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Coworking Spaces and Urban Quality of Life in Istanbul

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1 ABSTRACT

Co-working spaces can be defined as offices that give the opportunity to carry out individual work in a shared office environment for users from different sectors and disciplines. Co-working spaces provide flexible and alternative working conditions, supported by technical and spatial infrastructures of a working environment. With its spatial characteristics and amenities, co-working spaces promise the users efficient working hours. As well as individual efficiency, co-working spaces are also characterised by their contribution to stimulating social relations and establishing social networks.

Worldwide, co-working spaces are expanding through branches, and have the tendency to specialise through the services they offer. Co-working spaces also tend to create a worldwide network through online networks and databases, which contribute to their promotion and communication processes. Today, co-working spaces are a global trend, but they also become specific with their own local dynamics, and gain importance as a contributing factor to the performances of cities in creative sectors within a global network of cities.

In this study, the co-working spaces in Istanbul are analysed in terms of services they offer and their spatial characteristics. The aim of the paper is to put forward a description of the character of the co-working space network in the city and its contribution to urban life. This description indicates the role of co-working spaces in improving urban quality of life, in terms of accessibility of alternative working environments and the supportive facilities they offer. In this context, co-working spaces in Istanbul are analysed using their official websites. The results indicate that co-working spaces are particularly prominent in providing social interaction and flexibility characteristics, which are defined as the main components of the services they offer and the identity created for each enterprise. The spatial organisation and design characteristics of the co-working spaces are other prominent factors emphasised when explaining the services of these co-working spaces.

Keywords: Istanbul, urban quality of life, coworking, neighbourhood, infrastructure

2 INTRODUCTION

Co-working spaces can be defined as alternative office spaces which give people from different disciplines and sectors the opportunity to carry out their individual work in a shared work environment. In co-working spaces, spatial and technical infrastructure for office work is provided for the users, within different options in terms of space and period (Gandini, 2015).

Much of the literature considering co-working spaces are from the field of business and organisation theory, mainly explaining the emergence of these alternative work spaces, their characteristics and their association with the new models for business organisations and working processes (Gandini, 2015; Moriset, 2014; Fuzi, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012; Sykes, 2014).

The emergence of the alternative working spaces, such as co-working spaces are associated with the changes in learning and working models due to the advances in information and communication technologies. In a time of space of flows, rather than static places, activities take place regardless of spatial boundaries. In this new era, as the relationship between space and time is changing, everyday routine has become less important than it used to be, while mobility and spontaneity have become important features of working conditions. This change has inevitably brought forth the change in spatial needs, and a renewal of workplace organisations and their design features emerged. The rapid rise of information and communication technologies have influenced the way of doing business and made working processes more mobile and independent of geographic and physical space (Laing and Bacevice, 2013; Fuzi et al., 2014).

The emergence and the spread of the co-working spaces is also associated with the global economic crisis of the 2000s. With the experience of the economic crisis, more people abandoned the idea of traditional workplace and the tendency of developing individual businesses increased. Beginning with the crisis, sharing economies also gained importance to reduce costs, by sharing spatial and technical infrastructure, and other facilities that support the work environments (Gandini, 2015; Fuzi et al., 2014). With the effects of an

economic crisis atmosphere, human capital which is based on personal knowledge, talent and experience, and social capital which is developed through social relations, became significant factors that contribute to the entrepreneurship and innovation processes (Gandini, 2015).

Spinuzzi (2012) emphasised the distinctive feature of co-working spaces by calling it "working together but working alone". This feature indicates that one of the main expectations of co-working spaces is to create an environment in which the user can continue his / her job in the most efficient way and at the same time ensure unity with others who share this environment.

Lange (2011) defines co-working spaces as the physical space of independent work on the one hand, and the space of social relations which will contribute to cooperation on the other hand. In this definition, co-working spaces are seen to promise productive environments that support individual production, while providing social interaction that would contribute to the development of social networks. Laing and Bacevice (2013) state that the importance of creating a social environment is among the important characteristics that carries co-working spaces beyond being just physical work spaces. Among distinguishing characteristics of co-working spaces is flexibility which is achieved in terms of the services provided, choice of physical work place and occupancy and payment conditions (Gibson and Lizieri, 1999). For Laing and Bacevice (2013) one of the main factors affecting the organisation and design of co-working spaces is the purpose of creating spaces that support creativity and innovation. In order to support creativity and innovation, it is ensured that the physical organisation of these spaces is flexible, dynamic and supports interaction between users. The spatial organisation and the design features of these spaces are aimed to encourage experience and knowledge sharing among the users. Another characteristic that Laing and Bacevice (2013) define is that with the help of the design features, shared meanings and values are created through the co-working spaces, which contributes to feelings of attachment and belonging to a community. In addition, the virtual environment of each co-working space beyond the physical space is another dimension of creating a sense of community and sharing.

Co-working spaces are expanding through branches worldwide. The surveys by Deskmag formation conducted to determine the changes and trends associated with the co-working space usage in the world show that the number of shared office enterprises increased from 12,100 in 2016 to 15,500 in 2017; (Url-1).

Moreover, it is understood that the co-working spaces tend to create a worldwide network via online resources. Online resources have an important place in the promotion and communication processes considering co-working spaces and the model of working they provide. Figure 1 shows the distribution of co-working spaces across the globe. A total of 1785 co-working spaces are registered in 853 cities in 113 countries and these enterprises are located on the map (Url-2).
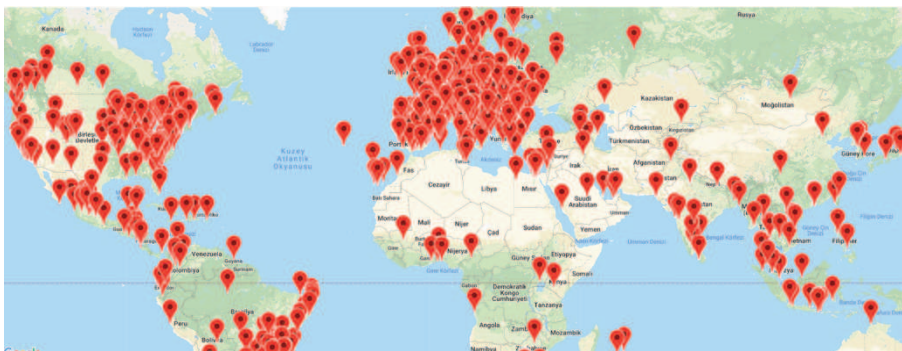

Figure 1: Example of the Distribution of Co-working Spaces Worldwide (Url-2)

In this study, it is aimed to put forward a description of the character of the co-working spaces in Istanbul and their contribution to urban quality of life. This description identifies the role of co-working spaces in improving urban quality of life, in terms of accessibility of alternative work environments and the supportive facilities they offer. In this context, co-working spaces in Istanbul are analysed using their official websites.

3 COWORKING SPACES IN ISTANBUL

As technology and internet use are a key factors of new business models, it is also important to ensure that co-working spaces are accessible via online resources. Co-working spaces create networks at world-wide or regional scales via online resources, they provide detailed introductions on their official websites and

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communicate with potential users via these platforms. These websites show that each co-working space makes its own promotion specific with visions and slogans explaining the services and facilities and the specific atmosphere it promises for the potential users.

For this study, the "Co-workSpace" site which is an online network that helps explore co-working spaces from different locations around the world, was used as the source for understading the main characteristics of the co-working space network in Istabul (Url-3).
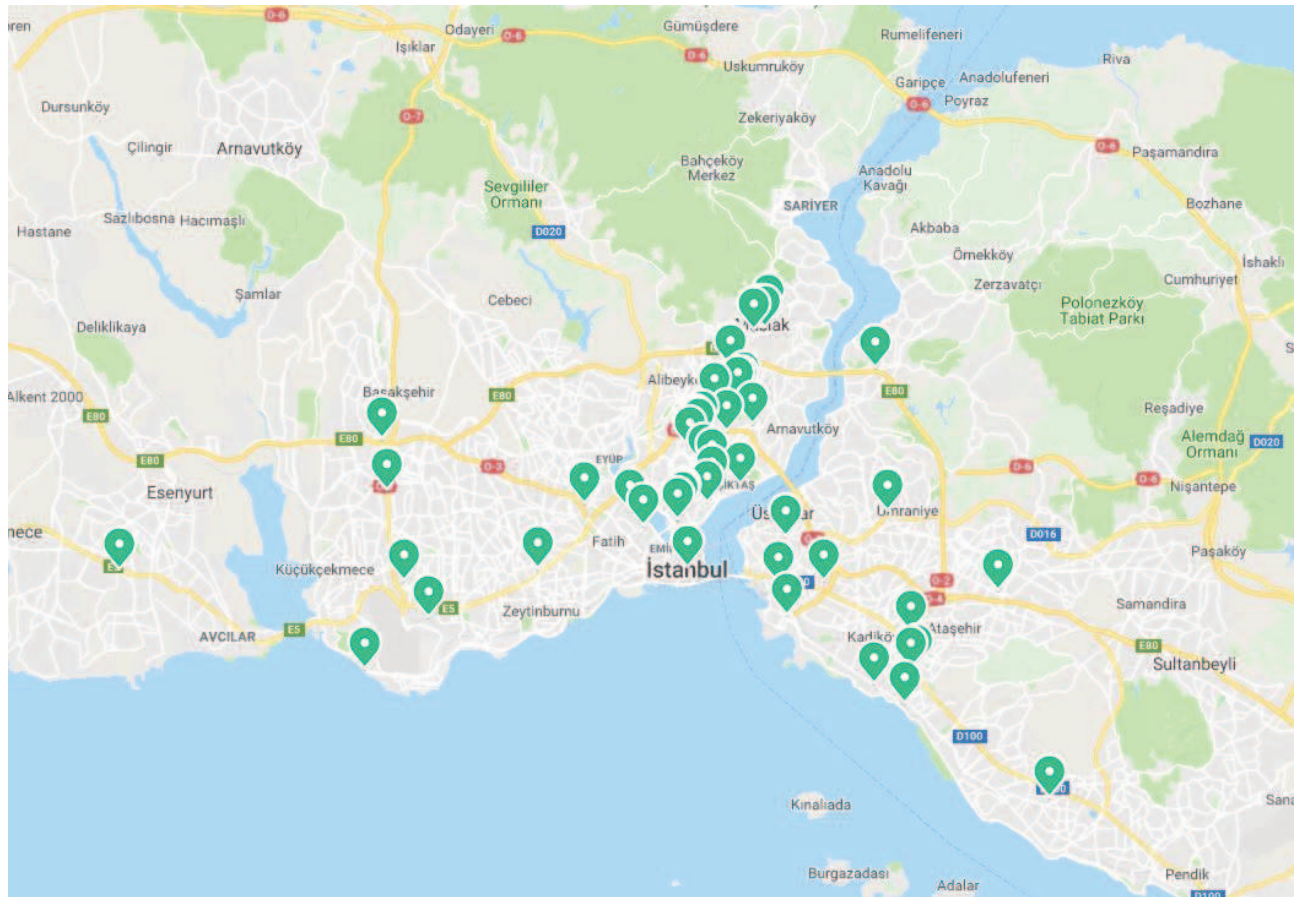

Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of Co-working Spaces in Istanbul (Url-3).

The spatial distribution of the 54 co-working spaces in Istanbul indicates that co-working spaces are located along the main transportation arteries (Figure 2). The main concentration of the co-working spaces is seen in the central business district of the city, particularly around the axis between Beyoglu and Levent – Maslak. The other locations, where co-working spaces are located, are the commercial areas on the periphery of the city. As the organisational structure and other characteristics of these co-working spaces are analysed, it is seen that the co-working spaces on the periphery are mostly the branches of companies which have national or international networks. These companies have also branches in the central business district, especially in prestigious skyscrapers on one hand, and in the historical city centtr, in revitalised environments on the other hand. In the city centre, both in the historical centre and in the central businness district, there are also smaller companies which are enterprises of local people.

From among the co-working spaces network, 3 co-working space enterprises with different characteristics are chosen for a more detailed analysis. The three cases are examined in terms of their location, institutional structure, the workspace and activity space types they offer, and the services they provide. The motto of each co-working space and the concepts that they emphasise in their own official websites are analysed to reveal how each enterprise expresses the type of work experience it promises. The official website of each enterprise was used yo investigate the characteristics of the cases. These issues are summarised in Table 1.

The research cases are named as Workinton, Habita and Atolye Istanbul. These three enterprises are located in the central business areas such as Levet-Maslak axis and Sisli, but the development and urbanisation process of each location differs from the other. In addition, all are all different examples in terms of their organisation type, business approach and the missions they define for themselves. The similar location and

the differentiating enterprise character was taken into consideration when selecting the cases from among the network of co-working spaces.

COWORKING SPACE	CASE 1: Workinton-Levent 199 (establishment: 2015)	CASE 2: Habita (establishment: 2016)	CASE 3: Atölye İstanbul (establishment: 2015)
LOCATION	Sisli, Levent CBD Prestegious skyscraper	Kagithane, Industrial zone near CBD Process gentrification through singular refunctioning and revitalisations	Sisli, Historical Bomonti Beer Factory Revitalisation of industrial heritage as a cultural zone
INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE	A enterprise with a branch network in Istanbul and Turkie, including one international branch	A co-working space without any other braches	A co-working and a workshop space with a makerlab; collaborates with universities and gets support from governmental grants, for different purposes
AREAL SIZE	2,700 m2	650 m2	700 m2
WORKSPACES	Private offices for rent, Open workspaces – for coworking, Meeting rooms (19 rooms)	Closed offices (12 office rooms), Dedicated desks–open office (32 desks) Flexible desks (15 desks), Meeting rooms (2 rooms)	Closed offices (4 office rooms), Open workspace, Meeting rooms (2 rooms) Makerlab
OTHER ACTIVITY HALLS & FUNCTIONS	Conference / Seminar Halls, Activity hall, Resting spaces, Kitchen, Game rooms	Lounge, Habita Venue and HabitatHall as activity halls, Kitchen / bar, Storehouse	Resting spaces, Kitchen, Activity hall (for 80-120 persons), Workshop space, Storehouse
OFFICE SERVICES	Networking, high speed internet, photocopy printer etc., address facility and virtual office service Incubation centre	Printer, minç 10 Mbps internet, address facility	Prototyping tools, creative industries library, 7/24 access, fiber internet
OTHER SERVICES	Limitless drinks, breakfast and snacks, daily cabinets	Daily drinks and snacks, cabinets	5 o'clock tea, happy hour, rthym circle, movie night, community gathering, yoga, outdoor activities, game tournaments
MOTTO	*WHERE PEOPLE WORK BETTER*	*AN OPEN & TRANSPARENT CO-WORKING HUB FOR EVERYONE* *a "habitus"* *a multi faceted sharing environment" that sprinkles common mind, accelerates ideas, establishes productive relationships and sets a ground to learn things altogether.*	*TRANSDISCIPLINARY INNOVATION PLATFORM* *COMMUNITY COMES FIRST*
CONCEPTS & CHARACTERISTICS EMPHASISED IN WEBPAGES	Accessiblity Motivation Efficiency, productivity Comfort Economical Prestigious work environment Flexibility (space / time / payment) Social networks, networking High quality in technical infrastructure * Institutional identity in terms of design features	Community Accessibility Efficiency Openness, spaciousness Inclusion Creativity Happiness Time and productivity * Interaction, privacy, transparency in terms of design features	Diversity (Transdisciplinary work) Interaction Creativity and innovation Flexibility Dynamism Convertibility Production, Prototyping Exhibiting, Sharing, Learning Openness, spaciousness * Sustainability, post occupancy interventions in terms of design features
Web Site	*https://www.workinton.com/subeler/istanbul/levent* *http://arkiv.com.tr/proje/workinton/5888*	*http://habita.com.tr* *http://www.arkiv.com.tr/proje/habita-coworking/7222*	*https://atolye.io/tr/anasayfa/* *http://www.arkiv.com.tr/proje/atolye-istanbul/5457*

Table 1: Summary of the Research Cases – Three Co-working Spaces (This table is developed from Ozturk ve Kısar Koramaz (2018) article).

Case 1, Workinton Levent 199 is located in Levent, in the central bssiness district of the city. It is one of the branches of Workinton which is one of the first companies that provide shared – flexible offices and co-working spaces in Istanbul. The company has 16 branches in total; 11 in Istanbul, 4 in other cities in Turkey and 1 in Qatar. In Istanbul, 11 of the Workinton branches are located in prestigious skyscrapers and shopping mall – office complexes on the European and Anatolian sides, the other 2 branches are located in the historical city centre in Galata and Macka. When the branches of the company in Istanbul are examined in terms of their location, it is understood that the branches are distributed throughout the city in a way to serve the city centres and business zones at different scales and there is a tendency to be in locations where office

workers and business activities are concentrated. It is observed that the two branches in the historical city centre are located where the cultural infrastructure of Istanbul and the creative industries are concentrated, and in histocial buildings (Url-4)

Workinton Levent 199 branch is analysed in this study as Case 1 co-working space. Case 1 is established in 2015, in one of the skyscrapers of the main axis of the central business district. It involves private and flexible offices for rent, open workspaces for co-working and meeting rooms. Other activity spaces are conference and seminar halls, activity halls, game rooms. Resting spaces, a kitchen and services such as limitless drinks and snacks are the features which contribute to the work experience of the users. Organisations focusing on business culture, innovation and entrepreneurship take place in the conference halls and there is also an incubation centre which facilitates and supports entrepreneurs. As the official website is examined, it is seen that, the central location and its accessibility are the most highlighted characteristics of the co-working space. Other features highlighted in the official webpage include a high quality and a prestigious work environment that can provide high motivation and productivity for users within varying and flexible usage options. The motto is defined as "where people work better". The motto also indicates the emphasis on the promise of high motivation and concentration in the work environment. The contribution of the work environment to creating social networks is another promise highlighted in the official website. Being affordable and economic, prestigious, and flexibility of the work space are other important characteristics. This company targets both corporate companies and freelancers (Url-4). Consideration of the architectural design features of Case 1 indicates the aim to emphasise the creation of an institutional identity that reflects the company. With this aim, the furniture and other interior design features designed for this company are especially focusing on physical comfort, high motivation and flexibility needs of the work environment (Url-5).

Case 2 is Habita Co-working; a co-working space established in 2016 and located in Kagithane. It is located in an industrial zone called Sanayi Mahallesi, near the Levent – Maslak axis, which is the central business district in Istanbul. The industrial zone is a specific neighbourhood with its central location and own dynamic character which is in a process of gentrification and re-functioning. On the official website, its central location, accessibility - especially by public transportation and its closeness to social facilities and business areas, are emphasised. Habita Co-working does not have any other branches and its founders define themselves as "3 people who had a dream of a work environment that hosts people with high potential and energy and who feel happy even when they work". This definition indicates the enterprise's promise of a pursuit of a happy work experience which is far from the corporate and bureaucratic work models. The enterprise involves closed offices serving as private work spaces, dedicated desks and flexible desks in an open office layout and meeting rooms. On its website Habita is defined as "an open and transparent co-working hub for everyone" and "a habitus". These definitions indicate that with this co-working space it is aimed to offer the users a holistic work experience, rather than just a physical work environment. Along with the concepts of accessibility, efficiency and productivity, other concepts, such as community, inclusion, openness, are emphasided on the website, indicating that the social environment and creating social networks is one of the priorities for this enterprise. Habita involves a lounge and 2 activity halls where organised events take place and these meeting and event places are especially emphasised on the website. The events usually focus on training and sharing experiences in areas such as entrepreneurship, innovation, marketing and design. They can be considered as activities that streghten the social interaction between the users who benefit from the other services of the enterprise (Url-6). Social interaction and privacy had been considered as the two main objectives of the architectural design. The place responds to different functions and privacy levels and enables not only spaces to work but also spontaneous actions as well (Url-7) to achieve and control the balance between privacy and socialising.

Case 3 is a co-working space named Atolye Istanbul (Atolier Istanbul) established in 2015. Atolye Istanbul is located in Sisli, Bomontiada which is a cultural complex. Bomontiada was developed through the revitalisation of the industrial heritage Historical Bomonti Beer Factory, and it makes a significant contribution to the cultural infrastructure of Istanbul with its concert and perfomance halls, art galleries, and meeting venues. As Atolye defines itself as "transdisciplinary innovation platform", it indicates that, besides creating a work environment, Atolye aims mostly to focus on stimulating the innovative and creative dynamics in the city, and defines its role as a facilitator. More than being just a physical space, Atolye had started as an idea first and developed into a project and the spatialisation of the project afterwards. One of the

mottos "community comes first" both explains the establishment story of Atolye, and its approach to social networking and being a facilitator of innovation and creativity. Atolye aims to provide a place for people from different fields to interact, develop new ideas, and by prototyping and sharing them use the technical and spatial infrastructure of Atolye. Diversity and transdisciplinary work, interaction, creativity and innovation, flexibility, dynamism are among the concepts emphasised on the official website. Atolye has a maker lab that provides prototyping and a creative industries library, along with the usual facilities, such as closed offices, open work spaces, meeting rooms, activity halls and workshop spaces. In the social spaces of Atolye, regular events take place that focus on design and innovation. The establishment of strategic and financial partnerships with national and international universities and governmental organisations such as the Istanbul Development Agency (ISTKA) is another aspect of Atolye Istanbul (Url-8). The architectural features focus on user needs and overall it is aimed to facilitate creativity and interaction through a flexible and dynamic environment (Url-9).

4 RESULTS

The aim of this study was to give a brief description of the co-working spaces in Istanbul. With this aim, three co-working spaces with different characteristics are analysed using online resources. The co-working spaces taken as research cases are examined in terms of their locations in the city, institutional structures, the workspace and activity space types they involve and the services they provide. Each co-working space, the type of work experience it promises and its mission are analysed through their mottos and the way they define themselves on their own official websites.

The spatial distribution of the co-working spaces network and the locations of the three case co-working spaces indicate that co-working spaces have the tendency of being located in the central business area or close to it, in recently developed commercial areas, and in the historical city centre. Companies with more than one branch prefer to be in the business districts and in prestigious buildings or commercial – residential areas. As individual enterprises co-working spaces may prefer to be close to the central bussiness district, in neighbourhoods which are in a gentrification process. This finding indicates that co-working spaces have a potential for the revitalisation of unused buildings, such as small scale industrial buildings. In this case, another point is to question the environmental, social and economic effects of co-working spaces on their neighbourhoods, and in particular whether they have any regeneration effects or not in their neighbourhood, as mentioned by Mariotti et al. (2017) for the Milan case.

The results of this study indicate that co-working spaces mostly focus on demands for a work environment and promise potential users an accessible, affordable, productive and efficient work environment. The spatial and technical infrastructure of the co-working spaces are emphasised in order to enhance motivation and productivity of the users to achieve this promise. Another promise of each co-working space is to emphasise its creation of social interaction and contribution to the creation of social networks. Social places such as lounge halls, kitchen, resting places and particularly activity halls undertake the task of social interaction through both spontaneous encounters and organised events. Moreover, architectural design features are also emphasised as an expression of the work environment they offer, and architectural design strategies focus especially on creating an identity for each co-working space. In addition, creating a balance between the promise of high motivation, an efficient work environment and the pursuit of social interaction emerges as a challenge for the architectural design process.

The spatial and organisational infrastructure of social events in co-working spaces aim especially to facilitate social networks for entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity, and to develop personal capacities in these fields. Considering this aspect, it can be stated that co-working spaces contribute to the cultural infrastructure of the city, by providing places for cultural facilities that contribute particularly to cultural production and capacity building processes. However there is a need yo analyse the contribution of co-working spaces to cultural life more in detail and how it can be enhanced in order to positively effect socio-cultural development of the society.

It is seen that all enterprises attribute importance to the effect of social interaction on the working process and the role of space and business identities in the development of social networks. This also coincides with elements such as social interaction, cooperation and new partnerships (Gandini, 2015; Laing and Bacevice, 2015), which are mentioned in the literature on co-working spaces. However, in the three described cases, the importance differs as regards social interaction, the role of social networks in the working experience,

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and the level and nature of the role they play. It is understood that the examples of interactions and associations have been highlighted more specifically by architectural design teams emphasising these issues and determining their design as the starting points. On the other hand, it is understood that the concepts included in the literature such as freedom from work, freedom and flexibility (Gandini, 2015; Laing and Bacevice, 2015) are also guiding principles in the sample enterprises.

The Atolye Istanbul case is a distinguishing example of this study. Besides a promise of a work environment, this co-working space also focuses on supporting innovation and creativity with its workshop space, makerlab and prototyping tools. This case overlaps with the literature that emphasises the contribution of co-working spaces to the creative cities, smart cities and smart citizens concepts (Capdevila et al., 2015; Niemi et al., 2015). There is a need to analyse the co-working space network in Istanbul to understand if there are other examples and how they operate in terms of contributing to the creative and innovative projects in the city. It is important to understand the possibilities of the existing co-working space infrasturcture and how to reinforce it and encourage innovative and creative projects, through policies and resources that are based on public-private collaborations.

The findings of this study confirm the contribution of co-working spaces to quality of life from different perspectives. First of all, co-working spaces respond to the demand for alternative work environments that accompanied new models of business and working. They promise happy and efficient working hours which are important factors for personal satisfaction from work and life. Using co-working spaces is also associated with mobility and accessibility of these facilities by public transport, a factor which reduces economic and environmental costs of transportation. In addition, as co-working spaces depend on sharing the economic and environmental costs of work, they contribute to sharing economies (Heinrichs, 2013). These factors indicate the benefits of co-working models in terms of sustainability. In addition, study results indicate that co-working spaces contribute to the cultural infrastructure of the city which demonstrates a potential that can be encouraged and supported to enhance cultural production and creativitiy of society and develop human capacity. These statements indicate that co-working spaces carry out a potential that would improve quality of life in various aspects. It is necessary to understand the possibilities and limits of this potential and how to use it to improve quality of life and as a tool to enhance the smart city and smart citizen concepts.

Due to the limitations of this study, only three co-working spaces are analysed via online sources. Further studies would consider a wider analysis of the co-working space network in Istanbul to reveal other types of co-working spaces and their achievements. Understanding the potentials of the co-working spaces network would breed policies that would enhance the contrinution of co-working spaces to quality of life. In addition, through further research, understanding the influences of co-working spaces on their environment would reveal their regeneration effects and their interaction with other urban functions which, in turn, would contribute to urban planning policies.

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