“A comparative study of coworking models within private, public and non-governmental sectors”

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During the past few years, the concept of coworking has acquired attention in different fields, starting from the academic research and ending with the proper policy formation activities at the local and even national levels. Coworking is often started by private for profit or not for profit organisations, stimulated by a specific individual motivation to have a flexible working time and to develop local community combining social and professional spheres. In rare cases, municipalities and other public bodies are initiators or partners of coworking initiatives, hence, such examples are rare and important to be shared among the other public bodies and countries. The initiation of the European Coworking Network project was possible due to various positive serendipity elements, where by dint of unplanned activities people met together and had a chance to brainstorm on the fostering of coworking at the European level. Since all of the involved partners strongly believe in a coworking concept as a tool for an entrepreneurial, social and personal development, hence, the journey of project’s application has started in 2014 with different participants.

In 2015, the project “The European Coworking Network” was granted to Zadra Nova by “Erasmus+” funding programme. The project entitles various activities which are concentrated on the young people who have passion for social and economic changes to develop knowledge, skills and networks they need to make a difference. Also it is supposed to create guidelines and learning module for an educational support of entrepreneurs. Finally, it also concentrates on information and recommendations for potential coworking founders from different sectors including non-governmental, private and public one. It was identified, that in a lot of countries, the summarised information with the best cases and recommendations for potential founders from existing ones, is still missing. The main focus of the project is to provide training, information and networking opportunities to the young people, start-ups and other stakeholders from Croatia, Hungary, Spain, Belgium and Latvia. Apart from that, since the material will be available in English, the aim is to disseminate it to as broad existing and potential coworking community as possible.

And finally, the aim of the project is to generate new possibilities, learning and experience that will guide the future improvement of a coworking concept in various European countries.
The “European Coworking Network” project team undertook to provide an overview of a relevant and up-to-date situation in the field of coworking practices in different sectors and regions, but with the main focus on activities within the European Union. To explore and at the same time motivate stakeholders, the below mentioned guidelines concentrate on following objectives:

Objective 1: getting an overall review, analysing and summarising the best practices and different elements to initiate and run effectively coworking spaces in various sectors;

Objective 2: surveying coworking spaces to understand the patterns of initiating and running coworking spaces, finding out any undiscovered elements of the effective initiating and running coworking;

Objective 3: performing a case study analysis to discover and describe the best cases as role models for coworking operations;

Objective 4: providing potential coworking spaces with relevant recommendations to initiate coworking spaces.

The research itself is concentrated on the two critical points:

- different preconditions of initiating coworking spaces;
- processes and elements of running coworking spaces.

It has to be admitted that the main part of the research is rather dedicated to the assurance that a proper analysis had been executed by potential founders before the coworking was started. Hence, it was more concentrated on the initiating activities of coworking spaces. The research applied use of secondary and primary data. Secondary data was used in the content analysis to investigate the countries’ characteristic situations and different global trends and practices, while an online questionnaire which was distributed among the target group (coworking spaces) was used to collect primary data. Content analysis. The content analysis was based on the available national and local documents, legislations, reports on the condition of coworking activities in the particular countries and beyond those. Although, the content analysis and the text body elements are assessed empirically to establish and document specific aspects of their characteristics and the relations among them. The content analysis elements can include words, idioms, sentences, paragraphs, articles, or entire papers and reports. Based on a specific sequence of steps, the content analysis allows the researcher to interpret meaningfully the content presented making inferences on the patterns of the content within the specific elements of the given text. Then the gained results were filtered according to the relevance of the given title or abstract and whether or not the subjects of articles found in the search were related to the nature of the study. We included case studies applied no later as year 2010, since it is reasonable to base learning on relatively recent processes and data. The content analysis role is to identify general trends, the best development and support practises of coworking spaces in the European Union and beyond its borders. At the same time, it also points out some challenges facing coworking spaces in terms of sustainability, impact, community building and other issues.

The online questionnaire is described further in the document.
What is coworking

The role of coworking in the economy

Different trends of the global economy and demographic changes continue to shape the changing workplace landscape, while creating opportunities for freelancers and entrepreneurs and empowering the coworking movement. As employees become increasingly mobile, The Economist magazine predicts the trend could “challenge many of the fundamental assumptions of 20th-century capitalism, from the nature of the firm to the structure of careers”. Moreover, computers and mobile devices increasingly connect consumers to the “On-Demand Economy”. In the changing economy, the coworking movement is one of the best options to meet new needs of the society. Such spaces provide an adaptable environment for the new economy – and a new generation of freelancers – to operate. The late 2000s (2010-2015) have been a start of a new kind of a workplace: a coworking space. Coworking spaces started as a shared office service, offering a working infrastructure to individuals and/or teams. Throughout time, the concept has evolved and now it also implies a community that shares and connects. All of the coworking spaces have in common the fact that they offer shared working spaces/logistics for individuals of similar needs. Shared space characteristics provides them with the unique opportunity to use it in a very flexible manner. It means that people using coworking spaces (can) use it when they really need it – either for their daily work, or for connecting with others (partners, clients, mentors), or for finding inspiration and motivation. For some of the users, flexibility also implies a very important cost reduction, specifically vital for freelancers, start-ups, students – mainly those groups who are more financially constrained than others or whose income may be inconsistent over time. As of 2015, 7800 spaces have been identified worldwide with more than half million members according to the first data from the Global Coworking survey newest series. The consulting firm Emergent Research has forecasted a growth in the global coworking facilities of about 30% over the five years since 2014. According to the forecast it has been predicted that worldwide membership will surpass 1 million in 2018, with new spaces being both larger and more efficient than at present in using space (See Fig.1).
Besides that, Haldane (2015) in the article “The Ultimate Guide to Co-working Spaces” states that by 2020, more than 40% of the workforce will consist of freelancers, solopreneurs, independent contractors and temps. This trend clearly explains the boost and expansion of a coworking concept, since the structure of employment forms nowadays is experiencing a change. He also states that almost 92% of those renting coworking spaces are currently satisfied with this kind of arrangement and prefer to work this way. Data from the Global Coworking Survey (2015) shows a similar trend reflecting the satisfaction level at 8.38 from 10 possible points of the maximum.

In the article, there is also a note that 91% of co-workers agree that working together is a great way to interact with people from different fields improving communication skills. Besides, Deskmag (2015) mentions that 75% of co-workers expect to have a small talk.

Finally, Haldane (2015) states that 70% of co-workers believe that working together independently, under the same roof, is much better than working from a cubicle in a jam-packed traditional office setting. The increase of different work models is a key driving element of a changing coworking culture. Coworking offers solutions for businesses, whether a local economy is established or still is growing. A 2014 report from the World Bank estimated that almost 100 coworking hubs had sprung up across the African continent, propelling the tech sector forward with home-grown entrepreneurship. Kwiatowski (2012) in his article “The impact of coworking spaces on the local economy” mentions three main areas, where coworking has impacted at the local economy level.

Coworking keeps stellar talent in town

Coworking spaces supports talented and self-assured individuals. Without coworking, many in mid-sized urban areas would have to commute or move their families to bigger cities with more opportunities than now. Coworking allows them to stay in town, preserving their money, talent, and enthusiasm for the local economy use.

Coworking supports small business

Small businesses are the ones among the main tenants of coworking. These businesses drive down the unemployment rates having in their disposal safe places to grow and develop.

Coworking creates a network for collaborative consumption

Collaborative consumption means reusing, growing, renting, bartering and creating instead of buying. But the sharing economy demands a network of friendly, trustworthy people to make it work. These networks can be easily build in coworking spaces. Coworking spaces (CS) are regarded as “serendipity accelerators”, designed to host creative people and entrepreneurs, to break isolation and to find a convivial environment that favours collaboration. At the beginning of the movement, CS establishment was purely a private initiative, but at the moment, it can be characterised as an outcome of the frontiers blurring and hybridization processes among technological, economic and social categories (Moriset, 2014).

It is expected that coworking spaces will be “new models of work” in the context of the ‘collaborative and ‘sharing’ economy (Botsman and Rogers, 2011). For better understanding of the coworking spaces’ role, its meaning clarification has to be made. Coworking spaces are workplaces shared by different professionals, mostly freelancers, working in various degrees of specialisation in creative and knowledge industries. Gandini (2015) states that coworking is the ‘third way’ of working, a halfway between a ‘standard’ work life

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**Fig. 1: Coworking facility forecast**

Source: Emergent Research
within a traditional, well-delineated workplace in a community-like environment, and a halfway - an independent work life as a freelancer, characteristic of freedom and independence, where a worker is based at home in isolation. This third way was coined “coworking” without the hyphen, to indicate the practice of working individually in a shared environment – and to differentiate it from co-working (with hyphen), which indicates working closely together on a piece of work (Fost, 2008) – although often these terms are used interchangeably. Is coworking phenomena as inevitably positive, or is it just an emerging ‘coworking bubble’, as recently suggested (Moriset, 2014), has to be decided during the coming years.

Deskmag (2014), leading online reference for the coworking movement, shows that coworking is developing steadily in ‘creative cities’ of advanced economies, such as London, Berlin and Paris in Europe, San Francisco and New York in the US. At the same time, also Moriset (2014) points out the development potential and presence of 129 spaces in Japan, 95 in Brazil, 60 in Australia and 39 in Russia. In the study of coworking spaces in the United States (Texas), Spinuzzi (2012) argues that coworking is the example of the new models of ‘distributed work’, incoming trend in the organisation of labour in the knowledge economy. However, an un-bright side of CS is that the majority (60%) of CS are not profitable, according to the Second Coworking Survey implemented by Deskmag (Foertsch, 2011b). At the same time, Deskmag’s poll has found out that 70% of large CS (over 50 members) are profitable. Coiffard (2012) states that a part of the value created by CS is non tangible and additional resources have to be found from public subsidies, sales of services (meeting rooms’ rental, seminars’ organization, coffee shops) and from large firms’ sponsoring. However, large firms may benefit not only from sponsoring of coworking.

Well-established companies may also benefit from a coworking cooperation model. Fast Company (2013) magazine reported that half of the Fortune 500 companies, including Google, Amazon and Twitter offer coworking memberships to their staff. According to a global survey (Deskmag, 3rd) 47% of coworkers worldwide are not freelancers, which is a gradually growing proportion. Certain benefits of the movement are universal for all modes of work, not just entrepreneurship. Large employers also value synergies and enthusiasm that characterize these spaces. Summing up, coworking spaces should be regarded as the most recent implementation of a new approach towards work and its organisation. It has its roots in the shared and highly networked forms of a collaborative production.

However, also a critical approach of ‘coworking bubble’ suggested by Moriset (2014) has to be taken into account, while analysing the role of coworking spaces in the nowadays economy.
First and foremost, it is necessary there is a shared vision among them, based firmly on their shared values and the articulated mission they want to set in motion. Only when this is clear, the process of planning and opening a coworking space can kick off. First and foremost, it is necessary to conduct a detailed market research, identifying the market need and articulating diverse demands from the target market. It is also important to map out potential partners and supporters that work in a similar or a complementary field. Those can be different kinds of civil society organizations, private companies, public institutions or institutes, foundations, cooperatives, citizens initiatives, distinguished individuals or similar. Those are organisations and teams/people that you can learn a lot from, that you can potentially connect to, have them help you network further on, fundraise, or even set in motion a common program once your coworking space is up and running. Parallel to that, it is of utmost importance to start a community building process much before actually opening a coworking space. A coworking space has long grown over the initial concept of shared working facilities and has evolved into a concept which implies connectedness to a community of like-minded individuals, future clients or partners, a space of inspiration, innovation and efficiency (depending on the focus and/or the mission of a coworking space). This means that community building is the basic precondition for a coworking space success – as a founder, you have to have a clear proof not only of the existing demand but clear evidence that your future community is starting to gather and grow. With the community...
building process in such early phases, you also start giving a form to the internal culture of a future coworking space. This process implies a clear communication of a coworking space's values, mission and relevance that are particularly important for new coworking spaces opening up in a market where other similar spaces have already existed. In the markets where coworking is still a brand or a relatively new concept, a community building process will also be a process of an active and continuous promotion of a coworking concept and what it is in practical terms – what does it imply. For this, different formats of public or private events can be organized – info sessions, workshops, meetups, etc. Aside from these, community building can include individual in-depth talks with potential users, as well as, with partners and supporters. Conversations should not only be about the level of the existing need for a new coworking space but also about the features it would include, services it would offer and the characteristics it would communicate to the wider audience. A coworking space as a space of collaboration and promotion of a new work paradigm should be a place that is co-created, both by founders and future users in a space of an equal relevancy and participation. By hearing a real voice of your future clients and incorporating their wishes and needs in a space, you are not only reducing the risk to offer to the market something that is not needed but of creating a space of a shared ownership, a space that a community will feel a part of and genuinely try to contribute to in any possible manner. In some cases, members of this initial community can be converted into co-founders or even co-founders of a coworking space.

Spinuzzi (2012) studied coworking spaces in Austin area (the United States) and found many characteristics or commonalities between coworking spaces including:

- a conference room;
- a kitchen;
- open plan rooms;
- coffee bar/access;
- fast Wi-Fi;
- printers/photocopiers;
- library;
- desk space;
- phone rooms;
- offices that may be leased;
- business services like legal, accounting, finance, and creative;
- some have a specific niche/industry;
- host events, workshops, meetups, and networking.

Coworking space building with taking into account mentioned characteristics has to be built as a really suitable space.
**Functional Furniture:** coworking members need to feel comfortable while they work, so in addition to the space, the furniture is another basic, but important feature. This does not mean that every coworking space has to have super expensive chairs for everyone, but they do need to give its members comfortable and functional furniture. No abstract chairs that double as art, but just comfortable chairs. Do not underestimate the value of sturdy furniture! It is comfortable to work at a solid table with a secure chair. Poorly designed furniture, like a wobbly table or chairs that rock unevenly, are going to add an unnecessary distraction. If it is a persisting problem, eventually members will lose confidence in the space and will find another spot. Offering alternative furniture, like couches or bean bag chairs, are a great touch to a coworking space design. These options give its members the feeling that they are not tied to their desk or a communal table. They will feel like they have freedom to move around. Different seating arrangements can be used for different kinds of work. For example, some use their regular sitting/standing desks for checking off tasks. Then they might move to a couch or a bean bag chair for a more creative work.

**Quality Technology:** Your coworking space should not remind its members of their previous café or other spot work experience. Members should not be spending time hunting down an outlet or wondering if the Internet is working. The technological amenities offered must work properly and be accessible. There should be plenty of outlets around all the tables. When you are choosing your communal tables, consider options with outlets built into the surface areas, so members do not have to get on their hands and knees to plug in a laptop. Interrupting a fellow member to ask and share an outlet does not reflect well on your coworking space. The Internet is the life-blood of any company these days. Coworking spaces must have high quality Wi-Fi. Make sure your router is in a central location and it is in an elevated location. The radio waves coming from your router transmit out and down, so a higher placement is optimal. Nothing will frustrate members as quickly as less than a reliable Wi-Fi.

**Suitable Conference Rooms:** Offering suitable conference room options are vital for coworking spaces. The conference room experience cannot be replicated sitting around at home or at a coffee shop. Quickly and easily booking a conference room is something many businesses people value. If they have a meeting and can sit everyone down in a proper conference room, members will be lining up to impress clients. A simple meeting room app makes a conference room management painless for its members and staff.

Conference rooms are an invaluable tool to entrepreneurs. Give your coworking space an advantage by offering members alternatives to a “corner café” with meeting rooms of different sizes.

**Call Rooms:** Open offices with communal tables and desks are great for group work and collaborating with coworkers, but they can be distracting and noisy. They can also make it difficult to take a call from a client. Background noise and asking a client to constantly repeat themselves can be embarrassing, and can disrupt members around you. Dedicated quiet rooms eliminate this scenario. Not quite the size of a conference room or an individual office, quiet rooms offer members a slice of peace and quiet. They can easily step out from the day-to-day buzz of the coworking space and take a call in peace. We recommend having more than one call room, depending on the size of the coworking space. At any given time, more than one person is bound to have a call. If members start to complain about availability, setting up meeting room scheduling software is a breeze. Just set it up in each quiet room so members can manage themselves without fuss.

**Kitchen and Complimentary Beverages:** The real value of designing a coworking space is the potential serendipity a kitchen can create. It is awkward to go up to someone while they are working and get to know them. But it is far easier to have a casual conversation in the kitchen, while pouring your coffee. A kitchen is a great way to break the ice and start building community within your members. Steve Jobs believed, “the best ideas come from informal conversations.” Coworking promotes those types of informal collisions that can spark new ideas and lead to business success. To spark these spontaneous interactions, coworking spaces can offer free coffee and tea to its members. These freebies are a nice perk that members will appreciate, but what it really does is bringing foot traffic to the kitchen. If people are bringing their coffee into the office and leaving for lunch, they never have a need to visit the kitchen. On the other hand, free coffee and tea will give more members a reason to stop by and increase the opportunity for the engagement among its members. For a more complete list of our recommendations, consider some essential products you should stock in the office kitchen. Whether you are opening up a coworking space or trying to upgrade your current location, follow these elements of an ideal coworking office space. You will create an environment that is physically comfortable, highly functional, and valuable beyond a desk.

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Below there are some more universal recommendations for a successful space creation and management.
In Seattle (the United States) there is the Space Traveller Programme, which is a permanent offer that allows people to find the right coworking space for themselves, according to the Foertsch (2011a) article “Do Coworking Spaces Need A Coworking Lobby?” One of the ways to promote the concept of coworking, is to rent a space for “outsiders” – locals or city-based groups, for example – to rent out the whole or a part of a space for private events. During those activities, there are a lot of possibilities to familiarize a wider audience with a coworking concept and let them see closely what it is, potentially increasing the size of a community, and making a good use of an existing space.

If prospective members can sense a vibe of an excitement from like-minded individuals, that is an invaluable resource. People like coming to work if the people around them are a part of that joy, they are more willing to sign up. It is important to encourage such kinds of activities while the community building is in the process of creation. For example, the Venture Cafe started in the Cambridge Innovation Centre. The cafe connects Boston area entrepreneurs and the innovation community. The cafe is looking to nurture the innovation process and build the innovation economy through conversations and storytelling, and accelerate this process with its workspace and programmes. They are building a very specific niche community within the entrepreneurial community.

Promotion of the concept of coworking

Commercial “desk share” spaces have been around for a while, providing a professional setting for independent contractors to meet clients and get things done. Yet a coworking space is a different concept. “Coworkers” want to make connections, fostering collaboration and sharing knowledge. Coworking gathers people who work independently but who share values and look for the synergies that a common space shared with talented people can bring. Coworking, Hillman says, is all about “bringing the social back into the workplace” (Leforestier, 2009). While coworking spaces are an antidote to that lonely feeling, membership does not promise attentive colleagues who will act...
as your sounding board. Liz Elam, founder of Link Coworking and the Global Coworking Unconference Conference (GCUC), invented “Bounce Hours” to help members evaluate ideas and brainstorm solutions. Here is how Bounce Hours work: on a Friday afternoon, members come together and form a circle. Elam throws a beach ball to the group and whoever catches the ball first is allotted 5 minutes to bounce an idea or a question off to others. Those listening provide a succinct feedback and an input. When time is up, the beach ball is tossed to another member. After the group disperses, members seek out one another to continue the dialogue, making Bounce Hours a catalyst for the collaboration.

When Enerspace owner Jamie Russo has recently expanded her coworking space and added a kitchen, she had no idea members would volunteer to show off their chef skills by preparing lunch once a week. Approximately 15-30 members show up for the free Friday lunch. But Russo believes the promise of free food is just the beginning. While a coworker-chef peels, chops and dices, members gather around and the conversation gets cooking. Just as the name of Jenny Poon’s coworking space implies, CO+HOOTS collaborates with local businesses to entertain and enlighten its coworkers and the community. Feeding into coworkers’ foodie culture plus knowing food trucks need hungry customers to grow their business, CO+HOOTS organizes a weekly food truck extravaganza on Wednesdays at 12pm. Guests flock to check out the newest mobile eateries such as Hao Bao, the first Chinese food truck in Phoenix. As expected, the casual and fun format is a perfect environment for networking and introductions.

Another example is NextSpace Santa Cruz partnered with the city’s Museum of Art and History by inviting guests to participate in a traveling Pop Up Museum. The theme was “Taking Risks.” People were encouraged to bring an object that symbolises a risk taken or a risk on the horizon and share a story with others – kind of a grown up show-and-tell. The NextSpace staff will make introductions and make you feel at home (Canty, 2013).

Local authorities support the creation of coworking spaces as parts of larger urban development projects aimed at the emergence of “creative districts”. This policy is backed by leading technology companies. However, the sustainability and growth potential of the coworking movement deserves to be questioned, given the low profitability of the most facilities. As the 2nd Global coworking survey has shown, coworking spaces earn their income from a variety of sources, not just from monthly memberships from a desk-renting, but also from other activities, shown in the graphics below (See Fig.3).

![Financial issues](2)

*Fig.3 How to plan profit*  
Source: 2nd Annual Global coworking survey (Deskmag)
At the Coworking Europe conference in Berlin (2011), a workshop led by Manuel Zea from Spain created a list of ten ideas to help push a coworking space toward profitability (Cashman & Voll, 2011):

• **Profit from a space rent**

  The general way of a rent-policy is to charge a member fee, which includes all accessible activities, offered by a coworking owner on its strategy. Yet for more profit and at the same time for the promotion of coworking, it is required to rent a space to non-members. Regardless of whether they are coworkers or not, allowing “outsiders”– locals or city-based groups, for example – to rent out the whole or a part of a space for private events, inviting them to become members of the community. The space-hiring terms can change depending on the individual needs of a renter. Whether the coworking staff can be hired, the coffee machines are on, or you lend out your Wi-Fi passwords can be negotiated, or predetermined in set events packages. However, do not rent out your space in a way which damages your community. This means, make sure that members with fixed desks do not need to change their desks too often and do not distract members with too many events while they work.

• **The initiation of a credit system**

  Much like a pre-paid phone card, and possibly attached to a Visa card, coworkers can be given the option of purchasing credits in advance for the future, though not necessarily time-specific use. (One possible model could be 1 Credit = 1 desk-hour; 10 credits = 1 conference room hour). One advantage of a credit system is the ability to alter the price of credits quickly and easily, and being able to forecast a portion of your impermanent traffic. Also, if credits were set up in order to be easily transferrable from one person to another, coworkers in a given space would be able to ‘invite’ friends or to ‘give the gift of a collaborative workspace.’

• **The implementation of sponsored programmes and events**

  Coworking spaces could enlist the support of big businesses to sponsor an area in a space. For example, big companies like Google could offer a start-up contest, providing ‘winners’ with a coworking sponsorship and a desk in that area. At Neonworx in Dresden (Germany), a local library sponsors discounted workspaces for up to 15 university students. The spaces are given away via a lottery system (Cashman & Voll, 2011). Coworking spaces may be hired by firms who wish to conduct business or social gatherings on neutral and interesting grounds. Being in a coworking space can make them also more open for the collaboration and other alternative workstyles.

• **Food and beverage events**

  The one of the suggestions for coworking spaces is to host wine tastings, cheese samplings and ham cutting fundraisers. Spaces could be used to host hospitality events, giving ‘outsiders’ a look in, and coworkers a chance to intermingle with the outside community. And again, this point is important not just in financial terms, but as well as, for the promotion of the concept of coworking.

• **Work with the city council or state departments to create workshops**

  The idea was offered in light of a coworking-government partnership in Bilbao, where the Department of Employment hosted workshops for unemployed individuals from creative industries. The programme, lasting for six months, did not derive any profit, though did help to boost membership numbers. Hence, the cooperation with the municipal or state level organisations might be a great way to boost finances or gain new members.

• **Charging a membership fee before opening your doors**

  Suggested by The Hub Madrid, who employed this strategy themselves, members of their community paid a small fee (15 Euros/a month) to be a part of a space-less community; that is, they paid to join the community before the coworking centre existed. This strategy helped to raise funds to open the space, and meant that a community had already been established before The Hub opened its doors. While this method was successful for The Hub Madrid, there was a definite advantage in working with a well-established brand name; without a known brand, it is likely the scheme would not have been as successful if you are not a natural born community builder.
Building a culture of community involvement by development, education and social engagement programmes

Some culture building activities were described in section Promotion of a coworking concept, and actually it is all about the same building and promoting of a coworking community and its concept. A community is not a physical element, but it is an equally important aspect of a coworking space. The members of a coworking space are an essential part of this space. The community can set the tone for the work space and can set one coworking spot apart from any other coworking spots.

Community in a coworking space does not just happen all by itself and the same apply also for the community culture. Coworkers need own working time and a coworking space, therefore, like a society or a big family needs several regulations or general rules of a community as the reflection of a coworking concept. Mostly there are no written rules, but communities are built on the basis of respect and trust, those are main cultural elements. A contract between a member and the working facility is an important element of the most of coworking spaces and typically it contains the following:

1. the community and respect for other members - respect the rights of privacy and non-disclosure of the fellow coworkers;
2. a fair use of equipment – anything that deals with physical aspects of your space, and other members’ equipment;
3. building a policy - includes information on the spaces’ stance on smoking, parking, pets and children.

The results of the 3rd Annual Global coworking survey indicate different expectations of coworkers in terms of development, education and social engagement activities. It can be observed that there are educational activities, as well as, entertainment and informal communication activities preferred by the coworkers (See Fig. 4).

The difference between a coworking space and a mere shared office space will always be – a community. Photo boards featuring space members, regular newsletters advising of new developments in the space, special member only offers, educational opportunities and remote working tools are the methods to interact with a community. Engage with members on social media and use social media as a platform to promote events and member businesses as well. Friday night drinks and pizza (a staple in tech start-up coworking spaces), beer fridges, the occasional lunch and alternative currencies are great ways to build lasting relationships between coworking space members.

Aside from being an added income stream, events help to market your space to others in the community who might not immediately see themselves as member material (Glaveski, 2014). Even when hosted by those outside your membership, the nature of events should align with your brand and be enticing to your market. For example, if your coworking space focuses on public practice professional services such as accountants, lawyers, or bookkeepers, topics such as ‘How...
to maximize your tax return serve to build your brand further and solidify your reputation as the public practice coworking space. Let members attend for free as a membership value-add and encourage them to organize their own events. The resident tax consultant will not only boost his/her public speaking credentials by holding a workshop, but could also generate additional leads and customers. Another value adds. Whatever the event and whoever the organizer, be sure to set aside a 30 to 60 minute block of time after the presentation for mingling and a casual conversation.

Education also extends beyond workshops. Your website should include a blog where you (and members) can post on topics such as efficiency, collaboration and remote working tools. This info can then be repurposed on social media accounts and in newsletters. A lending library, whether digital or hard copy, of books, journals, hardware and other general value adding resources is also very useful, and helps to transform your space into an all-purpose sharing hub.

And by the end of this chapter some great ways to start building your nascent community from Lars Hasseblad Torres, Vermont Centre for Emerging Technologies & Local 64 (Coworking in Vermont: A Starter Guide. Available at: https://crowdfundingpr.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/coworking-in-vermont-a-starter-guide.pdf):

- Present the findings from your survey; use your insights as a way to both position your effort as diligent and thorough and to excite people about the people and encounters they can expect to have through coworking.
- Give people a taste of the culture you are cultivating, build momentum, foster connections among people, and put your allies to work by hosting public events such as mixers, popup art shows, suppers, and similarly inspired happenings.
- If you are considering a location (or several), it is important to excite people about the potential of the physical space(s). Host walk-throughs of potential space(s) and offer opportunities for input.

According to Bruno Moriset, big companies in high-tech industries have several motives to support coworking initiatives. It may be a marketing tool aimed at improving their public profile. However, the most important goal is the “connection to local entrepreneurial ecosystems” (Malecki, 2011) aimed at expanding the perimeter of the serendipity production outside the walls of a company. Innovation has become increasingly fast and open (Chesbrough, 2003; Huizingh, 2011). Given that talents and skills are less mobile than capital, it remains locally anchored. Therefore, as writes Malecki (2011), large firms must implement “double networks” for catching, selecting, and assembling ideas and initiatives that originate outside their main R&D campuses. Other ways, referring to Cashman & Voll (2011), are based on the premise that coworking spaces should ‘look up, instead of down in terms of money,’ coworking spaces could enlist the support of big business to sponsor an area in a space. For example, big companies like Google could offer a start-up contest, providing “winners” with the coworking sponsorship and a desk in that area.

Cooperation with head hunters or human resource personnel of big companies - this could be an effective way to help individuals or freelancers in a space to sell their skills; city council or state departments help to boost membership numbers, meaning that any cooperation possibility has to be carefully analysed.

The identification of potential partners and their readiness to cooperate
The role of human resources

One of the most important aspects of the members’ management is the cultivation of coworking culture and this is something between the operation of a business and building of a community. The business touch must be light, competent, and exciting. The community-building aspects turn on openness, transparency, and participation. Achieving the right balance between business and community is not going to happen overnight, but the tools, processes, and activities that you choose — and how you use them — will have a deep impact on people’s experience of your venture. It is critical to help your members feel welcomed and empowered, not managed, says Lars Hasselblad Torres (Coworking in Vermont: A Starter Guide. Available at: https://crowdfundingpr.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/coworking-in-vermont-a-starter-guide.pdf). At the same time, it means that permanent human resources, whenever paid or volunteering have to be competent and reliable, to serve the needs and the feeling of a community. For that reason, human resources and management of coworking space human resources is an important element.

Coworking spaces predominantly share this culture of openness, sharing and co-creation, and a management team and its communication, ways of work and culture is often a real-life example illustration of what that particular coworking space stands for. Coworking spaces are dynamic places, and many times, regardless of their clearly defined roles and responsibilities, especially in the beginning, the team members have to have a high degree of readiness to react to unexpected and new situations that might occur in the space. A good coordination among team members and a prompt identification of common mistakes and potential ways of doing things better is a precondition to improve the delivery of the services for the users. Aside from this, a positive and an optimistic attitude, social and emotional intelligence are virtues that highly contribute to ensuring the best possible experience of the users of a coworking space. Especially for the hosts of the coworking spaces as they are the ones interacting directly with the users.

A team that manages a coworking space on a day-to-day basis should have a clear division of roles and responsibilities based on the experience, interests and personal motivations. It is necessary that it covers a wide range of roles from the office administration, financial management, hosting the community, an event and program management and coordination, business development, communication with stakeholders, marketing and promotion, sales, fundraising. Aside from the expertise that should be complementary, the staff should have a shared internal culture of codes of conduct and attitude that is clearly communicated among them and to the users.

Decisions related to the management and strategic development in some cases might rely on the advice of experts; thus, it is of crucial importance to keep the connections live, maintaining the social network and the community around the coworking space updated and flowing. Many times, partners are the ones who can offer crucial expertise for any type of an emerging doubt, a decision-to-be-made or a similar one. Advisory boards should, thus, include people possessing confident, relevant and diverse expertise, and the first and the foremost – people who clearly share the founders’ vision, support their mission and clearly understand the values behind the venture.

A practical example of launching a coworking space in Zadar, Croatia Creation

Coworking Zadar initiative was triggered by the COIN Zadar project team made of entrepreneurial support institutions 3 years ago, as a logical step in order to be in line with a global coworking initiative that had an annual exponential growth. It went along with Zadar’s development strategy as a creative industry was recognized as an important direction in encouraging Zadar’s economic development and entrepreneurship. So, during the coworking showcase week hosted in Zadar, an idea to make an old, abandoned space of the Association of Trades and Crafts Zadar into the future coworking place was born. It was in line with size of a potential coworking community that was estimated from 30 to 40 people of various
occupations (ICT, journalist, consultants, architects, engineers, designers, translators etc.) and the space size of 360 square meters was more than enough. Soon writing of the project proposal for funding of the infrastructure works from the EU funds followed with aim that COIN would serve as a polygon for new ideas, innovation and creativity integrated into the entrepreneurial activity.

**Design**

As for the physical space itself, the goal was to encourage productivity, creativity, growth, friendly and a collaborative atmosphere, as well as, serendipitous interactions. Achieving all that was not an easy task as the COIN was considered to be a small coworking space. COIN has some quiet work zones and a big noisy work zone as a way to stimulate productivity and adapt to different personalities among users. The big noisy work zone is followed by a smaller lounge area where users can relax, watch TV, drink coffee and brainstorm with others in a casual way that is not disruptive for other users but also subtly inviting them to take a break and join in. There is also a multimedia room with a capacity for 40 people for events and 30 people for meetings. All the tables in the big noisy work zone are removable to allow space for big events (approximately 100 people). COIN has also opted for playing radio music in the background keeping the volume at an appropriate level. Each user has the freedom to regulate the volume to match his/her working mood, as well as, switch between radio stations according to his/her own musical taste while being respectful to others. To increase multi-functionality each desk is movable to allow big open spaces for holding big conferences and events (capacity for approximately 100 people).

**Terms and Conditions and space management software**

COIN has been defining Terms and Conditions which outline the space usage options. The Terms and Conditions will be available to all potential members and user prior to signing up in COIN in order to avoid any possible miscommunications and conflicting situations. It will be also updated regularly in order to offer solutions to issues that will be occurring in COIN. Furthermore, a Code of conduct will define the social norms and house rules. Although, there is an existing space management software for coworking spaces such as Cobot, COIN has its own space management software in order to automate routine tasks, so that everyone can focus on what matters - coworking. However, the space management software needs to be further customized to coworking needs that will really transform the management experience.

**The level of knowledge about coworking among the society**

In Croatia, there are only a few coworking spaces and coworking is still at its beginning but lately, coworking initiatives all across the country have arisen. Informing and raising awareness about the coworking concept is one of our biggest challenges. When the idea of opening a coworking space in Zadar was being tossed around, at that time there was only one official coworking space in the country. Now, there are several places that declare themselves as a coworking space. However, the general public in most cases is still not aware enough. The first barrier being the language, as it is a foreign word and not easily translatable. It sounds cool and trendy but apart from a certain group of freelancers, the term „coworking” does not mean much to an average person. An additional barrier is that many people still consider freelancers to be individuals who cannot find “real jobs”, thus, cementing the stigma against self-employment in the region still exists. However, the traditional assumption of a secure employment is definitely slowly changing as people are realizing that a full time job does not necessarily mean a secure financial future. Established pillars like COIN help to promote the change and also support the growing number of freelancers.

**Financial issues**

Unlike other Croatian coworking spaces, COIN is established through the European funds solely as a coworking space and as such is the first of its kind in Croatia. Establishing COIN coworking space was founded jointly by the EU (85%) and all project partners (15%). The element of public ownership and the EU funding sets it apart from other, mostly private, coworking spaces in the region. In terms of finances, the partners are public institutions for entrepreneurs which have secured financial means within their budget for staff costs. While in that aspect the institutional background of partners is a mitigating circumstance for COIN, it can also be a disadvantage as oppose to privately own coworking spaces that know the market and are more independent. Future operating costs, maintenance costs and human resources costs of a coworking space are covered by all partners. Costs of programmes are covered by membership fees, the EU funded projects and other activities (educations, renting conference room, etc.). Due to its geostrategic location and
tradition, Zadar represents one of the most important traffic hubs on the Adriatic coast. Besides regular members and coworking users, due to tourism and modern technology it is expected that temporary users of a coworking space will be those who would prolong their holidays if they would be able to work in appropriate environment few hours a day. Further on that note, during the COIN construction we have even received multiple inquiries from digital nomads around the world regarding COIN’s opening date. All of them being very interested in making Zadar as their “home” for an extended period of time. As another financial stream, COIN will continuously rent the space, organize commercial events such as trainings and educations and other alternative ways of fundraising (e.g. crowdfunding etc.).

**The promotion of the coworking concept and building a culture of the community involvement by the development, education and social engagement programme**

From the beginning of the project that set up COIN coworking space, an intensive marketing campaign through Facebook started along with targeting potential users via Google Adwords campaign. Two months into the 18-months long project, jellies, breakfasts, workshops, educations, events begun in order to bring a coworking idea and its unlimited possibilities to the local community and to create a network of the future users. A promotional campaign among the local community targeted at a wide range of potential coworkers by hosting keynote speakers from various fields of expertise (movie and a creative industry, IT industry, women entrepreneurship, successful start-ups etc.). In order to reach a variety of people, COIN has also promoted itself during Design week in Zagreb, as well as, at the University of Zadar.

Our community had an opportunity to learn first-hand from veteran coworkers and owners of coworking places at an international conference that gathered representatives from London, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Milano and Ljubljana coworking scenes, as well as, through a study trip to the well-established Croatian coworking places.

In order to have a higher impact among entrepreneurs, COIN will also host a unique call center for entrepreneurs that will connect services of business support public institutions. Entrepreneurs will get easier access to essential information while simultaneously increase productivity and the specialization of supporting public institutions. Furthermore, to establish a local coworking community and really promote the coworking idea among general public, during the first couple of months after its opening working in COIN is free of charge.

**The identification of potential partners and their readiness to co-operate**

The idea of creating a coworking space in Zadar was actually initiated by the entrepreneurial support institutions and representatives of a local ICT community Developers HUB Zadar who recognized the importance and possibilities of the coworking concept. At that point, the new local partnership started to build, so all project partners joined their forces together and applied the coworking project to one of the EU calls for a small business infrastructure. COIN’s network of the local support institutions include:

- **City of Zadar (a local self-government unit)**
- **Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA (a non – profit co-owned by the regional and local government)**
- **The association of Trades and Crafts Zadar (an independent professional business organization of craftsmen)**
- **Croatian Chamber of Economy (an independent professional and business organisation of all legal entities engaged in business)**
- **Zadar County (a unit of the regional government)**

On a local level, potential partners could be a business incubator Innovative Zadar which can support entrepreneurs who outgrow a coworking space and the University of Zadar which can promote the coworking concept among their students – future entrepreneurs. The Croatian Employment Service – a regional office Zadar is another potential partner as it has a direct access to unemployed people and can promote a coworking idea as a potential solution to their problems. Also, could be mentioned QSDK which is a centre for information and carrier counselling. Other partners could be: FINA (Financial Agency), Tax Administration – a regional office Zadar and the Institution for the development of competence, innovation and specialization in Zadar County – INOVAcija.

On a higher level, COIN’s potential partners can be all other coworking spaces in Croatia, as well as, in the region. Basically, anyone who is supportive of the coworking concept, interested in contributing to COIN and its members, as well as, in setting up even more coworking events. All previously mentioned potential partners on a local level and more have already either assisted in coworking initiatives in Zadar or have expressed their interest to do so.
The role of human resources

In order to ensure follow-up activities related to a coworking space, the project has foreseen employing a community developer. This person, together with selected and trained hosts at a coworking space, was anticipated to work on the further development of a coworking community and services provided. The community developer manages the hosts and financial operations of the coworking space, assigns the hosts with their tasks and collaborates with CDIN’s network of the local support institutions.

Since coworking is not merely sharing a workspace, a major role in shaping the distinctiveness of the new space has its hosts, that is, people who can be tenants in their own business purposes which is why they could be offered a discount on their membership in exchange for their services. The primary tasks of hosts is to create and maintain an atmosphere of interactivity in order to enhance cooperation among coworking users and increase their creativity and productivity.

Besides a community developer, CDIN hosts are also in charge of promoting CDIN’s activities, guiding initiatives coming from other CDIN members, as well as, managing day-to-day business (answering online queries from prospects, ordering supplies and maintaining inventory etc). All human resources engaged in CDIN are provided by partner institutions which the established partnership committee in order to operate CDIN jointly. They assign their staff who acts as hosts in CDIN coworking space.

The best cases from around the world

The best cases often provide decision makers (in our case – the potential coworking space founders), as well as, stakeholders and the public with an evidence based on a successful model of doing specific actions.

The idea of starting a coworking space will only be successful if it has been planned realistically, with a clear focus after a detailed consideration of the associated risks. The best cases, hence, are important role models to learn, observe, contact and visit, before making important decisions of starting and running coworking space. The best cases or in another words the case studies tell stories of success. They illustrate how and why specific coworking spaces have become success stories. Most probably the best cases have arisen, because some best practices have been used to make a coworking successful. The best practices can be universal for a lot of coworking spaces, hence observing at least several coworking spaces is recommended for potential founders.

In our study, we have chosen to describe three cases from our partnership, since they have a successful track record in developing their operations. The rest of the cases have been selected by voting and suggestions, meaning that the cases, which have been chosen by several partners have been included in the best case section.
**NextSpace Coworking, USA**

**A general description:**

NextSpace was founded in 2008 and opened its first location in Santa Cruz, CA. Gradually it has become the largest coworking space network in California. In 2011, it was the first coworking space to receive 6digit dollar funding. Currently (2016) it has got 9 locations in the US. One of the important aspects is a great connection between the locations/coworking spaces. “NextSpace goes beyond strangers sharing a table at a coffee shop – it is an organic community of creative minds across all trades and topics. The result is a thoroughly networked place to exchange ideas, build trust and eventually gather the resources to bring new concepts to market,” said Jeremy Neuner, CEO and the co-founder of NextSpace.

NextSpace offers both the social and economic benefits, in an environment that encourages member interactions, which professionals and freelancers need in order to reach their highest creative, productive, and innovative potential. The members come from a wide variety of industries, including software, design, marketing, legal services, architecture, healthcare and engineering. Workers from Plantronics, Google, Yahoo and Cisco use NextSpace locations across California.

**Why we consider it great:**

- It has a success record in raising funds for the development – around 2 million dollars invested into the expansion and development from investors;
- It has shown a rapid expansion and an effective cooperation among existing spaces;
- It focuses on the real needs of coworkers, including their kids (they have some kind of a kindergarten called NextKids). Also there are summer camps, so parents can work undisturbedly being sure that their kids are looked after.

*Source: [http://nextspace.us](http://nextspace.us)*

*Contact info: contactus@nextspace.us*

*Address: various locations in CA*
Betahaus | Betahaus, Germany

A general description:

Betahaus is one of the Germany’s best-known coworking spaces. Started in April, 2009 a 2000 square metres space for a flexible coworking. Being located in the former washcloth factory, Betahaus now has around 350 workplaces and more than 500 members, café and a studio. And it is not just for start-up founders and freelancers who want to work there, for instance, big companies seek cross-pollination, rent desks for their employees in there. There is now a betahaus also in Hamburg, Sofia and Barcelona. Coworking is very active in socio-educational programme and offers more than 50 events / a month, as well as, lots of programmes for the community. Organisational values are strongly rooted in the the lifelong-learning belief (→that can help against unemployment). Over five flours of different settings, 8 different types of spaces are available to choose for coworking. Founded by: Christoph Fahle, Max von der Ahe and Madeleine Gummer.

Why we consider it great:

- it provides online marketing courses;
- it has law office hours;
- it provides courses on how to fund a business;
- it offers community breakfasts;
- it holds start-up brainstorming sessions;
- it holds weekly food assembly: directly from the local farmers, merchants etc.;
- it organises monthly get-together with beer;
- it offers a film/documentary events;
- it carries out an international start-up competition BETAPITCH.

Source: http://www.betahaus.com/berlin/
Contact info: contact@betahaus.de
Address: Prinzessinnenstraße 19-20, 10969 Berlin
A general description:

Pto de Contato has been established as the first coworking space in Brasil (the concept was adapted from Hat Factory) and it was opened in 2008. Fernanda Nudelman describes that the idea has originated from her own needs, as she was working home-based and was not satisfied with that model. Coworking was started in a small place (16 workstations) and after 2 years, a larger place (50 workstations) in a neighbourhood called Jardins, which is the coolest neighbourhood of São Paulo was opened. Most coworkers are young people (entrepreneurs, freelancers etc.). Their slogan is: coworking + coolworking.

Why we consider it great:

- it focuses on connections among people;
- its diversity is the main feature of its community, so they do not have a specific audience;
- „big names” have come from this coworking space ➔ more connections, better way to build community, better way to find help;
- among its community are freelancers, entrepreneurs, start uppers, professionals etc.

Source: www.ptodecontato.com.br
Contact info: https://www.facebook.com/ptodecontato
Address: Closed since end 2015
A general description:

Talent Garden is a global network of digital innovators with a focus on digital, tech and creative professionals. It was set up in 2011, and the first seat was opened in 2011 in Brescia (Italy). Currently (2016) it has got 16 campuses around Europe, mainly in Italy. According to the co-founder Davide Dattoli, the expansion up to 50 campuses by 2018 is planned on CEE and Africa directions.

Talent Garden has a unique spin on the shared workspace concept. The defining characteristic of every Talent Garden campus is the space. Thoughtfully designed for maximum creative inspiration and productivity, each Talent Garden has a mix of eco-friendly furniture and garden-inspired elements with the latest tech hardware. They are creating a “global” community, where members consistently bring value to each other through a creative cooperation in the everyday shared space.

Why we consider it great:

- It possesses the “know-how” how to grow inside the country and beyond its borders;
- It adopts a “global” community approach;
- It focuses on events and educational programmes;
- It promotes an innovation culture, including an “Innovation school”, which is an important part of its coworking space;
- It has got an inspiring interior.

Source: www.talentgarden.org
Contact info: info@talentgarden.it
Address: various locations
A general description:

WeWork provides a shared workspace, a community, and services for entrepreneurs, freelancers, start-ups and small businesses. It was founded in 2010 by Neumann and McKelvey in New York with its headquarters in New York. As of April 2016, WeWork has opened 98 coworking locations across the U.S., Europe and Israel, with the plans to expand to reach every continent (except Antarctica) by 2017. The company’s total estimated funding was $1.43 billion and valuation $16 billion (spring 2016). WeWork was named among the “most innovative companies” of 2015 by Fast Company magazine. WeWork rents offices from landlords and renovates them into hip coworking spaces and common working areas that promote social interaction.

The company’s 30,000+ members have access to health insurance, an internal social network, social events and workshops, and an annual summer retreat. WeWork Labs functions as a start-up incubator within WeWork.

Why we consider it great:

- It possesses the “know-how” how to grow inside the country and raise the funding for its expansion;
- It focuses on social relationships, events related to social interconnections;
- It uses the technology to connect all WeWork coworkers in one network by a simple app;
- It signs partnership deals with external companies for coworkers;

Source: https://www.wework.com
Source: www.fastcompany.com
Contact info: joinus@wework.com
Address: various locations
Third Door position themselves as a revolutionary way how a family and work can grow together. It combines nursery and workspace that offers easy, flexible working within an onsite Coworking space. Along with the essentials of a productive coworking environment (reliable Wi-Fi, air-conditioned open-plan environment with a natural daylight, communal areas, private offices, printing etc.), Third Door offers its trademark phone booths to make calls, has the disabled access (lift) and a fully registered and flexible Nursery downstairs, that are perfect for working parents. Third Door (day care and workhub) was launched in May 2010 and has plans for the national and international expansion.

Why we consider it great:

• it adopts a family oriented approach;
• it meets the needs of the disabled people;
• it is absolutely flexible, taking into account the needs of its coworkers (flexible part-time working)

Source: https://www.third-door.com
Contact info: hello@third-door.com
Address: 16 Point Pleasant, Putney, London SW18 1GG
Nova Iskra  

**A general description:**

NOVA ISKRA, coworking space dedicated to the professionalization of designers in Serbia and the region, as well as, to establishing connections between the sectors of creative industries and manufacturing, opened its doors in Belgrade in December 2013. NOVA ISKRA was the first realized coworking space in Serbia and the surrounding countries. The multi-functional workspace is being established with the idea to support young creative forms in the fields of design, architecture, interior design, visual communications and others. NOVA ISKRA offers a brand new model of working based on the “hub” principle, dedicated to establishing both formal and informal connections between creative individuals and teams. The approach of coworking is to be divided in the three main segments: DESIGNERS LAB (direct users of the NI workspace), CREATIVE HUB (the network of professionals from the domains of design and architecture) and INDUSTRY HUB (the network of partner companies and manufacturers).

**Why we consider it great:**

- It has an outstanding design;
- It implements into reality creative ideas and gathers together different stakeholders such as the municipality and private investors (companies);
- It focuses on local products and their importance;
- It promotes an international cooperation and exchange within different stakeholders.

**Source:**  [http://www.novaiskra.com/](http://www.novaiskra.com/)

**Contact info:** office@novaiskra.com

**Address:** Gavrila Principa 43, 11000 Beograd – Serbia
B.Amsterdam, Netherlands

A general description:

An innovative coworking space that is building a start-up city within a building. B.Amsterdam is located in 28,000 square meters and positions themselves as the biggest start-up ecosystem in Europe. Founders Ricardo van Loenen, Guus Meulendijks and Bas van Veggel started B.Amsterdam in 2013 with the aim to create an ecosystem for start-ups. More ambitiously they aimed “to create a city within a building”. The aim of B.Amsterdam is to bring together start-ups, creatives and corporates. Many corporates moved to B.Amsterdam for their events and meetings, some have become active members of the community. IBM has opened up an innovation space for start-ups and software developers. Besides business, educational initiatives such as Team Academy, an international school for entrepreneurship, and Handshake, an education innovation project that aims to connect entrepreneurial students with companies in the creative industries, have moved to B.Amsterdam as well. Though, only creative and innovative companies and start-ups are welcomed.

Why we consider it great:

• It receives the support from the largest IT corporations;
• It is probably the largest coworking space in Europe, in terms of square meters;
• It offers some exciting extra benefits (e.g. a roof garden, where members can grow their own plants; a gym for sport exercises and a cinema for entertainment);
• It provides a lot of accelerator and incubator programmes and initiatives.

Source: http://www.b.amsterdam/
Contact info: http://www.b.amsterdam/contact/
Address: Johan Huizingalaan 763A 1066 VH Amsterdam
A general description:

Betacowork Coworking is a start-up friendly coworking space and the biggest hub for web entrepreneurs and professionals in Brussels. Betacowork was founded in 2010 and it is now reaching 200 active members from different sectors (predominantly ICT, web entrepreneurs and start-ups). Its mission is to offer an innovative and inspiring working space for entrepreneurs and professionals that accelerates serendipity and creativity. Betacowork offers a flexible and low cost solutions for freelances and start-ups to start their businesses and grow in a motivating, encouraging and collaborative environment. Betacowork has a solid expertise in running a collaborative working space and in activating the community around it. Its founder Ramon Suarez is the author of The Coworking Handbook, a guide for coworking space operators in which he shares his knowledge in a practical way, covering every aspect of the management of a coworking space: marketing and sales, community activation, administration and finance.

Why we consider it great:

- It helps young entrepreneurs by creating a motivating, encouraging and collaborative work environment;
- It organizes, hosts and sponsors interesting events and workshops;
- It has a network of over 200 members;
- It organisers eat all together every Friday, when a co-worker cooks for the others, being a great moment of sharing.

Source: www.betacowork.com
Contact info: support@betacowork.com
Address: Rue des Pères Balncs 4, 1040 Etterbeek - Brussels
A general description:

LOFFICE is a new-generation office where a creative and business worlds meet in one place. It incorporates working, networking and relaxing, making it a place where everyone finds the space best suited to his/her activities. Started as the pioneer of a coworking model in 2009 in the former printing house of the Music Academy, Loffice has quickly established itself as a key hub in the Hungarian creative and start-up scene. By now it has 5 offices – 4 in Budapest and 1 in Vienna. Besides it offers workspace to entrepreneurs at multiple locations, LOFFICE has a significant experience in providing a wide scale of services, such as an event organization and all kinds of mentoring support, both directly via Loffice as through its reliable 3rd party network. It meets companies’ growing needs in-house to make sure that they develop and expand by securing their constructed community. It undertakes several tasks to help individual entrepreneurs with connections to micro and mid-size ventures and the start-up sector. Also, it has the capability to help Hungarian startups efficiently enforcing their national and international presence. The aim is to assist companies’ efficient operation, micro and mid-size ventures’ start-up development.

Why we consider it great:

- it incorporates design centric spaces, recycled furniture, environmental awareness, ergonomics and integrating contemporary art into work environment;
- it offers an extensive partnership network, assistance, sharing experience and a community;
- it has a varied range of spaces: a renewed printing house, indoor sky bar, a former shoe factory and an old plastic processing facility;
- it provides an export advice and assistance for creating business across country borders.

Source: http://budapest.lofficecoworking.com/
Contact info: office@loffice.hu
Address: 55 Paulay Ede Street
1061 Budapest, Hungary
Impact Hub Zagreb, Croatia

A general description:

Impact Hub Zagreb is a space and a community of entrepreneurs and social innovators that offers a unique ecosystem of resources, inspiration, and collaboration opportunities for all of those individuals and organisations who work on their ventures focusing on the social impact. Impact Hub Zagreb supports them by providing an inspiring coworking & event space, the access to a diverse community of members and partners and high quality programmes focused on business ideas generation and incubation. Impact Hub Zagreb is a member of Impact Hub Global network accounting to 85+ Impact Hubs around the world with 15 000+ members.

Why we consider it great:

• it connects, collaborates, co-creates and evolves as a community;
• it intensifies interactions among its members, as its space is designed naturally to meet and meaningfully interact with each other;
• its community consists of a wide variety of individuals (with an educational background, experience, interests, ideas, project)
• its programmes and content is focused on triggering and supporting ventures and business ideas dedicated to creating a positive social impact
• it has an extended network of partners aligned with the mission of triggering positive changes and supporting change making local leaders;
• its space design represents a balanced mix of an office, a living room and a cozy coffee place, dynamic, continuously changing in details and setup;
• it has a great location – in the city centre, enclosed by a green belt of a small parks, within an emerging creative district.

Source: http://zagreb.impacthub.net
Contact info: Ana Raguž, Co-founder and Program Lead
Email: ana.raguz@impacthub.net
Phone: +385 98 1667 312
Address: Vlaška ul. 70E, 10000, Zagreb, Croatia
Coworking founders’ view

As previously stated, the “European Coworking Network” project team undertook to provide an overview of the relevant information for the potential founders of coworking spaces, based on the experience of existing founders. In exploring a coworking concept, the online survey was concentrated on the following objectives:

Objective 1: identify motivators and barriers of starting a coworking space;
Objective 2: identify current status of running a coworking space and its processes.

The online survey of the second part of the research is important due to preparation of the recommendations for the potential coworking space founders in different sectors from Europe and beyond its borders.

Online questionnaire. A decision was made to rely on the Internet as the preferred method of questionnaire administration for coworking spaces as a target group. The questionnaire is divided into three thematic sets. The first set of questions is related to the characteristics of a sample set consisting of 10 questions. The second part of the questionnaire researches different aspects of starting a coworking space and it also consists of 10 questions. The last part examines what are the processes, obstacles, motivations to run a coworking space and it consists of 10 questions, as well. There is a “skip logic” implemented after the first section and, if a person, who fills in the questionnaire, is not a founder, he/she is directed to the last section, only for commenting on current processes within coworking, but not being involved in the answers related to the setting up of a coworking space.

The drafting of an application for a coworking space questionnaire was led by Social Innovation Centre, taking into account objectives of the survey. Once a draft of the questionnaire was completed, it was distributed among partners in January, 2016 and finalised at the partners meeting in Brussels (February, 2016). As soon as it was accomplished, the next stage of the adoption to the online version started. After consideration of different online tools, www.surveymonkey.com was selected. As soon as the online version was completed it was tested with all partners in the beginning of March, 2016. Feedbacks were collected and the proper adjustments were made, to make sure that the questions appeared in the designed order, that there were no clerical errors, and that the logic and the flow of the questionnaire worked properly under all branching conditions. The survey was carried out in English, assuming that coworking founders/hosts have a sufficient level of English knowledge. The questionnaire was posted on the partners’ web pages, Facebook, Twitter accounts, as well as, direct contacts were established with the coworking organisations, universities, schools and other institutions involved in coworking. The distribution of the online survey was initially planned from 10th to 25th March, 2016. However, it was extended up to 1st April, 2016 with the aim to collect a higher amount of replies. A plain text version of the final questionnaire was available on request.

Initial screening questions were used in the questionnaire to determine the status of a respondent, since the preferred target group were the founders of coworking spaces, as well as, geographical location was taken into consideration. The preferred primary distribution area was the European Union and the secondary priority was all the rest of the world. The distribution was executed by the partners within the existing networks. The networks like Impact HUB, the European Coworking Assembly, LEaC members were also included in the distribution list. According to the calculation, the survey was distributed to at least 500 coworking spaces. In total 60 replies were received, which makes the response rate relatively low. Probably it was due to the fact, that the target group (founders) was difficult to reach. In the selection of the respondents, a systematic random sampling method was applied. 80% of respondents were from Europe, including countries from the European Union and outside it. The replies were received from 20 different countries.
Characterization of the set. The number of years operated on the market: A dominant group representing coworking spaces operating on the market for 2-4 years made up 43.4%. It was followed by the group of coworking spaces operating on the market for 5 years or more making up 33.3% and the smallest group constituting 23.3% embraced coworking spaces operating on the market for less than a year. The orientation towards profit: The majority of coworking spaces constituting 75% were for-profit organisations, while the rest 25% were not-for-profit ones. The type of an organisation: Reflecting the previous question, 80% of the respondents were private institutions (e.g. limited liability companies), while just 11.7% were the third sector institutions (e.g. NGO, association) and only 8.3% were public institutions (e.g. municipality, agency). The geographical location: 80% of the respondents were located in Europe, while from Argentina, Australia and Canada only one reply per country was received and 15% was received from the United States. There were no replies from Asian and African countries. An average number of coworkers: 46% of the respondents replied that their coworking space had less than 30 coworkers. 30% of coworking spaces replied that they had 31-60 coworkers, while only 6.7% mentioned that they had 61-100 coworkers. A small percentage of 8.3% mentioned that there were 101-150 coworkers and 10% mentioned that they had more than 151 coworkers in their coworking spaces. The tendency shows that the majority of surveyed coworking spaces were rather small in the range up to 60 coworkers. A coworking space: 31.7% mentioned that their coworking space was 201-500 square metres; 28.3% mentioned that it was more than 501 square metres; 25% noted that the space was 101-200 square metres, while 11.7% replied that it was 51-100 square metres and only 3.3% mentioned that it was less than 50 square metres. Hence, even the previous question states that the number of coworkers was mostly under 60 coworkers, still the coworking spaces in the majority were larger than 101 square metres.

The number of work stations: The largest percentage accounting for 48.3% stated that in the coworking space was less than 30 coworking stations; 36.7% stated that there were 31-60 coworking stations; 6.7% double replied – they had both 61-100 work stations and more than 151 work stations. The smallest amount of 1.7% was given to 101-150 work stations. The number of employees: 50% of the respondents had only one employee; 25% had 5 employees and more, while employing 2 and 3 employees was mentioned by 11.7% and 1.7%, stated that they had 4 employees. The majority of coworking spaces had up to 3 employees. The orientation of a coworking space: 56.7% of coworking spaces stated that there was no specific orientation; 13.3% stated that it was Technology/ IT oriented; 11.7% mentioned that it was creative/artistic oriented, while the same percentage also chose the option ‘Other’; 6.7% chose the social orientation. The post at a coworking space: 81.6% of the respondents were founders of a coworking space, while 16.7% were employees and 1.7% were volunteers. It was assumed that a high percentage of founders was a positive aspect of the survey, being able to deliver valuable results for the analysis.

Online questionnaire results

The main analysis of the online questionnaires is made as a single data set, without making divisions by countries, types of organisations or positions within a coworking space. While, from one point, it gives more general information, it still represents an important opinion of coworking spaces as a single, united view and helps to understand the general trends. A deeper analysis can be rather done by the size of a coworking space and the number of coworkers and might be interesting for an academic research, while the objective of this study is to provide trends, opinions and recommendations for the potential coworking space founders and perceive an overall view of a situation in a coworking sector from the founders’ perspective. As previously described, the online questionnaire consists of 2 parts.
The identification of motivators and barriers while setting up a coworking space

The first part of the analysis describes the identification of motivators and barriers while setting up a coworking space. It also covers the questions of time spent during daily operations and the cooperation with other coworking spaces. However, the main focus of the section is on the opinion of the founders about their motivation and challenges during the starting process. This section was available only for the founders. The first question in this section (Q11) inspects: “What was the main motivator to start a coworking space?” (see Fig.5).

According to the results of the online questionnaire, the majority of the founders were motivated to start coworking because they believed in the concept. The important factors were also the community involvement and the combination of fun and income. None of the respondents was driven by pure income motives.

The next question analyses, whenever the respondent believes that opening of a coworking space was a good idea: “Do you think that opening a coworking space was a smart decision? (Q12). 83% responded positively, while only 2.1% responded negatively and 14.9% were not sure. The gained result mean, that the majority were positive about the made decision and only the minor part of coworking founders was not satisfied with the made decision. Since there were coworking spaces, which operated less than a year, it was logical that some of them still did not made their mind about was it a positive or a negative decision. The next question (Q13) inspects what were 3 main activities necessary to start a coworking space. The multiple choices were allowed (see Fig.6).

![Fig.5 The main motivators to start a coworking space](source: Developed by the authors, based on the questionnaire data)

![Fig.6 Three main activities required to start a coworking space](source: Developed by the authors, based on the questionnaire data)
According to the survey results, three most required activities to start a coworking space were finding a like-minded team, finding a space and customers. At least two of these activities could be classified also as basics for any business, where a team and customers play the most important roles. It has to be mentioned that the activity of “a company registration” was not selected by any of the respondents as an important one. Probably due to the fact that it was simply an administrative procedure and did not affect the further business operations.

The next question (Q14) inspects time that the founders spent on running a coworking space: “How much time do you spend per week on average running a coworking space?”. It has to be admitted that the split is relatively equal: 29.8% spent less than 10 hours per week, assunmingly giving away the main functions to employees; 25.6% spent more than 40 hours per week, hence taking the majority of the functions on their own shoulders; 23.4% spent 21-40 hours and 21.3% spent 11-20 hours per week to operate a coworking space. Hence, the split does not provide a clear trend and depends very much on the willingness of a founder to be involved in the processes of a coworking space as well as on the number of its employees.

The next question (Q15) inspects the main barriers and obstacles to start a coworking space. The range of barriers and obstacles is identical with question Q13. Hence, the three most important obstacles to start a coworking space were: finding customers (coworkers) – 57.4%, and marketing the space and finding the funding accounted for 34%. Nevertheless the role of funding and marketing the space was not so important during the establishment of a coworking space, it came out that they might become barriers at the certain stage of coworking operations. Since finance is often one of the barriers to start a business, the next question (Q16) inspects the main source of the funding. Here it has to be admitted, that only one, main source was allowed to be chosen. Even if the combination of sources was in place, still only the one main source was asked to be indicated (see Fig.7).

As a main source of funding was mentioned self-funding, followed by bootstrapping and the support from friends and family. Few have used an external support, while none used a crowd-funding. Since there might be difficulties with starting a coworking space, including financial matters, the next question inspects the founders’ opinion about the level of difficulty to start a coworking space (Q17): “Was it easy or difficult to start a coworking space?”. While in (Q12) 83% responded positively about starting a coworking space, still in this question - 46.8% replied that it was difficult; 38.3% replied that it was somewhere in between, while only 8.5% replied that it was easy and 6.4% replied that it was extremely difficult to set up a coworking space. None of the respondents replied that it was really easy. Hence, it can be assumed that opening a coworking space was not an easy process as admitted the majority of the respondents-founders.

The next question (Q18) is dedicated to the understanding what is the level of cooperation among coworking spaces. It was formulated as following: “Would you recommend going to other coworking spaces to learn how to run a coworking space before starting?” (see Fig.8).
More than half of respondents replied that learning how to run a coworking space is a must activity, and around ¼ mentioned that it was rather beneficial. Hence, the majority of founders believe that it was a valuable activity to take before opening a coworking space.

The final question in this section (Q19) inspects what are the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for a successful coworking founder: “What kind of skills, knowledge and attitude should a coworking founder have to start and run a coworking space with success?” The respondents are required to make maximum of 3 choices (see Fig.9).

According to the founders’ view, the most important are interpersonal and social skills, followed by entrepreneurial and sales skills. The rest of the skills, knowledge and attitudes had a lower level of importance. The section is finalised by the request of recommendations: “What are the 3 main recommendations for the potential coworking space founders?” These recommendations are the part of the survey and are included in the final section of the current survey.
The identification of the current status of running a coworking space and its processes

The second part of the analysis describes the identification of current processes within a coworking space. It covers questions regarding community, profitability, collaboration, obstacles of running a coworking space, and a view on the community’s knowledge about coworking spaces. The section was available for the founders and also for the employees and the volunteers, since the questions of the section cover mostly the information related to the daily operations. Since the community is perceived as a main driving element of a coworking space, the question (Q21) inspects the community building process: “How much time did it take to build a community?” (see Fig.10).

According to the provided replies the split is relatively equal: 25.5% started its building less than a year ago and the same percentage argued that it was a constant process; 23.4% stated that their community building happened a year after opening the space, 19.1% mentioned that it started 2 years or more before its opening, while 6.4% stated that the community was built 2-3 years after the opening of a coworking space.

One of the arguable questions within a coworking space community often arises about the profitability issues of a coworking space. Hence, in the online questionnaire the next question (Q22) inspects, if the respondents believe that coworking space has to be profitable. 80.7% of the respondents replied that “Yes”, 14% were not sure; while 5.3% replied that it should not be profitable.

Continuing the discussion about the profitability, the next question (Q23) is formulated in the following way: “How long did it take to become profitable?” (see Fig.11).

The majority of the respondents – 37% replied that it took 2-3 years to become profitable, 28% made a coworking space profitable in the first year, while 24% were still not profitable. None of the respondents replied that it took more than 5 years. According to the data, it means that coworking has to become profitable during the first 3 years. In the online survey took part some percentage of the coworking spaces with the operations on market under a year. Thus,
According to the respondents' replies, the majority of coworking spaces collaborated with other coworking organizations. The majority, or 33%, had 1-3 collaboration partners, followed by 4-5 and 11 or more collaboration partners. About 1/5 of the respondents replied that they did not cooperate or did not have an answer to the question.

Questions 25 (Q25) takes a deeper look on nature of coworking spaces cooperation: “How do you cooperate with other coworking spaces?” Multiple choices were allowed in the question. 70% replied that they cooperate with other coworking spaces within the existing network; 42% confirmed that they cooperated during conferences; 32% mentioned the existing online communities; 24% mentioned “other”; 22% mentioned exchanged programmes and 18% - the EU projects.

The next question (Q26) is also dedicated to the collaboration of coworking spaces and inspects how cooperation between coworking spaces can help coworking spaces (see Fig.12).

According to the replies, the largest impact of the cooperation among coworking spaces was on the sharing of good practices, followed by the innovation/inspiration and the exchange of coworkers. The next question (Q27) inspects the main activities, which are necessary to run a coworking space efficiently. “Please, specify the main activities you are involved in, to run a coworking space efficiently?” (see Fig.14).

According to the result, the most important activities were community building events, followed by the strategic planning of the coworking and building partnership development.
According to the respondents, the main obstacles in running a coworking space are the lack of awareness of society, which probably results in difficulties of getting customers (coworkers), as well as, the financial issues. Also, the respondents mentioned that an important obstacle was that it was a time-consuming process. At the very end, the respondents were questioned to provide an opinion about the level of understanding of coworking in their area (Q29). Area is defined as a village, a city, or a region, where a specific coworking space operates (see Fig.16).

The final question (Q30) is dedicated to analyse an opinion of the respondents towards their coworking space impact on the area it operates in: “I believe that my coworking space makes a positive impact on my area.” An area is defined as a village, a city, or a region, where a specific coworking space operates (see Fig.17).

According to the respondents’ view, the majority of respondents strongly agreed or disagreed that their coworking space impacted on the specific area it operates in. As a summary, it has to be admitted that the online questionnaire was valuable due to the fact that a high percentage of the founders were reached, as well as both starting and running operations were analysed, providing the important and practical trends for the potential coworking founders. Overall, it provides a typology of the coworking founders, assessing their skills, personal features, networking and the willing to cooperate.

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**Fig.15 The main obstacles in running a coworking space**  
Source: Developed by the authors, based on the questionnaire data

**Fig.16 The level of understanding of a coworking space in the specific area**  
Source: Developed by the authors, based on the questionnaire data

**Fig.17 The level of impact of coworking space in the specific area**  
Source: Developed by the authors, based on the questionnaire data
The section of “Recommendations” is prepared as a brief summary and individual inputs from the partners’ organisations. The recommendations are developed with the aim to outline some key elements, which have already been discussed in the comparative study, to give potential coworking founders a concise final advice.

Recommendations from ZADRA NOVA and City of Zadar.

While coworking spaces worldwide are popping up on the market like mushrooms after the rain, the awareness about the coworking concept has a much slower growth, especially in small cities. Most likely there are people in your city who would work in a coworking space but are either not aware that there is such a place in their city or have not heard about coworking at all. In either case, you want to work on raising the awareness about coworking in your city. You could have “open days” when anyone can enter your coworking space and work free of charge or just see with his/her own eyes how coworking actually looks like. You could also partner with other coworking spaces to work together in order to create events to encourage other entrepreneurs to join your coworking space. While some coworking spaces might be sceptical of partnering with competitors, the real competitor is the ignorance of people about the coworking concept.

Every owner of a coworking space will point out that a coworking community is the heartbeat. And we would agree, but would also like to add that the more diverse you can make a coworking community the better. When coworkers share a working space with fellow entrepreneurs from different industries with diverse backgrounds, it opens up their horizons, increases their knowledge and boosts up their creativity. It can also be very helpful for their businesses. For example, an electrical engineer who is starting a company will ask for advice from a fellow coworker who is an accountant because he knows and trusts that person and is quite familiar with him as an accountant, who is sitting next to him.

Another thing to keep in mind is an interior design. You might think you know exactly what they need but the experience has shown us that it is not always the case. It is very important to observe what they might be missing in your space, what they do not like and to adapt to their needs accordingly. Also, acoustics is a thing that can be overlooked as it is not so obvious. You do not want your coworkers to feel as if they work in the middle of the street because the sound travels from one room to the other. So, make sure to hire a professional to keep the noise to a minimum.

Recommendations from the Hub Impact Zagreb.

As of a coworking space size and different approaches, I would add that different approaches might be applied. The first approach is to start with a smaller space, test again your market response, test your business model and once it is proven and your market grows, new opportunities show up (for new services/products, for new market segment); you can gradually move on to a bigger place. This approach is suitable and beneficial for those founders who, on one hand, do not necessarily have a big amount of capital to invest in at the beginning and on the other, who are open to iterate and evolve, to experiment and adapt and who are prone to and in position to react promptly for any sudden change on the market (typically, this would be private founders, entrepreneurs, as opposed to public founders who are less flexible to sudden changes in the market environment). The second approach might be to start big, that is with a big, well-equipped space. This approach is more likely to be taken by the founders who have enough capital to invest; however, they have to make sure they have their community in place, namely, that the initial need identified in the market is indeed converted into a buying customer once the space is up and running.

Recommendations from Betacowork Coworking Brussels.

Community first. The community is the real value of your coworking space. Start building relationships even before you have a space. It is the pivotal building trust among the members that are going to work...
in the space. They have to trust you, and trust the other coworkers. 

To start building a community you need to go out and start talking about your coworking. From the moment that you will open your space, you will already have a network and the first members will show up. Keeping a community alive is a never ending work. It is a matter of sharing experiences, responsibilities and relationships through events, workshops, talks and sharing food. 

This would add a real value to your coworking and to your members’ business. You want your space to be durable, valuable and profitable.

To do so you need to strengthen the links and the relationships among your members. Coworking spaces are where serendipity happens, and you are the one accelerating the process. How? Being open to listen and know the more that you can do for your people, what their problems are and what they need. Then, help them to solve their problems and to achieve their goals by putting them in contact with the right people from your/their community.

Recommendations from SPECG.

Coworking service aims the promotion and development of innovative business projects and services based on information and communications technology (ICT) in shared workspaces.

These spaces are meeting points where companies and entrepreneurs foster their synergies and opportunities for growth and business success. 

This service has been designed in order to accelerate and incubate ideas and projects, and to develop the independent projects, while the creation of joint projects is encouraged, creating the dynamic collaboration between companies and entrepreneurs.

Another recommendation would be to convert the region where coworking is installed in a reference point as a workplace and attractor of talents.

Coordinate events and activities undertaken or proposed by the different partners to avoid duplicate spaces agendas between different entities related to entrepreneurs.

Recommendation from Loffice Budapest.

What is the essence of coworking spaces according to Loffice? 

Creating spaces which inspire, help and support. Where friendships and work relations are born. Where everybody feels like at home. A good place to be and to return, where everybody can focus on their work because they get every help they need.

The key of a coworking office for us is a community and sharing knowledge and space.

Community is what motivates us. Working with inspiring, innovative people, sharing ideas, thinking together, helping and asking for a help – all these is the basis of a coworking space. It is important for us to create an office which is not just a workplace: it is a community space, a place for relaxation and learning. It is worthy to decide what audience we want to address and start building a community towards them, because the real value of our office is not an infrastructure, but the community.

In the 21st century knowledge sharing supports big ideas and the development in a unique way is united with the approach of a competitive market. It is easier to find your partners and investors this way and it is easier to find new ways.

Space sharing provides an economical, cheap and liveable solution for young companies and entrepreneurs. The office provides every infrastructural need, therefore, coworkers can focus on their aims.

Beside all these features it is important for a coworking space to have its own, unique, one-of-a-kind concept – this could be a unique design space, eco-friendly approach, organizing community events – or anything on which a whole concept can be established.

The coworking model needs much more a personal effort than a conventional real estate leasing. A business model is not supposed to be based only on the infrastructure, it must be colorized by others services. It is not only important for the financial matters, but for the building up a community.