



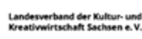
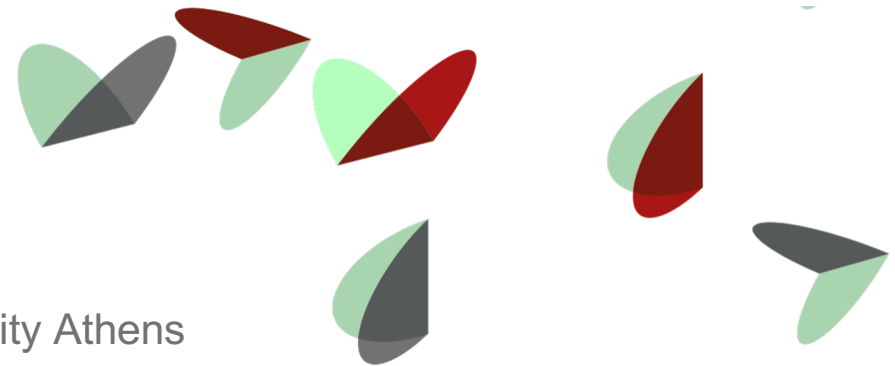
(E)quality workplaces for women? Gender dynamics in collaborative workspaces in rural and peripheral areas in Austria (and Greece).

New Work – New Problems? Gender Perspectives on the Transformation of Work. WS4: New Work and Gender Gaps

Conference of the Gender Studies Committee of the Swiss Sociological Association and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

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Intro The Coral Project

Collaborative Workspaces in rural and
peripheral areas of Europe

- European research network
 - 15 Early-Stage Researchers
 - Country-comparisons
 - 3 work packages:
 - impacts of CWS on the individual worker and the enterprise
 - scope and functions of CWS and impacts on local socio-economic environment
 - policy dimension of CWS
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Aim



- Discuss role CWS play in non-urban areas for their potential and actual users, in particular for women
- Examining aspects of gender dynamics within CWS, starting from the extent to which women are represented in these spaces, up to how these spaces answer to their specific needs
- How and in what ways do CWS in rural and peripheral areas have the potential to be both workplaces of *quality* and *equality* for women in the current changing world of work, whereby quality refers to explicit aspects such as the design and layout of the CWS, and equality to more implicit ones such as workplace culture.



Context

- Rise of CWS in non-urban areas
 - Female-centered / women-only CWS
 - Gender inequalities persistent, particularly for women in rural areas
 - Women in CWS: predominantly female staff, gender gaps
 - labour and gender inequalities in the new world of work and in the CCI
 - Exclusionary practices and mechanisms producing inequalities in CWS
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Theoretical Approach

Organization Studies (Acker 2006,
2012)

Feminist geography

“loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” Acker (2006: 443)

Inequality Regimes (Acker 2006)

- Theory of Gendered Organizations (Acker 2012)
- Gendered substructure, gendered practices and policies of and within an organization
- Traditional work organization vs. CWS



Methodology

Ethnographic fieldwork between
February 2023 and June 2023,
renting a desk in the 2 CWS

- Interviews and informal conversations with CWS users, founders, staff
 - Observations
 - Fieldnotes

 - Analysis: thematic coding
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Life Lab cooperative

- Located in a municipality of 8300 inhabitants in Northern Alps Region
 - Life Lab *Association* (Open Tech/Citizen Labs) and Life Lab *Cooperative*
 - Founder: background in Regional Development
 - Members: diverse backgrounds, professions, ages
 - Projects: educational, cultural (e.g. European Capital of Culture)
 - Not a “conventional” CWS
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Women Business Hub

- Located in small town of 4500 inhabitants in North-East Austria in vicinity of capital Vienna – many commuters
 - Supports female entrepreneurs (mentoring, visibility, networking)
 - Members: diverse backgrounds, professions, ages
 - 3 pillars: events and wellness, coaching/mentoring, and coworking
 - Cooperation with local childcare and elderly care home
 - "conventional" CWS with extras and focus on women
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Findings

What are rural CWS to their users?

- A hub with an urban feel for return-migrants
 - Sense of Security
 - Flexibility
 - Wellbeing
 - Personal and professional development
 - Networking
 - A “room of one’s own”
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Discussion

CWS: the future egalitarian workplaces?

- Life Lab cooperative: promising alternative to precarious employment conditions frequently faced by freelancers (e.g. flexibility, no rent, security pot, mental wellbeing)
- WBH: offering women a supportive and empowering environment, visibility

BUT

- Cooperative model comes with difficulties in starting and running, accessing funds and resources
 - Childcare services and women-focused CWS: perpetuating gendered care responsibilities?
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Conclusion

CWS are not a panacea for challenges women are facing in the world of work, since there are underlying structural issues (various gender gaps).

However, the two presented models of CWS (women-focused and cooperative) can be regarded as best practice examples when it comes to enhancing gender equality at the workplace.

Finally, CWS are a young phenomenon and policy makers can learn a lot from ongoing and future research.

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Thank you for
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