

# How Space and Place shape Coworking in the New Economy

Annabelle Wilkins and Darja Reuschke  
University of Southampton

**Spatial Reconfigurations of Work in Cities**  
University of Portsmouth  
21<sup>st</sup> April 2017

# Background

- Coworking: working alongside others in shared work settings
- New workplaces in the New Economy (Perrons 2003)
- Increased home-based, freelance, distributed work
- Reasons for coworking:
  - Social isolation (Spinuzzi 2012)
  - Business networks, collaboration, knowledge spillover -> 'micro-cluster' (Capdevila 2013)
- Literature largely focuses on commercially managed coworking spaces in creative cities (Merkel 2015)



Google Campus  
Source: Google

# Coworking spaces and residential location

- Workplaces of the self-employed: home, various places
- Self-employment and small business ownership often about the flexibility of where and when to work (Hanson, 2003)
- Work-life boundaries - particularly women in home-based self-employment
- Spatial constraints of dual earner households
- Social networks for entrepreneurship (Jack, 2005) - but their spatiality?
- Women are more localised in work, entrepreneurship and social networks (Hjorthol and Vågane, 2014, Ekinsmyth, 2011, Hanson and Johnston 1985).

# Research Framework

- Spatial mismatch between where people who might be users/beneficiaries of coworking live and where (studied) coworking spaces are located
- Connections between homeworking and coworking
- Connections between where people live and (co-)work -> why long commutes for coworking related to social isolation?
- Different coworking spaces might prioritise different motivations and practices

# Research Questions

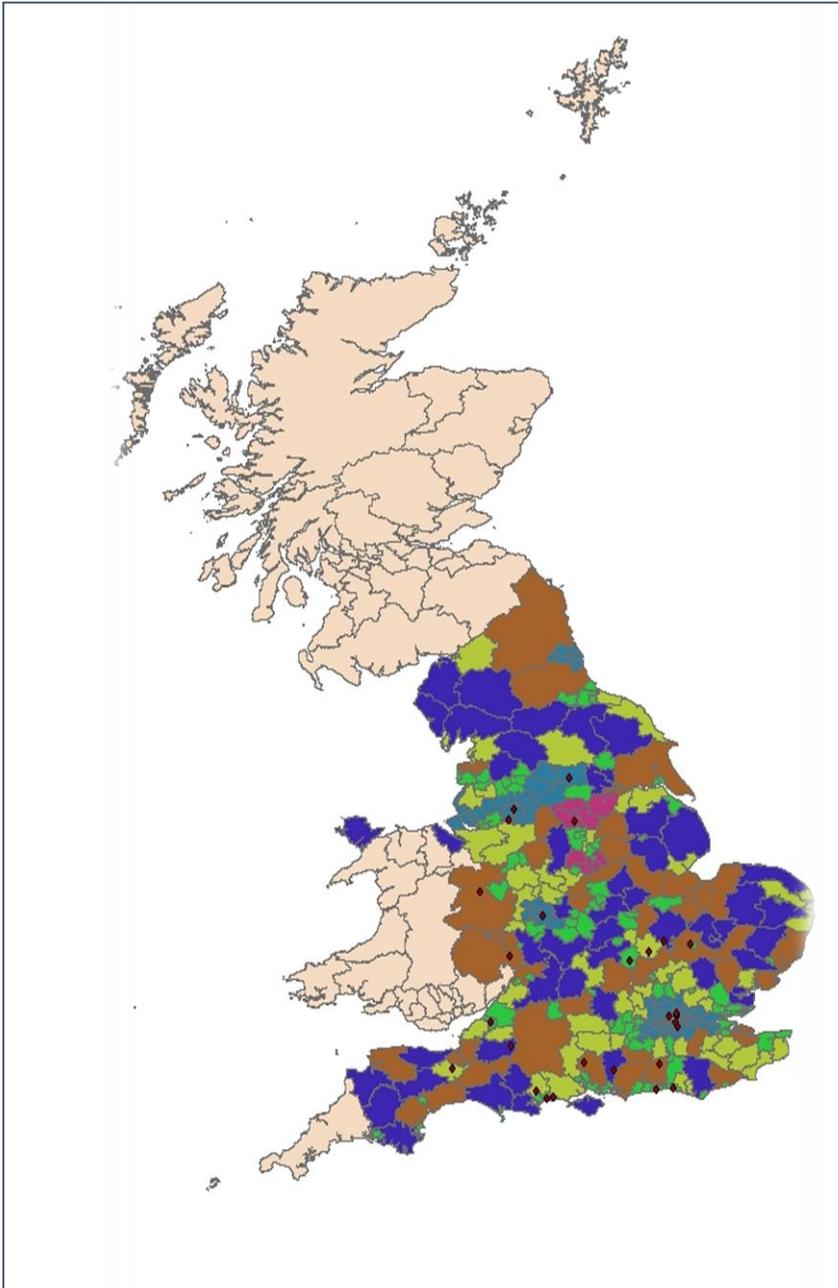
1. Where does coworking take place?
2. In what types of spaces and places?
3. In residential neighbourhoods with local residents?
4. Who uses what types of spaces and why?
5. How do space and place shape coworking practices?

# Methodology

- Coworking spaces and groups identified through social media and web
- In cities, towns and rural areas around the UK and Europe
- Participant observations and semi-structured interviews:
  - In homes, cafes, community centres, leisure centres
  - Comparison: commercially managed coworking spaces
  - Profession-based coworking

# Diversity of coworking locations in England

## Urban-Rural Classification



-  Largely Rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%)
-  Mainly Rural (rural including hub towns  $\geq 80\%$ )
-  Urban with City and Town
-  Urban with Major Conurbation
-  Urban with Minor Conurbation
-  Urban with Significant Rural (rural including hub towns 26-49%)

Source: ONS.

Map produced by Ana Basiri

# Coworking case studies

- Cohome
  - Coworking in people's homes for a charge, online platform-based
  - Bottom-up
  - Central Paris
- Hoffice
  - Coworking in people's homes for free, organised on Facebook
  - Bottom-up; facilitator of each group
  - Stockholm: 2x suburban, 1x central
- Jelly
  - Coworking networks for freelancers and entrepreneurs
  - Public spaces: Cafes, leisure centre, public libraries, community centre
  - Winchester, South London, Dorset (Wimborne, Christchurch)
    - Somerford Jelly – disadvantaged neighbourhood in Christchurch, local council-run



Bordeaux



Grenoble



Lille



Lyon



Marseille



Montpellier



Nantes



Paris



Rennes

## Cohome locations

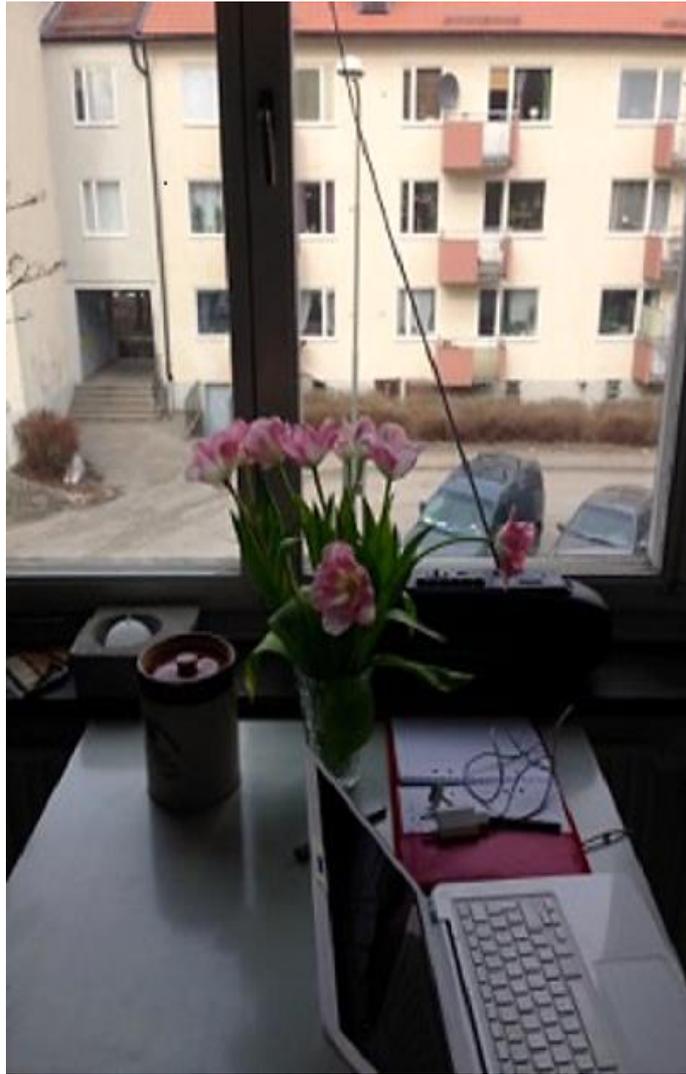
Source:  
Cohome.in





## Locations of Hoffice groups worldwide at 2017

Source: Hoffice.nu





# Somerford ARC

20 Southey Road Somerford, Christchurch BH23 3EH

# Jelly



<http://www.ukjelly.co.uk/>

Do you work alone and feel like you're missing out? Jelly is what you need!

## GUEST SPEAKER

**DORMEN** DORset Business **MEN**toring

**Denis James, Mentor**

Denis will be joining our weekly Jelly session to show you how Dormen can help your business. He will be specifically focusing on how you need to word your advertising to maximise the business that you draw in. This ties in with the marketing talks we have been putting on for you.

“Jelly” is an informal co-working event where freelancers, homeworkers and small/micro business owners bring their laptops or other work and

**Thursday** from 1pm to 3pm, drop in anytime. Tea, Coffee & Biscuit's, free WiFi, free parking, no booking required.

For more information contact Lydia, Centre Co-ordinator on 01202 470770 or [info@somerfordarc.com](mailto:info@somerfordarc.com)



# Summary and conclusions

1. Where does coworking take place?
  - Not only urban phenomenon but in: cities, suburbs, towns, villages
2. In what types of spaces and places?
  - Not only commercial designated coworking spaces but also: private space, public space, mixed commercial retail spaces
  - Fluid boundaries between different spaces
  - Urban buzz areas, less economically dynamic and connected urban areas, suburban, economically disadvantaged areas
3. In residential neighbourhoods with local residents?
  - Overwhelmingly mixed areas with good accessibility to attract people from outside the area (Paris)
  - Residential Stockholm with local residents and good amenities
  - Housing estate with local residential coworkers who would otherwise work from home

# Summary and conclusions – cont.

## 4. Who uses what types of spaces and why?

- Urban, young entrepreneurs to meet other start-up entrepreneurs
- Residentially-oriented attract middle-aged people and women

## 5. How do space and place shape coworking practices?

- Need for social contact across spaces and places
- Business networks, knowledge spillover and proximity in central creative areas but not only in commercially managed spaces
- Different practices and functions are related to the home: entrepreneurial and networking versus family life-fit
- Neighbourhood and housing history (cooperatives)

<http://www.workandhome.ac.uk>

[A.H.Wilkins@soton.ac.uk](mailto:A.H.Wilkins@soton.ac.uk)

Follow us on Twitter:  
[@WORK\\_AND\\_HOME](https://twitter.com/WORK_AND_HOME)



Acknowledgement: This research is funded through the ERC Starting Grant, 639403 WORKANDHOME ERC-StG-2014