmosphere.



Figure 84: Core characteristics of coworking spaces in Milan and Zurich.

6.3. Amenities and services

Both Milan and Zurich provide all the professional equipment necessary for paperwork and office tasks to their members, such as ergonomic office desks and chairs. In both cities, private office rooms that can be rented for teamwork, presentations, or meetings are furnished with more professional equipment, while open coworking areas mainly have large shared tables that users share with other members.

Coworking spaces in both cities cater to freelancers, remote workers, and hybrid employees who alternate between home, office, and third places. The presence of reliable digital infrastructure and shared amenities supports this mobile work culture.

However, Zurich coworking spaces provide more flexibility and diversity of workstations. For example, along with standard desks, it is possible to use standing desks, such as in Westhive coworking space, and lounge areas with comfortable sofas and armchairs. Meanwhile, coworking spaces in Milan provide more diversity of relaxation areas and activities.

Both cities provide various types of memberships with flexible prices depending on the requested services and frequency of use. In both cities, professional coworking spaces with higher prices provide a day pass, which can be advantageous for working nomads.

The difference is that in Zurich coworking spaces, mail service is highly requested, and almost every coworking environment provides virtual office membership, allowing a member to have an official company address and a mailbox. Thus, coworking spaces in Zurich often provide advanced business support services such as official company address registration, mail handling, reception services, secure access systems, and private meeting offices. These services make coworking spaces an alternative to traditional offices. In Milan, while such services are also available in professional coworking environments, many spaces place stronger emphasis on creative environments and community-oriented amenities rather than formal corporate infrastructure.

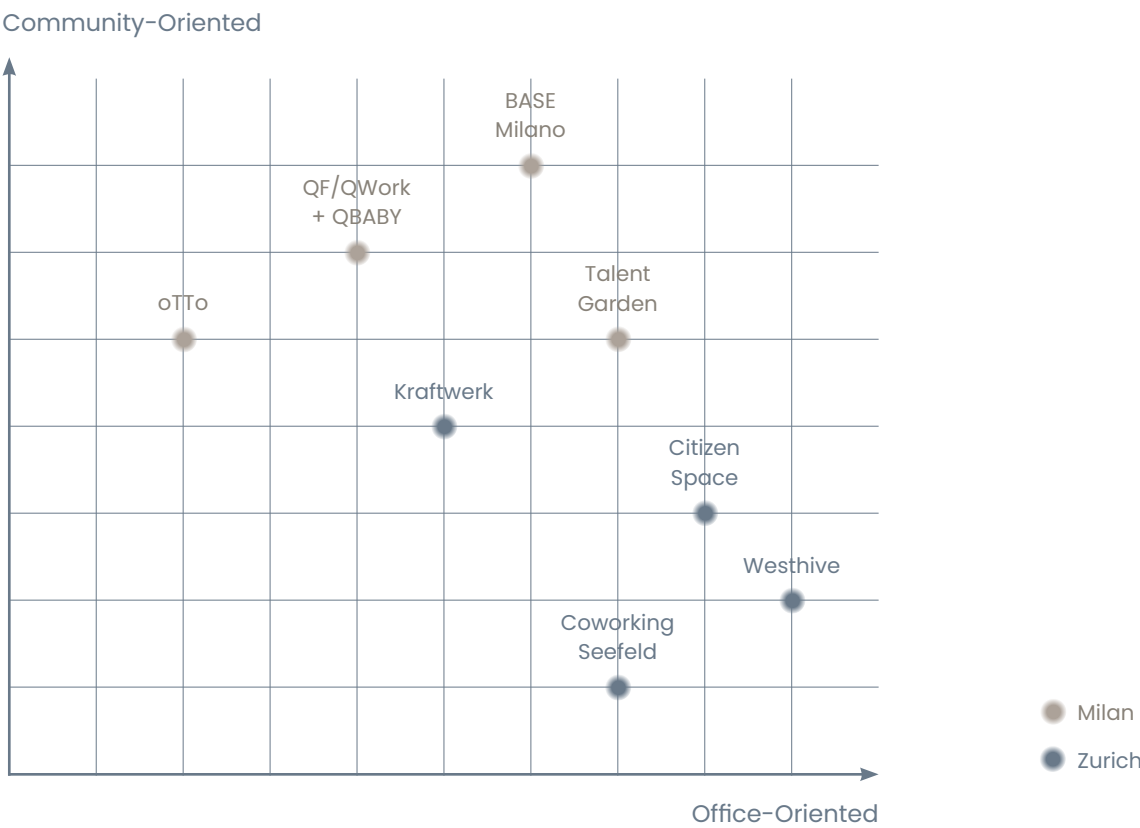


Figure 85: Community and Office Orientation of Analyzed Coworking Spaces.

6.4. Users and work culture

Both cities demonstrate the diversity of coworking space users, such as diversity of professions, ages, and forms of individual or collective work, with users highly concentrated on producing tasks or making constant calls. However, it is also possible to identify some divergences between the two cities.

The first difference is the average age of users. While coworking spaces in Milan attract more young specialists and students, in Zurich the average age is slightly higher, and the users are mainly experienced solo workers or professionals from startups and small businesses. The primary user groups observed include freelancers, entrepreneurs, startup teams, and employees of established companies using flexible workspace arrangements. Compared to Milan, fewer spaces appear oriented toward artistic, experimental, or lifestyle communities that mix their way of life with working. Thus, it is possible to suggest that Milan coworking environments demonstrate more features of a third place, while Zurich coworking spaces remain work-oriented.

Another difference is that Milan coworking environments have mostly artistic professionals and freelancers as members, while Zurich coworking spaces mainly host tech specialists, web developers, and IT engineers. This may also be advantageous for corporate nomads traveling among various spaces but having one

fixed working address to receive mail.

A difference in usage patterns can also be observed: while coworking spaces in Milan are full throughout the working week, in Zurich many people work from home on Mondays and Fridays, leaving the spaces almost empty.

Moreover, while in Milan there are many people coming for just one day, including tourists, nomads, and travelers who primarily prefer pay-as-you-go options, Zurich coworking spaces are more focused on long-term members, such as remote workers, corporate nomads, startups, and young companies. However, in both cities, various membership options exist; thus, both one-day users and long-term members were observed.

In both cities, solo workers were seen focusing on their own tasks without collaborating with others. However, while in Milan there are many events organized by coworking spaces, both work-related and social, there is more dedicated time for collaboration and networking. In Zurich, such events are less frequent and are mostly dedicated to conferences and professional workshops, remaining primarily work-related.

In Milan, users appear more open to spontaneous interaction, informal conversations, and social engagement within the workspace. In Zurich, users often seem more focused on individual

work, with social interaction occurring mainly in designated areas or during organized events.

Milan coworking spaces show strong daytime and evening activity, often extending beyond traditional working hours through events or social gatherings. In Zurich, usage patterns appear more aligned with standard working hours.

Coworking spaces in both cities cater to freelancers, remote workers, and hybrid employees who alternate between home, office, and third places. The presence of reliable digital infrastructure and shared amenities supports this mobile work culture.

However, they provide different advantages for working nomads. For example, Zurich coworking spaces may be more suitable for corporate nomads, as they offer a more professional environment with lower noise levels and all the equipment necessary for office work, sometimes even PCs and monitors, creating an environment where they can be productive and perform their tasks efficiently. Meanwhile, Milan coworking spaces may be more suitable for freelancers and working nomads who seek social interaction and the company of like-minded individuals.

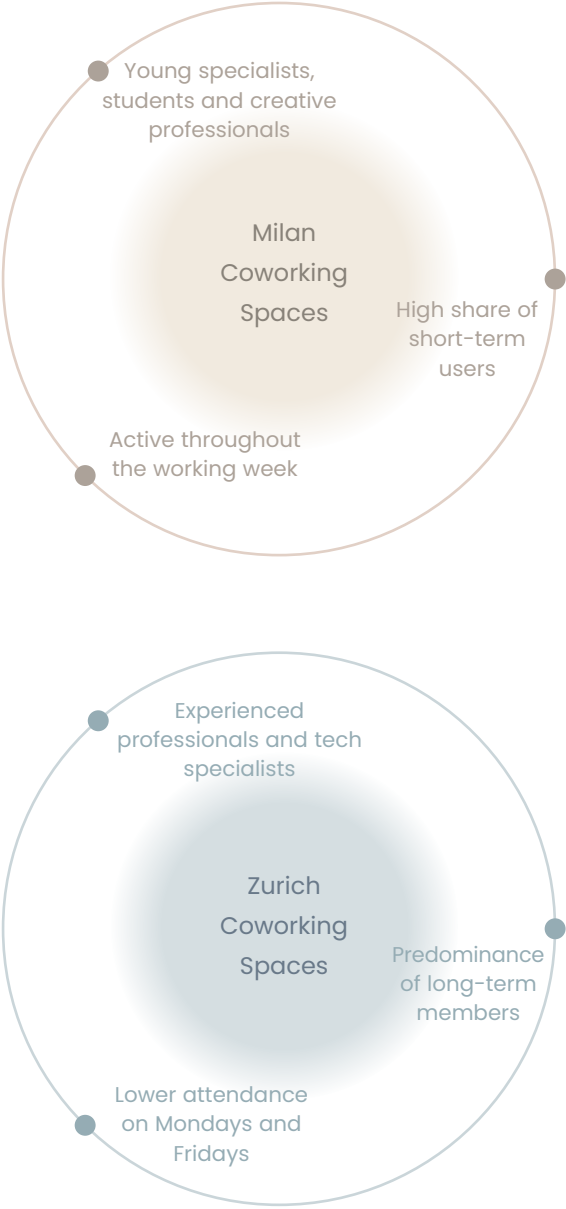


Figure 86: Comparison of user profiles and work culture characteristics in Milan and Zurich coworking spaces.

6.5. Economic and market positioning

In terms of pricing and market positioning, coworking spaces in Zurich tend to align with the city’s high-cost economic environment. Membership fees are often comparable to traditional office rentals, highlighting the perception of coworking as a professional workplace solution rather than an informal alternative. Nevertheless, it is possible to find coworking cafés where visitors pay only for drinks, but this model is less common.

Both cities demonstrate flexible pricing for memberships; thus, they provide various options, such as a day pass, a fixed desk for a month (sometimes with a variable number of days per month), and a team office. The difference is that in Zurich almost all professional coworking spaces provide new visitors with a chance to test the environment and do a trial day for free. This trend highlights the focus of coworking environments in Zurich toward long-term rental of workstations.

While in Milan, the pay-as-you-go option is quite popular. For example, in the oTTo coworking café it is possible to pay just for a half day, which highlights that one-day visitors are a stable group of clients.

This difference reflects the general economic environment and work culture of the two cities. In Zurich, coworking spaces often function as long-term professional workplaces for companies, startups, and corporate nomads, serving as an alternative to traditional offices. In contrast, coworking spaces in Milan demonstrate greater flexibility and accessibility, attracting freelancers, students, and short-term users.

Furthermore, coworking spaces in Zurich are more integrated into the formal business environment, providing services such as company address registration, mail handling, and stable long-term workspaces. In Milan, coworking spaces more often function as flexible and socially oriented environments that support temporary use, networking, and creative collaboration.

Thus, coworking spaces in Zurich are positioned mainly as professional office environments, while in Milan they combine professional functions with social, creative, and flexible forms of use.

6.6. Key similarities and differences (synthesis)

The comparative analysis of coworking spaces in Milan and Zurich demonstrates that, while having different cultural backgrounds and economic situations, the cities share some similarities. In both Milan and Zurich, popular coworking spaces have a hybrid model and combine various functions of a professional office and a community center. Thus, these environments integrate professional features, such as ergonomic furniture, private offices, meeting rooms, and equipment for paperwork, within open layouts with shared coworking areas and informal relaxation zones. In this way, users have an opportunity to perform working tasks outside a traditional office environment. Moreover, coworking spaces aim to foster networking and collaboration between their members by bringing together like-minded individuals, becoming in some way a third place. In addition, the adaptive reuse of former industrial or non-office buildings is common in both cities, contributing to the creation of contemporary workspaces while preserving architectural identity.

Coworking spaces in both cities also follow the trend of corporate nomadism, providing meeting rooms and private offices that individuals can rent for long-term periods. In addition, coworking spaces in both cities provide

various flexible membership options that can support this lifestyle and style of work.

At the same time, spatial organization, atmosphere, and patterns of use differ between the cities. Coworking spaces in Zurich are more professional, structured, and have a more office-like character, providing users with more privacy, acoustic comfort, and long-term solutions for companies and corporate professionals. These environments often function as an alternative to traditional offices, offering services such as virtual office registration, mail handling, and secure private offices. Such spaces can be a good alternative for corporate nomads who need a flexible but at the same time professional environment to perform their working tasks.

In contrast, coworking spaces in Milan demonstrate a stronger focus on community, creativity, and social interaction. Many spaces function not only as workplaces but also as social and cultural hubs that foster networking, informal communication, and participation in events. The atmosphere in Milan coworking spaces is generally more informal and dynamic, attracting freelancers, students, and creative professionals, as well as short-term users and digital nomads. Some spaces organize not only workshops but also summer camps and other

activities not related to work, becoming real community centers. These differences reflect the cultural and economic contexts of the two cities.

When it comes to design, Zurich coworking spaces mirror the corporate work culture of the city, emphasizing efficiency, stability, and work-life balance. Milan coworking spaces, on the other hand, reflect the city's strong creative industries and social work culture, emphasizing flexibility, interaction, and community.

Overall, coworking spaces in both cities provide hybrid working environments that combine work with social life, becoming an alternative to traditional and home offices. However, different work cultures cause some divergent features that can be seen in spatial organization, design elements, patterns of space use, and workers' behavior. Thus, while Zurich coworking spaces provide professional office alternatives, Milan coworking spaces combine professional, social, and creative functions, offering more socially oriented work environments.

7. Conclusions

7.1. From analysis to design principles

7.2. Design guidelines for an ideal workspace

7.2.1. Accessibility and location strategy

7.2.2. Sustainable reuse of buildings as an innovative approach to workspace design

7.2.3. Hybrid spatial structure

7.2.4. Clear and diverse zoning

7.2.5. Balance between collaboration and private work

7.2.6. Privacy and acoustic comfort

7.2.7. Provision of professional equipment

7.2.8. Integration of home-like elements

7.2.9. Flexible policies to support diverse user groups

7.2.10. Corporate nomads as a new target user group

7.2.11. Strong sense of community

7.2.12. Third place functionality: something in-between home and office

7.2.13. Integration of social life and community activities

7.2.14. Strong brand identity

7.2.15. Development of coworking chains across locations

7.3. Limitations of the investigation

7.1. From analysis to design principles

The analysis of coworking spaces in Milano and Zurich has shown that contemporary workspaces are no longer limited to traditional office models. Moreover, contemporary coworking environments are no longer limited to old-style coworking cafés. Instead, workspaces have evolved into hybrid environments that combine professional, social, and relaxation functions.

The analysis also raises the question of whether contemporary coworking environments can still be defined simply as “workspaces” in the traditional sense. These environments combine characteristics of offices, homes, and social spaces, integrating work, leisure, and everyday life. In this sense, coworking environments can be understood as *hybrid work habitats*, where professional activities, social interaction, and personal comfort coexist within a single space. They are not only places for work but also environments that support lifestyle, identity, and community.

Thus, it is possible to highlight that an attractive workspace for today’s workers is a fusion of office environments with all the necessary equipment and ergonomic furniture, home-like environments with relaxation areas and amenities, and social hubs with like-minded

individuals.

In this research, the concept of an “ideal workspace” is understood primarily from the perspective of the user. The proposed design guidelines focus on creating environments that support the comfort, productivity, flexibility, and well-being of contemporary workers, including freelancers, corporate nomads, and hybrid employees. At the same time, such environments also respond to the needs of organizations by providing efficient, adaptable, and economically sustainable working solutions that are also profitable.

For the formulation of design principles, it is necessary to consider the target group of users and the people who might be interested in renting these workspaces. There is no longer just one type of user; on the contrary, the target group has evolved and can be represented by several subtypes, such as:

- freelancers or nomadic workers, who are still one of the main user groups,
- corporate nomads, a relatively new and growing group,
- startups and young organizations,

- corporate companies that have the possibility to rent large spaces or entire floors.

The shift from freelancers toward corporate nomads and hybrid workers can be observed. Hybrid work has become the new norm, and workers have a need for flexibility and a variety of spaces. Moreover, traveling workers or digital nomads require flexible access and short-term rental options, which has led to the integration of more flexible membership models.

Another change in working environments is related to the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and the period of remote work, which introduced a new experience into the lives of workers who realized the advantages of working from home. As a result, workspaces had to reconsider their spatial organization and identity in order to attract employees back to physical environments. At the same time, workers also realized the limitations of working from home, as online meetings cannot fully replace in-person interaction. Thus, the concept of third places has become increasingly important. In this way, many coworking spaces aim to also perform the function of a third place, fostering a sense of community and encouraging face-to-face communication and collaboration.

In this context, coworking has also become part of urban lifestyle, providing not only a place to work but also opportunities for social life, networking, and participation in various events, both work-related and informal, educational or entertaining. Work-life integration within workspaces is becoming increasingly important, as spaces are expected to support not only work activities but also rest and informal interaction.

In addition, a growing trend toward coworking spaces can be observed, as more startups and companies choose coworking environments instead of renting traditional offices. This shift is driven by both economic reasons and questions of comfort and flexibility. As a result, coworking spaces increasingly need to provide professional equipment, such as ergonomic furniture, facilities for paperwork, mail services, and long-term membership options. At the same time, this trend has led to an increased demand for privacy and focused work, which can be observed especially in the Zurich case. Thus, coworking environments are evolving from informal spaces into environments that support deep work, offering private rooms and acoustic control.

Furthermore, as coworking spaces gain popularity, large coworking chains and networks have emerged across cities and even countries. This globalization of coworking brands supports work mobility, as users can access multiple locations with a single membership. It also increases the corporate appeal of coworking spaces, attracting not only freelancers but also companies and startups that prefer reliable and predictable environments. At the same time, independent coworking spaces often maintain a more creative and unique design identity. Coworking chains introduce a higher level of standardization in terms of services, spatial organization, and design, ensuring that users can expect similar amenities, infrastructure quality, and working conditions across different locations. This makes coworking spaces more attractive for professionals and companies seeking stable and professional working environments.

However, the comparison of coworking spaces in Milan and Zurich also revealed that different cultural and economic contexts lead to different spatial solutions, user behaviors, and design priorities.

These findings highlight the need to move beyond description and toward the definition of clear design principles for working environments. Rather than offering general recommendations, this chapter proposes a set of design guidelines for the development of an ideal coworking space. These guidelines are based on the spatial, functional, and social patterns identified throughout the research and aim to support the creation of flexible, inclusive, and efficient work environments for contemporary users.

7.2. Design guidelines for an ideal workspace

7.2.1.

Accessibility and location strategy

Accessibility is a key factor in the success of a coworking space, since route convenience and proximity are what workers pay attention to first. An ideal coworking space should be located in an area that is easy to reach, well served by public transport, well developed, and not overcrowded. Close proximity to railway stations, airports, or the city center, as well as metro lines and bus stops, plays a crucial role when users choose a coworking space. At the same time, coworking spaces do not necessarily need to be located in central areas, as these are usually the most expensive, crowded, and busy parts of the city. They can also be located in developing areas that are well served by public transport and offer a calm environment and more spacious interiors. Therefore, a balance between accessibility, cost, and environmental quality is essential when selecting the location of a coworking space.



Figure 87: Recommended location strategy for coworking spaces.

7.2.2.

Sustainable reuse of buildings as an innovative approach to workspace design

To create an ideal coworking space, architects should consider the possibility of adaptive reuse of existing buildings, especially former industrial or non-office structures that are currently abandoned but have the potential to become new social hubs. Renovation and restructuring of such spaces represent an innovative approach, while preserving the history of a building can provide additional inspiration for creating a unique and distinctive design identity, making coworking environments more attractive and recognizable. In this way, the design often offers unique spatial qualities, such as high ceilings, distinctive materials, and large open areas that can be adapted for flexible layouts. Thus, the case studies in both Milan and Zurich demonstrate that adaptive reuse not only supports sustainability but also contributes to the creation of creative and culturally meaningful workspaces.

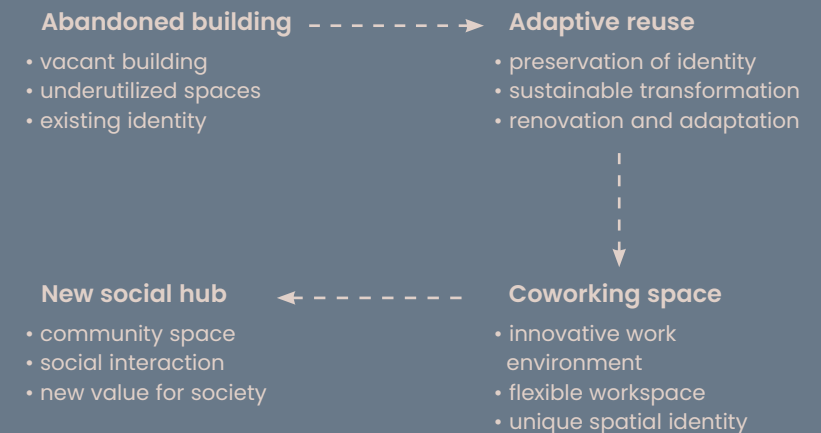


Figure 88: Transformation of abandoned buildings into coworking spaces.

7.2.3.

Hybrid spatial structure

An ideal coworking space that is in high demand among workers should have a hybrid spatial structure that combines zones dedicated to various activities within one space. These activities should relate to both work and leisure, providing users with a flexible environment that includes open coworking areas, private offices, meeting rooms, and informal zones such as lounges, kitchen areas, and relaxation spaces. Such a structure allows users to choose the most appropriate environment depending on their tasks, while also distinguishing coworking spaces from standard and monotonous office environments, as well as from home or café settings. This flexibility reflects the needs of contemporary users, including freelancers, corporate nomads and hybrid workers, who often switch between different activities throughout the day and benefit from opportunities for social interaction. Therefore, coworking spaces should avoid rigid layouts and instead provide a variety of interconnected spaces that can accommodate different working styles and activity preferences.



Figure 89: Typical sequence of user activities throughout a day in a coworking space.

7.2.4.

Clear and diverse zoning

Although combining various activities and settings within one space, an ideal coworking space should have a clear and well-defined zoning strategy that separates different functions while maintaining spatial continuity. Distinct zones for focused work, collaboration, relaxation, and social interaction should be carefully planned to avoid conflicts between activities and the creation of a chaotic atmosphere. Clear zoning helps users intuitively understand the function of each area. Thus, zones for relaxation and socialization can be located close to kitchen and dining areas, while private offices and meeting rooms should be separated from more dynamic zones in order to provide a higher level of privacy and acoustic isolation. At the same time, zoning should remain flexible and not overly rigid. Visual connections between areas, as well as smooth transitions, can support a sense of a unified open space while still maintaining functional clarity.

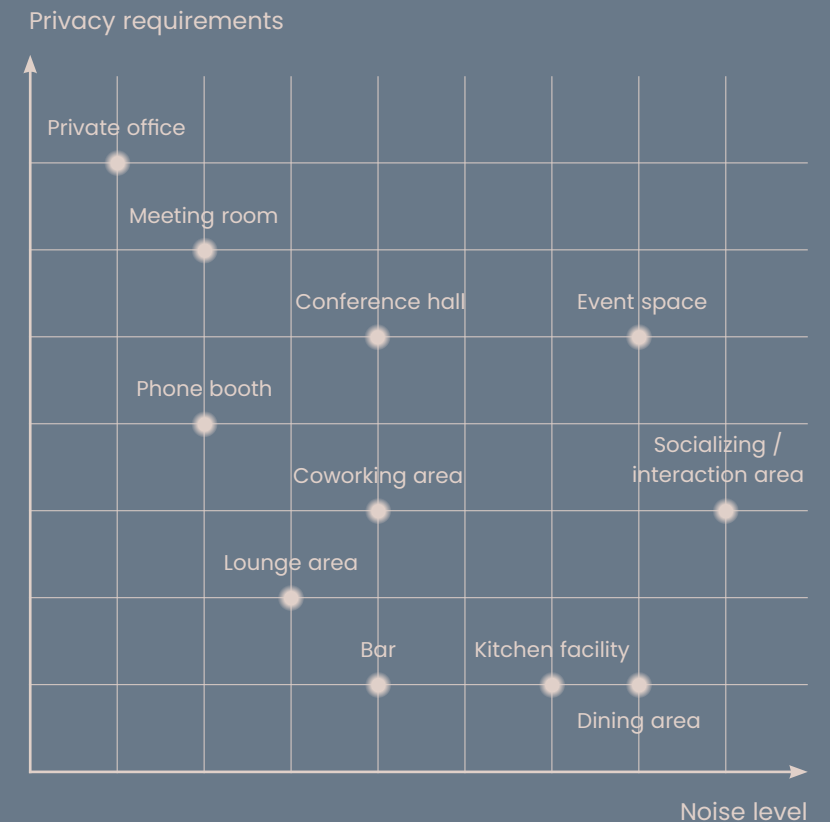


Figure 90: Spatial zoning according to privacy and noise requirements.

7.2.5.

Balance between collaboration and private work

An ideal coworking space should maintain a balance between collaborative areas and spaces for focused work. The research has shown that the demand for private offices has increased in both cities. For example, even community-focused coworking spaces and coworking cafés have introduced private rooms into their services. Therefore, the organization of coworking environments should provide both open, dynamic areas, where coworking functions as a true collaborative environment that encourages interaction, fosters a sense of community, and supports networking and socialization, as well as quieter zones dedicated to focused work. Such zones may include private offices, conference rooms for presentations, meeting rooms for client interactions, and phone booths for calls without disturbing other users. Designing spaces according to these principles allows users to switch between different working modes while having a single environment that meets all their needs. This flexibility reflects the working patterns of contemporary users; therefore, achieving a balance between collaboration and privacy becomes a key factor in creating efficient, comfortable, and user-oriented coworking environments.



Figure 91: Recommended distribution of space functions in coworking spaces based on case study analysis.

7.2.6.

Privacy and acoustic comfort

An ideal coworking space should provide a high level of privacy and acoustic comfort, especially in areas dedicated to focused work. During the research, a lack of privacy and a high level of noise were identified as some of the main drawbacks of coworking spaces. Thus, to address this issue, the design of coworking environments should include solutions such as soundproof phone booths, enclosed meeting rooms, and private offices with locking doors and the necessary equipment, where users can work with sensitive data. The use of sound-absorbing materials, the spatial separation of noisy and quiet zones, and careful layout planning can help create spaces suitable for users who seek greater privacy. The analysis of coworking spaces, particularly in Zurich, demonstrates that users increasingly value work environments where they can concentrate and perform tasks that require attention and confidentiality. This is especially important for corporate professionals, startups, and users working with sensitive information.

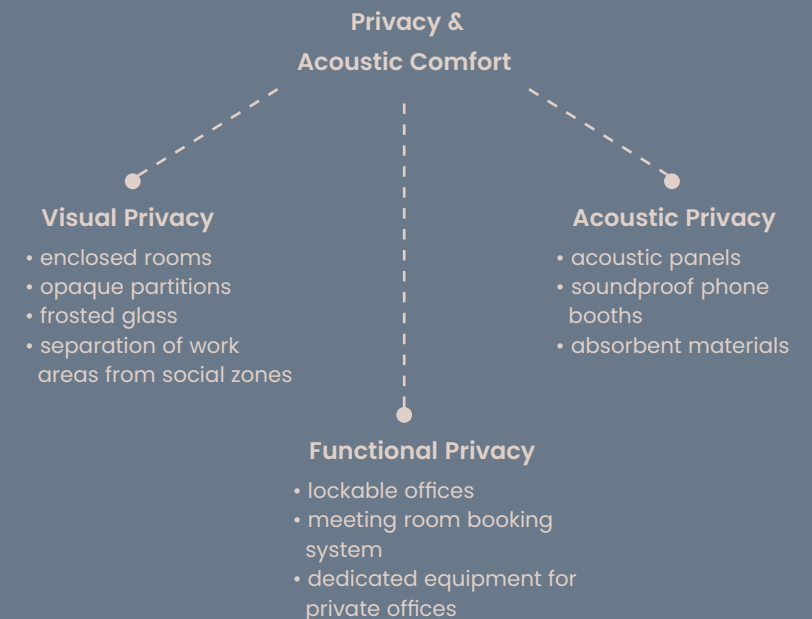


Figure 92: Design strategies for achieving privacy and acoustic comfort in coworking spaces.

7.2.7.

Provision of professional equipment

To satisfy the needs of users who choose coworking spaces as an alternative to traditional office environments, it is necessary to provide all the professional equipment required for office and paperwork, meeting the functional standards of a traditional workplace. To address the needs of emerging user groups, such as corporate nomads and remote workers who perform daily work tasks, coworking spaces should provide reliable high-speed internet, ergonomic desks and chairs, access to printers and scanners, and well-equipped meeting rooms for presentations and client meetings. Moreover, to support the flexibility and mobility of organizations and startups, an ideal coworking space should offer business-oriented services such as mail handling, reception services, and secure access systems, further enhancing the overall professional quality of the workspace.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Coworking space} \\ + \\ \text{Professional office equipment} \\ = \\ \textbf{Professional workplace} \end{array}$$

for:

- corporate nomads
 - startups
- remote workers
- small companies

Figure 93: *Integration of professional office infrastructure into coworking spaces.*

7.2.8.

Integration of home-like elements

Providing all the services and amenities comparable to professional offices, an ideal coworking space should integrate home-like elements for user relaxation. Such integration supports a hybrid work model and allows users, while having all the amenities to perform working tasks, to have the comfort of a home-like environment. Thus, users can relax and have some entertainment or interaction in the same space where they work. Home-like elements may include various lounge zones with comfortable armchairs and sofas, but also a kitchen zone, dining area, gym, shower cabins, and game or cinema rooms. In this way, home-like elements play an important role in supporting work-life integration, creating a comfortable, welcoming, and less formal working environment, and improving the overall quality of coworking spaces, where users can feel more at ease if they get stressed by work.



Figure 94: Integration of home-like elements into coworking spaces.

7.2.9.

Flexible policies to support diverse user groups

An ideal coworking space that will attract workers should have a wide range of membership options to cover the specific needs of diverse groups of users with different schedules and spatial requirements. Thus, it should provide favorable conditions for both organizations and individual workers, including long-term memberships such as fixed desks and private offices, as well as short-term memberships with daily or hourly passes. Memberships should also vary in spatial configurations, from renting a flexible desk suitable for nomadic workers to renting entire offices for companies and startups. All groups of clients should be provided with the option to rent meeting rooms. Moreover, memberships can also vary depending on the number of hours of meeting room access per month. In addition, providing users with personal access keys and 24-hour access to the space can be highly advantageous, as it allows greater flexibility and supports different working schedules, especially for users who work late hours or across different time zones. Such flexibility allows users to choose solutions that best fit their professional needs and financial possibilities, as many people choose coworking spaces over traditional offices for financial reasons.

Membership model		User group
Pay-as-you-go	● —	digital nomads
Short-term	● —	corporate nomads
Flexible (fixed number of days/month)	● —	remote workers hybrid workers freelancers
Long-term	● —	companies startups

Figure 95: Recommended membership options for different coworking user groups.

7.2.10.

Corporate nomads as a new target user group

An ideal coworking space should be focused on corporate nomads as a new and growing user group. While coworking spaces were initially designed for freelancers and tech professionals, contemporary work culture increasingly attracts employees of companies, remote teams and business travelers who require flexible yet professional workspaces. Corporate nomads combine traveling with structured work and office hours; therefore, they seek a workspace with a high level of flexibility, professional equipment, privacy and reliability. The development of coworking chains and networks further supports this user group by allowing access to workspaces in multiple locations with a similar structure under one membership. In this way, designing environments while keeping in mind this new target group helps to meet current work trends and create relevant workspaces.



Figure 96: Evolution of coworking space user groups and the emergence of corporate nomads as a new target group.

7.2.11.

Strong sense of community

An ideal coworking space should foster a strong sense of community among its users. Coworking environments are not only places for work but also spaces where people can socialize, interact, share ideas, and build professional and social connections. Without a sense of community, coworking spaces risk becoming similar to traditional offices, losing one of their key advantages. Thus, since one of the main goals of coworking spaces is to bring like-minded individuals together, it is possible to focus on specific professional groups, as was observed in the case studies of Milan and Zurich, for example, creative professionals, tech startups and remote workers, or even more specific groups of people, such as in QF/QWork + QBABY coworking space – working parents. In this way, members of the workspace can build valuable and deeper connections, which contribute not only to productivity but also to the overall user experience.

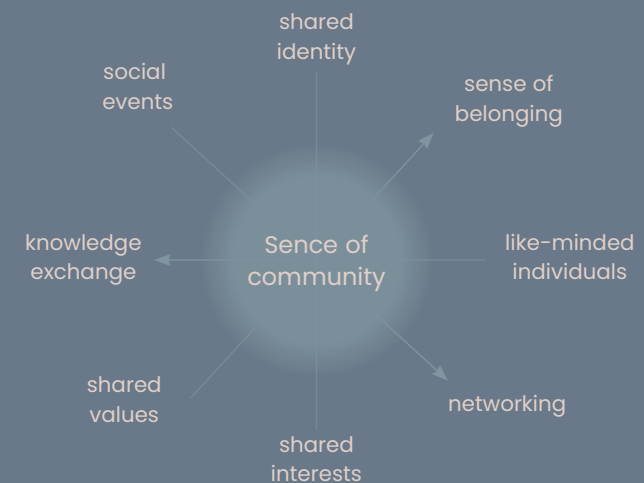


Figure 97: Inputs and outcomes of a community sense in coworking spaces.

7.2.12.

Third place functionality: something *in-between* home and office

An ideal coworking space should function as a third place, an environment between home and a traditional office space. Unlike formal workplaces, coworking spaces offer a more informal atmosphere where users can feel comfortable and socialize. Therefore, the design and organization of coworking spaces should encourage communication and interaction between users. This can be achieved through shared spaces such as lounges, kitchen areas, and informal meeting zones, where users can meet and exchange ideas in a relaxed environment. Long shared tables in coworking zones can foster interaction between workers during working hours, while break room games can encourage socializing during free time.

Thus, the concept of a third place offers several advantages for users. It supports user interaction, contributing to their well-being, especially for those who are tired of working from home or nomad workers traveling alone. It also creates opportunities for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. For companies, such environments can also be beneficial, as they increase employee satisfaction, creativity, and productivity, while also supporting

flexible work models.

However, the third place concept also has certain limitations. The informal atmosphere of such environments may cause distractions and a lack of concentration among users who require quiet and focused working conditions. In addition, not all users have a need for constant interaction, and some may prefer more private and structured environments. For companies as well, it can have some limitations, since the strong focus on a social and informal atmosphere may sometimes conflict with professional requirements, especially for those who work with confidential data.

Therefore, while the third place functionality is desirable for many users, particularly freelancers, nomad workers, and hybrid workers, it should be carefully balanced with privacy, focus, and professional performance. In this way, coworking spaces can successfully combine the functions of a third place and a working environment without compromising the quality of users' work performance.

7.2.13.

Integration of social life and community activities

An ideal coworking space should integrate, host and organize various activities and events, both work-related and entertaining. These may include workshops, open lectures, informal gatherings, classes or cultural events that bring users together and foster interaction. These initiatives help coworking spaces strengthen the sense of community, function as a third place, encourage collaboration and create opportunities for professional and personal development. The research demonstrates that coworking spaces, particularly in Milan, often integrate social and cultural activities into their daily functioning, transforming the workspace into a dynamic and engaging social hub. In contrast, in Zurich, such activities are less frequent and more work-oriented. In this way, the integration of social life and community activities enhances the user experience, supports networking and contributes to the creation of a vibrant and friendly atmosphere.



Figure 98: Community activities as a bridge between professional development and social interaction in coworking spaces.

7.2.14.

Strong brand identity

A coworking space that will become popular among users and attract new members should have a strong and recognizable brand identity that is reflected in its interior design, spatial layout, furniture choices, as well as in its official social networks, event themes, and overall atmosphere. Nowadays, coworking environments are not only alternatives to office spaces but also represent certain values, lifestyles and professional communities. Therefore, design elements such as colors, materials, and graphic components should be carefully selected to create a cohesive and distinctive identity. A well-defined brand identity can make the space more attractive to specific user groups and more memorable and distinctive compared to other spaces. Thus, a successful coworking space may provide its users with a unique and memorable experience, design and atmosphere that stand out among the numerous existing workspaces.



Figure 99: Main elements shaping the brand identity of a coworking space.

7.2.15.

Development of coworking chains across locations

An ideal coworking space should consider the possibility of expanding into a network of workspaces across different locations. The development of coworking chains will allow its members to access multiple workspaces under one membership. Moreover, such expansion supports mobility and flexibility in contemporary work culture. This approach is especially beneficial for corporate nomads, remote workers and companies whose employees travel frequently or work across different cities. By providing consistent service quality, familiar spatial organization and the same professional equipment in each location, coworking chains create a reliable working environment for users. Thus, coworking networks attract users by offering the opportunity to work in various locations while maintaining familiar conditions. This also strengthens brand identity and expands networking opportunities for members. In this way, the creation of coworking chains supports new patterns of work, increases accessibility, and contributes to the development of coworking as a global and flexible working model.

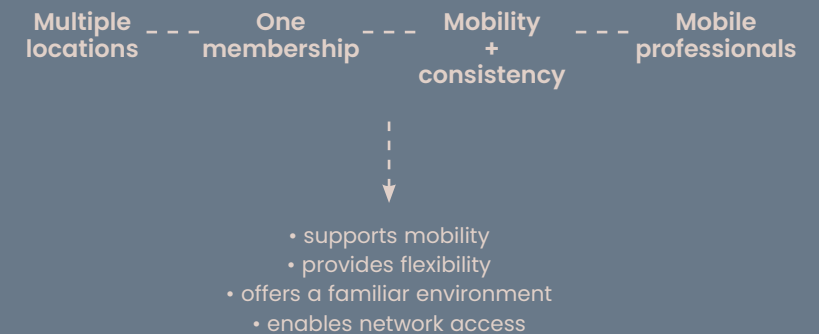


Figure 100: Benefits of coworking chains for mobile professionals.

7.3. Limitations of the investigation

The present research has several limitations that should be considered. First, the study is based on a limited number of coworking spaces in Milan and Zurich. Since the sample size is reduced, it cannot fully represent the diversity of the global coworking landscape. Although the chosen case studies provide valuable information for the research, a larger sample could offer a more complete understanding of coworking environments.

Second, the analysis is based on site empirical visits and direct observations, without the use of structured interviews or quantitative data feedbacks. As a result, user behavior and preferences are interpreted mainly through direct observation and reviews of the spaces, which may limit the depth of the analysis.

In addition, the research was conducted within a

specific time frame. Therefore, patterns of space usage may vary depending on the day of the week, time of day or season and may not fully reflect long-term usage trends.

Furthermore, the study focuses only on two European cities, Milano and Zurich. While this comparison allows for the identification of cultural and economic differences between the two cities, the findings cannot be directly generalized to other geographic contexts with different social, economic or urban conditions.

Finally, coworking environments are continuously evolving, adopting hybrid work models and flexibility, especially after post-pandemic changes in work culture. This means that some of the observed trends and conclusions may change over time, requiring further research in the future.

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