



**H.F.R.I.**  
Hellenic Foundation for  
Research & Innovation

**Description of the funded research project**  
**1st Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects to Support Faculty**  
**Members & Researchers and Procure High-Value**  
**Research Equipment**

The co-production of urban space: the case of co-working spaces in a transnational case study approach (Greece, UK and Germany)

**Title of the research project: The co-production of urban space: the case of co-working spaces in a transnational case study approach (Greece, UK, Germany)**

**Principal Investigator: Dr Vasilis Avdikos**

**Reader-friendly title: A research about the evolution of collaborative workspaces in metropolitan areas**

**Scientific Area: Social Sciences- Social and Economic Geography**

**Institution and Country: Panteion University, Greece**

**Host Institution: Panteion University**

**Collaborating Institution(s): Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig, Germany**

**Budget: 144135**

**Project webpage  
(if applicable): <https://urbancoworkgr.wordpress.com>**

**Duration: 2021-2024**

## Research Project Synopsis

**Collaborative workspaces, such as co-working spaces represent a new working practice that has rapidly emerged around the globe in the last fifteen years. In 2017 there were more than 17.000 co-working spaces worldwide with about 1,2 million co-workers working and collaborating in there (deskmag.com, 2018).**

**URBANCO-WORK aims at unpacking several core characteristics of co-working spaces that have not been researched yet by the academic community and offer new ways at looking at the inner and outer ontologies of co-working spaces, in relation to the production of urban space; with a specific focus at the possible influences of collaborative opportunities of co-working innovative environments on processes of urban space co-production. More specifically, URBANCO-WORK aims at investigating the emergence and wider impacts of co-working spaces in a critical urban studies and economic geography perspective, through three interrelated scientific objectives: (1) provide a better understanding of the emergence and variations of co-working spaces in the context of rising social and economic challenges in different institutional, political and cultural contexts; (2) critically analyse the impact of such projects on their participants/users and on urban/neighbourhood development processes; (3) facilitate transnational learning and replication of social and cultural innovation in the context of co-production, extrapolating new knowledge and policy practices to co-working in the Greek context and other aspects of urban governance (e.g. housing).**

## Project originality

Based on in-depth analysis in three cities, URBANCO-WORK will provide new knowledge on the emergence and governance of co-working spaces as well as their socio-economic impacts and relations to their urban environments. Following a cross-case and cross-country comparative approach, the relevance of the different organizational structures of each case and the different economic, institutional and cultural contexts for the sustainability, openness and innovation potential of co-working arrangements will be worked out. Although there is a growing literature on the characteristics of co-working spaces and their importance regarding several social and economic matters, there are still many gaps in the literature that have not been covered yet. A main scientific result will be a better conceptualization of the emergence and practices of co-working spaces in these different contexts, through unpacking several matters such as organisational architectures and practices, processes of co-innovation, effects on precariousness, governance structures and gender issues. Apart from the emergence of these projects and the ways that the commons are negotiated internally, another issue which has not been fully addressed in the literature is the potential links of the rise of co-working spaces with processes of urban development and the co-production of urban space. The proposed work will be one of the first research projects that will focus on that relation in a critical manner. Whereas the positive effects and potentials for more inclusive societies are often highlighted in the literature of co-working, overall critical analysis is scarce and our understanding is very limited as to how these initiatives contribute to urban co-production. So far, the literature on effects and potentials is based more on normative expectations than on empirical work. It is thus crucial to explore and critically analyse to what extent the emergence of co-working produces general benefits beyond the individual or members of the “creative class”, and the extent to which these projects contribute to a new form of urban governance and metropolitan development. Through the identification of commonalities, despite different national contexts, the transnational comparative approach is ideal for contributing to closing these research gaps and offering a new understanding about the collaborative innovative solutions that co-working can offer to other urban contexts.

## Expected results & Research Project Impact

The main target groups of URBANCO-WORK are co-working facilitators and co-workers, the local population and institutional or informal actors (local authorities, neighbourhood associations etc) in the areas that co-working spaces operate. All these, along with the academic community, are considered as the main stakeholder groups that the project will aim to engage with through its life-span and have specific impacts on them.

URBANCO-WORK will provide the academic community with new knowledge on the emergence of co-working spaces in different institutional, economic and cultural contexts, on the relation of co-working spaces with processes of urban development and finally on practices of co-production within/of urban space. In economic terms, URBANCO-WORK will advance our understandings about the socio-economic value of co-working, thus reframing the debate over the support of co-working spaces, as most of these spaces host micro-enterprises and freelancers that contribute enormously to local and regional economies, being part of distinct value chains with high added value for the national economy. Additionally, the examination of these economic benefits in relation to the institutional and policy contexts of the three different countries will allow us to produce a grid of the potential economic value and sustainability of co-working in relation to policy.

Moreover and in societal terms, the ways that the commons are negotiated inside/outside co-working spaces can shed light on the challenges that the recent paradigm shift of the “urban commons” faces. In other words, URBANCO-WORK will unpack and conceptualize the ways co-production is being done in co-working projects and transfer that new knowledge to the debate of urban commons, giving some new policy directions to State and non-governmental institutions. The project is designed upon the concept of community engagement and participation within urban space transformations. Within this framework, researchers and stakeholders will be given the chance to continuously and concomitantly learn from the experiences of urban co-production in all three cities. URBANCO-WORK will integrate a two-way exchange approach, between grounded urban co-production practice and theory that will greatly benefit and improve implementation strategies of urban governance, with high quality transferable outcomes to the co-working environment in Greece and other contexts and aspects of urban life such as housing.

## The importance of this funding

*The HFRI funding has given the research team the opportunity to work in a truly collaborative research environment, to exchange ideas and implement an innovative research approach to the study of coworking spaces in Greece and beyond. Moreover, funding this research enabled the PI and the senior researchers to form a multi-disciplinary research team with young postdoctoral and doctoral researchers.*

Furthermore, the research team is looking forward to deepen their cooperation in the framework of HORIZON 2020 and other European calls for research projects. Thus, funding this proposal has enabled the researchers to build an initial robust research network with ties in other European countries.



**H.F.R.I.**  
Hellenic Foundation for  
Research & Innovation

## COMMUNICATION

185 Syggrou Ave. & 2 Sardeon St. 2  
171 21, N. Smyrni, Greece  
+30 210 64 12 410, 420  
communication@elidek.gr  
[www.elidek.gr](http://www.elidek.gr)