

## COWORK 15': A HYBRID WORK RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND A COWORKING PILOT CONCEPT

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**Abstract** Cowork15' is a component of largest research and development platform UrbanLink15' in partnership with UVT Digital & Green Living Lab. The goal of UrbanLink15's research is to identify healthier lifestyles and sustainable facilities that support residents from the economic, social, and environmental impact. Contributing to community wellbeing is the ultimate goal of the UVT Digital & Green Living Lab. The initiative focuses both on promoting hybrid work developed as a relationship between organizational workspaces, living spaces, and neighborhood indoor plus outdoor coworking spaces, and the (re)connection with the sustainable mobility solutions of the concept of '15-minute city'. The article presents the methodology of the 2022 Cowork 15'research based on interviews with office workers from the most important Timisoara's town business center and workers from a coworking space plus a focus group with people that work in a coworking space from Timisoara. The aim of Cowork15'research is to determine the workers mobility behavior between home and workplace and motivations to change the current mobility behavior with alternative healthier and greener ways of working and mobility. Also, the article objective it is to define a frame for a concept of an interior Public Coworking Space and an Urban Community Gardens with dedicated outdoor co-working spaces as pilot project.

**Keywords:** Hybrid Work; 15-minute city; workplace; co-working; community garden; alternative aobility; community project.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In view of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, launched in 2020 by European Commission President von der Leyen [19], the ecosystem active in Timișoara on the area of green jobs, ergonomic and sustainable development, joined efforts to contribute to an applied context for the European Green Deal, in an attractive, innovative and human-centred way.

The focus of Cowork 15' research is on the relationship between organizational workspaces, living spaces and local indoor plus outdoor co-working spaces that meet the need for professional relationships, outdoor activities, natural green-blue grids, and the need of community enhancement in the area of Timișoara city [3].

Head office has moved from statement of corporate power to social hub for cultural cohesion, learning and values sharing. Workplaces are more fluid, human resources operate rather like the circular economy of material resources. Rigid and complex hierarchies have been swept away, with leadership redefined as a more relational role. Key functions are to drive purpose, inspire employees and keep strategy agile. Management is flatter, with power devolved to teams and networks. This autonomy is underpinned with clear and transparent rules and expectations that link back directly to the organization's purpose and vision [1]. Walkshops and standing meetings are well known as a

way to promote wellbeing and fresh ideas. It has even been shown that ideas flow most freely in the countryside. Most organizations lack easy access to vast wilderness spaces and work teams are more widely distributed, so AR and VR could help [18].

In this context work from home and work from neighborhood co-working in the spirit of 15-minute city combined with periodically meetings and events at the client or employer office hub it is an effective sustainable and well-being way of work and live [8]. A 15-Minute City is a residential urban concept in which most daily necessities can be accomplished by either walking or cycling from residents' homes. The 15-minute city concept as a way to ensure that urban residents can fulfill six essential functions within a 15-minute walk or bike from their dwellings: living, working, commerce, healthcare, education and entertainment. The framework of this model has four components; density, proximity, diversity and digitalization [7].

Coworking is an arrangement in which workers of different companies share an office space, allowing cost savings and convenience through the use of common infrastructures, such as equipment, utilities, and receptionist and custodial services, and in some cases refreshments and parcel acceptance services [10]. Major companies that provide coworking space and serviced offices include WeWork and IWG plc. In the same time, it is a large number of independent entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship co-working spaces, or even public co-working spaces developments.

Along with the dedicated digital and green tools, health and wellbeing is being addressed by the UVT Digital & Green Living Lab with capabilities related to green jobs & ergonomics (Arts and Design, Organisational Psychology), psychotherapy and spiritual wellbeing (psychology, theology, arts, music and theatre), physiotherapy and telerehabilitation (physical therapy and sports), sports and healthy lifestyle, nutrition and dietetics, including functional foods and bioactive compounds (nutrition, biology, chemistry). All of these topics, along with embedding circular economy concepts in Urban Community Gardens, are tackled with the pilot Urban Community Gardens project that has the objective to be use also as neighborhood outdoor co-working space [17].

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF THE COWORK 15' RESEARCH**

The Cowork 15' research purpose is to evaluate the working and mobility behavior, but also the present and future of working ways of the office workers from Timisoara as base of a social entrepreneurial indoor and outdoor co-working concept. Cowork 15' survey is based on interviews with about 80 office workers from United Business Center – Iulius Town Timișoara participants at the event Iulius Outdoor Office Day from 21 of June 2022 [13] and 20 office workers from FOR Workspace – FABER Co-working at the event International Outdoor Office Day at Faber [14]. The unreviews will be made by volunteer students base on a questionnaire developed on the current article. The data analyze will be made by a scientific team from ErgoWork Society [11]. The general methodology of research is validated by the previous researches made by the Workplace Lab team, part of Ergowork Society. One of most complex research of Workplace Lab entity was Generations at Work [2, 6].

### **2.1. Methodology of the hybrid and mobility behavior qualitative survey for workers from United Business Center – Iulius Town Timișoara**

Main objective of Cowork15' survey from United Business Center – Iulius Town Timișoara is to determine the workers mobility behavior between home and workplace and motivations to change the current mobility behavior with alternative healthier and greener ways of working and mobility. The second objective is to find the present and future ways of working of the target respondents. The

segmentations of the answers will take in consideration two criteria, age of respondents and the numbers of local employee in Timisoara that have the respondent's employer.

First topic of the survey will be to identify the Way of Working adopted by employer of each respondent. It will be used a multiple-choice question with one possible option as following:

- The company has so far opted for the predominant use of telework at home, with few exceptions for team
- The company has opted for a full return to work in the company's own space
- The company leaves the option to choose how to work from home or office, but once chosen we must respect the choice to be only at the company office or only in telework at home with occasional presence for team meetings at the company headquarters
- The company leaves the option to choose personally at any time between home teleworking and work at the company headquarters (hybrid work)
- The company leaves the option to choose personally anytime and whenever between work at the company's headquarters and any other location in Romania or outside Romania (hybrid - nomad work)

If the first topic is to determine the employer policy regarding of workplace, the second topic is design to determine the personal choices of the employee regarding of the favorites ways of working. It will be used a multiple-choice question with one possible option as following:

- To go to the company office every day
- Work from home and go to the company headquarters for team meetings no more than once a month
- To work 1-2 days a week at the company's headquarters and the rest to work from home
- To work 1-2 days a week from the company's headquarters, to have a 1-2 days subscription to a neighborhood co-working
- To go to the company headquarters for team meetings at most once a month, to have a 1 – 5 day subscription to a neighborhood co-working or another temporary residence location

Third topic is about the mobility behavior between home and workplace and the time used for mobility. The question is a grid type.

**Table 1. Type of mobility.**

N o.	Type of mobility between home and workplace	Transit time			
		Less 30 minutes	Between 30 and 60 minutes	Between 1 and 2 hours	Less 2 hours
1.	Personal car				
2.	Taxi or similar				
3.	Employer shuttle bus				
4.	Public transport and walking				
5.	Bike or scooter				
6.	Walking				

Forth topic is about motivations to change the current mobility behavior. The question is also a grid type.

**Table 2. Mobility motivations.**

No.	Motivations	Mobility type changing in:			
		Walking	Bike - scooter	Public transport and walking	Shuttle bus
1.	If I spend the same personal time as I do now				
2.	If my personal mobility time increases to 25%				
3.	If my personal mobility time increases between 25 and 50%				
4.	If my personal mobility time increases between 50 and 100%				
5.	If my personal mobility time increases 2 to 4 times				
6.	If I had a natural route, green, shady, quiet and safe, and the mobility time would be at most 50% longer than the current one				
7.	If I had a natural route, green, shady, quiet and safe, and the mobility time would be at most 4 times longer than the current one				
8.	Regardless of the mobility time and the route, I will not change my current mobility behavior				

Fifth topic is about openness to choose a neighborhood coworking subscription as workplace if the responded has a suitable offer. It will be used a multiple-choice question with one possible option as following:

- One day a week subscription
- Two days a week subscription
- Three days a week subscription
- Subscription for more than three days a week
- I wouldn't choose to work in a coworking space

The last topic is about openness to use potential outdoor facilities as following:

- I would choose to work in the outdoor space of coworking
- I would choose to do gardening in my outside working hours as an outdoor activity in a community urban garden run by a coworking.

## 2.2. Methodology of the work and mobility behavior qualitative survey plus focus group with workers from FOR Workspace Coworking Timișoara

Main objectives of Cowork15' survey and Focus Group from FOR Workspace Coworking Timișoara are to determine the workers mobility behavior between home and workplace, the mobility motivations when the respondents chose FOR Workspace Coworking and the general motivations to choose to work from a coworking space. The segmentations of the answers will take in consideration two criteria, age of respondents and the worker status (freelance, associate in a small business, employed in an SME, employed in a multinational company).

Main topics about motivations are in two multiple-choice questions and 2 open questions. The topic about the general motivations to use a coworking space connected with the payment subscription as the following options:

- It is my personal option to work in a coworking space and I pay the subscription from my general

income

- It is my personal option to work in a coworking space but I have a budget allocated by the employer for such a subscription
- It is the employer's requirement to work from a designated workspace, other than housing.

The topic with the objective to determine respondent's motivation of chose FOR Workspace Coworking has a multi-choice question.

- It is contracted by the employer
- It has an affordable subscription price
- Has facilities to work and communicate according to my needs
- I know people who work here and want to be around them
- Because it is close to home
- Pleasant and safe route to and from home for walking, cycling, scooter
- Due to the existing parking space nearby

In order to identify the pleasant elements of work in coworking it is used an open question and also for the dislike elements for coworking space.

The topics about mobility behavior are the same as in the questionnaire for Iulius workers. Regarding the use of outdoor facilities from FOR Workspace Coworking it is used questions with binary YES/NO answers.

Because the FOR Workspace coworking it is in a partnership with the most important Timisoara Urban Community Garden – “Grădinescu GreenFeel”, it is used multiple choice question regarding of the known and interest of FOR coworkers on this gardening initiative.

- I heard about Grădinescu GreenFeel
- I often go to the activities at Grădinescu GreenFeel or I would like to start to go frequently
- I visited Grădinescu GreenFeel and I still go to punctual activities only if are suitable with my interest, not being interested particularly in gardening but interested in different community projects that are develop in that location
- I don't know about the idea of an urban community garden or the GreenFeel Garden, but I would be interested to find out more and visit the GreenFeel Garden
- I do not know the idea of an urban community garden and I am not interested in such an activity.

The focus group guide for FOR Workspace workers will be quite similar with this questionnaire but it will look more closely at the connections between the influencing factors.

### 3. PUBLIC COWORKING CONCEPT PREMISES

Based on COWORK 15' research and Timisoara city mobility data traffic a West University from Timisoara students' team will propose a model of a social entrepreneurial co-working in order to fill better the 15 minutes coworking grid from Timisoara as support for hybrid work and more.

### 3.1. Product solutions for hybrid work

Work environments with a flexible design bring people, spaces, and technology together and adapt to changes in how, where and when work is performed. While technology is an employee's software, the workplace is their hardware: Easily reconfigured by its users, a dynamic space hosts different ways to work and multiple activities, a workspace can turn into a workshop space or a meeting room into a waiting zone. Dynamic spaces can be created in any context and are relevant for all sectors: offices and public spaces, educational or health facilities. The new developments have in common a demand for flexibility and high quality, which allows the post-Covid office to adapt to shifting needs while signaling value and appreciation to its users.

### 3.2. Dynamics Space

The designers, architects and manufacturers challenge are to maximize the use of limited space, while generating a sense of safety and well-being and making room for more individual choices as we design, shape and build the dynamic home of tomorrow. Dynamic spaces are particularly suitable for companies that pursue a hybrid approach and want to repurpose their facilities to promote in-person exchange and intermittent collaboration. Accordingly, dynamic spaces can be planned as smaller flexible spaces that enable users to repurpose the room according to their immediate needs or as larger dynamic spaces that support the different phases of project teams. As such, they can be planned as part of an existing office or as a separate workspace detached from the office. To begin with, the simplest solution is to create an additional or specific area from an already existing workspace or educational center.

As comprehensive solution dynamic spaces provide different space types at the same time and offer the ability to modify whole environments depending on current needs of the project teams – from workspaces to collaboration spaces.

### 3.3. DIY (do-it-yourself movement), Wellbeing and Social Entrepreneurial Co-working initiative

DiY culture is a dynamic and ever-evolving process that can help meet our day-to-day needs, develop organizations, provide our own entertainment and education. In fact, the principle of DiY can be used to do anything. “The do-it-yourself movement is not just a hobby. It is often a pleasant and meaningful contribution to family life”. Margaret Mead in 1957 [8].

One of the twentieth century's most influential pioneers Victor J. Papanek (1923–1998) and his key work, “Design for the Real World” about a socially and ecologically oriented approach to design beginning in the 1960s, remains the most widely read book about design ever published. In it, Papanek makes a plea for inclusion, social justice, and sustainability – themes of greater relevance for today's design than ever before [9].

Themes of Papanek's work, including his fundamental criticism of consumerism and his engagement with social minorities, his commitment to the needs of what was then known as the “Third World” ecology, sustainability, and making culture – creation and production using one's own resources – which had its origins in the 1960s **do-it-yourself movement**.

“The Politics of Design” what was revolutionary for Papanek’s time is now generally accepted: design is not only about giving form to something; it is a tool for political transformation that must consider social and ethical points of view. This is reflected by the fact that today’s debates over themes such as social design and design thinking draw upon Papanek’s ideas as a matter of course at the same time, it examines how Papanek’s socially engaged design is changing our world today – as well as how it can make the world a better one.

When you think of DIY you probably imagine making and building things yourself, but DIY goes far beyond home improvements. It is not so much a practical skill as a state of mind. Although the aforementioned texts by Starr and in “House Beautiful” associate DIY activities with a sense of inner satisfaction, makes a more direct and emphatic connection between DIY pursuit, social identity and well-being. This impulse is associated with the male psyche: that “millions find joy in building is nothing new”. The extraordinary popularity of the phenomenon is ultimately attributed to its perceived psychological and therapeutic benefits. Indeed, DIY was perceived by some do-it-yourselfers to be a preventive for suicide and ‘nervous breakdown’. The healing and medicinal power of DIY also relates to the redirection of a ‘patients’ psychological energies into manual labor and productive output. Thus, ‘in his home workshop, anyone from president down to file clerk can take satisfaction from the fine table, chair or cabinet taking shape under his own hands—and bulge with pride again as he shows them off to friends’. Moreover, the do-it-yourselfer of 1954 could analyze and reconstruct both self and home by referring to the many and varied DIY publications then available: ‘in New York City’s public library, there are 3,500 how-to books. There are dozens of books on *How to Buy a House* and how to make it better. Manuals also confirms that regardless of ideological or social difference, DIY was linked to the transformation of the self (individual and / or collective): be it the individual husband-handyman escaping his desk-bound office pressures; the elementary conjugal family united in homemaking; or the alternative countercultural family bonded through communal life and self-production. While the countercultural manual may be positioned as a radical co-option of the mainstream retail catalogue format, it might equally be understood as an extension of the ideology of self-transformation already established by the DIY manuals and catalogues of the 1940s and 1950s. The countercultural manuals encouraged a comprehensive mode of living through knowledge, information, products and action, in the same way that the early DIY manuals associated DIY action and productivity with the life of the family.

The ethics of DIY culture concern taking responsibility for your life and the world around you through positive practical direct action. Do It Yourself culture is the reason that Permanent Culture Now exists. It is one of the most empowering things that an individual can do. It is a design system that intentionally creates a harmonious integration of the natural landscape and people as a means of providing food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. It is also the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience that is found in natural ecosystems.

#### **4. COWORK 15’ TIMIȘOARA CONCEPT GENERAL FRAME**

In the COWORK15’ Timisoara concept we will use the concept for a public space with the premises of DIY movement used international volunteers work and recycled objects for furnishing the space but also innovative products developed by students from West University Timisoara. The pilot concept will take in consideration the Timisoara co-working spatial grid, the 15 minute city rules and the idea of design for outdoor working spaces integrated in a urban community garden. The concept

will be applied to a space converted from a thermal point part of the district heating grid of Timisoara [13].

Urban planning policy is a climate policy and, just as it goes on our streets, so does the planet. The city of Timisoara brings to the streets the fight against climate change with people-oriented strategies, innovations in transit and active transport and set the course for a future with less carbon and more opportunities. The city of Timisoara should pay attention in the area of mobility, when creating a connected city, where people of all ages, abilities and means can enjoy a good quality of life. We know that improving mobility, including access to transit, is a critical factor in supporting economic prosperity and addressing social equity in the city and region. The growth rate of the city of Timisoara amplifies even more the need for significant actions.

Coworking spaces (CWS) are workplaces created to provide infrastructure and opportunities for interaction between freelancers. These are the result of a trend towards flexible and project-based missions, through sustainable activity sharing and service exchanges.

Starting from the connection of the city resources, the analysis of the parks, the thermal points, the Bega canal, the roofs of the sustainable buildings, a circular connection map can be created between the neighbourhoods for the location of the Urban Cowork Spaces, taking into account the 15 minute principle. The proposals can be presented in various forms of location, connected around the historic center or in the outdoor areas, the difference in comfort being given by the ergonomics of the space, but also between the artistic fusion with the functional. Proposing a mobility study with Vaporetto Timisoara + bicycle / scooter connection through a Mobile App application dedicated to this new time of urban travel where the Bega Canal divides the city into 2 so it could be a landmark in our proposal for sustainable development.

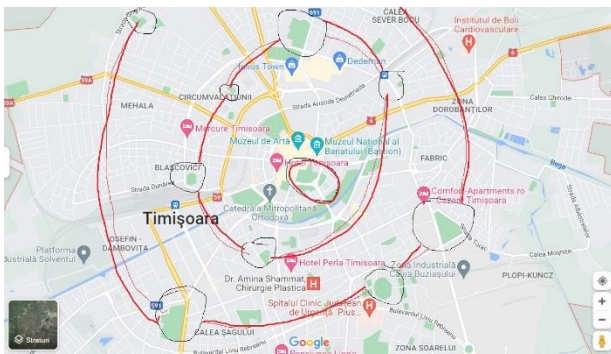


Figure. 1 Timisoara Rings proposed for Cowork 15'grid.

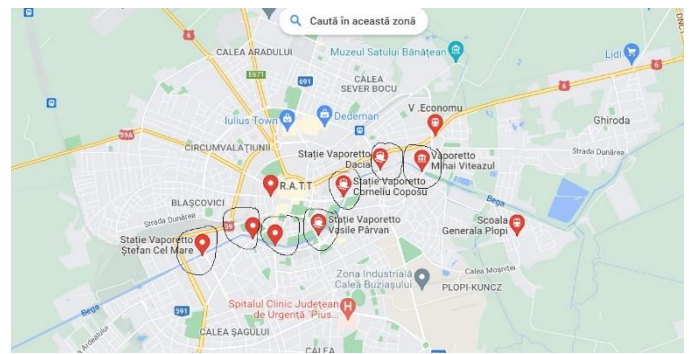


Figure. 2 Timisoara mobility study in relation with Vaporetto Bega.

The sustainable roof variant for different buildings, but also the proposal of multi-storey containers gives a minimalist industrial vision that can be integrated in the intermediate area between the two poles (interior / exterior) of the city.

This study brings together three topics: urban rehabilitation, social innovation, and new workspaces, given how public sector action can affect all three in a given city. There is considerable consensus on the need to rehabilitate and repopulate old city centers - in short, this is in line with the 15-minute post-modern vision of the city, or even the earlier concept of "neighborhood unity". The conditions imposed by COVID-19, for example, blockages and quarantine, together with the absence of the daily



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commute, have increased public awareness of neighborhoods.

Coworking spaces (CWS) are a recent urban phenomenon; reflects a trend in knowledge work towards flexibility and project-based tasks, where work can be done autonomously and in different places: office, libraries, cafes and common areas, or at home.



Figure 3. City Proposal Project - more transparent locations just to mark the pulse of the city, dynamics, vibration [15].



Figure 4. Outdoor City Proposal Project - green oasis from the less crowded locations of the city, peace, relaxation [16].

CWS: Positive and Negative Outlook

The CWS literature can be roughly divided into five main themes:

- (a) learning, collaboration and sharing,
- (b) typologies,
- (c) labor market and informal issues,
- (d) infrastructure management
- (e) CWS outcomes for both individual and urban learning environment.

CWS have been linked to sharing (or collaborating) the economy and are work environments built on concepts such as community, collaboration, openness, diversity, and sustainability. This view is

linked to the concept of a network society in which assets and knowledge are shared, increasing their use and economic efficiency. This optimistic view is balanced by another who understands CWS as a result of rising unemployment, associated with the dominance of project-based work, stimulated by information technology and self-employed professionals whose official working relationships with companies have been severed [4].

There are two different approaches to analyzing CWS:

an inside perspective, which emphasizes its community component and one on the outside, which sees CWS as part of urban business ecosystems, along with production facilities, incubators and accelerators. In the first component, individualistic and community behaviors are compared, while in the second, the authors make sense of the variety of jobs based on collaboration and sharing that make up the middle ground of big cities. CWS, together with incubators and production facilities, are part of the urban environment, which supports the urban ecosystem, which is believed to bring innovation and economic development, as well as commitment and social improvement. The popularity of coworking spaces has grown significantly in recent years and will certainly not be extinguished too soon, even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. From now on, however, more emphasis will be placed on personal space and some social distancing to maintain health, and therefore outdoor coworking spaces could become a new fad, especially in the summer.

Here are some of the types of people who can benefit from coworking:

**Independent:** Coworking spaces offer freelancers a cheap alternative to working from home or in a café.

**Startups or small businesses:** small businesses with only a few employees can use a coworking space to save money or take advantage of a more prestigious address. The benefits of a coworking space in terms of location and cultural events can also attract better workers.

**Travelers:** Traveling business people use coworking facilities as a meeting place for clients and business or to work outside their hotels.

**Remote Professionals:** People who work remotely use coworking facilities to have an office environment and interaction that they can't get with their company.

**Corporations:** Some corporations use coworking facilities to provide employees with a place to work together, without some of the disadvantages of coming to a corporate office, such as commuting or office politics.

Being a proposal for outdoor spaces besides the benefits of wellbeing (air, green, birds, walking, etc.) there is the possibility that these nuclei organize around them another kind of activity (urban gardening, painting classes, Yoga sessions, photos for events... etc), which means that the neighborhood is connected around the proposal of this Common Workspace [5].

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The article presents the entire specific methodology necessary to conduct research about hybrid work and coworking options using in the spirit of 15 minute city as application for Timisoara town. The current article establishes also the complete theoretical framework necessary to develop based also in the research result a pilot project for a public coworking space with supplementary functions as outdoor working facilities and community urban gardening. Following of the survey results, the information and correlations between motivations, as human factors, and the infrastructure plus human resources policy regarding of workplace organizational strategy it will be higher in this new

pioneer societal and scientific field.

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