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# Coworking – A New Entrepreneurship Model in the Sharing Economy

The starting point for the considerations contained in the article is 'the sharing economy' as a new business model. It modifies the way resources are used. Nowadays, possession of resources loses its significance at the expense of their temporary accessibility. In this context, resources can be numerous: time, skills, cars, bicycles, living and office space, just to name a few. In the last case, sharing is referred to as 'coworking'. It is identified with the new work culture, which enables freelancers and other people working remotely to concentrate in a shared office space. The research hypothesis concerns differences in the functioning of coworking spaces depending on the location. These spaces can be found not only in large cities but more often in small towns and rural areas. Their offer and way of functioning significantly differ. The purpose of the article is to present the essence of coworking and the differences arising from the functioning of coworking spaces in large cities as well as in small towns and rural areas. The article uses employs such research methods as literature studies and case studies from the USA, Italy, Ireland, Serbia and Poland. Literature studies were used to present the idea of coworking, its benefits and users. It was also indicated that coworking spaces bring added value in the form of such values as, among others, community, openness, and cooperation. Analysis of case studies has shown that examples of coworking derived from small towns and rural areas, unlike the ones in agglomerations, arise as a result of grass-roots initiatives, they are not of a commercial nature, and their survival is very precarious. Even though their offer is much more modest than that of network ones from large cities, they use their potential. It can be presumed that the level of relations between coworking participants (mutual assistance, cooperation, trust) is inversely proportional to the size of the city/rural area. This is a contribution to further in-depth research on the features of coworking spaces.

**Keywords:** coworking, sharing economy, city, rural areas, cooperation, freelancers, entrepreneurship, business model, local economy, community

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### ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКАЯ СТАТЬЯ

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#### Коворкинг как новая модель предпринимательства в экономике совместного потребления

Настоящее исследование посвящено бизнес-модели экономики совместного потребления с особым способом использования ресурсов. В современном контексте важную роль играет доступность различных ресурсов, таких как время, навыки, автомобили, велосипеды, жилые и офисные помещения. Коворкинг — совместное использование офисного пространства — отождествляется с новой культурой труда, позволяющей объединяться фрилансерам и работающим удаленно сотрудникам. В нашей статье рассматриваются особенности функционирования коворкинг-пространств в зависимости от их местоположения. Поскольку подобные пространства существуют не только в мегаполисах, но и в малых городах и сельской местности, способы их функционирования сушественно различаются. Для анализа особенностей работы коворкингов были использованы такие методы, как обзор литературы и исследования кейсов из практики США, Италии, Ирландии, Сербии и Польши. Анализ существующей литературы, описывающей идеи, преимущества и пользователей коворкинга продемонстрировал важность ценностей общности, открытости и сотрудничества. Исследование кейсов показало, что коворкинги в малых городах и сельской местности отличаются от коворкингов в агломерациях: первые чаще всего возникают в результате местных инициатив и не носят коммерческого характера. Подобные коворкинги реализуют свой потенциал, несмотря на уязвимость их положения и ограниченное количество услуг. Можно предположить, что уровень отношений между участниками коворкинга (взаимопомощь, сотрудничество, доверие) обратно пропорционален размеру города/села. Представленная статья вносит вклад в дальнейшее углубленное исследование особенностей коворкингов.

Ключевые слова: коворкинг, экономика совместного потребления, город, сельская местность, кооперация, фрилансеры, предпринимательство, бизнес-модель, местная экономика, сообщество

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### 1. Introduction

The contemporary economy is subject to significant changes, consisting in the transition from a traditional material-intensive economy based on economies of scale (industrial economy) to a modern economy based on intangible resources and modern technologies (knowledge-based economy). The traditional business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) models are no longer appropriate, especially for emerging startups. This resulted in the emergence of a new business orientation – the sharing economy, which consists in sharing unused resources, such as space or skills, in order to achieve monetary or non-monetary benefits (Botsman, 2013). According to this model, on the one hand, there are small local food cooperatives and, on the other hand, corporations with billions in revenue like Uber and Airbnb.

The sharing economy affects various spatial units. However, most often, it directly influences the urban economy both in the city itself as well as in its vicinity (Davidson, Infranca, 2016). In the face of emerging challenges in the functioning of cities related to the increase in the prices of apartments, office space, fewer job offers, the solution may be to share unused resources and space (Finck, Ranchordás, 2017). Coworking is a form of such sharing. It includes a community of users who share a propensity to support cooperation, openness and long-lasting relationships. On the one hand, it is based on the exchange of knowledge and skills and, on the other hand, on the sharing of physical assets, such as office or shared space. The assumptions of sharing and community make coworking part of the socio-economic system change, known as the sharing economy (Durante, Turvani, 2018).

Coworking communities occur on various spatial scales; they have different operating principles, users, facilities and benefits. Moreover, they occur not only in large cities, but also, as it turns out, in small towns and in rural areas.

The goal of the article is to recognise the idea of coworking as a new business model of sharing economy. Particular emphasis was placed on the principles of functioning of coworking spaces and benefits for users with a distinction between large cities, small towns and rural areas. In order to achieve the main study aim, the following research questions were asked:

1. What is the modern business model known as the sharing economy?

2. What is the origin, purpose of coworking and its relationships with the sharing economy?

3. What are the differences in terms of functioning principles, users and the way of organisation of coworking spaces in the world?

4. How are coworking communities organised in large cities, small towns and rural areas?

The research procedure consists of the following three parts: theoretical, theoretical-empirical and empirical. In the theoretical part, the essence of sharing economy was described after the introduction. Typology of this phenomenon and examples of organisational forms were also presented. Then, the importance of coworking and the benefits of common sharing of resources were analysed. The next part (i. e., theoretical-empirical) contains a description of coworking principles and users. This part of the article is complemented by the classification of coworking spaces as well as a set of their characteristics in large cities and in rural areas.

The last part (i. e., empirical) contains a collection of case studies presenting examples of organisation of coworking from around the world. Examples of good practices from both large cities as well as small towns and rural areas were presented. The analyses carried out as part of the research procedure allowed drawing the appropriate conclusions.

## 2. Methods

The article employs two research methods. The first one is literature studies, which were used to define the essence of sharing economy and coworking. The theoretical analysis was also used to identify the typology of these phenomena and the benefits they bring to users. The sharing economy is a new business orientation that, instead of ownership, postulates sharing, exchanging, and renting unused resources. This way of organising business is characteristic of coworking, which involves the creation of a community collectively using office resources and cooperating for the development of its business.

The second research method applied is case studies, which examined selected organisations offering coworking space. Some examples of global coworking networks — WeWork and Talent Garden — were discussed. Separately, the ways of coworking in a small Irish town of Skibbereen, the Serbian village of Mokrin and a Polish village of Dabrówka were presented. The conducted analyses made it possible to compare the specificity of coworking communities originating from urban agglomerations with small towns and rural areas.

## 3. New Business Model – the Sharing Economy

The concept of sharing economy can be understood very broadly. It is related to the fact that it contains elements of various fields and disciplines, such as, for instance, sociology, geography, marketing, management, consumer behaviour, and innovation. Its popularity results from the growing importance of ICT in social and economic life. People around the world use the Internet, mobile networks in order to transfer files, videos, photos, etc. Since the early 2000s, there has been a significant increase in the use of online technology to create communities interested in accessing goods and services in both the virtual and real worlds. The basic premise of the sharing economy concept is the ability to share unused resources. These can be intangible resources, such as knowledge, skills, time, but also material, such as office space, residential space, tools, bicycles, cars, etc. The instrument used to share these resources are digital platforms. They are based on 'non-market logics such as sharing, lending, gifting and swapping as well as market logics such as renting and selling' (Laurell, Sandström, 2017). They are used by individuals and organisations that, through an exchange, take on the role of both consumers and suppliers. Some of these platforms operate on a non-profit basis (e.g. Couchsurfing), while others are focused on maximising profits (Airbnb, TaskRabbit). In opposition to the latter companies, managed by large corporate players, cooperation platforms are created, managed and owned by many individual entities (Gerwe, Silva, 2020). Therefore, the sharing economy can be treated as a whole composed of three cores: (1) Access economy, (2) Platform economy, and (3) Communitybased economy (Acquier, Daudigeos, Pinkse, 2017).

Consumption within the sharing economy does not mean ownership. It occurs in the form of barter, trade, exchange, sharing, renting (Habibi, Davidson, Laroche, 2017). Access to goods and services is more important than ownership (Shaheen, Chan, Gaynor, 2016).

Sharing economy can occur in various forms. While considering criteria such as the type of digital platform, financial transactions and market structure, the following three archetypes can be distinguished (Petrini, De Freitas, Da Silveira, 2017):

1. New business models organised mainly in traditional areas where new players appeared, such as Airbnb (tourism sector), Uber (transport sector). They operate on technological digital platforms in which they offer access or transfer to resources. They generate profits by charging for services. Examples, in addition to those mentioned above, also include Relayrides (car rental) and Catarse (crowdfunding);

2. Redesigned business models — these are traditional models based on the B2P market structure but adapted to modern times. Examples include companies, such as ZipCar (short-term car rental), Netflix (access to films), Estante Virtual (sale of used books) and Gobooks (book rental);

3. Sharing the idea — this is a model based on the P2P market structure without the presence of financial transactions. It is related with a lifestyle beyond the sphere of business. This model is based on a culture of sharing and consumption through collective action. Examples are FreeCycle (offering donations), Livra Libro (exchange of used books), Swapsity (temporary exchange of goods and services) and OurGoods (exchange of knowledge), Wikipedia (sharing knowledge).

The Sharing economy is also referred to as 'crowd-based capitalism' (Sundararajan, 2016), since it relies more on multi-element networks than on centralised institutions. The supply of capital and labour comes from many individual units and not from a set of companies. A feature of this economy is that resource exchange can take place through distributed elements rather than centralised third parties. This view is in contrast with other approaches to the sharing economy. It is worth noting that the sharing economy as a business model includes the following three basic elements (Grybaite, Stankeviciene, 2016):

 service providers — individuals or entrepreneurs who offer their resources, time, skills and assets;

 users (or customers) — subjects that want to purchase the goods and services offered;

 digital platforms or mobile apps — intermediaries between the parties mentioned above.

This means that in many cases there are socalled service triads, i. e., relations between the customer, service provider, and intermediary (digital platform). An example is Airbnb, which the customer is contracting with, but the service is provided by a subcontractor of the intermediary company (e. g., a homeowner). This means that the service interaction takes place between the provider and the end customer but via a third party.

Therefore, the intermediary company should take care of its relationship with both the end customer and the service provider. Thus, it becomes a part of the so-called two-sided market (Eisenmann, Parker, Van Alstyne, 2006).

The sharing economy is significantly different from the traditional economy (Habibi, 2019). During the transaction, ownership of the resources is not transferred. Moreover, the assumption of the sharing economy is a cooperation between users and suppliers, which entails a more social nature of interactions, co-creation of value and joint responsibility of the parties. A good example of this is alternative funding in the form of crowdsourcing (Munoz, Cohen, 2017).

Furthermore, it should be added that the use of resources is more effective than in the traditional economy, which translates into less environmental pollution. Environmental aspects, in addition to economic ones, are the dominant stimuli of the sharing economy participants (Gazzola et. al., 2019).

The concept of sharing economy raises many doubts. It is suggested that the word 'sharing' is not by definition related to financial remuneration (Belk, 2007). 'Borrow' seems to be more appropriate, as it can be combined with a financial transaction. The essence of this concept raises other controversies. There is a view that ordering a car travel service in Uber is part of the 'on-demand economy' and should not be associated with the sharing economy. Similarly, the sale of products between customers is argued to be part of 'the second-hand economy', and the rental of products (e.g., cars) from the enterprise - 'the product-service economy' (Frenken, Schor, 2017). The above doubts only emphasise how diverse and ambiguous the concept of sharing economy is.

There are many organisational forms of sharing economy (Table 1). Sharing unused resources can be done for free or for a fee. The source of the resource can be both an individual as well as an enterprise. Finally, the payment for the service can be capital or own work.

Users of business models within the sharing economy benefit a lot. These include lower operating costs, access to a wider range of goods and services, improvement of the individual level of competence and entrepreneurship, flexible capital flows (Karobliene, Pilinkiene, Feruś, 2019). Moreover, strengthening social ties and reducing the negative impact on the natural environment by reducing waste, reducing transport routes (travelling together) are the effects of exchanging and sharing goods and services. The sharing economy is also considered to be an instrument

Table 1

Division of organisational forms under sharing economy with examples

	Capital	Labour	
	Couchsurfing (homestay accommodations);		
Nonmoney (free)	Peerby (short-term rental of products in the Sittingaround (babysitting cooperation)		
	neighborhood)		
Money-based (cover costs)	BlaBlaCar (ride-sharing)	Piggybee (crowd-shipping)	
	Airbnb, HomeAway	UberX, Lyft (ride-hailing); TaskRabbit	
Money-based (income	(short-term rental of properties);	(tasks);	
generation)	Turo, Getaround (car-sharing);	Rover (dog walking and boarding);	
	JustPark (short-term rental of parking spaces)	SuperProf (tutorials)	

Source: (Gerwe, Silva, 2020, p. 73).

of reducing income inequalities (by creating opportunities to earn with the use of own resources) and over-consumption (getting rid of unnecessary items). However, it has got some drawbacks. For example, there are reported cases of discrimination of participants due to low social status regarding digital platforms related to time banks and food swaps (Schor et. al, 2016). Another example of disadvantage is the decrease in the income of Taiwanese taxi drivers by 12 % in the first year after Uber's entry (Chang, 2017).

After all, this new business model is gaining more and more popularity around the world. One can observe the emergence of its new forms, new objects of exchange and sharing, new ways of organising the flow of goods and services. It means that the definition of sharing economy is constantly evolving and expanding by adding new elements. One example of new elements of sharing economy is coworking.

### 4. The Concept and the Genesis of Coworking

Coworking<sup>1</sup> can be defined as a new generation workplace providing a flexible, cost-effective and ready-to-rent work environment for freelancers, remote employees, micro-entrepreneurs and the self-employed from various fields, facilitating cooperation, interaction and creating networking between participants (Fuzi, Clifton, Loudon 2015; Bendkowski, 2018). Each coworking space in fact creates its own definition of the concept, since there are significant differences in services offered, area, number of users, business model, organisational culture, institutional goals, professed values and belonging to social movements (Parrino, 2013). According to Moriset (2014), coworking spaces can be considered as 'the third place of work', being an alternative to working from home and in a traditional office (Johns, Gratton, 2013). 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. Often these terms are used interchangeably (Fost, 2008). Practically speaking, coworking is the renting of desks to work in a shared space, equipped with a wi-fi network, where independent employees perform their professional duties alongside others, mostly in the same industry (Gandini, 2015). In agglomerations and in large European cities, coworking spaces, meaning spaces intended for joint work, are no longer new and they are developing very dynamically, and even in the so-called 'megacities', where the saturation phase of this type of space is observed. The symptoms of the development of this form of work can be seen more and more often in small towns, which is confirmed by the latest editions of the international Coworking Europe conference as well as studies and reports posted on the websites: deskmag.com, thesocialworkplace.com, coworkingpoland.pl.

It is assumed that the concept of coworking spaces and coworking itself has its foundations in the hacker movement and the so-called 'hacker-spaces', i. e., places run by independent communities, where people interested primarily in IT could meet to create technological solutions for encountered problems. Different researchers give different start dates for the hackerspace movement. The beginning of the 1990s is a period when the first such places were created in the United States. Simultaneously, but independently, similar places appeared in Europe, primarily in Germany and Austria — the first CBase in Berlin opened in 1995. The introduction of the concept of coworking<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Other synonymous terms for 'coworking' appearing in the literature are coworking space, coworking office, coworking centre, and cowork. The term coworker is used for a coworking space user.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The term 'coworking' was first used in 1996 by Bernard DeKoven, the creator of computer games, to describe a new work environment that was supposed to eliminate hierarchical relationships specific to traditional organizations and support the cooperation of equal units implementing their own projects (Bendkowski, 2018).



**Fig. 1.** Increase in the number of users and coworking spaces in the world in 2010–2020 (source: Own study based on Global Coworking Survey. Global Coworking Survey 2019. Retrieved from: https://www.deskmag.com/en/2019-global-coworking-survey-market-reserach-study (Date of access: 03.05.2020))

in relation to the community sharing the workspace should be associated with the first coworking space created in 2005 in San Francisco on the initiative of a programmer Brad Neuberg. His coworking space Spiral Muse was created as an alternative to the traditional work environment, which was not conducive to social interaction, and, therefore, was less productive. The first coworking space was a non-profit organisation, offering five to eight desks for two days a week, free wi-fi, common lunches and relaxation breaks (Botsman, Rogers, 2011; Bendkowski, 2018). Due to the growing interest in this initiative, the next step was the establishment of Coworking Wiki in San Francisco in 2006 – an international portal and forum gathering coworkers, owners of coworking spaces and people interested in a new form of work<sup>1</sup>.

It should be emphasised that the Global Financial Crisis in the years 2007–2008 was a clear impulse for the development of coworking in the world including Europe (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015). The accompanying mass layoffs and the loss of permanent job positions resulted in the search for new jobs and a different workplace related to the new 'third' form of work. It can be argued that the emergence and development of coworking as a new form of work is in a way a manifestation of so-cial resourcefulness in the long-term uncertainty

of the precarious world, meaning living and working under the conditions of uncertainty, instability and unpredictability (Rabiej-Sieniecka, 2016). Only in the years 2007–2010, there was an eightfold increase in the number of coworking offices worldwide (from 75 to 600).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the phenomenon of coworking has shown significant global diffusion and growth dynamics in the number of coworking spaces and their users. The diffusion of coworking spaces became visible on a large scale approximately a decade after Florida's manifesto and shows what promise of the creative class (Gandini, 2015). The growth dynamics of the number of users is particularly impressive, from 43,000 in 2010 to the forecasted level of 2,680,000 in 2020, which gives a growth rate of over 6,000 %. Over the same period, the number of coworking offices increased from 600 to 26,300 (Durante, Turvani, 2018) (Figure 1). In the world, the largest number of coworking spaces occurs in the United States (nearly 800), where this phenomenon emerged. Leaders in coworking cooperation are the so-called 'creative cities': London, San Francisco, New York, Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam (Moriset, 2014; Stachurska, Kuligowska, 2018). The report prepared by Cushman and Wakefield shows that in 2018, most coworking spaces operating on the European market could be found in London (183 spaces), Paris (145 spaces), Stockholm (139 spaces), Dublin (132 spaces), and Copenhagen (126

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Coworking Wiki. Retrieved from: http://wiki.coworking. org/w/page/16583831/FrontPage (Date of access: 03.01.2020).

spaces)<sup>1</sup>. The report includes coworking spaces, serviced offices and flexible workplaces with a total area of 11 million m<sup>2</sup>. On a European scale, the city with the highest activity in this sector and the largest total coworking space (1.1 million m<sup>2</sup>) is London, where the share of coworking space in the total volume of office space available in the centre is currently 4.6 %. London remains a key European location, due to the dynamic increase in supply by over 180,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new coworking space (+13 % as compared to 2017). The new form of work which is coworking is increasingly popular in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with a growing presence in China (Lindtner, Li, 2012).

In four cities - Budapest, Moscow, Prague and Warsaw - the total stock of flexible offices is already 286,000 m<sup>2</sup>, which is about 1 % of the total volume of office space in these cities (29.9 million m<sup>2</sup>). Currently, with over 129,000 m<sup>2</sup> of flexible office space, Moscow remains a leader among the capital cities of Central and Eastern Europe; Warsaw, with its 77,400 m<sup>2</sup>, is ranked the second. The next positions are occupied by Prague (37,100 m<sup>2</sup>) and Budapest (17,500 m<sup>2</sup>). In 2018, coworking operators signed lease agreements for over 200,000 m<sup>2</sup> of office space in these capital cities. The most active market was Warsaw, where lease contracts with flexible space operators covered 92,400 m<sup>2</sup>, which gave a 10.7 % share in the total rental volume on the office market. Slightly less, 64,300 m<sup>2</sup>, was contracted in Moscow (3.2 % of the total rental volume), and in Prague and in Budapest - 27,100 m<sup>2</sup> (5.2 %) and 17,500 m<sup>2</sup> (3.3 %) respectively.

# 5. Rules, Users and Types of Coworking Spaces

It is assumed that the basis of each coworking is five principles that should guide the coworking community. These are collaboration, community, sustainable development, openness and accessibility (Schürmann, 2013; Bendkowski, 2018). Coworking spaces can be described as new because they differ from older models of shared office space (DeGuzmann, Tang, 2011). Collaboration and community are the essential features that distinguish coworking from traditional office spaces, the so-called 'desks for hours'. This 'collaborative approach' is always underlined as a distinctive feature that sets coworking apart from other forms of shared, flexible work setting such as satellite offices, hot desks, coffee shops or business incubators (Botsman, Rogers, 2011).

The assumption of collaboration is the essence of coworking, but as Spinuzzi (2012) states, coworking is 'working alone together', which, in practice, means that coworking space is a shared workspace in which both individual and group work on one task takes place. Cooperation can involve both help in solving an immediate problem as well as establishing long-lasting business relationships. As a result of cooperation, knowledge to solve a specific problem is gathered. Increased cooperation leads to a high level of trust in mutual relations. In practice, collaboration is more often related to employees of related and different industries, as natural competition between employees in the same industry may occur.

Community is about understanding that cowork is a group of like-minded people, each of whom brings a specific value to the community and in return benefits from belonging to it. Community is the most important feature of coworking that generates social support: emotional (establishment of community bonds and group identity), informative (exchange of helpful information and experiences), instrumental (assistance in performing a specific activity).

Sustainable development refers to the sustainability of the community. It depends on taking into account the interests of all its users. The approach to the use of resources is important, which is also manifested in simple and functional equipment and interior design of coworking offices, as well as casual clothing and lifestyles of coworkers. Work is an important element of life for users. However, it is not its essence, since the most important thing in life is the general state of satisfaction, which is strengthened by the separation of private life (home) from work (cowork).

Openness refers to the willingness to share information and knowledge with others; there are tolerance and acceptance towards other users. There are no barriers to information access, questions do not remain unanswered, coworking has an atmosphere of honesty and truthfulness where mutual relations are characterised by fairness and respect.

The principle of accessibility assumes the lack of elitism, universality and equal availability of the services offered to all parties interested.

Coworking as a relatively new form of work (the so-called 'third job') is not a solution for everyone (people and professions). Current literature suggests that nonstandard forms of employment have become commonplace within a highly individualised labour market in which urban professionals work as a casualised, project-based and freelance workforce (Osnowitz, 2010; Cappelli, Keller, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Egospodarka. Retrieved from: http://www.egospodarka. pl/155368,Powierzchnie-coworkingowe-w-Europie-ranking,1,78,1.html (Date of access: 24.04.2020).

Criteria					
Size	Affiliation	Permanence	Form of work	Desk rental time	Area of activity
small medium large	corporate university private local governments (social) mixed	permanent temporary	individual group mixed	an hour several hours a day several days a week a month	agglomerations, large and me- dium-sized cities small towns, rural areas

# Classification of coworking spaces (coworks)

Source: Own findings based on (Schürmann, 2013; Bendkowski, 2018).

However, it can be a form of work that, on the one hand, allows combating the disadvantages associated with the lack of full independence when working in a corporation or the lack of a working community when working from home. On the other hand, working in a cowork allows people to use their independence and feel social support (DeGuzmann, Tang, 2011). According to the global report Global Coworking Survey, the structure of cowork users is dominated by the so-called freelancers who constitute 41 % of the total, 36 % are employed full-time and work remotely, 16 % are self-employed entrepreneurs, and 7 % of users are unemployed (e.g., students)<sup>1</sup>. In the professional structure of coworking space users, the largest group consists of people from the IT industry (22 %). The group includes programmers, software engineers and web developers. Another large group are people working in public relations (PR), marketing, advertising and sales (14%). The third-largest group are journalists, copywriters and writers (9%). The share of consulting employees is definitely smaller, similarly to the groups of people developing their own business (6%). The share of designers (games, graphics, products) and groups of scientists, researchers and analysts are at the same level (5%). Other groups (33% in total) include the following professions: project managers, personal trainers, coaches, translators, accountants, filmmakers, photographers, musicians. Both traditional intellectual professionals directly related to the creative industries and 'digital professionals' make up part of the coworking spaces. This means that across coworking we can find a 'multi-functional' set of professionals whose skills are both the result of education and training as well as of 'commonly available' knowledge, especially knowledge that directly pertains to the digital economy (Colleoni, Arvidsson, 2014). In the structure of cowork users in terms of gen-

<sup>1</sup> Global Coworking Survey 2017. Retrieved from: https://socialworkplaces.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Coworking-Europe-2016-GCS-2017.pdf (Date of access: 14.05.2020). der and age, the clear majority are men (over 60 %) in the age range of 30 to 40 years old (Stachurska, Kuligowska, 2018).

Individual coworking offices differ from each other in terms of size, strategy and scope of services offered. Their character is also often dependent on the founder's vision. As previously stated, each coworking space creates its own definition of the concept, which is related to a large diversification of coworks and their various classifications. The functioning coworks can be divided according to the following criteria: size, affiliation, permanence, form of work, desk rental time or area of activity (Table 2).

Based on the size criterion, in terms of the number of jobs, there are large coworks offering at least 40 desks, medium ones (above 15), and small ones, in which the number of workplaces usually ranges from 10 to 15. Based on the affiliation criterion, there can be corporate, university, private, local and mixed coworks distinguished. Corporate coworks are often a supplement to traditional forms of work; they can be created only for employees or shared with external users, for example, the SPACE coworking space created by the Koczorowski Urban Planning Office in Poznań (Poland). The most famous example of a university coworking space is SAUNA in Helsinki (Finland) initiated by students of the University of Aalto. These types of places create the opportunity to combine theoretical (knowledge) and practical aspects. The founders of small coworking spaces are usually individuals for whom coworking can constitute an additional occupation, for instance, PARKOVA COWORKING in Dąbrówka (Poland). Coworks co-founded by local government authorities, for example, LUDGE HUB coworking in Skibbereen (Ireland) or the designed coworking space in the train station building in Złotów (Poland), are addressed to small local communities.

Considering the criterion of permanence, permanent and temporary coworking offices are distinguished. The latter can be an experimental laboratory for the future, permanent cowork, they

Table 3

Characteristic features of coworking in small towns and rural areas around the world

Features of coworking spaces				
Agglomerations, large and medium-sized cities	Small towns, rural areas			
70–80 % of the total dynamic development national and international networks various additional services large coworking spaces longer lease contracts, concluded for an average of five years commercial, profit-orientated character	20-30 % of the total slow development local initiative limited additional services small coworking spaces shorter lease agreements, usually expire after two or three years to a lesser extent of a commercial nature, focused on help- ing the local community, cooperating with local partners			

Source: Own study (Based on: CoworkingEurope. Retrieved from: https://coworkingeurope.net (Date of access: 11.03.2020); Deskmag. Retrieved from: https://deskmag.com (Date of access: 11.03.2020); Social Work Place. Retrieved from: https://theso-cialworkplace.com (Date of access: 12.03.2020); CoworkingPoland. Retrieved from: https://coworkingpoland.pl (Date of access: 12.03.2020); Aplikuj. Retrieved from: https://aplikuj.pl (Date of access: 12.03.2020)).

can be established only for the duration of the implementation of a specific project and its financing or are created in temporarily unused rooms, e. g., in Galeria Katowicka (Poland).

The criterion of the form of work allows dividing coworks into those where there is individual work, group work or both with a specific task.

Cowork classification based on the desk rental time is very diverse, ranging from the possibility of working only for an hour or a few hours to the minimum rental time of a week or a month as well as for a more extended period of time, assuming relatively lower costs in the longer term.

The last relevant classification criterion is the area of activity. This criterion makes it possible to distinguish coworking spaces established in agglomerations, which are the vast majority, as well as large and medium-sized cities, and emerging only in recent years, coworks operating in small towns and in rural areas. Coworking spaces outside large cities display specific features (Table 3).

In small towns and rural areas there is a slow development of coworking offices, whose world share is estimated at 20-30 % of the total. The coworking market in these areas is at a very early development stage. There is room for growth because the average area and level of local competition seem to be quite low. In small towns, spaces intended for joint work are created due to the demand for such services. Before such space is launched, most often the local group of inhabitants who are interested in implementing such an initiative meets. The founders of coworking spaces in smaller towns more often cooperate with the local government and other local partners. In terms of area and number of users, small coworking spaces created there usually offer only basic (traditional) services: access to the Internet and printer, a desk in an open space, a conference room for rent, access to a kitchenette, and a relaxation zone. In contrast, coworks in large cities offer additional specialist services, e. g., accounting, banking, and legal services. Lease agreements for coworking offices outside agglomerations usually expire after two or three years, which is caused by their low profitability being the typical result of too little interest from the inhabitants. In large urban centres, coworking offices have a commercial character, are profit-orientated and operate much longer. They are referred to as 'networks', belonging to national and international networks, such as, for example, Regus, Adgar, HubHub, WeWork, Spaces or Brain Embassy.

# 6. Examples of Coworking from around the World

In order to examine the specificity and diversity of coworking spaces in large agglomerations as well as in small towns and rural areas, selected examples of coworks in Europe have been presented. In the case of coworking spaces operating in large agglomerations, examples of office networks established in the USA and in Italy were provided. To complement and display the differences, coworks' activities on a smaller scale were also presented, based on the examples of Ireland, Serbia and Poland.

# Case 1: WeWork

Due to the scale of operation in large cities and agglomerations, a specific model of coworking space organisation occurs. One example is the WeWork startup. The company started in 2010 with one 280 m<sup>2</sup> office in the SoHo district of New York. It currently manages approximately 800 coworking space locations in 124 cities around the world. At the very beginning, the company's founders Adam Neumann and Miguel McKelvey planned to organise a coworking space as part of an ecosystem, in which apartments, gyms, and even barbershops would be available to community members. During two years after the foundation of the company, they opened another four office locations. This attracted the attention of various investors including Goldman Sachs Group and a venture capital firm Benchmark, which provides seed capital to startup companies. The second company is known for successful investments, including Uber, eBay and Twitter. Benchmark has invested USD 17 million in the development of WeWork. This has led to an increase in the offered coworking space. In 2014, WeWork managed 140,000 m<sup>2</sup> of offices in which 10,000 people worked<sup>1</sup>.

As part of the coworking offer, the company offers membership in the startup community, which provides all basic services and equipment, including conference rooms, high-speed Wi-Fi internet, printing service, audio/video equipment<sup>2</sup>. Office users are allowed to use shared spaces, relaxation zone, and kitchenettes. An additional benefit is the support of a community manager who helps in organisational matters.

WeWork organises networking events as well as educational workshops, yoga classes, catered lunches, and seasonal markets. In this way, community members make friendships, set up new businesses, enjoy the creative atmosphere of the place and reduce expenses related to the functioning of the company (the possibility of including them in the costs of operating the rental office).

Moreover, in 2016, the company expanded its offer to include equipped apartments (WeLive) with free Wi-Fi as well as cleaning and laundry services, which is addressed to people who want to live in a local community.

The entrepreneurship school — WeGrow — was another new activity for children aged 2–11. It started operating in 2017. In the same year, Rise by We was created — the first gym opened in New York by WeWork. It offers yoga, boxing classes and spa treatments. Currently, all of the above organisations are a part of The We Company. In January 2019, the company's goodwill amounted to USD 47 billion. However, mismanagement of the company contributed to the loss of USD 2.2 billion in the first nine months of 2019. Furthermore, problems with office space leasing caused by the COVID-19 epidemic aggravated the crisis and resulted in a sharp drop in its value to USD 2.9 billion in 2020<sup>3</sup>. WeWork would probably go bankrupt, had it not been for the help of the main investor, the Japanese Soft Bank, in the form of eight billion USD. As part of an extensive recovery programme, Adam Neumann, the founder of WeWork, will leave the company's management board. However, company officials state that the global downturn may soon paradoxically improve WeWork's condition. The benefits of this business model can drive companies to move their offices to WeWork. Such benefits include greater cost flexibility and lower costs per employee. The company believes that, since it attracted tenants in 2010 during the US financial crisis, a similar situation will take place now during the coronavirus pandemic. However, real estate professionals have a different opinion. They argue that WeWork's business model is too expensive (Lietz, Bracken, 2019). In addition to traditional costs, the company has to incur expenses related to adapting the space to its standards. Industry estimates indicate that the total rent for WeWork offices must be twice the market rate for all leased space to cover the increased operating costs and wasteful space in the offices.

# Case 2: Talent Garden – Milan, Italy

Talent Garden is one of the largest coworking ecosystems and digital innovation hubs in Europe. It was created in 2011 in Italian Brescia. Currently, it manages a network of 23 campuses (a collection of offices and associated infrastructure) in eight countries (including Italy, Spain, Denmark, Ireland, Albania, Romania) and 18 cities where over 4,500 people work.

In selected campuses, users have the following facilities at their disposal: coworking space, 24/7 access to the campus, event spaces and meeting rooms, TAG Café, bistrò, community kitchen, community and relaxation zones, car/bike parking, Fablab.

One of the largest campuses within the network is the Talent Garden Calabiana in Milan<sup>4</sup>. It belongs to Google for Startups' network. It offers approximately 8,500 m<sup>2</sup>, where 450 people function daily. The campus buildings also house the Talent Garden Innovation School, which offers post-graduate studies, training for entrepre-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Business Insider. Retrieved from: https://www.businessinsider. com/wework-ipo-we-company-history-founder-story-timelineadam-neumann-2019-8?IR=T#weworks-biggest-investorsoftbank-is-now-reportedly-taking-over-the-company-andgiving-neumann-17-billion-to-step-down-as-chairman-22 (Date of access: 10.04.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We Work Company. Retrieved from: https://www.wework. com/pl-PL/I/warsaw (Date of access: 05.05.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Business Insider. Retrieved from: https://www.businessinsider.com/wework-valuation-falls-47-billion-to-less-than-3billion-2020–5?IR=T (Date of access: 16.08.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Talent Garden. Retrieved from: https://talentgarden.org/coworking/italy/milan-calabiana/ (Date of access: 04.05.2020).

neurs and is a venue for many events. The school focuses on the following areas: coding, data, marketing, design and business.

The campus offers assistance in the organisation of corporate events, business lunches, product launches, hackathons, meetups with developers and startups.

The city of Milan is an example of the rapid growth of coworking spaces, FabLab and makerspace<sup>1</sup>. In 2013, there were about ten such structures, and over 70 in 2018 (Lietz, Bracken, 2019). These statistics show that changes in working methods, such as flexible work and distance work, have resulted in spatial transformations in cities and an increase in the availability of flexible offices and workshops. Nevertheless, the research shows that it is too early to say that Milan coworking spaces affect the socio-economic development of the city and its surroundings (Mariotti, Pacchi, Di Vita, 2017). However, it should be said that they allow the development of peripheral districts of Milan. Talent Garden is an example of a space that is housed in former industrial buildings, quite far from the city centre. This can be a slight inconvenience to users, but it also has benefits, such as lower rental costs and greater availability of office space.

Coworking space gives the opportunity to cooperate with other enthusiasts of digital technologies. On the one hand, it offers meeting places, offices and laboratories, and, on the other hand, quiet areas for those who need concentration at work or want to relax. Interestingly, Talent Garden members have access to all 23 campuses and the TAG People online tool that allows connection to a global network of technical specialists. Business support is preceded by an analysis of a specific company, its needs as well as possibilities of implementing new technologies and digital trends. Furthermore, specialists offer to develop an innovative culture in the organisation that supports internal digital transformation.

Analyses carried out in Talent Garden Milan confirmed the high quality of services. It translates into a number of benefits for users. They include<sup>2</sup>:

 informal knowledge transfer which results from strong links, trust and community spirit;

technical skill development (designing, CAD, craft);

– soft skill development (creativity techniques, resiliency, self-management, teamworking);

 business awareness building (how to run a business, how to do basic accounting and taxes);

– community collaboration;

networking.

Talent Garden users pay rent, the amount of which depends on the type of office, a number of hours of access to the other campuses, meeting rooms, etc. Talent Garden plans to open new campuses in other cities.

# Case 3: Ludgate Hub<sup>3</sup> – City of Skibbereen, Ireland

The small town of Skibbereen, with a population of 2,600, is located in a rural area in the southwest of Cork County in Ireland. Until 2011, Skibbereen had very poor broadband because some areas did not have a fibre optic network. Coworking Ludgate Hub, which is a professional entrepreneurship centre, was launched in 2016 in a converted building of a former cinema, later a bakery. The basis for the launch was the installation of a super-fast broadband Internet connection with a bandwidth of 1 GB/s. Skibbereen obtained this kind of Internet link as a part of a pilot project - a rural digital centre, in which the Electricity Supply Board and Vodafone (mobile network provider) participated. The Ludgate Hub plays a key role in creating a favourable environment for local businesses, not only by offering internet access and workspace but also by being a point of additional support, developing digital skills and various business networking opportunities (Nowa koncepcja..., 2017). Coworking contacted the local community through meetings with residents and training sessions in digital technologies. As a part of the centre, eStreet was created, Ireland's first integrated social networking site for e-commerce, allowing retailers to increase their visibility and online sales, and gain access to new markets. In terms of financing, it was a private (84 % of total funds), corporate (13%), and local (3%) initiative. Ludgate Hub brings together over 250 active members and 25 companies operating in the coworking space, including 11 local entrepreneurs conducting e-commerce via eStreet. Cowork employs 11 people directly. Importantly, the coworking space attracted over 15 members who, together with their families, moved to this area to live there permanently.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> FabLab and makerspace — a kind of a workshop that gives the opportunity to implement own projects and ideas to people who need tools and space as well as technical knowledge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> InnovatiVET. Intellectual output 4 — toolit co-working and fablab. Retrieved from: https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/io4-fil\_en\_final.pdf (Date of access: 19.08.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Based on: Ludgate. Retrieved from: https://www.ludgate.ie/ (Date of access: 07.05.2020); Re-Imagining Rural Business Opportunities. European Union. Retrieved from: https://enrd. ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/publi-enrd-rr-24-2017-en.pdf (Date of access: 03.05.2020).

The Ludgate Hub is an example of a community coworking hub. It is a form of society or a participatory group whose members share and participate in the production and consumption processes, as well as participate in creating new value and generating new ideas in social innovations. The Hub is based on a group of enthusiasts and founders, around which people full of energy and ideas gather, who are looking for confrontation and inspiration for further work. Usually, these people show strong relationships with the startup environment, often in the field of one industry, most often new technologies (de Anca, 2012; Stępnicka, 2014).

# Case 4: Mokrin House of Ideas – Village of Mokrin, Serbia<sup>1</sup>

Mokrin is a large village with 5,300 inhabitants, located in northern Serbia, near the border with Hungary and Romania. Despite its location, the village is well connected, as the three main airports in Budapest, Belgrade and Timisoara can be reached within two hours. Modern coworking Mokrin House of Ideas was established as a private initiative. It is a workplace for freelancers, entrepreneurs and digital nomads ready to work in any place (e.g., at a Nomad Farm). Coworking offers, mainly for non-local people coming most often from large cities, not only a place to work but also accommodation of varying standards, food, leisure time management (bicycle trips, meetings, movie screenings, conferences) and integration meetings with local residents as part of practical workshops (FabLab). According to Tamara Kojic, CEO and co-founder of Mokrin House of Ideas: 'We are a co-living space, but at the same time, we are rethinking the future of countryside living (...) The first thing that we do is we employ locally, but at the same time, that is not enough because we cannot hire thousands of people'<sup>2</sup>.

The cowork team consists of over 20 people and its structures are strongly formalised. It has its main founder, president, managers, business administrator, logistics manager, etc. The initiative is commercial; the business has a high level of profitability and generates relatively large revenues. Depending on the standard of accommodation, prices of daily stay range from 46 Euro to 108 Euro, and monthly from 993 Euro to 2,332 Euro. The slogan promoting Mokrin House is: 'It is a modern and urban place in the countryside. It is the perfect place for freelancers, entrepreneurs and digital nomads who want to escape from big cities and enjoy life and work in the countryside for two weeks, two months or two years'.

The Mokrin House of Ideas is an example of a coworking form of the nomad coworking type (Bendkowski, 2018). It is a change from sitting at a desk and is associated with taking up work in various, often exotic places around the world (Chiang Mai in Thailand is considered the world's capital of digital nomads)<sup>3</sup>. Digital nomads equipped with laptops, internet and cloud services travel the world and stay overnight in private accommodation to do some work. They work in a given coworking space as long as they feel comfortable and then set off on a journey in search of a new place to live and work.

# Case 5: Parkova Coworking – Village of Dąbrówka, Poland<sup>4</sup>

The village of Dabrówka, with a population of 3,900, is located in the rural municipality in the town of Dopiewo in the Poznań agglomeration at a distance of 20 km from Poznań. Due to the Poznań Metropolitan Railway, the village has excellent transport accessibility. The dynamic development of the population of the village is the result of intensive and still ongoing suburbanisation processes, which in the initial phase were associated with large deficiencies in the scope of service facilities. The main reason for the cowork established in 2016 was the lack of social services, including the lack of childcare services. Parkova Coworking is a grassroots initiative and was founded by a group of young residents operating in the Common Space association. At the initial stage, coworking functioned as an integration space and carried out tasks in the following areas: work, childcare, and relaxation. External funds from the civic budget were obtained for its activities. Currently, the cowork is run by two people (a married couple) working professionally as a graphic designer and an academic at the University of Arts in Poznań. The primary function of the space is to rent a work desk for one month at a price of 95 Euro, with 24-hour availability. Most of the users of this little cowork are residents of the village of Dabrówka (a total of 14 people) who can get to the place on foot or by bike.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mokrin House. Retrieved from: http://www.mokrinhouse.com (Date of access: 23.04.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Coworking Assembly. Retrieved from: https://coworkingassembly.eu/podcast/tamara-kojic-empowerment-and-community (Date of access: 19.08.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Traveling Lifestyle. Retrieved from: https://www.traveling-lifestyle.net/category/nomading/ (Date of access: 19.08.2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Information on cowork activity was obtained as a part of in-depth interviews conducted with the co-founder and users in September 2019 and February 2020 as well as based on Parkova. Retrieved from: https://www.facebook.com/parkovacoworking/ (Date of access: 03.04.2020).

The users include a programmer, an accountant, a sales representative, a translator, and a scientist. Individual work with occasional cooperation dominates in the cowork. An additional integration service addressed to children and adults is the proposal of an afternoon meeting with board games every Friday (for a monthly fee of 12 Euro).

It should be emphasised that this initiative is not of a commercial nature, it has low profit margin, and it generated a small income after a year. When it comes to the future plans, according to the co-founder, there are two scenarios possible: 1) further development based on expanding the business through an additional offer for children and youth, a new activity in the form of FabLab or a new location with better accessibility, i. e., in the railway station building, 2) termination of activities also due to the fact that the village of Dąbrówka offers rental of new small service premises (approximately 50) and a possible loss of a number of users who will move there.

The above analysis of selected coworking spaces shows significant differences in their functioning as a result of different geographic location and area of operation, as well as affiliation and size. It is also worth paying attention to the different hierarchy of obtained benefits. In the case of large (network) coworking spaces located in large centres, there is a clear advantage of benefits for founders and users, with a small share of benefits for the local environment. However, when it comes to coworking spaces operating in small towns and rural areas, users and the local environment usually benefit the most, while the founders receive less benefit (see the Mokrin House of Ideas). The possibility of using digital hubs as a means of encouraging people to live and work in rural areas is a strategic goal of many such initiatives. For example, the launch of the Ludgate Hub helped to improve the local digital (ICT) infrastructure and increased the possibilities of running a business, improved access to services for people and contributed to the promotion of the town, which is, for instance, to bring the Irish diaspora back to rural Ireland (Nowa koncepcja..., 2017).

## 7. Conclusions

The conducted analyses made it possible to obtain answers to the research questions posed in the introduction to the article.

1. The modern business model of the so-called sharing economy is based on the exchange of goods and services as well as the lending or sharing of intangible (knowledge, skills) and tangible resources (cars, apartments, office space). Transactions can take place free of charge or for a fee. Establishing relations between the participants of the exchange takes place through internet platforms that allow the rental of apartments, bicycles, cars, and others. The relationship between service providers (individuals, services providing companies, enterprises) and customers is crucial. They are more complex than in the traditional model of the economy, which translates into a more social nature of the relationship. Moreover, sharing resources increases the efficiency of their use and translates into limiting the negative impact on the environment. The period following the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008 saw a rapidly growing popularity of this business model. People then began to cut back on their spending and look for new ways to earn money.

2. The progress in the field of new technologies that has been made in recent decades has caused changes in both business models and the nature of work. The progressive digitisation of the economy, related to the development of mobile technologies, has led to significant changes in the functioning of enterprises and the creation of new, flexible forms of work, including remote work. Coworking is an interesting option for many beginners as well as for experienced entrepreneurs. It is a response not only to the trends described above but also to the contemporary challenges of cities, i. e., an increase in the cost of renting an office and a decrease in the number of job offers as a result of economic crises.

Coworking is a form of business based on the sharing of office space, equipment, as well as cooperation, openness, help and common ideas. Hence, it corresponds to the principles of the sharing economy and can be treated as one of its forms.

Coworking spaces appeared in the USA in the 1990s and have since then started to appear and develop dynamically around the world. They are the subject of numerous theoretical, statistical, and comparative studies. The essence of these analyses is not only the issues of real estate investments but also the relationship between users, knowledge transfer, and work organisation.

Coworking spaces offer some added value. On the one hand, it is about establishing a creative atmosphere, stimulating entrepreneurship and, on the other hand, a sense of community, mutual help, openness, and deepening relationships. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the price of renting office space, the user receives additional benefits that are difficult to describe in terms of value.

3. The research hypothesis that there are differences in the functioning of coworking spaces depending on the location has been confirmed. The analysed cases demonstrated that coworking spaces in large cities, in contrast to those in small cities, operate on a larger scale, offer more amenities and business support.

A network of coworking spaces created in large cities and agglomerations are profit-oriented. The analysis showed that their offer is much more extensive than in rural areas. They additionally offer the possibility of training, studying, mentor support, as well as fitness centres, hairdressers, and equipped apartments to rent. Their survival depends on the financial situation of the whole group. More unsatisfactory results in one city may be compensated by the prosperity in another place. The offered support is comprehensive and includes counselling and mentoring. A significant advantage is also the possibility of using the contact network within the campuses of a given group. This is conducive to establishing business contacts and facilitates learning the difficult art of running own business.

4. Coworking communities in large cities are increasingly based on large campuses, often in prestigious city districts. Their number is growing dynamically, which reflects the demand for such spaces, especially among young people running startups. Another trend in large cities is the network of coworking spaces. There are many examples of companies that specialise in the rental of coworking offices in various cities around the world. The added value of such a solution includes greater opportunities for establishing business contacts between network points, conducting pieces of training (e. g., on-line), as well as using the infrastructure of campuses from other cities and countries.

The performed case study analysis confirmed that in rural areas and small towns, coworking initiatives are more often of a non-commercial nature. This makes their survival highly risky. They are founded on the initiative of the local community, as a response to specific needs (e.g., childcare). A characteristic feature of these places may be a deeper relationship between its members and a greater willingness to cooperate than in the case of large cities. Circumstances that are conducive to such relationships are private contacts resulting from the fact of living together in a small town. This is an interesting contribution to further research on the dependence between the level of cooperation and the size of areas where coworking functions.

The situation of coworks in rural areas and in small towns is more difficult than that of those operating in large cities in terms of creation and development. This is conditioned by a lower level of entrepreneurship as well as a lower standard of living and a smaller scale of development opportunities. Many young people migrate to the agglomerations hoping for a better life. It is estimated that by 2050, approximately 70 % of the world's population will live in urban areas. Despite this, there is a growing number of examples showing that small towns also have their potential and new business models allow its use. It is worth mentioning that during the lockdown period accompanying the pandemic caused by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the number of users of Parkova Coworking operating in a rural area in Poland remained unchanged, and the restrictions on its activities concerned only additional services, including training.

In summary, coworking spaces are an attractive offer for freelancers and people working remotely. At a reasonable price, they receive a set of benefits that are unattainable when doing business in their own office. It is also worth adding that the magnet for young people is the freedom of these places expressed in the way of being, dressing and spending free time. All this means that the interest in such a business model is very likely to increase.

In the current situation related to maintaining the social distance caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (post-covid era), it seems that new opportunities are appearing on the horizon related to the development of remote work within coworking. According to Bureau à Partager (France), 'Coworking spaces can expect a huge rise in demand; companies will look very quickly for even more flexibility to be able to adapt their office to the size of their teams' and, according to Venture X UK & Ireland's opinion, 'Any shake-up of traditional workplace practices on the scale we are currently seeing can only be good for the coworking sector long term' or, in the opinion of JLL Poland, 'The coworking model will likely take a bigger slice of the office market, also in smaller cities'. In turn, New Work (Poland) predicts that 'Investors now agree on the 200–300 % growth forecast for Coworking and Flex Workspace'1. According to the authors, future research should focus on the dynamics of changes in the number of coworking spaces in small towns and rural areas during the coronavirus pandemic. Comparing the upward/ downward trends with large cities will be very interesting from the point of view of the effectiveness of these spaces and their resistance to negative external changes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Coworking Europe. Retrieved from: https://coworkingeurope. net/2020/05/27/post-covid-era-full-of-opportunities-for-coworking-attend-coworking-europe-2020/ (Date of access: 16.08.2020).

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