SOCIO-SPATIAL EFFECTS OF CO-WORKING SPACES FOR KNOWLEDGE FLOW AND INNOVATION CAPACITY: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

Space and economics have evolved with the change in the information-communication technologies. In this change process, sharing economy has become crucial for sustainable growth and economic development. From this framework; co-working spaces are the new model of workplaces which is based on sharing and collaborative economy and works with different groups as a community. The aim of the research is to identify to what extent and how co-working spaces provide an environment for the flow of knowledge and development of entrepreneurship - innovation capacity with networking opportunities in Istanbul. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the users from different sectors and founders of spaces to identify the capacity of innovation-entrepreneurship and creation of knowledge.

Keywords: Co-working space, knowledge flows, innovation, entrepreneurship

BACKGROUND

With the rise of “sharing economy” driven by the digitalization, economic activities both showed dispersion and concentration in space. Information and communication technologies provided detachment to fix job locations and flexibility of workplaces, yet self-employed or creative freelance workers still required professional and social connections to develop more meeting opportunities and eliminate the risk of isolation (NSF, 2018; Durante & Turvani, 2018; Moriset, 2014; Mariotti et al., 2017). From this point of view; co-working spaces started to establish firstly in San Francisco and the concept diffuse worldwide with more than 2000 spaces and 500,000 users (Johns and Gratton, 2013).

Co-working spaces defined as workplaces used by different sort of professionals, mostly freelancers, working in various degrees of specialization mostly in knowledge industry. Sharing resources and close social interaction between users provide a flexible environment for community building among individuals (Gandini, 2015; Capdevila, 2013).

Entrepreneurial activity needs supportive and a productive business and physical environment where innovation and creativity can evolve. It is argued that co-working spaces serve as interaction platforms between creative individuals and innovative firms and maintain relations between people working in different professions through the aggregation of places and events for the creation of innovation, knowledge sharing and collaboration (Lee, Florida, & Acs, 2004; Fuzi, 2015).

As Bathelt and Cohendet (2014) claim, to reveal the factors underlying knowledge building and knowledge access, it’s crucial to identify creative agents and processes, local conditions and knowledge platforms and spaces. The innovation capacity of the region depends mainly on the flow of information between different actors rather than considering innovation as a process that run in R&D departments of organizations. External sources of information and knowledge are also important for the development of innovative capacity. For this reason, it is crucial to create environments that will help to constitute such information flows within the same local environment. Innovations are co-creation of communities rather than talented or creative individuals (Hippel, 2007; Capdevila, 2013).

The importance of proximity in localized learning and knowledge (tacit and explicit) flows between stakeholders are particularly emphasized in economic geography literature. On the contrary to explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge is quite difficult to be expressed. For this reason, it is necessary to provide geographic proximity and co-location for knowledge transmission and a close interaction between stakeholders for face to face relations. However Boschma (2005) emphasized the need for the cognitive proximity in the creation of new knowledge in
addition to co-location. The new knowledge is consequently deeply embedded in the geography and processes for innovation require knowledge flows (Marquis & Battilana, 2009; Bathelt and Cohendet, 2014).

Generally, co-working spaces can help to maintain social relations that can be classified as learning, trust, collaboration between professions which is formed by networks. Besides, with the advantages of social network linkages, users who are forming new initiatives might reinforce their innovation capacity and entrepreneurial performance rather than other ventures (Spinuzzi, 2012; Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018; Hughes et al. 2011).

OBJECTIVES
Co-working spaces have been increasing at a major rate, and the role they occupy in the local innovative environment are considerable issues to reveal the benefits of others in the innovation development collectively. Bathelt and Cohendet (2014) claimed that, the innovation capacity of the region depends mainly on the flow of information between different actors. External sources of information and knowledge are also important for the development of innovative capacity. For this reason, it is crucial to create environments that will help to constitute such information flows within the same local environment. From this point of view, in addition to the factors as individual productivity and self-efficacy (Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018) this research assumes that knowledge flows and learning processes among individuals will help to improve innovation-entrepreneurial capacity.

From the point of view established under the background, research will focus on obtaining a comprehensive understanding of mechanisms in co-working spaces and their effects. General aim of the project is to identify whether co-working spaces provide an environment for the flow of knowledge and development of entrepreneurship - innovation capacity with networking opportunities by examining Istanbul case.

The objectives of the study for this general aim are;

- to understand if co-working provides adequate response for demands of new enterprises
- to reveal the internal determinants ensuring the efficiency of a co-working spaces
- to understand whether or not homogeneity in professions in co-working spaces effect networking, community forming and venturing,
- to understand if more social interaction can increase innovation capacity.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY
Descriptive research will use general data from internet browsing to obtain a database of co-working spaces in Istanbul. A typology of spaces according to attributes including size, member number, professions (homogenous or heterogenous sectoral structure) and locations will be executed from the websites of the spaces. Co-working spaces that are designed as an emerging business service provision model in Turkey, should be studied in detail to understand the dynamics that are created by spatial proximity of different sectoral professions within the framework of developing economies. Istanbul, as Turkey's financial and cultural center, is one of the major cities which experience the most intense socio-economic and spatial changes.

Co-working spaces are determined according to the concept of “community of practice” as Wenger Capdevila (2013) defined:

- Spaces that are open to general public
- Spaces that let information and tools sharing among members.

To illustrate co-working practices, this research will conduct qualitative methods as follows:

- Location preferences of co-working spaces.

- Semi-structured interviews with co-working initiatives and users: Owners will be asked to procure information about the motivations, models and underlying reasons for opening a co-working spaces and tools that used to maintain interaction and collaboration among participants and to create development.

- Users will be asked to reveal information about the effects (benefits) of co-working spaces for networking, entrepreneurship and information-flow and their motivations for being a member.
REFERENCES


