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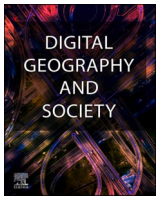

Working in the comfort zone: Understanding coworking spaces as post-digital, post-work and post-tourist territory

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ABSTRACT

Coworking spaces are contradictory places. Typically, they are constructed as connected, domestic-like places for hard work and as recreational, aestheticized destinations for individuals in search of work-life balance and opportunities for partial disconnection. This article contributes an immanent critique of coworking spaces through the overarching notion of "coworking space territoriality". Our point of departure is the concept of post-digital territoriality, which captures how individuals and organizations in various ways try to counter the downsides of escalating digitalization and reclaim a sense of bounded place. To further elaborate the subversive potentials of coworking spaces, however, the "post-digital" is brought into dialogue with "post-work" and "post-tourist"; two other "post-" concepts that contain ideas and practices that characterize the contradictory nature of coworking spaces. At the intersection of all three facets of territoriality, we argue, the coworking space emerges as a spatially and socially bounded comfort zone. The suggested approach informs the ongoing conversation about the ambiguous role of coworking spaces in broader transformations of society, especially in terms of social inclusion and exclusion. The theoretical arguments are anchored in a substantial literature review as well as in first-hand empirical data from a "hot-desking ethnography" covering ten different coworking spaces in Oslo, Denver, and Palma de Mallorca.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide a deeper and more complex understanding of coworking spaces as part of broader transformations of society – both as a general phenomenon and as a multifaceted agglomeration of individual cases at different locations. Based on a literature review combined with first-hand observations from ethnographic fieldwork carried out in 2023, we advance a triadic approach to coworking spaces as *post-digital, post-work* and *post-tourist* territory. In developing this approach, we follow an ideal of immanent critique – which can be traced back to Hegel's dialectical view of social transformations (Stahl, 2013/2022, pp. 26–8) – meaning that we try to capture the inherent, and ideologically imbued, tensions and contradictions that signify many, if not all, coworking spaces.

The core of our analysis is to understand coworking spaces as part of a broader post-digital transformation of society. This means that permanent connectivity and digital reliance are *normalized*, but also *contested*. While "coworking space" is a somewhat elastic notion (see, e.g., Orel and Bennis, 2021; Mariotti et al., 2024), it is common to describe it as a digitally connected workspace where freelancers and other "flexible" knowledge workers can access a "hot desk" and other work facilities for a limited period. At the same time, while digital infrastructures are rudimentary for the coordination of flexible office spaces (Richardson, 2021), there are also measures taken to compensate for the digital fatigue, stress, or frustration that oftentimes haunt contemporary knowledge workers. According to Indy Hall founder Alex Hillman, coworking is not a workspace industry, but a "happiness industry" that humanizes work (King, 2017). Through the provision of various analogue or disconnected amenities (e.g., board games, table-tennis, yoga, and mindfulness), most coworking spaces become places for both hard, computerized, work and joyful recreation away from screens.

The contradictory approach to digital media that signifies today's coworking spaces, and the methods used to release workers from digital overload, contribute, in turn, to the construction of these workplaces as spaces where productive and leisure-oriented activities exist next to one another. Symptomatically, the typical coworking space exists in vibrant neighborhoods marked by aesthetic and emotional intensity in "cool" city areas (cf. Waters-Lynch and Potts, 2017) and offer "low-slung

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couches with decorative pillows" (Grazian, 2020, p. 997) next to the standard laptop desks. As a kind of Airbnb for digital workers then, and as spaces promoting also non-work "experiences" through everything from self-enhancing activity programs to edgy architecture and interior designs, coworking spaces have been recognized as a driver of an ongoing "touristification of work" (Fast and Jansson, 2019, 2023). This development echoes one of the coworking space industry's most repeated slogans: that it ultimately offers "a home away from home" (e.g., van Dijk, 2019). It is most accentuated in digital nomadism (e.g., Cook, 2020; Orel, 2019, 2021), where coworking spaces provide anchoring environments (Bacevice and Spreitzer, 2023) for hyper-connected knowledge workers searching for global encounters in attractive settings.

Coworking spaces are thus ambiguous spaces. They are *both* connected and disconnected spaces; they promote *both* hard (or "smart") work and recreational ease; they are *both* domestic-like milieus for disembedded workers and experience-laden "destinations" for tourist-like workers. Against this backdrop, it is important to recognize how the post-digital tendencies that characterize coworking spaces are interlaced with other social trends. In this article, we identify coworking spaces as not only *post-digital territory*, but also *post-work* and *post-tourist* territory. As we show, variations among coworking spaces – including variations in how these hybrid workplaces affect the social life of cities and neighborhoods – can be understood largely in terms of how these distinct yet inter-related facets of territoriality are articulated. While coworking spaces, on the one hand, correspond to "the most advanced forms of neoliberalism due to the type of workers (freelance, independent) and activities (start-ups, new economy) they consist of" (De Peuter, Cohen, & Saraco, 2017, p. 691), the business also, on the other hand, proclaims "post-capitalist" (Vidaillet & Bousalham, 2020, p. 61) or "post-work" (Gregg, 2018, p. 87) ideals of community and self-realization. Similarly, while asserting improved cities and places open to everyone, aestheticized and touristified coworking spaces are likely to appeal mainly to people with a relatively privileged habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Centner, 2008) and certain amounts of network capital, that is, various skills and resources, especially linked to digital media, that enable mobility and connectivity (Urry, 2007, p. 194–203).

Our focus on *territoriality*, while keeping in mind the open-endedness of coworking spaces, helps us scrutinize these environments as sites of social power. In line with Adams and Jansson's (2023) conceptualization of post-digital territoriality, we here draw on Sack's (1986) work on human territoriality. However liquid and open-ended coworking spaces might appear, especially given their digitalized nature, they do have boundaries that serve to include certain groups while excluding others. From that insight in particular, it is possible to elaborate an immanent critique and engage in a wider discussion around the socio-spatial implications of the ongoing "post-digitalization", "post-workification" (Fast, 2021), and "post-touristification" of urban space.

The notion of post-digital territoriality also provides an analytical lens that makes it possible to challenge the paradigmatic lines of division that cut across the research field. Research on coworking spaces is largely torn between a celebratory and a critical strand. In the former strand, which embraces dominant corporate ideals and visions, researchers conduct studies aiming to help maximizing the anticipated positive effects of coworking spaces, such as, knowledge sharing, collaboration, learning, and the appropriation of new digital tools (e.g., Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018; Rese et al., 2020; Howell, 2022; Kopplin et al., 2022). The latter, anti-capitalist strand interprets coworking spaces as an extension and legitimization of neoliberal labour regimes (e.g., De Peuter et al., 2017; Gandini, 2016; Grazian, 2020). In framing coworking spaces as post-digital territory, we recognize coworking spaces as an extension and normalization of the contemporary, neoliberal and digitally saturated world of work where many digital workers suffer under precarious life conditions and "always on" work cultures (e.g., Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates, 2013; Wajcman, 2018), *and* highlight the potentials of these spaces to serve as a counterforce to troubling social trends like surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), data colonialism (Couldry and Mejias, 2019), and exploitive or self-harming work conditions more generally.

We are not alone in focusing on the ambiguities of coworking spaces, nor are we the first to recognize their territoriality. For example, De Peuter et al. (2017) point out that coworking spaces are promoted as a response to neoliberal working conditions and labour precarity but "in a manner that redoubles network sociality – a mode of conduct that requires one to be active, to take initiative and to seek out contacts". Relatedly, Grazian (2020) shows that experiences of community among workers do not emerge to the extent often professed, meaning that one of the expected key benefits is not experienced by individuals (see also Gandini & Cossu, 2021). In another analysis, which also addresses the consequences of digitalization, Fast (2024) depicts coworking spaces as "elite territory" as much as a space of precarity. Reuschke et al. (2021), in turn, structure their literature review of coworking research in relation to key ambiguities that demarcate the phenomenon. Yet, articulations of coworking space ambiguities as reflections of wider societal developments pertaining to either post-digitalism, post-work, or post-tourism are still very rare – not to say absent – in the otherwise burgeoning research on coworking spaces. To our knowledge, no one has previously scrutinized coworking space territoriality through the lens of *all three* of these "post" conditions.

Our article begins with a section where we provide the socio-economic background and ideological underpinnings of the increasingly diverse landscape of coworking spaces, with a special focus on the ambiguous role of media. This is followed by a methods section detailing the empirical basis of the study. Our observations derive from a two-step literature review and an ethnographic pilot study covering, in total, ten coworking spaces in Oslo (Norway), Denver (CO, U·S) and Palma de Mallorca (Spain). After that, we discuss the three forms of territoriality that characterize coworking spaces – post-digital, post-work, and post-tourist – in separate sections. By way of conclusion, we suggest that coworking spaces have emerged as culturally distinctive *comfort zones* at the intersection of these three "post-developments".

2. The expanding and pluralizing landscape of coworking spaces

Recent literature locates coworking spaces within the broader category of "new working spaces" (Mariotti et al., 2024) that have emerged with (but not only because of) digitalization. As such, coworking spaces share traits with, but can also be distinguished from, Fab labs, Makerspaces, Hackerspaces, Living labs, Innovation hubs, and other non-traditional workspaces (Micek et al., 2024; Tomaz and Aboutalebi Tabrizi, 2024). The start of the so-called "coworking movement" has been linked to the establishment of The San Francisco Coworking Space in 2005 – a collaborative workplace located in the gentrified "dot-com area" (De Peuter et al., 2017). Since then, the trend has accelerated worldwide – at least up until the global breakout of the Covid-19 virus in 2020. The long-lasting effects of the pandemic remain to be seen, but the global industry was hit hard by national lock-downs and other safety measures undertaken to prevent the spread of the virus (for a multi-facetted inquiry into the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on new workspaces, see Mariotti et al., 2022). The Coworking Space Global Market Report 2022 forecasts that the market reaches $30.36 billion in 2026, at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 17.0 % (ReportLinker, 2022). Yet, in November 2023, one of the major players, WeWork, filed for bankruptcy over major losses largely stemming from the remote work revolution that took off during the pandemic (The Guardian, November 6, 2023).

As of 2022, North America dominated the coworking space market, followed by the rapidly growing Asia Pacific market (Business Research Insights, 2022). Coworking spaces exist on all continents (Waters-Lynch et al., 2016), in smaller cities (Jamal, 2018), and increasingly in rural areas (Bosworth et al., 2023), yet remain essentially concentrated to metropolitan cities where financial, political and corporate networks

intersect (Wang and Loo, 2017). In terms of intra-city location, coworking spaces tend to establish in creative suburbs (Waters-Lynch and Potts, 2017) and business districts (Grazian, 2020). Most coworking spaces are privately owned, yet alternative forms of proprietorship exist. The typical member of a coworking space is a 36-year-old, educated, white, male freelancer (Deskmag, 2022; Lorne, 2020).

Yet, as emphasized in recent literature, it is increasingly important to consider the growing *diversity* in the coworking sector. Akhavan (2021) presents a research overview that includes a differentiated view of coworking spaces, and calls for more comparative studies in different countries, settings, and so forth. As a step in that direction, she discusses a number of key distinctions, one of them differentiating coworking spaces that are generally appealing to freelancers and entrepreneurs wanting to find a comfortable "third space" for work, from more specialized places that pertain to specific sectors or market segments. Grazian (2020: 1008–1011), in turn, identifies a handful of such emerging segments, including professional women; young men celebrating ideals of hard work and beer-drinking; Black and Latino entrepreneurs; non-profit organizations, and businessmen attracted to more conservative settings. Capdevila (2017), further, crystalizes two organizational dimensions, distinguishing top-down management from bottom-up organization, and "explorative" from "exploitative" approaches (see also Kojo and Nenonen, 2016). Other scholars, such as Howell (2022), have presented how different design choices characterize different types of coworking spaces, including their aesthetic features and service offerings. Orel and Bennis (2021), finally, presents a taxonomy including four types of coworking spaces, where they also identify three types of "non-coworking shared offices" that are sometimes (mistakenly, according to the authors) seen as coworking spaces.

While categorizations like these are valuable, they predominantly deal with the organizational elements and market positions of coworking spaces. Much less has been written and said about the different ways in which coworking spaces embrace, encode and expose (or hide) digital infrastructures – even though such infrastructures underpin the whole ideology of coworking and are literally indispensable to coworkers (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Isaac, 2016). The Coworking Manifesto, formulated by early coworking architects around 2005 and still serving as a declaration of core values for many coworking spaces, envisions "a new economic engine composed of collaboration and community, in contrast to the silos and secrecy of the 19th/20th century economy" (wiki.coworking.org). Coworking spaces, thus, promote themselves as smart, networked counter-spaces that defeat the downsides of digital capitalism – most notably the "loneliness epidemic" (King, 2017) caused by individualization and neoliberalism (De Peuter et al., 2017; Merkel, 2015, 2018). At the same time, critical researchers have drawn attention to the symbiotic relations between coworking and neoliberal capitalism, including digital exploitation, escalating work precariousness, and urban exclusion (De Peuter et al., 2017; Gandini, 2015; Lorne, 2020; Merkel, 2018; Vidaillet & Bousalham, 2020). While coworking spaces challenge the fragmenting post-Fordist work regime by reterritorializing work and offering workers stability, they reinforce the norms and values they mean to defy. Digital reliance is at the core of this contradictory development.

In the remainder of this article, we show how coworking spaces can be characterized in terms of their setup and enactment of digital infrastructures and platforms, *and* the parallel measures taken to counterbalance the downsides of the "digital mundane" (e.g., Maltby and Thornham, 2016). As mentioned, we see the balancing of these two sides as a sign of post-digital conditions.

3. Material and methods

We have developed our understanding of coworking spaces through an abductive process, involving three main stages. First, many of the original ideas leading up to the argument of this article emerged through an overview of existing coworking discourse, including online promotional material for different types of coworking spaces, especially in Sweden, which was combined with a literature review. This took place in 2018–2020 and led up to the project application and the project that this study is part of (see also Fast and Jansson, 2019).

Second, during winter 2022–23, we conducted a more focused and updated literature review to specifically grasp issues related to our conceptual lenses (post-digital, post-work, post-tourist). This overview of the field was conducted in a relatively "organic" way, meaning that we used Google Scholar to identify relevant publications and traced ideas further via reference lists and other intertextual connections. The amount of literature we have gone through is considerably larger than what we are able to represent in this article. It should also be noted that our ambition is not to present a complete, systematic research overview but to advance theoretical arguments that are grounded in previous research (which at the same time becomes a way of saying something about the research field).

Third, we build our arguments on currently ongoing ethnographic research, which so far includes material from ten coworking spaces in Oslo (Norway), Denver (CO, U.S), and Palma de Mallorca (Spain). All cases are self-proclaimed coworking spaces and adhere to predominant theoretical taxonomies (see, e.g., Orel and Bennis, 2021; Mariotti et al., 2024). The ethnographic material deployed in this article was gathered in 2023 through what we call "hot-desking ethnographies". The aim of this pilot study was to gain insights from diverse coworking spaces (in terms of, for example, profile, ownership and geographical context), in preparation for a follow-up, more in-depth ethnography at four spaces, selected on the basis of findings from the pilot study. In line with this objective, the main criteria for selecting the cases for the pilot study was diversity. Our primary site became Oslo, where seven of the ten studied coworking spaces are located (Spaces Kvadraturen, HerSpace, Regus, 657, Share, WeWork, and Factory Tøyen). Oslo offers the geographical and socio-economic diversity that we look for in the project as a whole, and with the city's relatively high number of coworking spaces it was possible to find coworking spaces that diverged from one another in terms of location, profile and ownership. In our selection, we also benefited from tips from people we met at the various coworking spaces on where to find contrary cases in Oslo. The case in Palma de Mallorca (Convendum) was carefully selected to further expand our cohort of coworking spaces, into the realm of more touristic settings. The two Denver cases (Venture X, LoDo and Venture X, Downtown) also adhere to our diversity criteria. Expect for expanding the study to yet other geographical and socio-economic contexts, the two cases are internally diverse despite the fact that they are part of the same franchise.

The goal of the pilot study was to increase our understanding of the diversity of the coworking space market and the uniqueness of (and similarity between) different cases, as a way of preparing for our subsequent, more thorough, ethnography. The general approach of the pilot study was to mimic the "fly-in-fly-out" mode that the typical hot-desking business model facilitates. Thus, the standard procedure was to ask staff for permission to enter the venue as a coworker and work, on our laptop, in the designated area for hot-desking for a few hours. We were never denied access but sometimes had to pay for a day-pass. We always revealed our researcher identity in conversations and through a visible nametag. In the majority of places, we were offered a guided tour by a staff member. The hot-desking ethnographies included informal conversations with staff and coworkers, which adds to our understanding of how the studied spaces were interpreted. No formal interviews were conducted, except for one with a community manager at Convendum in Palma de Mallorca. The total time spent in the ten coworking spaces were 45 h. The lion share of this time (21 h, distributed over four days) was spent at Convendum, Palma de Mallorca, and the remaining time (23h) were distributed between the other nine coworking spaces. In total, the hot-desking ethnographies generated circa 30 computer-written pages of field-notes (15,174 words), plus sketches and photographs.

While working on this article, we realized that some elements of

coworking space culture and territoriality, notably the post-digital features that are at the core of our view, are still under-developed in the coworking space literature. In the following discussion, we therefore include three examples from our fieldwork to make our arguments more tangible and to compensate for gaps in the research terrain. While recognizing the complexity of each coworking space, we have selected cases where one of the three facets of coworking territoriality is particularly articulated: the post-digital (Venture X), the post-work (HerSpace), and the post-tourist (Convendum). The case descriptions are mainly anchored in our own observations and coworking spaces' self-representation (in fieldwork conversations or official sources, e.g., company websites).

4. Coworking space territoriality

Following Sack (1986), we understand territoriality as a spatial and political strategy that enables people to "affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (p. 19, italics omitted). Per this definition, territories are never neutral, but always the result of human activity. More specifically, according to Sack, territoriality entails three essential practices. First, a certain area or place is *classified* as having a certain restriction in terms of access or possession. This means, in essence, that a geographical area is claimed by an individual or a group and that it attains a certain function and significance to these people. Others may enter the area only if invited, or by force, deception, or the like. Second, there is always some type of *communication* involved that demarcates the geographical area. The main means of demarcation are various kinds of boundaries that separate "insiders" from "outsiders". They can be physical, like walls, fences or locked doors, as well as symbolic, such as, for example, memberships, logotypes, or passwords. Third, territoriality involves some kind of "attempt at *enforcing control* over access to the area and to things within it, or to things outside it by restraining those within" (p. 22, italics added). In other words, the area is defended, proactively or reactively (Brown et al., 2005), against those who do not belong.

Territories are thus the outcomes of territoriality and, as given by the definition, always to be understood as social constructs (Sack, 1986, p. 30; see also Raffestin, 2012). Yet, human beings often take territories for granted or *see* them as natural containers, due to deeply rooted cultural conventions, power relations, and/or societal regulations that prescribe who has (and has not) access to a certain area, or what types of things should (or should not) be contained within an area. It is this circumstance, their deceiving naturalness, that makes territories so powerful.

Territoriality is exercised on many levels; it may stem from supranational organizations, states, organizations, groups, and individuals. Due to the nature of our focus and data, our concern here is primarily with *organizational territoriality* (e.g., Brown et al., 2005), that is, with territorial practices undertaken by coworking space companies (notably owners and managers). As others have remarked, "organizations are particularly fertile grounds for territoriality" (Brown, 2009: 44). At the same time, to fully understand the territorial characteristics of the coworking space, we must also consider the territorial aspirations and labor of individual workers (Raffestin, 2012) *and* how the workplace is interwoven with the urban fabric, the neighborhood in particular, and its social relations (see also Bernhardt, 2023). A similar, decentered approach is applied by Fast (2024), who argues that coworking spaces can be understood as elite territory with strong links to gentrification processes. In the following, we extend this critical argument to make tangible how the territoriality of/at coworking spaces *brings together and reinforces the exclusiveness of post-digital, post-work and post-tourist currents* in culture and society.

4.1. Coworking spaces as post-digital territory

In media studies, the last few years have seen a growing interest in digital disconnection, media withdrawal, and various forms of (partial) non-use of digital media (e.g., Hesselberth, 2018; Syvertsen, 2020; Syvertsen and Enli, 2020; Lomborg and Ytre-Arne, 2021; Jansson & Adams, 2021). This "turn" reflects and responds to a "disconnection trend" in society, where both individuals and certain social groups, as well businesses and organizations, have come to recognize and search for solutions to the downsides of people's connected lives (Fast, 2021). The problems range from individual feelings of addiction, distraction and information overload to hampered productivity in organizations, and political concerns with digital surveillance. Accordingly, there are also different and sometimes contradictory rationales as to why disconnection is advanced as a solution. What they have in common, we argue, is that they denote the coming of a *post-digital condition*, where the normalization of permanent connectivity and digital reliance is challenged.

In this section, we argue that coworking spaces should be understood as post-digital territories, following the arguments of Adams and Jansson (2023). The problem with digital media, they argue, is not the digital per se, but "the logic by which connectivity saturates and even predicates daily life, eroding useful boundaries between self and other, subject and environment, and one situation and another" (p. 668). Adams and Jansson take post-digital territoriality as a prospective way of managing connectivity in times of data colonialism and intrusive datafication.

In relation to the regime of digital connectivity – which prescribes and normalizes that people in general, as citizens as well as consumers, *should be* digitally connected most of the time in order to function within society and culture (e.g., Fast and Jansson, 2019; Gregg, 2013; Mazmanian et al., 2013; van Dijck, 2013) – territoriality can be used as a "shield" from over-connectivity or over-extension. It means, for example, that a certain room in the home or at a work-place may be demarcated as "free" from digital devices and infrastructure. This is to communicate and reinforce a certain boundary that also demarcates the rules that apply if one crosses the boundary, that is, the anticipated non-use of, or non-access to, certain types of media. Constructing this type of territory thus holds a double significance in (a) keeping digital flows out, and (b) regulating the premises for human access. This example points to the tactical potential of territoriality for humans (including individuals as well as smaller groups and organizations) in their quest for coping with digital entanglements and intrusions into the lifeworld. However, post-digital territoriality does not refer to a complete, and thus futile, abandonment or rejection of digital media. Rather, as suggested by the notion of *post*-digital, it signifies a new type of sensibility and a way of reflexively countering the digital regime on a day-to-day basis; the keeping-up of meaningful, yet not entirely closed, boundaries around the "space of the self" (cf. Couldry and Mejias, 2019). We may think of post-digital territoriality as a form of spatially and/or temporally *managed permeability*, or, as Adams and Jansson (2023, p. 668) put it, "moments of resistance and disruption through which digital network logics are challenged, by those who can do so, through certain bounding practices."

The organizational features of coworking spaces make them vulnerable to digital intrusions and over-connectivity more or less by default. As argued by Migliore et al. (2021), the very mission of coworking spaces is "to be intermediate territory endorsing distributed organisational practices, made of physical and digital connections or formal and informal interactions", which invoke "a common layer of relational hybridity" (p. 21). At the same time, coworking spaces are typically designed to compensate precisely for this hybridity and open-endedness. Part of their attraction is to provide an "identity anchoring environment" for aspiring creative workers or knowledge workers (Bacevice and Spreitzer, 2023), who are reliant on the connectivity industry (van Dijck, 2013) and digital platforms for handling "self-branding" and networking (Baym, 2018). In a longitudinal ethnographic study among digital nomads, Cook (2020) found that coworking spaces offered a "protected work environment in locations primarily designed

for leisure" (p. 370), meaning that the territoriality of these work-places assisted digital nomads in keeping up their work-discipline in the midst of other temptations. Such temptations also included social media platforms whose propensity to crisscross the work-leisure divide was much easier to manage when staying in an office designated for work (rather than in an apartment or in cafés).

Lately, voluntary digital disconnection – the refusal of digital media – has also been recognized as a means of wellbeing and "work-life balance", as well as of social distinction (Fast et al., 2021; Hesselberth, 2018; Syvertsen, 2017). Whereas digital connectivity is indeed a precondition for becoming a member of a coworking space, that is, for entering and making full use of the territory (e.g., via Wi-Fi networks and community apps), analog technology (e.g., typewriters, vinyl records, analogue cameras) and disconnected activities (e.g., table-tennis, puzzles, yoga) are emblems of coworking spaces, building creativity and spatial attraction. Likewise, while digital platforms and infrastructures are crucial to the communication and signaling of boundaries, coworking spaces are also replete with analogue spatial markers (e.g., stickers and painted signage) that indicate where connectivity is disabled, prohibited, or unwanted. Tellingly, in an overview of which amenities are provided by coworking spaces (based on data from Coworker.com), Howell (2022) found that these environments generally contain a mixture of digitally connected technology (the mandatory Wi-Fi, printer, and projector) and various analogue and/or disconnected technologies (e.g., board games and arcade games), as well as amenities for sealing off digital connectivity (e.g., phone booths). This is to say that there are connected as well as disconnected resources enabling and articulating the specific form of community that coworking spaces promote, including shared norms as to what constitutes "good work".

Along these lines, to conceive of coworking spaces as post-digital territory means that it is brought about through representations, practices and events (from the design and marketing of space and infrastructure to people's individual ways of using different media at different times) that are preconditioned by and necessitates the digital but in various ways oppose the digital regime and its dominant features, notably problems related to digital intrusion, distraction, and entanglement. The post-digital condition implies that digital media, while still being hegemonic, are "disenchanted" (Cramer, 2015).

Venture X, a coworking space franchise originating in Florida in 2016 that nowadays has a global presence, can serve to illustrate the post-digital signature of the business. One of their spaces, centrally located in the touristic area of Denver (16th Street), features small rooms for rest and meditation. The sign on the frosted glass doors reads "Shh… Nap/Meditation". Following what seems to have become a norm in the coworking space industry, it also provides phone booths for bounded media use. Additionally, they utilize multiple analogue or pre-digital media as part of their interior décor, including a black typewriter and a wood-veneer coated television set. The latter is placed in a shelf, next to an electric fireplace in one of the lounge areas (Fig. 1). The other Venture X venue in Denver, in downtown area "LoDo" (1800 Wazee St.), displays in one of their larger office areas a vinyl player, placed on top of an open sideboard with numerous vinyl albums. As others have noted, this kind of "old-world nostalgia for the vintage and retro" is emblematic of post-digital aesthetics (Humayun & Belk, 2020, p. 635).

The ambivalent post-digital condition has so far been under-explored in the growing body coworking space research. In critical as well as more business-oriented literature there is a prevailing concern with what digital infrastructures and connectivity can *achieve*, or *cause*, rather than with the significance of disconnectivity and alternative ways of appropriating the digital. A majority of the business-oriented articles we have overviewed apply an instrumental approach to analyze the prospects of extended digitalization, notably for community-building, networking and growing autonomy of workers. As a case in point, Kopplin et al. (2022) studied the prospects of digital matchmaking applications in the coworking business, that is, software designed to facilitate social connections, and found that workers are very utilitarian, looking for tools that are efficient and at low cost and low effort. Similarly, in a study of home coworking ("hoffices"), Reuschke et al. (2021)

Fig. 1. Fashionably analogue. Post-digital aesthetics at Venture X at 16th Street, Denver, Colorado. Photo: Karin Fast.

found that digital platforms were indispensable to arranging these meetings, i.e., finding a place to work: "Digital platforms and virtual interactions create in our study predictability for meeting those with similar experiences of working in a personalized professional environment and with awareness of the challenges and ambivalences of personalized professional work (feelings of loneliness and ambivalences of failure in particular). They also help in organizing the coworking sessions given the constraints of independent work." (p. 130). However, the potential downsides of these types of logistical developments that classify the territory of coworking spaces, for example in terms of digital fatigue and entanglement, were not addressed. It is also telling that no study exists, to our knowledge, that tries to extract the individual or organizational gains of for example disconnection or analogue media in coworking spaces. Such approaches are rather to be found in the wider field of management literature, even in self-help literature, advancing the benefits of "deep work", "digital minimalism", and so forth (Newport, 2016, 2019; Goodin, 2017; Rauch, 2018).

A key argument within the critical strand of coworking research is that coworkers are exposed to a new form of sophisticated exploitation, in which digital media provide the means of surveillance (e.g., De Peuter et al., 2017; Gandini, 2015). From such a perspective, coworking spaces can be considered as yet another territory of capitalistic control, where workers' extensibility is sold back to them as "flexibility" (see also Sennett, 1997). In this literature, however, analyses of media and connectivity are relatively scarce, or under-developed, compared to other key concepts such as work and labour. An interesting exception can be found in the introduction to a special issue of *Organizational Studies*, where De Vaujany and colleagues (2021) provide a comprehensive view of the tension between autonomy and control in emerging forms of working and living (where coworking is one key example). Based on a research overview of organizational literature, they describe the cultivation of a paradox where surveillance is now built into all (inter)actions due to digital infrastructures (see also Mazmanian et al., 2013). Ultimately, they argue, "the organizational form of surveillance capitalism is the platform" (p. 681). This understanding follows Zuboff's (2019) theories of surveillance capitalism and resonates with dialectical views of mediatization processes, holding that the digital tools people rely on in day-to-day life work back upon them according to capitalist logics (e.g., Jansson, 2022). At the same time, De Vaujany et al. (2021) criticize Zuboff for not providing any deeper account of peoples' actual experiences of this paradoxical condition of controlled/autonomous work and conclude that future research should look at different forms of resistance developed by workers in the face of this new regime. Interestingly, however, the authors do not address the fact that coworking spaces, also at the organizational level, tend to celebrate disconnected practices and certain forms of territorial boundedness.

A similar bias – a tendency to underplay the disconnective elements of digitally coordinated labour – can be found in Richardson's (2021) pioneering research on the platformization of work. Richardson argues that "the tendency of contemporary technologies of work is less to divide space according to a specific function, and more to create *spaces of coordination* that can adjust the definition of purposeful activity" (p. 349). Platformization, Richardson argues, is "a process of spatial definition of work through technology that does not necessarily fix location but rather creates space (and time) for coordination that arranges different (more or less) territorialized actors and their networks" (p. 359). However, under post-digital conditions, where connectivity and spatially distributed work have become the established norm, we should also consider the reverse perspective. While coworking spaces are emblematic of platformization, turning territoriality into a relational and deeply hybridized matter, they also provide boundaries, spatial anchoring and, potentially, disconnection and shelter from digital over-extension and distraction. Through "disconnective workplace designs", Fast (2021) argues, coworking spaces are "also promoters of *work fixity*" (p. 1620). Speaking with Cook (2020), they provide a "protected work environment" (p. 370), a territory to inhabit for the sake of temporal and spatial regularity.

4.2. Coworking spaces as post-work territory

We will now contextualize coworking spaces' ambivalent approach to technology through the conceptual lens of *post-work*. This is to say that we emphasize how coworking spaces' ongoing post-digitalization is made part of a grander transformative project which the business ultimately claims to pursue: that of improving not only work and workplaces, but also life at large. This means that we recognize organizational post-digitalization as a crucial component – albeit not the only one – of corporate-led "post-workification" processes (Fast, 2021, p. 1625), and – in the end – of *post-work territoriality*. The boundaries of concern here are those between work, on the one hand, and leisure or recreation, on the other. We use "post-work" as an umbrella term for imaginaries of a future society where work, *as we have come to know it*, no longer exists (see e.g. Aronowitz and Cutler, 1998, for a collection of conceptualizations). Advocates argue that life in the post-work, or post-capitalism, society will cease to be work-centric and ultimately freed from neoliberal constraints and capitalist exploitation (Mason, 2015; Srnicek and Williams, 2015). Technology tends to play a key role in post-work futures. Due to automated jobs and work-time reductions, people are envisioned to have more time for leisure, personal pursuits, community, and well-being.

The post-work signature of coworking spaces has been recognized in earlier research, albeit to a low degree. Gregg (2018) is one of the few who has engaged the term to discuss coworking spaces. While acknowledging both the structures of inequality that tend to permeate coworking spaces and the limits of business promises, Gregg (2018) finds hope in the ways in which coworking space operators "share a desire for more meaningful work" (p. 88); "play with the constraints of the working-week paradigm" (p. 93), and "produce a different orientation to time" (p. 93). What they do, she argues, is "securing the social and practical resources to enjoy work *through* work" (p. 90, original emphasis). As mentioned, the earliest coworking spaces emerged as a response to what the founders described as inhumane, isolating, and over-rationalized work cultures. To this day, coworking spaces continue to argue that they revolutionize working life. More concretely, they claim to promote a fundamental reconfiguration of the relationship between work and leisure, and predominantly so in the direction of integration rather than separation of the two domains. Their ideals and aspirations are condensed in typical coworking space discourse that still circulate – as territorializing wall decors, stickers, printed mugs, Instagram quotes, and more – such as "Home away from home", "Do what you love", "More than a workplace", or "Thank God it is Monday" (Grazian, 2020).

Beyond semantics, coworking spaces' life-embracing post-work orientation can materialize in life-affirming, yet territorializing workplace designs. Privately owned HerSpace, in central Oslo, Norway, is a case in point. This relatively small, independent coworking space targets primarily people identifying as women and offers a "mini space"; a playroom for kids in immediate connection with the work areas. Whereas the kid's space also serves as a meeting room (see Fig. 2), babysitting can be arranged. Possibly then, HerSpace solves a problem identified in previous research (Rodríguez-Modroño, 2021): that many, young women especially, think that coworking is not compatible with having children. On top of this, HerSpace offers a repertoire of workshops and seminars that resolutely blur the lines between work and life – between productivity and re-productivity – in the purest sense of the latter word. Next to more conventional community lunches and professional development workshops, HerSpace's condensed membership calendar covers, among many other things, courses in breast-feeding, menstrual cycle health, and birth-giving, as well as "community plant-swaps", "crafternoons", and "embroidery for beginners" courses. The latter cluster of activities reflects, one could argue, the growing interest in (disconnected) craft-work in post-industrial societies (Gandini and

Fig. 2. A family-friendly space. The "mini-space" section of HerSpace, Oslo. Photo: Karin Fast.

Gerosa, 2023). While HerSpace's capacity to "revolutionize" working-life remains to be empirically assessed, the territorial construction of HerSpace could be considered an expression of a more care-oriented, feminist, post-work ideal that expands beyond the more traditional, masculine, understanding of the word (as called for by Hester and Srnicek, 2023).

While hard work, aspiration, and determination is by no means devalorized by coworking spaces (Fast, 2024), what the industry ultimately promises to facilitate is work that seamlessly merges personal and professional values, or "loveable work" (Sandoval, 2018). In doing so, coworking spaces act as contemporary display windows of a work ethic that has for a long time been associated with creative and cultural professions, where "passionate labour" (Alacovska, 2020; Arvidsson et al., 2010) and self-realization-through-work remain constructed as means for a more meaningful, "happy" life (Hermes, 2015; Sandoval, 2018). As "more than just a workplace", many coworking spaces provide mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and similarly spiritual activities. Thereby, they also reproduce ideals that were popularized in the U.S. and Europe in the1960s, by movements like Neo-Romanticism, the New Age movement, and the Human Potential movement (Watts and Houtman, 2023). While diverse, these movements fundamentally collapsed in their critique of the modern society and in their quest for more *meaningful* work. As argued by Watts and Houtman (2023), these movements paved way for a "spiritualization of work"; a counter-hegemonic work ethics revolving around values such as "authenticity, experience, feeling, self-expression, growth, and wholeness" (p. 442). As noted, concepts like these hold center positions in coworking vocabulary and territorial practice, and has done so for a long time. Increasingly, though, coworking spaces seem to embrace "digital disconnection" as a key trope in their post-work ideology. Today, a new repertoire of mottos – e.g., "Remember to Unplug" and "Work Offline Today" – are being circulated in the business (Fast, 2021) and, symptomatically, previously mentioned HerSpace has hosted a mini-course in "digital balance" as part of its (potentially) subversive event programme.

When it comes to coworking spaces' actual capacity to cultivate a life-embracing post-work culture – marked by belonging rather than alienation; meaning rather than exploitation – the literature leaves us with ambiguous answers. In much business-oriented research, many of the key tropes of coworking discourse (including community, freedom and autonomy) are taken at face value. Bouncken and Reuschl (2018), for instance, hold that "coworking-users decide autonomously" whether to interact and communicate with others, which in turn "serves experimentation and creativity" (p. 320), without problematizing neither the meaning of autonomy nor how this prospective sense of autonomy is affected by the fact that workers obey certain stipulated norms in order to be part of building a "coworking-space culture or coworking-community" (p. 322). In a similar fashion, Howell (2022) concludes in a research overview that coworking spaces are attractive not because they provide space as such, but due to the *community* within the space, and this is "especially beneficial for less-advantaged entrepreneurs" (p. 3).

The more critical domain of the research field takes a skeptical stance toward the business' sworn ground-breaking potential. For example, Purser (2018) dismisses corporate mindfulness as "a disciplined but myopic self-help doctrine, that transfers the risk and responsibility for well-being onto the individual" (p. 107). Particularly scrutinized is coworking spaces' leitmotif – *community*. De Peuter and colleagues (2017, p. 695) argue that "community" largely "operates as an empty signifier in coworking parlance" – a term that people, managers and workers repeat and thus reproduce in interviews. Bacevice and Spreitzer (2023, p. 76), on their part, find that "coworking provides individuals

with a more instrumental and almost transactional form of 'community' that can be purchased as an experience through coworking but which offers the latent possibility for a more meaningful engagement if people seek it". Similarly, Tintiangko and Soriano's (2020) study of coworking spaces in the Philippines reveals that coworkers find it difficult to live up to coworking space ideals of "aspirational belonging" and, furthermore, that coworking inclusivity is preserved for the global mobile elite rather than local inhabitants.

For our purpose here, it is important to point out that community and territoriality can be two sides of the same coin: some people make it inside, others are kept outside. Even as an empty signifier, "community" defines and legitimizes coworking spaces as post-work territory.

4.3. Coworking spaces as post-tourist territory

The final aspect of territoriality concerns how coworking spaces and their post-digital workstyles are related to *post-tourism* and, by extension, the politics of urban place (e.g., May, 1996), inviting certain groups while keeping others out. As we saw, coworking spaces are environments where productivity, networking, and "smart" work are supposed to take place, but also post-work territories (Richardson, 2017) where anything from architecture to activity programs promote disconnected recreation and reproductive duties. This suggests that coworking spaces are engines of an ongoing "touristification" of work (Fast and Jansson, 2019) that have implications not only for the freelancers, entrepreneurs and contract-workers that make up the mobile workforce, but also for urban life. Arguably, the influx and presence of tourist-like workers – the digital nomad being the archetypical figure – have effects on how urban spaces and places are materially constructed and imagined. As Fast (2024) argues, inasmuch as coworking spaces are inhabited by young, reflexive, and relatively affluent individuals, their incorporation in the urban fabric can be linked to gentrification and the overarching experience economy. These phenomena, in turn, are intertwined and can be seen as extensions of the post-industrial social order that have come to dominate Western societies. Gentrification actualizes the spatial dominance of the (new) middle classes in formerly under-privileged neighborhoods, involving cultural and aesthetic changes as well as alterations of the real estate market (e.g., Doucet, 2014; Ley, 2003; Trinch and Snajdr, 2017; Zukin, 2010). The experience economy revolves around the same general clientele and prescribes urban life to be exciting and aesthetically intensive (e.g., Degen et al., 2017; Knudsen et al., 2015), much in line with the post-work character of coworking spaces. Both gentrification and the experience economy are marked by a fascination with cultural difference, mixing and novelty, which makes the scenes of urban life volatile, especially during the early stages of gentrification (Ley, 2003). Likewise, there are important semiotic variations and shifts to consider among coworking spaces, as they communicate with different sub-segments of the mobile workforce.

This expressive dimension adds to the territorial exclusivity of coworking spaces (besides the fact that some coworking spaces are designed for specific businesses and purposes). As Grazian (2020) concludes from his ethnographic study in Manhattan, coworking spaces are design-intensive settings, whose aesthetics are largely shaped around popular Instagram feeds that follow colorful scripts with typical attributes like "placards bearing inspirational platitudes" and "low-slung couches with decorative pillows". (p. 997). They are designed to evoke a sense of cultural identification *and* spatial order among groups of like-minded workers, who search for a place in their taste that also cater for work discipline. This means that while the workplace (as well as its surroundings) becomes an attraction, a place to *experience*, it is also (in the cases that Grazian studied) "heavily fortified with key card access systems, manned guarding services, and surveillance cameras" (p. 996). Behind their touristified appearances, coworking spaces are environments where discipline and enclosure are managed by means of digital planners, community apps and other logistical media.

The distinctive position of coworking spaces in the urban landscape signifies the continuation of post-tourism as a narrative about the social transformation of modern society. The term "post-tourism" was coined in the 1980s by Feifer (1985), who reflected on the accentuated role of mediated imagery in relation to travel experiences and the fact that people did not have to go anywhere to experience different places (at least, superficially). At the time, mass tourism had established itself as a social norm among a great share of the population in affluent societies and television was the dominant medium. Under these conditions, Feifer argued, certain middle-class groupings took on a new attitude to tourism and travel, mixing mediated and "real" experiences in a playful way. Subsequently, theorists like Munt (1994), depicted the social landscape of tourism, especially beyond mass tourism, as increasingly fragmented and asserted that the middle classes took advantage of this situation in order to travel in ways that were different, or at least looked different, from the ordinary mass tourist. On the whole, expanding mediatization processes and more specialized forms of travel arrangements led to the merger, or-de-differentiation, of tourist experiences and other types of practices, and made it possible to travel like a tourist without being identified as one. Ultimately, tourism is increasingly "nowhere and yet everywhere" (Urry, 1995, p. 150):

> Postmodernism involves de-differentiation. There is a breakdown of the distinctiveness of each sphere and of the criteria governing each. There is an implosion via the pervasive effects of the media and the aestheticisation of everyday life.
>
> (Urry, 1995, p. 149)

As argued by Urry (1995), the development of post-tourism went hand in hand with the overall transition from industrial capitalism to more reflexive forms of accumulation, notably post-Fordism, through which sign-value came to dominate over material use-value. Today, we argue, post-tourism is still a useful denominator for describing place-consuming mobilities (virtual as well as corporeal) that are marked by high levels of cultural reflexivity, fine-grained distinctions, and open-ended boundaries between tourism experiences and other realms of social life, notably, work. Here, coworking spaces can be seen as post-tourist *destinations*, operating as flow-architectures that provide connectivity and meeting points for mobile subjects, *and* as territories that set their clients semiotically and materially apart from others. Coworking spaces are part of (mainly urban) "hospitality ecosystems" (Merkel, 2022), offering their customers a sense of being *hosted* by somebody at an attractive and comfortable destination, while at the same time keeping all forms of organized tourism at arm's length.

Here, we can give a first-hand example from the up-scale coworking space *Convendum* in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Convendum is a Swedish chain and the Palma office remained the company's only venue outside of Sweden at the time of this writing. Like the other Convendum coworking spaces, Convendum in Palma refers to itself as a "premium" coworking space. Exclusiveness is constructed through, among other things, strategic partnerships with local 5-star hotels and very sophisticated stylization. All Convendums follow more or less the same aesthetic format, in everything from furniture and visual décor to music playlists and scent (there is even a special, exclusive, Convendum-branded fragrance). The ambition is to create resemblance between all Convendums, so that the customers can feel "at home" regardless of which office they visit. A Convendum membership grants access to all offices. However, unlike the other Convendum offices, the Palma venue also sells short-term memberships (daypasses and week-passes) to cater for a specific customer segment: the many digital nomads that travel to, and through, Palma. Mallorca holds top-positions in several digital nomads ranking lists, and the fact that Spain in January 2023 introduced a 'Digital Nomad Visa' to facilitate for foreigners to work in the country is regularly emphasized as a great benefit. An online article titled 'Why Mallorca is called the digital nomad's paradise' (Medium, November 18, 2023, n.p.) summarizes the island's attraction as follows:

> Mallorca isn't just a destination; it's a lifestyle. With its high-speed internet, a supportive expat community, and the Digital Nomad Visa, the island beckons those seeking the perfect synergy of work and leisure.

Convendum's universal branding standards mean, however, that there is hardly no sense of Palma in the local office. A few books placed in one of the shelves make an exception (see Fig. 3). Touristic (and, arguably, distinction-making) titles such as *In Palma*, *Plazas de Españia*, and *Vinos de Españia* serve as a slight reminder of the geographical context.

To come full circle, we should consider how the post-tourist attributes of coworking spaces are associated with the post-digital developments outlined above. Grazian (2020, p. 993) argues that "digitization has reshaped the uses of urban space around mobile work in the new economy", leading not only to the expansion of coworking spaces but also turning hotel lobbies, cafés and restaurants into hybrid work spaces adapted to the demands of people on the move. Similarly, entire tourist destinations – notably communities and towns in attractive locations – have rebranded themselves to attract digital nomads, "workationers", and other knowledge workers who can relocate their jobs for a certain period (Voll et al., 2023). Even state governments have stakes in this development, as we saw (see also Mancinelli and Germann Molz, 2023). At the same time, there are counter-movements, as seen in many gentrifying neighborhoods where social and environmental sustainability are high on the agenda. Just like tourism tends to gravitate toward places that are understood as genuine and authentic, many of the environments that coworking spaces and their visitors are drawn to are the ones that represent rootedness and organic attributes rather than a sleek high-tech appearance (let alone that many coworking spaces are also located in central business districts and the like).

A good example is the so-called hipster economy (Gerosa, 2024) that prevails in many gentrifying neighborhoods, where digital start-ups and innovation hubs – oftentimes located in coworking spaces – co-exist with micro-breweries, gourmet food trucks, craft cocktail bars, and a variety of micro-entrepreneurs of the neocrafts movement (see also Gandini and Gerosa, 2023; Zukin, 2020). What members of this urban eco-system have in common is that they search for "something rooted in tradition but with an innovative twist, which makes it distinctive" (Gerosa, 2024, p. 3), that is, *different from* their traditional counterparts. While digital platforms provide an indispensable infrastructure for these types of businesses – for marketing, transactions, logistics, and so forth – artisan products and the work associated with such products are displayed *in opposition* to the digital norm. The hipster economy, in which coworking spaces are a key ingredient, underpins a cultural order that classifies the ability to disconnect and consume authentic, analogue services and places according to one's own taste as a post-digital *and* post-tourist sign of privilege.

The territorial and place-political consequences of these social processes are ambiguous. Akhavan et al. (2018) explored the connections between coworking spaces and social streets in Italy, a bottom-up initiative aiming to build more hospitable urbanism. They found that coworking spaces contributed positively to such initiatives where people built communities via Facebook groups as well as non-mediated public activities and support functions. In their study, based on 236 interviews, 75 % reported that coworking spaces had had positive effects on the surrounding neighborhood. The study points to the potential of coworking spaces to ignite, or become part of, social change. There are also other studies (e.g., Jamal, 2018; Mariotti et al., 2017) that point to positive correlations between coworking spaces and urban revitalization, for example in terms of a growing service sector. However, these studies do not problematize the more long-term consequences of gentrification – notably the displacement of inhabitants that lack economic resources – but mainly describes the first stages of gentrification, or, what Akhavan et al. (2018, p. 9) call "urban regeneration from below". As other scholars have found, the localization of coworking spaces generally follows a market-driven logic, meaning that coworking spaces pop up where there are most opportunities to attract the right types of entrepreneurs. Here, Avdikos and Merkel (2020, p. 350) advances an important distinction between entrepreneurial-led and community-led coworking spaces, where the former are embedded in entrepreneurial ecosystems rather than in neighborhoods. In addition, since the territorial boundaries of coworking spaces are maintained via fees, those who would benefit the most from meeting others early in their entrepreneurial trajectories have most difficulties to get access (Avdikos and Iliopoulou, 2019; Reuschke et al., 2021).

Thus, while the linkages between post-tourism and urban gentrification (in its multiple appearances) seem indisputable, it takes more concrete research in different settings to find out how coworking spaces,

Fig. 3. A (slight) taste of local culture. Touristic literature on display at Convendum, Palma de Mallorca. Photo: Karin Fast.

as distinctive post-tourist territories, play into the wider relations of spatial power in cities and towns around the globe.

5. Concluding discussion: the coworking space as a comfort zone

In this article, we have proposed a threefold analytical framework that serves to dismantle how different coworking spaces (re)produce territoriality and with what social consequences. After a substantial literature review, in combination with first-hand empirical data, we identified the post-digital, post-work, and post-tourist as under-researched yet significant and symbiotic facets of contemporary coworking space territoriality. At the intersection of these three facets of territoriality, the coworking space inevitably emerges as a humanized *comfort zone* in a digitally entangled working-culture that may otherwise feel intrusive, meaningless, and hostile. The term "comfort zone" should here be understood in a dual sense: both as a materially and socially *comfortable place* for the aspiring, mobile worker, and as a *place of promise* that people can retreat into for achieving a sense of emotional, even existential, comfort in an accelerating, fragmented society. In spite of its territorial contradictions, as we have discussed, the coworking space still nurtures a hope that there is something meaningful and authentic awaiting beyond hyper-connected work-schedules and standardized place-experiences. This encapsulation of social hope is something that post-digital, post-work and post-tourist territories have in common.

But who is qualified to enter this "zone" and make meaningful, productive use of this space, and who will remain on the outside? We hope that our critical, triadic approach to coworking space territoriality can inspire a continued conversation about the ambiguous role of coworking spaces in the broader transformations of society, notably when it comes to matters of inclusion and exclusion. We remain open to the idea that the inherent exclusivity of post-digital, post-work, and post-tourist outlooks and practices contribute to a classification of many coworking spaces – which strategically and conspicuously reproduce these ideals as their "USP" (unique selling point) – as less hospitable than they actually wish to be. Our empirical exploration is limited in terms of user experiences, however. We welcome future studies that delve deeper into how the forms of territoriality scrutinized here are interpreted, and *felt*, by coworking space users (including staff).

By extension, our analysis invites researchers to consider and reflect upon the wider spread and significance of post-digital territoriality in today's society. What other post-digital enclaves are there and where in the world do they mainly exist? What capacity does post-digital work and user modes really have to upset surveillance capitalism, data colonialism, and escalating digital labour, and to what extent do comfortable, and comforting, work spaces rather make us more tolerable to the exploitative sides of mediatization?

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Karin Fast: Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization. **André Jansson:** Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interests pertaining to this submission.

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