

# Redefining the Workplace: A Quantitative Examination of Coworking Spaces in Québec

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## Abstract

Our research focuses on the role of coworking spaces as “third spaces” for work. It examines the characteristics of coworkers, the social and physical dimensions of coworking environments, and the forms of work and collaboration within these spaces on the basis of an online survey of managers and coworkers. This study contributes both theoretically and practically to the understanding of coworking spaces as multifaceted environments where work, collaboration, and socialization intersect. It underscores the importance of intentional facilitation, inclusive design, and contextual sensitivity in maximizing the potential of coworking spaces to support creativity, innovation, and well-being. As coworking becomes increasingly embedded in hybrid and decentralized work arrangements, these insights offer valuable guidance for managers, urban planners, and policymakers aiming to harness coworking spaces for sustainable economic and social development.

## Keywords

Coworking, Open Space, Open Plan Office, Innovation, Well-Being

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## 1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, coworking spaces appear to be re-emerging as a significant component of the future of work. The rapid expansion of telework in recent years has reshaped work practices, while self-employed workers continue to seek professional work environments. In this context, coworking spaces offer flexible alternatives that respond to these evolving needs. Our research on coworking, initiated approximately six years ago, focuses on the role of coworking spaces as “third spaces” for work. Our interest lies in examining the characteristics of coworkers, the social and physical dimensions of coworking environments, and the observed forms of work and collaboration within these spaces. Given that coworking appears increasingly integrated into hybrid models

of work, it is crucial to investigate what actually happens in these spaces in order to better understand their potential role in shaping the future of work.

Coworking is generally understood to have emerged in the 1990s, with the first formal coworking space established in San Francisco in 2005. Since then, coworking spaces have proliferated globally, with Deskmag (2019) estimating approximately 22,000 spaces worldwide by 2019. The past several years have seen fluctuations in this trend, as numerous coworking spaces were forced to close during the pandemic, followed by a period of reopenings and new developments. As of 2022, coworking spaces appear to be undergoing a phase of renewed expansion. This growth now extends across many regions, including Asia and Africa.

For instance, Regus (IWG) has opened 16 coworking spaces in Morocco alone, doubling its previous presence there in just three years. In African and Asian contexts, coworking spaces are often used by expatriate workers, particularly when their employers maintain only small teams (typically 10 to 20 employees) in a given city or country, and where mobile or remote work is common. In addition, business travelers increasingly rely on coworking spaces abroad, as Regus membership provides access to over 3300 coworking locations worldwide <https://www.regus.com/fr-fr>.

This international trend also has distinct characteristics in more industrialized nations such as Canada, France, and Germany—regions that formed the focus of our research in the last decade or so (Tremblay & Krauss, 2024; Krauss & Tremblay, 2019). In these contexts, local workers are increasingly drawn to coworking spaces as affordable and flexible alternatives to traditional offices. Such spaces typically offer lower rental costs, reduce commuting time, and provide professional environments in closer proximity to home (Le Nadant et al., 2018; Tremblay et al., 2022). In many countries, coworking is also being explored as a tool for revitalizing urban centers that have been adversely affected by the widespread adoption of telework during the pandemic. Some real estate developers now see coworking spaces as a means of breathing new life into downtown areas. Furthermore, during the pandemic, many teleworkers relocated to suburban or rural areas. Small towns and villages now view coworking spaces as important professional services—offering workspaces, access to technology, and meeting rooms—which can attract new residents and stimulate local economic development in peripheral regions.

Following two years of extensive telework, especially during the pandemic (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Gillet & Tremblay, 2023; Kozłowski et al., 2022), many workers now want to have more autonomy in their work and desire alternatives to traditional on-site office cultures. For these individuals, coworking spaces represent an attractive option for part-time or hybrid work arrangements. In this context, it is evident that both employer and employee expectations have evolved considerably. These shifts prompt a broader rethinking of work organization and the physical spaces in which work takes place. Our research therefore, aims to provide a picture of coworking spaces in Canada, mainly in the Québec province,

to inform both future work practices and urban development strategies.

On the basis of an online survey, which offers a larger picture than most qualitative case studies done on coworking to date, the objective of this paper is to examine the potential of coworking spaces to foster new forms of work and collaboration, and to assess their capacity to enhance the work contexts and advantages for self-employed workers, entrepreneurs, firms, who establish themselves in coworking spaces, as well as the competitiveness of cities and villages that attract these coworking spaces. Previous research has suggested that cooperation and innovation are key goals for many coworkers and firms seeking to innovate, and we want to further explore this theme through new empirical data.

In this article, we focus primarily on findings from our most recent study (conducted within the framework of a project on Open Spaces and Coworking), while also drawing on insights from earlier research (Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a, 2017b; Tremblay & Scaillerez, 2020; Tremblay & Vaineau, 2020). Our previous studies identified some of the trends that continue to shape coworking today, and our current research—conducted with a larger sample and more recent, post-pandemic data—serves to confirm and expand upon these earlier observations. In particular, this article highlights both continuity and change within coworking practices, comparing recent findings with those of earlier work (Tremblay & Vaineau, 2020; Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a, 2016b), and offering an updated and more representative portrait of coworking in Canada (Québec) today.

## 2. Literature Review

Coworking spaces provide users with the opportunity to work remotely from their usual workplaces or to avoid the risks of isolation often associated with working from home (Oldenburg, 2000; Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a). For many individuals, however, the value of these spaces lies in the potential for networking and the professional opportunities that may arise from working in proximity to a diverse range of users—individuals whose activities may intersect in ways that facilitate interaction and collaboration (Dorley & Witthoft, 2012; Loechel & Legrenzi, 2013; Murray et al., 2010; Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a, 2016b; Pierre & Burret, 2015, 2014).

Coworking spaces allow independent entrepreneurs, self-employed workers, and various other professionals to share a physical workspace equipped with all the standard amenities of an office, while also benefiting from shared equipment and pooled expenses in exchange for a monthly rental fee (Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016b). Beyond these practical advantages, coworking spaces are often recognized for fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration that can give rise to creative and innovative projects (Capdevila, 2016; Fabbri & Charue-Duboc, 2016; Suire, 2013), typically initiated by groups of users. However, it is important to note that this collaborative work culture does not materialize in all coworking spaces. Although often promoted as one of the core benefits of coworking, the presence of a

strong collaborative dynamic has not been systematically confirmed in empirical studies (Krauss & Tremblay, 2019).

A considerable body of research on coworking spaces draws upon the theory of open innovation, which enables organizations and self-employed workers to collaborate with external partners or actors in the development of new ideas, products, or services. Both this theoretical perspective and our own research are grounded in broader work on the dynamics of open innovation processes (Chesbrough, 2003; Chesbrough et al., 2006; Pénin et al., 2011).

Open innovation theory rests on the premise that firms do not always have internally the expertise that they need to innovate. External resources and competencies can be a very useful source of new knowledge and play a critical role in stimulating innovation. In our view, another theory is useful and similar to that of open innovation and it is the concept of knowledge developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). These authors also emphasized that firms do not necessarily employ all of the best talent in-house and therefore must seek to integrate external expertise, particularly tacit knowledge, as it is presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi. This does not imply that internal knowledge should be undervalued; rather, it suggests that companies should complement internal expertise by trying to access external ideas and intellectual property (Trott & Hartmann, 2009). Participation in external networks is thus seen as essential for accessing such knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, which cannot be found in written documents, online or otherwise. Thus, coworking spaces may be useful for firms and individuals to access this form of knowledge exchange.

It is important to mention, as Trott and Hartmann (2009) observe, that the idea of leveraging external knowledge is not new. However, over the years of research, and even in recent years, it has historically received less attention. Indeed, researchers have tended to put more emphasis on internal talent as the main driver of creativity and innovation, in products, services or organizational dimensions. Our own research on management of innovation within organizations (Tremblay, 2014; Tremblay & Rolland, 2019) has also incorporated earlier theories, such as the quality circles and Theory Z associated with Japanese (J-type) firms—organizations that contrast with more hierarchical, less innovation-focused American (A-type) firms. Both the open innovation approach and the innovation-oriented Japanese firm model underscore the importance of knowledge exchange and network-building as essential mechanisms for acquiring the new knowledge that appears necessary for innovation (Tremblay, 2014). Moreover, these processes may also foster the identification of new business ideas or opportunities, as frequently occurs in coworking spaces where such networks can emerge organically.

At the same time, several scholars have highlighted the potential risks associated with open innovation and open knowledge exchange—specifically, the risk of information leakage. In such a context, it is important to ensure that innovation management practices, and work practices in general, ensure that internal knowledge continues to flow appropriately but also that sensitive information is protected from

leakages. Indeed, some researchers (Tremblay & Vaineau, 2020; Krauss & Tremblay, 2019) found that some coworkers expressed concerns about the possible loss of exclusivity over their knowledge or the risk of some exclusive knowledge being disclosed.

It is important to note that open innovation theory has primarily focused on medium-to-large firms that open themselves to external sources in search of talent. In our view however, this approach can be equally relevant to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and self-employed workers, who can similarly wish to benefit from external knowledge sources. Indeed, these external sources may often lead to more creativity and innovation because of the diversity of knowledge and also possibly because of new forms of work organization and management models associated with these external sources (Tremblay & Rolland, 2019; Tremblay, 2014).

Activities based on open innovation can contribute to the development or enhancement of new products, services, work organization of management modes by involving a variety of actors or sources of knowledge (Laursen & Salter, 2006; Sailer Kerstin & McCulloh, 2012). Research has also shown that open innovation does not always happen ‘automatically’ or easily. It usually requires the involvement of intermediaries who facilitate the knowledge exchanges and transfers (Chesbrough, 2003; Chesbrough, 2006). The primary role of these intermediaries is to connect different actors, foster collaborations and exchanges, and thus facilitate the innovation process.

In this respect, coworking spaces may be conceptualized as open platforms for innovation—provided that they facilitate collaboration among their members, and eventually external actors as well. However, it is precisely this collaborative dynamic that is often not guaranteed. Nonetheless, fostering such collaboration is a critical success factor in the early stages of innovation for smaller enterprises or for self-employed workers who offer their services to other firms and also need to innovate. The firms and self-employed in coworking spaces thus often rely on their ability to access complementary external resources and expertise to compensate for limited internal capacities.

Coworking spaces thus need the participation of intermediaries—individuals or organizations who act as interfaces between parties for knowledge exchanges or transfers (Howells, 2006; Tremblay et al., 2012). These intermediaries play an essential role in building trust between actors, facilitating encounters, and fostering relationships—for instance, by acting as matchmakers or by organizing structured interactions. It is reasonable to consider that facilitators or community managers within coworking spaces can perform this intermediary role, helping to foster connections among coworkers. Such facilitators can encourage the circulation of knowledge and support the initiation of collaborative efforts within the coworking environment (Leroux et al., 2014; Fabbri & Charue-Duboc, 2016). Intermediation between coworkers and with others is enabled through various activities that cultivate a collaborative culture; although nothing is assured, this can facilitate

interactions that may ultimately lead to new business opportunities, to various innovations in products and services or sometimes to simpler things such as new ideas or new formatting for products and services.

To conclude, the literature highlights coworking spaces as both functional work environments and potential hubs for collaboration, creativity, and innovation (Cheyrouze & Tremblay, 2023; Alla et al., 2024; Alla et al., 2025). While they offer relief from the isolation of home-based work (Oldenburg, 2000; Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a), their added value often lies in enabling informal interactions and knowledge exchange among diverse users (Capdevila, 2016; Fabbri & Charue-Duboc, 2016). However, this collaborative dynamic is not guaranteed (Krauss & Tremblay, 2019). Drawing on open innovation theory (Chesbrough, 2003) and Nonaka and Takeuchi's concept of tacit knowledge, scholars argue that external expertise plays a vital role in driving innovation, especially for individuals or firms with limited internal resources. Yet, such openness also raises concerns about knowledge leakage. To foster meaningful exchange while managing risks, coworking spaces often rely on intermediaries—such as facilitators or community managers—who build trust, support collaboration, and help generate new ideas, opportunities, or innovations (Howells, 2006; Leroux et al., 2014). We now present our quantitative methodology before turning to results.

### 3. Quantitative Methodology

This section presents an overview of the quantitative methodology employed in the study, along with a profile of the participants involved.

#### 3.1. Participant Selection

The questionnaire was designed to be applicable to all 250 coworking spaces identified across Québec. To that end, each coworking space was contacted individually and invited to distribute the survey to its users. However, a number of coworking spaces declined to participate or to forward the survey to their members, citing concerns about over-solicitation, as members were already frequently approached for various activities and/or surveys.

As a result, the survey was ultimately disseminated in coworking spaces where the managers voluntarily agreed to collaborate and allow distribution of the questionnaire to their user base.

#### 3.2. Research Protocol: Survey Questionnaire

For the quantitative phase of this research, a structured questionnaire in survey format was developed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of coworking spaces, as well as various aspects of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), especially well-being. The questionnaire was made available both online (using Google Forms) and in a paper version in French. Additionally, upon request, a paper version of the questionnaire was provided in English to two (2) users of a coworking space in Montreal.

### 3.3. Research Protocol: Data Collection

Completion of the survey required approximately 20 to 30 minutes. In total, 207 coworkers from 36 coworking spaces located throughout Québec completed the questionnaire. Of these respondents, 37 individuals—representing 17% of the total sample—identified themselves as managers of coworking spaces.

In addition to online dissemination, some face-to-face visits were conducted in selected coworking spaces in both the Québec City and Montreal regions, enabling some users to complete the questionnaire in paper format. Responses collected on paper were subsequently entered manually into the Google Forms database for analysis.

As concerns ethics issues, the first page of the survey provided participants with full information regarding the study's objectives, assurances regarding the confidentiality of individual responses, details concerning project funding, and a clear statement of the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By clicking on the "Next" button to proceed to the following page of the online survey, participants provided their informed and voluntary consent to participate and to allow their data to be used for the purposes of the study.

Finally, data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using Microsoft Excel software, primarily through the use of pivot tables to identify trends and patterns. Particular attention was given to analyzing the most significant variables emerging from the dataset.

### 3.4. Profile of Coworking Spaces

The coworking spaces that participated in this study were located in a range of settings across Québec. Seven of the participating spaces were situated in the metropolitan areas of Montreal and Québec City. An additional three coworking spaces were located in medium-sized cities, specifically Sherbrooke, Rimouski, and Rivière-du-Loup. Two coworking spaces were located in suburban areas surrounding Montreal, while one coworking space was located in a village setting (Mont-Joli).

Of particular note, one coworking space visited during the study, MitisLab, relocated during the research period—from a rural location (Jardins des Métis) to the village of Mont-Joli. The author of the paper was able to visit the second site personally, to update information and qualitative data, while the first location had previously been visited by a research assistant. It is also important to note that two coworking spaces included in the study are no longer in operation as of today.

## 4. Results on Workspaces

This section presents findings related to key variables associated with the physical characteristics of the workspaces themselves. Participants were first asked to identify the type of individual workspace they used within their coworking space. The results indicate that, across coworking spaces in Québec, the majority

of coworkers work in open-plan spaces. More details on this are given in the next section.

#### 4.1. Work Environment and Use of Spaces

The findings reveal that across coworking spaces in Québec, a majority of coworkers (54.9%) work in open-plan spaces, while 8.7% work in open-plan areas located within a closed office. As mentioned previously, over one-third (36.4%) work in closed office spaces.

When analyzing this variable by socio-demographic characteristics, it is notable that only 25% of coworkers aged 21 to 40 work in a closed office. Among women, across all age groups, only 21% work in a closed office.

In relation to workstation type, the data indicate that for the majority of respondents (66%), their workstations are assigned. Assigned workstations refer to dedicated spaces to which workers return on each visit, and which they may personalize by leaving personal belongings.

When disaggregated by gender, 62% of women reported having assigned workstations, slightly below the overall rate of 66%. Among respondents identifying as introverted, 64% reported having an assigned workstation. For those aged 41 to 60, this figure rises to 72%.

Geographically, coworkers in Montreal and Québec City reported similar results: 60% of Montreal-based coworkers and 59% of those in Québec City indicated that they had an assigned workstation—both below the provincial average of 66%. In the Bas-du-Fleuve region, only 50% reported having an assigned workstation. Conversely, in Montreal's South Shore area, 82% of coworkers reported having an assigned workstation, well above the provincial average.

#### 4.2. Use of Different Spaces

Beyond individual offices and desks, coworking spaces typically feature a variety of additional zones: kitchen spaces, lounges with armchairs, open collaborative areas, enclosed meeting rooms, soundproof phone booths, and other creative zones, depending on architectural choices, space availability, and the owners' objectives. While open areas and meeting rooms are generally favored to promote interaction and collaboration, demand for closed office spaces has increased in the post-pandemic years.

In light of this diversity, the study also examined how many hours coworkers spend in each type of space on a daily basis. Among all survey respondents, 50% reported spending more than four hours per day in closed offices or concentration areas. Compared to this overall figure, 60% of men and 42% of women reported spending more than four hours per day in these spaces.

Regarding collaborative zones, 33% of survey respondents indicated using collaborative areas for more than four hours per day. Comparatively, 30% of men and 35% of women reported spending more than four hours per day in such areas.

Among employees working for firms located within coworking spaces, 28% re-

ported spending more than four hours per day in concentration areas, while 22% reported spending more than four hours daily in collaborative zones.

By contrast, among employees of firms located outside the coworking space, 75% reported spending more than four hours per day in concentration areas, and 17% reported spending more than four hours in collaborative zones.

Overall, 29% of coworkers stated that they typically work with team members located outside the coworking space, while 31% reported working regularly with team members located within the coworking space. Additionally, 6% of respondents indicated that they do not work in a team for their job. Finally, 30% of coworkers reported working equally with team members both inside and outside of the coworking space.

### 4.3. Physical Characteristics of Coworking Spaces

This section presents findings related to the comfort of the physical work environment, focusing on distance between workers, noise levels, and lighting conditions.

Regarding the distance between workers, 51% of respondents reported working at a distance of 1 to 2 meters from others, while 49% reported working at a distance greater than 2 meters. These results were consistent across genders. However, notable differences emerged across age groups: 66% of those aged 41 to 60 reported working at distances greater than 2 meters, compared to only 32% of those aged 21 to 40.

When asked whether they felt that other workers were too close, 88% of respondents across Québec answered “no.” This perception was consistent across gender, age, and self-identified introversion or extraversion. We need to mention that most coworkers work in these spaces on a voluntary basis, only some employees having this imposed upon them by their employer.

In relation to lighting, only 5% of respondents indicated that lighting was problematic. No significant variation was observed by gender or age. Regarding temperature, 24% of coworkers reported that temperature was often, very often, or always problematic (too cold or too hot). This percentage increased slightly to 26% among women but dropped to 9% among those aged 41 to 60.

As for comfort related to seating, desk space, and desk height, 81% of respondents either agreed, somewhat agreed, or strongly agreed that the furniture met their needs.

The next area explored pertains to noise levels, concentration, and distractions. Overall, 33% of respondents stated that their coworking space was too noisy; 19% reported that there were too many distractions; and 11% reported having difficulty concentrating. This is one of the main negative elements that came up. Perceptions of excessive noise did not vary according to age, gender, or self-identified introversion or extraversion.

Regarding distractions, while the overall percentage was 19%, it rose to 24% among extroverts and dropped to 16% among men. With respect to concentration

difficulties, the overall percentage was 11%. Among extroverts, the rate was slightly higher at 12%, and among introverts, it was 9%. No variation was observed across age groups. Again, such low levels are surely due to the voluntary nature of the presence in coworking spaces, as there are more negative views in Open plan spaces of private or public companies. We now turn to the impact of workspaces on employment decisions.

## 5. Influence on Employment Decisions and Leaving the Workspace

To assess the influence of workspace configuration on employment decisions, participants were asked: “To what extent does the prospect of working in an open-plan space influence your decision to accept, retain, or leave a job?”

Responses were as follows: 22% of respondents indicated that it influenced them very little; 38% stated that it influenced them moderately; and 37% reported that it influenced them significantly. These trends did not vary significantly by gender, and only slightly by age or by self-perceived introversion or extraversion.

To gauge members’ attachment to their coworking space, the survey asked: “To what extent would it be easy for you to leave this coworking space?”

Responses revealed that 47% of respondents considered leaving the space to be rather difficult, 21% considered it somewhat easy, and 33% found it easy, indicating a high level of attachment for about half and low level for the other half. Among those who had used their coworking space for more than two years, the percentage finding it difficult to leave increased to 53%, compared to the overall figure of 47%.

## 6. Interpersonal Relationships

Overall, 51% of coworkers reported having developed new professional relationships through their coworking space. Among women, this figure was 54%, compared to 49% among men. This is a relatively high percentage, as half of the respondents indicated the development of professional relationships.

Regional variation was evident: in Montreal, 47% of respondents reported developing new professional relationships, and 42% on Montreal’s South Shore. Higher rates were observed outside Montreal: 63% in Québec City and 66% in the Bas-du-Fleuve region.

In terms of personal friendships, 38% of coworkers reported developing such relationships through the coworking space. Among women, this figure was 40%, while among men it was 30%. Again, regional variation was observed: 51% in Montreal, 39% on Montreal’s South Shore, 37% in Québec City, and 50% in the Bas-du-Fleuve region.

## 7. Collaboration

Collaboration was examined through two dimensions that are often considered central in the decision to create or to use a coworking space: knowledge sharing,

and the promotion of creativity and innovation.

Regarding knowledge sharing, 45% of coworkers indicated that they often or always shared knowledge within the coworking space. Among men, this figure was 37%; among women, 52%; and among respondents aged 41 to 60, it rose to 55%. It thus appears that coworking can be conducive to knowledge sharing.

With respect to creativity and innovation, 44% of coworkers reported that their coworking space contributed to the development of new ideas, creativity, or innovation. The rate was 42% among men, 48% among women, and 50% among those aged 41 to 60. Again, this percentage can be considered high, in comparison with previous observations (Krauss & Tremblay, 2019).

Interpersonal dynamics were generally positive, as only 3% of respondents reported that conflicts with other coworkers had become more frequent since joining the coworking space.

## 8. Productivity and Quality of Work

With regard to productivity, 87% of coworkers reported that the coworking environment supported their productivity. No significant differences were observed between men and women. Among those aged 41 to 60, the figure rose to 92%, while it was 84% among those aged 21 to 40. Among self-identified extroverts, the rate was 85%, compared to 90% among introverts.

Analyzing productivity by usage of space, 76% of respondents who worked 1 to 2 hours per day in closed spaces rated themselves as productive—below the overall average of 87%. By contrast, among those working more than 3 hours per day in closed spaces, 100% reported feeling productive.

Regarding the quality of work, 90% of coworkers indicated that the coworking environment supported the production of high-quality work. This figure was 92% among men and 89% among women, with no significant variation by age. Among extroverts, 88% agreed, compared to 92% among introverts.

## 9. Main Observations and Discussion

First, let us recall the main elements from the literature review before we put into light the various observations from the online survey conducted as part of our research.

As seen above, the literature on coworking spaces highlights their dual role as both practical work environments and potential catalysts for collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Initially valued for offering an alternative to home-based isolation (Oldenburg, 2000; Scaillerez & Tremblay, 2016a), coworking spaces have also been recognized for fostering professional interactions that may lead to knowledge exchange and joint projects (Capdevila, 2016; Fabbri & Charue-Duboc, 2016). However, this collaborative culture is not consistently observed across all spaces (Krauss & Tremblay, 2019). Many studies draw on open innovation theory (Chesbrough, 2003), which emphasizes the importance of external knowledge sources in stimulating innovation—particularly for firms

or self-employed individuals with limited internal resources. This aligns with Nonaka and Takeuchi's concept of tacit knowledge, which cannot be codified but is often accessed through social interaction. To facilitate this, coworking spaces require the presence of intermediaries—such as facilitators or community managers—who can build trust, organize exchanges, and support collaboration (Howells, 2006; Leroux et al., 2014). These actors play a key role in enabling the informal encounters and shared practices that can generate new ideas, business opportunities, or innovations in products, services, and work organization. While open innovation offers clear potential, it also carries risks such as knowledge leakage, as was mentioned by some in the qualitative part of our research. We now present the main observations from the online survey, tying them into the discussion.

### **9.1. Role of Diversity and Regional Differences**

The findings reveal significant regional variations in relationship-building, collaboration, and space usage. Coworking spaces outside of Montreal (e.g., Québec City, Bas-du-Fleuve) report higher levels of interpersonal relationship development and knowledge-sharing, which suggests that smaller centers may foster more community-oriented coworking cultures.

This indicates that “one size fits all” models of coworking may not be appropriate; regional and cultural factors must be considered in both research and practice.

### **9.2. Importance of Community Facilitation**

The role of community managers emerged as a critical success factor in promoting interaction, collaboration, and innovation—supporting existing literature on the importance of intermediation (Fabbri & Charue-Duboc, 2016; Howells, 2006). Spaces lacking such facilitation may miss opportunities to fully leverage the potential of open innovation.

Future research might explore which community management practices are most effective in different types of coworking spaces (urban vs. rural, corporate vs. freelance-oriented, etc.).

### **9.3. Varied Needs and Preferences Among Coworkers**

The data clearly illustrate that coworkers are not a homogenous group. Variables such as age, gender, personality traits (introversion/extraversion), and employment status (freelance vs. employee) affect preferences for space configuration, noise tolerance, collaboration levels, and even attachment to the coworking space.

These findings suggest that coworking space design and programming should adopt a flexible, user-centered approach.

### **9.4. Impact of Space Design on Well-Being and Productivity**

Physical factors such as noise levels, lighting, temperature, and workspace layout strongly influence user experience. A significant proportion of respondents re-

ported temperature issues or perceived excessive noise.

This highlights the need for more research into how physical coworking space design affects well-being, productivity, and long-term retention.

### **9.5. Hybrid Work and the Evolving Role of Coworking Spaces**

The data suggest that coworking spaces are increasingly integrated into hybrid work strategies—not only for freelancers but also for employees of firms located outside the space.

This trend indicates that coworking spaces may evolve into essential components of new urban work ecosystems and could play a role in revitalizing peripheral and suburban areas.

### **9.6. Attachment and Retention**

The findings on attachment (measured by our question on the difficulty leaving the coworking space) indicate that long-term users form strong bonds with the space, suggesting that coworking spaces may provide not only professional resources but also a sense of belonging and social identity. Understanding these dynamics could help operators design loyalty and engagement strategies to foster long-term membership.

As all research, this one also has limitations, which we mention here, before addressing possible future research directions.

### **9.7. Limitations of the Study**

The voluntary nature of participation and the fact that some spaces declined to distribute the survey may limit generalizability. Future studies could seek to address these limitations by broadening the sampling frame or conducting longitudinal analyses, although longitudinal analyses are not easy to do, as there is important mobility and movement in coworking spaces.

### **9.8. Future Research Directions**

As mentioned above, longitudinal studies could be interesting as they could examine how coworking practices and preferences evolve post-pandemic, considering there will surely be changes over the years in the hybrid work model and remote work options, which do have an influence on coworking spaces.

Comparative studies between coworking spaces in different provinces or countries could also provide valuable cross-cultural insights. This research is centered on Canada, but some research was done with France and Germany (Tremblay & Krauss, 2024); however strictly comparative studies are not easy to manage as many institutional and national variables come into the picture.

Further exploration is needed regarding the intersection of coworking with emerging trends such as coworking for corporate employees, coworking in rural areas, and the use of coworking spaces as municipal tools for economic development.

## 10. Conclusion

This research refines several findings from previous studies regarding coworking spaces and their role in fostering creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Specifically, with respect to the hypothesis that interpersonal interactions within coworking spaces catalyze creativity and innovation—a premise grounded in the theory of open innovation—not all coworkers appear to actively seek such outcomes, nor do these outcomes emerge spontaneously in every context. Our findings underscore the pivotal role of a community manager or facilitator who actively fosters interaction and collaboration, thereby enabling the conditions under which innovation and knowledge exchange are more likely to flourish.

Moreover, the study highlights the heterogeneous nature of coworking experiences, shaped by diverse individual preferences and needs. Physical working conditions—including noise levels, distractions, and spatial proximity—pose challenges for some coworkers, while others adapt readily. This diversity is further evident in the socio-demographic variations observed: younger coworkers and women tend to prefer different workspace configurations and report differing experiences of collaboration and social connection. Similarly, personality traits such as introversion and extraversion influence coworking preferences and perceptions of the environment. These findings suggest that coworking spaces should embrace a flexible, user-centered design approach, incorporating diverse workspace typologies and community activities to accommodate varying needs.

Significant regional differences emerged from our analysis. Notably, coworking spaces located outside major urban centers such as Montreal—particularly in Québec City and the Bas-du-Fleuve region—demonstrate higher reported rates of professional relationship-building and collaboration. This suggests that coworking in smaller cities and rural areas may cultivate more tightly-knit communities, possibly reflecting differing social dynamics or space scales. Such variations challenge the applicability of uniform coworking models and highlight the necessity of context-sensitive approaches in both research and management practice.

The physical environment itself plays a crucial role in coworker satisfaction and productivity. While the majority reported favorable conditions regarding lighting and furniture, issues related to temperature and noise were salient for a non-negligible minority. Given that distractions and difficulty concentrating were reported by some respondents, particularly extroverts, future research should further investigate the interplay between physical design elements and user well-being and productivity. The presence of diverse functional spaces—open-plan areas, closed offices, meeting rooms, and quiet zones—appears vital in balancing collaboration opportunities with the need for focused work.

Our findings also reflect the growing integration of coworking spaces within hybrid work arrangements. A substantial proportion of coworkers work alongside team members located both inside and outside the coworking space, underscoring the evolving role of these environments as extensions of organizational workspaces rather than solely independent freelancing hubs. This trend, accelerated by

the COVID-19 pandemic, positions coworking spaces as key components of emerging urban work ecosystems and potential instruments for revitalizing peripheral, suburban, and rural areas affected by telework-induced geographic shifts.

Furthermore, the emotional and social attachment to coworking spaces is significant. Nearly half of respondents reported that leaving their coworking space would be difficult, with attachment particularly strong among long-term users. This suggests that coworking spaces offer more than mere physical amenities; they foster a sense of belonging, community identity, and social support, factors that are essential for user retention and satisfaction.

Despite these insights, our study is subject to limitations, including the voluntary nature of participation and the exclusion of certain coworking spaces that declined to circulate the survey, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, our cross-sectional design captures coworking dynamics at a specific point in time, limiting the ability to observe temporal changes or causal relationships.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to track evolving coworking practices and preferences, especially as post-pandemic work models continue to develop. Comparative studies across different provinces, countries, and cultural contexts would further illuminate the factors influencing coworking experiences and outcomes. Investigations into the specific roles and practices of community managers as innovation intermediaries would also be valuable, as would exploration of emerging phenomena such as corporate coworking and municipally supported coworking initiatives.

In conclusion, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the understanding of coworking spaces as multifaceted environments where work, collaboration, and socialization intersect in complex ways. It underscores the importance of intentional facilitation, inclusive design, and contextual sensitivity in maximizing the potential of coworking spaces to support creativity, innovation, and well-being. As coworking becomes increasingly embedded in hybrid and decentralized work arrangements, these insights offer valuable guidance for managers, urban planners, and policymakers aiming to harness coworking spaces for sustainable economic and social development.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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