UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON / FACULTY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
BARTLETT SCHOOL OF PLANNING / MRes Interdisciplinary Urban Design
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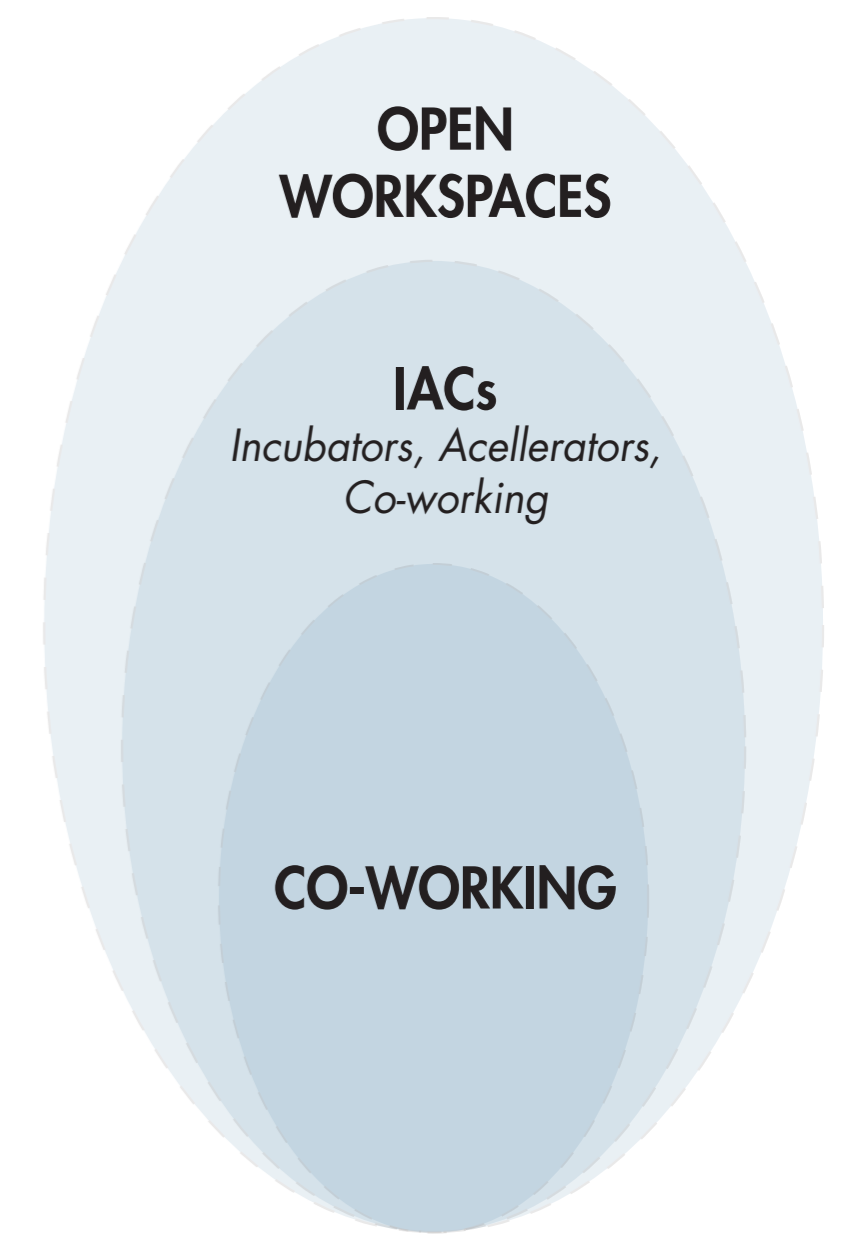**contact: irenemanzinic@gmail.com**

UCL

HABITS AROUND CO-WORKING SPACE – MAKING PLACE IN SPITALFIELDS, LONDON

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, globalisation and technological change have altered the relationships between geographic location and socio-economic activities (Giddens, 1991). The collapse of the employment paradigm combined with high social expectations and job uncertainty have led to the recasting of labour organization and the configuration of a new way of working as a freelancer. Theorists have long observed some of the consequences of globalisation in the weakening of traditional class-based social spaces that historically facilitated associational ties and fostered collective forms of identity (Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2000). However, to face the ongoing transformation process, new forms of cooperation emerged around working experiences (Bourdieu, 1998; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005; Ettlinger, 2007; Waite, 2009), defining the concept of 'open workspace'.

The research seeks to understand the dynamics carried out around the spatial configuration in a single, embedded co-working space, Second Home Spitalfields, through habits that may generate meaningful attachment to specific neighbourhoods. By exploring the informal actions (Merkel, 2018), such as events and spatial production, the study focuses on the role that the case study has in fostering a collective sense of community. Based on the diary-method interviews with members of Second Home, the awareness of the complexities of human behaviour might postulate open structures to unlock the potential of a co-working space at the urban level through processes of attachment. In this way, members would be enabled to create a shared sense of place and re-negotiating meaning into space.

OPEN WORKSPACES

IACs
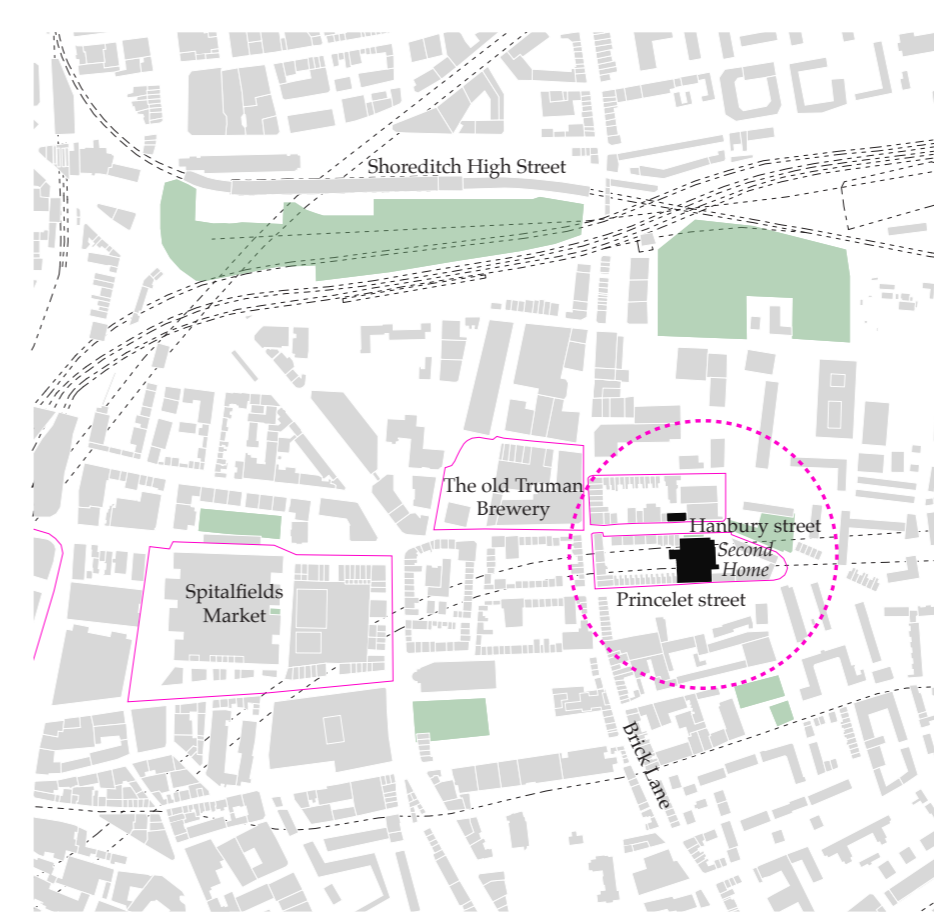*Incubators, Acellerators, Co-working*

CO-WORKING

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The research aims to contribute to the theoretical knowledge on co-working spaces by providing an in-depth case study on the tactics and processes in the production of meaningful attachment to the place around co-working. To examine the way of working transformation due to the contemporary uncertainty condition. To investigate the different dynamics occurring both at the social level and at the spatial dimension. Assess key factors and evaluate their contribution both at the micro and macro scale in order to discuss the opportunity and the potential in fostering a sense of place.
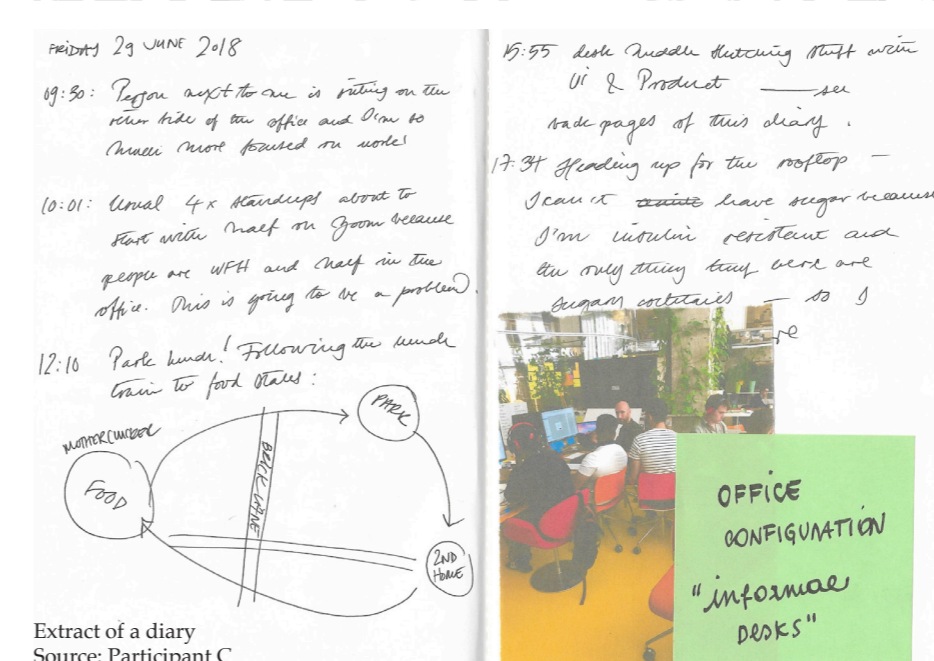
(1) Main research question:

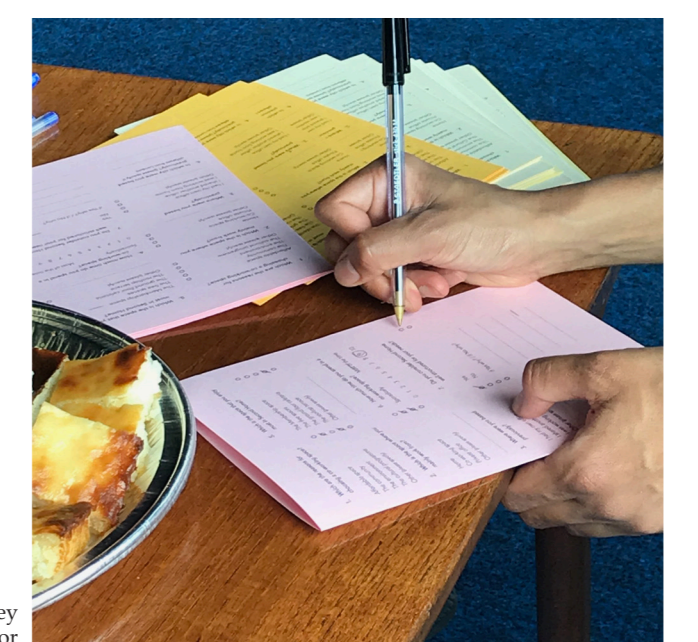*Do co-working spaces in London help to generate meaningful attachment to place?*

CASE STUDY - SECOND HOME, Spitalfields

Social event in Hanbury Street, London
Source: Instagram: secondhome_io

Extract of a diary
Source: Participant C

Survey
Source: Author

Map produced during the interview with participant E
Source: Author

From the diaries emerged, in fact, that attachment processes are developing by members both at the micro-scale (building) and at the macro-scale (neighbourhood) through patterns of personalisation for the former, and patterns of routine for the latter.

METHODOLOGY   **Social constructivism** and **critical ethnography**

In-depth case study

Fieldwork

a. Observations → Participatory observation has been carried out on the single case study, where I rented a hot desk for three months membership.

b. Survey → 18 mixed single and multiple-answer questions deliver via "Slack" and hardcopy.

c. Diary-method → Taking inspiration by the method of *Don H. Zimmerman and D. Lawrence Wieder* (1977), implemented with the a disposal camera.

d. Semi-structured interviews → Two sections: the diary-based interviews in the pilot case study, and the semi-structured interview in the compared case studies

CONCLUSIONS

From the literature, there is an understanding of the co-working space as an experiment on the new way of working, pointed out on the flexibility of space able to satisfy the needs of different categories of workers and complemented by the managerial team with the promotion of a "homey environment". Some key factors operating on the space have been identified, such as the scale perception and timeframe with furthermore trajectories in fostering a diverse sense of place.

Three main conclusions arise:

● The role of the hosts accellerate the process of interactions playing an important role in fostering a sense of community.

● events could be seen as informal actions to creating concrete spatial opportunities for feeling of attachment to the place at the microscale.

● catalyst tactics around co-working spaces, performed both by members through habits and routine, and by the co-working policy though discounts or street activities, have the power to generate a meaningful attachment to the neighbourhood scale. A key factor is the temporal dimension that plays a role in the local settling process.