

# **COWORK 15' - A Hybrid Work Research 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 neighbourhood indoor plus outdoor coworking spaces, and the (re)connection with the sustainable mobility solutions of the concept of '15-minute city'. The article presents results 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 behaviour between home and workplace and motivations to change the current mobility behaviour with alternative healthier and greener ways of working and mobility. Also, the article presents 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, Workplace, Co-working, Alternative Mobility

## 1. Introduction

In view of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, launched in 2020 by European Commission President von der Leyen, the ecosystem active in Timisoara 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 Timisoara city (Draghici 2022).

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 (Capotescu 2019). Walk shops 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.

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 (Draghici et al. 2021). 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 (Moreno 2021).

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 (2022 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/>). 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 (Kraus 2022, Mohora 2020).

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 neighbourhood outdoor co-working space.

### **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 Timisoara participants at the event Iulius Outdoor Office Day from 21 of June 2022 and 20 office workers from FOR Workspace – FABER Co-working at the event International Outdoor Office Day at Faber (<https://meaningandfusion.work>). 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 (<https://ergoworksociety.com/members/>). The methodology has base validation as model on the ErgoWork Society research Generations @Work (Capotescu et al. 2020, Mohora 2020).

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

Main objective of Cowork15' survey from United Business Center – Iulius Town Timisoara is to determine the workers mobility behaviour between home and workplace and motivations to change the current mobility behaviour 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. It was applied a questionnaire to 60 respondents based on direct interview

made with operators. The segmentations of the answers will take in consideration two criteria, age of respondents – Figure 1 and the numbers of local employee in Timisoara that have the respondent’s employer – Figure 2.

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

Main objectives of Cowork15’ survey and Focus Group from FOR Workspace Coworking Timisoara are to determine the workers mobility behaviour 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. It was a questionnaire applied mainly online to the 12 respondents that are using the services of FOR Workspaces Co-working space. The segmentations of the answers will take in consideration two criteria, age of respondents (under 30 years old – 4 respondents, between 30 and 45 years old – 8 respondents) and the worker status (freelance - 5, associate in a small business - 5, employed in a SME 2).

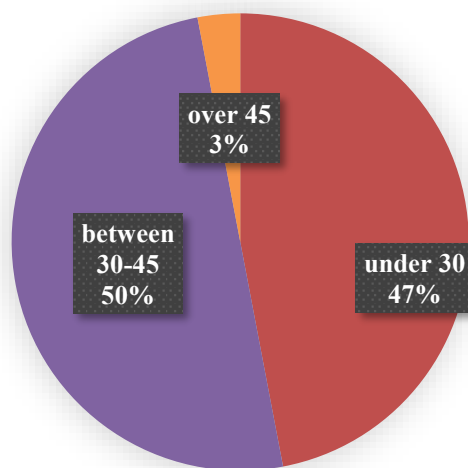


Fig. 1: Respondents age

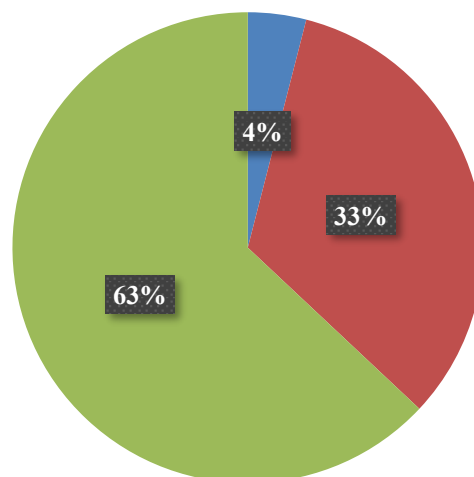


Fig. 2: Numbers of local employee

## Results of the COWORK 15' Research

### 3.1 Results from survey for workers from United Business Center – Iulius Town Timisoara

The first question is an open one about the Way of Working adopted by employer of each respondent. It was used a multiple-choice question with one possible option and the results are presented in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Way of Working adopted by employer

#	Way of working (survey research results)	Percent (%)
1.	The company leaves the option to choose personally at any time between home teleworking and work at the company headquarters (hybrid work)	48%
2.	The company has so far opted for the predominant use of telework at home, with few exceptions for team	22%
3.	The company has opted for a full return to work in the company's own space	10%
4.	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	8%
5.	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), without reimbursing expenses for work in other locations such as part of the rent - housing expenses or co-working subscription	5%
6.	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) and reimburses expenses for work in other locations such as part of the rent - housing expenses or co-working subscription	3,5%
7.	Other corporate politics	3,5%

As seen in Table 1, at the date of 21 June, majority of the branches of big multinationals companies with creativity work from the main Timisoara Business Centre are very flexible regarding of the office work of employees.

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 favourites ways of working. It was used a multiple-choice question with one possible option and the percent of

choices are according with the Table 2 related with the employee age and Table 3 related with employer dimensions.

Tab. 2: Employee's favourite Way of Working by age

#	Way of working (survey research results)	Less 30 years old	Between 30 and 45	More than 45	General percent (%)
1.	To work 1-3 days a week at the company's headquarters and the rest to work from home	46,5%	30%	100%	40%
2.	Work from home and go to the company headquarters for team meetings no more than once a month	18%	30%	0	23,3%
3.	To work 1-2 days a week from the company's headquarters, to have a 1-2 days subscription to a neighbourhood co-working	21,5%	10%	0	15%
4.	To go to the company headquarters for team meetings at most once a month, to have a 1 – 5-day subscription to a neighbourhood co-working or another temporary residence location	11%	17%	0	13,3%
5.	To go to the company office every day	4%	13%	0	8,3%

Tab. 3: Employee's favourite Way of Working related with employer dimension

#	Way of working (survey research results)	Less 50 employees	Between 50 and 250	More than 250	General percent (%)
6.	To work 1-3 days a week at the company's headquarters and the rest to work from home	50%	50%	34%	40%
7.	Work from home and go to the company headquarters for team meetings no more than once a month	0	10%	32%	23,3%
8.	To work 1-2 days a week from the company's headquarters, to have a 1-2 days subscription to a neighbourhood co-working	0	25%	11%	15%

9.	To go to the company headquarters for team meetings at most once a month, to have a 1 – 5-day subscription to a neighbourhood co-working or another temporary residence location	0	15%	13%	13,3%
10.	To go to the company office every day	50%	0	10%	8,3%

Majority of the respondents prefer to have a flexible – hybrid way of working, but in the same time it is a percent by almost 10% that prefer to work daily from the employer own office space. Regarding of age differences it is a higher preference of the young people to be presence on the employer office but not every day. In the correlation with the employer dimension are also important differences. Respondents from bigger employers has a higher diversity of options and a highest percent of respondents prefer to be less connected with employer office.

Third question it is about the current mobility behaviour between home and workplace and time spent during of home and workplace with the results presented in the graphic from Figure 3.

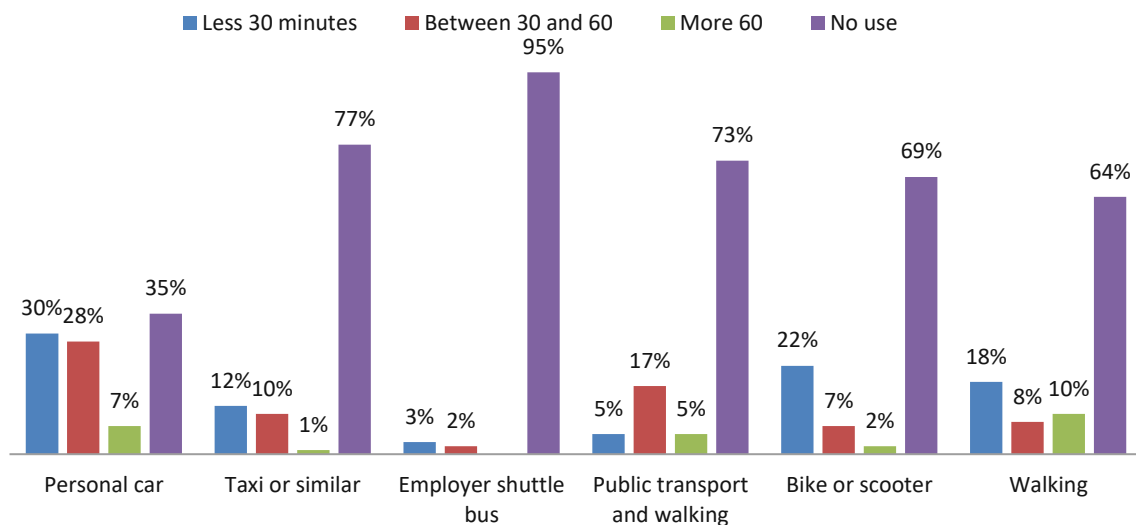


Fig. 3: COWORK 15' mobility behaviour and time spent between home and workplace

Personal car is not used by 35% of respondents. Public transport and alternative mobility as bikes or scooters are used by 27% - 31% from respondents.

Next question was about the motivation to reduce the personal carbon footprint following of changing the mobility behaviour, results from Table 4.

Tab: 4 Mobility motivations

No.	Motivations	Mobility type changing in:				Shuttle bus
		Walking	Bike - scooter	Public transport and walking	Public transport and bike / scooter	
1.	If I spend the same personal time as I do now	33%	31%	29%	5%	2%
2.	If my personal mobility time increases to 25%	19%	32%	21%	21%	4%
3.	If my personal mobility time increases between 25 and 50%	7%	32%	23%	16%	16%
4.	If my personal mobility time increases between 50 and 100%	9%	23%	26%	18%	25%
5.	If my personal mobility time increases 2 to 4 times	5%	25%	28%	16%	26%
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	37%	26%	19%	9%	9%
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	17,5%	39%	14%	17,5	12%

According with the survey results the respondents are motivated to walk if the time consuming for mobility between home and workplace it is as the current situation or about 25% longer, even if it is a blue – green, shady and safe way. If the time consuming it is longer, they prefer to use, bike, scooter, or a mix between public transport and walking or bike – scooter.

Fifth topic was about openness to choose a neighbourhood coworking subscription as workplace if the responded has a suitable offer. Majority of the respondents was open and interested about a potential opportunity to work from a co-working space placed at 15 minutes walk or bike from home, complete answer in the graph from Figure 4.



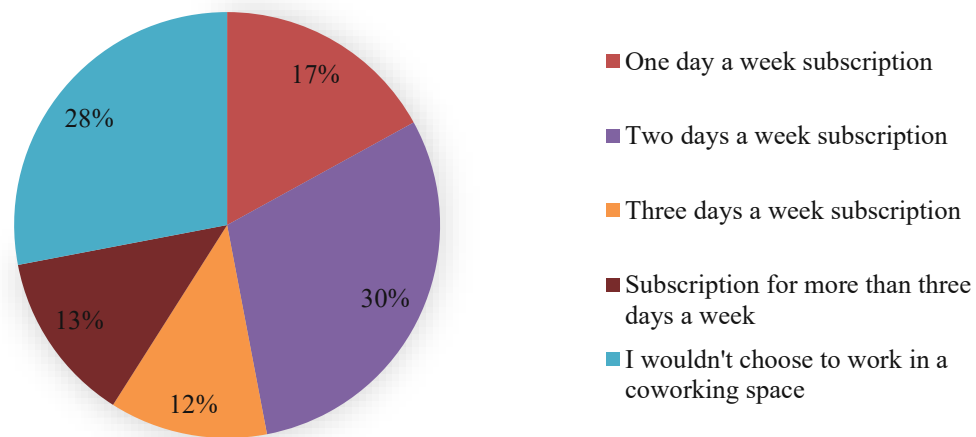


Fig. 4: Openness to choose a neighbourhood coworking subscription as workplace

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

- *work in the outdoor space of coworking, 58% of respondents answered positive interested*
- *gardening in the outside working hours as an outdoor activity in a community urban garden run by a coworking, 53% answered positive interested*

### 3.2. Results from survey from workers from FOR Workspace Coworking Timisoara

First topic was about the general motivations to use a coworking space connected with the payment subscription. The answers were as following:

- *personal option to work in a coworking space and the subscription from my general income: 9 answers*
- *personal option to work in a coworking space but I have a budget allocated by the employer for such a subscription: 2 answers*
- *the employer's requirement to work from a designated workspace, other than housing: 1 answer.*

The topic about respondent's motivation of chose FOR Workspace has the number of answers (multi-choice question) according with Figure 5.

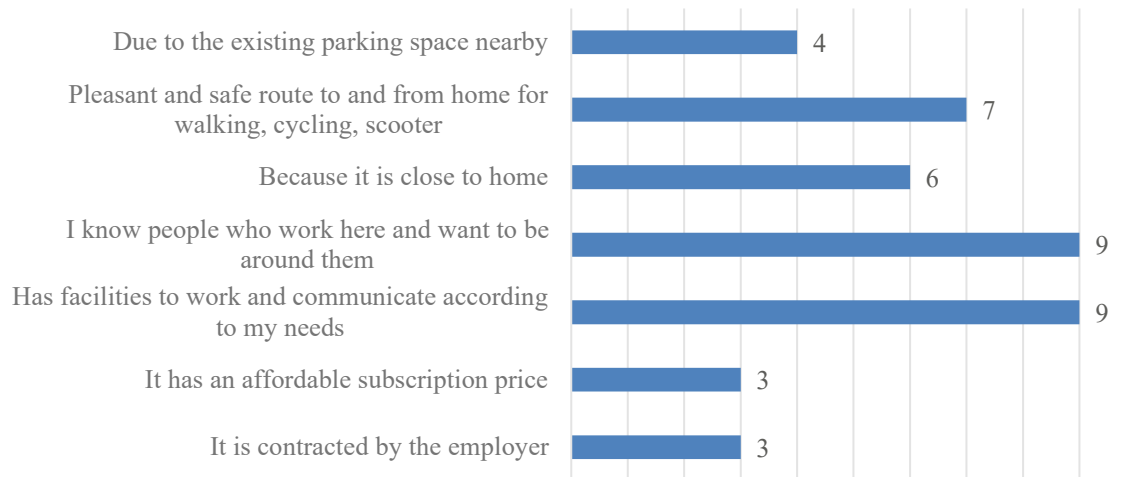


Fig. 5: Motivation to choose FOR Workspace

The question about the current mobility behaviour between home and workplace and time spent during of home and workplace has the results presented in the graphic from Figure 6.

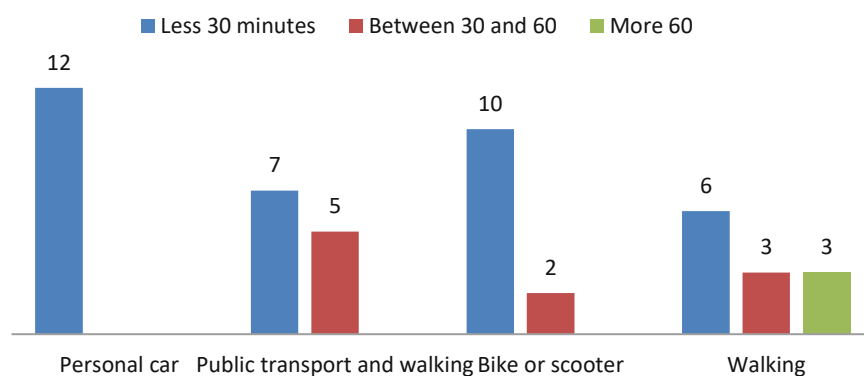


Fig. 6: COWORK 15' mobility behaviour and time spent between home and coworking space FOR

Regarding the motivation to reduce the personal carbon footprint following of changing the mobility behaviour, results from Table 5.

Table 5. Mobility motivations at FOR workers

No.	Motivations	Mobility type changing in:		
		Walking	Bike - scooter	Public transport and walking
1.	If I spend the same personal time as I do now	9	2	1
2.	If my personal mobility time increases to 25%	4	8	
3.	If my personal mobility time increases between 25 and 50%	5	6	1
4.	If my personal mobility time increases between 50 and 100%	2	8	2
5.	If my personal mobility time increases 2 to 4 times	2	6	4

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	8	4	
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	3	7	2

The trend it is similar for the co-working users as for the employee from the United Business Canter. For a short mobility time increasing people prefer to walking and if the time increasing more, they prefer to use bike – scooter or a mix with public transport.

A half of the co-workers respondents that use the outdoor working facilities from Faber and the rest of six don't use them. Because the Faber stake holders are involved in the most important Timisoara urban community garden (Greadinescu GreenFeel), to test the interest about the concept it was used a question connected with this garden. Six respondents didn't knew the concept of urban community garden and never heard about the Gradinescu Greefeel. Seven respondents have heard about the garden but any one visited yet.

### 3.3 Results of the Focus Group and open question in survey about pleasant and dislike elements of co-working space

The open question and focus group revealed the known main advantages and disadvantages of co-working apace with accents from the pandemic times as following:

#### A. Advantages

- *The community feeling, diversity of the people but in the same time people quality*
- *Positive contribution to the productivity following of the increasing of the focus on work comparative with home work*
- *The positive contribution to the work – life balance as delimitation between the time and space of work and the rest of private life*
- *The quality of facilities from the co-working space as: internet and IT equipment, cleaning and other accommodation services, interior design quality, furniture quality and ergonomics, relaxing area and urban location*
- *A better feeling of free of hierarchy and authority control*
- *The opportunity to be close by other quality connected events organised by the co-working space*

#### B. Disadvantages

- *Difficulties regarding of the sensitive security data protection*

- *The general noise level background*
- *Difficulties of focus on a high attention task following of the general noise level*
- *Difficulties to organise and be focus on the individual online meetings*
- *Less psychological freedom to choose between work tasks and leisure activities in a certain moment*

### **Public coworking concept**

Based on COWORK 15' research and bellow interior design premises we 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.

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 or workplace of tomorrow. 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 (Gelber 1999).

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 (Papanek 2005).

In the COWORK15' Timisoara concept used 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 takes 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 it is applied to a space converted from a thermal point part of the district heating grid of Timisoara (<https://fitt.ro/voluntariat-in-centrele-de-tineret-din-timisoara>).

The concept has a component of indoor coworking space, Figure 7 and a component of outdoor coworking space connected with an idea of community urban garden, Figure 8.



Fig. 7: COWORK 15' public indoor space concept



Fig. 8: COWORK 15' public outdoor space concept

## Conclusions

The results of the COWORK 15' research show interest and potential development to integrate the coworking space as a tool for urban sustainable development in the frame of 15 minute city concept. The survey respondents were in generally aware about the personal carbon footprint and open to change the working and mobility behavior in order to improve the town sustainability and to enhance the neighborhood community using 15 minutes coworking spaces and urban community gardens.

COWORK 15' pilot concept show that can be found private and public resources to create a coworking grid at the level town in the frame of 15 minute city idea that can be used even by the youth and people that doesn't have financial resources for a co-working subscription developed as a private business.

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