9 Rural coworking spaces in the COVID-19 era

A window of opportunity?

Elisabete Tomaz, Bruno Moriset, and Jacques Teller

Introduction

Coworking spaces (CSs) were long viewed as an inherently urban phenomenon, given that the vast majority of creative and knowledge workers are concentrated in large and medium-sized cities (Merkel, 2015; Moriset, 2014). Today, CSs have become increasingly widespread in rural communities and small cities. Therefore, policy-makers tend to view these new workspaces as a tool to stimulate entrepreneurship and the creative economy outside traditional economic sectors in rural areas (Roberts & Townsend, 2016). In addition, CSs can provide 'hard and soft infrastructure' (Fuzi, 2015) to newly arrived creative entrepreneurs, employees, and people willing to stay in their community instead of commuting or moving to large urban agglomerations.

Etymologically speaking, coworking refers to the physical proximity of workers (Spinuzzi, 2012), generating social interactions and stimulating innovation and creativity. In spring 2020, when lockdown measures were adopted throughout Europe as an answer to the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers were confined at home and all public venues were closed. CSs therefore seemed to have lost their primary rationale. Even outside 'full lockdown' periods, they had to deal with social distancing measures that questioned the community interaction model at their core, with a loss of revenue. At the same time, new opportunities have arisen for rural CSs: the burst of digital services and remote working (or teleworking)[1] and the renewed attractiveness of the countryside in terms of quality of life.

Advances in digital technologies at the end of the twentieth century had already generated optimistic visions for the development of rural communities, especially concerning the possibilities of remote working and access to broader markets for rural businesses (Moriset et al., 2012; Salemink et al., 2017). However, actual achievements did not meet past expectations. Despite efforts in the last decade to reduce the digital divide in Europe, it still persists (Negreiro, 2015), and the 'rural penalty', as Malecki (2003) suggests, remains significant, with few job opportunities, remote basic services, dependence on private cars, inadequate telecommunications, and scarcity of social and business contacts.

The pandemic has reinvigorated this debate. 'The COVID-19 crisis is accelerating the use and diffusion of digital tools. Confinement measures are fomenting

DOI: 10.4324/9781003181163-12

remote working practices, remote learning and e-services. This is particularly important in rural areas where distances and commuting times tend to be longer. All this could promote the attractiveness of rural areas' (OECD, 2020, p. 4).

In reality, the pandemic has drawn attention to the advantages of living in rural areas, notably the affordability of single homes with larger indoor spaces and access to private outdoor areas, while urban dwellers were confined to tiny apartments during the first wave of lockdowns. Besides this, remote working, which had been increasing timidly for decades, was pushed to unprecedented levels by government measures aimed at slowing the spread of the virus (Eurofound, 2020). Most observers consider that the current wave of remote working will last to some degree (Baert et al., 2020). Indeed, it has proved effective on a large scale, and a number of employees 'wish to consolidate the practice of remote working after the end of the lockdown and with more continuity' (Massimo, 2020, p. 47).

Admittedly, these changes may not fully benefit CSs because rural dwellers often have large houses suitable for remote working; however, they still risk social and business isolation. Precisely for this reason, CSs can offer self-employed and small businesses a more professional workplace, with adequate meeting rooms and video conferencing facilities. Such work environments, separated from family life, could increase the acceptance of remote working by employers and employees.

Taking a comparative approach, this paper analyzes the situation and short-term impacts of the pandemic on CSs located in rural areas of France, Portugal, and Belgium, accounting for their particular circumstances. Section 2 details our methodological approach. Section 3 describes the main features of the sample considering the location, organization, and functions of selected CSs. Section 4 summarizes the situation experienced by CSs during the first year of the pandemic in the three countries. The main factors explaining the resilience of rural CSs are discussed in Section 5, while perspectives and planning policies are addressed in Section 6.

Methods

This paper focuses on CSs located in NUTS level 3 sub-regions (France's *Départements*, Belgium's *arrondissements*, and Portugal's *subregiões*) classified by Eurostat (2018) as predominantly rural. It evaluates and compares the characteristics and evolution of CSs in rural areas in the three countries, with special regard for the impact of COVID-19, pointing out explanatory factors in relation to their contexts and the challenges they face when compared to CSs located in large cities.

The choice of the three countries under study results from the growing interest among scholars, policy-makers, and stakeholders in understanding new labour trends in a variety of contexts and, particularly, the multifaceted reality of rural territories within the EU. Furthermore, the authors have been involved in the debate on these issues for several years, namely participating in the COST Action CA18214 'The Geography of New Working Spaces and the Impact on the Periphery'.

The identification of French CSs was based on regional networks of third places, notably in Nouvelle Aquitaine, Occitanie, and the *département* of Ardèche. Third places that did not offer coworking facilities were disregarded. In Belgium, 15 CSs matching the rural criteria were selected from the Wallonia Coworking Network and contacted by email. Seven of them answered our request for an interview. In Portugal, rural CSs were identified through desk research and interviews requested with managers by email. Based on the availability of CSs managers to be interviewed, our selection process may have biased our sampling, since fully closed CSs may have remained out of touch of our requests. Given the geographic scattering of the sample, aside from the circumstances of COVID-19, all interviews were conducted by telephone or video conference between 7 January and 18 March 2021. In the end, the authors conducted a total of 48 semi-structured interviews with CSs managers in France (30), Portugal (11), and Belgium (7). Of these, 8 are located in municipalities of less than 1,000 inhabitants. The others are located in municipalities of 1,000 to 7,500 (14), 7,500 to 20,000 (12), and more than 20,000 (14) inhabitants.

The interviews addressed the following issues: (i) legal ownership, property characteristics, functions, and digital accessibility; (ii) the situation before and after the pandemic outbreak (number of users, financial issues, etc.); (iii) CS actions in different stages of the pandemic (restrictions, events, etc.); (iv) COVID-19-related government support measures; and (v) prospects for CSs and the local community.

A qualitative content analysis was carried out to rigorously and systematically compare the information collected through interviews. With the aforementioned research aims and issues, the data was analyzed inductively and classified according to codes to find the relevant categories (and subcategories) of analysis: demographic and geographic characteristics and classification of CSs location; CSs features; government lockdown measures; the situation of CSs before and during the crisis; and foresight.

Description of the sample

Geography and local dynamics

Natural beauty, nice weather, a rich cultural heritage, and low property costs may be attractive for knowledge workers and various kinds of 'digital nomads' (Orel, 2019). Portugal and the French regions surveyed, notably Ardèche and the South-West, are endowed with such positive stereotypes. In Belgium, the overall population density contributes to sustained urbanization of the countryside, especially in the vicinity of motorways. Creative workers are also attracted to rural areas because of lower housing prices, the availability of large houses, and easy access to major urban centres.

The distance to large cities (Lyon and Toulouse in France, Liège and Brussels in Belgium, Lisbon and Porto in Portugal) appears to be an important factor in the development of these spaces. In seven cases, the travel time to the closest major city is short enough to allow daily commuting from the rural locality.

> The accessibility and short distance from Lisbon, allowed the coming of young professionals looking for a different and more collaborative lifestyle. (PT31)

Thirteen municipalities in our sample witnessed demographic growth, while two thirds of them showed a declining (23) or stagnant (12) population. In France and Portugal, this is the result of a century-long process of rural devitalization and ageing.

In declining rural communities, the presence of CSs is a matter of local economic development and revitalization policies. On the other hand, in municipalities with strong demographic and economic dynamics, it is rather an issue of mixed-use planning and development. In turn, small towns located close to major cities fear they may become dormitory cities endowed with few local jobs and the majority of the labour force subject to a long commute.

Most of the rural CSs surveyed were created in 2018 and 2019 after a period of slow development (Figure 9.1), following the trend observed in large cities. Peghaire (2019) reports that in 2019, 62% of all French CSs were less than three years old, and 21% were less than a year old. Two thirds of the CSs surveyed opened between 2018 and March 2021. The implementation of subsidy programmes aimed at creating third places in peripheral areas may have fuelled this recent growth in the three countries.

A subsidized sector

According to *Deskmag*, only 43% of CSs generate a direct profit (Foertsch, 2019). Ten interviewees spontaneously said that rural CSs are not profitable because the community of potential users is small, so they charge low rental fees, or because their main goal is not to earn a profit, for example, when they are promoted by public entities. In France, for instance, CSs in main cities charge €210 per month for unlimited access to the open space (add €100 in Paris) (Peghaire, 2019), while in the rural CSs surveyed, the usual figures are around €100–120 per month.

Of the 48 spaces surveyed, 21 spaces are managed under the umbrella of non-profit organizations, 13 are run by private companies, and 14 are directly managed by local municipalities. Rural CSs usually have to apply for public funding or find complementary sources of revenue. Public funding for CSs, in money or in kind, is the tangible expression of planning, revitalization, and

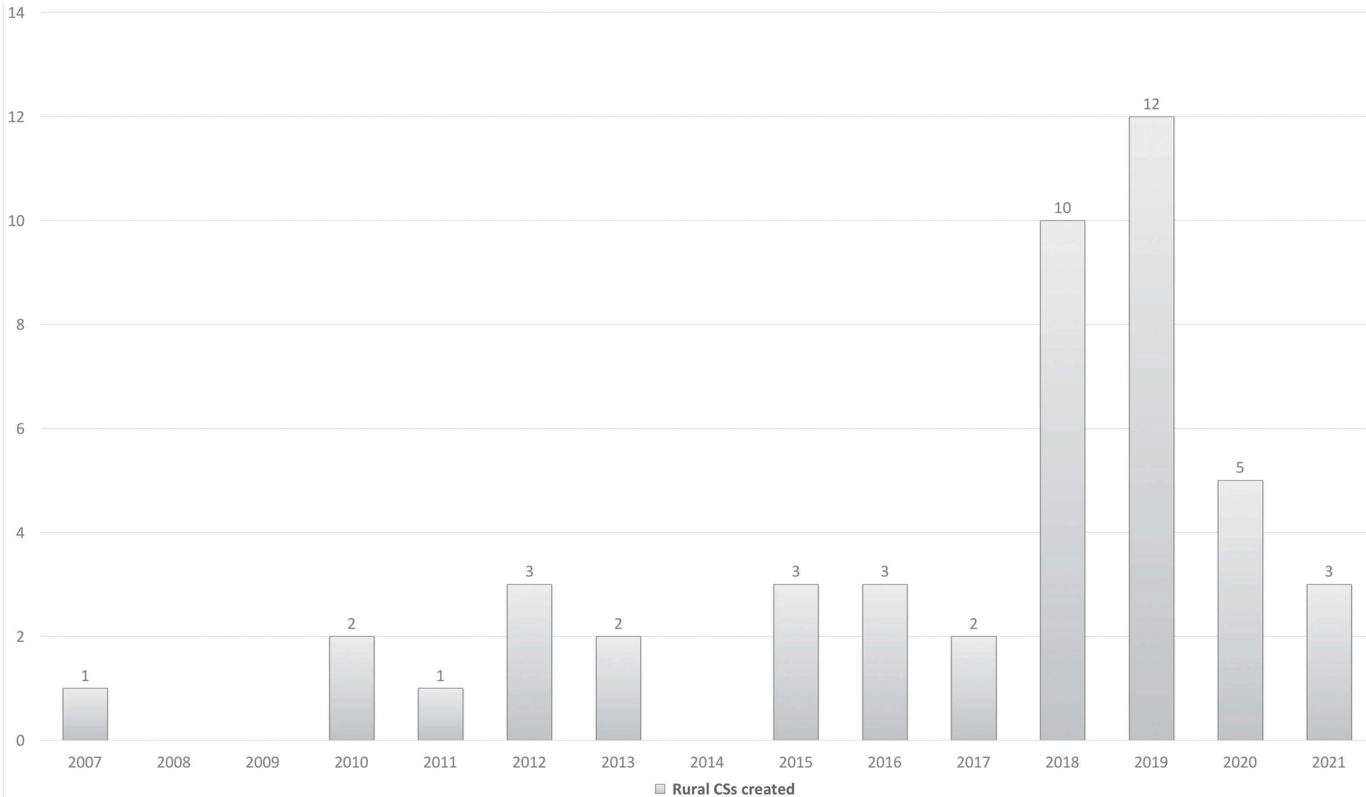

Figure 9.1 Years in which the 48 CSs surveyed were created.

Source: Authors.

economic development policies promoted by the different government levels in each country and the European Union (for example, through the LEADER programme). Some private spaces do not receive any public funding. One of the interviewees even criticized CS managers who 'hunt' for subsidies.

Direct subsidies aside, rural CSs subsist thanks to low or non-existent real-estate costs. Globally, property costs make up 40% of overall CSs costs and removing them from the equation is critical to the business model of rural CSs (Levy-Waitz, 2018). Most of the CSs surveyed pay a modest rental fee or are hosted for free; 12 spaces are owned and managed by the municipality, and 7 are provided by local authorities to non-profit organizations for free or for a symbolic rental fee.

Rural CSs are often located in reconverted buildings, a testimony of the long demographic and economic decline of rural areas. Among the 48 CSs surveyed, 9 former factories (mainly textile mills), 6 closed administrative buildings (post office, bank, gendarmerie, public baths), 5 shops, 4 former schools, 1 church, and 1 convent were identified. In some ways, rural communities mimic on a smaller scale the urban revitalization policies developed in the former industrial neighbourhoods of large cities in view of accelerating the transition towards a knowledge economy.

Hybrid and creative spaces

CSs belong to the wider category of 'third places', which can host a wide array of activities (Oldenburg, 1989) such as makerspaces or fabrication laboratories (fab labs), digital public access points, small exhibition and art venues, cafés, and restaurants.

In rural areas, the diversification of CSs is required by the low density of knowledge workers and firms in the digital industries. This makes it possible to densify occupancy, increase the number of events, and raise revenues. Only 18 out of 48 spaces surveyed are 'pure play' coworking facilities. Aside from this, 10 CSs include a fab lab, 10 are community technology centres, and 4 act as incubator and business centres. Fourteen of these spaces are used to host various cultural activities: circus arts school, theatre, artist residences, art exhibitions, video studios, live music performances, etc.

This broad spectrum of services meets the expectations of local authorities, which regard CSs as much needed hubs of economic and social development. This explains the involvement of some rural municipalities in their development and support. Community technology centres and fab labs are dedicated to the digital empowerment of citizens and firms through training sessions and mentoring. These services, proposed to local authorities and companies, are in themselves a business opportunity for CSs managers and their tenants.

Rural CSs facing the pandemic

Closures due to lockdowns

The three countries faced three waves of COVID-19 at similar times and with more or less similar responses in terms of lockdowns and restrictions. In the middle of March 2020, the governments of Belgium, Portugal, and France imposed severe lockdowns, with all public venues closed and mandatory remote working. The lockdowns were gradually relaxed at the end of April. The second wave, in October–November, led to a new, though less severe, lockdown in France and Belgium and some restrictions in Portugal (schools and shops remained open). From January to March 2021, the three countries adopted new lockdown measures and/or maintained existing ones.

The lockdowns in spring and fall 2020 were very different. The first lockdown was very strict. Out of the 48 spaces surveyed, two thirds had to close at some point during the lockdown, and 20 were closed completely (Table 9.2). Seven spaces did not close since they had not yet opened when the pandemic began. Like other places open to the public, spaces serving as community technology centres had to close. A number of CSs remained open to their regular subscribers, such as self-employed workers, micro-firms, and non-profit organizations that could not operate from home. Arguably, these private enterprises, which do not receive the general public, could not legally be closed. At the beginning of the pandemic, confusion often reigned, and some CSs had to operate within legal loopholes.

> We are legally open, but we have to deal with governmental rules, and avoid to communicate the attendance on social networks, which makes it difficult to attract new users.
>
> (BE43)

The second lockdown was much less severe, and the vast majority of CSs surveyed remained open, following their respective governments' guidelines and measures. Only one space had not opened again since the first lockdown.

	First lockdown		*Second lockdown*	
Never close anyway	6		29	
Some closure at some time	32		8	
Including: full closure		20		2
remained open to regular users		6		6
re-opened with measures against Covid-19		4		
Postponed the opening	4			
Unknown, does not apply	3		11	
Created after first lockdown	3			
Total	**48**		**48**	

Figure 9.2 CSs responses to lockdown measures in 2020.

Source: Authors.

A sustained flow of events that encourage business and social interaction is usually cited as an important source of added value with CSs. Even if some spaces remained open, nearly all in-person collective events were cancelled. Community managers tried to 'keep contact' with the community by virtual means such as Messenger or video conferences: online meetings, webinars, workshops, and aperitifs. In some cases, community management efforts were hampered by the nature and legal status of CSs: 'We may be open, but not to the general public, and as long as we comply with the rules of physical distancing and hygiene' (PT41).

Financial problems and government aid

Of the 34 usable responses, only 10 people reported financial losses directly related to COVID-19, five of which were from private CSs. One space acknowledged a growth in revenue (Table 9.3). Loss of revenue was related to the decrease in paid attendance: 18 spaces acknowledged some loss in the number of users. Three mentioned a drop in revenue from meeting room rentals, and one mentioned the cancellation of weekly public events.

A majority of spaces did not have financial losses because rental fees are a very small or non-existing share of their operating budget, as mentioned above. These are public (11) or strongly subsidized spaces (6). Some non-profit associations do not pay any staff. It may be said that the much 'socialized' or self-organized business model of rural CSs make them more resilient to the crisis than urban, business-oriented ones. The diversification of activities also played a role in the resilience of these spaces. Like other businesses, some CSs received specific COVID-19 government aid, such as unemployment benefits or solidarity funds (France). Eight out of 12 CSs that received such aid are private companies. Some spaces did not receive any help, but some of their tenants or users did, which can be seen as indirect assistance to CSs. In most cases, the public nature of the space and the importance of subsidies explain why no aid was mentioned.

Financial problem			*Covid-19 specific aid*		
Some financial loss	10		No aid	26	
No problem	23		Some aid	12	
Including:		6	Including:		5
relies on subsidy			subsidy extension		
public space		11	unemployment benefit		4
Financial benefit	1		solidarity fund		2
No data	14		No data	10	
Total	**48**		**Total**	**48**	

Figure 9.3 Financial issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Authors.

Resilience of rural CSs during the pandemic

Rural CSs were obviously not immune to the COVID-19 crisis. One of the interviewees mentioned the lost year, while another said they had to start over from scratch: ‘We have to rebuild the collective and events’ (FR2). Ten managers acknowledged that the pandemic has slowed their development. One said, ‘COVID has hampered our communication effort’ (FR18). Nevertheless, strong resilience is the dominant feeling.

This resilience cannot be solely attributed to the umbrella of public subsidies and assistance or public ownership. Many rural CSs seized opportunities from the specific conditions created by the pandemic, notably in France and Portugal.

The rush of Parisians to the countryside at the beginning of the crisis was a phenomenon specific to France, especially since the concentration of service jobs suitable for remote working in a mega-city is rather unique. An analysis of mobile telephone data revealed that in the aftermath of the first lockdown in March 2020, about 1.5 million people had left Paris, and other major cities to a lesser extent, taking refuge in family homes or secondary residences (Untersinger, 2020). Some extreme measures adopted in France in this period – for example, prohibiting travel farther than 1 km from home and the closure of several green public spaces – probably also played a role in this occurrence.

In Portugal, many Lisbon residents fled to their vacation or family homes and some digital nomads preferred to extend their stay instead of returning to their country of origin. In Belgium, a rush to the countryside was not seen because residential migration towards rural areas is rooted in long-term dynamics that COVID-19 did not alter. In addition, such movement was somewhat penalized by regional or national divides: many holiday homes are owned by Dutch-speaking people who could not legally travel to these places.

The ‘house factor’ proved important. Rural houses are on average larger than apartments in Paris, Brussels, or Lisbon, and are more suitable for remote working. During the pandemic, the demand for social contact at CSs has been counterbalanced by the fear of becoming infected. Six managers said that people preferred to work at home. By contrast, nine managers mentioned some kind of ‘home-working fatigue’ as a favourable factor for CSs, resulting from a combination of issues such as noise, social isolation, the feeling of routine, and the lack of adequate bandwidth.

When the first lockdown restrictions were lifted in summer 2020, the three countries returned to a misleading ‘new normal’ (accommodations, restaurants, and other services opened). Still, restrictions on international travel led residents to opt for domestic destinations. In France, large cities were ignored, but 2020 proved a record high year for rural tourism (Sagot, 2020). CSs also benefited from this phenomenon. Seven managers witnessed an increase in the attendance of non-regular users during holidays, mainly people seeking to escape the issue of working at home (especially people with children).

The digital divide: a driver for rural CSs?

Though it has long been considered a serious planning issue (Salemink et al., 2017), uneven access to fast internet connections in rural areas was brutally exposed during the pandemic, given the vital need for fast remote connections for daily activities, especially video conferences for work and school tasks (Merrefield, 2020).

The old idea that a good connection available at a telecentre – today's CSs – may benefit rural individuals and businesses was somehow revived during the pandemic. Major towns in French, Walloon, and Portuguese rural regions are now generally well connected, often with fibre optics, but a number of small villages and isolated settlements only benefit from ADSL technology or even have no broadband access at all (EC, 2020). Our interviews revealed at least five cases in which broadband access served as motivation to visit the CS, notably by owners of secondary residences with no internet connection. Conversely, the presence of a CS was an argument used by managers, relayed by local and regional authorities, for lobbying communication companies for better internet connections. Once again, the existence of a CS may be seen as a driver for connection and revitalization by some municipalities, which explains their involvement in supporting part of their costs.

Perspectives and outlook

The majority of managers interviewed (19 out of 31 usable answers) have a positive outlook on the future, compared to three who foresee negative events and seven who emphasized uncertainty. Many managers pointed out that the role of CSs in the local economy will increase, and they revealed their optimism in planning short- and medium-term projects. At least six CS managers plan to expand their current space. In Portugal, two interviewees expect to create new spaces in nearby mountain villages. In Belgium, one expects to develop as an international cultural hub. Some are planning marketing communication strategies to attract new users, and others are looking to diversify.

> Third places will grow everywhere.
>
> (FR6)

> We will open another space in the city centre and another in a mountain village.
>
> (PT39)

Drivers of optimism

Many managers predict that the post-COVID-19 economic and social context will be favourable for their activities if the negative effects of the pandemic do not continue (lockdowns and economic downturn).

The generalization of remote working is regarded as the main driver of success in the near future. One expected effect is the increase in CS attendance by salaried workers who cannot or do not want to work permanently at home and are reluctant to resume commuting long distances to their regular offices.

> The demand by remote workers and digital nomads has increased.
>
> (PT37)

> We will emerge from COVID stronger. We have good feedback from salaried users who have negotiated remote working work arrangements with their employers.
>
> (FR22)

The increased political and media attention on remote working and digital technologies may provide rural CSs with additional support from public authorities and private partners. Their development will benefit from a better understanding of the coworking concept and its advantages from local policy-makers.

> We will make more use of the telework topic in our internal and external communication.
>
> (FR5)

> The buzz on telework might help us to persuade the 'communauté de communes' to support the enlargement of the space. It could be a marketing argument to involve a partner in our extension project.
>
> (FR7)

Some public authorities are already seizing this opportunity. On 29 April 2020, the Portuguese government confirmed that it will support the creation of a network of coworking spaces managed by municipalities in inland areas to boost these territories, increase attractiveness of remote areas for both people and companies, reduce travel needs, and improve the quality of life.

More in general, the growing importance of information technologies (IT) should reinforce the role of rural CSs. In the medium term, micro-firms and self-employed workers in digital industries should flourish again, positively affecting CS attendance. In the same vein, the need for IT services targeting the general public, i.e. training sessions, should remain high, raising the interest of CSs as community technology centres.

> The need for digital mediation will increase.
>
> (FR9)

Conclusion

When compared to the situation in large urban agglomerations, the development of CSs in rural areas is more recent and progressive. It has occurred in diverse conditions in terms of municipality size and development process, yet it presents quite similar patterns in the three countries studied. Given their acknowledged role in local socioeconomic development, the spaces are often subsidized, either directly or indirectly, by local and regional authorities. Rural CSs host a variety of professionals, businesses, and activities that foster employment and attract or retain a skilled workforce that contributes to the diversification and dynamization of local contexts.

The rural areas of the three countries present different conditions for the development of CSs. Portugal offers several public incentives to support the incubation of companies and startups in rural and inner areas and France has benefited from the development of tourism. In Belgium, rural areas are usually well connected to larger cities and attract an important share of workers enjoying a break from long-distance commuting during the pandemic. The socializing and networking functions of CSs were therefore decisive in maintaining and developing their customer base.

In France, rural regions witnessed a real surge in remote workers during the first year of the pandemic. The same could not be assessed in the case of Portugal or Belgium, at least not to the same degree. Workers who moved from large urban agglomerations did not always have adequate connections and facilities for remote work in their homes. In this case, the technical facilities offered by CSs played a key role in their attractiveness.

Even within each country there are differences that determine the resilience of these spaces. In Portugal, the location – along the coast or inland – influences attractiveness and accessibility. It explains the development of very specific formulas, such as CSs deliberately developed in connection with surfing activities.

In all three countries, the availability of public support largely explains the remarkable resilience of rural CSs during the COVID-19 period. With low operating costs in terms of salaries, real estate, or maintenance, they have managed to maintain some of their core activities thanks to the sharing of space and staff between different functions. Arguably, one of the main difficulties related to the reduction of the activities of coworkers themselves rather than to restrictions related to COVID-19, especially after the first lockdown.

Most of the CSs managers interviewed appeared optimistic about the future after the pandemic. As some said in the interviews, if their activities could be maintained throughout the crisis, they can only thrive once the threat has passed. Furthermore, the number of digital nomads is expected to grow in the coming years. Remote work is also predicted to remain at a fairly high level, since workers have experienced the benefits of working away from large urban areas during the COVID-19 period, and many companies are rethinking work arrangements to cut real-estate costs.

When communication, training activities, and social/business events resume, these should boost CS attendance. Even when they have sufficient space and adequate IT facilities at home, which is not always the case, some remote workers may decide to work at CSs some days each week to break social isolation and keep personal life and work separate. The community aspect of CSs is expected to play a crucial role in this regard, both internally as a place for socializing and externally as a magnet of public life in a largely residential rural environment.

Can these potential drivers of success lead to the long-term, significant revival of rural areas? This is debatable. COVID-19 has amplified an old media and political narrative of 'back to the countryside'. There are plenty of anecdotes about 'creative' entrepreneurial newcomers, but while the real magnitude of the phenomenon is unknown, it is probably small. Several interviewees mentioned a real-estate boom driven by the arrival of former urban dwellers, but the reported cases of increased attractiveness – notably in France and Portugal – rely on local idiosyncrasies and must not be generalized to all rural areas. The digital divide between large cities and rural areas is likely to remain structural and significant in the near future (Cowie et al., 2020).

Therefore, rural CSs should not try to mimic urban CSs, but rather develop their own model based on their intrinsic qualities, i.e. their hybrid character and role as a hub of economic and social innovation, which legitimizes their support by local authorities and communities.

Note

1 In this article, the words are used interchangeably.

References

Baert, S., Lippens, L., Moens, E., Sterkens, P., & Weytjens, J. (2020) *The COVID-19 crisis and telework: A research survey on experiences, expectations and hopes*. IZA Discussion Papers, 13229. Bonn: Institute of Labor Economics.

Cowie, P., Townsend, L., & Salemink, K. (2020) 'Smart rural futures: Will rural areas be left behind in the 4th industrial revolution?', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 79, pp. 169–176. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.08.042.

Eurofound (2020) *Living, working and COVID-19*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2806/467608.

European Commission (EC) (2020) *Broadband coverage in Europe 2019*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2759/375483.

Eurostat (2018) *Territorial typologies manual*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2785/930137.

Foertsch, C. (2019) 'How profitable are coworking spaces in 2019?', *Global Coworking Survey*, 4 September. Available at: www.deskmag.com/en/coworking-spaces/how-profitable-are-coworking-spaces-profitability-margins-market-report-2019 (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Fuzi, A. (2015) 'Co-working spaces for promoting entrepreneurship in sparse regions: The case of South Wales', *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 2(1), pp. 462–469. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2015.1072053.

Levy-Waitz, P. (2018) *Tiers Lieux, un défi pour les territoires*. Available at: www.fondation-travailler-autrement.org/2018/09/19/mission-coworking-faire-ensemble-pour-mieux-vivre-ensemble/ (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Malecki, E.J. (2003) 'Digital development in rural areas: Potentials and pitfalls', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19, pp. 201–214. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00068-2.

Massimo, F.S. (2020) *Impact of the Covid-19 confinement measures on telework – qualitative survey for France*. European Commission, JRC122669. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/jrc122669.pdf (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Merkel, J. (2015) 'Coworking in the city', *Ephemera*, 15(2), pp. 121–139.

Merrefield, C. (2020) 'Rural broadband in the time of coronavirus', *Journalist's Resource*, 30 March. Available at: https://journalistsresource.org/economics/rural-broadband-coronavirus/ (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Moriset, B. (2014) *Building new places of the creative economy: The rise of coworking spaces*. Paper presented at the 2nd Geography of Innovation International Conference 2014, Utrecht, Netherlands, 23–25 January. Available at: https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01369753 (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Moriset, B., Brette, O., Chareire, O., Grasland, L., Richaud, A., & Thivant, E. (2012) *The "death of distance" fifteen years on: Information technology and knowledge-based service firms in rural areas*. halshs-00728338. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281354056_The_%27death_of_distance%27_fifteen_years_on_Information_technology_and_knowledge-based_service_firms_in_rural_areas.

Negreiro, M. (2015) *Bridging the digital divide in the EU*. EPRS, European Parliament. Available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/573884/EPRS_BRI(2015)573884_EN.pdf (accessed: 20 May 2021).

OECD (2020) *Policy implications of Coronavirus crisis for rural development*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1787/6b9d189a-en.

Oldenburg, R. (1989) *The great good place*. New York: Paragon House.

Orel, M. (2019) 'Coworking environments and digital nomadism: Balancing work and leisure whilst on the move', *World Leisure Journal*, 61(3), pp. 215–227. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2019.1639275.

Peghaire, C. (2019) 'L'indice du coworking 2019: une forte croissance tirée par de grands acteurs', *BAP*. Available at: https://www.bureauxapartager.com/blog/indice-ducoworking-2019/ (accessed: December 2019).

Roberts, E., & Townsend, L. (2016) 'The contribution of the creative economy to the resilience of rural communities: Exploring cultural and digital capital', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 56(2), pp. 197–219. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12075.

Sagot, H. (2020) 'L'année 2020 a été exceptionnelle pour les gîtes de France en Dordogne', *France bleu*, 21 December. Available at: www.francebleu.fr/infos/economie-social/l-annee-2020-a-ete-exceptionnelle-pour-les-gites-de-france-en-dordogne-1608308951 (accessed: 20 May 2021).

Salemink, K., Strijker, D., & Bosworth, G. (2017) 'Rural development in the digital age: A systematic literature review on unequal ICT availability, adoption, and use in rural areas', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 54, pp. 360–371. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.09.001.

Spinuzzi, C. (2012) 'Working alone together: Coworking as emergent collaborative activity', *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 26(4), pp. 399–441. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651912444070.

Untersinger, M. (2020) 'Confinement: Plus d'un million de Franciliens ont quitté la région parisienne en une semaine', *Le Monde*, 26.