

**Managing the Start-up Working Life:
The Emergence of Creative Labour, Coworking Spaces and
Hubs in Athens**

Adamantia Antigoni Papageorgiou

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Performance and Cultural Industries

December, 2019

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Adamantia Antigoni Papageorgiou to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© 2019 The University of Leeds and Adamantia Antigoni Papageorgiou

With thanks to my friends, family and colleagues, and to all those who participated in this research. Particular thanks to my supervisors, Leila Jancovich and Jonathan Ward.

In memory of Professor Calvin Taylor and Dr Anna Upchurch, who read successive drafts of this thesis.

Abstract

The deepening sovereign debt crisis has resulted in the increasing visibility of coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups in the Athenian downtown area. Due to poor job prospects, a growing number of employees are engaged in entrepreneurial activities. This PhD study, based on qualitative research carried out in coworking spaces in Athens, examines how professionals conceptualize their needs and position themselves in the labour market, while based in coworking spaces. It illustrates the diversification of the Athenian coworking landscape and it offers insightful accounts of the ways people manage their start-up working life by analysing its qualities and the ways they shape their entrepreneurial selves. The thesis concludes by arguing that people at coworking spaces have a demanding working pattern that directly affects their work-life balance. However, despite the precarious and uneven nature of their occupation, their professional career steps are experienced as highly rewarding, ethical and creative. Therefore, I argue that we currently see the emergence of 'desperate optimists': a workforce which eagerly accepts its precarious conditions of work, cultivates a deep and profound connection with their occupation and, for that reason, undertakes the risks of acting entrepreneurially.

Prologue

In 2014, the main stakeholders of the Greek start-up ecosystem signed and digitally distributed the Start-up Manifesto (Anon, 2014). The document calls for specific action to facilitate and promote the creation of new businesses:

The Greek economy experienced an unprecedented collapse after 2009, resulting in a GDP decrease by almost 30% (the greatest for any European country in peace time), unemployment of 28% and youth unemployment as high as 65%. For Greece to recover, the country needs to achieve high growth rates, rates which no traditional economic activity promises to provide in the short and medium term. Technology enabled businesses and especially highly innovative start-up companies which offer disruptive solutions with a global reach are well positioned to offer growth and employment (Anon, 2014).

By 2014, hubs, coworking spaces, and start-ups proliferated in Athens, largely without any strategic planning or institutional support. According to Endeavor Greece, an international non-profit organization that monitors entrepreneurship, the number of Greek start-ups founded rose by 9 times each year between 2010 and 2014 (Endeavour Greece, 2015).

Less than three years later, in August 2017, prior to the International Thessaloniki Fair – Greece's equivalent of the State of the Union Address – the Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, visited Athens Impact Hub, one of the downtown hubs in Athens. During his visit, the Prime Minister was introduced to the hub's overall aim and philosophy in an informal setting. After meeting with the founding team and the participants of the space, he gave a short speech in which he stressed the importance of social and solidarity economy in a time of crisis. Considering Tsipras' left-leaning ideology and the political momentum, the selection of Athens Impact Hub, a hub dedicated to social entrepreneurship, was not random. Founded by two young, independent entrepreneurs, Athens Impact Hub represents an entrepreneurial 'success story' in times of crisis. For Tsipras, these stories serve as concrete proof that the country was overcoming crisis.

The victory of the far left Syriza Party (Syriza is an acronym for the coalition of the radical left) in 2015 resulted in the formation of a coalition government with the far-right populist party ANEL (ANEL is an acronym for Independent Greeks). The Prime Minister approved new austerity laws, including numerous tax hikes, privatizations and other unpopular measures which caused further deregulation and poverty (Portaliou, 2016). So, with decades of austerity measures and privatizations yet to come, social welfare structures such as social security, public education and health increasingly shrank. As Costas Lapavitsas – a Eurosceptic professor of economics and former member of the Hellenic Parliament for the left-wing Syriza party – pointed out:

The future looks bleak for Greece. It will probably continue to stagnate: growth will perhaps pick up a little, then it will decline a little, and then again the same. It will become a country with a permanently high unemployment rate and high income inequality; a poor country whose trained youth will leave; an aging country crushed by huge debt; an irrelevant little country on the fringes of Europe. Its ruling class has accepted this eventuality, it is a historic bankruptcy of its rule. Syriza is also playing a part in this disaster (Lapavitsas, 2017).

The pessimism expressed by Lapavitsas openly contradicts Tsipras' perception that Greece is currently overcoming the crisis. I argue that the celebratory visit of Alexis Tsipras to Athens Impact Hub signalled a strategic turn of the mainstream political agenda towards 'new' forms of employment such as self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship. However, these practices are not at all new, as from 2014 a start-up ecosystem has gradually and independently evolved.

To put it another way, his visit gave exposure to a space popular only with those 'in the know', members of the start-up community. Yet, the fact that he chose to address people who were mostly freelancers and start-uppers signifies the importance of this 'critical mass' for the future of the country. In fact, as this study demonstrates, the creation of a primarily entrepreneurial workforce is a

Greek top-priority; one fully aligned with EU policy direction (European Commission, 2010).

So, beyond any doubt, start-up entrepreneurship has entered the official political agenda. Despite the social issues at stake, in a country suffering crisis and economic depression, start-up entrepreneurs are promoted as those who lead by example. They operate independently as they do not rely upon social welfare or public funding, and, against all odds, have managed to sustain themselves professionally. So, who is going to lead us to become a country that can gradually recover from crisis, unless it is start-uppers? In this context, entrepreneurialism is positioned as an emancipatory and empowering practice for young, highly skilled professionals. However, after almost a decade of EU and IMF-imposed austerity, people cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel; and, as Karamessini (2015, p.1) stresses: “There are no signs of escape in the coming years from an externally imposed and supervised austerity cure and the deleterious consequences of prolonged recession”.

This brief illustration introduces the context within which young entrepreneurs – “start-uppers” as they call themselves – operate. While my PhD study was in progress, many of the interviewees and other people I met through my fieldwork decided to leave Greece. In fact, through constantly looking for funding, they ended up drained and hopeless. Others dropped out, as they managed to secure employment in international corporations or other start-up firms that managed to scale faster than those in Greece. Very few are still active in the Greek start-up scene. During my residency in one of the coworking spaces under investigation, I realized how much this generation of highly qualified employees struggles to sustain a meaningful working life – or reproduce the social status of their parents’ generation.

By calling them ‘desperate optimists’, I wish to highlight the internal conflict they have been through. They are desperate to sustain a meaningful working life and thus, start-up entrepreneurship is treated as the only means for self-growth. ‘Desperate optimists’, as a metaphor, depicts this discrepancy in highly affective

terms; in the same way young entrepreneurs talk about their work and negotiate their working life in a context of permanent crisis.

The participants of this study were quite different in terms of their individual circumstances – their studies, their working experience, what they hoped to achieve through their work as entrepreneurs – but there were striking common features. These included narratives about career expectations and life goals, the self, their moral commitments to being an entrepreneur as well as the kinds of spaces they tend to call workplaces. These are the coworking spaces, the hubs, the places where they work (often until late at night), hang out, drink, party, and where they spend most of their day. Being a start-up entrepreneur, as I discovered, is a life job, grounded in a particular set of philosophies, values and ethics. These topics are some of the key issues this thesis explores.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	- 1 -
1.1	SETTING THE CONTEXT	- 2 -
1.2	AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	- 8 -
1.3	OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS	- 9 -
2	THE PROLIFERATION OF CREATIVE LABOUR	- 14 -
2.1	FROM FORDISM TO POST-FORDISM: FROM THE WORKER TO THE ENTREPRENEUR	- 14 -
2.2	THE EMERGENCE OF PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT	- 21 -
2.3	POST-FORDIST AND PRECARIOUS LABOUR: CREATIVE WORK AS EXEMPLAR	- 24 -
2.3.1	THE VALORIZATION AND CRITIQUE OF CREATIVE LABOUR	- 29 -
2.3.2	THE RISE OF NETWORK SOCIALITY	- 32 -
2.3.3	PRACTICES OF ADAPTING THE SELF	- 35 -
2.4	A REQUEST FOR A MORE BALANCED APPROACH	- 39 -
2.5	SUMMARY	- 41 -
3	THE EMERGENCE OF NON-FIXED WORKPLACES	- 43 -
3.1	BEYOND CORPORATIONS	- 46 -
3.2	THE PROLIFERATION OF COWORKING	- 48 -
3.3	DIVERSE COWORKING NUANCES	- 53 -
3.4	COWORKING SERVICES	- 56 -
3.5	COWORKING PRACTICES	- 61 -
3.6	THE NEED FOR FURTHER EMPIRICAL RESEARCH INTO COWORKING	- 65 -
4	METHODOLOGY	- 68 -
4.1	RESEARCH AIMS	- 69 -
4.2	THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF MY STUDY	- 73 -
4.3	CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	- 76 -
4.4	CASE STUDY AS APPROACH	- 77 -
4.5	IDENTIFYING THE CASES: LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES	- 80 -
4.6	IN THE FIELD	- 81 -
4.6.1	THE SPACES UNDER INVESTIGATION	- 83 -
4.6.2	ON SAMPLE AND SATURATION	- 84 -
4.6.3	DURING THE INTERVIEW	- 86 -
4.7	POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCHER: "ARE YOU AN ENTREPRENEUR?"	- 87 -
4.7.1	ETHICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY	- 89 -
4.8	DATA ANALYSIS AND STRUCTURE	- 90 -
4.9	SUMMARY	- 91 -
5	MAPPING THE COWORKING LANDSCAPE OF ATHENS	- 93 -
5.1	THE SPECIFICITY OF THE GREEK CASE	- 94 -
5.2	COWORKING NUANCES IN THE ATHENIAN CONTEXT	- 98 -
5.3	COWORKING SPACES' MISSION	- 109 -
5.4	SUSTAINING A COWORKING SPACE IN TIMES OF CRISIS	- 114 -
5.4.1	UNCERTAIN PROFITABILITY	- 115 -
5.4.2	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	- 118 -
5.4.3	CHOOSING AUTONOMY OVER FINANCIAL DEPENDENCY	- 121 -
5.5	COWORKING SPACES AS A RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS?	- 124 -

6	<u>COWORKING SERVICES</u>	- 127 -
6.1	WHAT DO COWORKING SPACES HAVE TO OFFER?	- 128 -
6.2	HOW DO PARTICIPANTS VALORIZE COWORKING SERVICES?	- 134 -
6.3	COWORKING SPACES AS PROVIDERS OF ENTERPRISE EDUCATION	- 141 -
7	<u>COWORKING PRACTICES</u>	- 145 -
7.1	THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS	- 146 -
7.2	REJECT OR COMPLY: THE MORALLY DUBIOUS PRACTICES OF CELL AND FOREST RIDGE	- 153 -
7.3	TOWARDS THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF MORAL VALUES IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	- 158 -
8	<u>MANAGING THE START-UP ENTREPRENEURIAL WORKING LIFE</u>	- 164 -
8.1	"I PITCH, THEREFORE I AM"	- 165 -
8.2	A GREEDY PATTERN OF WORKING ON A 24/7 BASIS	- 174 -
8.3	THE DISCOURSE OF 'LOVE' AND THE REPUDIATION OF NECESSITY	- 179 -
8.3.1	THE GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF START-UP WORKING LIFE	- 185 -
8.3.2	FAILURE AS F.A.I.L (FIRST ATTEMPT IN LEARNING)	- 192 -
8.4	A PRECARIOUS WORKING LIFE	- 197 -
9	<u>CONCLUSION</u>	- 199 -
9.1	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THEIR IMPLICATIONS	- 200 -
9.2	FUTURE RESEARCH	- 204 -
9.3	CONTRIBUTIONS	- 205 -
9.3.1	CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL LABOUR	- 206 -
9.3.2	BEYOND SOCIALITY?	- 207 -
9.3.3	COWORKING FOUNDERS AS GATEKEEPERS	- 209 -
9.3.4	"SHOW PASSION, SUPPRESS ANXIETY"	- 210 -
9.4	FINAL REMARKS	- 211 -
10	<u>REFERENCES</u>	- 213 -

1 Introduction

This study concerns the ability of younger generations of employees to manage economic uncertainty in both collective and individual ways. It examines the rise of start-up entrepreneurship and non-fixed workplace settings that happened in the midst of crisis in Athens, Greece. It illustrates the working lives of young professionals pursuing entrepreneurial careers in coworking spaces, hubs and other collective spaces. Its aim is to profoundly explore the ways young entrepreneurs counterbalance their desires to pursue meaningful careers with pragmatic demands such as doing business and making money.

The study draws upon – and hopefully adds to – the wider debate around the transformation of work (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Banks, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Neff, 2012; Bessant et al., 2018) and the emergence of hubs, coworking spaces, accelerators and other shared workspaces (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Gandini, 2016b; Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016; Merkel, 2019b) as alternatives to fixed corporate workplaces. It explores the ways contemporary employees carve out their professional careers (Grey, 1994; Pongratz and Voß, 2003; Adkins, 2013) and manage their working lives (Gill, 2011) in highly unstable and precarious conditions.

In my study, individuals are not seen as “passive victims of globalization” (Strangleman, 2007, p.100) as I aspire to overcome the “pessimistic assessments of neo-liberal fatalists” (Banks, 2006, p.466). Instead, young individuals are perceived as active agents who seek to undertake meaningful work. Therefore, creative labour studies frame my work in terms of understanding how personal morals, ethics, aspirations and drives (Banks, 2006; Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2017) lead to emerging forms of start-up entrepreneurship which are perceived as highly desirable, creative and fulfilling by the individuals involved.

Each of the six coworking spaces under investigation that serve as my case studies could be a PhD study on their own, in terms of personal interest as well as richness of insight. While my study suggests that there are different

typologies of coworking spaces – some acting as primary cells of entrepreneurial creativity and learning, fostering collaboration, while others adopt a more business-like approach, aiming to boost entrepreneurial growth and maximization of profit – there are significant similarities. Most of the participants of this study were based in multiple spaces simultaneously. This somewhat greedy pattern of working is well acknowledged in the study, which attempts to examine, in depth, the diverse coworking nuances of Athens.

Lastly, this empirical study considers the landscape of start-up entrepreneurship as a contested front line in a wider economic restructuring which has taken place globally, having Athens at its epicentre. This work is important as it investigates how contemporary professionals are adapting to the global economic downturn, and how this process is being shaped and constrained by the geographical and institutional context of Athens.

1.1 Setting the context

According to Eurostat, in August 2019 the unemployment rate in Greece was 17% - the highest in the EU where the rate of unemployment is 6.2% overall (Anon, 2019). In the context of the Greek economic downturn, there has been an expansion of flexible forms of employment and self-employment as a result of the wider competitive restructuring of the economy and extensive austerity measures (Gialis and Tsampra, 2015). As Gialis and Tsampra (n.d.) observe, there are a series of factors that contribute to this expansion beyond the high unemployment rate: the semi-Fordist structures of Greece; tourism which, as in all Mediterranean countries, offers self-employment opportunities; and the need for highly qualified low-paid employees in the 'new economy' sectors (p.5).

Highly skilled, educated, young professionals find themselves suffering from long periods of unemployment or being offered low paid jobs that have no connection to their studies. Giotopoulos et al. (2017) point out that job alternatives become fewer or worse for highly skilled individuals and as a result they tend to get involved in various forms of entrepreneurship. So, in this context, the formation of new business ventures constitutes, mostly, a

necessity-driven choice (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014) for highly-skilled individuals. As traditional employment paths gradually dissolve and thus do not represent a possible – or even desirable – choice, micro-entrepreneurship emerges as a response to youth unemployment. Through micro-entrepreneurship, young professionals see greater chances to undertake decent work¹. In the midst of crisis, the cultural and creative industries (CCI)² emerge as an attractive and fulfilling employment route for young people, which holds the promise that young professionals could secure meaningful employment. As the official report for CCIs, published by the Ministry of Culture and Sports states, creative enterprises in Greece do not contribute to job creation, they rather represent micro-entrepreneurial activities:

More than 71% of the creative enterprises in Greece is either a sole proprietorship or an enterprise with one employee, 25.4% employ two to nine persons, while enterprises with 50 employees and more represent barely 0.6% (Avdikos et al., 2016, p.19).

In this context, self-employment seems the only possible route for highly skilled creative professionals. Nevertheless, despite the popularity of the cultural and creative industries, the creative sectors of the economy have long been neglected by national cultural policy (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016).

In the Greek context, creative industries are a very fragmented sector (Αυδίκος, 2014; Dallas, 2010). The first attempts to provide a policy framework cannot be traced to any earlier than 2014 (Zorba, 2009; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016). The absence of the term creative industries from any policy document before 2014 signifies a deep structural gap in Greek policy when it comes to understanding, and thus regulating, contemporary creative production. As Zorba (2009) explains, since World War II, Greek cultural policy has mainly focused on

¹ Decent work is a policy concept developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Decent work stands for fair remuneration, workplace security and good prospects for personal development and social integration (Heery and Noon, 2017).

² According to Avdikos et al. (2016), “the term ‘cultural and creative industries’ or ‘culture and creativity industries’ (CCIs) usually encompasses any enterprise producing marketable goods of high aesthetic or symbolic nature, the use of which aims at stimulating consumers’ reactions stemming from the experience” (p.3).

promoting high art, ancient heritage and antiquities. Only after the 1980s did the cultural sector in Greece begin to expand and flourish. Anglo-Saxon creative policy patterns that have long prioritized the role of CCI in social cohesion and urban regeneration have been systematically ignored in the Greek context.

The first Greek mapping of CCIs happened in 2016:

Greece ranks 11th in terms of employment and 10th in the number of creative enterprises in EU-28. The sectors with the highest number of employees in 2014 are architecture (21,200 employees), publishing (16,200), advertising (11,300) and arts and recreation (11,200) (Avdikos et al., 2016, p.15).

In the midst of crisis, a not-clearly-defined entrepreneurial community has emerged. These entrepreneurs are closely engaged with occupations that lie in the wider creative sectors of the economy. However, this turn towards entrepreneurship has happened without any strategic institutional support while policy interventions have been “both belated and awkward” (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016, p.62). The institutional recognition of the creative industries’ potential came late, in a context where the market and creative production seem to have already moved on:

These events took place in the midst of economic crisis when an entire field of activities had already been developed around creative industries and entrepreneurship providing a diverse array of services like consulting, networking, mentoring, funding events and pitching battles to young professionals (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016, p.61).

The deepening sovereign debt crisis and the proliferation of cultural and creative industries resulted in the increasing visibility of coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups in Athens:

Collaborative workplaces emerged after the gradual collapse of the stable employment paradigm that was one of the main features of the Keynesian welfare state and as a response to precarious working

conditions that were augmented during the recent economic crisis and the subsequent recession (Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016, p.1).

However, despite the recent documentation of the creative industries in Greece, there has been limited research regarding the working conditions and practices of people who work in the wider creative sectors of the economy. In an attempt to illustrate the socio-profile of contemporary creative workers in Athens, Avdikos' (2014) quantitative study in the field of design points out that creative workers are mostly young (maximum 40 years old), working in a blurred professional status (short term, project based work) without any legal or social security, using capital mostly from family savings to start creative businesses (Avdikos, 2014, p.112). Moreover, evidence from the field of design shows that young designers are mostly based in the urban centres of Athens and Thessaloniki, highlighting an apparent regional disparity (Avdikos et al., 2015). The fact that employees in creative enterprises are highly educated suggests that "the wider field of creative labour is an attractive field of work" (Avdikos et al., 2016, p.17) for a highly qualified workforce.

The quantitative data of Avdikos reveals extremely precarious working conditions. Greek designers do not get paid for working overtime, while 60% have side jobs in the shadow economy. The shadow economy in this context is defined as unreported economic activity, but referring to legal transactions (Schneider and Enste, 2013). The main reason for staying in the shadow is the extremely high cost of hiring people officially. The findings are even more striking when we consider the correlation between gender and personal income. The study reveals that male designers are paid more than females, confirming the claim that social inequality is systemic in the EU creative industries (Oakley, 2016; Banks, 2017).

Labour in the creative sector is also highly skewed socially, supporting the claim that creative workers tend to come from an insecure and indebted middle class (Oakley, 2016). Those who can sustain a creative career are those whose family money can act as a buffer against the monetary disadvantages of a highly flexible creative environment. When someone wants to enter the creative

economy, there is only one route; endless unpaid internships, unstable and interrupted work, spec-work and flexible work contracts (McRobbie, 2002b).

Amid the crisis, a wider debate has begun regarding the potential that these creative occupations have. This debate is epitomized by the belief that creativity can bring young people back to work. This belief was well-reflected in the Financing Creativity Conference organized during the Greek EU presidency in 2014 by the Ministry of Culture. The aims of the conference were to map the current creative ecosystem and disseminate good practice and experience from abroad. Particular emphasis was given to the financial aspects of creative sectors, which can be considered a ground-breaking and relatively new route for Greek creative policy which consistently overlooks the financial aspects of contemporary creative production. This financial framing of the creative industries triggered intense debate between high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Culture and conference participants. The Minister's speech was interrupted by artist-activists who came to the conference to protest budget cuts in arts and culture. The intervention was organized by a collective of artists called Kinisi Mavili. During the opening speech of the right-wing Minister of Culture and Sports, Panos Panagiotopoulos³, artists started to laugh, shouting "shame", especially when the Minister emphasized non-European examples of growth that could serve as an example for Greece:

The economies of China or other countries of the Middle East have proved that the old continent – with its past and current attempts regarding economy and its productive base – is being left behind. The cost of labour and a series of other factors have made many of the sectors of the European economy non-competitive therefore non-sustainable. European countries individually and collectively as part of the European family are forced to explore alternative processes of production that are competitive (Anon, 2014).

³ Panos Panagiotopoulos is a Greek politician from the New Democracy (ND) liberal-conservative political party.

According to the former Minister of Culture, Greece's competitiveness can only be boosted by diminishing its high cost of labour – following the examples of China and the Middle East. As indicated in his speech, high employment costs force investors to look for cheaper labour in other countries in the region. This statement came at a time when the minimum wage in Greece was already one of the lowest in the EU and unemployment among young people was almost double the EU average (Gialis and Tsampra, 2015; Gialis and Tsampra, n.d.).

During the conference, the Greek case was illustrated in a presentation by the Bank of Greece entitled *The Smart Economy: Cultural and Creative Industries in Greece*, which calls for the development of a national sustainable framework for creative industries in tune with EU policy (Λαζαρέτου, 2014). The use of the word 'smart' is indicative of the way creative industries are perceived as a flexible, cost effective solution to the economic crisis.

The proliferation of debate about the creative industries coincided with the production of a conflicting narrative about how people should talk about employment and how they should see themselves within the open-ended and challenging condition of constant crisis. This central narrative was constructed through managerial doctrines which encourage people to be entrepreneurial, taking their lives in their hands and generating meaningful employment for themselves. Out of necessity, people put less trust in established structures such as the government, the EU or big corporations and tend to rely on their personal and professional networks. This, in turn, produces new forms of individualization, having at their epicentre people's increased responsibility for their own working life choices. Individuals are no longer perceived as passive consumers but rather as active producers of their unique meaningful working lives:

The image of the citizen as a choosing self entails a new image of the productive subject. The worker is portrayed neither as an economic actor, rationally pursuing financial advantage, nor as a social creature seeking satisfaction of needs for solidarity and security. The worker is an individual in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal

achievement, a maximized 'quality of life', and hence of work. Thus the individual is not to be emancipated from work, perceived as merely a task or a means to an end, but to be fulfilled in work, now constructed as an activity through which we produce, discover, and experience our selves (Rose, 1989, p.103).

So, what needs investigation is the way the meaning of work, the conceptualization of the self and the notion of the workplace are being transformed and shaped by the current conditions of crisis, and how this, in turn, is reflected in the ways young professionals perceive themselves, their occupations and the expectations they have of themselves. There is a dire need to capture the conditions under which the younger generation of employees enter the labour market in a state of permanent crisis. As empirical studies repeatedly warn, new inequalities emerge (Avdikos et al., 2015; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016).

As Michailidou and Kostala's (2016) ethnographic research into new media work shows, creative workers tend to respond to crisis either by forming creative collectives or by starting their own creative businesses. In response to economic downturn, professionals explore new ways to sustain a nomadic and precarious working life in a fragmented context. They navigate their occupational field with little or no experience, they learn to put less trust in fixed structures and embrace an ephemeral way of living and working.

So, creative professionals, often viewed as being at the forefront of flexible labour, have been chosen as a case study for this research as they negotiate their working and personal lives in a permanently transitional context. This empirical study aims to capture this turn towards involuntary forms of start-up entrepreneurship, exploring the ways young professionals are gradually transforming into an entrepreneurial 'venture' workforce (Neff, 2012).

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

This thesis engages with the debates around the emergence of casualized labour and the proliferation of creative labour and entrepreneurship. It explores these

debates in the context of the emergence of shared workplaces such as coworking spaces, hubs, accelerators and collective spaces. By taking Athens as a case study, it explores involuntary start-up entrepreneurialism in the midst of the economic downturn. This type of exploration is crucial, as existing research is limited (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016).

To address this gap, this research aims to explain the current rise of coworking spaces, by investigating:

- What kind of coworking spaces have emerged in the Greek context and why? What does it mean to sustain a coworking space in times of crisis?
- What kind of services do these spaces offer and how do they differ?
- What are coworking spaces' practices? What kind of values and ethics are bound up in them? How do people at coworking spaces respond to written and unwritten rules?
- How do people at these spaces manage their professional working lives? What are the qualities and practices embedded in their coworking lifestyles?

By answering these key questions, this thesis adds to critical discussions about labour practices, ways of organizing work and emerging workplace ethics and identities. Furthermore, it aims to underline the importance that start-up entrepreneurs and collectives put on pursuing a satisfying professional path, incorporating creativity into their ways of working and the work itself.

1.3 Overview of Chapters

This thesis links the longstanding debates on creative work and casualized labour (Banks, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Gill et al., 2013; Banks, 2014) with active debates on the flexible organization of work, ethics and emerging workplace inequality (Gill, 2014; Gandini, 2015; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Hesmondhalgh, 2017; Banks, 2017). It does this by tracing the emergence of coworking spaces in Athens.

As debates about creative labour and the working lives of creative workers mostly centre on Anglo-Saxon countries, the introductory chapter illustrates the

Greek case, paying attention to the peculiar economic circumstances from which precarious entrepreneurs and flexible workplaces emerge. It highlights the existing quantitative and qualitative studies about creative labour and young professionals and the current challenges they face due to the sovereign debt crisis. It concludes by analysing the peculiar circumstances under which coworking spaces emerge. It calls for a deep investigation of the qualities and forms of involuntary start-up entrepreneurship. However, before presenting the findings or the theoretical implications of this study, it is necessary to situate my thesis within a wider academic context.

Chapter 2 discusses the proliferation of creative work, tracing the emergence of casualized labour. It starts by offering a brief overview of the debates associated with the transformation of work and the emergence of casualized labour. It analyses the rise of the new model of employee, the 'entreplooyee' (Pongratz and Von, 2003), meaning one who has embraced entrepreneurial and self-marketing practices. It then focuses on critical accounts of the spread of creative labour due to information communication technologies (ICTs) that radically transform the way people work today. It explores the emergence of 'network sociality' (Wittel, 2001) which serves as a model for the way people operate and present themselves in the labour market. So, this chapter traces the emergence of creative labour while presenting long-standing critiques based on empirical and qualitative studies. It concludes with an examination of the ethical ramifications of creative labour – calling for a more 'balanced' approach which is ethically informed (Banks, 2006). The chapter signals the need for an empirical investigation into the ways young people cultivate themselves in order to become subjects of value in the current context.

Chapter 3 discusses the emergence and proliferation of coworking spaces. It firstly analyses the rise of minimally regulated workplaces that are 'permissive' and 'no-collar' (Ross, 2004), then illustrates the ways such spaces are attractive for both employees and employers. Its main focus is the diversification of such spaces, which operate under various terms. Whatever these spaces are called, the chapter seeks to understand the overall promise of such spaces that

convinces people to pay in order to work there; most coworking spaces rely on membership subscriptions to sustain themselves. It concludes by pointing out the need to understand coworking as a phenomenon embedded in the current socioeconomic context. It thus argues for a perception of coworking spaces as constructed to combat the precarity and isolation of working from home. It calls for an empirical investigation of the specific coworking nuances, practices, values and activities that are interrelated with these spaces.

Chapter 4 gives an account of the research conducted and the methodological approaches adopted. It justifies the methodological and epistemological choices made and describes the research sample and methods of analysis. This chapter also indicates how my overall research strategy has been in a constant dialogue with the contingency of the field and informed by the specific circumstances found there. Responding to repeated calls for more localized and locally sensitive research into creative labour in multiple contexts (Vinodrai, 2013), my data collection process is informed by qualitative methods. Participatory observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews and shadowing research participants were all employed in order to help me, as a researcher, dive deeply into everyday coworking life.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the empirical findings and the analysis of the fieldwork. Chapter 5 looks into the nuances of Athenian coworking, revealing a crowded coworking market. This chapter sheds light on the various spaces under investigation. As identified, some spaces have a pan-professional character, such as Forest Ridge, Cell and Social Hub, while others are focused on a specific form of entrepreneurship. It also explores what it means to sustain a coworking space in times of crisis, investigating their sources of funding, ties with corporations or foundations and the ways these relationships are conceptualized in a context of general financial instability. Uncertain profitability applies to the majority of the spaces under investigation. Corporate social responsibility programmes serve as the only funding sources available for these spaces. Being only partly funded, or even not funded at all, four of the six coworking spaces under investigation value their autonomy over financial dependence on an institution or

corporation. This chapter concludes by asking whether a brave entrepreneurial 'just do it' practice can serve as a response to the crisis.

Chapter 6 investigates coworking spaces' services and how the participants of these spaces valorize them. It investigates the array of coworking services, such as mentoring, coaching and other services provided. It concludes by positioning coworking spaces as providers of enterprise education linking young professionals with the labour market.

Chapter 7 dives deeply into coworking practice, as it identifies the importance of being embedded in professional and personal networks, verifying the fact that coworking spaces are spaces where various 'network socialities' (Wittel, 2001) are staged and performed (de Peuter et al., 2017). It explores the ways some coworking practices employed by the spaces under investigation are considered morally dubious by the start-up ecosystem. While my thesis supports the idea that young start-uppers and collectives embrace a rational approach to the morally dubious practices of some of the spaces under investigation, it considers their aspirations and the way they conduct their entrepreneurial activity to be socially aware and well-rooted in fundamental moral values. By operating in a competitive market economy in spaces that are founded and funded by corporations or foundations, young professionals face a deep moral complexity.

Chapter 8 takes a broad look at the working lives of young start-uppers. This final chapter, firstly illustrates what it means to manage a start-up in the spaces under investigation, analysing the importance of self-promotion, then focusing on what needs to be articulated publicly, and what does not. This leads to an illustration of the qualities of the self that make a successful entrepreneur. Next, it explores the development of a 'love and commitment' discourse about the form of work conducted in coworking spaces, which is described as a "labour of the head and heart" (Weeks, 2011, p.69). It investigates the correlation between gender and start-up entrepreneurship, concluding with an investigation of the ways failure is reframed. The final section of the chapter summarizes the characteristics of the start-up working life and the way it is managed by young entrepreneurs.

Chapter 9 serves as the concluding chapter of the thesis, and demonstrates the original contribution to knowledge. It suggests that the proliferation of start-up entrepreneurship, as a promising and fulfilling professional path, signals a shift towards the emergence of a workforce which eagerly accepts its precarious conditions of work, is mostly based at non-unionized workplaces such as coworking spaces, and undertakes the risks of acting entrepreneurially. The last section focuses on the high levels of satisfaction expressed by the participants of this research.

2 The proliferation of creative labour

This chapter examines the emergence of precarious and casualized labour in the Western world. It explores the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism while focusing on various theories of creative labour. Its aim is to illustrate the major structural shifts that have happened in contemporary employment.

My current study illustrates the longstanding heated debates about the proliferation of casualized labour and the emergence of creative labour. It examines both the celebratory and critical accounts of creative work. These accounts are closely related to the radical shifts in the economies of the Global North after the 1970s with regard to capital organization, consumption and work. The chapter concludes by taking creative work to be the conceptual vehicle through which to understand general labour changes in the capitalist economies of the West.

2.1 From Fordism to post-Fordism: From the worker to the entrepreneur
Fordism, which broadly marks a period from 1945 to the mid-70s, can be defined as a method of industrial production characterized by mass production of standardized products. Watson (2019) defines Fordism as:

A system of mass production combining the new technological innovations of the early twentieth century which accelerated the pace of manufacture, particularly the assembly line, with a managerial ethos encouraging greater efficiency in the organisation of work (Watson, 2019, p.145).

This method of industrial production has been accused of homogenizing the workforce while reducing workers to the level of cogs in a machine. In this context, work is organized through a strict division of labour. The model, inspired by the Taylorist assembly line, divides production into uncomplicated repetitive steps such that an unskilled workforce can produce identical products. Assembly lines eventually became the key to mass production, or Fordist production. At the same time, the relationship between the unskilled workforce and private corporations was fully regulated by the state. So, Fordism

inaugurated a period of state protectionism where deskilled and repetitive labour was performed in exchange for wage benefits. As Esser and Hirsch (1989) point out:

The assurance of full employment and growth, the expansion of the welfare state and global control of the economic process of reproduction, supported by the extended apparatus of financial and fiscal state intervention, corporate negotiation structures and national economic prognoses, were determinate characteristics of Fordist hegemonic structure. It guaranteed the stability for profit rates, the raising of the general standard of living, and a relative balance in the economic processes of reproduction for a fairly long phase (Esser and Hirsch, 1989, p.421).

Between the late 1940s and 1973, the advanced capitalist economies of the West experienced a post-war Keynesian welfare state (Huws, 2013, p.2). The period from the end of the Second World War in 1945 to the early 1970s when the Bretton Woods monetary system collapsed, was marked by great prosperity and has thus been described as the 'golden age' of capitalism (Vroey, 1984). During that period there were high levels of labour productivity with extremely low unemployment rates. In an era of standardized mass production, capital accumulation was largely tied to factories where contractually formalized employment was the rule – at least for white male workers. Therefore, Fordism consistently encouraged the promise of a well-protected job for life, in which sick leave and paid holidays were inalienable rights.

The transition that happened after the mid-70s indicates a turn towards deregulation, decentralization and deindustrialization (Harvey, 1989b; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Lazzarato, 2009). While there is wide debate in scholarship about this transition, a point of agreement is that "something has changed in the way capitalism has been working since about 1970" (Harvey, 1989, p.173):

Capitalism is becoming ever more tightly organised through dispersal, geographical mobility, and flexible responses in labour markets, labour processes, and consumer markets, all accompanied by hefty doses of

institutional, product, and technological innovation (Harvey, 1989, p.159).

From the late 1960s onwards, technological developments have penetrated the Fordist model of production, simplifying and standardizing many labour processes (Huws, 2013, p.3). The negotiating power of trade unions has gradually diminished – without entirely losing the capacity to bargain. Huws (2013) notes that: “Whilst a discourse about ‘atypical’ employment began to emerge, jobs were, on the whole, still regarded as subject to formal regulation and contractual negotiation”(p.3).

However, it was the era between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the mid 2000s that marked further deregulation as well as a deepening of technological advancement. Nation states gradually adopted a neoliberal political agenda, reinventing themselves as potential sites for investment:

[The nation state] is now in a much more problematic position. It is called upon to regulate the activities of corporate capital in the national interest at the same time as it is forced, also in the national interest, to create a ‘good business climate’ to act as an inducement to trans-national and global finance capital, and to deter (by means other than exchange controls) capital flight to green and more profitable pastures (Harvey, 1990, p.170).

Deregulated labour markets have come to represent the norm as employment protection gradually weakens. The days when state policies were responsible for controlling and regulating the market have long passed. In the post-Fordist era, the power of the state has been undermined and, in the Western world, features of work that were long taken for granted are no longer valid.

Neilson and Rossiter (2005) point out that the state protectionism and stability of Fordism was the exception rather than the rule. Their critique, by bringing forward the nature of capital as inherently precarious and unstable, is crucial to our understanding of the current transformations in the world of employment:

The current increase of precarious work in the wealthy countries is only a small slice of capitalist history. If the perspective is widened, both geographically and historically, precarity becomes the norm (and not some exception posed against a Keynesian or Fordist ideal of capitalist stability). With this shift in perspective the focus also moves to other forms of work, still contained within the logic of industrial or agricultural production, that do not necessarily abide the no-material-product logic of so-called cognitive, immaterial, or creative labour. Without denying that neoliberal globalisation and the boom-bust dot.com cycle of information technology have placed new pressures on labour markets in the wealthy countries, it is also important to approach this wider global perspective in light of a second fact: that capital too is precarious, given to crises, risk, and uncertainty (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005).

So, capturing the radical changes in employment that have resulted in the emergence of precarious work, Neilson and Rossiter (2008) suggest that capitalism should be seen from a wider historical and geographical perspective, where “it is precarity that is the norm and not Fordist economic organization” (p.54). As their study describes, during early industrialization, the proletarian workers had only their raw working capacity to offer without being able to have any control over their work. They experienced severe forms of exploitation while no social protection was provided. Under Fordism, for the first time, work became standardized. This led to employee’s regaining structural control over their work on the basis of scientific knowledge (Pongratz and Voß, 2003). If Fordism is perceived as a system of production based on the assembly line and capable of high industrial productivity, post-Fordism or ‘flexible accumulation’ signals the deregulation of labour markets. As David Harvey (1989a) argues, the process of ‘flexible accumulation’ marks the current post-Fordist mode of production which is highly decentralized.

The spread of post-Fordism would not be possible without the support of information and communication technologies (ICTs): the web, the cloud, and other digital resources. Most workers now rely on ICTs, and their increasing

centrality has radically transformed the way people conduct their work. Physically located far away from colleagues, they find themselves forming virtual teams:

Virtual labour [...] whether paid or unpaid [...] is carried out using a combination of digital and telecommunications technologies and/or produces content for digital media (Huws, 2012, p.3).

Composed of a complex network of online and offline working practices, the boundaries separating virtual from non-virtual work are still open to negotiation (Holts, 2013). Researchers suggest that virtual labour lies at the intersection of paid and unpaid – or free –labour, as the distinction between what is paid and unpaid work in virtual terms is not clear (Terranova, 2000).

The rise and the increasing centrality of digital technologies, the web and the cloud, enable new media workers to pursue their careers without being physically attached to a specific workplace. Yet, while digital technologies have ‘liberated’ workers from any restriction of time and space, they tend to obscure the boundaries between home and office as well as between professional and personal life. ‘Homing from work’ or ‘working from home’ are common phenomena, as workers are pushed to be productive at any time and from anywhere. Various researchers have suggested the emergence of new working identities such as the ‘technobohemians’ (Gill, 2007) or ‘digerati’ (Fisher, 2008).

For Pongratz & Voß (2003), the pivotal change in employment occurring in post-Fordism is well illustrated by the concept of the ‘entreplooyee’. This concept captures the inevitable turn towards an entrepreneurial perception of the self in the contemporary post-Fordist economies of the West. The concept of the entreplooyee stands for an emerging type of labour power based on self-control and self-marketing practices which inevitably result in the further economization of life. Entreplooyees tend to believe that they have control over the quality and content of their work, while navigating an unregulated market where social security is shrinking.

Figure 0.1: Pongratz & Voß's (2003) theory of the transformation of work

Early Industrialization	Fordism	Post- Fordism
Proletarian Worker	Vocational Employee	Entreployee
Raw working capacity	Standardized qualifications, basic work virtues	Individualized qualifications
Rigid direct control of work	Structural control of work based on scientific knowledge	Systematic self-control of work
Severe exploitation, no social protection	Milder exploitation, greater protection by the state	Self-exploitation, precarious social security

As the literature suggests, the emergence of post-Fordist capitalism is closely related to the entrepreneurial figure (Thrift, 1999; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Accounts of post-Fordism have long incorporated concepts such as workers' self-organization, collaborative production and entrepreneurship in a regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 2005). The entrepreneurial figure has its roots in the 'entrepreneurial discourse' of the Reaganism and Thatcherism of the 1980s. Revolving around a radical neo-liberal dogma, its main components are the refusal of any state intervention and a strong faith in individual potential. The depiction of the entrepreneur as a person driven by a brilliant idea, risking everything for the sake of innovation and social progression is well grounded in literature (Kiessling, 2004). Mainly inspired by a Schumpeterian perspective of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs have been conceptualized as business leaders not merely capital owners (Manimala, 1999), eagerly accepting the risk of running their own innovative businesses or launching cutting-edge products onto the market (Knight, 1921; Drucker, 1970; Kiessling, 2004).

Consequently, the landscape of entrepreneurship is considered by the business literature to be dynamic and multidimensional, and to play a central role in the market economy and economic development. Those involved in entrepreneurship have long been portrayed by the literature as brave, self-motivated, bright individuals always ready to grasp potential opportunities (Kiessling, 2004; Bodrozic and Adler, 2018). These almost heroic individuals are

presented as people who change the world in ways nobody could imagine, while nothing can stop them. David Bornstein's (2004) rhetoric is indicative of the celebratory tones that surround entrepreneurship. Bornstein describes entrepreneurs as those "who have both changed their lives and found ways to change the world". This entrepreneurial evangelism is pervasive not only in the public discourse but also in the academic literature which explores the ethical potential that entrepreneurship can entail, linking it to good society as well as individual emancipation (Bornstein D., 2004; Alvord et al., 2004; Seelos and Mair, 2005).

In the context of the recent financial crisis, entrepreneurship in practice represents not an ideal, liberating or creative possibility, but a necessity. Garcia-Lorenzo et al. (2014), who did research in Spain and Ireland during 2013, reveal untold stories of a different type of entrepreneurship. According to their findings, people become entrepreneurial because it is the only possible way out of unemployment. The emerging narrative of the 'necessity entrepreneur' has nothing to do with the Schumpeterian 'motivated individual' who seeks to foster wealth and business creation. In times of economic instability, the notion of entrepreneurship is redefined as a collective process rather than dependent on individual motivation, cognition or behaviour (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014, p.5). David Rae's (2014) work tells us that the nature of entrepreneurship and its role in economy, society and career-making are changing because of the crisis:

A growing number of graduates realised that in a difficult job market creating their own employment by starting a business may be a preferable option to provide independence, self-fulfilment and income (Rae, 2014, p.82).

Therefore, the entrepreneurship route and the creation of start-up ventures, represents a possible professional path in a context of deep uncertainty. Start-up entrepreneurship is an unexplored but promising terrain, in which individuals are in constant search of growth and innovation, while being true to themselves. It is interesting that this turn towards entrepreneurialism happened in the midst of crisis – or even post-crash:

Practically speaking, when economic systems are in or just emerging from recession, they tend to laud entrepreneurship as a vehicle to provide ready solutions to economic woes, emphasizing entrepreneurship's concern to take products or service to market and generate value (Chell et al., 2016, p.619).

The figure of the entrepreneur goes hand in hand with the emergence of precarious employment. Entrepreneurial discourse brings forward the responsibilities people have for their own employability in a world where labour is becoming more precarious and casualized.

2.2 The emergence of precarious employment

It seems well established that precarious employment is a dynamic trend in many parts of the Western world (see Bessant et al., 2018). A growing number of people find themselves afflicted by poor job prospects in a highly deregulated labour market. In this context, the term 'precarity' and its variations have been well adopted by researchers to describe the experience of risk and uncertainty associated with flexible and insecure patterns of employment (Standing, 2014):

[Precarity refers] to the existential, financial, and social insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilization of labour associated with Post-Fordism. Freelancing, contract work, solo self-employment, temporary work, part-time, absence of unionism, collective representation are among paradigmatic employment arrangements (de Peuter, 2014b, p.32).

The decline in Fordist labour patterns has been accompanied by the emergence of 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). In his 2000 work *The Brave New World of Work*, Beck claims that the old safety nets of social structures such as the welfare state, the labour unions and the nuclear family are gradually dissolved:

Paid employment is becoming precarious: the foundations of the social welfare state are collapsing; normal life-stories are breaking up into fragments (Beck, 2000, p.3).

Beck uses the notion of a risk society to point to the fact that work becomes uncertain and employment fragmented. As insecurity grows, Beck talks of the

emergence of 'nomadic multiactivity' (Beck, 2000, p.2). Today's workers are pushed to work outside standard employment relationships, resulting in various forms of insecurity and flexibility. Therefore, the current mosaic of employment practices comes in the form of temporary contracts, self-employment, project agreements and micro-entrepreneurship. The office and the factory are no more the physical cornerstones of working life, as formal corporate organizations have been gradually replaced by more flexible structures and ways of working. This, in fact, has profound effects not only on the way people work but also on the way people see and understand the world around them and position themselves within it.

Undeniably, the global restructuring of labour has changed the way people work in today's society. The idea that people must secure their place in the labour market seems now, more than ever, accurate. Younger generations of employees are being told to be flexible and occupationally agile (Qin and Nembhard, 2015) in a context where traditional career paths have become, in practice, obsolete. Flexibility erodes all aspects of an individual's working life, and this contemporary 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) is typified by the deepening uncertainty about how to position and establish one's self in the labour market. In this context, workers are pushed to compose their own individual portfolio of work (Grey, 1994); meanwhile, "work is reconfigured as an activity through which people produce and discover a sense of personal identity" (du Gay, 1996, p.78).

Sylvia Federici (2006) explains structural changes in employment by highlighting the major shift that happened in the 1960s when people demanded 'more money, less work'. In the 1980s, the precarization of employment deepened as many workers began to engage in work that did not produce physical objects but information, ideas or 'states of being'. So, for Federici (2006), the precarity of labour is strongly rooted in the restructuring of production that resulted in various forms of cultural, cognitive or 'info' work. While industrial labour was in decline, 'immaterial labour' emerged as a dominant form.

The various works of Lazzarato, Negri and Virno in the early 1990s, having their historical roots in operaismo, a political ideology that emphasizes the centrality of working class, introduced the concept of immaterial labour, which is defined as labour which produces informational or cultural commodities, involving our brains and bodies (Lazzarato, 1992). It includes forms of work that primarily involve intellectual activity in order to produce texts, images, symbols or ideas and, secondarily, those that manipulate and produce feelings of “ease, well-being, satisfaction, etc.” (Trott, 2007, pp.208-209).

This precariat and immaterial labour discourse has been criticized for not being historically grounded. According to Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2008), the concept of ‘immaterial labour’ to explain those forms of labour considered creative, lacks theoretical or empirical engagement in the field of creative production. Not only does it homogenize the labour processes in a very obscure way, it sees all flexible workers as sharing the same capacity to struggle against capital (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008).

From a feminist point of view, Federici (2006) identifies two major points of critique: firstly, behind the concept of ‘immaterial labour’ lies an axiomatic assumption that labour is becoming more intelligent and that we are moving towards a higher level of production and social relation; and secondly, ‘immaterial labour’ is presented as gender neutral, failing to redefine work in terms of recognizing or including women’s unpaid reproductive labour (Federici, 2006, p.3). The concept of immaterial labour is highly exclusive, because it expresses the interests of a specific group of workers – mostly white and male – tied to the highest level of capitalistic technology (see Caffentzis, 1998). Indeed, the people affected by the end of Fordist industrial labour are very different to the specific group of workers operaismo thinkers consider.

Characteristics considered inherent to female work have become constituent elements of how people work today. This observation has led scholars to believe that there has been a ‘feminization’ of work, where precariousness, mobility and fragmentation are the rule when it comes to employment conditions:

Cognitive capitalism touches on the individual spheres of the experiences of men and women, both native and migrant, but at the same time seeks to impose a unique and homogenous command mechanism for work: it is these very differences and the exploitation of them that translate into surplus value. From this point of view, the simple and binary dichotomies of production/reproduction, male work/female work lose their meaning to the point of pushing us to hypothesize a gradual process of the degendering of work (Morini, 2007).

So, the reason precarious, casualized labour has become visible nowadays is that it reflects major structural shifts in the post-industrial context of production especially affecting high-skilled workers in the advanced capitalist economies of the West:

There are clear perils in focusing on the new forms of insecurity faced by cultural workers and other labouring subjects in the advanced capitalist economies. Apart from diverting attention from less-privileged workforces that support and even enable the labour of these figures, there is the danger of falling back on welfare and funding models that assume the continued viability of state political and social structures that have been slowly eroded (Neilson and Cote, 2014, p.4).

As the above quote suggests, cultural workers are a good lens through which to examine contemporary labour and so the following section explores creative work as a conceptual framework for this thesis.

2.3 Post-Fordist and precarious labour: creative work as exemplar

While previous sections note the deepening precarization and casualization of labour, this section briefly illustrates the definitional debate around creative work and discusses its very distinctive features. It sets the background for the exploration of the working conditions and labour practices of those who are considered 'creatives'.

There are many definitions of cultural creative work, but, even though all labour involves various degrees of creativity and repetitiveness, some industries

harness individual and collective creativity more than others. A sectoral approach identifies cultural creative workers as those working in organizations defined as part of the cultural creative industries, industries that produce and disseminate 'symbols'. Cultural work researchers focus on the experiences of those considered producers of 'cultural goods' and texts, the 'symbol creators' or the 'cultural creative workers'. According to Banks (2007), cultural work refers to "the act of labour within the industrialized process of cultural production" (p.3). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) point out that cultural creative workers are not a homogenous group but need to be differentiated:

In using the terms 'creative labour' and 'creative workers', we recognize of course that there is a division of labour in cultural production. This can be expressed as involving primary creative personnel such as writers, actors, directors, musicians; craft and technical workers such as camera operators, film editors and sound engineers; creative managers such as television producers, magazine editors and A&R personnel; administrators; executives; and unskilled labour (see Hesmondhalgh 2007: 64-5). We intend the term 'creative labour' to refer to the work of all these groups, as part of an organizational division of labour, while recognizing that the input of different groups of workers into 'creative' outputs varies, and this variety can be source of important hierarchies and distinction in cultural production (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p.9).

However, according to the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), creative industries are "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 2001). As of 2015, the creative sector has come to encompass industries (such as advertising, marketing, IT, software and computer services) beyond those traditionally perceived as cultural. Even though it is not our objective here to introduce the creative policy debate, it must be noted that the turn towards creative industries is marked by the digital era in those industries as well as the

commercialization of creativity per se (Cunningham, 2004; Garnham, 2005; Potts and Cunningham, 2008; McGuinan, 2010).

The adoption of creativity policies instead of 'culture' or 'cultural policy', signifies a shift from the state-regulated cultural industries and broadcast media to networked forms of creative production (Rossiter, 2006). A series of creative industry initiatives have long-served as employment and educational policies aiming to fill the gap created by the declining role of manufacturing in the advanced capitalist economies of the West (Garnham, 2005). So, the proliferation of creative industry discourse articulates a policy turn towards forms of labour that are highly self-regulated, entrepreneurial and precarious.

NESTA adopts the Creative Trident model, supporting those creative people who work both outside and inside the creative industries. According to NESTA, "the Creative Trident comprises all the people working in the creative industries and the people working in specialist creative occupations in 'non-creative' firms and organizations" (Higgs et al., 2008, p.20). The high rate of growth of the creative workforce (that work within or outside the creative industries) is indicative of the wider structural changes that have happened in the economy over recent years. So, the terrain of creative work cannot be taken for granted as its definition appears contested and provisional. With many kinds of work classified as creative, the creative industries can be considered "a contested zone in the making" (Lovink and Rossiter, 2007, p.11).

What this "new order of creativity" suggests is that the "preferred labour profile" nowadays, is that of "the eponymous struggling artist, whose long-abiding vulnerability to occupational neglect is now magically transformed [...] into a model of enterprising, risk-tolerant pluck" (Ross, 2007, p.21). For this reason, critical scholarship has developed around the notion of precarious labour, emphasizing the specific conditions of creative labour in the artistic, cultural and creative industries (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Ross, 2008; Miller, 2010; Bain and McLean, 2013; de Peuter, 2014b). At the same time, a number of articles address a wide variety of related topics: the blurring boundaries between work and play; the extension of work beyond the formal workplace;

unpaid labour; and the complexity of value creation in a wide range of activities that can be characterized as creative (Kucklich, 2005; de Peuter and Dyer-Witford, 2005; Goggin, 2011). This wide body of literature discusses the work-related experiences of people currently undertaking creative work, who are perceived in many ways (beyond creative workers), usually referred to as 'knowledge workers' (Drucker, 1999) or 'venture labourers' (Neff, 2012).

With the economy flooded with creatives, creative labour has shown its multifaceted and conflicting nature. According to McKinlay and Smith, the forms of labour that are considered creative tend to have very specific and unique characteristics:

[There is a] strong identification of creative labour with the production process and its output and the uncertain profitability of cultural products, the forms of labour control that tend to rely on high degrees of self-motivation (McKinlay and Smith, 2009, p.30).

Even though creative work fits models of employment from low wage sectors (Ross, 2008), it is experienced as desirable and fulfilling by the individuals involved in it (McRobbie, 2011).

According to Ursula Huws (2010), "creative labour should be conceived as something extremely heterogeneous which is, moreover, undergoing rapid and dynamic change" (Huws, 2010, p.509). In her study, the distinctiveness of creative work compared to other forms of labour has multiple reasons: firstly, creative workers are highly committed to the solution of new problems that require the adoption of new mind-sets; secondly, creative workers identify themselves with their creative outputs, with some even perceiving their occupations as a "continuation of the self" (Huws, 2010, p.511) or "even better than sex" (Trinca and Fox, 2004); and thirdly, those who undertake creative work feel they have the freedom to exercise personal judgment and counterbalance what the client wants against what they believe to be ethical and moral.

Furthermore, the fact that creative work is often highly individualized (McGuigan, 2010) and “takes place in paid and unpaid contexts” (Deuze and Lewis, 2014, p.162) obscures the working conditions of creative workers, pushing them to operate at the intersection of employment statuses. Today, more than ever, there are a growing number of creative workers that might be full-time employees, freelancers, or independent entrepreneurs. These creative professionals, however, do not operate in a vacuum free from market imperatives and any managerial control. According to Huws (2010), they may experience multiple forms of control that “are not necessarily single or stable; several may co-exist alongside each other, and one may transmute into another”(p.515):

In many ways, freelance creatives appear to inhabit a world of work that is decentralized, relatively autonomous, tech savvy, digitally wired, and nourishing of individual creative freedom. [...] freelance creative work is not exempt from the processes of measurement, abstraction, time discipline, and worker control to which labour under capitalism has traditionally been subject. Rather, it makes these processes more transparent (Pitts, 2016, p.516).

Nevertheless, we cannot dismiss the fact that the proliferation of forms of creative work is largely a problem of the highly-educated and privileged middle-class, which sees its proletarianization. Of course, the conditions of creative work are amplified if gender, social class and ethnicity are taken into consideration, but creative labour as an analytical category frames our understanding of how a privileged group of workers in the Global North experience forms of casualized labour.

As discussed, the working conditions and labour practices of creative labour are increasingly present in the wider workforce (Woodman and Wyn, 2015; Bessant et al., 2018), showing the neoliberal restructuring of labour. Therefore, it is no surprise that creative work is now a major theme across disciplines, as it sharply illustrates the wider transformations of work in Western, post-Fordist economies. In fact, a set of practices considered to be inherent characteristics of

creative work, including outsourcing, project-based production and just-in-time teams, are now an exemplar model of new economic business practice (Cunningham, 2004).

The next section considers the valorization and critique of creative labour before and after the crash. It firstly presents idealized accounts of creative labour, then adopts a critical perspective focusing on the negative effects of creative, entrepreneurial, networked and individualized ways of working, without dismissing the ethical underpinnings that creative labour provides for people.

2.3.1 The valorization and critique of creative labour

Creative labour is indicative of how we all will, increasingly, have to negotiate our working lives in a permanently unstable and insecure context (Neilson and Cote, 2014). As Ross observes, flexible working practices associated with labour in the creative industries reflect an incorporation of employment conditions that exist for low-skilled workers:

It would be a mistake, however, to see the creative economy sector as simply a marketized uptake of these long-standing traditions of painstaking endeavour and abiding forbearance. For the precariousness of work in these fields also reflects the infiltration of models of non-standard employment from low-wage service sectors. The chronic contingency of employment conditions for all low-skill workers and migrants is more and more normative, where before it was characteristic of a secondary labor market, occupied primarily by women working on a part-time basis, or at discounted wages in an era dominated by the 'family wage' of the male breadwinner (Beck, 2000) (Ross, 2008, p.34).

Despite the fact that creative labour is characterized by high levels of insecurity and precarity, it has been repeatedly celebrated by the creative policy debate. Indeed, creative policy discourse has consistently valorized and celebrated the emergence of creative work, encouraging investment in creative industries that results in elevating, and thus making more visible, the position of creative entrepreneurs (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Oakley and Leadbeater, 2005). Creative workers and entrepreneurs are seen as crucial political actors in terms

of fostering social cohesion and pioneering urban regeneration (Pratt, 2008; Ward, 2015).

One of the most prominent advocates of creative work as a panacea is Richard Florida. *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) valorizes creativity and culture, the 'creative class' is perceived as a "defining feature of economic life because new technologies, new industries, new wealth and all other good economic things flow from it" (Florida, 2002, p.21). Florida's work received much attention from politicians, policy makers, grey literature and the media:

The Rise of the Creative Class itself has been packaged in a populist way – its style irreverent, informal and in-keeping with popular lifestyle-guides – and has been supported by a concerted marketing campaign to disseminate its themes (Ward, 2015, p.51).

However, the celebratory accounts of creative work have started to be toned down, especially post-crisis (Pratt, 2012). The fact that Richard Florida himself acknowledges that his claims regarding the creative class have failed in his latest book, is notoriously impressive (Florida, 2017).

Under a political agenda of austerity, researchers have explored how creative workers adapt to changing economic conditions (Vinodrai, 2013). Scholarship has started to pay attention to local and national institutional structures, avoiding the 'one size fits all' creative solution. A comparative study of the creative economies in Toronto and Copenhagen by Vinodrai (2013) highlights the importance of local contexts for creative work:

While the dynamics of creative work may—on the surface—appear similar in different geographic contexts, it is necessary to dig a little deeper to understand how creative work is shaped and constrained by the institutional context in which it takes place (Vinodrai, 2013, p.173).

Empirical and qualitative studies – mostly conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries (Gill, 2014; McRobbie, 2015) – offer deep insight into the nature of creative labour and the way people manage to navigate the unstable and uncertain labour market in advanced Western economies.

Critical scholarship looking into the employment and working conditions of people who engage into a wide range of creative activities and occupations, questions over-polished accounts of creative labour (Gill, 2002; Neff et al., 2006; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2015). From these studies, a clear and largely consistent picture emerges, pinpointing the costs of freelance, flexible and entrepreneurial work. People's working lives are characterized by high levels of uncertainty and insecurity.

Empirical research across a number of fields, including the fashion industry (McRobbie, 1998), new media (Gill, 2007b; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) and television (Ursell, 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008), repeatedly underlines the hidden costs of living and sustaining work in the creative sector. Gill's (2002) study of new media work in the Netherlands openly challenges the cool, creative and egalitarian nature of creative labour. However, research in the field of cultural production from a perspective that emphasizes identity and subjectivity, focuses on how creative workers embrace the risk and actively reproduce their own systems of inequalities and exploitation (Gill, 2002; Ross, 2004).

As discussed, if Fordism is associated with state regulation, centralized planning and the provision of employment and welfare programmes, post-Fordism is closely related to decentralized planning and deregulation which is mediated and legitimized through technology. Under the hyper-networked conditions of 'flexible accumulation' (Harvey, 2005) work becomes increasingly precarious and unstable. Younger generations of employees are no longer treated as workers who are compelled to participate in capitalist production but are perceived more like entrepreneurs or 'entreploees' (Pongratz and Voß, 2003), which requires them to be responsible for securing their own place in the labour market.

With informality being the 'new black' for creative work, as Rosalind Gill (2007, p.24) suggests, creative networks of production are seen as highly non-hierarchical and bohemian. These networks are perceived as being informally governed (Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Wittel, 2001; Blair, 2003; Menger, 2006),

signifying the erosion of any formal labour regulations. This is why the concept of informality is used to analyse a series of expressions and articulations of contemporary labour markets. Creative labour markets, mostly made up of freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs, can be characterized as highly informal, and this informality penetrates every aspect, from entering the creative field to sustaining a career and navigating this fluid context:

Creative industries' labour markets have characteristics that can be described as informal, for example, in relation to employment relationships (i.e. temporary freelance contracts), labour market access (i.e. opaque network-based recruitment), governance structure (i.e. non-hierarchical, project-based) and working cultures (i.e. 'bulimic work patterns' (Gill and Pratt, 2008:17) and the various forms of non-paid labour (Merkel, 2019, p.529).

As career paths are fragmented and difficult to predict, people – especially the younger generation – transit from one employment status to another (Woodman and Wyn, 2015), from one job to another. In these transitions, informal and interpersonal networks and the way the self is presented within them are crucial elements of professional development for young employees.

2.3.2 The rise of network sociality

Examining the structural changes in employment in project-based industries, researchers acknowledge the importance of informal and interpersonal networks in accessing, as well as retaining, active employment (Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Blair et al., 2003). Networks are identified as the way to operate in creative industries in terms of recruiting, sharing knowledge and getting support (Rossiter, 2006; Christopherson, 2009; van Heur, 2010). In high risk creative environments, networks are coping strategies to negotiate risk and gain visibility and inside industry knowledge to help identify the next job opportunity.

The rise of networks is closely related to what has been called late capitalism (Jameson, 1991), cool capitalism (McGuigan, 2009), the new economy (Castells,

2000) or the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Fisher (2010) addresses the expansion of networks:

The spirit of networks revolves around connectivity, flexibility, cooperation, decentralization, dehierarchization, spontaneous ordering, creativity and play and ad hoc assemblages, and, most prominently of course, the very notion of networks. These paradigmatic terms have become a dominant toolkit with which much of the dynamics and characteristics of contemporary society – pertaining to the economy, culture, politics, and socialibility – are understood, experienced, and constructed. At the center of the spirit of networks – or rather, what holds the discourse together and binds its disparate themes – is network technology (Fisher, 2010, p.224).

The emergence of the ‘new economy’ has resulted in the proliferation of networked economic flows (Adkins, 2005) wherein creative workers can easily be transformed into entrepreneurs. Mark Deuze’s (2007) research into new media work celebrates the rise of these creative networks as non-hierarchical, aiming to foster independence and autonomy while cultivating an ‘entrepreneurial self’, agile and adaptable to market demands:

The worker of today must become an enterprise of her own: perfectly adept at managing herself, unlearning old skills whilst reflexively adapting to new demands, preferring individual independence and autonomy over the relative stability of a life-long work-style (Deuze, 2007, p.10).

Within creative networks, people often describe their work as DWYL (do what you love) as it combines work, pleasure and autonomy (Duffy, 2016), and are surrounded by like-minded people often described as PLUS (people like us). The exclusive nature of being creative and doing creative work for a living polishes the image of creative work and gives it a sense of glamour (McRobbie, 2002d), as celebrity culture is an integral part of creative work (Kennedy, 2012). Inspired by emblematic figures in the media and fashion industries, various entrepreneurs (e.g. Steve Jobs) and dot.com millionaires, creative workers and

entrepreneurs aspire to jobs that do not seem like work, and to get paid for doing what they love. Affective terms such as 'passion' and 'love' are used to construct people's working biographies (Gregg, 2009). Networks with inherent glamour elevate the importance of accumulating social capital in order to access and maintain employability (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2002).

Wittel's (2001) study is crucial to understanding how the emerging world of work operates. His study introduces the concept of 'network sociality' as an emerging model that penetrates contemporary working practices. For Wittel, network sociality replaces the dissolution of traditional structures with "fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemeral and intense encounters" (Wittel, 2001, p.51). In network sociality the social bond at work is not bureaucratic but informational, it has the form of 'catching up' and its nature is highly ephemeral. Exploring the expansion of networking events in the UK, Wittel identifies the tendency for contemporary high skilled professionals to operate within ephemeral networks. Participating in well-structured events that follow the speed-dating format, information, capital and labour are disseminated. Operating through these constructed, ephemeral, social bonds, professionals pursue a nomadic, flexible lifestyle, and these professionals are presented as detesting being tied to a specific job, community or location.

Angela McRobbie's (2002a) work states that 'network sociality' has penetrated the orientation of a generation of young employees who are consistently drawn away from traditional bonds such as family, community or region. The absence of social structures marks the decline of a fixed workplace politics which is all about 'who you know and not what you know'. Informal recruiting practices replace the formal procedures which, at least on paper, guarantee democracy and inclusivity. Using a very descriptive metaphor, McRobbie illustrates the way employees in the creative industries operate:

In this case, the club culture of 'are you on the guest list?' is extended to recruitment and personnel, so that getting an interview for contract creative work depends on informal knowledge and contacts, often friendships. Once you know who to approach (the equivalent of where

the party is being held), it is then a matter of whether the recruitment advisor 'likes you' (the equivalent of the bouncer 'letting you in'), and all ideas of fairness or equal representation of women and black people (not to mention the disabled) fly out of the window (McRobbie, 2002, p.523).

Given the absence of state regulated structures such as institutions and unions, uncertainty has become an inherent part of the creative worker's work-life. The nature of creative labour markets can be perceived as highly informal and made up of a rising number of people who work at the intersection of paid and unpaid labour and have no access to pension schemes, while the structures of collective representation are absent (McRobbie, 2015). The proliferation of networking practices signals a deeper individualization and precarization of work-life. It also raises concerns about the equality and representation of people from diverse economic and educational backgrounds (Gill, 2002; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Gill, 2014; Banks, 2017).

While networking has emerged as a structural principle of a fragmented world of work (Christopherson, 2009), scholarship has repeatedly questioned the ways employees carve desirable and appealing personalities in order to compete in the current labour market.

2.3.3 Practices of adapting the self

With young people being at the forefront of the neoliberal restructuring of work which sees the 'self as enterprise' (McNay, 2009), it is important to understand the social and economic imperatives under which the notion of the self is shaped and produced. The work of David Farrugia (2019) sheds light on the key social imperatives which are valorized by the market economy:

Analysing the cultivation of the self as a worker reveals new ways in which the imperative to form entrepreneurial and value-accruing subjectivities intertwines the creation of classed subjectivities with the logic of work and value in contemporary capitalism. In the cultivation of the young labouring subject, the affective experiences, relational styles and personal 'authenticity' of the self becomes the basis for labour market engagement and for working. The practices through which this

takes place, and the modes of selfhood that these practices are designed to realise, constitute new aspects of classed subjectivity both within the labour force and outside work, in which the life of the subject is rendered productive or unproductive through labour market engagement (Farrugia, 2019, p.60).

Hence, as work and life become interchangeable, the post-Fordist work ethic makes imperative the need to become somebody through labour. As labour markets become ever more precarious, the requirement for the self to be adaptable has intensified (McRobbie, 2015). Many studies suggest that contemporary workers tend to employ self-branding techniques (Cremin, 2003) in order to promote themselves and their work:

Under the conditions of a perpetually transforming, unstable and increasingly image-based mode of production, we come to recognize that the ability to attract attention – to garner a reputation – might provide us with a modicum of personal and financial security (Hearn, 2010, p.426).

Gandini (2016) captures this turn towards a socio-economic context where reputation is the new currency:

It is reputation that permits the allocation of unequal resources in this individualized labour market by functioning as the intermediary that transforms social relationships into value (Gandini, 2016, p.125).

These accounts portray contemporary workers and entrepreneurs as merely 'status seekers' who aspire to acquire as many acquaintances possible in order to stay within the market realm. Gandini's work sees new media workers as being in an ongoing process of image making and creating impressions. These practices are enacted in new media industries, authorizing and validating attention while self-production and self-branding are elevated to key practices.

This highly pessimistic and critical approach signals a "shift from a working self, to the self as work in the form of a self-brand with the reputation as its currency" (Hearn, 2010, p.426). Indeed, modalities of the self that can be commodified are expanding while autonomist Marxist theory suggests that

there is no aspect of the self that cannot be attached to work (Hardt and Negri, 2004). According to competitive entrepreneurial discourse, the self can be transformed into an eternal project of entrepreneurial development (Bröckling, 2015).

In this entrepreneurial context, it is not formal education, skills or capacities that make someone thrive but rather their adaptability to 'enterprise culture' (McRobbie, 2015). Contemporary workers find themselves on a continuous pitch. As one of Gill's interviewees puts it, "life is a pitch" (Gill, 2011). Facilitated by the proliferation of digital technologies, the working lives of creative workers and entrepreneurs are 'boundaryless' (Webster and Randle, 2016) since they have to demonstrate their commitment, love and passion on a 24/7 basis (Gregg, 2009).

Creative labour is often characterized as a labour of love, signifying how much labour is connected to the self of the individual. The performance of emotional labour in the course of work illustrates the creation of value through subjectivities. This kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and sometimes draws "on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality" (Hochschild, 1983, p.7). The blurred boundaries between work-life and personal life strengthen this claim as personal, non-work elements of employees' lives have to be managed and controlled. For instance, participation in after work drinks has taken the form of 'compulsory sociality', as employees must join in, to show devotion and commitment to the enterprise culture (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Gregg, 2010). Consequently, with no clear, formal path in front of them, young workers form their identities in a highly relational and affective way (Hardt and Negri, 2004; Lazzarato, 2007).

Due to the largely self-employed nature of creative work, a culture of self-blame is common:

Self-blaming arises as traditional explanations of business failure – such as recession and economic downturns, lack of governmental support,

bureaucratic inefficiency or institutional uncompetitiveness – lose their legitimacy in a more individualized economic climate (Banks, 2007, p.61). This is what Beck (1992) describes as the individualization of social risk, where social problems “are perceived in terms of psychological dispositions as personal inadequacies, guilt feelings, anxieties, conflicts, and neuroses” (p.100). In this context, the pseudo-legitimization of social inequalities emerges as fully natural and based on meritocracy:

More flexible, privatized, and precarious working arrangements, which characterize post-Fordist capitalism, have been accompanied, I suggest, by a new ethos which sees workers as autonomous nodes in a network economy where workers are expected to act as entrepreneurs, and where inequalities are seen as a result of meritocracy (specifically skilfulness with network technology), not capitalist relations of power (Fisher, 2008, p.184).

As analysed by Fisher, this emerging ethos entirely transfers the burden of market uncertainty to workers. Inequalities are naturalized and capitalist relations of power seem, and feel, normal. According to the aforementioned critical studies, this leaves little or no room for negotiating the conditions of contemporary working life.

Many critical studies of creative labour adopt a neo-Foucauldian approach, using ‘governmentality’ as their theoretical lens. The concept of governmentality is introduced in the later work of Foucault as a more refined way of understanding power and knowledge (Foucault, 1991). To ‘govern’ implies a complex set of processes through which human behaviour is systematically controlled in ever wider areas of social and personal life. Through ‘technologies of self’, people “are trained to accept and reproduce for themselves the precise conditions of their subordination” (Banks, 2007, p.42). Ethics is understood as a medium of governance, or as a technology of the self in which human beings act upon themselves within certain regimes of authority and knowledge, by means of certain techniques directed at self-improvement (Rose et al., 2006, p.90).

Gordon, following the concept of governmentality, underlines how individuals must conduct their lives as an enterprise in the making to become entrepreneurs (Gordon, 1987). In this highly-individualized process, risk is embraced as the necessary corollary of success, while people have only themselves to blame for failure (Banks et al., 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Neff, 2012). Some research suggests that 'governmentality' in creative industry contexts should be thought as a form of self-regulation, ethically informed and, on occasion, more effective than legislative regulation (Kennedy, 2012, p.86). Governmentality theory offers a theoretical lens through which to understand the conflicting nature of creative labour – being simultaneously exploitative and empowering for creative workers. This is often illustrated by the 'pain-pleasure axis' (McRobbie, 2006), highlighting that, despite its dark side, creative labour retains its attractive and desirable character. Despite the opportunities for critical thinking that governmentality theory entails when applied to creative labour, it creates a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness, and there is little space for negotiation or transformation within the theory (Banks, 2007).

2.4 A request for a more balanced approach

Even though empirical and ethnographic accounts of creative labour repeatedly challenge its idealized perception, creative labour has not lost its charm. In an attempt to understand the intrinsic motivations of contemporary workers for pursuing creative careers – despite the precarious working conditions (Gill and Pratt, 2008) – researchers explore what is considered good, fulfilling work and what is not. Creative industry scholars identify certain parameters such as satisfying wages, good working hours, certain levels of safety, strong autonomy, interest, involvement, sociality, self-esteem, potential for self-realization, work-life balance, security, excellent products and products that contribute to the common good (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Contemporary creative workers tend to value the inherent informality of creative labour as it opens up possibilities for independence, autonomy and self-realization (Hesmondhalgh and Zoellner, 2013, p.28). The negative features of

creative labour such as low pay, overwork and insecurity are overshadowed by its ambiguous promise of personal and professional emancipation through self-realization. This has pushed researchers to explore its ethical underpinnings and its connection with how people see and construct themselves as ethical human beings (Banks, 2006; Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2017).

The field of creative labour and entrepreneurship seems ideal for exploring the ethical and moral underpinnings of economic activity, as it is so interconnected with the notion of the self and the common good. As many researchers confirm, the number of creative initiatives that put the common good at their centre rather than the profit imperative has increased over the last few years (Dey and Steyaert, 2016). The rise of ethical businesses along with social and cultural entrepreneurship has signalled a turn towards the re-introduction of morality into economic activity, suggesting a post-corporate ethos at work:

The pursuit of profit alone, however, is increasingly not the sole driver. Prior to 2007, the development of social enterprise and entrepreneurship was growing rapidly and is now accepted as being in the mainstream. Increasingly, entrepreneurs are expected (and many expect) to work in socially responsible ways; to create social as well as financial value and not simply pursue individual self-enrichment (Rae, 2014, p.83).

Banks argues that individualization may present an opportunity to re-establish moral and ethical values in the workplace, as creative workers seem to have a continuous motivation for self-improvement and the betterment of society. The dissolution of the boundary between pleasure and work can be seen as an opportunity to re-establish the morality of work (Banks, 2006).

There is a strand of thought which considers creative individuals to have embraced market imperatives in order to sustain themselves; leaving little or no room for questioning the existing neoliberal structures (McRobbie, 2011). Therefore, empirical studies call for a more balanced approach to understanding the conflicting dilemmas young contemporary creative workers face (Banks, 2006; Hesmondhalgh, 2017). These empirical studies explore creative individuals

through a holistic lens, in the sense that creative individuals should be understood as rounded characters with psychological needs lending themselves to ethical, moral and social practices (Kennedy, 2012). Taking a cue from Banks' (2006) claim that "if we merely assume that moral values are absent or that a blanket consensus exists whereby atomized individuals automatically endorse neo-liberal values, we decontextualize and dissocialize the varied conditions under which the cultural industries operate" (p.460), I seek to understand more deeply the ways contemporary creative workers manage their work-life.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has offered a brief overview of the debates associated with the transformation of work and the emergence of casualized labour. Firstly, it analysed the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, highlighting the figure of the entrepreneur as a leading model for economic activity. Without idealizing entrepreneurial discourse, this chapter focuses on critical accounts of the wider transformations of work, tracing the emergence and valorization of creative labour, and presenting long-standing critiques of its precarious and casualized nature.

Shedding light on highly fragmented creative labour markets, it introduced the concept of network sociality (Wittel, 2001) which serves as a structural principle for navigating the new economy (Adkins, 2005). It characterized the way personal and professional relationships between individuals are formed. Contemporary workers are pushed to become entrepreneurs and navigate creative labour markets with inherent informality in their practices. As illustrated by Angela McRobbie in her work on the diffusion of 'club culture' into contemporary companies, informal and back-door recruiting practices prevail (McRobbie, 2002b), raising concerns about equality and justice in the creative sector.

The glamour that frames creative labour and people who engage in a wide variety of creative entrepreneurial activities presents creative careers as hard to get, desirable and fulfilling (Hesmondhalgh and Zoellner, 2013). This uneven

promise is often framed by a discourse of love and 24/7 commitment, in which workers engage emotionally and personally (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Gregg, 2009). Indeed, in this context, there is no distinction between the working self and the self. Studies show that individuals adapt to the imperatives of the market economy, employing techniques of self-branding (Cremin, 2003), self-promotion and self-marketing. It is crucial to understand the idea of reputation, which serves as a passport to creative labour markets.

This chapter highlighted the contradictory nature of creative labour. While it is presented as both desirable and fulfilling for young professionals, empirical studies warn of its highly exploitative nature and low salaries. This chapter examined the attractiveness of creative labour through the lens of 'governmentality theory', which explains how individuals reproduce their own terms of subordination. It presents a balanced approach to creative labour that seeks to explain its values and ethics. Drawing on Banks' (2006) rationale, it aspires to treat creative workers and entrepreneurs as rounded and holistic subjectivities, navigating highly individualized labour markets. The close relationship between the self and creative work, opens up potential for re-moralizing economic activity.

This chapter signals the need for an empirical investigation into the ways young people cultivate themselves to become subjectivities of value in the current context. Following Farrugia's (2019) work, further investigation is needed into the ways today's employees manage⁴ their working lives and cultivate the qualities of a productive worker. Of course, this entails an examination of the current conditions that shape, constrain and determine the social imperatives which emerged post-crisis.

⁴ Here, drawing upon Gill's study, I use the word 'manage', "not in its conventional or 'business school' sense but with a more critical reflection that comes from Marxist, feminist and poststructuralist thinking" (Gill, 2011, p.249).

3 The emergence of non-fixed workplaces

As demonstrated, structural changes in employment bring new forms of market-oriented business strategies (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). As de Peuter observes: “The spread of nonstandard, creative work under post-Fordism demonstrates capital’s remarkable capacity to absorb, adapt to, and thrive off desires opposing it” (de Peuter, 2014, p.265). So, with capitalism leaving behind the hierarchical, Fordist regime, new forms of network-based organizations emerge (Wittel, 2001; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Fisher, 2010). At the same time, bureaucratic organizations are criticized for their rigidity and their lack of innovation, resulting in a gradual flattening of their organizational hierarchies and an increased focus on risk-taking and creative problem-solving (Davis and Scase, 2000; Cunliffe, 2014; Lund and Zukerfeld, 2020).

New forms of work, based on employee initiative and relative work autonomy, are perceived as liberating and emancipating opportunities for the younger generation of highly qualified employees (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Reflecting a peculiar optimism, Giddens puts his hopes in the dynamism of the market-based society, saying that these emerging economic forms present an empowering opportunity for more people to engage in meaningful working lives (Giddens, 1991). However, Sennett believes that new economic forms result in the corrosion of social bonds and personal meaning (Sennett, 1998).

As discussed in Chapter 2, critical scholarship suggests that freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs treat relationships as highly functional, career-oriented “network socialities” (Wittel, 2001) while the self is perceived as an eternal project of entrepreneurial development (Bröckling, 2015). Facilitated by the proliferation of digital technologies, the working lives of contemporary workers have no boundaries (Webster and Randle, 2016) because they are required to demonstrate commitment on a 24/7 basis (Gregg, 2009). This results in contemporary workers having a constant need to prove their value, being “on a continuous pitch” (Gill, 2010). Formal education, skills or capacities are no longer the most important assets for professionals to thrive, but rather it is their adaptability to the ‘enterprise culture’ (McRobbie, 2015).

So, employees are pushed to become 'entrepreneurs of their self' in a continuous race for self-improvement, while "work is reconfigured as an activity through which people produce and discover a sense of personal identity" (du Gay, 1996, p.78). Selfhood becomes a project of its own, that must be reflexively and actively pursued (Giddens, 1991), while self-development is elevated to a human right (Illouz, 2007, p.45). Studies suggest that people tend to feel less valued in corporate environments (Webb, 2004) and, in turn, seek jobs that contribute to their professional and personal growth.

With the proliferation of digital technologies, fixed working arrangements are becoming ever less the cornerstone of professional life. More flexible structures and ways of working proliferate, addressing the challenges of the younger generation of employees who consider themselves emancipated entrepreneurs rather than precarious employees. These professionals are no longer treated as workers, compelled to participate in capitalist production, but entrepreneurs or "entreploees" (Pongratz & Voß, 2003), who aspire to take their fate into their own hands. This has profound effects not only on the way people work but also on the way people see and understand the world around them and position themselves within it.

As independent workers now represent "the fastest growing group in the EU labour market" (Leighton, 2015, p.1), traditional perceptions of how employment, work and workplaces should look are being challenged by the wider restructuring of labour and the rise of unemployment (Katz and Krueger, 2017). The fixed corporate environment, which has long symbolized security and financial prosperity in people's minds, can no longer guarantee social mobility (Fraser, 2001). However, based on cultures of flexibility and informality, flexible working arrangements introduce non-traditional practices into workplaces, such as the freedom to work remotely or in flexible layouts where vertical hierarchies and bureaucratic culture are somewhat disrupted.

The first section of this chapter (3.1) aims to capture the turn towards contemporary workplaces incorporating elements of leisure and entertainment in their settings. Tracing this dynamic trend, it explores the first studies of Andy

Pratt (2002) and Andrew Ross (2004), which capture the spirit of the emerging, 'permissive' workplaces of Silicon Valley. With informality as an asset, these workplaces create high expectations in terms of maximizing productivity and opening new horizons for innovative businesses. This does not come without a cost, of course. As Ross (2004) indicates, these workplaces are designed to extract value from every aspect of the employees' working life. His study reveals a 'bulimic' working pattern with no social security. Nevertheless, the 'permissive workplace' has not lost its charm.

Section 3.2 traces the genealogy of coworking, from the demand for a 'third space' to the commercialization of coworking. It then turns its focus to the diverse nuances of coworking. As this section indicates, coworking spaces operate in multiple, vaguely differentiated ways in terms of their profiles, models of operation, funding resources and target audiences. Section 3.3 explores the overall promise of coworking. Indeed, the proliferation of coworking makes some wonder what makes these spaces so attractive. What could make freelancers, start-ups and small businesses pay to work in such spaces? The proliferation of coworking can be seen as a response to deepening precarity, especially for those who work in the creative sectors of the economy. Coworking spaces host workers who operate outside 'standard employment relationships' (de Peuter, 2014a). Responding to various manifestations of precarity, coworking spaces unevenly promise that they can potentially help residents navigate an unstable and unregulated labour market.

As this chapter illustrates, coworking spaces do not operate outside the market. Whether approaching coworking from a business and managerial perspective (Spinuzzi, 2012; Capdevila, 2013; Moriset, 2014), or putting the notion of community at the heart of the coworking phenomenon, the literature supports the idea that coworking spaces offer an infrastructure that makes flexible labour regimes robust (de Peuter et al., 2017, p.691). Their competitive aspects need to be further unpicked and analysed - and this is exactly what is done in section 3.6, which explores coworking's inherent informality by analysing the ways it manifests in everyday practice.

3.1 Beyond corporations

The works of Andy Pratt (2002) and Andrew Ross (2004) in the early 2000s regarding new media companies in Silicon Valley describe, in depth, how new places of work were launched, incorporating elements of freelance culture such as the values of autonomy and workplace flexibility. These workspaces contrast with the sterile corporate office environments which were, from the 1950s, designed to implement the Fordist method of work, prioritizing corporate efficiency and standardization. As Pratt observes, new workplaces started to emerge which had nothing in common with what used to be called an office.

Located in cheap warehouses with 'cool' atmospheres and aesthetics, these workplaces gradually became the next 'cool' and 'funky' spaces to work (Pratt, 2002). The overall physical aspects of these spaces became their differentiating element, as much emphasis was put on the way they looked. To be more specific, these emerging workplaces tended to avoid corporate, old-fashioned cubicles, replacing them with open spaces "where things flow organically" (Pratt, 2002, p.42).

Ross (2004) argues that in the early 2000s the 'humane workplace' emerged as a workplace "designed both physically and philosophically to chase the blues" (p.10). Aiming to capture the spirit of the dot.com era, Ross focuses on the ways young media workers in Silicon Valley conceptualize themselves in a work environment that looks informal, homey and not corporate. As Ross discovered, young media workers are encouraged to be themselves, to act freely and independently, as well as undertake initiatives voluntarily. On the surface, everybody seems happy and the workplace conditions look ideal. But, as Ross' study showed, for this emerging category of digital professionals, working countless hours without social security benefits was the norm. Ross points to the fact that despite the superficial flexibility exemplified by the workplace atmosphere, every employee is relentlessly monitored, the aim being "to extract value from any moment of an employee's day" (Ross, 2004, p.146).

Almost a decade later, these workplaces are gradually becoming the norm. That said, the award-winning Google workplace serves as the ideal example of how an office should look. Google has been called one of the 'best companies to work for' many times, as its workplace culture stands out for many reasons:

Working at Google, employees enjoy free food served throughout the day, a volleyball court, a swimming pool, a car wash, an oil change, a haircut, free health care, and many other benefits. The biggest benefit for the staff is to be picked up on the day of work. As assessed by many traffic experts, the system set up by Google is considered to be a great transport network (Tran Kim, 2017, p.3).

Informality and leisure penetrate every aspect of working life, as workplace benefits and amenities proliferate outside the fixed office space. More broadly, Silicon Valley workplaces such as Google actively restore businesses' faith in informality and individual responsibility (Ross, 2004). In this emerging 'no dress code' workplace, informality gradually becomes the norm; it is a sign of success, rather than a sign of amateurism. So, corporations like Google, IDEO and Southwest are conceptualized as fun workplaces where employees can work and play interchangeably (Schmidt and Rosenberg, 2014).

A range of management and business articles support the view that informal, 'no collar' office designs that are cool and that incorporate elements of play such as ping-pong tables, are more likely to have employees that are happy, motivated and, above all, productive (Petelczyc et al., 2018). This is why contemporary businesses put so much emphasis on workplace aesthetics. In an interview, Mark Montgomery, founder of FLOthinkery and entrepreneur-in-residence at Nashville, states that office design should serve the company's needs as well as its personality. In an attempt to advise young start-up entrepreneurs he urges: "Just make your space reflect who you are and what your company is and what it does" (Hann, 2011). In his interview at www.entrepreneur.com, he repeatedly points out that office design should reflect the company's culture but also its leadership. If an employee spends half

of their day (at least) in the workspace, it should be made to feel good, otherwise productivity and employee engagement will not be achieved.

The trend for redesigning corporate spaces has developed alongside the growth in alternative workplaces where individual entrepreneurs and small businesses come together. Coworking spaces, hubs and informal workplaces are widely presented in the grey literature as workplaces that incarnate the aesthetics of informality and neo-leisure at work, incorporating a post-corporate way of working.

Thus, glorifying the coworking buzz, companies all over the UK, the EU and worldwide, have invested in neo-leisure zones such as gaming and chilling spots. In addition, as de Peuter observes, “a growing number of large corporations install employees remotely in coworking spaces because managers view coworking environments as an innovation stimulant, a recruitment venue and a low-overhead location for temporary project teams” (de Peuter et al., 2017, p. 691). So, coworking creates expectations of high productivity, innovation and entrepreneurial culture. At the same time, in such spaces self-management and self-regulation are the norm, as employees do not come across visible vertical hierarchies. It can be argued that coworking gives a sense of flatness, of a dismissal of any power.

This section has outlined the popularity of spaces that are not considered strictly ‘corporate’. The popularity of workplaces which incorporate elements of leisure brings to the surface a deeper quest, the need to trace their origins. This means exploring the genealogy of coworking. The next section investigates the emergence of coworking, from when it was just a demand for a ‘third space’ between home and office, to the emergence of the WeWork phenomenon.

3.2 The proliferation of coworking

Coworking might be seen as developing from the demand for ‘third spaces’, first recorded in the 90s in the USA. The term ‘third spaces’ was originally introduced by the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg in 1989, to distinguish working from home (first space), working from a typical working environment (second space)

and working from a collaborative or communal space where professionals come together to work on their own or collaborative projects (Oldenburg, 1989). For Oldenburg, the initial third spaces were cafés or fast food chains in the USA.

As technology enabled a more flexible way of working (see Chapter 2), people began to work outside traditional workspaces, constantly on the move and sometimes 'workplace-less' (Huws, 2014). Indeed, the socioeconomic context in which coworking has grown is similar to the one identified by critical accounts of creative labour and involuntary entrepreneurism (Gill and Pratt, 2008; McRobbie, 2016; see Chapter 2). Coworking spaces host a wide spectrum of professionals in creative industries such as designers, writers, web developers and creative consultants, as well as the business services supporting these industries. Thus, the diffusion of coworking is closely related to the proliferation of a casualized, project-based, freelance (Cappelli and Keller, 2013) and un-unionized workforce (de Peuter et al., 2017). At the same time, labour has become more precarious and unstable, and the notion of what constitutes a contemporary workplace is shifting, as de Peuter observes:

Mostly populated by communication, design, and business services professionals, coworking spaces respond to two manifestations of precarity for solo operators: the isolation of working alone at home, and a lack of access to affordable commercial property (de Peuter, 2014, p.268).

Coworking is primarily discussed by the practitioners themselves in blogs, wikis and conferences, where it is presented as an ultimately positive and desirable experience. As described in a coworking wiki, the term 'coworking' was first used in 1999 by Bernie DeKoven, an American game designer, author and lecturer, to describe the collaborative work supported by computers and the new technologies of the day. The first accounts of the coworking phenomenon linked it to the emergence of an 'open source approach to work'. As Anne Leforestier points out:

The co-working space has been inspired by open source software precepts and dot-com boom. The number of one-person businesses rose

from 16.5 million in 2000 to 20.4 million in 2005 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Typically, independent contractors, freelancers, entrepreneurs and work-at home professionals were sick of working in isolation and were looking for human interaction. (Leforestier, 2009, p.4).

Coworking has been described as the physical manifestation of the 'open source movement' (Lange, 2011), offering much needed and desired 'telecoworking flexibility' (Reed, 2007).

The perception of 'coworking' as a philosophy is attributed to the Global Coworking Manifesto published in 2013, which says, "coworking has come to serve as the emerging idealistic workplace that goes beyond the culture of traditional corporations which are tied to hierarchical structures", and goes onto say:

Coworking is redefining the way we do work. Inspired by the participatory culture of the open source movement and the empowering nature of IT, we are building a more sustainable future. We are a group of connected individuals and small businesses creating an economy of innovation and creativity in our communities and worldwide. We envision a new economic engine composed of collaboration and community, in contrast to the silos and secrecy of the 19th/20th century economy (Anon, 2016a).

So, besides physical space, being a member of a coworking space implies that individuals and collectives are aligned to a specific set of values and culture:

It is collaboration over competition, community over agendas, participation over observation, doing over saying, friendship over formality, boldness over assurance, learning over expertise, people over personalities, value ecosystem over value chain (Anon, 2016a).

Alongside the grey literature, throughout the first years of the coworking phenomenon a growing body of academic literature developed, examining coworking in terms of collaborative production and bottom-up self-management. Studies by Lange (2011) and Merkel (2015) of Berlin give a

definition of coworking spaces as bottom-up, collective-driven and grounded in urban space. For Lange, coworking spaces are a manifestation of the “collective-driven, networked approach of the open source idea translated into physical space” (Lange, 2011, p.292). Likewise, for Merkel, coworking represents a collective way of tackling precarity, an inherent characteristic of work in the creative and cultural industries:

The proliferation of coworking as an urban social practice highlights alternative ways of organising labour in the city of the twenty-first century. [...] coworking is deeply embedded in the distinct production logics of cultural and creative industries with its project-based organisation and knowledge dynamics required for constant innovation. It presents a strategy for coping with the insecurities and precariousness of creative labour conditions by means of a collective, community-based approach to the organisation of cultural and creative work (Merkel, 2015, pp.134-135).

Over the last few years, the proliferation of coworking in Anglo-Saxon countries and more broadly across the economies of the West has been huge. Moriset’s (2014) study reports an overall number of 2,498 coworking spaces worldwide in 2014, arguing for the creation of a “coworking bubble” (p.16). This has led to the proliferation of various coworking spaces that operate under multiple terms. The diversity of definitions available for these spaces brings to the surface their complex nature. The lack of definitional clarity prompts the question whether coworking is a “coherent phenomenon” or just an “unstable referent” (Spinuzzi, 2012, p.419).

The proliferation of coworking spaces indicates their commercialization. Franchise coworking spaces are common in cities as they usually operate under a common brand, providing workplace facilities to freelance professionals, start-ups or even more established businesses. The example of WeWork is emblematic. Until very recently, WeWork was an expanding giant that started in New York, renting short-term desk spaces to professionals. Despite the fact that it was valued at \$47 billion, in October 2019 the company unexpectedly

announced that it could soon run out of money. This development prompts a question about the viability of the whole coworking industry which, in the WeWork case, is closely interrelated to the erratic property market:

Coworking is more heterogeneous than WeWork, but this behemoth illustrates how far collaborative workspace has come. Inside a decade, an innovation from below was drawn out of the economic margins, harnessed by capital and imprinted with corporate power relations. Coworking has evolved into multiple permutations, from sector-specific to pan-professional spaces, small-scale operations to multifloor facilities, metropolitan to small-city locations. Operators are under pressure to differentiate in an increasingly crowded coworking 'market'. Some forecasters see coworking as a harbinger of a wholesale transformation of the 'workplace' into a 'consumer good', envisioning a matrix of sites in which mobile workers toil, a respatialization of work from which hotel and retail chains are strategically placed to profit (Munn et al., 2013 cited in de Peuter et al., 2017, p.692).

With coworking becoming a buzzword over the last few years, dePeuter et al. (2017) ask whether coworking can act as a protective shield against precarity or whether it is 'doomed' to simply reproduce it:

Coworking is deeply ambivalent. It emerged from below and was subsequently harnessed by private market interests. Coworking softens effects of flexploitation, albeit in a manner that tends to deepen neoliberal subjectification. Pushing back against both recuperation and individualization requires that coworking spaces explore alternatives to capitalist ownership conventions (de Peuter et al., 2017, p.701).

Even though coworking spaces began from bottom-up collective action to combat precarity, their proliferation reveals their eventual marketization. They testify to the deepening of the precarious working and living conditions of workers employed in other sectors, apart from creative and cultural ones. The next section illustrates the diverse nuances of coworking, exploring its multifaceted nature.

3.3 Diverse coworking nuances

Multiple empirical studies indicate the nuances and variations in coworking spaces (Chambers and Vejle, 2011; Dovey et al., 2016). As the literature suggests, these spaces may be stand-alone enterprises initiated by independent entrepreneurs or collectives, or they could be owned by public institutions such as embassies, municipalities or chambers of commerce (Moriset, 2013; Capdevila, 2013; Capdevila, 2014b; Mortara and Gontran Parisot, 2016; Di Roma et al., 2017; Brown, 2017; Schmidt and Brinks, 2017; Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018). Coworking spaces could even be embedded in universities, libraries (Bilandzic and Foth, 2013) or other social institutions. There are spaces that operate combining various statuses of ownership, such as semi-public initiated spaces or semi-private, and combining various sources of funding (Dovey et al., 2016). IT firms such as Google and IBM are providers of coworking spaces that are sometimes open to the public. The study of Bouncken et al. (2018) identifies the emergence of spaces owned by consultancy firms that look to aggregate innovation by attracting talented professionals.

An international survey of coworking conducted by Deskmag in 2011 shows that 54% of coworking users are freelancers, 20% entrepreneurs and 20% dependent contractors, while most work in the broad field of the creative and new media industries (Foertsch, 2011). Spinuzzi's work was among the first empirical studies of coworking, and depicts coworking as having different meanings depending on the target audience:

Coworking is not a concrete product, like a building, but a service – in fact, a service that proprietors provide indirectly, by providing a space where co-workers can network their other activities by engaging in peer-to-peer interactions (Spinuzzi, 2012, p.431).

Adopting a regional perspective, Capdevila's study captures the innovative dynamics of the phenomenon, noting that "coworking-spaces are defined as localized spaces where independent professionals work sharing resources and are open to share their knowledge with the rest of the community" (Capdevila, 2013, p.3). Gandini observes:

Coworking spaces are shared workplaces utilized by different sorts of knowledge professionals, mostly freelancers, working in various degrees of specialization in the vast domain of the knowledge industry. Practically conceived as office-renting facilities where workers hire a desk and a wi-fi connection these are, more importantly, places where independent professionals live their daily routines side-by-side with professional peers, largely working in the same sector – a circumstance which has huge implications on the nature of their job, the relevance of social relations across their own professional networks and – ultimately – their existence as productive workers in the knowledge economy (Gandini, 2015, p.194-195).

Gandini's study of coworking spaces in Milan indicates a fluid mosaic of digital professionals that is multi-functional, aggregating diverse skillsets. Their per-month income is reportedly between EUR 1,000 and 2,000 (Gandini, 2015).

Bilandzic and Foth (2013) identify three main types of coworking users:

- The simple utilizer who uses the technological facilities.
- The learner who has expectations of acquiring knowledge, attends events and meets peers.
- The socializer who is in search of professional recognition and acknowledgement.

The above categorization indicates the various functions of coworking facilities, training and event organization as well as networking facilitation. These three elements of coworking are both tangible and intangible, reflecting various nuances of the spaces operating under the term 'coworking'. That said, I consider coworking an insufficient term to capture the currently evolving and multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon.

Many studies still use coworking as a term, attempting to enrich its definition while researching its multiple ramifications (Gandini, 2016b; Brown, 2017; de Peuter et al., 2017; Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018). For its proponents, coworking and other kinds of third space serve as meeting points where diverse professionals work flexibly and independently next to young entrepreneurs,

nurturing their entrepreneurial ideas (Dovey et al., 2016; Gandini, 2015). Under the same coworking roof, creative professionals, micro-entrepreneurs, and small business owners co-exist, sharing tangible and intangible resources (Spinuzzi, 2012). Some empirical studies introduce new analytical models to describe these spaces. The work of Schmidt and Brinks (2017) points out the relationship of these spaces with creativity and experimentation, using the umbrella term “open creative labs” (p.295). Their study is well-embedded in the German context, researching mainly the spaces operating in Berlin. Their typology provides four types of open creative lab:

1. Experimentation labs: These spaces are grassroots initiatives that are usually run by interest groups or non-profit associations. They mainly target do it yourself practitioners and hobbyists.
2. Working labs: These spaces resemble what we identify as coworking. Compared to the first category of experimentation labs, working labs have a stronger economic orientation. They mainly attract freelancers, micro-entrepreneurs and start-ups.
3. Open innovation labs: These spaces are mostly initiated by firms or academic institutions, aimed at enriching internal development processes with external knowledge. The ultimate objective of these spaces is to identify upcoming market trends and build marketable products from scratch.
4. Investor-driven labs: These spaces are managed by venture capitalists and their aim is to turn ideas into profitable businesses. They are mostly occupied by entrepreneurs, start-ups and various teams. These spaces resemble incubators and accelerators.

The different statuses of ownership reflect different models of operation. Capdevila's (2014a) work identifies two very broad categories of management, 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. Top-down refers to a rigid chain of command, fixed power relations and well-structured bureaucratic processes. In this model, governance is facilitated by actors at the upper levels with a limited but progressive involvement of the lower levels. In contrast, the 'bottom-up'

approach relies on grassroots dynamics, where decisions are taken collectively and the participation of all members is required. In this context, initiatives can emerge organically from actors at low levels or from actors outside the flexible organizational structure. While Capdevila's identification of two broad categories of management is useful, it might prove overly simplistic in practice.

From my observation – and this is something to be further tested empirically – it seems to be the case that popular terms such as coworking spaces, incubators, makers' spaces, labs and accelerators are used interchangeably. The pluralism of the existing terms under which all these spaces operate tends to obscure the debate around their emergence and function. In their study of creative hubs, Dovey et al. (2016) indicate that research into these emerging spaces of work organization should be less about “enumerating the various types or instances of creative hubs” and more about “understanding the types of processes and values that shape and govern their day to day activities” (p.14). The apparent lack of empirical evidence about these spaces underlines the importance of scrutinizing the various levels of dependence of such spaces on institutions, corporation and other firms, and the extent to which these levels of dependency have implications for the overall coworking model of operation and day to day practice.

3.4 Coworking services

Going through the websites of the various coworking spaces that have multiplied in cities such as London, Barcelona and Paris, it can be observed that they promote themselves as ‘collaboration facilitators’, ‘open learning hubs’, ‘communities of like-minded individuals’ and not just shared desks with strong Wi-Fi connections. They usually provide general workplace facilities such as receptions, offices, meeting rooms and shared kitchens alongside more specialized services such as consulting, mentoring and coaching schemes. Occasionally, they host various networking and training events. Some spaces have selection processes which prospective participants have to follow, while other have no significant barriers to joining. Participants might work on their

own projects, shared projects or towards the marketability of business ideas (Gandini, 2015; Schmidt and Brinks, 2017).

In one of the first studies of coworking, Spinuzzi (2012) attempts to capture the coworking spirit. Interviewing a wide range of co-workers as well as coworking proprietors in Austin, his study reveals diverse dynamics:

Co-workers co-work, but freelancers freelance, consultants consult, entrepreneurs start and grow businesses, and small-business owners run small businesses. These activities are different, particularly because they are exercised in different fields and disciplines and require different sorts of work and resources – and collaborations. Consequently, the actors of these coworking activities expected quite different things from their shared spaces. (Spinuzzi, 2012, p.421)

For Spinuzzi, co-workers are perceived as ‘non-employee enterprises’, similar to what Gandini calls a ‘businesses of one’ (Gandini, 2016b) or ‘the start-up of me’. Adopting a business-oriented approach, he sees profit maximization as the main motivation for ‘non-employee enterprises’ to join the coworking space. Once a newly established business or young professional joins the coworking space, they instantly have access to a wider pool of clients and potential collaborators. Spinuzzi calls this phenomenon the ‘good neighbours’ approach. Co-workers form a neighbourhood in which collaborations and partnerships can be formed. In this process, the role of hosts and proprietors is crucial as they are the ones who identify common interests and create the links between co-workers (Spinuzzi, 2012). Coworking forms informal networks where professionals can search for employment and collaboration opportunities.

For this reason, coworking spaces have even been called ‘serendipity accelerators’ (Moriset, 2014, p.8), highlighting the importance of informal and unstructured interaction between co-workers. Brown (2017) observes that such spaces can be thought of as ‘curated workplaces’ of serendipitous encounter, spontaneous exchange and collaboration (p.112). There are even studies such as that of Capdevila (2014b) addressing the various forms of collaboration that might occur in these spaces. Despite the fact that Capdevila adopts a business

oriented and managerial perspective, his work gives us a glimpse of what collaboration in these spaces can mean in practice. He observes primarily cost-driven collaboration where co-workers share material resources, and pinpoints other, more profound, modes of collaboration in which both tangible and intangible resources are distributed (Capdevila, 2014b).

In the first quantitative multinational study of coworking, Gerdenitsch et al. (2016) pointed out the importance of social support in coworking spaces. This study is significant because it advocates the belief that being surrounded by like-minded individuals has a great impact on the quality of individuals' working lives. The notion of community emerges as an analytical model for understanding coworking.

In search of flexible and fluid organizational theories to understand what these spaces have to offer, many studies examine coworking organization through the theoretical lens of community (Brinks and Schmidt, 2015; Brown, 2017; Garrett et al., 2017; Schmidt and Brinks, 2017). The idea of understanding the workplace as a community is not something new. In their study of a TV production company, Grugulis and Stoyanova (2011) explore how people tend to navigate a labour market dominated by small firms and freelancers. In this fragmented context, communities are perceived as the strategic 'missing middle' where new entrants work their way up the professional ladder:

Communities of practice are both a forum for developing technical skills and a social network through which those skills can be exercised and polished. These two processes are very much interdependent, as the correlation of membership and expertise signals (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011, p.344).

The interest in communities of practice (CoPs) signals "a broad reinstatement of situated learning in thinking on dynamics of knowledge capitalism" (Amin and Roberts, 2008, p.353), where flexible working arrangements gradually proliferate. The community of practice, a term coined by Wenger, can be broadly defined as aggregations of people who share enthusiasm, resources and concerns, aiming to solve a shared problem through practice (Wenger, 1998). In

this sense, the CoP shares many common characteristics with the way coworking spaces are promoted as 'learning and talent growth facilitators'. In a CoP, learning through knowledge sharing is a structural element of its existence. Lave and Wenger (1991) distinguish a CoP as "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge" (p.98), putting situated learning at the heart of community. These spaces promise to transform co-workers into learners.

By joining a coworking facility, participants share a lot more than just space. According to Schmidt and Brinks (2017), participants may share values, working conditions and projects, and can even work towards the marketability of start-up ideas. Members of a coworking space can even create a shared sense of belonging. Garrett et al. (2017) argue that, in this way, participants of coworking ascribe a sense of community at work. Pushing this argument further, participants foster a sense of belonging to a professional community as the work in such spaces tends to be highly un-unionized.

Most coworking spaces define themselves as part of the Global Coworking Community. They demonstrate strong ideological affiliations with the open source movement (Lange, 2011) and the sharing economy (Botsman and Rogers, 2011) as they tend to operate with a flat structure, putting notions of community and collaboration at the heart of their moral principles. With coworking having its ideological roots in artists' collaborative spaces, it is seen as a highly self-organized, non-competitive, value-driven and communitarian phenomenon (Markusen et al., 2006; Lange, 2011; Merkel, 2015). These collectives were set up to protect artists from their precarious working life conditions (Bain and McLean, 2013; Forkert, 2013). Coworking spaces promise to bring the fundamental values of "collaboration, openness, community, accessibility and sustainability" (Anon, 2016a). But as the coworking landscape becomes more diversified by hosting freelancers, start-ups and newly founded businesses, all operating within the market realm, how can these issues still resonate?

Seeing coworking spaces, hubs and other collective workplaces as value-driven communities may lead us to dismiss the fact that most of these spaces operate

within a very competitive market. The competition in these spaces can occur on various scales, between coworking spaces as well as between co-workers. Several studies (Capdevila, 2013; Gerdenitsch et al., 2016; Garrett et al., 2017; Brown, 2017) explore coworking through the individual experiences of co-workers or by looking into how coworking spaces are internally structured from a managerial perspective. However, as described in this section, coworking creates expectations of improving the professional lives of those involved. These studies give no evidence of the working conditions or the overall betterment of professional lives.

I argue that we should understand coworking as one of the multiple survival strategies employed by freelancers, start-ups and small business owners who operate within the competitive market. Facing a fragmented project-based labour market, with an apparent lack of fixed organizational routines and organized learning mechanisms, contemporary workers have to rely heavily on self-organized interactions with other professionals (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011). That said, I argue that we should analyse coworking not as a 'movement' or 'lifestyle' but as a way of transforming work-related experiences. This means, in practice, that we should not disregard the individualistic and competitive tendencies current working life entails while understanding the coworking phenomenon within a specific socio-economic context. These spaces are embedded in specific institutional and regional contexts and thus, are shaped and constrained by the specific circumstances found there.

What should also be taken into consideration is that these spaces are 'doomed' to be regarded as ever-changing, as their users see them as "a transition point in their professional lives" (Schmidt and Brinks, 2017, p.292). Coworking services can be defined as support mechanisms for professionals who are in continuous transition. This reinforces the argument that the primary aim of such spaces is to improve the working lives of their users by helping them to make a career.

As discussed in Chapter 2, contemporary workers operate in a fragmented labour market where they are forced to act as agents for themselves, constructing their own DIY working life (Grey, 1994; see Chapter 2). While the

aforementioned studies tend to focus on the non-competitive elements of coworking, the next section provides a critical examination of coworking spaces as places where individualistic tendencies co-exist with more collective approaches.

3.5 Coworking practices

Although a wide body of literature emphasizes the non-competitive aspects of coworking (Capdevila, 2013; Capdevila, 2015; Garrett et al., 2017; Spinuzzi et al., 2018), there is a strand of thought which offers a more critical perspective (Gandini, 2015; Gandini, 2016b; de Peuter et al., 2017). This section critically explores the centrality of coworking practices. The aim of this section is to contextualize coworking practices as embedded in a competitive market economy context where professionals struggle to survive.

A critical reflection on coworking should include an examination of the practices that are likely to occur in these spaces. In coworking spaces, everybody talks about work, but nobody really discusses working conditions:

Coworking disengages class but embraces work. The Coworking Manifesto (n.d.), written by early coworking architects, positions coworking as a platform for work that tackles weighty societal challenges, a vision that aligns closest with the social enterprise-oriented coworking space niche. More broadly, ideas about work that circulate in coworking discourse tend to focus on individual experience (de Peuter et al., 2017, p.694).

According to this quote, for de Peuter et al., work and working conditions are deliberately taken out of the picture. When coworking is discussed, scholarship tends to explore its nuances without putting the phenomenon in a specific socio-economic context. As discussed in Chapter 2, the proliferation of fluid structures such as coworking spaces, hubs and other flexible working arrangements, is inextricably intertwined with the establishment of informal practices. The vaguely defined notions of 'community', 'collaboration' and 'interaction' prompt me to delve into what really makes them attractive. Indeed,

what does their inherent informality signify, and thus what is the marketable asset of these spaces? What kind of workplace practices are applied in such informal spaces?

As discussed in the previous section, informality is the essence of today's coworking culture. The work of Alacovksa (2018) sheds light on the informal working practices that are likely to occur in flexible settings. As she observes, in these contexts, an array of informal working practices may arise such as tip-based work, unpaid favours, bartering, favour swapping, voluntary work and even work in the shadow economy. These practices reflect the deepening, and the standardization, of the precarity currently faced by many creative workers (see Chapter 2).

However, people working in shared spaces tend to invest highly in personal relationships that do not necessarily have instant profit gain or even potential, meaning that workers undertake 'relational work':

Relational work thus refers to the strategic alignment (matching) of economic transactions and payment media with meaningful social ties. The management of relational matches primarily entails the performance of emotional and boundary work, story-telling, discursive framing, and the mobilization of cultural scripts that help link meaningful social relations with apposite economic transactions and payment media (Alacovska, 2018, pp.5-6).

As this quote signifies, personal networks count, and affect the ways in which contemporary professionals operate. This observation leads Gandini (2015) to locate coworking in the 'intermediate territory', where these spaces act as 'relational milieus'. Gandini suggests a grounded and rational approach to what is really happening in such spaces:

Coworking spaces seem to function, not just as hubs, as most of the literature suggests, but mostly as *relational milieus* providing workers with an intermediate territory to enact distributed organizational practices made of continuously negotiated relationships in a context

where professional social interaction is simultaneously physical *and* digital (Gandini, 2015, p.200).

With most coworking spaces trying to sustain a physical as well as digital presence (Dovey et al., 2016), Gandini identifies an economic rationale that sees these informal practices as crucial to the acquisition of reputation (Gandini, 2016b), exemplified in the ways people in coworking spaces use social media:

The use of social media serves the aim of engineering the construction of a reputation through the use of personal branding techniques. This enables forms of managerially steered sociality that are based upon the fact that digital technologies and social media allow reputation to become tangible via a number of different – and more or less reliable – indicators, rendering it the most important asset for the individual brand (Gandini, 2016a, p.125).

Gandini considers freelancers and micro-entrepreneurs in these spaces as treating relationships as highly functional, career-oriented ‘network socialities’ (Wittel, 2001; see Chapter 2). This contradicts the perception of coworking spaces as places where ‘serendipity encounters’ just occur in a random and unstructured way (Moriset, 2014). From this perspective, every interaction, every piece of small talk with a co-worker could potentially lead to an upcoming business or project opportunity. In fact, interactions are not unstructured, they are rather “staged network socialities” (de Peuter et al., 2017).

Gandini’s quote goes beyond highlighting the importance of being known in the digital and physical world. He points to the importance of cultivating a branded persona in order to survive in a competitive market - which is not at all new. As Hearn (2008) argues, self-branding techniques represent a common practice for people who navigate within the market realm. As discussed in Chapter 2, constrained by the competitive and fragmented labour market, contemporary workers are forced to develop a self-entrepreneurial ethos around their work, and workers are expected to be “entrepreneurs of the self” (du Gay, 1996, p.70). This self-entrepreneurial ethos is articulated in various branding techniques

(Cremin, 2003). Critical scholarship perceives these self-branding techniques as the apotheosis of the flexible entrepreneurial workplace:

We no longer trust in any overarching system of values. In order to hedge against our 'stable instability' (Virno, 1996, p.17), we look to exploit every opportunity and grow increasingly cynical as we recognize that work is a game and that its rules do not require respect, but only adaptation (Hearn, 2008, p.213).

Young professionals driven by necessity could potentially use any tactic to sustain their place in the labour market. The self-branding techniques employed by people who work in coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups can be seen as a coping mechanism. Arvidsson and Bandinelli (2012) explain that, in highly competitive marketing regimes, professionals are forced to brand themselves. Investigating the networks of socially oriented start-ups and entrepreneurs, they observe that branding penetrates deeply into people's operational practices:

The branding operates at micro and macro levels. Participants brand themselves as part of a culture which is, in turn, the result of a collective branding operation to position the changemaking movement in the wider global financial market. In this context, acquiring reputation enables one to have easier access to other people with whom to team up for projects and financial resources (Bandinelli and Arvidsson, 2012, pp.69-70).

Besides the functional characteristics of self-branding, the participants of these networks brand themselves in an attempt to construct a sense of collective belonging. This might be seen as an attempt to cultivate an immature professional identity. In the case study of changemakers illustrated above, how can we assume that participants present themselves – or better brand themselves – as changemakers without being – or at least being in the process of becoming – one?

Instead of seeing people who work in coworking spaces as merely seeking to acquire connections, Alacovska's (2018) study helps us understand the conflicts people face while based in flexible spaces. By operating in a highly informal,

'relational' way professionals engage in activities that they consider 'good' or even 'moral'. This relates to the claims of Bank (2006), who identifies an opportunity to re-establish moral values at work despite the highly individualistic tendencies that might prevail (see Chapter 2). If we assume that networking practices are strictly functional and individualistic, we might fail to recognize "the mutuality, reciprocity, and morality of a wide range of practices" (Alacovska, 2018, p.22) that occur within these spaces.

The extensive use of values in coworking calls for an investigation of the ethical ramifications of coworking practices and the way these spaces operate.

According to Foucault (1984), ethics is a "conscious practice of freedom" (p.284) through which people develop a notion of self which can be considered ethical. Drawing upon later Foucauldian theory, I adapt the conceptual framework developed by Dey and Steyaert (2016) that suggests a practice-based understanding of ethics, where "nothing is a priori given but is immanent in ongoing struggles related to becoming an ethical subject" (p.628).

In this context, I consider coworking spaces as contested spaces, full of struggles and ambiguities. I examine the everyday informal and formal practices their residents undertake, as well as the dilemmas they face during their residency. Ethics is understood as a set of practices dynamically intertwined with the individual freedom to make choices about what to do and who to become, and the organizational context in which these choices are made, framed and governed. In this context, Foucault's work is valuable as his primary concern for ethics is how people constitute themselves as moral subjects through their actions, and how they are subsequently disciplined by institutions to become certain types of people (Foucault, 1984).

3.6 The need for further empirical research into coworking

This chapter outlined the debates about the emergence of coworking spaces. It investigated the turn towards a minimally regulated workplace that is 'permissive' and 'no-collar' (Ross, 2004). As described, the coworking concept is attractive to professionals, both outside and inside traditional employment, as it

vaguely promises to make everyday working life more happy, meaningful, fulfilling and productive.

Facilitated by the emergence of ICTs that allow professionals to no longer be tied to a specific place of work (Huws, 2014), the demand for a third space (Oldenburg, 1989) becomes apparent. However, the fact that the proliferation of coworking coincides with the dissemination of flexible and casualized labour in certain economic sectors, such as the creative and cultural industries, should not be disregarded. This can be seen in the further diversification of coworking. Even though coworking's roots can be traced back to the emergence of shared artistic spaces as a collective response to precarity (Merkel, 2015), coworking nowadays is more diverse than ever. The study of Schmidt and Brinks (2017) presents a snapshot of coworking diversification. Referring to 'open creative labs', their study illustrates the different structures, values, aims and philosophies under which coworking spaces operate (Schmidt and Brinks, 2017). Their analytical model orients us through the empirical investigation of these spaces in the Athenian context.

The need for empirical investigation of coworking spaces becomes apparent, as these spaces cannot be analysed otherwise. What is argued herein, and calls for further exploration, is that coworking spaces could potentially represent unique case studies of their own – embedded in specific socio-economic contexts. Subcategorizing them into specific types could potentially conceal their unique characteristics. What must be taken into consideration are their statuses of ownership, their models of operation and their target audiences. Lastly, their funding resources are explored, as "coworking's profit margins are slim" (de Peuter et al., 2017, pp.691-692), and thus, their sustainability is called into question.

As demonstrated in this chapter, coworking spaces should be treated as ambivalent (de Peuter et al., 2017) and relatively under-researched spaces, bound up in specific values, practices and activities. Within these spaces, as the literature suggests, individualistic tendencies co-exist with communitarian values, in contexts which are promoted as being inclusive, 'classless' (de Peuter

et al., 2017) and easy-going. A study of these values, practices and activities needs to be conducted on a micro, everyday level. Only this way can we understand what is really happening within these emerging spaces.

4 Methodology

Methodology is of great importance in the field of social sciences, as the methods used are closely connected to the generation of the research questions, sample, data collection and analysis. Arguing in favour of the messiness of social research, Bryman (2012) suggests perceiving methodology as “the road map for the journey ahead” (p.14). This chapter describes the methodological principles adopted in this thesis as well as the debates and controversies surrounding them.

Understanding the methodological debates informs and reassures the researcher, the research participants and the audience that the research findings are reliable and aligned with the general ethical codes of social research. While this chapter cannot do justice to the full complexity of the debate around methodological perspectives in social sciences, it situates this thesis in terms of research methods. To be precise, this chapter justifies the research process adopted as well as pinpointing the various issues that emerged throughout my fieldwork. Social research is not a linear or unproblematic activity, and as Townsend and Burgess (2009) underline in their book *Method in the Madness: Research Stories You Won't Read in Textbooks*, a researcher must show flexibility, humour, empathy and perseverance in order to cope with the complexities of research.

So, while this chapter cannot illustrate the methodological debates in the field of social sciences in detail – as this goes beyond its purpose – it positions the project methodologically, while analysing the way the research is conducted. It focuses on the key issues that emerge from the research. The chapter is not a mere description of how the research was conducted, it also portrays the lived experience of my research process. Besides illustrating the ways this research was undertaken by looking into the selection of cases and research participants, I describe and reflect on the process and the challenges I came across throughout the data collection, and reflect on how I position myself as a researcher.

4.1 Research Aims

The overall aim of this thesis is to explore the way people in coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups manage their working lives in times of crisis, and consider how the Athenian coworking landscape is shaped by the current conditions and the ways each space under investigation responds to them. Current empirical studies mainly locate the coworking debate in the Anglo-Saxon countries of northern and central Europe or the US (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Dovey et al., 2016; Jakonen et al., 2017; Merkel, 2019b). Creative labour scholars (Deuze, 2007; Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Gill, 2011; Banks et al., 2013) rarely address countries undergoing long-standing crises such as Greece. As I outline in the previous chapters, my review of the literature identifies a gap in the research regarding the expansion of the creative professions in Greece over the last few years. So, taking a cue from the EU's turn towards deregulatory approaches to culture and creativity (Oakley, 2016), there is a need to explore the employment conditions of creative workers in a rather unstable and insecure context.

I look at Greece as a case study, as it is a relatively under-researched and underexplored. Although Greece has monopolized recent public debate, due to the sovereign debt crisis, very little is known about the ways young people respond to the long-standing crisis. What needs further exploration is whether working from a coworking space or hub has become a coping strategy to fight precarity and employment insecurity.

In the case of Greece, externally imposed austerity measures have resulted in greater deregulation of the labour market, as crisis and recession gradually become permanent characteristics. As Karamesini (2015) points out in her study of the transformation of the Greek social model:

Economic depression is accompanied by exploding unemployment, a dramatic fall in living standards, decimation of employees' and social rights, impoverishment among the lower and middle classes, a humanitarian crisis affecting the most vulnerable groups, major

disruptions in social cohesion, generalized precariousness and uncertainty about the future. The main structural changes in the social model – in other words, labour market deregulation and welfare state retrenchment – are contributing to precariousness and uncertainty. Moreover, the recessionary context in which these changes are taking place is actively helping to shape their long-term outcomes. That is, due to recession and mass unemployment, pension reforms are caught up in a downward spiral of benefit cuts and entitlements, leading to merely residual social protection; while mass unemployment modifies expectations and renders permanent the fall in wages and living standards and the low levels of employee protection brought about by labour deregulation (Karamesini, 2015, pp.47-48).

It can be observed that young professionals in Greece operate in the blurred boundaries between permanent, atypical and informal employment (Gialis and Tsampra, 2015). Despite the growing precarity, there has been no attempt at regulation. In these times of crisis, project based work has flourished, while uninsured and informal employment has thrived. This sort of work, including work by the skilled and the educated, remains unrecorded due to its illegal nature (Karamessini, 2015; Gialis and Tsampra, 2015). As illustrated in the introductory chapter, young people suffer from long-term unemployment or are offered low paid jobs that have no relation to their studies. As a result, skilled individuals tend to be involved in ambitious entrepreneurial projects as job alternatives become fewer or worse (Giotopoulos et al., 2017). During turbulent economic times, new business ventures promise greater chances for personal fulfilment and satisfaction, even though they do not guarantee high financial returns. What can be assumed, but needs further research, is that forms of start-up entrepreneurialism are, in this context, seen as a fulfilling and emancipatory for young people. What also needs investigation is whether precarious conditions are eliminated, or simply reproduced, in coworking spaces.

The proliferation of casualized employment triggers discussions of the emergence of a labour force that conducts work that shares characteristics with work identified as 'creative'. The first empirical works have been generated in Greece; studies by Martha Michailidou and Vassilis Avdikos, which have shed light on the profile and the working conditions of creative professionals (Avdikos et al., 2015; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016). These studies have been conducted at a time when the crisis is solidified in its permanence.

Meanwhile, critical research on coworking has developed, placing coworking in the current context of post-Fordist capitalism and the further precarization of work (see Chapter 3; Gandini, 2015; Gandini, 2016; de Peuter et al., 2017; Merkel, 2019). As these studies highlight, we must investigate the socio-economic context in which these spaces are embedded in order to understand coworking, and, with coworking participants spanning the wider sectors of the economy that are considered creative, the most suitable conceptual framework in which to place this study is the critical creative labour debate. The reasons I select critical creative labour and coworking studies as my theoretical foundations are that these accounts bring out the precarious nature of this form of work, and take into consideration the socio-economic context in which it is embedded (see Chapter 2; Miller, 2010; de Peuter, 2014; McRobbie, 2016), the compulsory entrepreneurial tensions that tend to be developed as survival strategies (Gill, 2014; Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014; Rae, 2014; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Bogenhold and Klingmar, 2016) and the fulfilling and rewarding character (Banks, 2006; Banks et al., 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2017) of work in these contexts for individuals.

Hereafter, as noted, my theoretical underpinnings draw heavily upon critical debates about creative labour and coworking, not entrepreneurship. This is because orthodox and mainstream approaches to entrepreneurial research tend to focus on innovation, growth and general prosperity (Kiessling, 2004; Bodrozic and Adler, 2018) and the research of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). As identified in Chapter 1, this is not the case for Athens. To be specific, the start-

up businesses found in such spaces have nothing to do with the Silicon Valley model. They are relatively small businesses (mostly employing up to three employees), newly established and with marginal impact in terms of creating growth. They probably respond to the deepening of precarity, and thus entrepreneurship seems the only path towards a meaningful career that entails decent work. The start-ups that are being put under the microscope have limited impact on the overall economy:

It certainly is the case that a small number of start-ups has a positive impact on the economy, but most of the time, for most of the firms, and for most of the performance metrics, the economic impact of entrepreneurial firms is poor. [...] We refer to these poorer performing firms as “marginal undersized poor performance enterprises” (Nightingale and Coad, 2013, p.130).

My study aims to respond to “repeated calls for more localized and locally sensitive research into the emerging forms and organization of work” (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016, p.57). Following the study of Tara Vinodrai (2013), who explores how the characteristics of creative work unfold in the urban contexts of Toronto, Canada and Copenhagen, Denmark, I examine how local articulations of creative labour reflect and intersect with the critical debates around the transformation of work and its organization. As Vinodrai suggests:

The literature on innovation systems and varieties of capitalism (VoC) provides insights into learning, knowledge and innovation dynamics. This work reminds us that different national and regional institutional architectures (re)produce persistent geographic patterns in the function and organization of the labour markets that underpin and support innovation, knowledge circulation and learning processes (Vinodrai, 2013, p.160).

So, taking into consideration the “persistent influence of national institutions” (Vinodrai, 2013, p.172), I seek to explore:

- What kind of coworking spaces have emerged in the Greek context and why? What does it mean to sustain a coworking space in times of crisis?
- What kind of services do these spaces offer and how do they differ?
- What are coworking spaces' practices? What kind of values and ethics are bound up in them? How do people at coworking spaces respond to the written and unwritten rules?
- How do people at these spaces manage their professional working lives? What are the qualities and practices embedded in their coworking lifestyles?

Each of the following four chapters focuses on one of the above sets of questions. Chapter 5 broadly focuses on illustrating the peculiar coworking landscape of Athens, mapping the spaces that have emerged. In this introductory findings chapter, I portray each space under investigation and, by comparing them, highlight the various coworking nuances to be found in the Athenian context. In addition, this chapter explores what it means to sustain a coworking space in times of crisis.

Chapter 6 is devoted to understanding what each space has to offer by exploring its array of services, while Chapter 7 goes into the spaces under investigation, exploring their practices and the ways people in coworking spaces respond to them in depth. By bringing all the case studies together, I pinpoint the coworking practices that I came across in my study that are bound to a specific set of values and beliefs.

Chapter 8 investigates how people in such spaces manage their working lives by looking into their everyday practices. While I draw on various types of data throughout, observation, field-notes and semi-structured interviews guide me in the first two chapters. Thereafter, I mostly rely on interview data.

4.2 The theoretical underpinnings of my study

As the literature review narrowed the specificity of the research enquiry, this methodology chapter formulates the appropriate conceptual boundaries (Merriam, 1998) to adequately ensure the most appropriate realization of the

aims of the thesis. The question of methodology refers to the distinct approaches to investigating the social world, incorporating opposing ideas, not just in terms of methods but also the initial goals and outcomes of the research. As Hammersley (2011) observes, “methodology [...] when used to refer to an area of study, has now come to include not just discussion of methods but also discussion of the philosophical and political issues that differentiate the many approaches to social research that now exist”.

The methodology cannot be seen as being outside the social world that it is attempting to understand, as methodological knowledge contributes to the expansion and deepening of this understanding. Hence, the question of methodology does not, in any case, strictly follow rules or procedures without engaging in a broader philosophy:

The belief that research can be an entirely technical or practical matter – philosophy-free, as it were – is an illusion; there must always be some reflection on what is being done and why, and sometimes this will involve issues that have pre-occupied philosophers (Hammersley, 2011, p.34).

As many social science researchers highlight, there is a dire need for critical reflection on the formulation of research questions and the conduct of fieldwork (Agee, 2009; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Research design cannot be seen as a linear process starting from a hypothesis that needs to be tested, with the next steps following in a fixed sequence. In fact, it is a messy process and requires continuous reiterations as, in the social world, the research stages and steps might overlap.

Understanding the methodological debate is crucial for this study, as it allows me to place the study within the epistemological and philosophical approaches that, as a researcher, I rely upon. Philosophical and epistemological approaches to research vary in the field of social sciences. For some it is described as ‘discovery’ while for others as ‘construction’ (Bryman, 2012). In an attempt to briefly illustrate this theoretical debate, those who support the discovery model perceive research as an attempt to uncover reality, drawing upon the Chicago

School sociologists such as Robert Park. The Chicago School is widely known for the development of a 'getting your hands dirty' approach, which involves:

[...] a firm belief in the power of observation, a willingness to be ruled by observable evidence, a belief that scientific conclusions should never get beyond the realm of extrapolation, and a feeling that the rational universe of science is nothing more than the habitual association of certain ideas of a perceiver (McKinney, 1966, p.72).

This strand of thought taps into a belief in objectivity and precision, while research design is located within the logic of the experimental method. For empiricism, the only knowledge to be gained is that which can be obtained through experience and the senses, grounded in data (Bryman, 2012, p.615). For this reason, one point of critique that researchers raise is that, in a way, theories are always undermined by data (Hammersley, 2011, p.127).

The second approach is based on the belief that knowledge is created and constructed, data do not speak for themselves and there are no objective truths to be revealed. As Hammersley (2011) points out, the differentiating element from the previous model is that the truth which is documented is not independent of the process of discovering it (p.128). According to constructivism, the researcher presents a specific version of social reality, while knowledge is indeterminate and in a state of constant revision. Here, multiple constructions are available as well as multiple perspectives from which to approach social phenomena. The research process is an integral part of any study. In this strand of thought, 'knowledge' and 'truth' are replaced by 'what is taken to be true'.

As can be observed, philosophical approaches in the field of social sciences vary. Both approaches attract criticism and have their drawbacks. Given this, I draw upon a third approach, Hammersley's model of hermeneutics (Hammersley, 2011, p.137). Hermeneutics, as a field, involves interpreting human actions while paying attention to the wider social and historical context within which these actions are embedded (Bryman, 2012, p.560). Applying this crucial element to

the methodological approaches selected, allows a deeper understanding of the social and historical context of the phenomena investigated.

4.3 Conducting qualitative research

Qualitative methods such as ethnography are predominant for social and cultural anthropology, having a strong presence in sociology and social psychology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As many researchers underline, qualitative research means immersion in the field (Hammersley, 1992; Brewer, 2000; Britzman, 2000) while ethnography equals “recording the life of a particular group and thus entails sustained participation and observation in the milieu, community or the social world” (Charmaz, 2006, p.16).

Recently, a growing body of ethnographic and qualitative studies has emerged, focusing on the lives of professionals currently employed across the creative industries sector, underlining the precarious conditions of their labour and the challenges they face (Chapter 2; Bruni et al., 2004; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Ross, 2009; Miller, 2010; Gill, 2010; Banks et al., 2013; Gill, 2014). These qualitative works actively challenge overpolished accounts of creative labour, putting the microscope on everyday micro-practices and beliefs around employment. Following this strand of thought, the methodology of this research is primarily informed by qualitative research methodologies, as it aims to understand people who work at coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups. It uses qualitative methods as the central point of departure and aims to see ‘from the inside’ the working lives of people who own or work in such spaces. Due to the nature of this study, qualitative research techniques are employed, as it aims to understand the subjective experiences of people who work in coworking spaces and how these experiences are constructed in the unstable context of Athens. My study is an ongoing process, referring to the present while aiming to record past experiences.

To enrich the findings I obtain from the interviews with the research participants and my observations, I have attended various events organized by these initiatives and reflect on my own personal experiences in the start-up

ecosystem. The interviews are semi-structured, and the participants are encouraged to reflect on their educational background, career paths and decisions to work from a coworking space or hub. Because I am very interested in their opinions and beliefs about the emerging coworking landscape and how they position themselves within it, the participants are allowed to discuss topics they feel are important to the aforementioned core topics. All the interviews are rather intensive – more than one hour long – conversations, because of my constant demand to know and explore more the ‘you knows’ of the participants. The participants are pushed to explain things to me that are somewhat considered ‘given’.

Taking a cue from more traditional qualitative paths such as in-depth interviews and participant observation, and aiming to capture, experience and record as much action and interaction as I could get, prior to the semi-interview and my visits to the space, I looked them up online, especially their public profiles on social media platforms. My aim is to understand these spaces and how the participants promote themselves and their work on platforms like LinkedIn. As the literature suggests, these platforms are crucial for personal branding and identity management (Gandini, 2016a). In this study, I use them to trace the educational backgrounds of the participants, their professional milestones and the ways they construct their online identities – both personal and professional.

My qualitative data are constructed through observation, interaction with the participants of the study, semi-structured interviews and the coworking, hub and start-up events I attended during my fieldwork. So, while this section gives the broad qualitative underpinnings of my study, the section below illustrates the approach I took in the course of my study.

4.4 Case study as approach

This research is based on data collected through a study of the Athenian coworking landscape. It represents six months of fieldwork, mainly in the city centre of Athens, but also at events elsewhere associated with coworking, hubs and start-ups in Athens. The research findings are based on data collected

between September 2015 and January 2016, in Athens, at events associated with the start-up ecosystem, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with young professionals based in the spaces under investigation. During this period, I was based at a hub for a period of three months. This multi-method approach responds to the repeated calls for research that takes into consideration the local context in which creative labour and coworking spaces are embedded.

Therefore, my empirical study goes beyond popular conceptualizations of coworking as a new and upcoming trend that is radically changing the way people organize their work (Viasasha, 2017), and challenges optimistic accounts of its distinct characteristics, the formal and informal practices that occur in these contexts, the way participants in these spaces respond to them, the ethics that are bound to their practices, the services these spaces offer, and the way people at these spaces manage their working lives. The purpose of my study is not to romanticize the personal narratives of the respondents. For that reason, my research is not limited to whether coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups currently serve as ideal spaces to work and flourish professionally, or whether people at these spaces adopt an entrepreneurial approach to themselves and their work; it is more about the ways in which participants make sense of their lives at both a personal and professional level. The personal experiences of the research participants are fundamental, and act as the basis of knowledge for this research project. However, it must be noted that the aim of this study is not to present their voice, their stories or demands. Considering them as active agents interacting in specific socio-economic contexts, I pay attention to both structure and agency, as outlined in Chapter 1.

The study draws upon what might be broadly understood as a case study approach, defined as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p.18). The case study approach provides a methodological framework in which a rich and detailed understanding is the main focus.

My overall research strategy is constant dialogue with the contingency of the field. It is informed by the specific circumstances found there. Pointing out the open-ended ethos of case study data collection, Yin observes:

[Case study data collection] follows a formal protocol, but the specific information that may become relevant to a case study is not readily predictable. As you collect case study evidence, you must quickly review the evidence and continually ask yourself why events or facts appear as they do. Your judgments may lead to immediate need to search for additional evidence (Yin, 2009, p.43).

Following this rationale I use a multiple case study approach in which multiple cases are examined in parallel. The case study approach is fundamental to qualitative research (Hammersley, 1992) as researchers can investigate a specific phenomenon, located in a specific context, in depth.

Following Bryman's (2012) argument that, "conducting qualitative research in more than one setting can be helpful in identifying the significance of the context and the ways in which it influences behaviour and ways of thinking" (Bryman, 2012, p.402), my in-depth study is a snapshot of an evolving situation in a defined frame. While all the spaces selected fall under the broad category of coworking – in the sense that the people working in these spaces share working facilities – the cases have significant differences in terms of the profiles, services and target audience. In addition, the fluidity and obscurity of coworking as a term is reflected in the fluid and unpredictable character of these spaces. As I illustrate in the following chapter, the coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups that operate in the context of Athens tend to transform their characteristics to adapt to an ever-changing economic context.

I am very interested in understanding what expectations people at coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups have of their working lives in the current context of crisis in Athens. So, my study requires an in-depth analysis of the way the participants of these spaces conceptualize themselves and their professional world. For that reason, I employ a number of case studies of spaces that fall

under the broad category of coworking and, for each, I include a mixture of interviews and participant observation.

4.5 Identifying the cases: limitations and challenges

The research process itself brought surprises and sparked new ideas while I was in the field. At first, my research proposal concerned a qualitative exploration of creative collectives but, as I looked more carefully at the dynamics involved in the Greek context, I became aware of the expansion of the coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups which attracted young professionals, operating across the blurred boundaries of creativity and the market economy. While not wishing to undermine the alternative collective forms of organization operating outside the market economy – entailing radical possibilities for creative production (Daskalaki, 2014) – I shifted my focus to coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups.

Thus my research study focuses on a pragmatic approach, and serves as an entry point for understanding the challenges contemporary professionals face as they attempt to carve out a living in the Greek context of crisis and identify potential occupational paths in an unstable labour market. This choice is dictated by the need to understand the wider transformations of work in the Greek context, as it is threatened by the macro and microenvironment. The primary restriction I place upon respondents is that they live in Athens and work in a coworking space, hub or start-up collective. The recruitment of study participants was mainly achieved during the time I spent in coworking spaces, hubs and related start-up events.

Three key informants were recruited – on the basis that they played an important role in the coworking ecosystem – and were interviewed repeatedly, as their opinions and interpretations are central. My key informants are considered pioneers in the coworking landscape, as founders of start-up businesses, and operate in multiple spaces at the same time. They are occasional speakers at start-up related events hosted by the spaces under investigation. The time spent on one of the cases under investigation turned out

to be crucial, as I was introduced to broader networks of co-workers, start-up entrepreneurs and others related to the overall ecosystem (Byrne, 2012).

4.6 In the field

The fieldwork started in September 2016 and continued until January 2017. As I discovered first-hand, fieldwork can be challenging as it opens up limitless possibilities of attending many events, meeting many people and creating many places of empirical investigation. My fieldwork was a stimulating experience that enriched my understanding. When in the field, the researcher can catch any important knowledge that is circulated only 'in the air' through 'gossip and rumour' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.32).

As this study focuses on people who work in coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups, it is crucial to engage with the spaces under investigation. I immersed myself in these spaces in order to see their day to day operation. I did this for a period of three months, at one of the spaces under investigation, in order to interact with the participants of the space as much as possible.

The time spent in the field was valuable for me, and proved both fascinating and insightful, as my research questions were enriched and my understanding deepened. My day to day interaction with the participants and owners of the spaces under investigation and my attendance at start-up related events shaped my research questions and my methodological approach. To give a concrete example, during my fieldwork the study participants kept mentioning a serial entrepreneur who was acting as an angel investor and venture capitalist. I felt it was absolutely necessary to include his perspective, beliefs and opinions regarding the Greek start-up scene, so I decided to include him in the research sample.

Moreover, as the fieldwork evolved, I identified a gender gap, since very few of the participants in these spaces were women, and even fewer were founders of their own businesses. From my observation – and this is something to be further empirically tested – women tended to occupy the communication posts and were usually considered the 'mothers' of spaces. For that reason, right at the

end of my fieldwork, I interviewed a female start-up entrepreneur via Skype, aiming to gain more insight into the gender roles within the ecosystem.

My continuous field visits, as well as the fact that I shadowed my three key informants, led me to become more insightful. Shadowing is a qualitative research technique applied to organizational studies (McDonald, 2005) in which the researcher follows a subject for an extended period of time. In my case, besides the fact that I was working next to them, I attended start-up events and other related activities. I often asked for clarification, which triggered further debate in relation to their working lives and the wider start-up ecosystem. This helped me refine my research questions, and was beneficial in terms of identifying potential gatekeepers, other spaces of interest and interview participants (see the subsection below).

I took notes through the classic means of pen and paper, and this helped guide me throughout the fieldwork. When needed, these short and scattered notes of only a few words became separate documents on my laptop. This process of extensive note-taking proved important as it helped capture the coworking landscape and map the key players in the ecosystem. My notes included observations, things I saw that triggered my interest, and how I interacted with the research participants and the other people in the space in general.

Getting access to key people and key spaces was of great importance for me as a researcher. Obtaining access was relatively easy, as I decided to locate myself in one of the spaces under investigation, by paying a basic subscription. Further opportunities, such as attending coworking hubs and start-up events, came relatively easily since my key informants secured access for me. However, getting invitations to special meet-ups was somewhat more difficult, as my access to these networks of people was fragmentary. These meet-ups were not secret, but were only for those in the know. In one particular case, I was not even aware of the existence of a coworking space until I was invited to it by one of my key informants.

4.6.1 The spaces under investigation

The preliminary research revealed that in September 2016, there was increasing visibility of coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups in Athens. Of these, I selected five to investigate. In the meantime, as I was in the field, I came across another upcoming coworking space. The peculiarity of this space was that it targeted specific professionals, and thus I decided to include it in my research sample. All the spaces under investigation, as well as the research participants, are anonymized to avoid potential identification. The selection was part purposive, part opportunistic, and was aided by the time spent as a resident at the coworking space Social Hub. The reason I decided to be based at Social Hub, a centrally located hub dedicated to social entrepreneurship, was twofold: 1) it was one of the busiest and most vibrant hubs in Athens, attracting a wide range of professionals operating across the creative and social sectors; and 2) entering was easy as I paid for a three-month subscription.

At Social Hub, two key informants were recruited. The first was one of the founders of Social Hub, whom I selected as a key informant due to his deep knowledge of the Athenian start-up ecosystem, and to represent the successful case study of Social Hub. The second was a serial start-up entrepreneur based at Social Hub, who agreed to let me follow him while he participated in start-up events. Hanging out with him and taking part in informal discussions, helped me integrate into the coworking and start-up mentality, gradually understanding its codes, language, ethics and rules.

Social Hub was the entry point of my research and my study base in Athens. For three months, I spent approximately eight hours a day working from there, getting to know my co-workers, observing their time schedules, their way of working and interacting with others and gathering notes about the way the participants interacted with each other and their daily office hours. I used the space to interview one of the founders and two start-uppers who were based there at the time. I attended almost every start-up event organized in the space.

Using my personal connections, I got access and met start-uppers in another two spaces, Creative Space and Forest Ridge, where I introduced myself and my

research to participants through e-mail. Creative Space is a space dedicated to arts and cultural professionals, at which I interviewed the founder and two professionals who were using the space as their office.

Forest Ridge at that time was upcoming and had created a buzz around itself due to its links with an embassy in Athens and a big pitching event organized there each year. I spent a lot of time there, attending events and talking with potential study participants. As Forest Ridge has a clear focus on the various forms of entrepreneurship, representing not only the social and creative sector but more commercial activities, I interviewed five participants and the administrator of the space. From Forest Ridge, I recruited one key informant who was based there at that time and who had one of the most successful start-up initiatives in Athens. By 'successful', I mean that his start-up initiative had been awarded multiple funds from a wide range of investors (angel investors and venture capitalists) and, at the time of the interview, he had applied for EU funding. From Forest Ridge, I interviewed a total of 6 start-uppers, one of whom introduced me to a work collective called P2P Lab, dedicated to developing apps and software.

P2P Lab's founder introduced me to the founders of Net where I interviewed the founding team. Net was the first coworking space in Athens and was, at that time, facing financial difficulties. Both my key informants identified Net's founders as mentors and pioneers of the Athens start-up scene. The last space included in my sample, is Cell, a space initiated by a financial institution, where I interviewed the managing director and a start-upper who was based there. The rationale behind this selection was to include in my sample all the spaces that were actively participating in the coworking scene – and, thus, shaping its characteristics. I recruited them in order to ensure that I had enough research input for my study.

4.6.2 On sample and saturation

Semi-structured interviews, participant observation and shadowing are all time-consuming, not only to undertake but also to prepare for. This limitation affected the size of the sample which was designed to include people working

from coworking spaces or hubs who were members of start-up collectives. My research participants came from various backgrounds and their newly founded businesses were in their initial stages.

At first, my sample was designed to include approximately 10–15 participants who met the criteria (working from a coworking space or hub and being a member of a start-up collective), but in the field new research issues emerged, guiding me to continue sampling. The interviewees and key informants introduced me to other start-uppers. For some, sampling tactics are peripheral to the study, but this is not the case for my study. Following Noy's (2008) rationale, I strongly believe that, as a researcher, I learned a lot about my research participants by reflecting upon the dynamics of accessing and approaching them. This was not apparent at the beginning of the research, but as the study evolved I recognized that this form of snowball sampling (Byrne, 2012) goes hand in hand with a close investigation of the social dynamics involved. My research participants were those most visible in the ecosystem, the most connected. Therefore, by employing snowball sampling, I eventually interviewed participants that were more extroverted and social, with more friends and acquaintances. Having acknowledged this crucial parameter, the social networks contributed to my understanding of the start-up ecosystem. The word 'ecosystem' itself recognizes the existence of a system of things, interacting with each other and creating various – sometimes, conflicting – dynamics.

I conducted 18 interviews in total, across the six spaces under investigation, until theoretical saturation was reached and no new analytical insights were emerging. At the end of my fieldwork, I looked for 'negative cases' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). These cases could potentially add diverse perspectives. I reached the point where, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out, the collection of new data did not shed any further light on the issue under investigation. My sample was more or less homogenous, based at the same time in more than one space, recruited according to the aforementioned criteria. This uniformity guided me to analyse the data while I was in the field and spot the subtle differences (Ritchie

and Lewis, 2003). My overall sampling can be identified as opportunistic (Patton, 2002), as while I was in the field, I adopted a flexible approach that included the opportunities that emerged. This study then, does not represent a complete and generalizable set of data for the aforementioned reasons. However, it does identify pertinent issues such as the ethos of start-up entrepreneurship, and the turn towards more flexible working settings in a wide range of professional and personal situations. Furthermore, it brings forward the similarities in the educational backgrounds and ages of the research participants.

Overall, I suggest that my case studies give valid accounts of the working lives of people who work from coworking spaces and hubs. My study contributes to the emerging academic research about the conditions and the contemporary organization of creative labour (Gill, 2011; Banks et al., 2013; Avdikos and Kalogerisis, 2016; McRobbie, 2016b) as well as the occupational paths of young professionals in the context of crisis (Avdikos et al., 2015; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016).

4.6.3 During the interview

Interviews are a challenging methodological approach as they can easily be affected by the skills of the interviewer, the location and the power relation between the respondent and the interviewee. As Yin (2009) states, the researcher should be a good listener which means the assimilation of large amounts of new information in order to understand the context and capture the mood of the interviewee. During the interviews, I tried to keep a neutral tone and I avoided expressing my opinion, with the aim of not influencing the participants and allowing them to express themselves with minimal intervention.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to last approximately 40 minutes, though most lasted 1 hour, with two lasting 1.5 hours. All the interviews were recorded digitally, allowing me to concentrate on the interview. However, I still made extensive notes during the interviews. Prior to the interview, I explained the scope of my research, illustrating the basic timeline and my general areas of interest. All the interviews were conducted face to face, apart from one that was

conducted via Skype. This was necessary for personal reasons of the interviewee, who was travelling. For the rest of the interviews, we met during the interviewees' daily working routine. In our personal communication, the interviewees were free to propose a place for the interview – all proposed the coworking space where they were based. I did this because “the interview site itself produces ‘micro-geographies’ of spatial relationships and meaning where multiple scales of social relations intersect in the research interview” (Elwood and Deborah, 2010, p.3). These ‘micro-geographies’ gave the researcher useful insight into the working lives of people who work from coworking spaces, or hubs.

4.7 Positionality of the researcher: “Are you an entrepreneur?”

This methodology is designed to gain insight into the ways people in coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups manage their working lives in times of crisis. It explores how the Athenian coworking landscape is shaped by the current conditions and the ways each space under investigation responds to them. Nevertheless, a key issue in social science research is the position of the researcher in the research process. Researchers in qualitative research have traditionally been thought of as positioned inside or outside the social group being studied (Brewer, 2000). This section discusses the ethical and methodological dilemmas involved in negotiating access in the field and recruiting participants. Researcher positionality is taken into consideration, examining the potential risks.

As the literature suggests, the insider/outsider dichotomy is well-documented in methodological studies (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley, 2011; Bryman, 2012). However, over the last few years it has been actively debated (Giwa, 2015). In my case, this dichotomy brings to the surface a deeper challenge: the fact that the theoretical and methodological lenses I am using in my research study have mostly been produced in Anglo-Saxon countries.

Over the last few years, various concerns have been raised regarding the ethics, politics and responsibility of academic knowledge production when it comes to

conducting fieldwork elsewhere (Scheyvens and Storey, 2014). For instance, being an academic attached to an institution which is detached from the country and the social phenomenon investigated, may create major methodological challenges. As a result, there is an increased emphasis on reflexivity and the positionality of the researcher, in an attempt to create new forms of learning outside the hegemonic practices of knowledge production (McFarlane, 2006). Taking the Global South as an example, many researchers call for plural modes of knowledge production: “If the South is worth knowing and exploring, voices from the South should be heard in ‘knowing’ the South” (Giwa, 2015, p.2). There have been multiple studies published by researchers from the Global South on the challenges of conducting research at home while being attached to Northern research institutions. These studies highlight the tensions that exist within the conflicting identities of the researcher (Mullings, 1999; Oriola and Haggerty, 2012; Nazneen and Sultan, 2014; Giwa, 2015).

Nevertheless, an individual’s social identity decisively influences his/her experience in the field and, in my case, returning home for fieldwork evoked feelings of belonging and connectedness. This sense of belonging served as a privileged entry point as I already had access to the research community I study, being a creative worker myself and being familiar with some of the facts I investigate. As Ganga and Scott (2006) observe, sharing characteristics such as ethnicity, race, language and/or gender with the study population can perhaps provide insiders with unique insights into the subject matter.

In many senses, one of the main methodological techniques employed over the course of this research, is living my life as a creative worker. By being a creative worker and by participating in entrepreneurial collectives I operate at the blurred boundaries of market and academia in Athens. It is likely that my positionality has added bias to this research at each stage of the process; from designing the research through to analysing its findings. As a middle-class woman wearing Vans – a brand well-known for depicting ‘coolness’ and ‘easiness’ – my appearance largely fitted in with the people who work in coworking spaces or hubs running small start-up firms. At first, this made my

research life easier, as I could gain access instantly. My presence rarely raised concern or further questions. In turn, a common question I was asked when I met with people was: 'Are you an entrepreneur?'

Most of the time, the participants were very eager to share their personal and collective stories with me. Only once was my presence as a young female researcher questioned and considered 'redundant'. For this participant, who was influenced by his corporate background, what I was researching was 'evident', somehow my research was considered by him 'useless'; and what I represented as a female PhD researcher in arts and humanities, not business, was 'vague'.

4.7.1 Ethics and confidentiality

Prior to each interview, the respondents were required to go through the project information sheet, and complete the consent form approved by the University of Leeds Ethics Committee. The use of pseudonyms is a practice often employed in qualitative social science research, to ensure that respondents remain unidentifiable (Byrne, 2012; Thomas, 2013).

However, as this thesis makes use of the respondents' biographical information, with reference to their entrepreneurial career and the relatively small Greek start-up ecosystem where everyone is identifiable (especially the 'success stories'), although I agreed not to name people or hubs by their real names interviewees were made aware that their participation in my research study could potentially lead to them being identifiable from the research outputs. The informal chats I had with people at coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups – some of whom were research participants, while others were not – made up part of the participant observation notes I took during my fieldwork. All of them are anonymously quoted in my findings and the names of the spaces are pseudonyms.

During my fieldwork, I was trying to be as 'invisible' as possible and not interrupt activities and behaviours in the spaces under investigation. Indeed, in the first days of my residence at Social Hub, I realised that my presence was noticed. As

time went by, my presence came to be considered natural in the space. However, even when informed, many of the research participants may not have realized that what they said as 'gossip' during informal conversations may have gone on to form part of my thesis. This observation has led many researchers to suggest that participant observation may be an ethically challenging research method (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2010). To resolve this, it must be noted that my research project was not a secret and when individually approached, I informed them of my research topic and the enquirer was given a handout about the project.

4.8 Data analysis and structure

This thesis is based on qualitative data drawn from semi-structured interviews with participants, observation notes and the shadowing of key informants. Each source provides rich insight, given the focus of this study on people who work in coworking spaces, hubs and start-ups. The interviews were transcribed and coding was conducted using, as the initial list, themes derived from the review of literature and my data collection. The findings chapters are structured according to my research questions.

So, in the first findings chapter which introduces the spaces under investigation, the following key concepts are identified:

1. the diversity of coworking spaces
2. the uncertain profitability of independent coworking spaces
3. the financial robustness of corporate coworking spaces
4. the value of autonomy over any long-term financial dependency as expressed by coworking entrepreneurs and collectives
5. the understanding of coworking spaces as a response to crisis.

The second chapter discusses coworking services. Mentoring and coaching services are put under the microscope in order to understand what coworking has to offer. The chapter examines coworking spaces as providers of enterprise education and as spaces that familiarize coworking participants with the logic of

the market. The chapter also examines how less formal processes are prioritized by participants.

The next chapter investigates coworking practices and identifies the importance of networks for the way coworking participants and owners of coworking businesses operate. It sees coworking participants as operating in a 'relational way' (Alacovska, 2018) that does not necessarily generate profit right away, but serves as an investment for the future. Secondly, the morally dubious practices of Cell and Forest Ridge are discussed, referring to the moral concerns raised by start-up entrepreneurs and collectives. The chapter concludes by pointing out that start-uppers face 'moral complexity' as they have to demonstrate their ethics in spaces founded by for-profit corporations. Nevertheless, start-uppers incorporate a pragmatic and rational approach which is dictated by the fact that they operate within a market economy.

The last chapter of findings is structured around the qualities of start-up working life. Firstly, it analyses the importance of 'continuously pitching', whereby start-uppers must exhibit their entrepreneurial mind-set and thus reveal their authentic selves. Secondly, it identifies the bulimic working patterns of start-up entrepreneurs and collectives who see start-up life as entailing an internal commitment to work on a 24/7 basis. Thirdly, it analyses the affective relationship start-up entrepreneurs and collectives create with their occupation. Thus, this section identifies work at coworking spaces as being a 'labour of love'.

The concluding chapter highlights the original contribution to knowledge of this thesis by suggesting the emergence of a labour force that eagerly accepts its precarious employment conditions since creative or entrepreneurial labour holds the promise of fulfilling and meaningful employment. That said, one high level concept is employed, and that is the 'desperate optimist'.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has illustrated my methodological approach, by justifying the use of the case study approach while outlining how it has been implemented. This approach responds to repeated calls for more localized and locally sensitive

research on creative labour in multiple contexts (Vinodrai, 2013) and demonstrates how the open-ended nature of ethnographic study leaves enough room for adjustment. The chapter indicates that my overall research strategy is in constant dialogue with the contingency of the field and informed by the specific circumstances found there. My fieldwork experience has, so far, been an open and challenging learning process, in which my theoretical development, research questions, methods and perspectives were constantly challenged.

5 Mapping the coworking landscape of Athens

In 2016, when the fieldwork of this study took place, Athens had at least fifteen coworking spaces. These spaces were mostly set up by independent entrepreneurs, collectives, corporations or institutions. While the first coworking space opened back in 2009, coworking gained visibility only after 2013. That year two key pioneering coworking initiatives were founded by private institutions. By the time I found myself in the field, the coworking landscape of Athens was more diverse than I could have imagined. This intense diversification of the coworking landscape triggered my intellectual curiosity as a researcher.

One of my first observations in the field was that, despite the limitations that the Athenian context entails – a relatively small city compared to other EU capitals, under severe measures of austerity – coworking spaces flourished. As I observed, these spaces were multiplying in the heart of the historical centre of Athens, located in neighbourhoods of the city centre perceived as deprived (Souliotis, 2009; Alexandri, 2011; Karachalis, 2011). As identified in the literature – and reflected in the Athenian case – coworking spaces constitute acts of urban practice (Capdevila, 2013; Merkel, 2015; Schmidt and Brinks, 2017; Merkel, 2019b). Coworking spaces are often associated with the wider debate around regeneration and gentrification of inner-cities (Evans, 2009; Pratt, 2012; Mariotti et al., 2017).

The coworking spaces of Athens can be found in unconventional spots and locations: a rooftop in the business district, a neoclassical building at the heart of the tourist area, the former premises of a bank, or even a hidden lab; these spaces have proliferated, transforming coworking into a buzzword. As I explore in this chapter, their locations reflect their overall profile and affiliations. Interestingly, most spaces are located in close proximity to each other – creating an invisible triangle in the city of Athens. Operating under various terms, these spaces host freelancers, newly founded businesses, recent graduates, young professionals and more established businesses. From my field observations, it

became obvious that coworking, as a term, only captures one aspect of what happens in the Athenian context.

As identified in literature, in these spaces people work (Brown, 2017; Capdevila, 2013; Dovey et al., 2016; Spinuzzi, 2012), and expect to come across potential collaborations. Of course, as the literature suggests (see Chapter 3), these spaces are more than just offices with a strong Wi-Fi connection and an easy-going atmosphere. In Athens, many spaces use the term 'coworking' to describe themselves, but the spaces that have emerged from 2013 onwards have a very particular common mission; to provide opportunities for meaningful employment to young professionals in search of alternative professional paths.

This chapter provides vivid accounts of the landscape of coworking in Athens, firstly by arguing about the specificity of the Greek case and then by illustrating the overall profiles of the spaces under investigation. This way, a deeper understanding of the socio-economic context in which these spaces are embedded is provided. This chapter illustrates "how things actually work in practice" (McRobbie, 1998, p.11), providing a timely contribution to the current critical debate of emerging forms of organization of work, beyond the Anglo-Saxon context.

This chapter discusses the kinds of spaces that have emerged in Athens and how these spaces are shaped and constrained by the Athenian context. It takes a cue from the observation of de Peuter et al. (2017) that coworking has an inherently ambivalent nature, acting as a "transition point" in the professional lives of young professionals (Schmidt and Brinks, 2017, p.292).

5.1 The specificity of the Greek case

Studies of coworking spaces in the UK, Italy, Germany and other advanced capitalist economies of the West, show highly-skilled, educated professionals turning towards forms of flexible employment and start-up entrepreneurship (Dovey et al., 2016; de Peuter et al., 2017; Merkel, 2019b). These studies suggest that in the Global North, especially the Anglo-Saxon countries, coworking spaces proliferate in the aftermath of crisis. Silicon Valley is perceived as the Mecca of

new media labour and start-up entrepreneurship (Pratt, 2002), Milan as an international fashion hub (McRobbie, 2016a) and London as an international capital that attracts a wide range of professionals who operate in the knowledge economy (Gandini, 2016b). As early as 2007-08, the literature captured the significant global diffusion of coworking spaces worldwide:

A proliferation of coworking initiatives and ventures can be currently witnessed in different cities worldwide, for a somewhat self-proclaimed 'coworking movement' that now aligns with other similar 'trendy' concepts which flourished in the post-crisis economy, such as 'startups', 'social innovation' or 'sharing economy' (Botsman and Rogers, 2011) (Gandini, 2015, p.195).

The ethnographic work of Carolina Bandinelli (2017) gives us rich insight into those who want to kick-start a career and build their reputation as social entrepreneurs in Milan or London. According to her study, "the conditions in which social entrepreneurs operate are those of well-educated, independent workers in urban gig-economies" (p.126). However, in the entrepreneurial narratives in her study, she states "ethical motivations come to prominence and outweigh financial ones" (p.153).

This, however, is not the case for Athens, which was still experiencing an uneven and tenuous recovery from the crisis when coworking spaces first emerged. While the coworking scene of Athens did attempt to incorporate the tech-evangelism and social awareness discourse of start-ups, untold stories of necessity entrepreneurship and unemployment prevail (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014). This observation does not negate the fact that participants of coworking spaces in Athens express moral and ethical concerns regarding their economic and entrepreneurial activities (see Chapter 7 for a detailed account of coworking practices); it rather suggests that we should seek to develop creative labour accounts that draw insight not only from Anglo-Saxon case studies, but which develop from the social and economic specificities of places. The work of Ana Alacovska and Ros Gill (2019) advocates an 'ex-centric' perspective on creative work that challenges the universalism of Western theory (Willems, 2014).

Since 2008, countless articles have been written regarding the sovereign debt crisis, which has Greece as its epicentre. As the years have gone by, Athens has become a symbol of the austerity measures and labour market deregulation policies imposed by the EU and International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a response to these policies, massive demonstrations have been organized in the city, with most resulting in riots, while general strikes took place across the country. Eleven years later, the sovereign debt crisis has inevitably led to the Greek economy suffering the longest recession of any advanced capitalist country.

Over the last ten years, Athenian citizens have seen their lives change radically, with wages cut, pension schemes shrinking, and people's overall financial status deteriorating dramatically. In 2013, the Greek middle-classes lost almost a third of their disposable income (Anon, 2013). According to Chatzidakis (2014), the economic restructuring reflects a wider transformation of the Athenian middle class:

The once well-to-do Athenian middle-classes now parallel the world's so-called "emerging middle-classes" in reverse, experiencing everyday precariousness and the fears of "falling from the middle" (Kravets and Sandikci, 2014) – and straight onto the poverty zone – in an unprecedented magnitude and scale. Increasingly, Athenians approximate Europe's "defective" and "disqualified" consumers (Bauman, 2011, 2007), unable to fully define themselves neither in terms of what they consume nor what they produce: with unemployment rates hitting a record 27% across the entire population and over 50% among the youth (Chatzidakis, 2014, pp.35-36).

In a city where the middle classes were undergoing a financial – if not an existential – crisis, coworking spaces emerged as a response to wider social unrest. They became visible right at the time when the crisis represented the norm, rather than the exception, and this specific timing suggests that it would be wrong not to correlate the emergence of coworking spaces with the wider economic restructuring.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, coworking spaces emerged “after the gradual collapse of the stable employment paradigm” (Avdikos and Kalogerisis, 2016, p.1). These spaces offered alternative employment paths for highly educated and skilled middle class professionals who entered the labour market for the first time. Compared to the first years of the crisis, where bottom-up initiatives such as time banks, other forms of barter economy (Kavoulakos and Gritzas, 2015) and squatting projects (Daskalaki, 2014) flourished, coworking spaces appeared when the crisis had solidified into apparent permanence. With these spaces operating within the market realm, it can be argued that these initiatives represent a pragmatic and grounded response to the long-standing high rates of youth unemployment.

The specificity of the Greek case calls for a deeper investigation of coworking spaces, as spaces where less normative perceptions (at least, from an Anglo-Saxon perspective) of entrepreneurship can be found. These spaces operate at the intersection of informal and formal labour market and in a recessive economic reality. These two observations – examined in the following chapters – prompt me to support the idea that the Athenian socio-economic context might have more in common with Spain (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014) and elsewhere in South East Europe (Alacovska, 2018; Alacovska, 2019) or even non-Western countries of the Global South such as Argentina (Beltran and Miguel, 2014).

As the next section illustrates, two dynamics can be identified in the Athenian coworking scene: top-down and the bottom-up responses. Top-down responses consists of corporate and institutional initiatives to intervene in employment by running coworking spaces, while bottom-up responses involve independent entrepreneurs or collectives founding spaces. Nevertheless, all the spaces under investigation are aimed at entry level professionals with most having unlimited unpaid internships on their CV while very few have clients with experience of working full-time in corporations.

5.2 Coworking nuances in the Athenian context

Most of the spaces started to operate in late 2013, hosting multiple start-up teams and young professionals. By 2016, coworking spaces had created a significant buzz in Athens, attracting media attention. At the time I conducted my fieldwork, the spaces under investigation were full of young professionals who were working as freelancers or had started their own businesses. Just a walk around the city centre of Athens was enough for me to observe that these spaces were becoming more visible in the urban context. Social Hub was the coworking space I selected to start my fieldwork. By paying a three-month subscription, I got instant access to a space located in a more than impressive building.

Social Hub occupies a two-storey building in a neighbourhood in the historical centre, traditionally related to commercial and manufacturing activity (Karachalis, 2011). This space is a downtown collaborative space where social entrepreneurs and freelancers meet and work together. The Social Hub is a franchise, part of the global network of hubs connected to various international partners with social business consulting expertise.

As is evident from my case (see Section 4.6.1), entering Social Hub was easy, as anyone can participate either as a freelancer or a start-up collective aiming to create an impact in various business areas such as social inclusion, democracy, human rights, the environment, health, education, technology, the arts, migration and social integration. By paying monthly fees, participants get access to the hub's facilities and services. When a newcomer enters the hub, their presence is announced through an internal newsletter. The hub's committee is responsible for curating tailor-made services for newly founded businesses, helping them grow. Social Hub is funded by private investment but has also receives various donations and sponsorships from foundations and corporations to run specific programmes. Profits also come from members' subscriptions and from renting out its premises for events.

As Marios, the founder of Social Hub states, the selection of the building was the outcome of a long and painful search that took a long time:

We viewed so many spaces, we walked so much, we saw spaces in

Votanikos, Metaxourgeio and Syntagma (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

The opening hours of Social Hub are quite flexible. It opens early in the morning and closes late in the evening. The space comprises a large common area where members can work at shared or private desks. There are a few closed meeting rooms, an open kitchen, balconies, and a small yard. The space itself encourages interaction and communication among the users as most of the time the participants share common desks. While the main space is often buzzing with activity, it manages to maintain a homely atmosphere through the work of community managers responsible for taking care of the space, inducting newcomers and ensuring its smooth operation. As many studies suggest – and this is something that also emerged from my participant observation – the role of host is decisive for creating connections between the participants of these spaces (Spinuzzi, 2012; Brown, 2017). In my case, the host was responsible for introducing me to the residents and making me mingle with the other co-workers. Merkel describes the duties of the hosts as an affective investment:

They embody and practice the coworking values in their daily activities and feel responsible for the co-workers in their space. Hospitality is their major concern. Since coworking is strongly associated with cultural values of collaboration and sustainability, these hosts consider it their main responsibility to care for co-workers and enable a lively community within the space, but also beyond it (Merkel, 2015, p.128).

The atmosphere resembles that of a home, where friends work on their laptops, rather than a formal working space. The high-ceilings, the couches, as well as the shared desks and the open space create an easy-going and inclusive feeling. The participants seem very devoted to what they do in the shared space. Being based at Social Hub I met professionals from diverse backgrounds working towards the realization of their social projects.

As Marios informed me, they wanted the space to be independent and profitable on its own. This is why they decided to turn down any other space that was already branded by companies or other institutions. Operating as a franchise start-up space where social entrepreneurs and freelancers meet and work together, Social Hub immediately gained visibility due to its affiliations. This is echoed by Michalis, who joined Social Hub on its very first day of operation:

My partner knew the association from the time he was based in the US. He used to work at the same franchised space, so we said “ok, let’s go with that” (Michalis, member of a start-up collective, Social Hub).

So, by operating under an easily recognizable coworking brand, Social Hub has achieved visibility for the ‘ones who know’.

Like Social Hub just a few blocks away, Creative Space occupies a huge space in one of the most deprived areas of the city centre. Creative Space is a multifunctional building which, while it operates as a cultural space hosting events, exhibitions and gigs, also runs an incubator programme. Incubator programmes target newly founded businesses and provide them consulting so they can grow and become profitable.

Creative Space opened its doors in 2014. The collective behind Creative Space renovated an old industrial building that had been empty for decades in the Athenian city centre. As the founder explains, the heritage of the building motivated him to initiate the hub:

I was really attracted by the story and the heritage of the building [...] I’ve read also a lot of reports and papers about the neighbourhood – this is one of the most deprived streets in Athens [...] and this was exactly our motive, to transform this ghost building that represented a historical cultural industry [...] it was cool in terms of location and the story behind the building was very helpful in terms of communicating and promoting of our goal. The building itself gives an extra clarity to what we are attempting to do (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

Inspired by the idea of transforming the building into a dynamic multifunctional space, the team worked hard for three years to make their dream come true.

Creative Space's aim is to help young professionals realize their full potential within the broader landscape of the arts, culture and creativity sectors. Besides the private studios that are available, Creative Space offers a wide range of services, aiming to boost entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, Creative Space receives funding from a private company to run their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme. This programme offers scholarships to young creative entrepreneurs, allowing them to join the space for free for a certain period. Aiming to secure diversity, the participants are carefully selected according to specific criteria such as novelty and their creative practice. These specific criteria follow the categorization of creative industries as industries operating in the fields of architecture, design, fashion, services and ICT (DCMS, 2001; European Commission, 2010). During the year, the creative businesses hosted at Creative Space are asked to participate in various activities. These activities offer the participants networking opportunities and opportunities to exhibit and promote their work.

Creative Space's private offices are casual and artistic with a bohemian touch. Neon lights and minimally designed furniture is coupled with various habitués with beards wearing customized Reebok shoes – a brand of trainers loved by Athenian 'hipsters'. As Creative Space aspires to keep the space busy and open to the wider public, attracting as many people as it can, every floor has its own function. In a typical working day, people can be seen drinking coffee at the bar while exhibitions are held on the first floor and meet-ups of creative teams happen in the available rooms. Creative businesses occupy closed private offices, so it is not the first thing anyone sees when they visit the space.

As I observed, a working day at both Creative Space and Social Hub includes a continuous shift between working and leisure modes (Bouncken and Reuschl, 2018). Indeed, as de Peuter et al. (2017) observe "coworking spaces' open-plan interiors and friendly atmosphere give the impression that power is flattened" (p.698). When participants are in the shared office spaces, there is a 'mind your

own business' mentality, but during break time they seem eager to socialize and engage in small talk. The shared open kitchen, in the case of Social Hub, and the café bar of Creative Space emerge as social spaces where people interact and get to know each other. Coworking members have their own individualized work, most of the time working on their specific projects. However, stopping by the social spaces seems somehow mandatory.

In both Creative Space and Social Hub, the aesthetics and atmosphere play a significant role. Thus, I argue that these spaces are constructed as spaces that 'need to be seen'. Their missions reflect to their overall aesthetics. The homely and friendly atmosphere of Social Hub mirrors its social orientation, justifying its identification as 'a house of social entrepreneurship' by the start-up community. In the same way, Creative Space's building, hosting the cultural industry of Athens, symbolically connects the past, present and future of creative industries.

As discussed in Chapter 3, paying so much attention to the aesthetics and atmosphere of a workplace is closely related to the emergence of what Andrew Ross calls a 'no-collar' and 'humane workplace' (Ross, 2004). These attempts to humanize the workplace bring the aesthetics of bohemian informality and neo-leisure at work. Both Creative Space and Social Hub are constructed as spaces that look cool and look nothing like a conventional workplace.

These two spaces that invite people in, stand in contrast to P2P Lab. P2P Lab is located on the 5th floor of a typical Athenian building of the 1960s called *polykatoikia*, literally "multiresidence", a few blocks away from Creative Space. Compared to the other initiatives, P2P Lab occupies a significantly smaller space, consisting of a shared working space, a few meeting rooms, some private offices and a shared kitchen. The fact that P2P Lab is located on a floor of an office building gives the initiative limited visibility from outside. Indeed, P2P Lab was hard to discover, as it resembles an 'undercover' space. In fact, I would never have discovered it myself without the help of one of my key-informants. Gregory was working there on multiple shared projects while at the same time developing his own start-up ideas.

P2P Lab was founded later than the other spaces under investigation, in 2015. The newly established, entry level, small, independent, collaborative space is one that emphasizes the learning process. Its aspiration is to fight the brain drain by creating an open learning community. So, P2P Lab facilitates learning through the interaction between junior and senior professionals. The space was co-founded by a young media professional and an established foreign professional. In terms of aesthetics, P2P Lab is unpretentious, humble, and simple. The main space is occupied by developers. The founder explained to me how she came up with the space:

I inherited the space from my family. The only money we invested was to put brand-new windows. You know, it is a matter of health and safety, one day one window just fell in the street. That was the only thing we actually changed. Everything you see around you, the chairs, the furniture are donations from friends. Residents have brought them (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

For P2P Lab, the selection of the space was primarily driven by the lack of resources. Nevertheless, its humble DIY aesthetics reinforce its identity as a collective bottom-up space that is for the community, made by the community. Gregory presented P2P Lab to me as an unpretentious space 'where great things happen', far away from the start-up buzz. In addition, P2P Lab is perceived as a space addressed to those who go beyond the coworking hype, and are cool, knowledgeable and geeky.

Net is located five minutes away from P2P Lab, in a seven-storey building that used to host commercial activities, and now hosts one of the first coworking spaces to operate in Greece. Net mainly attracts tech start-ups and digital professionals. Founded by two entrepreneurs with long-standing experience in hosting start-ups and organizing networking events, Net provides private offices, meeting rooms and an event space. Start-uppers pay monthly fees to access the services and facilities Net provides. Besides start-up businesses, Net has for several years hosted a venture capitalists' network, while maintaining strong links with experts, coaches, mentors and innovative entrepreneurs in Athens

and abroad. The Net initiative has received no funding from any private or public institutions; its main profits come from participant subscriptions and paid events.

As Christina, the co-founder of Net, explains to me, they chose this building because they wanted to host multiple start-up teams. Being aware of the fact that start-up teams and professionals might be in a different incubation stage, Net's space is curated accordingly:

When you are a start-up you are hungry for success, you want focus, but after you want to take your team to a closed office. And the other reason is you have an idea, and you are worried that the person next you, is actually looking at your laptop and he will steal your idea from you [...] It's a bit from both of these (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Net's space is curated this way in order to counterbalance two conflicting demands of start-up entrepreneurs. Without overlooking the need for interaction and consulting, Net's set-up safeguards start-uppers' privacy and autonomy over their entrepreneurial venture.

However, despite the fact that the expertise and the knowledge of Net's founders is well acknowledged by start-uppers, their location is perceived as a no-go place. Located downtown, the building is relatively empty and less busy than the other spaces I visited. Even though P2P Lab was just few meters away from Net, the street where Net is located is considered somewhat dangerous. Just before our meeting, an investment fund based at Net decided to relocate. Christina explains the problems they have encountered:

Even at night if you don't provoke, walk around talking on your iPhone or show your laptop [...] they won't bother you. We never had any problems, but the thing is don't forget our investors have to keep their [...] standards (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Lacking security and safety, Net's public image has been significantly harmed by the reputation of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, for Creative Space and P2P Lab, which are in close proximity, this does not represent a barrier, but for Net it has been elevated to a major problem, impacting its operation. For the artistic

and bohemian crowd which is attracted by the edgy aesthetics of Creative Space's neighbourhood, its location is not an issue. In fact, for Creative Space, this peculiar edginess functions as a marketable asset. People I met during my fieldwork described Creative Space as the 'exotic flower' that has blossomed in such an unexpected location. So, for Creative Space, its edginess is welcome; something well captured in the literature of urban regeneration and creative cities (Landry and Bianchini, 1995; Pratt, 2008; Evans, 2009). However, for the more business-oriented audiences of Net, the tolerance to edginess is way more limited.

These more business-oriented audiences are attracted by coworking spaces located in traditional business districts. Cell, a CSR initiative, is one such space. Directly attached to a financial institution, Cell established itself as a platform entirely hosting start-ups. In this pan-professional space, cultural start-ups work next to tech-entrepreneurs, in the former premises of a financial institution that hosts up to 30 small start-up teams in each cycle of operation.

When entering Cell's space, visitors are required to give their ID and state the aim of their visit. While it is open to the public, the identification process gives it a more formal character from the outset. It limits spontaneous visitors or just curious passers-by, as visits need to have a specific purpose. Gregory, a young start-up entrepreneur based in multiple spaces, told me about his first visit to Cell:

When you enter the building, there is a guard noting down your name, as the first thing that crossed your mind is stealing when you go up to the offices. It is not an open space at all, it is far away from the centre, nobody goes there (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge & P2P Lab).

Once the visitor enters the building, the floors follow a cubical structure resembling a corporate office more than a coworking space. It can be argued that, while the cubical structure gives privacy to participants to work on their own start-up ideas, it limits interaction and networking to organized events. Through my informal chats with participants of the space, I noticed that the

start-up teams were way more focused on their objectives than interacting with other teams.

A few colourful post-its, a blackboard, some couches and several stress balls used for decoration break the monotony of the well set and structured corporate office space. As discussed in Chapter 4, coworking spaces come to embody all the hot workplace trends for office spaces, being playful and with a fun-loving atmosphere. Obviously, this is not the case for Cell. Its apparent lack of playful aesthetics in terms of office design endorses its overtly corporate image. In comparison to other initiatives, it is perceived as rather cold and distant by start-uppers.

While Cell's aesthetics can be described as corporate, the atmosphere of Forest Ridge, the last space under investigation, is much more casual and flexible. A renowned initiative of a foreign institution, Forest Ridge is supported financially by multinational businesses and grant making foundations in Greece. There are specific rounds in which start-up entrepreneurs can apply, following a specific process. If they are awarded participation at Forest Ridge, they pay monthly fees to use the facilities and engage in the various events organized by the hub. Well linked to international corporate businesses and investors, Forest Ridge provides a specific package of services.

Located in close proximity to the foreign institution to which is attached, Forest Ridge includes an open coworking space and few private meeting rooms. As the visitors enters Forest Ridge, they find themselves in a busy, fully branded space. The colour selection makes direct reference to the national colours of the foreign institution that funds Forest Ridge. The presence of international company sponsors is extremely visible in the space. People work in an open, shared space that facilitates interaction and networking. Forest Ridge's open space makes it evident that it is primarily addressed to immature start-up teams and professionals taking their first entrepreneurial steps. This is the stage where start-ups want to be 'seen' by investors, interact with co-workers and, last but not least, gather attention and help from everybody involved in the coworking space.

The spaces described are mostly addressed to young professionals, recent graduates and early stage start-up entrepreneurs. These audiences are clearly stated in their marketing material. From my observations, people in Athens join these spaces either as start-up collectives or as 'businesses of one' (Gandini, 2016, p.14), far less as freelance professionals. The reason may be twofold: firstly, the highly unstable and flexible working conditions under which many creative professionals operate may discourage them from paying for a desk in a coworking space; and secondly, from my observations, creative professionals who work as freelancers tend to share office spaces along with flexible collaborators. The latter option is more affordable, as they are expected to contribute from €50 to €100 per month. On the contrary, for the spaces under investigation, renting an office or shared desk ranges from €150 to €300.

Compared to Social Hub, Creative Space, P2P Lab and Net, where the selection of the space is a mixture of careful consideration and necessity, the locations of Cell and Forest Ridge imply their affiliations with foreign institutions and international corporations. As such, both corporate initiatives use sponsored spaces that are slightly modified to host the initiatives. Cell uses the former premises of its main sponsor with slight amendments to the building. The building mainly contains private offices with a few shared spaces. Compared to the other spaces under investigation which are walking distance from one another, Cell's location does not encourage visits.

During my fieldwork, these six spaces were gaining attention as they attracted recent graduates, young professionals and collectives. Therefore, the spaces represent, in my opinion, key players in the coworking ecosystem of Athens. Their founders organized many coworking events and meet-ups, but at the same time, public initiatives were gradually appearing. These initiatives were joint projects by various public institutions, supported by the Municipality of Athens and funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the National Strategic Reference Framework. Some spaces were part of the Athens Projects initiated by the Municipality of Athens which aimed to foster entrepreneurship

and competitiveness. However, the spaces supported by public initiatives never managed to enter the coworking and start-up debate.

These spaces started to operate relatively later, when an array of start-up services had already been established and were operating successfully. The public turn to start-up entrepreneurialism was belated, which undermined its potential in terms of attracting interest from start-up entrepreneurs and collectives. As such, these spaces never really penetrated the already established and developed start-up ecosystem. In fact, they were doomed to operate in the shadows of the six spaces under investigation. As Michailidou and Kostala observe, the start-up ecosystem mostly evolved without strategic institutional support:

Institutional recognition and endorsement of the potential of creative industries for the Greek economy were both belated and awkward, with policy trying to catch up in a field where the market and creative production seem to have already moved on without strategic institutional support (Michailidou and Kostala, 2016, p.62).

During the start-up events I attended as part of my ethnographic observation, the coworking initiatives of the Municipality or the Chamber of Commerce were often mentioned as examples of mismanagement and a waste of public money. Indicative is the case of high budget space which was repeatedly criticized as redundant by the key players in the ecosystem. As one interviewee observes:

The [name of public coworking initiative] is a tragic case, it is also a very interesting one as the building which was used to host the public initiative was ready. But this space costs something like 4 million for its 18 months of operation, without having beneficiaries, without producing content. It is a constructed success story where the municipality counts its traffic in terms of events. But if you take a closer look, you will realise that the space is empty. Ok, you can count about 600 people one day because an event is held but if you pass by it any other day, you will see no one else in the building apart from the administrators. It is an empty building (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

Another research participant, the founder of P2P Lab, gave me her first impressions of meeting the managers of a public hub at a meeting held at the Municipality:

Ah, the Municipality supports spaces like [name of the space]. Once I participated in a focus meeting, we had with the Municipality, where all the stakeholders were there. The managers of [name of public initiative] didn't say a word, they didn't even know what to say, how to speak and I started to question these public interventions. I have been to all these public initiatives, I have been to [name of the hub] and to [name of the hub], because I was curious what they are actually doing (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Public hubs never became part of the start-up debate, and were never recognized as relevant. As FF, the founder of the Net states:

Look, in terms of infrastructure it is really nice but there are no projects. When I went, it was empty, like really empty... that means that they are not doing something right (FF, founder of Net).

In addition, within the start-up ecosystem, the belief that start-up entrepreneurship is incompatible with public interventions is pervasive. Public initiatives are somehow considered 'peripheral' to the rapidly growing start-up ecosystem.

5.3 Coworking spaces' mission

Founded in the midst of crisis, each space under investigation had a very precise mission. According to the manager of Forest Ridge, their aim is to introduce entrepreneurship to young Greek professionals as a possible employment path:

The new ambassador came and realised that there was huge unemployment, that a lot of Greeks were leaving Greece, and we realised that there was a lack of entrepreneurship, we saw that there were negative stereotypes between Northern countries and Greece in other cultures and we knew [...] that we wanted to share knowledge, we also wanted to terminate the huge wave of brain mobility from the South to the North. Basically these factors, made us to start this incubator and

we used the same building as the foreign institution (Anna, manager of Forest Ridge).

At that time, Greece had been implementing an austerity package that resulted in a deeper deregulation of the labour market. Being on the same page as Forest Ridge, Cell was founded to fight youth unemployment by boosting start-up entrepreneurship:

So, it was like four years ago when the corporation decided to initiate this structure as part of its CSR aiming to boost youth entrepreneurship. In 2011, the employability of young populations was among the priorities for the organization [...] and this is because entrepreneurship creates employment opportunities. If you have the possibility to start an entrepreneurial venture, you create a company – that means you create a team. So, you create a product that has value for the clients and at the same time you generate jobs [...]. Cell was launched in 2013 and we were the first to start something like this. It was the first initiative that was supported financially by an institution (Nikos, manager of Cell).

As traditional employment paths were gradually collapsing due to the deep-seated crisis, entrepreneurship was the only route available for young, highly-qualified professionals. So, both initiatives are part of wider CSR campaigns aimed at cultivating a positive image for the corporations involved by 'doing good' for society.

So, while Forest Ridge represents an act of cultural diplomacy, the creation of Cell can be broadly understood as a signal to Greek society, aiming to reformulate its bad impression of corporations. However, despite the ways these initiatives may have benefited the companies, both spaces represent a top-down response to the deepening crisis. Identifying difficulties moving between education and employment, both spaces aspire to fill the gap between university studies and the labour market.

In addition to the corporate initiatives, both Creative Space and Social Hub were founded by creative collectives aspiring to help young professionals find creative and socially aware employment paths. What grabbed my attention was the fact

that both spaces incorporate a very specific scope. Both aim to connect sectors not traditionally associated with profit-making to economic activity. As Panos, the founder of Creative Space points out:

We are an incubator, we bring in contact the creative and cultural sector with entrepreneurship [...] we do focus on that and we aspire to equally share the spaces to the five creative sectors – architecture, design, fashion, services, ICT – [...]. We are not interested in hosting start-ups but rather creative teams with potential (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

As discussed in the introduction to this study, compared to the creative industry debate in Anglo-Saxon countries where cultural creative industries are considered the driving force of innovation and growth (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; DCMS, 2001; European Commission, 2010), in Greece the debate has been long neglected. So, by identifying this gap, Creative Space aims to provide knowledge and support to open creative entrepreneurial territory for exploitation. This gives young professionals the opportunity to start their own businesses in fields perceived to be creative, and thus meaningful (for the debate see Chapter 2).

Similarly, Social Hub attempts to actively connect the social, traditionally not-for-profit sector to start-up entrepreneurship while fostering a culture in which any economic activity has a social impact and a value to society:

What we do is to work with the teams of newly founded social businesses on building strong funding proposals [...] in this programme that we run we work all day on “what is scale?”, “what is growth?”, “what is my product?” during the day and in the afternoon large corporations and investors join us and we explain to them the same way “what is impact investment?” [...] because it is not only the financial benefit, is also the impact (Marios, co-founder of Social Hub).

So, the stated aim of Social Hub is twofold: on the one hand, to transform social businesses into investment-ready ventures by familiarizing them with the way a business plan should be written; and on the other, to introduce to the corporate

world a way of profit making investment that can also make an impact on society.

Both P2P Lab and Net are spaces dedicated to supporting start-up entrepreneurs mainly with tech and new media backgrounds. Often, during our meetings the founders identified themselves as 'techies' or 'geeks'. As the founding team of Net explains:

When we say that we are a coworking, which means in practice a multi-functional space because we host innovative ideas and at the same, we do run workshops, seminars, 80% of the things we actually do is start-up and tech related (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Having adopted a very specific angle, Net operates within the world of start-ups aiming to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture, driven by technological innovation. It can be argued that Net's founders actively promote themselves as 'tech-evangelists'. Occupying a specific niche in a relatively small start-up scene that is currently expanding, the founders of Net distance themselves from other initiatives as they aspire to be thought of as experts in their field. They promote themselves as being able to provide real value to young, aspiring professionals with their knowledge and their access to entrepreneurial networks.

The manager and founder of P2P Lab explains to me how they run the space and what serves as its differentiating element:

Back in 2012, we were like let's do a coworking in Athens, we were telling them [the Greeks] about start-ups and they didn't have a clue. In [EU country], when you say coworking means that you rent a space, nobody talks for start-up entrepreneurship. Then, we came back again in 2013 and there were so many initiatives, we saw such a huge change. The guys have just opened Social Hub and Forest Ridge has just started to operate. So, we were like, there is no reason to run a coworking, in Greece it was so much more focused [...] there are start-ups, there are entrepreneurs, what's missing is the know-how [...]. So we were like so many start-ups, so many people learning how to code... we can

contribute to this part by bringing projects from abroad (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

P2P Lab serves as a learning node for developers, designers and marketers who want to develop their own products. It puts young professionals to work next to senior developers, so they can gain professional experience. Instead of providing services that overlap with other initiatives, P2P Lab addresses young professionals by helping them learn next to experienced professionals.

Despite some different elements, the spaces under investigation all aim to link young professionals with some form of entrepreneurship. Top-down initiatives such as Forest Ridge and Cell aspire to connect young professionals with the market economy, while Creative Space and Social Hub work towards opening unexplored terrain for entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, bottom-up initiatives such as P2P Lab aspire to link recent graduates with more experienced professionals. To contextualise the emergence of these spaces in the Athenian context, in August 2014 alone “12,000 applications for immigration visas to Australia” were issued (Aranitou, 2014, p.1). As the recession deepened, a lot of highly skilled professionals were forced to look for jobs worldwide. These spaces presented one of the few meaningful employment paths for young, highly qualified graduates. Indeed, coworking spaces presented the only cure for the continuous brain-drain.

While traditional employment paths were being dissolved, the entrepreneurial route was promoted as a promising professional trajectory. As discussed in Chapter 2, developments in the ‘new economy’ led to the creation of a labour force, mostly constituted of self-employed individuals, demonstrating entrepreneurial activity. This ‘involuntary entrepreneurship’ (Kautonen et al., 2010) is encouraged by EU policy makers who see in start-ups “one of the key enablers of the European Union Digital Market strategy. When successful, they help our economy grow, create innovation and employment” (Anon, 2018, p.1). These findings reflect the wider transformations of work in the post-Fordist era where labour is becoming more entrepreneurial and self-managed (Pongratz and Voß, 2003).

So, illustrating what kind of spaces have emerged in Athens in times of crisis and why, brings to the surface a deeper question that needs to be addressed: what does it mean to sustain such a space in times of crisis? Indeed, the apparent lack of resources has triggered repeated debates regarding the profitability of such initiatives. During my fieldwork, the preservation of such spaces was of great importance. So, the next section addresses the coping strategies these spaces employ in order to survive. With all the spaces being for-profit, their profitability was among the first issues I discussed with the founders and managers.

5.4 Sustaining a coworking space in times of crisis

As identified in the literature, coworking profit margins are limited. Specifically, as de Peuter et al. (2017) observe:

Although coworking takes a variety of forms, from municipally supported programs to non-profit spaces, most spaces are for-profit, even though for most, profit margins are slim. One operator describes coworking's economic model of splitting rent across itinerant tenants as fundamentally flawed. Another says coworking 'isn't a money-making project'. Uncertain profitability has not deterred efforts to wring value from coworking, however: spaces proliferate at such a clip (de Peuter et al., 2017, p.692).

In the Athenian context where resources are limited, most spaces struggle to survive. Emerging right in the midst of crisis, coworking spaces combine sources of funding to sustain themselves. Exceptions are Cell and Forest Ridge, linked to financial institutions and corporations, with therefore nothing to worry about, sustainability is not an issue. Yet, as I discovered, the funding resources of coworking spaces are under scrutiny by the founders, managers and participants of the spaces. The survival strategies of coworking spaces are continuously valorized. This section explores the practices employed by the spaces and the debates that surround them.

5.4.1 Uncertain profitability

As expected, sustaining a business in an unstable economic context is hard.

Most independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives who run coworking spaces use primarily their very own family money or personal capital. For instance, Eva uses a flat she inherited from her grandmother to house P2P Lab. Sustaining an independent space is not easy and thus, she feels her life to be a treadmill:

We don't have a standard secure income. Since we are working on a project basis, we could work one month and end up making money to sustain the next two. But next month could be tough and we might not get any projects. So, who knows what will happen next? We want to reach the level where the space could be sustainable on its own, no matter the number of projects (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Adopting a legal structure where every participant becomes a shareholder, Eva points out:

We were with FP who is the co-founder and while we were in Athens, we found people who wanted to collaborate and embrace this idea. We didn't want to become just the managers of the space, we wanted to be surrounded by like-minded people [...]. For that reason, we founded in the form of a social cooperative enterprise, everybody can be part of this, can contribute. We wanted to have a more of a horizontal way of organization, we wanted to be like an open society (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

A social cooperative enterprise is an open and inclusive legal structure for enterprises in Greece of which everybody can be part, no matter whether they are a student or unemployed. Participating in such an organization allows participants to receive benefits from the state, and once the enterprise starts to produce profits, 35% is shared with the workers. Since a bottom-up structure is adopted, participants don't pay monthly fees, but at the end of the month the bills are shared equally. If a member cannot pay their share, they can contribute to the community by providing another service needed at that time.

Christina runs Net along with her partner, based only on their personal resources and relying upon member subscriptions. Despite the fact that rents in Athens are relatively low, compared to other EU metropolises, the operational costs of running a coworking space are significant. As she told me, their resources come mainly from her husband's compensation package: "It happened, the crisis affected everybody, so my partner. They were told, look guys, tomorrow morning you are all fired". So, Christina and her partner decided to use the severance money to kick-start a new business that could prove profitable in the long run.

The founders of Social Hub are significantly younger than those of Net. The crisis burst right at the time they were about to enter the labour market. While still in university, they got involved in various NGOs and student associations, and started to work on their idea of running a coworking space. Creating a space like Social Hub was their dream; which eventually came true, but not without personal sacrifices. The founders of Social Hub followed a long and exhausting entrepreneurial path. Throughout their entrepreneurial becoming they were devoted, disciplined and committed:

Before our graduation, we were allowed to conduct an internship, so I went to [EU country] to work at [name of the space] there. I emailed them, I had a connection back then a friend, I asked her to introduce me to them, so I sent through my application. It was a paid three-month internship by the university. After the completion of the three months I did some fundraising applications to support my internship. I did an Erasmus placement, an Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, and then I did an EVS. In total I stayed up to two and a half years and I was raising a salary for the one year and a half while after I was on the payroll. When I joined the [name of the space] in [EU country], they had just started, they had opened four months before my arrival, so I felt somehow obliged to find the resources to strengthen the newly founded organization. So, I did fundraising for the organization to fund my salary (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

Before coming back to Greece, both founders of Social Hub spent some time abroad to extract tacit and explicit knowledge on how to properly run a collaborative space. Both conducted extended internship programmes sponsored by their universities and later by various EU youth mobility programmes. Usually, university scholarships for European internships are up to €500, while EVS provides interns with some pocket money and rent allowance. This, in practice, meant that for quite a while Marios lived on less than €500 per month.

For the realization of Creative Space, the founding team managed to combine several sources of funding; some came directly from foundations and company sponsorships. As Panos told me, their initial intention was to withdraw funds from the European Union Fund, as at that time there was a call for an EU bid. However, they did not win the bid, and were left alone to search for sponsorships. Creative Space managed to secure funding from a multinational company to run an incubation programme after the renovation of the building. They received a small grant from a Greek foundation that allowed them to change the crucial infrastructure of the space. Nevertheless, Creative Space is a structure mostly funded by private resources. As the Creative Space team runs another cultural institution, they decided to stop paying taxes for a period of two years. This pause helped them secure enough savings to start funding the Creative Space initiative. This strategy is called 'creative accounting' by Panos:

So, what we actually did, was what I call 'creative accounting'. We suspended all the payments to the State, I mean taxes, bills, etc., for a period up to two years. [...] Everybody, our accountants were like "you are crazy", "what you are doing is completely insane", and actually they were right about it but we decided to proceed (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

This 'creative accounting' strategy embraces the high risk of paying fines to the State that could have resulted in the closure of their other cultural centre.

For spaces funded by independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives uncertain profitability is the rule. All the case studies illustrated above – Net, Creative Space, P2P Lab, and Social Hub – have embraced entrepreneurial risk in order to run a business the profitability of which is uneven. Using primarily their own financial resources, they put their personal and professional lives on the line. If we fail, then what? was something never really articulated in our discussions. However, it was more than apparent that independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives live in conditions of deep uncertainty. Prioritizing their business over anything else, they, indeed, promote a ‘sacrificial ethos’ (Ross, 2004) of working. What is striking is that the lack of access to public and private funding sources was not represented as a discouraging factor.

However, while the spaces under investigation struggle to survive, foundations are reluctant to help. They either chose to support them with small grants or to fund their own initiatives directly. These are the cases I illustrate in the section below. Being part of CSR programmes, both the Cell and Forest Ridge are spaces where sustainability is never an issue. So, while tracing the emergence of the CSR debate, the section below illustrates the way these initiatives are perceived by independent entrepreneurs, start-ups and creative collectives.

5.4.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

Since the crisis of 2008, CSR initiatives have gained visibility in the corporate world and beyond. These initiatives emerged as a central business practice aiming to improve reputations by ensuring that corporations do good in society, and contribute to it by creating added value (Arvidsson, 2010). Worldwide, an ethical stance by big corporations is observed, embracing values that address wider social concerns (Vogel, 2007; Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013). Jeffrey Hollender, co-founder of the leading household product company Seventh Generation and CSR evangelist, notes:

There are a number of signs that the public will not tolerate the kind of behaviour that they tolerated in the past. There is a new level of expectation, and it is going to change the unspoken guidelines under

which commerce operates. It does not mean that every business is going to become a good business, but we are in the process of setting the bar higher than it has ever been set before, and these new standards are going to force some level of change on even the most reticent companies. Public opinion, public relations and public pressure from an increasingly enlightened citizenry are already starting to see this change (Hollender, 2004, p.113-114).

The development of CSR discourse is inherently tied to debates about corporate legitimacy in the wake of corruption, environmental and other forms of scandal such as violations of labour rights. As far as the Greek context is concerned, the first CSR programmes aiming to tackle youth unemployment appeared in 2013. Financial institutes and banks were the first to launch initiatives aiming to help young professionals carve their professional paths, then other industries, such as fast moving consumer goods, followed. The topic of employment has been a subject of contestation within Greek society since the crisis erupted. The strategic moves of corporations in this landscape signify their defensive stance as the majority are associated with scandals regarding capitalization, mergers and acquisitions. In this tense climate for corporations, actions are needed to reverse impressions by actively cultivating good reputations. Therefore, alongside the high visibility of Forest Ridge and Cell, concerns are often raised regarding their ties and sources of funding.

Although Forest Ridge is initiated by a foreign institution, the space is financed by Greek foundations and corporations. Surprisingly, the foreign institution that was the initiator gained public exposure and acquired the credit. Thus, many of the owners and managers of coworking spaces I interviewed explicitly expressed their concern about Forest Ridge's links:

Forest Ridge is an incomprehensible case, because while its first investment has been very interesting, there have been a lot of question marks as well regarding how a foreign institution can intervene in this area, without even giving funding to its own initiative... It's a very complicated thing, since it got sponsored by foundations, it is very weird,

and in terms of morality as it raises various concerns (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

Panos was neither the first nor the last to express concerns about Forest Ridge during my fieldwork. Many of the people I interviewed were very critical, perceiving Forest Ridge as an ambivalent foreign intervention in the sensitive terrain of self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship. The main point of critique was that the foreign institution gained so much popularity for an initiative not even funded by its own resources.

Likewise, Cell raised concerns regarding its 'ambivalent' sponsors. Being openly affiliated to a financial institution, for some, Cell's image is stigmatized by its status of ownership:

I might be wrong, but the Cell programme didn't inspire me, when I heard that there is a bank behind this initiative, I became quite sceptical [...] I am always concerned when there are financial institutions behind (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

As this illustrates, Maria was quite sceptical about a space initiated by a large corporation, particularly a financial institution. Maria's attitude reflects the wider social unrest towards banks which prevailed at that time in Athens, and worldwide.

Despite the scepticism expressed by some, many young start-uppers I met through my fieldwork chose to locate themselves and their businesses at Cell. As Manolis explains, it was a very rationalized decision, that they took as a team. However, for Gregory, a young start-up entrepreneur, Cell presented a dystopian 'never-never land' of start-ups, a forgotten place where nobody goes and once you enter the incubation programme, you are likely to stay forever. The reason for this was not the support of the financial institution, but because the people who ran Cell proved to be unqualified in the long run, allowing start-ups to be lazy. As Gregory puts it:

There is the Cell programme where they are actually doing nothing there [...]. They have taken money from the [name of the financial institution]

and they must do something with this amount. [...] There are start-ups there that they have entered and stayed for a long, long time. What I know is that if you are lazy, you should be kicked out of the hub (Gregory, Forest Ridge and P2P Hub).

It is apparent that Gregory internalizes the market rationale, in which anybody not complying with market imperatives such as productivity and rapid growth should be immediately kicked out.

Summing up, Cell and Forest Ridge entered the start-up ecosystem financially robust and stable. Eventually, they became strong key-players, competing with other independent initiatives and creating a top-down structured response to youth unemployment. However, as the section below indicates, social responsibility initiatives being led by firms is an issue that continues to generate debate and mixed thoughts. The concerns expressed are that these spaces boost corporate reputations; an issue that triggers further concern. The section below addresses the idea that independent entrepreneurs, despite the uncertain profitability of their entrepreneurial ventures, choose autonomy over permanent financial dependency on an institution, corporation or even the public sector.

5.4.3 Choosing autonomy over financial dependency

Despite the difficulties and the financial uncertainty faced by coworking spaces, many founders are reluctant to establish permanent collaborations with corporations. Indicative is the case of Social Hub. Before its actual realization, the founding team scouted potential funding opportunities. Marios, the co-founder of Social Hub, explains how they finally declined a last-minute offer by a financial institution:

Back in 2012, a bank was looking to establish some sort of partnership with us, but we finally decided not to proceed with this plan. This happened because they wanted to put the name of the bank, “a hub powered by the bank”, something that we didn’t want to do in any case (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

So even the founders of the Social Hub were in negotiations with financial institutions, but in the end chose not to proceed with a collaboration since they couldn't achieve a deal on their own terms. Putting the 'powered by' a bank in the name of Social Hub was non-negotiable for them, as their initiative would be somehow tied to this capitalization by a private company. It is striking that, despite the difficulties and the lack of resources, the founding team of Social Hub had the negotiating power to decline offers for potential partnerships. As Marios says, another opportunity came along, but they also decided to turn that down:

Even [name of a cultural space] offered to give us a space, we decided not to proceed. In our case, you have one choice, to do something independent. It is way different to say I will be put under the auspices of an organization [...] it was actually better for the community here (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

So, few opportunities for collaboration with big corporations and established cultural organizations did emerge, but the founding team decided to finance Social Hub entirely through personal savings and family budget. As Marios describes, their decision to choose autonomy was driven by the fact that this "was actually better for the community here", pointing out how much autonomy and independence are valorized within the emerging world of start-up entrepreneurship. Ideas of autonomy and independence are well captured and documented in the creative labour debate (Banks, 2006; Banks, 2010; Banks et al., 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2017).

Likewise, Net operates independently but is financially precarious. At the time I conducted the interview, Net was facing challenges in terms of sustaining the building itself and retaining clients. Despite their financial difficulties, the founding team was very negative about receive public funding: "you are not as creative when your tummy is full, you are more creative when your tummy is empty", commented the founder of Net. When Christina, the co-founder, expresses complaints regarding state bureaucracy, FF stopped her by saying: "Doesn't help to complain... it really doesn't, it's like complaining on [Facebook],

writing on the wall. Let's not focus on the problem". In fact, any grumble or sign of resentment was perceived by her partner as unnecessary and misleading, as something that could harm their entrepreneurial substance. So, while the co-founder of Social Hub rejects any financial dependency from institutions, Net denies any public funding – at least on a theoretical level. Thus, as Andrew Ross (2000, 2009) suggests, their motivation lies in the conception of labour as a sacrificial one wherein "physical and psychic hardship is the living proof of valuable mental innovation" (Ross, 2009, p.47). So, if private funding can be perceived as an infringement of entrepreneurial autonomy, public funding could in turn cost entrepreneurial ingenuity.

Marios adds another element, that start-up entrepreneurship is about what you have achieved using limited resources instead of talking about what you might have done:

If you want to talk about entrepreneurship, you should have done it. You are not allowed to talk if you haven't done it. You should be aware of all the steps throughout the process, how you have reached to the decision to found a space, how you are planning to build your entrepreneurial plan, your feasibility plan, how are you gonna make profit, when do you expect to stand on your own feet. When we came here, the building was closed for up to 4 years, there was nothing (Marios, co-founder of Social Hub).

Therefore, a 'just do it' discourse develops that legitimizes the entrepreneurial substance of the founders, injecting it with bravery and romanticism. Even though their decision was highly constrained by the current context, it is framed as an emancipatory practice. No matter what, they proceed to the realization of their entrepreneurial idea, actively defying financial risks and difficulties.

This tendency is echoed in the way the founding team of Net presents their entrepreneurial move to found a hub after FF was fired from his job. The fact FF was fired is perceived as an opportunity for expansion, for exploration of their capabilities despite the limitations and the general financial instability:

FF one day woke up and said “let’s do it” because an entrepreneur means that you are a risk taker, you get out your comfort zone, you are crazy in a good way, you don’t stuck, you don’t look for security, you are doing it despite the challenges, because you like so badly, just because you thrive for the challenge and you won’t find the way to come and top. Let’s be realistic, this is entrepreneurship, if it was easy everybody would be doing it (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Throughout our interview, the founders of Net referred to start-up entrepreneurs as the crazy ones, the risk takers, the underdogs that dare to start their own businesses. This can be perceived as an attempt to brand start-up entrepreneurs as brave individuals (Bandinelli and Arvidsson, 2012). Indeed, according to Christina’s quote, difficulties and challenges are conceptualised as opportunities to toughen up and prove how much an individual is committed to the entrepreneurial dream.

5.5 Coworking spaces as a response to the crisis?

Cell and the Forest Ridge position themselves as strong key players in the coworking and start-up ecosystem. Independent coworking spaces however navigate in a highly unstable and unpredictable context without stable financial help from any external resource. The spaces under investigation that were founded by creative collectives and independent entrepreneurs receive limited or no financial support.

At the same time, new spaces have emerged supported by the Municipality and other EU funded projects, openly competing with independent spaces which struggle to survive. All the spaces under investigation face difficulties, while the profitability of their entrepreneurial venture seems uneven. However, as this chapter illustrates, independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives embrace the risks associated with running their own businesses in a state of general instability and deep uncertainty. Openly criticizing Forest Ridge and Cell for being dependent on institutions, foundations and corporations, above all else they value their independence and autonomy.

Hesmondhalgh (2010) questions whether autonomy can be seen as a means by which attention is distracted from real exploitation (p.237). By choosing the harder path of independence, their entrepreneurial decisions are framed with a self-sacrificial ethos (Ross, 2004). Becoming entrepreneurial implies following specific steps to build financial autonomy. We cannot dismiss the way the owners of independent coworking spaces position themselves, wanting to be acknowledged as self-made, brave, independent and resourceful.

In the currently evolving brave entrepreneurial discourse, there is no room for complaints or excuses for not proceeding or keeping up. However, the uncertain profitability of coworking spaces transforms the working lives of their founders into a continuous struggle. As identified in the literature, coworking is deeply and intrinsically ambivalent (de Peuter et al., 2017); something reflected in the precarious working conditions of independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives. I suggest that the oxymoron is even more apparent in these cases: these spaces were founded to support and protect young entrepreneurs and professionals from the insecurity and instability of the deregulated labour market of Greece, however, precarious conditions are reproduced and directly impact the founders of these spaces.

It can be argued that this brave resourcefulness is a coping mechanism that serves as an empowering narrative. Given the precarious conditions, independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives construct their own personal narratives about their entrepreneurial choices. They foster perceptions about themselves and their ventures that are injected with romanticism, bravery and boldness. Yet, this robust, brave, entrepreneurial narrative legitimizes even illegal practices when employed for good or ethical reasons. In this context, the brave strategy of 'creative accounting' employed by Panos makes sense, as it is not for personal profit but for the sake of his upcoming entrepreneurial venture. So, 'creative accounting' is considered a substantiated, genuine and pragmatic entrepreneurial move in the Athenian context. However, this does not apply to the spaces that have direct links to institutions and corporations. Their sources of funding are under continuous scrutiny, raising concerns.

This chapter provides a vivid account of the six spaces under investigation. It suggests that the apparent diversification of the coworking landscape can be seen from their diverse locations, aesthetics, aims and professional target audiences. Each space addresses a specific angle of start-up entrepreneurship, attempting to link young professionals with the labour market. Indeed, entrepreneurship seems to be the only professional path that could lead to meaningful employment for the highly qualified professionals. It can be argued that coworking spaces serve as a response to a crisis which has led to a continuous brain-drain. This chapter calls for a deeper investigation into the ways coworking spaces support young entrepreneurs in practice, paying close attention to coworking services and how they are valorized by the start-up community.

6 Coworking services

The previous chapter demonstrated the crowded coworking market of Athens. Many spaces have, in fact, emerged within the wider landscape of the creative industries. Some coworking spaces, such as P2P Lab, Creative Space and Net, address a specific niche of professionals – the first, developers and new media professionals, the second, designers, photographers and artists, and the third, mainly tech start-ups. Some other spaces have a pan-professional character, such as Forest Ridge, Cell and Social Hub, which are populated mostly by micro start-ups, the activities of which come under the broader spectrum of entrepreneurship.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the six case studies under investigation all operate within the market economy. Being immature entrepreneurial ventures, they operate with limited or no external sources of funding in the context of a deep-seated crisis. Exceptions to the ‘uncertain profitability’ rule of the coworking spaces in Athens are Forest Ridge and Cell which are funded by private institutions or corporations. These two spaces represent top-down responses to high unemployment rates. Examining the other cases thoroughly shows that independent entrepreneurs and creative collectives identify market opportunities that emerge due to the deepening of crisis, and further deregulation of the labour market. Of the spaces under investigation, only P2P Lab operates with a collective, bottom-up structure in which the participants are not necessarily expected to pay a specific amount each month. As the previous chapter illustrated, all the spaces under investigation rely on membership subscriptions.

This chapter investigates how these spaces respond to participants’ needs and how, in turn, their services are valorized by them. Taking a cue from the observation of de Peuter et al. (2017, p.688), I consider a coworking space an “emergent site where cultural labour is performed and responses to precarity are enacted”, the services of which tackle the needs of micro-start-ups, young professionals and small businesses.

6.1 What do coworking spaces have to offer?

With so many coworking spaces operating in Athens, this chapter investigates what coworking spaces have to offer. Throughout my fieldwork, I relentlessly questioned what coworking spaces provide for their audiences. As I observed, the spaces under investigation mainly address micro start-ups, and independent entrepreneurs. Most of the time, the individuals I came across were part of start-up teams or collectives. As identified in the previous chapter, only a few professionals enter these spaces as freelancers. In fact, the services offered in these spaces tackle the specific needs of entrepreneurial teams. As the coworking literature suggests, coworking spaces act as “collaboration facilitators” (Capdevila, 2014b; Dovey et al., 2016), “open learning hubs” (Schmidt and Brinks, 2017) or just “communities of like-minded individuals” (Capdevila, 2013; Brinks and Schmidt, 2015; Butcher, 2016; Garrett et al., 2017). Considering the vagueness of these terms, this chapter investigates what coworking spaces offer in practice. However, the diversification of coworking spaces does not necessarily reflect the services they provide. In fact, the spaces under investigation try to help participants in all sorts of ways.

The financial robustness of Forest Ridge and Cell mirrors the fixed package of services they offer to their participants. While Cell has no participation fees, Forest Ridge charges less than the other spaces. Due to their links, both spaces have established a fixed network of service providers. Being well-embedded in corporate cycles, they have open communication channels with big corporations and multinational businesses. Cell was the first initiative launched in Athens, aiming to support start-up entrepreneurs, and the site manager has plenty of good reason to brag about it:

In February 2013, when the interview for the official launch of Cell took place, there was no other initiative. We were the first hub which was supported by a financial institution. Every other initiative you see, it certainly happened after March 2013 (Nikos, site manager of Cell).

The launch of Cell happened at a time when there was no other corporate initiative in the landscape of entrepreneurship. Its array of services included a full incubation programme that constituted five pillars:

Our services are organized under five different pillars: the first one, has to do with the provision of the infrastructure since start-up teams that join Cell are not even entities yet. So, it is Cell that actually provides them with an office space and a common space where they can interact. The second pillar is dedicated to what we call one-stop-shop services where six services are being offered by our sponsors or the executives of our corporation. So, there is a company that provides accounting services, book-keeping and governance. The other part has to do with the creative. This creative part is responsible for the logo but also the brand strategy, the marketing approach, and there is another team which deals with copyrights. So, we also cover trademarks, patents. Another package of services which is also covered by the executives of our corporation has to do with the HR, development assessment training. Things like how I do a job description, how I recruit, how I interview participants, how I structure a working relationship. There is also an array of services provided directly by our corporation; these are products that aim to help the start-teams deal with funding issues. [...] all these services are free of charge (Nikos, site manager of Cell).

Incorporating a 'one-stop shop' approach, Cell aims to transfer 'corporate intelligence' to start-uppers. Maintaining well-established collaborations with an array of institutions such as big corporations, banks, private investors, venture capitalists and independent mentors from the world of business, Cell provides a fixed package of services to its participants.

Likewise, Forest Ridge's sponsors contribute to the initiative by being the core providers of knowledge:

We went to [...] [foreign] companies, and they said, "yes, we want to be part of this", so knowledge sharing is one of the services we provide [...]. These companies send mentors, so the companies said, "we are gonna

help in three ways: sponsorship, contributions, mentors". The knowledge sharing is the mentorship and our main donor became [name of Greek foundation], they joined later but they are responsible for a lot of programmes like Entrepreneurs in Residence (Anna, site manager of Forest Ridge).

Since both Cell and Forest Ridge aim to enable the breeding of newly founded businesses, their services and processes are identical. They run specific application rounds in which candidates must follow specific steps that include the submission of a business plan, an interview with the selection committee and, in some cases, a pitch of their start-up idea in front of investors.

As far as Forest Ridge is concerned, start-uppers are required to present their start-up idea by completing a business plan that incorporates parameters such as their potential key partners, their overall value proposition, their customer relations and target segments, their channels' strategy, the cost structure and their revenue streams. The aim of this process is to familiarize participants with market logic, by making them think of all the aspects of business related to their start-up idea, before even entering the hub.

Maria joined Forest Ridge as a solo entrepreneur. Taking part in the formal application process gave her reassurance that she had taken the right step for her entrepreneurial career:

The whole process of entering Forest Ridge was so up-to-date and so, let me say, progressive. It made me start reading again, I was really inspired [...] I sent my application and then I was interviewed by the committee. Let me say that [foreign institutions' representatives] were attending the interviews, their presence made me feel so good and so sure about my choice. I give my kudos to the [foreign institution] for its initiative (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

When Maria applied to join Forest Ridge, she felt she was in good hands. She somewhat felt that the process was 'progressive'. In fact, the formal recruiting process served as a proof of professionalism. To push this argument further, Maria buys into the logic of the market, and thus, processes that resemble the

ways big corporations operate represent for her a secure professional path to follow. This supports claims, discussed in the literature, that contemporary professionals feel obliged to align themselves with market imperatives in order to sustain themselves professionally (Farrugia, 2013a; Farrugia, 2013b; Bessant et al., 2018; Farrugia, 2019). So, the presence of high-profile foreign institutions' representatives came to frame both Cell and Forest Ridge as serious and experienced initiatives, and this was realized by those who have international expertise in entrepreneurship and connections within the corporate world.

Aleksandra, who also joined Forest Ridge, explains how much her confidence was boosted once she entered a space supported by a foreign institution and international sponsors:

Before joining Forest Ridge, I was feeling almost embarrassed to say out loud that I wanted to start my own company; it was a taboo for me (Aleksandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

If Aleksandra was feeling insecure about sharing, with her friends and family, her decision to start her own business, by the time she joined Forest Ridge she felt certain about her choice. It can be argued that the existence of structures supported by private and foreign institutions frame start-uppers' entrepreneurial attempts as serious career steps. Both spaces are seen as bridging the gap between education and the labour market, by bringing forward 'the intelligence of the corporate world'. As David Rae suggests:

There is rapid evolution of entrepreneurial teaching and learning approaches, both in the UK and worldwide, with a critique of 'academic' models which can be seen to privilege cognitive, 'theoretical' knowledge over 'practical', experiential approaches associated more directly with entrepreneurial businesses (Rae, 2014, p.85).

Entrepreneurs seek support, but also need some sort of legitimization. If education fails in terms of securing decent work in a highly deregulated labour market, entrepreneurship has the possibility of creating meaningful employment. Contextualizing Rae's observation, the market imperatives

represented by Forest Ridge become, to some extent, a model of operation for young professionals.

Valuing hands-on experiential learning, Gregory explains that joining P2P Lab was a life-changing experience:

When I first came here, I had a very immature start-up idea. [...] I considered it brilliant back then, but as I gained some experience, I realized that it was complete bullshit. People here told me to join some of their teams to see how work is being done, the problems that we encounter, what works and what doesn't (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

Hands-on experience shaped Gregory's ideas about what could potentially prove profitable in the market. It can be argued that these spaces fill the gap between theoretical, academic knowledge and the logic of the market. Being based in such a space serves as a reality check for participants, and functions as a preliminary stage before entering the market. In this stage, the participants and founders of the spaces do whatever it takes to help the newly founded businesses.

The founder of Social Hub explained that, when a new resident joins the space, the founding team organizes a kick-off meeting with them. The aim of the meeting is to deeply understand the start-up's needs. Only in that way can Social Hub really help them:

We always start with a kick-off that lasts around one hour, one hour and a half maximum. This meeting is crucial for both sides because we actually identify how are going to work together, what kind of needs the individual has, what can Social Hub offer to them (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

The kick-off meeting is crucial for both parties, as this is where mutual interests are expressed and trust is established. The same applies to Net, which does not have specific admission criteria. However, it primarily targets tech-oriented start-up entrepreneurs and teams, as Christina, the co-founder, points out:

We don't have specific admission criteria, but if a cultural start-up comes to us, I should say they should go definitely to [hub's name], or to the [hub's name], because the start-ups [here] are mostly tech orientated, which means that they won't be able to fit very well (Christina, co-founder of Net).

As Christina says, they aspire to help start-up entrepreneurs and collectives grow as much as they can, sometimes by rejecting the collaboration from the very beginning and offering more suitable alternatives.

Instead of committees, the founders of the spaces agree or reject collaborations based on mutual interest. Instead of formalities and structured interview sessions, the spaces start their collaborations based primarily on relationships. It can be argued that, from the very beginning, personal, intimate relationships are cultivated with the founders of these spaces. Within Cell and Forest Ridge, relationships are mediated by fixed processes and specific steps that need to be taken.

The importance of personal relationships and less formal structures is further exemplified by Net, as Christina explains how working in a coworking space is a dynamic, collective process which brings the participants close to each other:

We don't believe in being so strict, I mean have fun, work, but have fun at the same time, enjoy, it's your project, it's your baby here, so enjoy. If you don't enjoy it, you are going to stress over, and what's the point? [...]
We all meet up at lunch time and everybody on the ground or third floor, it's as we are doing it in this conversation now, it's the same kind of thing (Christina, co-founder of Net).

By not believing in "being so strict", Net's founders promote a flexible, open and fun approach to coworking. They emphasize informal, casual, everyday practices that cultivate deep and profound relationships. Having lunch together is conceptualized as a collective experience, in which many things can be done and said. Lunch acts as an informal community building activity. Similarly, being based at the Social Hub for a period of almost three months, I observed that the shared lunch routine was a must for participants. The common kitchen emerged

as a social space where start-uppers shared their concerns, networked and exchanged information. This is reflected in the way Christina describes everyday life at Net:

It was a good thing about us in Net, and we do get a lot of “you have a very welcome environment” when someone walks in here [...] this is what we wanted, we wanted people to feel welcome, we want people to feel at ease (Christina, co-founder of Net).

This inherent informality in the way spaces operate is widely understood as a structural feature of contemporary creative workplaces (Ross, 2004; Neff, 2012).

As Panos, the founder of Creative Space, says, they acknowledged quite early on that fixed services do not necessarily match the residents’ needs. So, instead of providing fixed schemes, Creative Space has gradually adopted flexible ways of monitoring the participants’ progress. While their work is mostly self-managed, coworking spaces tend to support participants by creating flexible mechanisms and processes. However, while more flexible programmes may provide services in ways that appear to conform to the assumed informality of these spaces (Merkel, 2019), the flexibility and informality are controlled to ensure the system remains productive. The participants of Social Hub and Net are not required to attend specific programmes. They have their own autonomy and their own responsibility over their start-up ideas or business ventures. So, while fixed services resemble formal bureaucratic institutional support, flexible services dissolve managerial hierarchies, promoting an informal and playful way of working.

6.2 How do participants valorize coworking services?

Mentoring services

Among the services provided by the spaces under investigation, mentoring is the most discussed in the coworking ecosystem. Having a mentor means, in practice, that each start-up entrepreneur or collective is assigned a specific consultant whose role is twofold: on the one hand, they aim to help start-up entrepreneurs and collectives build their initial ideas, while on the other, they monitor entrepreneurial progress in terms of attracting investors, finding clients and

formulating a concrete marketing strategy. Nevertheless, start-uppers and members of creative collectives actively question their structures and overall values.

Manolis, an architect who joined Cell as a member of a start-up collective explained how much their mentor helped in terms of giving them business insight:

Our mentor was selected by Cell – but I have to say he was a good choice, he helped us a lot [...]. He was a senior manager at [corporate company], now he has left, no idea where he has gone. He was a corporate professional, but he gave us clear directions on how to navigate. You know, we all come from an architectural background, we had no clue on how to start a new business, what are the first steps, we didn't have any client facing skills – we didn't have any marketing knowledge. Our mentor did have excellent marketing knowledge, so he played a crucial role in the evolution of our final product offering (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

Mentoring sessions came to bridge the business knowledge gap in Manolis' team and equip them with the marketing insights and business intelligence needed to build their product. Similarly, Dimitris was a software engineer and start-upper based at Forest Ridge. Along with his team, he participated in multiple mentoring programmes while incubated in an accelerator in another EU country. He cherished these mentoring experiences, but acknowledges how hard it was for his newly founded start-up team to get solid feedback from the mentors:

We were constantly meeting new people. Every week we had a new mentor. Some of them they were like “your idea sucks” some others got really excited. That was confusing for us, at some point we damaged our brains from the ideas, from what we should be doing instead of what we were doing. It took us quite a lot of time to wrap up what we have heard and transform it into constructive feedback. For a month, we had like been thinking of the different versions, ideas and their potentials. We

had some experiments, we took it step by step (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

For Dimitris, despite the difficulties of the mentoring, its importance is not questioned. However, for Aleksandra, mentoring is much more complicated in practice. As she states, she puts the power relationship that can be developed between the mentor and the mentee under scrutiny:

When it comes to mentoring, it is also significant to have someone who is an experienced professional in their field, but this is also tricky. There is a trap, to start doing whatever your mentor tells you to do, but the mentor does not know what your project is about, or you can even start contesting and disputing your mentor (Aleksandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

As Aleksandra explains, it is very difficult to counterbalance the authority of the mentor against the value it has for the start-up entrepreneur. For that reason, she tries to critically engage with mentoring programmes, keeping a balance between her entrepreneurial decisions and the mentor's power. In this case, however, the mentor is someone who has made a career in the corporate world, so their opinion represents the values of the market. As I discovered while in the field, an array of consultants and C-level executives act as speakers in workshops and start-up events – with some having established more permanent collaborations with coworking spaces. So, with the help of the mentor, the mentees can see the truth of the market. As a result, immature product ideas are inevitably shaped by someone who knows what the market really wants.

Concerned about who could really help the newly founded businesses in Net, its founders decided to act as mentors in the day to day life at the space. At the same time, Net runs carefully curated events that aim to moderate the mentors' authority and engage start-uppers:

Hmmm, everybody wants to be a mentor, we try to pick mentors who come from the community, have the background and the right to give feedback to the team. One thing we noticed, which we actually realised that works really well [is that] we put the mentors' photos and bios on

the wall, so we get the team to go by and read an update on them. According to the idea that they [the mentors] have pitched, the participants book a slot with them. This is better because sometimes you get so many mentors in the room, 20 mentors on a weekend, you lose time and when the mentors are so many, you get different opinions, and they might confuse you, they might challenge your mind, you are losing time, it's better for you to focus on three over the weekend according to your background, your idea (FF, founder of Net).

As Net's founders explain, mentors are carefully screened in order to ensure they are the right people to consult with the newly founded businesses. So, instead of just allocating mentors centrally to consult with specific start-up teams, the start-up entrepreneurs choose who mentors them. This way, the authority and gravitas of the mentor is moderated, while start-uppers are far more engaged from the beginning of the process. The start-uppers are consulted by someone they have chosen – something that puts them in a position of power. In addition, the whole mentoring process, in the context of Net, treats start-uppers as responsible and determined professionals who know best what suits their businesses.

In addition, the flexible and informal environment of Net encourages participants to open up and share their entrepreneurial concerns and fears with their peers. In this way, they receive ad-hoc consulting, including valuable insight generated by the community as well as courage from their peers:

We don't have set specific hours of mentorship, I mean come on, we don't need that, we are not kids, we are not babies, you know yourself, what your tasks are, if you need to talk to me, or someone, you will come to me and say "I have this difficulty, I have this challenge, what should I do?", or someone you need in the building (Christina, founder of Net).

Net treats start-up entrepreneurs as responsible individuals who need to be consulted and coached; the participants are not considered inexperienced trainees or beginners who need continuous guidance.

In Forest Ridge and Cell the participants must be mentored, while in Net and Social Hub the participants are solely responsible for their own training.

Coaching services

What triggered my interest in conducting my fieldwork was the existence of coaches in coworking spaces. Many start-uppers informally told me that they all need emotional support and encouragement at some point.

Maria deeply believes in coaching as a fundamental way of supporting herself during her time at Forest Ridge:

Coaching helps a lot. Look, it is very important to have the internal strength and power to tackle the challenges. There are some moments when you think that you are on top of everything you do, and there are some others when you believe that you are somewhat crazy. You believe that you are not going to make it, that they are making fun of you, that you are the freak [...] you need to have the courage to be proved resilient at the end. You can fall, but it is required to stand up immediately – you are not allowed to even fall. This is what coaching gives you, no one can really help you better than the coach (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

Aleksandra used a coaching service only once. She states:

Then you have the coach, you go there, and you talk about your work problems and he or she can help you with that. I went once, there are people that go hand in hand with their coach (Aleksandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

Hanging out with start-uppers at Forest Ridge, I realized that being seen with the coach might not look that good. In fact, it might be perceived as a sign of weakness, of not being able to cope with the demanding and stressful entrepreneurial working life. Taking a cue from my observation that the founders of the independent coworking spaces want to be seen as brave, entrepreneurial individuals, I argue that coaching contradicts the inherent entrepreneurial spirit, which is fearless and does not need any guidance or emotional boost (Kiessling, 2004; Bodrozic and Adler, 2018).

Instead of attending formal coaching sessions, Aleksandra stresses that she prefers to be informally coached by her peers. For her, informal interactions with their peers nurture strong feelings of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals:

The first thing a hub does is to bring you closer to like-minded people. [...] here, there are people that hear your fears and understand your efforts, and you walk together. I have met so many helpful people. This is the most important because everybody keeps saying to you “come on, don’t take it so seriously” [...]. So, this interaction, this exchange puts you forward to reflect on your idea from different perspectives. So, when you see that everybody around you is trying hard, you don’t even think to quit. There are people that understand you and stand next to you throughout the process (Alexandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

So, by participating in coworking spaces, young professionals cultivate an immature professional identity on the basis of informal daily interactions. By working next to their peers, residents of these spaces share their fears and anxieties, but this lasts only for a short time.

Incubation time

As I discovered in the field, the incubation time of start-ups varies and is subject to change. Despite the fact that, in many cases, people at coworking spaces had a specific plan to follow, they chose to extend their residency at the structures.

Many start-uppers I met at Forest Ridge were in their second year. Some, despite the fact they had proper office spaces, were still paying subscriptions at Forest Ridge. The rationale was that they wanted to take advantage of their extended network of corporate affiliations. Aleksandra informally told me, “you don’t want to be forgotten once you graduate, so you register for the Forest Ridge Alumni Scheme”. In addition, other members of coworking spaces told me that their wish to join such spaces was triggered by the corporate networks in which coworking spaces are embedded. Antonis, a recent graduate of Forest Ridge explains that his decision to be based there was driven by his need to acquire business contacts:

To be honest, I used Forest Ridge for its network. Forest Ridge offers a wide network of foreign companies that operate in Greece and they do have a network of collaborators abroad. So, because we wanted to be established with the foreign people that live in Athens, our decision was driven by the clientele we desired to acquire. So, it was driven by this need, and it was not that we needed mentorship (Antonis, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

Similarly, Manolis' team was offered a chance to prolong its residency at Cell for free, as a reward for being diligent. Returning the favour to Cell, the team had to act as mentors for newcomers:

Since we were among the most active teams we were offered to stay within the Cell, using the facilities and in turn mentor the newcomers (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

From Cell's perspective, it could be argued that this was an attempt to take advantage of the value created inside the space. This value takes the form of peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. At the same time, Cell's decision helped Manolis and his team significantly, as they had not managed to scale after their official graduation from the coworking space.

However, when the incubation time is prolonged, it means that the objectives are not being met on the part of the start-up. It can be seen by the start-up ecosystem as a sign of stagnancy, or even laziness:

One thing I know is that the teams that are not productive, the ones that are just being there doing nothing, they should be kicked out of the hub [...]. That's why some spaces, they say "look I am gonna host very few teams, like five". Because they want these five teams to do something that really matters. The ones that are not working, they should leave (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

As described, there is a tendency for start-up entrepreneurs and collectives to remain in the coworking spaces for an extended period. The people I met throughout my residency at Social Hub and during start-up related events were all very driven and focused. In my opinion, remaining at the coworking spaces is

a realistic decision for entrepreneurs if their goals are not being met. To contextualize this finding, the hardest thing for start-ups in Greece was to scale, i.e. to find clients and become financially sustainable.

From the perspective of the coworking spaces, it is not desirable to have the same start-up teams for a long period. So, in an attempt to push start-ups to grow, Panos thinks of adopting a new model:

We are now preparing to adopt a new model originally derived from an incubator in Portugal [...]. Every incubation year, the price of the rent raises geometrically. So, the motivation for someone to stay in the hub needs to become stronger. It is interesting how this model works because it starts with almost zero rent and then you end up paying a lot. You must really want to stay in the hub and take advantage of it (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

This model pushes start-up businesses to scale fast while supporting newcomers by allowing them to pay lower rent. What is being described is an attempt to launch a reciprocal cyclical model which aims to fully exploit the value created within the space.

6.3 Coworking spaces as providers of enterprise education

As this chapter has illustrated, coworking spaces host start-up entrepreneurs and creative collectives that are in their early stages of entrepreneurship. Participants join these spaces with the aim of developing their entrepreneurial skills and mind-sets. Their goal is to prepare themselves for unstable economic environments, however, these spaces incarnate the imperative of the market to relentlessly engage in innovative, and thus new, economic activity. Those who do not comply with this imperative are considered to have stagnated.

Coworking spaces act as providers of enterprise education (Hytti and O’Gorman, 2004), as they aim to align businesses with what proves profitable in the market economy. This turn towards the provision of enterprise knowledge elevates entrepreneurship to a meaningful activity that goes beyond new business formation. Besides teaching young professionals how to start a business or how

to write a business plan, it equips them with an entrepreneurial approach to the new world of work (Beck, 2000; Pongratz and Voß, 2003; Bröckling, 2015). They prepare individuals to act autonomously and independently while being responsible for becoming someone of value in the labour market (Weeks, cited in Farrugia, 2019). The way coworking spaces offer their services proves this.

While they are based in coworking spaces, participants are obliged to follow specific steps. In Forest Ridge and Cell services are fixed, while other spaces are more flexible and offer ad-hoc support. Whatever the case, participants go through a process of “responsibilization and autonomization” (du Gay, 2004, p.40). As Christina, the co-founder of Net, points out: “we are not kids, we know ourselves”. This reflects entirely the idea of neo-liberal governance, where workers are required to take full responsibility for their actions while embracing this as an empowering form of freedom (Rose, 1989).

All these mentoring and coaching sessions equip professionals with an entrepreneurial approach to their occupation, transforming them from observers into doers. Coworking spaces provide much-needed enterprise education. Intersecting with the world of corporate business, they bring young entrepreneurs and creative collectives closer to the market. They shape young professional attitudes towards entrepreneurship and determine what needs to be done by the start-up to grow fast and scale.

However, as my study indicates, the residents of coworking spaces question the value of coworking services. In the case of Cell, the participants tend to undermine its services. Cell’s services are considered too corporate, and thus not really applicable to the needs of start-ups. Manolis explains that, despite the fact that he acknowledges the value of Cell’s corporate links, Cell fails in terms of providing the most suitable consulting for start-ups:

Here the services are not that successful or useful. For example, they have [name of an international company] for accounting services and [name of an advertising agency] for corporate identity. They are very good companies, but they don’t fit me at this stage, where I am. Last

year, we did our tax returns, and we told them that we wanted to take advantage of the exemptions from VAT since we all earn less than 10,000 euro per year and we were told that they didn't know how to do it. [...] That's Cell's fault. We didn't even think of using this company, I don't think they do good work. A lot of start-ups here feel the same (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

As Manolis describes it, there is a mismatch between start-uppers' needs and Cell's services. This mismatch is caused due to the fact that Cell applies the same corporate services to every start-up without taking into consideration the unique challenges that each start-up encounters. Despite the fact that Manolis feels that, by being at Cell, he is taking the right entrepreneurial step, in practice, the corporate intelligence proves somewhat inadequate. So, what looks good on paper does not necessarily help in reality.

Elena, a young, solo start-up entrepreneur who had attended various incubation programmes, points out that her participation in such sessions was "a total waste of time". As Elena explains, it is very rare to find someone from the corporate world who can really help a start-up by providing solid consulting:

Most of them [corporate consultants] have no idea because they have been working in big pharmaceutical corporations. They have never been exposed to any risk or danger. They do not get how you feel when there's only you and your start-up idea. They all talk by being at a very safe place (Elena, start-upper).

By initiating a new business venture, Elena accepts the risk of running a business from scratch. How can a high-level executive help her when they have no idea how it feels to run a business of their own? So, on the one hand, the lack of business knowledge and connections pushes start-uppers to attend coworking programmes, while on the other, the real value of such sessions is often questioned.

The coworking spaces promise start-up entrepreneurs that they will do whatever it takes to help them turn their idea into a profitable business, but with the effectiveness of such services considered ambivalently, there is a need

to understand coworking practice. However, while this chapter provides insights into coworking services, a deeper understanding of the values and ethics that are bound up with coworking practice is needed.

7 Coworking practices

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the participants of coworking spaces are offered specific services to tackle their needs. This array of services aims to help newly-founded businesses grow and scale quickly. As described, coaching and mentoring services come either in the form of fixed incubation programmes or more fragmented services provided on an ad-hoc basis. Coworking spaces promise they can help start-uppers to marketize their ideas so they can prove profitable in a highly competitive market economy.

Coworking spaces act as providers of enterprise education, shaping start-up ideas. However, in practice, coworking spaces shape more than just ideas and projects. The participants cultivate a sense of collective belonging to an immature professional community (de Peuter et al., 2017). While operating within the market, they come across multiple contestations. The power imbalance between the corporate mentor and the mentee is an indicative example of how market imperatives penetrate coworking life. The chasm observed between the corporate world of work and the start-up mentality is apparent, as the latter is highly associated with the risk of sustaining a business in precarious times. With coworking spaces acting as providers of enterprise education, their position lies at the intersection of the labour market and education.

This chapter focuses on the coworking practices identified while I was in the field. It does this as it seeks to understand the social practices that are likely to occur within these spaces. As de Peuter et al. (2017, p.697) observe, coworking spaces are “choreographed sites of enterprise interaction”, where participants have to comply with the imperative of practicing “network sociality” (Wittel, 2001).

This chapter, firstly, illustrates the way people at coworking spaces interact, paying attention to the ways participants navigate these shared environments. It addresses the moral underpinnings of working with friends and friends of friends in spaces funded by friends of friends, considering issues of justice and

representation (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Banks, 2017). It puts major coworking events organized by Cell and Forest Ridge under scrutiny with the aim of uncovering the ambivalences of coworking as well as the dilemmas faced by participants.

This section analyses the ethical ramifications and moral dynamics bound up in informal practices. It does this by drawing upon the Foucauldian perspective of ethics, considering them a “conscious practice of freedom” (Foucault, 1984, p.284) through which people develop a notion of self which can be considered ethical. Identifying ethics in the correlation between individual morality and organizationally prescribed principles of the spaces under investigation, this section delves into the importance of operating through networks, and illustrates the constraints and determinants of participating in the benchmark activities of Cell and Forest Ridge and the overall use of ethics in the everyday lives of these spaces.

7.1 The importance of networks

From my very first moment in the field, I realised how important it was for people at coworking spaces to be well-connected. Operating in a small, crowded market, people at coworking spaces have embedded a “networked mode of organization” (Blair, 2003) that projects into their daily operation. Networking is treated as a long-term investment the value of which is never questioned. As a newcomer to the Social Hub, I entered the space with the vague title of ‘researcher’. Due to my expertise, I was asked multiple favours such as sharing insight and evaluating products and services. For example, Nikos, one of my key-informants based at Social Hub, was building a new product. Every time I passed his office, I was kindly asked to evaluate his immature product ideas.

That was the experience of every co-worker passer-by at the hub. During the process of building new products and services, the members of the hub were the first to test and evaluate them, exchanging opinions and giving feedback to the team. The insights Nikos gained through this informal process equals that he would potentially have gained by conducting proper usability tests or user

experience research. Indeed, people felt somewhat obliged to help co-workers, and in the same way, Nikos would return the favour later. Spending a significant amount of time at Social Hub, I came to realise that a culture of trust and reciprocity is nurtured among the, somewhat related, co-workers. Within Social Hub, networks are created in which everybody is a friend, or a friend of a friend.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that access to these networks of friends is not easy unless you know the 'right' people. So, despite the fact these networks look open, democratic and inclusive, in practice they are accessible only to those who already know someone who is part of them. So, even though the barriers are not visible, issues of equality, diversity and justice still occur. In fact, who has access to these networks in which meaningful acquaintances are developed is an issue repeatedly raised by creative labour scholars (Gill, 2002; Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Banks, 2017). The members of these networks are extremely homogenous and thus represent a very privileged group of young professionals. For example, Social Hub's networks consists of highly skilled and educated young professionals, recent graduates of higher education, members of NGOs, academics and entrepreneurs. This observation validates the idea that sustaining a meaningful career is not only about what you know, but also who you know.

Marios, the co-founder of Social Hub, explains that, before the actual implementation of the hub, they attempted to become visible and establish their presence in a wide network of professionals. They started by meeting with professionals from their personal and professional networks, such as friends, friends of friends, their university professors and representatives of NGOs they admired. The aim of these meetings was not only to identify young professionals' needs, but also to secure tangible and intangible support, prior to the realization of Social Hub:

So, we were on the move, always meeting people who wanted to collaborate with [...] people, friends from diverse backgrounds, from academia, from business, from entrepreneurship. We met with [name of

a start-upper] and with [name of an associate professor], with [company], with a lot of NGOs [...] we met them and we just listened to what they had to say. We tried to understand what they really needed, back in 2012 everything was really crucial (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

In precarious times, Social Hub's founders acknowledge the importance of operating in a way that might not bring direct or immediate support. It can be argued that enacted networks of professionals serve as a diverse pool of potential clients and collaborators for Social Hub. In fact, among Social Hub's first residents were friends, and friends of friends.

The same applies to Eva, the founder of P2P Lab. She managed to open P2P Lab by combining personal and professional connections she acquired while abroad:

I had this idea of running a space some time ago when I was still abroad. I talked to friends, to friends of friends, to companies run by friends, you know for the networking and the connections. If you want to initiate something new, you definitely need a back-up of connections and acquaintances. So, through friends' recommendations, as I told you, I talked to companies that could sponsor us or could host us and send us developers from abroad to work for some time in Athens. That way, we wanted to create a buzz around our name, have clients to make references about us and our projects all around the world, in San Francisco, Netherlands, UK (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Having limited financial resources available, Eva and her partner started their business being very frugal. Using mainly personal capital, she used a flat that her family owned in the city centre to host P2P Lab, with only a few amendments, mostly for health and safety reasons.

Eva managed the risk of running the space on her own by spreading it across a wide network of friends and collaborators. This is reflected in the legal entity of P2P Lab:

We have 10 to 11 participants at the moment and they all contribute to our operational costs, depending on what we have to pay every month. We say, the bill just came and then we split the costs. Because we want to keep the space open for everybody and not exclude someone who has no money at the moment. We were like “ok you can come help us for instance by doing our logo for us!”. We see it in broader terms, this barter philosophy can help us for a period. It is a way to help each other because it is not only about the capital value. And let me tell you that so far, this practice has worked out, since we have no rent to pay (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Operating in an open way creates expectations from the participants of P2P Lab, not only monetary ones. Besides the rent being shared equally among participants, people at P2P Lab are obliged to contribute in multiple ways, and the same applies to the other coworking spaces.

Both Net and Creative Space often give spaces to various creative teams and collaborators for free. As Christina explains, Net is trying to operate in an open and flexible way, hosting various teams:

We try to make it as feasible as it can be for them [start-uppers] to be able to succeed [...] we hosted at our space after a hackathon one of the three winning teams three months for free, that’s a stepping stone (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Panos, the founder of Creative Space, goes one step beyond this. Instead of focusing on a profit-making idea, Creative Space tends to value the individuals or collectives behind the idea:

We invest in people, not only in ideas. You will come and we will say that you have a potential in the future to do something unique. We don’t say your idea is very innovative, let’s invest in it because it produces ‘surplus value’ (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

In the context of Creative Space, investing in people is valued more than start-up ideas. Yet Panos believes that extroversion is the key to success for the structure itself as well as its residents:

To begin with, let me tell you that we truly believe that we are the most extrovert infrastructure that exists in terms of public image and reputation, so that returns to our clients. It is something that exists on its own, it is not like the [space's name] which is only known by the ecosystem. Our differentiating element is that we don't have this inherent introversion. When we designed this infrastructure, we said ok, there will be an incubator, which is the introvert part, and the cultural centre, which will be entirely extrovert, into things and out there. So, there is a part that works from inside outside and vice versa. Our reputation has value to your client and what we say is that we are so very open to the general public which will potentially be your client – so, this is the first. And the other is that when your client comes to the space, the way Creative Space is structured is something to be seen (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

Christina, the co-founder of Net, acknowledges the importance of keeping the space alive and busy with friends and friends of friends. By combining various creative activities, Net has become visible and well-grounded in the city:

We do encourage young kids, young children, we usually give them anywhere between one to three months to come and use the space for free, we are organizing a makers' space on minus two floor, where you can have all the tools you need to get your project going, we are expecting one gal this month so she does a lot of artwork paintings, she wants to display her artworks, she got stuck around home doing nothing, so we told her come and she wants to do wool things we said "use minus two, it's yours" (Christina, co-founder of Net).

The activities organized by Net and Creative Space are not strictly professional but expand into the wider social sphere. Net's space aspires to become a node where like-minded individuals gather for 'good':

Last year we had elections, we opened the space for the first time to candidates who come and run their campaigns. All parties, apart from Golden Dawn, were invited [...]. Now, we run another small project and for that we were in Lesvos with the refugees [...]. Net is also a meeting point where people can drop off bags and goods for refugees. A drop off point, so we try to be active, we try to be creative, we try to make sure that people are happy, we introduce new things, and see how they take off and if they take off, and as I said we play around with the situation around us, I mean you have to.... I mean anything can affect us all (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Operating in a way that is not necessarily or exclusively driven by a rational of maximization of profit, coworking spaces acknowledge that accumulating talented professionals and creative, cutting-edge businesses can help them sustain a strong position within the ecosystem in the long run.

As identified in the literature, the spectrum of informal creative labour practices that occur in these spaces is wide (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011; Alacovska, 2018; Merkel, 2019b). Thus, people who work in coworking spaces tend to engage into what Alacovska identifies as “relational work”:

Relational work thus refers to the strategic alignment [matching] of economic transactions and payment media with meaningful social ties. The management of relational matches primarily entails the performance of emotional and boundary work, story-telling, discursive framing, and mobilization of cultural scripts that help link meaningful social relations with apposite economic transactions and payment media (Alacovska, 2018, pp.6-7).

As Gregory, who learnt about the existence of P2P Lab through a friend of a friend, says that the projects come to the P2P Lab through an “atypical and informal sales process. We do a project for a client and they like it, they recommend us to others. [...] It is entirely reputation-based, the way this is happening”. In spaces where projects are mainly digital, reputation is the currency used to secure positions in the labour market, as identified by Gandini:

Reputation represents the form taken by social capital within digitalized environments, where social interaction most often occurs at a distance and with a lesser extent of co-presence and proximity, being an instrumental feature in securing employment in a freelance-based economy as it represents the indigenous, cultural conception of value shared by participants in this labour market (Gandini, 2016a, p.124).

In deregulated or highly unstable labour markets, entry into an entrepreneurial career is secured informally, though the accumulation of contacts, connections and acquaintances (Blair, 2003; Menger, 2006). Moreover, the lack of rigid, top down structures reinforces the importance of maintaining personal relationships, connections and acquaintances. From the start-uppers' perspective, by participating in a coworking space, the team immediately gains access to a wide variety of professional and personal contacts. Of course, young entrepreneurs share their tangible and intangible resources, by helping their peers, returning favours to the coworking spaces and working hard not only for themselves but for something bigger. In fact, for Eva, P2P Lab is an attempt to create and maintain well-connected and grounded safety nets:

If you represent something bigger than your own company and yourself, you help the others as well. So here you have all the resources, the network, the people, you ask the guy sitting next to you and he helps you with what you have at hand (Eva, co-founder of P2P Lab).

In this context, working for free is not even perceived as problematic. Cases of workers in P2P Lab and Social Hub are indicative as these spaces rely upon low paid or even free labour. Most of the hosts I met during my fieldwork were conducting internships. At the same time, renting out spaces of the coworking space at a low price, or even giving it away for free, is entirely legitimized by the prospect of potential collaborations that would prove profitable in the long run. Operating in this relational way is perceived as a well-thought-out investment, foremost for the founders of coworking spaces and the participants.

7.2 Reject or comply: the morally dubious practices of Cell and Forest Ridge

Cell's services are free of charge, and, besides the fact that participants are required to follow a specific application process (see Chapter 6), they also need to comply with its unwritten rules. Among which, the residents of Cell have to make a one-euro donation every day. The amount collected is donated to an NGO of the start-uppers' preference every Christmas. According to the site manager of Cell, this is a milestone activity for the space:

The Cell programme is entirely free, but as a participant you are being told to contribute one euro per day, and at the end of the year you are asked to choose to which NGO you will donate the money you have collected. This is at the strategic core of this programme, because no matter if you are a start-upper or a corporation, you are asked to have a civic engagement with society (Nikos, site manager of Cell).

From Cell's side, the quest to be 'ethical' is an everyday matter. The fact that this one-euro contribution has the character of a daily activity signifies how much the participants should be alert, careful and diligent at demonstrating an ethical stance. This daily practice is there to remind them that ethical knowledge and moral wisdom coexist with entrepreneurial activity.

So, throughout their residency, start-up collectives and entrepreneurs face an ongoing quest to 'be ethical'. In spaces funded by large corporations where neoliberal capitalist values are embraced and fully naturalized, young start-uppers must demonstrate that their yet-to-come entrepreneurial career is designed around the profit motive. The irony and hypocrisy of this corporate activity is amplified if we take into consideration the fact that most start-ups struggle to survive. For newly founded businesses, it is all about sustaining business activity rather than becoming profit-making overnight.

Getting funded is the hardest thing for young start-up entrepreneurs, and the limited opportunities available mean a constant struggle for funding. This struggle and competition for scarce resources, unsurprisingly, creates ethical

tensions among the participants. During my fieldwork, there was only one competition in which start-uppers had the possibility of winning immediate funding. Organized by Forest Ridge, 'the Hunt' is a pitch battle, a competition for who can present the best business pitch, in which only its residents could participate. That said, many start-uppers were applying to join Forest Ridge, as their residency would equal a chance to participate in the Hunt, as Gregory points out:

Forest Ridge is a place where they know what they do. What needs to be changed is the way they promote the pitch battle. They run a pitch battle every three months, they call it [the Hunt]. So, people join Forest Ridge, they pay for their memberships just to participate at [the Hunt]. I won the first prize there six months ago and I was shocked because I saw people I have never seen in my entire life. They are just in it for the Hunt, for the money. If they don't win, they cancel their subscription (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

As he points out, the high profile of the Hunt attracts businesses that are 'only in it for the money'. Eva, founder of P2P Lab, which has collaborated with Forest Ridge from its early days, explains how Forest Ridge's strategy has changed over the years of its operation:

Look, now it has changed, it has become more capitalistic, how can I put it? Their communication strategy is summarized into 'come to win some money', before it was more of 'come to realise your dream, come to meet, to start your own business'. I went to the last pitch battle, because I used to go there from the very first day, and there were even promotion girls, there was black light everywhere so you could see the coloured branded bottles, branded pillows everywhere. OK, we know that [large corporation] is the sponsor, their name is everywhere, it was like we were in a club in Gazi (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

It is significant that Gazi, a highly commercialized neighbourhood of Athens known for its massive night clubs, is used as an example to illustrate how Forest Ridge's whole public profile has radically changed. As both Gregory and Eva

suggest, it had become overtly commercialized. While its embeddedness in the market economy was never questioned, its market evangelism is now criticized. As Eva states, Forest Ridge's focus shifted towards promoting an opportunistic approach to entrepreneurship. Indeed, many study participants expressed the belief that Forest Ridge's initial perception of start-up entrepreneurship was romantic and unadulterated but now its focus has shifted. While it was always a pitch battle, now it has been turned into a continuous hunt for easy and immediate funding.

As the pitch battle gained more exposure, eventually, its unwritten rules shifted, signalling a significant change in its evaluative principles:

At the beginning, the money was taken by the oldest start-uppers whose founders were just one step before falling off the cliff, the ones that were financially and emotionally drained (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

If, in the past, getting funded was a matter of how much a start-up entrepreneur or collective was in need of immediate financial help, or how drained the founder was, now it is all about creating impressions. According to Vasilis, the start-up ideas that get funded are those that fascinate the audience and the jury committee, without necessarily having the potential to become profitable businesses:

This turn towards the social aspects of entrepreneurship, you know [...] we cannot play this card, as what we do it has to do with software [...]. I think they are more into ideas that look 'wow', a bit up in the air, how can I explain to you? Not really tangible, but catchy (Vasilis, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

As Vasilis points out, the fact that his start-up collective has a for-profit character diminishes the chances of creating an impression, and thus getting funded. The reason being that participants feel somewhat obliged to demonstrate their ethical credentials. The participants like Vasilis, whose businesses has an entirely for-profit character, feel that they should embrace a more socially responsible approach. This instrumentalization of ethics prevails.

The case of a start-up that participated in the Hunt, and was greatly criticized for using its charity character to differentiate it from the competition, is indicative. After winning the prize, the start-up was criticized for multiple reasons, with various participants raising concerns about the way the funding was allocated:

From what I've been told, and it comes from a lot of different sources, because I didn't experience it first-hand, they have gotten funding from multiple resources and they haven't even made a proper website, it's not even a business that could become profitable. They have taken the funding, and there is no transparency, you don't know where and how it has been used. How are they using this funding? To make the people more aware? To buy laptops? To go travelling abroad? There is no control and that's very weird because when [the foundation's name] gives even five Euros, there is huge bureaucracy and they want to know where this amount of money has been used (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Many participants implied that this start-up used its social orientation as a hook to stay in the spotlight. In addition, while its social character implies it is an ethical business, its practice is not. A discrepancy can be seen between 'demonstrating your ethicalness', and 'being ethical and acting in an ethical way'. While the aforementioned start-up promotes its business as being socially responsible, their practice does not prove so. Nevertheless, it can be argued that 'demonstrating your ethicalness' is elevated into a necessary skill to be acquired and demonstrated by start-uppers in search of immediate funding. It could signal also a perception of start-up entrepreneurship which is, at least, good on paper.

In the case of Cell, 'demonstrating your ethicalness' comes as a top-down reminder. The managing committee believes deeply that moral wisdom comes through everyday practice, and that is why they organize the one euro per day donation. Cell feels responsible for training start-uppers to become ethical on a daily basis. Likewise, in Forest Ridge, the morality of a start-up must be publicly demonstrated. Only this way can a start-up idea stand out from the crowd.

These moral dynamics brings to the surface the ethical ambivalence of Forest Ridge and Cell. Their apparent use of ethics is perceived as not being compatible with their corporate aims:

[There is a] fundamental incompatibility of ethics and capitalism, as it is argued that 'ethics' tend to be used quite superficially as a legitimising signpost, effectively concealing the (possible) structural lack of ethics built into the capitalist order per se. Consequently, ethical branding may in fact legitimise the un-ethical aspects and elements of capitalist relations and practices (Wyer-Egan et al., 2014, p.1).

Both Cell and Forest Ridge have their own internal sets of rules. These rules constitute their moral principles and permeate their everyday practice. Operating under a top-down model, these moral principles are well defined by their managing committees. Since the obligations and rules are clear and implemented top-down, there is limited room – or even no room – for objections or justifications. So, start-uppers need to be fully aligned to the internal moral principles of these spaces. Participating in the ethical training of Cell is a condition that cannot be skipped for start-uppers. Playing under the invisible rules of the Hunt is an apparent – but unwritten – requirement.

Young start-up entrepreneurs and collectives respond to this moral complexity by adopting a grounded, pragmatic approach. Despite often expressing objections and concerns, they, remain part of the spaces. Their pragmatic stance counterbalances their needs against the moral concerns they encounter. Their ethical values co-exist with the imperative of sustaining an entrepreneurial career, and thus a living. In contexts where the logic of the market is fully naturalized, young entrepreneurs and start-up collectives come into being through the hard and demanding work of coping with moral complexity.

The morally dubious practices of Cell and Forest Ridge are rarely dismissed, most of the time they are acknowledged and highlighted. In turn, throughout their residency at these spaces, participants aspire to expand their professional networks and acquire reputation. As Manolis told me, "if I had the money and a job, I wouldn't be where I am", pointing out that his choice was mainly driven by

necessity. Along with some friends, they formed a start-up collective and decided to apply to Cell. As he says, it was a tactical move that helped them to understand the way new business ventures are created:

We did it to gain some experience, to see what's going on. We liked the idea at first, we never thought that we would transform it into a business [...] but here they have helped us a lot, we have managed to formulate our start-up idea [...], despite the fact the services here are more corporate (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

The highly individualistic approach is repeatedly underlined by studies of coworking and the freelance economy (Gandini, 2016a; Gandini, 2016b). These tendencies can be described as instrumental or functional “network socialities” (Wittel, 2001).

Despite the concerns, Forest Ridge is, after all, “a place where they know what they do”, as Gregory stated multiple times during our discussion. Having a constant hunger to expand his professional network, Gregory remained part of Cell. The initial personal resources he used to kick-start his entrepreneurial venture had long gone, and he was in constant search for funding. Gregory is not the exception, but rather the rule within the start-up ecosystem. Everybody I met and talked to during my fieldwork was in search of funding opportunities. The instrumental imperative to sustain an entrepreneurial career dictates start-uppers professional steps, and one is to participate in coworking spaces such as Cell or Forest Ridge.

7.3 Towards the re-establishment of moral values in economic activity

This chapter brings forward the discussion around the moral dynamics that are bound up with the social practices that are likely to occur in coworking spaces. A significant turn can be observed towards economic activity that would look – and would be – primarily ethical. While start-up entrepreneurship was initially perceived as a quick fix to youth unemployment, it has now been enriched by moral commitments and an extensive quest to demonstrate an ethical stance towards economic activity. This is reflected in the transformation of Forest

Ridge, as well as the multiple CSR initiatives that have flourished by aiming to boost youth employment.

Despite the functional and instrumental use of ethics by Cell and Forest Ridge, start-uppers express strong moral sentiments regarding their first entrepreneurial career steps. Manolis acknowledges that the whole process of incubation at Cell has been an ongoing, if fruitful, struggle. Despite the moral complexities he occasionally encounters, he wishes to pursue an ethical entrepreneurial path:

I could identify myself as an entrepreneur – even as a term that has bad connotations here in Greece. When you say “I am an entrepreneur” directly they connect you with effortless money making, night clubs. It sounds like you are chilling and money comes or you have invested somewhere. But in reality, being an entrepreneur is totally different. Entrepreneurship in practice means to find ways to survive yourself and your company. We are still a small venture, but I can see in the future how responsibilities will grow. And if everything goes as you have planned, you will have employees to pay. We are not the kind of people that we would hire someone and then say, “bye bye!!”. We feel responsible for the people we collaborate with; we get attached to them, and then we feel that we have the responsibility towards them to succeed. We want to succeed not only for us, but for them as well (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

Start-uppers are self-consciously engaged in forms of practice that contain certain ideas about what is ‘good’ and what is not. For Manolis, start-up entrepreneurs embody values such as openness, honesty and truthfulness. He is illustrative of an ethos of doing business that surely goes beyond just generating profit. For him, running a business equals a lot of responsibility – not merely quick financial gain. Manolis exhibits moral ways of acting consciously towards others, identifying what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ entrepreneurial practice. Similarly, Dimitris, based at Forest Ridge, stresses that among his primary

concerns is producing something that can truly make a difference in people's lives:

To make something that could change someone's life or create value to someone so he could pay you for that, this is a huge moral reward for me (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

In this context, start-up entrepreneurship cannot be distinguished from its social elements. Yet, as Christina explains, start-up entrepreneurship should be, a priori, ethical:

I don't like to separate social entrepreneurship from entrepreneurship, my belief is that every entrepreneur has to have social content [...] so the hype around social entrepreneurship is to play again with people's emotions, but every entrepreneurial activity if doesn't have a social mission is strip mining (Christina, founder of the Net).

Christina openly criticises the instrumental rationale of using ethics just to trigger people's emotions, the way marketers do. She deeply believes that the notion of entrepreneurship cannot exist without a truly social orientation.

Likewise, Eva, the founder of P2P Lab explains that the work outcomes of P2P Lab are ethically grounded and substantiated:

Look in terms of coding, the way they write the code is different. That is FP's [the co-founder] part to teach them, and he has some values that are unnegotiable such as... how to protect the user, what kind of privacy he has, what does it mean when it [product/app/platform] goes public. We don't do whatever the client asks, we have some values and we stick to them and last but not least we don't use the already made plug-ins. You must have the control over your work, not to rely upon external plug-ins. So, he trains young people to do this thing, it is not connecting the dots, it is about training and shaping young people's minds (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

The work conducted under the supervision of FP is grounded in strong ethical and moral underpinnings such as putting the user at the centre of the practice, protecting his/her identity, and maintaining control over project outcomes. The

gravitas that the co-founder brings to P2P Lab guarantees high quality projects that are ethically grounded. In this context, coding can be perceived as speech that has political and ethical implications (Coleman, 2013; Gregg, 2015).

It can be argued that hands on training and learning next to peers has been reconceptualized as a collective dynamic process that radically shapes the participants' understandings of entrepreneurship. As Christina says, the start-ups that are incubated at Net are not only profitable but also ethically grounded. Taking as an example a recent success story that grew out of Net, Christina talks about the uniqueness of AmberT:

So, you can find another 20-30 taxi apps, but AmberT is unique, is different than any other taxi service out there, AmberT cares about its clients [...] it does not only care about making money for themselves, AmberT wants to gain your respect and your trust, your trust and respect, they show it on a daily basis with their drivers, their services, with their campaigns, with their approach, they are the only ones doing that, and we know it, that's why we prefer AmberT, it is not just a taxi service out there, otherwise you can pick one of those, taxiplon, taxifon (Christina, co-founder of Net).

Drawing upon Banks' (2006) rationale, it can be argued that the involvement of the self in economic activity leaves room for young professionals to undertake what can be perceived as ethical work. As Adam Arvidsson observes:

Ethical labour is the 'labour' of adapting oneself to the expectations of one's peers, in order to become a virtuous individual in the eyes of the polis in which one operates and to contribute to its strength and good fortune by helping others, socializing new members, resolving conflicts and disputes and generally sharing one's generic competences (Arvidsson, 2014, p.122).

For start-up entrepreneurs and collectives, entrepreneurship represents an ethical and moral choice, and they likewise aspire to live decent and honest lives (Banks, 2006). In this context, ethical work is considered that which brings forward the profound connection of personal motive and social wealth.

Entrepreneurship is conceptualized as the ideal path that combines personal gain and social wealth.

The networks through which young entrepreneurs and collectives operate are not just functional, ephemeral, 'network socialities' (Wittel, 2001). Within these 'safety nets' personal relationships are concretized in the form of potential collaborations, projects and gains. As Alacovska observes, this way of operation is a coping mechanism that aims to combat precarity:

In precarious conditions, creative workers go about their work relationally rather than strictly calculably or economically. In doing so, they transform labour practices into 'relational practices', whereby informal, interpersonal efforts at attending to meaningful social relations become the basis for the accomplishment of economic activities (Alacovska, 2018, p.3).

Through the conflict and moral ambiguity they encounter on a daily basis, start-up entrepreneurs and collectives foster an entrepreneurial identity that operates through safety networks and are eager to return the favour by working for free. At the same time, the morally dubious practices of Cell and Forest Ridge are rationalized, not openly debated, and thus, accepted to a great extent. Out of necessity, start-uppers acknowledge the importance of being connected to the corporate world; and this is the reason they are very careful in terms of turning down any upcoming opportunity for collaboration. As Gregory highlights:

We fight despite the challenges, we try to get into the 0.1% of the start-ups that will survive, but the times are heavily against us (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

In the Athenian context, where entrepreneurship is primarily driven by necessity, young entrepreneurs renegotiate space within the capitalistic system where they can act in a way that they believe to be ethical. They do not reject the system as such, and they see themselves operating in a highly competitive and unregulated labour market. Hence, FF, the founder of Net, prioritizes Net's

sustainability over any collaboration with anyone that can be considered competition:

We are trying but we are not there yet. We don't really have this [collaborative spirit], because I am afraid of Panos and he is afraid of me in turn. We are trying to abolish it, we talk occasionally, but we do not work together. Our interests are not aligned, we are intending towards it, though. [...] The piece that is missing is trust, is to build trust that comes through the years you collaborate with the other players but we don't have the time, the courage to take care of it because we are buckling to survive (FF, founder of Net).

So, by negotiating a space within the capitalist system, rather than rejecting it, "coworking spaces formalize a setting for network sociality where the predominant style of conduct is 'entrepreneurial', self-reliant, responsabilized"(de Peuter et al., 2017, p.697). However, I suggest that their stance is, mostly, necessity driven and thus we should not underestimate their attempts to attach moral values to their entrepreneurial practice.

8 Managing the start-up entrepreneurial working life

The previous chapter looked into the informal practices that are likely to occur within the coworking spaces under investigation. It examined the moral dynamics bound up with these practices. So, as discussed in Chapter 7, start-uppers tend to operate in networks driven by both market imperatives and social conscience. That said, being embedded within a market economy, start-up entrepreneurs and collectives aspire to follow ethical entrepreneurial paths, despite the apparent moral complexity they face. This observation highlights the importance of closely investigating the working life of young start-uppers in terms of the ways they aspire to present themselves in front of investors, how they balance their working and personal life, and the profound connections they cultivate through their work.

This chapter explores the ways start-uppers manage their entrepreneurial working lives. Drawing upon Gill's study of new media work across the EU, I use the word 'manage' to signify "a critical inflection that comes from Marxist, feminist and poststructuralist thinking" (Gill, 2010, p.2; see Chapters 2 and 3), and to describe the way young start-uppers cope with the challenges and difficulties their working lives entail. As discussed in Chapter 2, the coping strategies employed by start-up entrepreneurs are explored in relation to the ways they craft themselves as sources of value within a competitive market realm (Farrugia, 2019). Drawing upon the observation in Chapter 2 that young professionals who navigate in fragmented creative labour markets tend to employ highly individualized practices such as self-promotion and self-branding techniques (Cremin, 2003; Hearn, 2010), this chapter investigates how the self is shaped, constrained and determined by the current conditions in times of constant crisis in the Athenian context.

At this point, I must note the occupational diversity of start-uppers as well as the resulting endogenous inequality. The start-uppers I interviewed call themselves digital professionals, content strategists, project managers, software developers, designers, architects, marketers and business managers. Besides economics, business, marketing and strategy, most of the female research participants I

interviewed had a background in arts, social sciences or humanities. The participants in the study fell into many categories of employment, along with being entrepreneurs, they were also working as freelancers for other start-ups and one was employed by a large corporation. The majority of participants fell into the 25-34 age group, as they were at the beginning of their careers, having limited working experience. Besides being entrepreneurs, many had side jobs to pay the bills, learn and expand their professional network. It became clear from the beginning of the study that start-uppers do not follow a linear, well defined or stable professional path. Instead, start-uppers construct their own do-it-yourself career biographies (Adkins, 2013). They are adaptable, ready for adjustment or modification and open to contingencies.

This chapter, first illustrates what it means to manage a start-up and lead an entrepreneurial working life in the coworking spaces under investigation. It starts by analysing the importance of self-promotion, then turns its focus to what needs to be articulated publicly and what does not. This leads to an illustration of the qualities of the self that make a successful entrepreneur. It goes on to explore the development of 'love and commitment discourse' in regards to work, conducted within coworking spaces, where the work is a "labour of the head and heart" (Weeks, 2011, p.69). It discusses the correlation between gender and the repudiation of necessity, and concludes with an investigation of the ways failures are reframed. The final section of the chapter summarizes the characteristics of start-up working life and the way it is managed by young entrepreneurs.

8.1 "I pitch, therefore I am"

During my fieldwork, it became apparent that young entrepreneurs were trained in how to sell their ideas. Workshops, sessions and meetings thoroughly addressed this need. Of particular interest were a series of networking events organized in a gamified way, aiming to facilitate interaction and communication among the participants. Following the form of speed dating, participants were asked to wear a shirt of a specific colour to signify their occupation. If designers were asked to wear yellow, developers were asked to wear blue. This colour-

coding approach served as an ice-breaker as well as making the communication among the participants more targeted and effective. Someone who was looking for a designer could go straight to someone who was wearing yellow. Often, the colour-coded networking events resulted in small friendly gatherings, resembling non-work situations. This format facilitated the 'ephemeral and intense relationships' described by Wittel:

The tendency towards ephemeral but intense, focused, fast, and overloaded social ties is also observable in non-work situations. At parties, for example, the distinctive dimensions of network sociality are highly visible – the fleetingness of interactions, their intensity and the fluctuation of social figurations. Parties are an occasion to talk to many people within only a few hours. One has to make decisions and selections between who to talk to and for how long. These decisions have to be made instantly. It would be useful sociological knowledge to find out how people make these decisions and on what grounds they select their conversation partners (Wittel, 2001, p.66).

Wittel describes a form of community which is highly instrumental and individualistic, incorporating playful elements that blur the boundaries between work and leisure. The most crucial thing in these events, as I learned, is not only to show up, but also meet and attract the right people. Depending on the scope of the event, it is very common for investors and corporate partners to attend or pay visits to the coworking spaces to meet start-up teams and their young founders. As discussed in Chapter 6, most of the spaces under investigation offer informal and flexible set-ups that facilitate interaction and continuous networking. Attending various start-up related events at coworking spaces, I realized that investors and start-up enthusiasts join in order to scout potential investment opportunities. Despite the superficial informality and casualness of the set-up, start-uppers are always alert and ready to pitch their start-up ideas. Vassilis, a young start-upper who had just joined Forest Ridge, describes the experience of being based in a truly international environment:

It is international, something that we really value. I practice my English every day, they introduce me to foreign companies, it is ok (Vassilis, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

As Alexandra states, what matters most is the ability of coworking spaces to enable networking and connect individuals and teams with corporations and investors. As identified in Chapter 7, this highly functional networking mentality penetrates everything start-uppers do. Indeed, coworking spaces acknowledge the need for networking, and besides organizing events and meet-ups, networking philosophy serves as a structural principle:

We tend to forget that asking is even better than Googling, and I'm always like "Greg, do you happen to know any good engineers?" And this is happening every single day (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Likewise, Panos acknowledges the importance of networking, pointing out that, within Creative Space, it happens effortlessly as opportunities for collaboration emerge from informal personal relationships. For him, a sign of success is when residents collaborate with each other:

A graphic designer needs something, for instance, to curate an exhibition, and he seeks help from the community. Or a developer needs a designer, so he approaches a designer from the community. So, there is this internal networking happening out of formal processes, it is self-organized and spontaneous (Panos, founder of Creative Space).

Christina explains the way networking penetrates their practice:

This is why when we see talent, we grab them and tell them: "you have to talk to this person, and we will connect you to an investor or to someone abroad" that will help them to see the whole process, a lot faster, easier, you don't have to spend time and money, from both sides [...] so we are the glue in between (Christina, co-founder of Net).

By acting as the invisible 'glue' that sticks people together, Net's founders present it in two different ways depending on the target: for investors, they are 'knowledgeable talent seekers' and 'trusted partners', while for start-up

entrepreneurs and collectives they are 'well connected and experienced professionals'.

Similarly, the founder of Social Hub explains how networking penetrates their everyday practice:

Here, what we provide is mostly opportunities for meeting partners and institutions. For instance, if I knew that you, Antigoni, worked for the creation of a culture platform, I would identify the most suitable institutions for you to talk to (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

Coworking spaces, besides acting as providers of enterprise education (see Chapter 6), also serve as networking facilitators, creating bridges between investors and start-uppers. In addition, start-uppers recognize the value of being connected and grounded in specific networks, even after their graduation from the fixed incubation programmes.

Gregory is a young start-upper, based in three different coworking spaces. He told me his main motivation was to expand his professional network and maximize his opportunities for meeting the right people:

In the morning, I work at another start-up called [name of start-up] and I am based at [space's name] for about four hours per day. It is something I do part-time. Then, I leave heading to the guys over at the [name of university]. Attached to the uni, there is the [incubator's name], people there are very friendly and helpful. From [incubator's name], we work on my start-up idea. I do some freelancing from there or when I am at home. [...] From here [hub's name], we work on developing the app, the business things are getting done at [incubator's name]. I wanted the development to stay here at [space's name] since this is a more natural environment for our developers (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

While Gregory works as a freelancer in other start-ups, he spends most of his days working from various coworking spaces. His residency across these spaces has helped him meet various investors who operate in Athens.

Likewise, for Dimitris, networking happens effortlessly, by mingling with the 'right' crowd:

So, let me explain to you what's really happening [...]. Here at Forest Ridge, it is always busy, either there are other start-uppers who will drop by and chat with you, or even the community manager will say "go talk to this start-up", [...]. So, they come and introduce themselves and then you really explore what you can do together. Eventually, you will meet random people that could prove useful connections for your future career. Everybody is so open here, so you schedule an appointment right away [...]. Let me give you an example, these people could be the managing director of [name of international company], or the chief of [international company] in Greece and once you meet him, you can email him and link you with its marketing guy (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

Gregory explains his rationale and philosophy when he approaches key-people during events:

VCs [venture capitalists] are going [to events] to find opportunities to invest, they do not go there because they are bored, they go there to do business. It is an opportunity for them to meet you face to face. You can talk about what you do, as a person. It is way different from just send an email over to them telling what you do. In these events, investors get to know you, you talk with them, they are really interested in seeing whether you are a congenial person (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

As the previous quote demonstrates, meeting with investors is equally about presenting the start-up idea and demonstrating a congenial and pleasant personality. As Gregory puts it, the entrepreneurial self should be demonstrated in a way to look compatible with investors and so "you could have fun with them for 5-10 minutes". The short duration of their meetings signifies how much pressure and intensity they entail. According to Gregory, it is all about making an impression, grabbing investors' attention, and thus, cultivating a personal

relationship with them. These short meetings follow the rationale of a pitch where, in a limited time, start-up entrepreneurs present their ideas in a compelling way. Their pitch could, indeed, make them stand out from the crowd.

However, meeting the right people and establishing connections with them can be a long, difficult and even a painful process for start-uppers:

It always takes a lot of time to meet the right people, to acquire the right connections. Imagine, you have an enterprise and you have no money at the moment. It is a painful process; I am telling you and it always lasts up to a year where I will be looking for an angel investor or a venture capitalist. And then, I have to show him the product, but not many start-ups have a product ready to be demonstrated.... and that is another problem [...] don't get me started that when you go to a fund, you play by their rules, you work under tight deadlines [...]. You have no negotiation power at all, it can take up to year (Elena, start-upper).

The way the investor-start-upper relationship is described demonstrates its tough and difficult-to-handle nature. Once start-uppers establish a relationship with a 'hard to get' investor, their need for immediate funding puts them, in advance, in a position where they have limited or no negotiating power. The fact they do not have a ready-to-show product, just an idea, puts them in an extremely demanding position.

Dimitris and his team have won many competitions which have, in turn, resulted in attention from the media as well as the start-up community. He says: "from the pitch you can do in front of people, you can show yourself". This reinforces the argument that it is the self that is demonstrated rather than the educational competencies. So, since the only thing start-uppers have is an idea open to adjustment, transformation or even abolishment, demonstrating an open and flexible personality seems the only way to navigate a demanding and competitive context.

To explain what investors are looking for, Christos, an angel investor, says they like to meet aspiring entrepreneurs with passion and commitment: “[We are looking for] passionate entrepreneurs who want to do big things”. Surprisingly, a passionate self overshadows any other skill or qualification. The start-uppers I met were uniformly from middle-class backgrounds, highly educated, with some pursuing MBAs or even second post-graduate degrees. Their educational qualifications were considered necessary, but at the same time insignificant. Being passionate implies that start-uppers should engage in “emotion work”, to manage emotion, or do “deep acting” (Hochschild, 1979, p.561). As Farrugia’s study demonstrates:

The mobilization of resilient, aspirational and ‘passionate’ subjectivities is now promoted as a requirement for labour market engagement amongst unemployed young people, whose intrinsic ‘passion’ is positioned as critical to their success (Farrugia, 2019, p.50).

Entrepreneurship is a quality that lies within the authentic self of the individual. That said, becoming a start-up entrepreneur could bring young professionals one step closer to their authentic and truthful selves. As Maria suggests, start-up entrepreneurship is something that lies in your DNA:

I will tell you what I did. After I became member of [incubator’s name], I did some IQ tests and personality tests there. You are not asked about your idea, they just need to check if you have the entrepreneurship in you, if you can survive the forthcoming difficulties and that’s true. We were 26 when we entered and eventually only 6 graduated. [...] After all, courage is needed, you need to be brave, you should be resilient, if you fall you must get up and try again, actually you shouldn’t fall in the first place (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

What can be seen here is that becoming entrepreneurial constitutes a broad project of personal development that entails the disclosure of the authentic self. During this process, individuals reveal their somewhat natural, and thus ‘true’, selves which are indistinguishable from their selves elsewhere (Farrugia, 2019).

Maria got herself tested in order to see whether she has the entrepreneurial 'DNA' in her – which constituted being brave, resilient and restless.

In addition to the 'fun-loving' personality that start-uppers should demonstrate, they are required to present themselves as restless, self-confident, interpersonal self-starters. These qualities should be performed during the key networking events and other start-up activities, such as pitch battles, start-up events and informal chats with investors, which can occur at any time.

What is striking is that emotional involvement serves as proof of deep commitment and devotion to the entrepreneurial goal. Hence, personal or natural characteristics such as 'being passionate', 'being fun' or 'being self-confident' are becoming marketable assets. Being ambitious is perceived as proof of high-level professionalism which brings the young participant one step closer to success. It is not only about a 'soulless' idea but about how the self is carefully carved to fit into the idea of 'entrepreneurial DNA'. Indeed, as Skeggs (2004) points out, through this performance, contemporary workers position their middle-class selves as open to be altered in various ways in order to become integrated into the labour market. It is clear from the participants' narratives that investors are looking for a particular type of personality which could be naturally inherited as Maria suggests or cultivated as Gregory and Vassilis indicate.

However, when individuals fail to win competitions or attract investors' interest, they feel a deep sense of shame. While self-blaming is a phenomenon well-discussed in creative labour studies (Banks, 2007; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2015), in these cases, individuals attribute their failure to the absence of certain qualities from their personalities. This perception is mirrored in the narrative of Vassilis, whose start-up collective failed in a competition:

It was our fault; we couldn't communicate it very good. It's a matter of confidence, you should be extremely extrovert and I have stage fright by default (Vassilis, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

Vassilis blames this on his lack of confidence, and his “stage fright by default”. However, the fact that the available funding was limited and hard to acquire was never mentioned. It is all about the way the self is demonstrated. Likewise, Manolis explains the reason they have, so far, failed to find funding for their newly founded business:

Look, we do not communicate it the right way [...] I think it is also the self-confidence that matters [...] you should be extrovert [...] we are pushed a lot by our mentor to go out and talk about our idea (Manolis, member of a start-up collective, Cell).

Extroversion is perceived as a prerequisite for being introduced to the entrepreneurial world, and ‘self-confidence’ is elevated to the top characteristic of the entrepreneurial personality.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the post-Fordist era is marked by the decline of stable employment structures and their replacement by ‘network sociality’ (Wittel, 2001). This is entirely reflected in the ways people operate at coworking spaces. As identified by many studies, informal and personal connections are of paramount importance in accessing employment (Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Christopherson, 2009; see Chapters 3 and 7). In addition, networking is elevated to a core practice, aimed at getting to know new people, brainstorming new ideas and scouting upcoming job opportunities.

Coworking space participants understand the rules of the game, which are the demonstration of certain qualities such as extroversion, passion, bravery, self-reliance and resilience. These qualities are fully aligned with the brave, do-it-yourself (DIY) start-up ethos demonstrated by the founders of the coworking spaces (see Chapter 5). According to du Gay (1996, p.56), this is an aspect of enterprise culture in which “certain enterprising qualities-such as self-reliance, personal responsibility, boldness, and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of goals are regarded as human virtues and promoted as such”. The ability to demonstrate these characteristics is what matters most. Appropriate techniques of self-presentation and self-promotion are what can create impressions on investors. The cultivation of extroversion and confidence seems indicative of the

way to gain a position in the labour market. It is not about educational qualifications – which is something everyone could possibly gain – but about presenting an exceptional personality. This section then, captures the importance of selling yourself and your team in the start-up entrepreneurial world by investigating the way certain personality traits are valued by investors and the wider start-up ecosystem.

The next section takes a closer look at start-uppers' working lives, investigating how they manage them within these spaces. Despite what needs to be demonstrated at actual start-up events, the next section is devoted to the working lives of start-up entrepreneurs and collectives, aiming to identify the characteristics of this new model of working and living.

8.2 A greedy pattern of working on a 24/7 basis

As thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6, coworking spaces are working settings, designed to look cool and feel comfortable. So, this section explores the way that the culture of flexibility and informality identified in Chapter 6 and elsewhere impacts the working life of start-up entrepreneurs and collectives. While this section is based on interview data, it also relies on my personal observation as a participant in Social Hub. As the previous chapters demonstrate, working life at the coworking spaces is highly self-regulated, as start-up entrepreneurs and collectives are expected to act as responsible ethical individuals who are their own bosses.

From my observations, the combination of working flexibly, with friends or alone, endorses the inherent informality that comes from the fact that these spaces are not conventional workplaces (McRobbie, 2002a; Kennedy, 2012; Alacovska, 2018; Merkel, 2019b). As discussed in Chapter 3, the work conducted in such informal spaces tend to be self-managed and highly exploitative in nature. The fact that there are no fixed structures, leaves "little possibility of a politics of the workplace" (McRobbie, 2002, p.519), especially when individuals tend to consider themselves as their own bosses. Self-exploitation is often even described as desirable (Gill, 2007b; Gill, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

As Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010, p.6) point out, self-exploitation occurs when “workers become so enamoured with their jobs that they push themselves to the limits of their physical and emotional endurance”.

Coworking spaces are often open from early in the morning until late at night, hosting events. I asked Gregory to tell me how his typical working day goes:

In the morning, I work for [name of the start-up] as a part-timer for about 4 hours per day while I am based at Forest Ridge. Then I leave and I go down to find my peers [...] and from there we work on my start-up idea. When I freelance, I work from home or from [another hub]. What makes me laugh is that I left from my previous job because I used to work for 11 hours and now, I have ended up working for up to 13 hours per day. I wake up around 8.00 in the morning and a good day finishes at 23.30. And this happens not only during weekdays but also on weekends. Maybe some Sundays I don't allow myself to do anything, but that's not really happening (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

Gregory's intensive working pattern is the rule in the start-up scene. Antonis was a start-up entrepreneur who had just graduated from Forest Ridge. We met at his new office downtown. As he explains, the long working hours are a symptom of what he called 'founderitis':

Look, when we talk about small scale entrepreneurship, start-up entrepreneurship in our case, there is this syndrome of 'founderitis'. I call it this because it is the syndrome of the founders where you cannot really tell what is work and what is hobby, the boundaries are blurry. Of course, when you work a lot, you get burnt out and you are not so productive after all (Antonis, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

So, Antonis acknowledges the fact that he works long hours, and considers it something inevitable, even inherent to the nature of start-up entrepreneurship. In addition, the 'founderitis' syndrome described in Antonis' narrative brings to the surface the blurred boundaries between work and life – a phenomenon well captured and acknowledged in creative labour studies (Banks, 2007; Gill, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016).

As Dimitris admits, he has become so attached to his newly founded venture that he finds himself always working:

Look, let me tell you something straight. I feel that I am constantly working. I work minimum 12 hours per day and when I sleep, I see all these start-up ideas in my dreams (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

Dimitris, and all the founders I met, engage in an eternal working mood, not one imposed by external sources, as they said many times during our informal chats. I observed that start-uppers experience the obligation to work constantly and be productive as an internal commitment. Eva notes that she rarely allows herself to take a break:

Look, the space is open between 10.00-21.00 but at the beginning we were here from 09.00 in the morning till 02.00 after midnight, of course this was applicable for Saturdays and Sundays. Now, I am trying to change it. I have an intern, so sometimes I allow myself to leave [earlier] (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

In fact, not working is experienced as betrayal of the 'authentic self', and allocating time to non-working arrangements is surrounded by feelings of guilt. For that reason, Gregory has rationalized his choice and has convinced himself that start-up working life is not compatible with a 'normal life':

I have seen a direct correlation between how much I work, what kind of work I pursue and how my personal life goes. So, to give you an example, due to the nature of start-up work, I had to end a long-term relationship. We were together for like 5 years, but she couldn't get this shift towards the start-up mentality. In my previous work, I was working a lot but when I was away, I didn't care if the place was burnt. I couldn't care less. I had time to be devoted to my relationship, to take care of her, to do things for us. But by the time I brought my child into the relationship, and I am referring to my start-up as being my child, because I am so connected to it, this immediately intervened in my relationship. It changed the balance, it caused me problems. So, I had to end it [...] for me, it is way

better to admit that this is a problem that cannot be solved. For that reason, I have decided to pause my personal life for the next 6 months at least. All I want is to stay focused till my start-up idea begins to roll. Then ok, I will allow myself to take some days off during the weekends. I will have a break then, I will devote myself to other things (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

Many of the interviewees admitted that this shift towards what they call a 'start-up way of life' made them end long relationships and distance themselves from things they used to do in the past. The sense that "if you are an outsider, you cannot get it" was pervasive in our interactions.

Start-up entrepreneurship is represented as a life choice, rather than merely a work choice. Indicative of this is the way Gregory describes how his working life used to be when he was just a nine-to-five employee. His narration shows the deep personal and emotional involvement he now has with his work as well as the self-sacrificial ethos of this lifestyle (Ross, 2004). Start-up entrepreneurship offers a path towards self-fulfilment and self-realization that keeps start-uppers motivated and disciplined. So, relationships end, since the start-up entrepreneurial path itself offers the promise of becoming someone through work.

Gregory's stance of being always alert and on the move is described well by Boltanski and Chiappelo (2005) as being one of the inherent characteristics of working life in a post-Fordist era, and individuals should:

...be always pursuing some sort of activity, never to be without a project, without ideas, to be always looking forward to, and preparing for, something (Boltanski and Chiappelo, 2005, pp.9-10).

Gregory's intense working pattern and his bulimic practice to join as many coworking spaces as he could – he has joined almost half of them – signifies how determined and devoted he is.

Likewise, Marios, the founder of Social Hub, admits that his personal life has been paused for the last two years. Working with some of his closest friends at Social Hub, he admits that he rarely allows himself to take a break:

I work 12 hours, actually up to 14 hours per day, from 09.00 in the morning till 22.00, actually till the midnight. What I do for my personal life? I extend my nights (laughing) sometimes I leave to go on vacations, or to visit another hub in the world. It's been 2 years since we started the hub and I can say that now we have achieved a better balance. Now we are a team, I am allowed to leave at 22.00 if I want to (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

Asking how they cope with the limited amount of free time they allow themselves, they responded by laughing awkwardly. Many start-uppers' personal lives are paused. Despite some admitting that they had seen the first signs of entrepreneurial success, none had gone on to achieve better balance. In fact, a break from the intense start-up working life might equal losing track of their business. Vacations are only allowed if they are to some extent business-related. For Marios, vacation means a visit to another hub in the world. In this context, time-off is not purely leisure time but also an opportunity for professional expansion and self-development.

From the start-uppers' perspective, the apparent absence of personal life and free time is not considered a problem – it is rather portrayed as a pleasure. The lack of time-off is experienced as an achievement, as proof of the hard work they do. In this way, all the sacrifices and the hardships are justified:

I have achieved to be financially independent, but I have indeed diminished to minimum all my personal expenses. What I consider as luxury is immediately out of the picture. So, I don't go on trips, besides the business trips, I don't buy new clothes, I don't use my car only in very few exceptions. I decided to sublet my flat, now I have a new flatmate so I can save money and invest it in turn to the company (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

By adopting a self-sacrificial mode of existence (Ross, 2004), many participants portray themselves as committed soldiers. Maria sees herself this way: “I am like a soldier, I wake up early in the morning, I have changed my habits”. The young entrepreneurs’ lives are structured according to their decision to enter the start-up world. This decision is experienced as a lonely and individualistic process, the aim of which is to reshape the self in order to adjust to the start-up imperative and its inherent challenges.

To conclude, the most significant finding illustrated in this section is not the blurring boundaries between work and life – the idea that work penetrates the lives of young workers is not new at all (McDowell, 2004; Gill, 2007c; Gregg, 2011). What is at stake is personal life itself, in these cases, their lives are totally dominated by their business ventures.

Operating in the grey area between self-employment and paid employment, the participants of my study agree that there is no specific time schedule. The fact that they work next to friends or with friends makes them extend their working day. The long and non-standard working hours resemble the working patterns found in the ICT industry, where fixed schedules have been replaced by a fun-loving flexibility (Pitts, 2013). The start-uppers I spoke to had all stopped counting their work hours, feeling an internal commitment to work on a 24/7 basis. So, the pattern of the market has become the pattern of the work (Shih, 2004). The fact that no personal life can exist in itself creates a profound emotional attachment between the individual and the newly founded entrepreneurial venture. The next section investigates the way this choice is reframed and rationalized.

8.3 The discourse of ‘love’ and the repudiation of necessity

Despite the apparent absence of personal life, the young entrepreneurs could not miss the chance to express their deep love for what they were doing and the way they were doing it. As Antonis points out, despite the intense working pattern, he feels somehow lucky for being engaged in an activity he loves deeply:

So, the truth is that I feel blessed that I have been engaged in a professional activity that I really and deeply like, so for me it doesn't really matter how many hours I work (Antonis, start-upper).

Similar to Antonis, Gregory cherishes his start-up life for exposing him to the emerging start-up ecosystem:

I'm good so far, I can say for sure that I am satisfied with my career. The last two years that I am involved in start-up entrepreneurship, now I am 29 years old turning 30, I have experienced so many things, I have been exposed, I have learnt. In my entire life, there hasn't been a moment I didn't work. But the last two years have been so far a life changing experience in terms of meeting new people, creating a professional network from scratch. I couldn't do any of these, if was stuck behind a corporate desk, working on an excel document. In my previous jobs, I worked with a team of five people who were the people I knew (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

It is interesting that Gregory compares his previous corporate working experience to the way he works now. The chasm between the start-up and corporate worlds is often portrayed as a justification for pursuing an entrepreneurial career. In his quote, the start-up work life is cherished, due its strong potential for self-development, improvement and socialization.

Trinca and Fox (2004) contribute to the discussion around the role of work in the lives of contemporary employees. Using the provocative book title *Better than Sex: How a Whole Generation Got Hooked on Work*, they illustrate the high level of commitment the young generation of employees show to their work when it promises to act as a vehicle of self-actualization (Trinca & Fox, 2004). As Kelly (2013) points out:

When work is better than sex, the self is conducting itself as an enterprise in ways that open up possibilities for finding purpose and meaning, for making choices; and, when the self is only able to find work that is toil and drudgery, then the self is a failing, even failed, enterprise

that is unable to exercise choice or conduct a life in ways that would offer meaning and purpose (Kelly, 2013, p.106).

When Alexandra found herself in a position where she was working in a job that did not fulfil her at all, she told me that she wanted to “jump out of the balcony”. For her, a normal job would distant her from her real self:

I couldn't find a challenge to develop me as a human being. When I was working in a normal job, I wanted to open the window and jump out of the balcony. It is because my character is a little bit of weird... I think if the times were different and I had a normal job, I would have been so sad and miserable. It is because I want to create, I want to do a creative job (Alexandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

Alexandra describes herself as being too creative to be employed in a conventional job. This 'weirdness' is largely derived from an idiosyncrasy which considers start-up entrepreneurship to be the only way to personal and professional happiness. What is striking is that she cherishes the general instability for pushing her to realize her career dreams despite the challenges of the turbulent times. Many participants told me that the inherent unpredictability of start-up working life is what they are fond of:

Nothing is sure, and I like it, because I have been always suffocating when I wake up and I know what needs to be done. I don't know what I have to do, might be a new project, a collaboration might fail? Who knows? (Eva, founder of P2P Lab).

Eva accepts, even welcomes, this unpredictability. In this context, risk is considered the inherent charm of the start-up working life, and is compatible with the peculiar character of start-uppers who are risk-takers, brave and autonomous, as identified in Chapter 5. In contrast to the corporate world of work, which is viewed as delimited and well structured, start-up working life is presented as desirably unpredictable and hence, fascinating.

Maria was the only participant of this study who still worked in a corporate job when I met her. As she explains, her corporate experience led her towards start-up entrepreneurship:

I wanted to do a lot of innovative and creative things, but my co-workers in the company, the whole management, they have grown old, it's not about their age, it's about the mentality. We have entered in a phase where we don't do things very actively, since our work is done anyway. They follow the traditional way, but when there are new problems, you are asked to provide new solutions. You can't solve old problems with old ways. New ways should be found, otherwise is just a darn. I have been doing my own things, but there was a difficulty, we didn't do what I was proposing because it was extra work! All their problems could have been solved same old problems... I was bored to work without any recognition, not only in terms of salary, but mostly in terms of recognition of my work values (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

Even though Maria was suffocating in her corporate job, she had not quit, since her entrepreneurial career was still uneven. For her, a start-up career entails a strong liberating, self-fulfilling element, with the opportunity to innovate and think creatively and independently. The corporate world is perceived as rigid, stiff and naff, leaving no room for self-realization. Gregory describes his feelings during his short corporate experience: "we were 380 people in the company, whatever I did, I was just a cog in the machine".

It must be noted though, that only a limited number of the participants in this research had solid corporate professional experience. Besides Maria and Gregory, most were relatively young, having done multiple unpaid or low paid internships. Entering the corporate world was not a realistic option for them. The post-corporate discourse developed by the young participants is based rather on perception than personal experience.

What can be argued though, is that anti-corporate feeling is presented as an acceptable justification for not being employed or not having managed to acquire corporate experience. In other words, I argue that the development of the post-corporate discourse is used by young start-uppers as a justification for their career path that can be publicly articulated. In fact, the start-uppers appeared to feel a constant need to prove that their choice to enter the

entrepreneurial world was not necessity driven. Thus, in practice, the rejection of the corporate world by start-uppers equates to the repudiation of entrepreneurship driven by necessity. Their entrepreneurial path is rather portrayed as enacted and motivated by an exceptional self.

Despite the strong love discourse about the start-up work life, young entrepreneurs acknowledge that being based in a hub is the one and only professional stepping-stone someone could take in times of constant crisis. Firstly, starting a new business venture from a coworking space signifies an inability to plan on a long-term basis:

We couldn't find something better actually, because if we were like renting an office at the centre of Athens this eventually would have been a commitment, you know you would have to pay your phone, your internet connection. Renting comes with a commitment at least for a year, and we didn't know whether we could manage to buy other things like printers, to have coffee every day [...] so, were like let's calculate... and we decided that it would be better to go to a hub (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

Secondly, as Gregory explains, all coworking spaces and start-up initiatives are the tangible effects of a long and endless crisis which has resulted in high unemployment:

All these (spaces) are mushrooming because of people's need to do something different because they realise there are no job opportunities both in private and public sector. There are no jobs. Let me put it that way, if you don't want to stay at home depressed, you start your own business (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

Hence, start-up entrepreneurialism is promoted as one – or maybe the only – step towards the labour market; not only because branding yourself as a start-upper and participating in such activities gives you visibility and access to various professional networks, but because you could potentially enter the market by generating your dream job. As Stergios puts it: “Look, I wanted to become a product manager, I couldn't find the job, so I created it”.

In the evolving discourse of love of the start-up working life, necessity is deliberately taken out of the picture. As Marios states, despite the fact that start-up entrepreneurs may be driven by necessity, they still shouldn't be doing something they do not love:

It is all about starting towards the right direction, it shouldn't be in any case entrepreneurship driven by necessity. And by that, I mean to start something by myself because there is no other way; deep inside there might exist but you should start by asking yourself what is it that I like, what is it that I love doing. I was thinking how I want my everyday life to look like and I am really trying to build this environment. So, if everybody can combine what he is good at, what he loves and to have an impact, he would find happiness (Marios, founder of Social Hub).

In our informal communication, 'necessity entrepreneurs', the people who admit that they were in coworking spaces because they didn't have another option, were treated by the other participants as low ability entrants, not motivated by a brilliant or promising idea, and not likely to survive in the market economy. These 'necessity entrepreneurs' were often used as bad examples, justifying failures and pitfalls.

To sum up, besides the long working hours and the absence of a personal life, young start-uppers present themselves as extremely satisfied with what they do and how they do it. Their choice to enter the entrepreneurial terrain is framed within a love discourse about start-up work life and all it entails. The participants presented themselves as 'blessed' and 'gifted' for having the chance to pursue an entrepreneurial career. For the young entrepreneurs, start-up working life entails possibilities for self-expansion, fulfilment and creativity. The development of a love discourse is also related to the imperative of being in love with your work in order to prove that you are committed, ambitious and professional. As Gregg (2010b) identifies, contemporary professionals have to develop a deep emotional attachment to their work.

It can be argued that start-up life is converted entirely into "the capacity for labour, including affective styles, modes of relationality, and characteristics

usually not considered as productive dimensions of the self” (Farrugia, 2019, p.47). Since start-up work life is presented as highly rewarding, hip, cool and desirable, it is allowed – and even welcomed – to penetrate the broader affective life of the individual. Notwithstanding, as discussed in this chapter, young start-uppers aspire to present themselves as passionate, self-motivated and resilient. Their professional steps are justified by their love for the start-up working life and their peculiar idiosyncrasy which is not compatible with the corporate world of work. The corporate world is repeatedly considered ‘naff’, too delimited and boring for the ‘weird’ and sociable young start-uppers. Hence, the rejection of the corporate world strengthens their entrepreneurial choice, repudiating its necessity driven nature (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014).

However, in the analysis, I noticed differences between the responses from male and female respondents, and so the next sub-section considers the gendered dimensions of start-up entrepreneurship within the coworking spaces under investigation. The next sub-section explores the ways start-up entrepreneurs and collectives conceptualize failure – which, in fact, does not sound like an impossible scenario.

8.3.1 The gendered dimensions of start-up working life

As discussed in the previous section, a dynamic was evident between the participants who had what is considered a strong background (business or technology) and those who came from fields less associated with entrepreneurship. Since young entrepreneurs face multiple, conflicting challenges, this dichotomy proves over-simplistic and needs to be further explored. So this section extends the analysis of managing the start-up working life by focusing on its gendered dimensions. It primarily focuses on the experiences of the four female research participants who were founders of their own businesses in Athens. It consists of two parts: the first is focused on how female entrepreneurs negotiate their career choices in the male-dominated world of start-ups, and the second investigates how gender inequalities do or do not enter into the conceptual repertoire of the female interviewees’ as being relevant to their professional experience.

A general belief that no one is underrepresented or disadvantaged, as the nature of the work itself, often labelled creative, cultural or digital, naturalizes the current gender blindness. This cool, creative and egalitarian status of creative labour is extensively questioned by empirical research and critical analysis of contemporary creative professionals' lives (Gill, 2002; Wreyfold, 2013; Sang et al., 2014; Reimer, 2016; Swail and Marlow, 2018). Critical analyses of the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship inform us that the influence of gender is evident in the entrepreneurial ambitions, expectations and behaviours of the founders of new business ventures (Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2008; Marlow and McAdam, 2013). Most of the current debate is developed around the deconstruction of myths of female entrepreneurship such as the 'underperforming' or 'necessity driven' female entrepreneur (Marlow and McAdam, 2012). Studies show that women in start-ups are rarely the founders and are mostly found at the lower levels of the job hierarchy (Marlow and McAdam, 2013). Especially in technical sectors, gender disparity is justified through the general belief that "it's the men who are technical and the women who communicate well" (Gill, 2007a, p.35). A European Commission report states:

The ideal of the male entrepreneur as the norm continues to be perpetuated by social media, in education and even through policies in many countries. One way in which social attitudes are visible is through attitudes towards failure. Women are more likely than men to report a fear of failure prevents them from starting a business. At the European Union-level, 52% of women indicated that a fear of failure would prevent them from starting a business relative to 42% of men. Women are more likely than men to report this barrier in all countries and were the most likely in Greece (71%) and Poland (65%) (Halabisky, 2017, p.12).

The previous section identifies start-up entrepreneurialism as highly driven by necessity despite the evolving discourse of love, whereas this sub-section explores the gendered dimensions of, what I consider, a fake chasm between 'necessity entrepreneurs' and 'self-motivated individuals'.

Alexandra was in her early thirties at the time of the interview. She had studied social sciences and law but, as she admits, it was very difficult for her to find a job: “I was looking for a job for quite a long time. I stopped counting how many CVs I had sent when I reached 200; it was killing me. I was emotionally exhausted”. As the crisis deepened, there were no other jobs to be found, so she started working informally in education. At the time of the interview her entrepreneurial activity was mainly financed by her informal work, as she had not found any external funding. Entrepreneurs like Alexandra, with a background not traditionally related to entrepreneurship, who confessed that they were primarily driven by necessity, were treated by male entrepreneurs as low ability entrants, not likely to survive in the market economy. As Alexandra cynically admits: “We are not Google, we just have a small project, an enterprise in the making”. Discussing her views on entrepreneurship, another female participant says: “behind start-ups, behind new business ventures, are people and when we are talking about people, we actually mean males who have an IT background”. So, for female entrepreneurs, the major barrier to overcome is their gender identity itself, which does not fit with the archetypal entrepreneurial model, which is highly masculinized (Swail and Marlow, 2018; Naudin, 2018).

Vasilis, a male research participant and aspiring entrepreneur in his early 30s with a background in computer engineering, felt that he needed to differentiate himself from the ‘necessity entrepreneurs’ whose numbers were mushrooming in coworking spaces:

I believe that entrepreneurship has nothing to do with unemployment. If someone is only in it because he couldn't find a job, it is better for me to not even start a start-up [...] if you can't manoeuvre your way into the labour market [...] and that has nothing to do with the unemployment rates, regardless of whether they are 30% or 50%, there is no chance of generating a successful business (Vasilis, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

Even though we discussed all the problems Vasilis had encountered working as a freelancer, he still deeply believes that the market economy somehow naturally rejects people that are not needed, the people who cannot 'adjust', the people who do not listen to the voice of the market.

The 'two-speed start-up community' discourse, as represented by this male entrepreneur, revolves around a perceived dualism, pervasive during my fieldwork research. On the one hand, there are those who happen to have what is considered a strong background in finance or technology and represent 'success' and 'ambition', and on the other, there are entrepreneurs who originate from fields less associated with conventional forms of entrepreneurship such as the arts, culture or education, and who serve as the unsuccessful examples of 'necessity'. Even when female research participants have the same qualifications as their male counterparts, they are still treated with suspicion by the start-up community.

Eva, a young woman who is the founder of a coworking platform where developers, marketers and designers collaborate, admits that it was difficult to explain her role in the community, due to her lack of IT knowledge which singled her out from her peers. She explains that women must prove they have exceptional skills to justify and maintain their position in the workplace: "Developers are cocky [...] if you are a woman developer you should have a very good knowledge of what you are doing, otherwise you will end up being the woman developer who is constantly being mocked". The 'mocking' that Eva refers to is indicative of a tough, masculine culture, where there is a constant battle for joking supremacy. Being 'cocky' is perceived to be an asset, as it is openly associated with the smartness, competitiveness and boldness needed to survive in the start-up world of entrepreneurship. I argue then, that mocking as a tactic in these spaces is highly masculinized and women in these spaces are expected to perform in a way that would validate this type of masculinity so as to gain acceptance in an overtly masculine culture (Plester, 2015).

Elena is a young woman in her mid-twenties with a background in economics, who started a business in financial technology. Operating in a highly

masculinized sector, she thinks of entrepreneurship as a long-term career strategy. She confesses that it has been difficult for her to explain herself and her business idea in front of male dominated juries. Despite having all the credentials to enter the business world, she has realized that, as a woman, she needs to try harder to prove that she is braver and more thick-skinned than her male counterparts. This tendency is documented in literature, which shows a strong association between gender and the effort invested in work, indicating that even though women exert greater effort at work they still lag behind men in reward (Gorman and Kmec, 2007, p.829).

Maria is a woman entrepreneur in her late thirties who worked as a computer engineer for almost fifteen years in a big corporation. For her, entrepreneurial activity is unexplored terrain where she could find professional fulfilment and overcome the obstacles encountered in her corporate working life. Maria describes her transition from the corporate to the start-up world as a radical transformation of herself. An essential part of her becoming an entrepreneur was the abandonment of any habits not compatible with this new, emerging self. To explain how absorbed she is in her business idea she says:

I haven't had a manicure for quite a while; actually, I don't remember when the last time was. My hair, the same, I haven't gone to the hairdresser. I'm only taking showers. I don't go shopping but I don't care. I don't feel that I have overlooked myself, but that simply I don't care. I don't flirt. Ok, I want to be pretty, like all women want to some extent, but I'm not like I used to be (Maria, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

In her transitional stage to becoming an entrepreneur, Maria left behind all the traditional feminine pleasures which are not condoned in the start-up world. It is significant that Maria, by not conforming with practices such as beautification and feeling desired, shows deep commitment and loyalty to her entrepreneurial dream. Her normative perception of femininity legitimizes the traditional gender binary, reproducing all the gendered dichotomies such as subject/object and active/passive.

Discussing Elena's views on the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the start-up world, she states:

Women are equally passionate and hard workers, they are very dedicated to what they are doing. Many women, I don't know how to explain, I don't want to sound like [...] because I'm a woman, but I simply think that is a matter of leadership, it's not that I'm saying that one gender is lacking compared to the other, it's just deciding to be in the front line, to do things (Elena, start-upper).

Elena thinks of being in the frontline as a sign of overcoming her gender's barriers, which is, in turn, perceived as a strong sign of success. Emulating strong masculinized attitudes such as being a front-line fighter seems to be the only way to position herself within this emerging start-up world.

Apart from a strategy of denying the relevance of gender, one female research participant expressed the opinion that women could constitute a privileged gender in the start-up world: "But in this field, it is easier to be a woman, because they [developers] crave to find a woman". The 'female advantage' is constructed by the argument that "women could deliberately use their sexual power to distract men – so as to take-over the business while guys are salivating" (Gill, 2007a, p.158). A patriarchal construction of the female worker as having advantages based on appearance and sexual attractiveness thus delegitimizes female professionals as they are seen as succeeding by using their 'natural characteristics'. This argument is additionally problematic in that it unintentionally legitimizes cases of sexual harassment, which are not rare in extremely 'laddish' environments (Gill et al., 2017).

This section outlines female entrepreneurs' experiences of working in coworking spaces. This brief piece of empirical research highlights the gendered barriers that female entrepreneurs must overcome to sustain their position in the start-up ecosystem. It explores how gender discrimination is reproduced and amplified by the informality and precariousness of today's flexible workplaces. Women are often regarded by male start-up entrepreneurs as 'necessity' driven, setting up businesses essentially as an alternative to unemployment. For male

entrepreneurs, women must explicitly prove that they are the exception to the 'necessity' rule. 'Necessity entrepreneurship' denotes a form of entrepreneurship which differs significantly from mainstream conceptualizations, which perceive entrepreneurship as liberating and enabling opportunities for innovation, wealth and job creation (Kießling, 2004). Necessity entrepreneurship means that entrepreneurial activities, especially in the context of the current financial crisis, function as the only way out of unemployment (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014). In contrast, the male research participants with high profile positions, mostly as founders of their own businesses, present themselves as aspiring entrepreneurs and self-motivated individuals.

Myths and constructed dualisms, such as necessity and success-oriented entrepreneurs, are explicitly reproduced within the coworking spaces. Thus, career expectations are socially predetermined in a gendered manner, inscribed quietly into the male or female bodies of start-up entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs tend to internalize these perceptions by lowering their expectations regarding career outcomes – as, after all, Alexandra indicates “we are not Google”. Yet, by accepting that, as women, they should try to do it like a man – and sometimes, as I provocatively suggest, try to do it better.

The female interviewee's accounts reproduced a normative type of femininity, through which the female research participants tended to make a tacit compromise that entrepreneurship is not compatible with their gender and, for that reason, they had to try harder and imitate hegemonic masculine attitudes. When discussing their gender, some female interviewees even idealized it, presenting it as the 'advantaged sex' because of the supposed benefits of women's appearance and attractiveness in the predominantly male world of start-ups.

Gender inequalities in the contemporary start-up world are the elephant in the room, a topic that female research participants tend to consistently ignore. Few wanted to call it by its name. Narrating their experiences, they didn't see gender as a barrier or, when they did, they consistently tried to take it out of the picture. It felt like any admission of feelings of exclusion or discrimination by the

female research participants would potentially be equated to a sign of weakness or lack of boldness on their part. In their attempt to fit into the masculine culture, women felt the need to perform and validate normative types of masculinity, such as the front-line fighter.

As discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 4, coworking spaces foster a start-up entrepreneurial discourse from which nobody is excluded.

Nevertheless, women entrepreneurs still face invisible barriers that they need to overcome in order to enter the entrepreneurial world. Despite the superficial gender neutrality of the entrepreneurial territory, traditional male values such as bravery, power, aggression, military discipline and competitiveness are promoted, as discussed in Chapter 7.

The tendencies illustrated are only part of a currently evolving picture. This section is a snapshot of a set of sexist everyday practices developed within the coworking spaces under investigation. This snapshot is far from optimistic, as the female entrepreneurs I interviewed are engaged in constant modification of the self to adapt to an environment which they are constantly subtly excluded from. By repudiating the relevance of gender, gender discrimination is consistently dismissed and naturalized. In its place, a 'go with the flow' discourse develops, accepting rather than defeating the current gendered status quo which requires women to imitate masculinized stereotypes in order to be accepted and thus succeed (Ranga and Etzkowitz, 2010; Gill et al., 2017; Swail and Marlow, 2018).

8.3.2 Failure as F.A.I.L (first attempt in learning)

In the grey literature, failure is often presented as a desirable step towards entrepreneurial success – which is indeed, innovation and disruption. Indicative is the example of Michael S. Malone, an American author and tech investor who has written the Silicon Insider column for ABC since 2000. He is a Silicon Valley evangelist, and states:

Outsiders look at Silicon Valley as a success, but it is, in truth, a graveyard. Failure is Silicon Valley's greatest strength. Every failed

product or enterprise is a lesson stored in the collective memory. We don't stigmatize failure, we admire it (Sloane, 2010).

An eternal 'trial and error' stance is promoted as innovation, which is perceived as built from the bones of past failures. By using the word 'graveyard', Michael Malone illustrates this oxymoron. Failure is surrounded by celebratory discourse nurtured in the tech start-ups of Silicon Valley. In a series of lectures at the University of Berkeley, an executive of Uber encourages students by stating that failure is nothing to be ashamed of and is, in many cases, necessary:

Try something you could fail at [...]. You could be bad at it, but one of the most rewarding things you could do is dive deep into something (Lynn, 2018).

These celebratory accounts obscure the consequences that a potential failure might engender in regard to the individual perception of the self. As Nightingale and Coad point out:

Starting a firm is like entering a lottery (Storey, 2011; Vivarelli, 2011: 201), with death rates, skewed returns with most players losing out, random growth, little or no entrepreneurial learning ("Learning to roll a dice" [Frankish et al., 2013]), no influence of education on performance, little control over outcomes but substantial overconfidence among players (Nightingale and Coad, 2013, p.130).

Failure has long been discussed in entrepreneurship studies as the other side of the coin (Jenkins et al., 2014), while the studies focus on growth, innovation and prosperity (Kiesling, 2004; Bodrozic and Adler, 2018). Few studies underline the financial and emotional costs of failure, pointing out that it could cause a sense of inadequacy that could lead to anxiety, depression and even a sense of shame (Shepherd, 2003). The framing of failure as learning is well-discussed in literature (Shepherd, 2003; Ucbasaran et al., 2010; Cope, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2014; Justo et al., 2015; Mandl et al., 2016). However, literature lacks rich ethnographic accounts, as the process of failure itself is rarely scrutinized as such (McGrath, 1999). Many studies highlight how failure can often conflate

with grief, loss of self-esteem and social stigma (Shepherd, 2003; Jenkins et al., 2014).

In the world of tech start-ups, messing up is practically a religion and, instead of hiding mistakes, failures and pitfalls, fallibility is put at the centre of working life. In practice what must be investigated is actually, who is allowed to fail. As Adrian Daub, an academic and writer who lives in San Francisco, observes:

Failing [...] seems to carry opposite meanings depending on who does it. If a traditional brick-and-mortar business haemorrhages money as unregulated digital competition moves in, then that's just a sign that brick-and-mortar deserves to die. By contrast, if a disruptive new economy start-up loses money by the billions, it's a sign of how revolutionary and bold they are (Daub, 2018).

This sub-section provides a grounded account of how young start-uppers manage failure by exploring the way they perceive their current professional paths. Even failing is being re-invented as a sign of a high level of disruption and innovation. What must be explored then, is how young start-uppers manage failure and the possibility of failing.

Failure was discussed by all the participants as a potential outcome of their entrepreneurial activity. Aligned with the Silicon Valley's empowering narrative, failures were presented as the necessary pit stops on the way to the best and most innovative idea. Christina, the co-founder of the Net, a tech-oriented hub, adopts a 'trial and error' approach to start-up entrepreneurship and the incubation of newly funded businesses:

Young people are risk takers, especially a new generation is experiencing, it is not bad at all to fail – and this is something you are not taught at school. If you examine the word fail, it is an acronym, fail means 'first attempt in learning', so you need to fail to succeed, you are learning from your mistakes. This is what we say to start-ups, *fail fast, fail cheap*, if you want to do it just do it, but if does not go anywhere, let it go. *We know it is hard, it hurts, it is your baby, you made it, it is painful* – you have to let it go. And it is way better to fail in Greece, the market is

relatively small and you can get funded by the 3 Fs, friends, fools and family (Christina, co-founder of Net) (emphasis added).

So, “fail fast and fail cheap” acts as a way for start-ups to scale up and not get stuck. The fact that “it hurts”, as Christina says, signifies the deep emotional involvement of start-uppers with their immature, and most of the time not profitable, start-up ideas.

Dimitris, a software engineer based at Forest Ridge, explains why the ‘trial and error’ philosophy is so important at this stage of his entrepreneurial venture. Coworking spaces themselves give the freedom to test ideas multiple times, before entering the market or even meeting a potential investor:

If you go and say to the investors “I want this money, just because I want to test and see if this works” and you don’t even know what you are talking about that time, you will sound weird (Dimitris, member of a start-up collective, Forest Ridge).

For some start-up entrepreneurs, entering a coworking space and starting a business have been reconceptualized as hands-on experiences and an opportunity for do-it-yourself learning. For Gregory, the emergence of coworking spaces where start-up entrepreneurship blossoms, motivates people to at least see the way they learn differently, as he puts it: “A lot of people have entered a whole different learning process. Starting a new business is a learning process on its own”. For him, what they need is empowerment and acceptance from their peers, in case they fail:

What a start-upper really needs at the beginning of his career is not money or legal consulting. He needs support and feedback. You need to come across the right people who can really show you what’s wrong and what you should be doing, to listen to their thoughts. So, you need to be told “Just do it, you are not gonna lose if you try. Success might not come, but you are in the right place” (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

Failure is embraced by Gregory as a harsh but valuable teacher, showing the key path towards growth. Indeed, Gregory believes deeply that innovation can be built through practice:

By the time I entered this hub, I had an immature start-up idea. Back then, I was like 'this is the best idea ever', but as I gained some experience here, I realized that my idea was a total bullshit. [...] The guys here were like 'start working on other projects simultaneously to see how it works out in practice, what functions and of course what does not (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

So, through this entrepreneurial learning curve, young start-uppers can develop abilities to overcome setbacks while nurturing their self-esteem in contexts where failure is exculpated. By reframing failure as a learning opportunity, start-uppers produce an empowering narrative for themselves in a context where success has yet to come:

I am really trying to stay calm. Let's be logical and unemotional, my project might fail. But I have learned so much, so I could start another business which will go better. If it doesn't work and we have reached this point where it has become stressful, with all the skills we got we will try to find another way. We have already started working on a different idea on the side (Alexandra, start-upper, Forest Ridge).

The emotional distress of failure can still be detrimental. A potential financial loss of mostly family money, can lead to anxiety and depression. In a context where start-up entrepreneurship is primarily driven by necessity, failure can be a painful and damaging experience for the individual. Failure is of course not a desirable outcome for start-uppers, but Gregory expresses a highly rationalized, down to earth – if not deterministic – opinion about the uneven future of newly founded businesses:

Look, 99.9% of the start-ups out there won't make it, they won't survive, I am telling you. The co-founders might be bored, or they will end up emotionally and financially drained. So, we are all combating against the chances that are telling you that you are going to fail. This is what we do with the start-ups I work for. We fight despite the challenges, we try to

get into the 0.1% of the start-ups that will survive, but the times are heavily against us. [...] funding opportunities in Greece are limited [...]. The [Greek start-up] managed to raise serious funding after two and a half years, after they had taken some funding from here and there. Very few of us have the possibility to sustain financially our start-up ideas for so long as to attract investors' interest. [...] In fact, the Greek start-up scene is something very good in terms of acquiring new skills, becoming an experienced professional, finding a proper job in big companies or in the two or three start-ups that will survive (Gregory, start-upper, Forest Ridge and P2P Lab).

It can be argued that, behind the framing of failure as learning, start-ups are regarded by young professionals as a more affordable and hands-on learning experience than MBAs. Considering that an MBA is worth a lot compared to an MSc or MA degree, a start-up acts as a professional step that bridges the gap between formal education and the labour market. The reframing of failure as learning and even as an MBA serves as a way to manage and rationalize the high probability of terminating the venture. Start-uppers are highly aware that they might end up emotionally and financially drained. The fact that family capital is being used creates a deep emotional connection with their venture.

8.4 A precarious working life

This section has illustrated the conditions of the working life of start-up entrepreneurs, the ethical constraints and the dilemmas they face while sustaining a start-up entrepreneurial business in times of crisis. In her work, Gill proposes the following characteristics of new media work:

1. Love of the work and deep commitment
2. Precarious work
3. Low pay
4. Long hours culture
5. The need to keep up and always be alert
6. Do it yourself and hands-on learning
7. Informality

8. Gender inequality
9. Uneven future (Gill, 2007c; Gill, 2011).

All these features, as well as those presented by various other creative labour studies (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Zoellner, 2013; Banks et al., 2013; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Duffy, 2016; Alacovska, 2018), sharply illustrate the working life of people who work in coworking spaces in Athens.

In a context of growing insecurity, where non-standard work is expanding and we currently see the emergence of “nomadic multi-activity” (Beck, 2000, p.2), the constructing of a meaningful working life is hard to realize. Indeed, for this generation of employees, becoming an entrepreneur represents, to a great degree, a necessity driven choice in the Athenian context. Necessity entrepreneurialism, a phenomenon rarely discussed by current entrepreneurship studies, is one of the multiple effects of the high rates of unemployment in countries such as Spain (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014) and, of course, Greece. Micro start-up entrepreneurialism has flourished as a response to the deepening crisis and the decline of middle-class jobs.

9 Conclusion

This doctoral thesis examines the idea of Greek start-up entrepreneurs as precarious workers who are pushed to adopt entrepreneurial practices due to the high rates of youth unemployment that were a product of the 2008 global financial crisis. It contextualizes this inquiry in relation to the growing body of literature on the changing nature of work in neoliberal societies.

Instead of analysing the emergence of start-up entrepreneurship through the lens of entrepreneurship studies, debates around the deepening of precarity (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Morgan et al., 2013; de Peuter, 2014b) and the emergence of creative labour (McRobbie, 2002c; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Banks, 2007; Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009; Christopherson, 2009), frame my understanding regarding the subjective experiences of those who are engaged in entrepreneurial labour practices. Rather than focusing on entrepreneurship and its innovative outcomes, my study investigates how this turning of young employees towards entrepreneurialism impacts contemporary subjectivities in the ways they reconceptualize themselves and notions such as workplace, entrepreneurship, career and success.

The physical spaces where this radical transformation of the self takes place are coworking spaces. Thus, my thesis is informed by previous empirical studies which examine the specific working conditions and labour practices encountered by people who are based at coworking spaces and hubs. These studies point out that professionals in coworking spaces are in search of meaningful employment, engaged in a wide range of self-promotional and branding strategies, and experience their career steps as lifestyle choices (Gandini, 2016; Bandinelli, 2017; Bandinelli and Gandini, 2019).

There are experienced employees who leave secure corporate jobs to jump to coworking spaces and start their own businesses, and there are also early career professionals who are pushed to entrepreneurship by *necessity* due to the high rates of unemployment. While the first category tend to dominate entrepreneurial spaces in the advanced capitalist economies of the Global

North, it is the the second type of necessity entrepreneurs who are often encountered in the coworking spaces that have emerged as a response to the deepening of crisis in countries such as Greece (Avdikos and Kalogerisis, 2016; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Papageorgiou, 2020).

As such, this research not only draws on, but advances emerging critical creative labour and coworking debate through an in depth examination of the ways people experience work, manage their working lives and ascribe value and meaning to themselves in contexts where entrepreneurship is mostly necessity driven. Taking the local context into consideration (Vinodrai, 2013), the thesis illustrates the ways in which start-up entrepreneurs and collectives prepare themselves to operate within an unstable labour market in a country in the midst of a long-standing crisis.

While my research does not examine the overall impact of start-up entrepreneurship in Greece, it is clear that there is little evidence that it could be a major help in Greece's recovery from the crisis. Micro-entrepreneurs in Greece have limited government support and there is no realistic prospect of attaining funding. They set up companies as a response to the impossibility of acquiring fulfilling jobs.

The impact of the proliferation of coworking spaces is profound at a higher, more symbolic, level. The findings I present in this doctoral dissertation capture the turn towards start-up entrepreneurship in Greece which signals a shift towards the emergence of a workforce which eagerly accepts its precarious conditions of work, is mostly based at non-unionized workplaces such as coworking spaces and undertakes the risks of acting entrepreneurially.

9.1 Summary of findings and discussion of their implications

With research on coworking reaching a certain level of maturity, Chapter 3 illustrates how coworking qualities and communitarian values are well-addressed by urban and regional scholarship as well as business and management studies (Capdevila, 2015; Brown, 2017; Garrett et al., 2017; Jakonen et al., 2017; Bouncken et al., 2018). Moreover, studies that draw upon accounts

of creative labour (see Chapter 2) address the coworking phenomenon in terms of the formation of neoliberal subjectivity (Gandini, 2015; Gandini, 2016a; Bandinelli and Gandini, 2019). So, based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2 – in which I explore the precarious character of contemporary forms of work – and Chapter 3 – in which I demonstrate the plurality of managerial practices in coworking that result in various coworking typologies – this doctoral thesis answers four sets of research questions:

1. What kind of coworking spaces have emerged in the Greek context and why? What does it mean to sustain a coworking space in times of crisis?
2. What kind of services do these spaces offer and how do they differ?
3. What are coworking spaces' practices? What kind of values and ethics are bound up in them? How do people at coworking spaces respond to written and unwritten rules?
4. How do people at these spaces manage their professional working lives? What are the qualities and practices embedded in their coworking lifestyles?

In the course of this thesis, these questions have been answered through the empirical findings of the study, and the discussion of those findings. I develop my main argument in four stages, examining: firstly, the structure of the spaces; secondly, the array of coworking services and the ways these services are valorized by participants; thirdly, the coworking practices; and finally, the ways people at coworking spaces manage their working lives.

To answer the first set of questions, Chapter 5 reveals a diverse coworking landscape that targets mainly entry-level professionals. As I show, coworking spaces commonly have a flat organizational structure and easy-going workplace atmosphere which are believed by those who work in them to nurture collaboration, communitarian values and a sharing culture. Such spaces operate either as independent endeavours, set up by experienced entrepreneurs, or as corporate enterprises attached to institutions and corporations. The indie coworking spaces struggle to sustain themselves financially and receive limited or no funding from external resources. The corporate spaces, however, are part

of corporate social responsibility initiatives and thus are financially more robust and stable. Their funding resources determine the ways participants are recruited as well as how everyday life is structured. For instance, as I discovered, in indie spaces recruitment often occurs through word of mouth strategies while in corporate spaces it is the outcome of a well-structured process.

Contrary to the common belief in some literature that coworking spaces attract mature and immature professionals as well as freelancers, in the Greek context such spaces host highly educated individuals with limited or no professional experience. Due to prevailing levels of unemployment, they have no other choice than to make their initial career steps through entrepreneurship. So, both categories of space can be viewed as a response to the long-standing crisis and share a very precise mission to equip young professionals with enterprise knowledge and education.

To answer the second set of questions, Chapter 6 demonstrates a crowded coworking market that emerged within the broader creative industry landscape to provide a wide array of services to start-up entrepreneurs. This thesis presents strong evidence that Athens coworking spaces act as the 'missing middle', providing hands-on entrepreneurial practice to bridge the gap between university education and the market. By understanding these spaces as the missing middle this thesis aims to change the way we think about coworking. To be more precise, as the empirical evidence suggests, coworking does not solely offer a working experience to its audiences, it provides a whole new world of entrepreneurial learning and doing. Within this world, participants take advantage of coworking services and go from being co-workers to being professionals and entrepreneurs. As they go through this process, participants' attitudes, stances, beliefs and values are shaped and crystalized. However, as my study shows, coworking services are not always valorized by the participants of these spaces, revealing deeper tensions and conflicting dynamics (the tensions between mentors and mentees is indicative).

To answer the third set of questions, in line with findings in other studies, coworking spaces are found to rely upon extended professional and personal

networks. As Chapter 7 shows these forms of sociality serve as the most crucial part of the organization of work in hubs. Therefore, establishing relationships is a means to build an initial professional network where co-workers can look for projects, funding and collaboration opportunities. The goal of this sociality is to accumulate reputation, which is of paramount importance for professional resilience. The opportunistic aspect of sociality is examined elsewhere (Wittel, 2001). However, my research develops this concept by examining the way that such sociality is deeply entangled with moral and ethical constraints. My research suggests coworking spaces offer environments to engage in ethical debate around entrepreneurship and economic activity. I argue therefore that the role of coworking founders and hosts is crucial. In fact, I would reconceptualize them as curators and gatekeepers of this re-attachment of ethics in the entrepreneurial debate. As my study shows, individuals shape their understanding of every aspect of their entire existence in coworking spaces. They learn what parts of their personality should be displayed and what parts should be downplayed; what should be said publicly and what should not. What I therefore argue here is that start-up entrepreneurship is experienced as a deeply personal moral choice. Its ethical compass consists of a set of skills that are shaped and put into practice in coworking spaces. This way, entrepreneurship is reconceptualized and presented on a collective level as something ethically superior and positive, and on a personal level as an emancipated choice that could offer personal fulfilment and collective social change.

To answer the final set of questions, Chapter 8 sheds light on the ways start-up entrepreneurs manage and negotiate their entrepreneurial working lives. This chapter confirms that the articulations of creative entrepreneurial labour identified in Athens conform with the picture already seen in literature in Anglo-Saxon contexts (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Gregg, 2009; de Peuter, 2014b; Bandinelli and Gandini, 2019) which highlights the precarious nature of employment, reconceptualizing work in the new economy as a 'labour of love' (Gregg, 2009). Moreover, despite the common belief among those interviewed

that coworking spaces are inclusive and egalitarian, my ethnographic evidence challenges the gender neutral character of coworking practices. In tandem with accounts of gendered aspects of creative labour (Gill, 2002; Gill, 2014; Gill et al., 2017; Stokes, 2017), my research indicates that in contexts where start-up entrepreneurialism prevails, there are specific gendered barriers that participants must overcome to legitimize their positions within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. While normative masculinity is idealized, womanliness is restrained for the sake of becoming a 'frontline fighter', and prevailing gender discriminations are explicitly ignored. As I discovered, the working lives of female entrepreneurs at the coworking spaces are full of ambiguities - it is a minefield full of gendered dos and don'ts.

My research also provides rich insight into the sacrificial work ethos that is pervasive within coworking spaces. This is something already captured in literature on labour in the new economy (Ross, 2004; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Bessant et al., 2018), but I demonstrate how this sacrificial work ethos has a twofold justification: on a personal level, it is justified for the pursuit of self-realization, while on a collective level, it is believed to be a practice that can bring broader social change. However, it would be naïve to understand the start-up entrepreneurial landscape as a space for the creation of radical and autonomous creative enterprises. The individualism of entrepreneurialism is pervasive and contributes to the formation of a neo-liberal subjectivity where the authentic, true self is yet to be revealed while the hype of the sharing economy signals an ambivalent re-attachment of ethics to economic activity.

9.2 Future research

While my thesis captures the turn towards involuntary forms of start-up entrepreneurship, further research is needed to understand to what extent these spaces have the potential to be transformed into sustainable businesses and more equal workplaces. As this thesis indicates, coworking spaces are constructed as environments that encompass other spheres of existence beyond just work; to name a few, they provide places where participants can think,

learn, connect, relax, cook and socialize. Instead of strict vertical hierarchies, complicated organizational charts and well-defined bureaucratic steps, coworking spaces incorporate a flat hierarchical structure with a less rigid or austere workplace culture.

As increasing numbers of contemporary professionals go through incubation programmes and attend entrepreneurship-related events mostly hosted by coworking spaces and designed to facilitate entrepreneurial learning, they also need to fit into masculine working practices. Further research into the extent to which gender norms and gender inequality are reproduced through these programmes would be invaluable. Moreover, the fact that coworking spaces are mostly addressed to immature and early-stage professionals signals the importance these processes may have for what it means to be an entrepreneur; who fits into the entrepreneurial practice and who does not.

With open coworking business models proliferating, our understanding of their organizational models is sparse and fragmented. So, from a managerial standpoint, coworking spaces represent an opportunity to critically explore the ways social inequalities are reflected and negotiated in contexts that seem to distance themselves from rigid bureaucratic organizations. Therefore, a gendered perspective is needed to guide future research into coworking. Only then can we understand the practices of inclusion and exclusion in bottom-up contexts where work is highly self-organized, self-regulated and entrepreneurial. At the same time, adopting a gendered perspective might lead us to a more sustained discussion of the potential of coworking spaces to become egalitarian workplaces.

9.3 Contributions

My findings contribute to the academic literature on the organization of work and identity formation process in neoliberal societies. As with many kinds of social and cultural research, making claims about the generalizability of the findings is difficult. The research therefore, firstly, has specific resonance in the Greek context, where national creative policy is still underdeveloped. More

precisely, my study provides a forensic examination of the local context which could inform policy regarding the sustainability of coworking spaces and the feasibility of the entrepreneurial ventures they host.

However, the research also has a broader importance in extending the academic debate on labour outside the Anglo-Saxon context. It adds to research on the characteristics of work in Greece (Avdikos and Kalogeresis, 2016; Michailidou and Kostala, 2016; Papageorgiou, 2020), but also contexts such as Spain (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2014), Argentina (Beltran and Miguel, 2014) or elsewhere where start-up entrepreneurship has an involuntarily character, and relational practices prevail over formalized and structured responses to precarity (Alacovska, 2018; Alacovska and Gill, 2019; Alacovska, 2019). While it may be most relevant to contexts which are undergoing a wider economic restructuring, the findings are useful for consideration in any context where start-up entrepreneurship is treated as a panacea for youth unemployment.

9.3.1 Creative entrepreneurial labour

The nature of the work conducted in coworking spaces can be seen as the outcome of a continuous flexibilization, casualization and political deregulation of employment relationships; project-based, insecure, informal and flexible. I argue that work in these spaces is emblematic of the Greek context, but coincides with creative labour accounts from elsewhere which vividly describe the working lives of creative workers as highly individualized, precarious and in a state of constant uncertainty (Gill, 2002; Deuze, 2007; Ross, 2009; Gill, 2011; McRobbie, 2011; Adkins, 2013).

Despite the pervasive hype created around coworking and notions such as sharing culture and collaboration, participants still experience their working lives as highly individualized. In this context, success is yet to come and failure always seems a very reasonable possibility. The participants experience their work as fulfilling and they feel responsible for nurturing it. Signalling an understanding of work in coworking spaces as entrepreneurial, participants invest their time in learning, establishing connections and maintaining relationships without predicting the outcomes of such practices. In these contexts, entrepreneurial

ventures are perceived as the new, more affordable, MBAs, where start-uppers learn by acting entrepreneurially. Throughout this process, they have only themselves to rely on – and to blame – as many participants of this research agreed: “we are alone, fighting against all odds”.

While other literature sees the proliferation of coworking as an opportunity for individualized workers’ demands to be heard (Merkel, 2019), my research suggests otherwise. My work indicates that, within coworking spaces, atypical informal labour practices tend to prevail. Instead of being precarious employees, participants brand themselves as start-up entrepreneurs and thus, precarious labour practices are reproduced – without even being acknowledged as such. This finding suggests an ambivalence towards the possibilities of coworking in combatting precarity without reproducing it (de Peuter et al., 2017).

However, I also argue that the proliferation of coworking brings to the surface the emancipatory desire to conduct work that is meaningful, creative and autonomous. In saying that, my thesis does not embrace debates that perceive contemporary creative workers as victims where the attractive character of creative work constitutes a form of seduction for contemporary workers. Instead, I understand them as active agents who conduct highly entrepreneurial and individualized forms of work.

Nevertheless, the individualistic nature of creative entrepreneurial work overshadows any radical possibilities for collective responses to precarity; in turn, individualized coping strategies proliferate. This is in line with McRobbie’s (2002) statement that “the possibility of a revived, perhaps re-invented, radical democratic politics that might usefully de-individuate and re-socialize the world of creative work is difficult to envisage” (p.528) and unfortunately, individual solutions to collective structural problems may be impossible.

9.3.2 Beyond sociality?

As my thesis indicates, entrepreneurial coworking world is highly precarious, and uncertain profitability rules. This finding verifies de Peuter et al.’s (2017) claim that coworking spaces’ profit margins are relatively limited, but also enriches

our understanding of coworking practices. Indeed, the general economic instability pushes the participants of this research to use strategies that entail high levels of risk (see Section 5.3.1 for the detailed analysis of these techniques). By illustrating the coping mechanisms deployed by the indie spaces and coworking participants, my research reveals that coworking life consists of a continuum of value-creating activities with favour-swapping, bartering and working for free being among them. These value-creating activities are performed, distributed and exchanged not necessarily in expectation of direct financial remuneration; instead they serve as opportunities for participants to build their networks and put into practice their ethical skillsets.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the participants of coworking spaces exercise their personal judgement regarding what constitutes good versus bad entrepreneurial practice, attempting to attach moral value to their immature entrepreneurial practices. As Manolis pointed out during our discussion: “We feel responsible for the people we collaborate with; we get attached to them and then we feel that we have the responsibility towards them to succeed” (see Section 7.3). What must be noted here, is that my thesis contributes to an understanding of how entrepreneurial practices, which started as a quick fix to unemployment, have been elevated in a relational way that can re-moralize and humanize economic activity. Ethics, then, is perceived as a necessary skill that needs to be exercised on a continual basis.

These findings indicate the important role of network sociality (Wittel, 2001) while simultaneously pushing its analytical boundaries. In saying this, I do not want to undermine the fact that creatives are engaged in instrumental forms of sociality, employing self-branding strategies that are highly individualized, but I wish to stress the importance of recognizing that they tend to operate in relational ways (Alacovska, 2018). By bringing these two theories together here, I underline how, despite the opportunistic character their sociality might have, it may be a pitfall to claim that creatives are solely career-focused individuals who would take any possible opportunity to succeed – in the Greek context, survive. The fact that their practices are entangled with ethical traits reveals the gap

between the moral thoughts and actions and the individualistic nature of creative entrepreneurial work.

9.3.3 Coworking founders as gatekeepers

In coworking spaces, one may come across managerial discourses that embrace open dialogue and communication, out of the box thinking and inclusivity. Compared to the organizational rationality and top-down management that prevails in the corporate world of business, coworking spaces promote a new ethos of how work and the workplace could be organized. Nevertheless, the absence of formal managerial control means, in practice, that most core tasks are undertaken through a process of self-managed 'mutual adjustment', where the role of the founder or host is crucial. As discussed in Chapter 6, founders are the ones responsible for the curation of the coworking environment, selection of the participants and maintenance of the space. From organizing training and tax consultation sessions to food-sharing events, the founders are the ones in the most privileged position (see Chapter 6; Merkel, 2019a).

In this sense, coworking's relational practices are exemplified by the founders of the spaces who act as hosts and curators. Especially in indie spaces, founders decide whether newcomers are a cultural fit and act as mentors and interaction facilitators between coworkers. Indicative of this is the fact that the founders of Net consider themselves to be the 'invisible glue' that sticks creative professionals together. Likewise, managers of the corporate coworking spaces are responsible for introducing coworkers to their business allies and cultivating a sociable atmosphere.

Either by training young professionals in how to start a business or write a business plan, founders and hosts shape the way they see themselves and their entrepreneurial activity. Beyond just educating people in how to act entrepreneurially, they are responsible for teaching young professionals how to become someone of value in the labour market, contributing significantly to the construction of a neoliberal subjectivity. They lead by example as they promote and present themselves as independent, brave, self-made entrepreneurs.

Therefore, my thesis demonstrates the importance of the role of founders and hosts, which other literature tends to overlook.

9.3.4 “Show passion, suppress anxiety”

Despite their uneven future prospects, the precarious conditions under which they work, the long working hours and the culture they adopt, start-uppers insist that they are highly satisfied with their working lives, and share an unbounded optimism for the future. Expressing what I call ‘desperate optimism’, start-uppers narrate their working experiences using highly affective terms.

Therefore, I stress the crucial role emotions play in the understanding of contemporary forms of labour.

To understand start-uppers’ unbounded, desperate optimism, we must note that contemporary capitalism places specific imperatives on people who want to become of value in the current labour market (Weeks, 2011; Farrugia, 2019) and for that reason, scholars place emphasis on the emotional expectations that are crucial for success in contemporary workplaces (Hochschild, 1983; Illouz, 2007; Gregg, 2009; Butler, 2018). Creative economy discourses exemplify this trend as it demands creative professionals to show their affection, enthusiasm and passion for their occupation, while pushing away any bad feelings. In this cultural context, where conducting creative labour is celebrated as the ideal goal and start-up entrepreneurship is experienced by individuals as interconnected to the notions of self and well-being, working practices are reconceptualized as deep acts of love that exploit the physical, intellectual and emotional capabilities of individuals.

Thus, disavowing the material conditions of their existence, they brand themselves as optimists, resilient, extroverted and aspiring individuals. What I wish to highlight is that the way start-uppers demonstrate their desperate optimism signifies a profound status anxiety, as the uneven future evokes fear. But feelings such as anxiety, stress and fear are supposed to be suppressed and never articulated. The start-uppers I spoke to – with some of them even crying when they were telling me their working life stories – were pushed to believe that the “job choices they make give messages about who they are and how

successful they are in a market of personal distinction” (Webb, 2004, p.725). In fact, the pressure experienced by contemporary employees is twofold: on the one hand, they have to look for jobs in a highly fragmented and deregulated labour market; while on the other, they must manage their emotions in a certain way so they can present themselves as full of passion and free from stress and anxiety. It feels to them that their survival relies on the management of their emotions.

9.4 Final remarks

Undertaking a PhD thesis is a long but fruitful process. Being in the challenging but also privileged position of researching a phenomenon which is currently unfolding in the social world, I am particularly interested in how coworking spaces will evolve in the near future. My study captures the local articulations of the global coworking phenomenon and explores the first wave of coworking spaces that emerged in the midst of crisis in Athens. Its contribution consists of a wide range of findings regarding the management of working life and the construction of contemporary workplaces which are far removed from fixed structures and models. Revealing the entrepreneurial labour practices of a wide range of highly skilled professionals, it signals a shift in the way contemporary employees think about self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship. While, in the past, micro-entrepreneurship was a thing that occurred, today it is a process that needs to be taught, and there are specific places for this process to happen – coworking spaces.

Even though people in Greece struggle to sustain a professional living, very few talk about their precarious financial conditions. Instead, they drag themselves from one networking event to another, pitching their start-up ideas in front of business executives. In the start-up world, collective forms of organization and action have no place.

So, in an era where ideologies seem to matter less and less and the economy shows no signs of recovery, start-up entrepreneurial success stories serve as tangible examples of how change can come only through individual exertion. But

what kind of change can be anticipated? Are there any robust alternatives to the current socio-economic regime? How can coworkers tackle all the ambivalences that their working lives entail? Even though it is hard to find easy answers to these questions, I hope this study has shed some light on them.

Over all, what I present in my doctoral thesis is a snapshot of the coworking phenomenon which is currently evolving. "The future lasts a long time", as Louis Althusser wrote, and is yet to be explored. Hopefully this thesis will serve as a point of reference for future empirical exploration of the ambivalences and potentialities of workplaces that are embedded in the market economy and operate in an atypical, flexible and creative way.

10 References

- Adkins, L. 2013. Professional identity and the time of individualization *In*: M. Banks, R. Gill and S. Taylor, eds. *Theorizing Cultural Work*. New York: Routledge, pp.149–160.
- Adkins, L. 2005. The new economy, property and personhood. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **22**(1), pp.111–130.
- Agee, J. 2009. Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. **22**(4), pp.431–447.
- Alacovska, A. 2018. Informal creative labour practices: A relational work perspective. *Human Relations*., pp.1–28.
- Alacovska, A. 2019. ‘Keep hoping, keep going’: Towards a hopeful sociology of creative work. *The Sociological Review*. **67**(5), pp.1118–1136.
- Alacovska, A. and Gill, R. 2019. De-westernizing creative labour studies: The informality of creative work from an ex-centric perspective. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. **22**(2), pp.195–212.
- Alexandri, G. 2011. The Breeder Feeder: Tracing Gentrification in Athens City *In*: Amsterdam.
- Alvesson, M. and Sandberg, J. 2013. *Constructing research questions: doing interesting research*. London: Sage.
- Alvord, S.H., Brown, L.D. and Letts, C.W. 2004. Social entrepreneurship and societal transformation: An exploratory study. *Appl. Behav.Sci*. **40**(3), pp.260–282.
- Amin, A. and Roberts, J. 2008. Knowing in action: Beyond communities of practice. *Research Policy*. **37**(37), pp.353–369.
- Anon 2016a. Coworking Manifesto (global - for the world). *Wiki.coworking*. [Online]. [Accessed 8 December 2017]. Available from: [http://wiki.coworking.com/w/page/35382594/Coworking%20Manifesto%20\(global%20-%20for%20the%20world\)](http://wiki.coworking.com/w/page/35382594/Coworking%20Manifesto%20(global%20-%20for%20the%20world)).
- Anon 2013. Greeks have lost a third of their disposable income. *Reuters*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 October 2020]. Available from: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-greece-incomes/greeks-have-lost-a-third-of-their-disposable-income-idUKBRE93I0HL20130419>.
- Anon 2016b. *Mapping the cultural and creative industries in Greece*. Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports - Executive Unit-Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework 2014 - 2020.
- Anon 2014. The Greek Startup Manifesto. Available from: <http://www.startupmanifesto.gr>.

- Anon 2019. Unemployment statistics. *Eurostat Statics Explained*. [Online]. [Accessed 19 October 2019]. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.
- Anon 2018. *Unlocking the potential of startups in Europe: European Entrepreneurship in Action* [Online]. European Commission. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/unlocking-potential-startups-europe-european-entrepreneurship-action>.
- Aranitou, V. 2014. The collapse of the middle class in Greece during the era of the Memoranda (2009-2014) *In*: Madrid, Spain.
- Arvidsson, A. 2014. Public brands and the entrepreneurial ethics. *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. **14**(1), pp.119–124.
- Arvidsson, A. 2010. The ethical economy: new forms of value in the information society? *Organization*. **17**(5), pp.637–644.
- Arvidsson, A. 2008. The Ethical Economy of Customer Coproduction. *Journal of Macromarketing*. **28**(4), pp.326–338.
- Arvidsson, A. and Peitersen, N. 2013. *The Ethical Economy: Rebuilding Value After The Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Avdikos, V. and Kalogeresis, A. 2016. Socio-economic profile and working conditions of freelancers in co-working spaces and work collectives: evidence from the design sector in Greece. *Area*. **49**(1), pp.1–8.
- Avdikos, V., Kalogeresis, A., Demetriadis, C. and Penlides, K. 2015. *Design in Greece: Supply, demand and working conditions*. Athens: CS.
- Avdikos, V., Michailidou, M., Klimis, G.-M., Gaitanidis, L., Nikolopoulos, P., Drakakis, P. and Kostopoulou, E. 2016. *Mapping the Cultural and Creative Industries in Greece* [Online]. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports - Executive Unit-Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework 2014 - 2020. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/33655130/Mapping_the_Creative_and_Cultural_Industries_in_Greece_2017_.
- Bain, A. and McLean, H. 2013. The artistic precariat. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. **6**, pp.93–111.
- Bandinelli, C. 2017. *Social Entrepreneurship: Sociality, Ethics and Politics*. London: Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London.
- Bandinelli, C. and Arvidsson, A. 2012. Brand Yourself a Changemaker! *Journal of Macromarketing*. **33**(1), pp.67–71.
- Bandinelli, C. and Gandini, A. 2019. Hubs vs Networks in the Creative Economy: Towards a ‘Collaborative Individualism’ *In*: R. Gill and T. Virani, eds.

Creative Hubs in Question. Dynamics of Virtual Work. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

- Banks, M. 2010. Autonomy Guaranteed? Cultural Work and the Art-Commerce Relation'. *Journal for Cultural Research*. **14**(3), pp.251–269.
- Banks, M. 2014. 'Being in the Zone' of Cultural Work. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*. **6**, pp.241–262.
- Banks, M. 2017a. *Creative justice: cultural industries, work and inequality*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Banks, M. 2017b. *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality*. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Banks, M. 2006. Moral Economy and Cultural Work. *Sociology*. **40**(3), pp.455–472.
- Banks, M. 2007. *The politics of cultural work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Banks, M., Gill, R. and Taylor, S. 2013. *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Creative industries*. London: Routledge.
- Banks, M. and Hesmondhalgh, D. 2009. Looking for work in creative industries policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **15**(4), pp.415–430.
- Banks, M., Lovatt, A., O'Connor, J. and Raffo, C. 2000. Risk and trust in the cultural industries. *Geoforum*. **31**, pp.453–464.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Beck, U. 2000. *The Brave New World of Work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beltran, G.J. and Miguel, P. 2014. Doing culture, doing business: A new entrepreneurial spirit in the Argentine creative industries. *Journal of Cultural Studies*. **17**(1), pp.39–54.
- Bessant, J., Farthing, R. and Watts, R. 2018. *The precarious generation: a political economy of young people*. London: Routledge.
- Bilandzic, M. and Foth, M. 2013. Libraries as coworking spaces: understanding user motivations and perceived barriers to social learning. *Libr hi Tech*. **31**, pp.254–273.
- Blackburn, R. and Kovalainen, A. 2008. Researching small firms and entrepreneurship: Past, present and future. *International Journal of Management Reviews*. **11**(2), pp.127–148.

- Blair, H. 2003. Winning and Losing in Flexible Labour Markets: The Formation and Operation of Networks of Interdependence in the UK Film Industry. *Sociology*. **37**(4), pp.677–694.
- Blair, H., Culkin, N. and Randle, K. 2003. From London to Los Angeles: a comparison of local labour market processes in the US and UK film industries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. **14**(4), pp.619–633.
- Blair, H. and Rainnie, Al. 2000. Flexible films? *Media, Culture and Society*. **22**(187–204).
- Bodrozic, Z. and Adler, P.S. 2018. The evolution of management models: A neo - Schumpeterian theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. **63**(1), pp.85–129.
- Bogenhold, D. and Klinglmar, A. 2016. Independent work, modern organizations and entrepreneurial labor: Diversity and hybridity of freelancers and self-employment. *Journal of Management and Organization*. **22**(6), pp.843–858.
- Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. 2005. *The new spirit of capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Bolton, S.C. and Laaser, K. 2013. Work, employment and society through the lens of moral economy. *Work, Employment and Society*. **27**(3), pp.508–525.
- Bornstein D. 2004. *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* [Online]. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available from: <http://davidbornstein.wordpress.com/books/>.
- Botsman, R. and Rogers, R. 2011. *What's mine is yours: the rise of collaborative consumption*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Bouncken, R.B., Laudien M., S.M., Fredrich, V. and Gormar, L. 2018. Coopetition in coworking-spaces: value creation and appropriation tensions in an entrepreneurial space. *Rev Manag Sci*. **12**, pp.385–410.
- Bouncken, R.B. and Reuschl, A.J. 2018. Coworking-spaces: how a phenomenon of the sharing economy builds a novel trend for the workplace and for entrepreneurship. *Rev Manag Sci*. **12**, pp.317–334.
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*.
- Brewer, J.D. 2000. *Ethnography*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Brinks, V. and Schmidt, S. 2015. Global knowledge communities in temporary space *In*: Sheffield.

- Britzman, D. 2000. 'The Question of Belief': Writing Poststructural Ethnography
In: E. A. St. Pierre and Pillow, eds. Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructuralist Theory and Methods in Education. New York: Routledge, pp.27–40.
- Bröckling, U. 2015. *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject.* London: Sage.
- Brown, J. 2017. Curating the 'Third Place'? Coworking and the mediation of creativity. *Geoforum.* **82**, pp.112–126.
- Bruni, A., Gherardi, S. and Poggio, B. 2004. Entrepreneur- mentality, gender and the study of women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Organizational Change Management.* **17**(3), pp.256–268.
- Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods* Fourth edition. New York: Oxford.
- Butcher, T. 2016. Co-working communities: Sustainability citizenship at work *In: Sustainability Citizenship in Cities: Theory and practice.* Advances in Urban Sustainability. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.93–103.
- Butler, N. 2018. No funny business: Precarious work and emotional labour in stand-up comedy. *Human Relations.*, pp.1–21.
- Byrne, B. 2012. Qualitative Interviewing *In: Researching Society and Culture.* London: Sage.
- Caffentzis, G. 1998. The end of work or the renaissance of slavery? A critique of Rifkin and Negri.
- Capdevila, I. 2015. Co-Working spaces and the localised dynamics of innovation in Barcelona. *International Journal of Innovation Management.* **19**(3), 1.
- Capdevila, I. 2014. Different inter - organizational collaboration approaches in coworking spaces in Barcelona.
- Capdevila, I. 2013. Knowledge Dynamics in Localized Communities: Coworking Spaces as Microclusters.
- Cappelli, P. and Keller, J.R. 2013. Classifying work in the new economy. *The Academy of Management Review.* **38**(4), pp.1–22.
- Castells, M. 2000. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* 2nd ed. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Chambers, M. and Vejle, Knud E.S. 2011. *Incubators for Creative Entrepreneurs.* INTERREG IVC.
- Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

- Chatzidakis, A. 2014. Athens as a Failed City for Consumption (In a World that Evaluates Everyone and Every Place by their Commodity Value) *In: J. K. Brekke, D. Dalakoglou, C. Filippidis and A. Vradis, eds. Crisis-Scapes: Athens and Beyond. CRISIS-SCAPE.NET, pp.33–41.*
- Chell, E., Spence J., L., Perrini, F. and Harris, J.D. 2016. Social Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics: Does Social Equal Ethical? *Journal for Business Ethics.* (133), pp.619–625.
- Christopherson, S. 2009. Working in the Creative Economy: Risk, Adaptation, and the Persistence of Exclusionary Networks *In: A. McKinlay and C. Smith, eds. Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.72–90.
- Christopherson, S. and Storper, M. 1989. The Effects of Flexible Specialization on Industrial Politics and the Labor Market: The Motion Picture Industry. *ILR Review.* **42**(3), pp.331–347.
- Coleman, G.E. 2013. *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Commission European 2010. *Green Paper: Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries.* Brussels: European Commission.
- Cope, J. 2011. Entrepreneurial learning from failure: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Business Venturing.* **26**, pp.604–623.
- Cremin, C.S. 2003. Self-starters, can-doers and mobile phoneys: situations vacant columns and the personality culture in employment. *The Editorial Board of The Sociological Review 2003.*
- Cunliffe, A.L. 2014. *A vert short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about management* Second Edition. Sage Publications.
- Cunningham, S. 2004. The creative industries after cultural policy: A genealogy and some possible preferred futures. *International Journal of Cultural Studies.* **7**(1), pp.105–115.
- Daskalaki, M. 2014. Mobility in urban social events: Towards organizational transvergence. *Culture and Organization.* **20**(3), pp.215–231.
- Daub, A. 2018. The Undertakers of Silicon Valley. *Logicmag.* **5.**
- Davis, H. and Scase, R. 2000. *Managing Creativity: The Dynamics of Work and Organization.* Open University Press.
- DCMS 2001. *Creative Industries Mapping Document.* London: Department for Culture Media and Sport.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. 2011. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* 4th ed. London: Sage.

- Deuze, M. 2007. *Media Work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Deuze, M. and Lewis, N. 2014. Professional identity and media work *In*: M. Banks, R. Gill and S. Taylor, eds. *Theorizing cultural work*. London: Routledge, pp.161–174.
- Dewalt M., K. and Dewalt, B.R. 2010. *Participant Observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Altamira Press.
- Dey, P. and Steyaert, C. 2016. Rethinking the Space of Ethics in Social Entrepreneurship: Power, Subjectivity, and Practices of Freedom. *Journal for Business Ethics*. (133), pp.627–641.
- Di Roma, A., Minenna, V. and Scarcelli, A. 2017. Fab Labs. New hubs for socialization and innovation. *The Design Journal*. **20**(sup1).
- Dovey, J., Pratt, A.C., Moreton, S., Virani, T., Merkel, J. and Lansdowne, J. 2016. *Creative Hubs: Understanding the new economy*. London: City University of London.
- Drucker, P. 1999. *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Drucker, P. 1970. *Technology, Management and Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Duffy, B.E. 2016. The romance of work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. **19**(4), pp.441–457.
- Eikhof, D.R. and Haunschild, A. 2006. Lifestyle Meets Market: Bohemian Entrepreneurs in Creative Industries. *Creativity and Innovation*. **15**(3), pp.234–241.
- Eikhof, D.R. and Warhurst, C. 2013. The promised land? Why social inequalities are systemic in the creative industries. *Employee Relations*. **35**(5), pp.495–508.
- Elwood, S.A. and Deborah, M.G. n.d. ““Placing”” interviews : Locations and Scale of Power in Qualitative Research. *The Professional Geographer*. **52:4**, pp.649–657.
- Endeavour Greece 2015. *Δημιουργώντας θέσεις εργασίας για τους νέους* [Online]. Available from: http://endeavor.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/END_GR_F.pdf.
- Esser, J. and Hirsch, J. 1989. The crisis of fordism and the dimensions of a ‘postfordist’ regional and urban structure. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. **13**(3).
- Evans, G. 2009. Creative cities, creative spaces and urban policy. *Urban Studies*. **46**.

- Farrugia, D. 2019. The formation of young workers: The cultivation of the self as a subject of value to the contemporary labour. *Current Sociology*. **67**(1), pp.47–63.
- Farrugia, D. 2013a. The reflexive subject: Towards a theory of reflexivity as practical intelligibility. *Current Sociology*. **6**(13), pp.283–300.
- Farrugia, D. 2013b. Young people and structural inequality: Beyond the middle ground. . **16**(5), pp.679–693.
- Federici, S. 2006. *Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint*.
- Fisher, E. 2010. *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Age: The Spirits of Networks*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fisher, E. 2008. The classless workplace: The digerati and the new spirit of technocapitalism. *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society*. **11**, pp.181–198.
- Florida, R. 2002. *Rise Of the Creative Class Revisited: 10th Anniversary Edition — Revised and Expanded*. Basic Books.
- Florida, R. 2017. *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class-and What We Can Do About It*. Philadelphia: Basic Books.
- Foertsch, C. 2011. The coworker's profile. [Accessed 22 April 2019]. Available from: <http://www.deskmag.com/en/the-coworkers-globalcoworking-survey-168>.
- Forkert, K. 2013. *Artistic Lives: A Study of Creativity in Two European Cities*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Foucault, M. 1991. Governmentality *In*: G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. United States of America: The University of Chicago Press, pp.87–104.
- Foucault, M. 1984. On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress *In*: P. Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader*. Penguin London, pp.340–372.
- Fraser, J.A. 2001. *White-collar Sweatshop: the Deterioration of Work and Its Rewards in Corporate America*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Gandini, A. 2016a. Digital work: Self - branding and social capital in the freelance knowledge economy. *Marketing Theory*. **16**(1), pp.123–141.
- Gandini, A. 2016b. *The Reputation Economy: Understanding Knowledge Work in Digital Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gandini, A. 2015. The rise of coworking spaces: A literature review. *ephemera*. **15**(1), pp.193–205.

- Garcia-Lorenzo, L., Sell, L. and Donnelly, P. 2014. 'I just want a job: The untold stories of entrepreneurship' In: M. Izak, L. Hitchen and Anderson, eds. *Untold Stories in Organisations*. Taylor and Francis, pp.143–167.
- Garett, L., Spreitzer M., G. and Peter A., B. 2017. Co-constructing a Sense of Community at Work: The Emergence of Community in Coworking spaces. *Organization Studies*. **38**(6), pp.821–842.
- Garnham, N. 2005. From cultural industries to creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **11**(1), pp.15–29.
- du Gay, P. 2004. Against 'Enterprise' (but not against 'enterprise', for that would make no sense). *Organization*. **11**(1), pp.37–57.
- du Gay, P. 1996. *Consumption and Identity At Work*. London: Sage Publications.
- Gerdenitsch, C., Scheel, T.E., Andorfer, J. and Korunka, C. 2016. Coworking spaces: a source of social support for independent professionals. *Front. Psychol.* **7**(581).
- Gialis, S. and Tsampra, M. n.d. The Changing Geography of Atypical Labour in Greece Under Flexicurity and Recession.
- Gialis, S. and Tsampra, M. 2015. The diverse regional patterns of atypical employment in Greece: Production restructuring, re/deregulation and flexicurity under crisis. *Geoforum*. (62), pp.175–187.
- Giddens, A. 1991. Tribulations of the self In: *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity, pp.181–208.
- Gill, R. 2002. Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender In Project-Based New Media Work In Europe. *Information, Communication, and Society*. **5**(1), pp.70–89.
- Gill, R. 2011. Life is a pitch: Managing the self in new media work In: M. Deuze, ed. *Managing Media Work*. London: Sage, pp.249–262.
- Gill, R. 2007a. Postfeminist media culture:elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. **10**(2), pp.147–166.
- Gill, R. 2007b. *Technobohemians or the new Cybertariat? New media work in Amsterdam a decade after the Web*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Gill, R. 2007c. *Thechnobohemians or the new Cybertariat? New media work in Amsterdam a decade after the Web*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Gill, R. 2014. Unspeakable Inequalities: Post Feminism, Entrepreneurial Subjectivity, and the Repudiation of Sexism among Cultural Workers. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*. **21**(4), pp.509–528.

- Gill, R., Banks, M. and Taylor, S. 2013. *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, continuity and change in the cultural and creative industries*. London: Routledge.
- Gill, R., K.Kelan, E. and Scharff, C. 2017. A postfeminist Sensibility at Work. *Gender, Work and Organization*.
- Gill, R. and Pratt, A.C. 2008. 'In the social factory? Immaterial Labour, precariousness and cultural work. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **25**(7–8), pp.1–30.
- Giotopoulos, I., Kontolaimou, A. and Tsakanikas, A. 2017. Drives of high - quality entrepreneurship: what changes did the crisis bring about? *Small Business Economics*. **48**(4), pp.913–930.
- Giwa, A. 2015. Insider/Outsider Issues for Development Researchers from the Global South. *Geography Compass*. **1–11**.
- Glaser G., B. and Strauss, A.L. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK): Aldine Transaction.
- Goggin, J. 2011. Playbour, farming and leisure. *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. **4**, pp.357–368.
- Gordon, C. 1987. The soul of the citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on rationality and government *In: S. Lash and S. Whimster, eds. Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity*. London: Allen & Unwin, pp.293–316.
- Gorman, E. and Kmec, J.A. 2007. We (have to) try harder: Gender and Required Work Effect in Britain and the United States. *Gender & Society*. **21**(6), pp.828–856.
- Gregg, M. 2015. Hack for good: Speculative Labour, app development and the burden of austerity. *The Fibreculture Journal*. (25), pp.183–201.
- Gregg, M. 2009. Learning to (love) labour: production cultures and the affective turn. *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies*. **6**(2), pp.209–214.
- Gregg, M. 2010. On Friday night drinks: workplace affects in the age of the cubicle *In: M. Gregg and G. Seigworth, eds. The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp.250–268.
- Gregg, M. 2011. *Work's Intimacy*. USA: Polity Press.
- Grey, C. 1994. Career as a project of the self and labour process discipline. *Sociology*. **28**(2), pp.479–497.
- Grugulis, I. and Stoyanova, D. 2002. Social capital and networks in film and TV: Jobs for the boys? *Organization Studies*. **33**(10), pp.1311–1331.

- Grugulis, I. and Stoyanova, D. 2011. The missing middle: communities of practice in a freelance labour market. *Work, Employment and Society*. **25**(2), pp.342–351.
- Halabisky, D. 2017. *Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship*. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Hammersley, M. 2011. *Methodology: Who needs it?* Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hammersley, M. 1992. *What's wrong with ethnography? Methodological explorations*. Routledge Revivals.
- Hann, C. 2011. The importance of Office Aesthetics. *The Entrepreneur*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 November 2018]. Available from: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/220238>.
- Hardt, M. and Negri, A. 2004. *Multitude*. New York: Penguin.
- Harvey, D. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. 1989a. From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in late Capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler Series B Human Geography*. **71**(1), pp.3–17.
- Harvey, D. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. 1989b. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Haunschild, A. and Eikhof, D.R. 2009. Bringing Creativity to Market: Actors as Self-Employed Employees In: A. McKinlay and C. Smith, eds. *Creative Labour: Working in the creative industries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.156–173.
- Hearn, A. 2008. 'Meat, Mask, Burden. Probing the Contours of the Branded Self. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. **8**(2), pp.197–217.
- Hearn, A. 2010. Structuring Feeling: Web 2.0, Online Ranking and Rating, and the Digital 'Reputation Economy". *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. **10**(3/4), pp.421–438.
- Heery, E. and Noon, M. 2017. Decent Work. *A Dictionary of Human Resource Management*.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. 2017. Capitalism and the media: moral economy, well-being and capabilities. *Media, Culture and Society*. **39**(2), pp.202–218.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. 2007. Creative Labour as a Basis for a Critique of Creative Industries Policy In: G. Lovink and N. Rossiter, eds. *My Creativity*

Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp.61–69.

- Hesmondhalgh, D. 2010. Normativity and Social Justice in the Analysis of Creative Labour. *Journal for Cultural Research*. **14**(3), pp.231–249.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. 2011. *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Baker, S. 2008. Creative Work and Emotional Labour in the Television Industry. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **25**(97).
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Zoellner, A. 2013. Is Media Work Good Work? A Case Study of Television Documentary In: A. Valdivia, ed. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- van Heur, B. 2010. *Creative Networks and the City: Towards a Cultural Political Economy of Aesthetic Production*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Higgs, P., Cunningham, S. and Bakhsi 2008. *Beyond the creative industries: Mapping the creative economy in the United Kingdom*. NESTA.
- Hochschild, A.R. 1979. Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure. *American Journal of Sociology*. **85**(3), pp.551–575.
- Hochschild, A.R. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* 3rd ed. Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press.
- Hollender, J. 2004. What matters most: Corporate Values and Social Responsibility. *California Management Review*. **46**(4), pp.111–119.
- Holts, K. 2013. Towards a taxonomy of virtual work In: U. Huws, ed. *Working online, living offline: labour in the Internet Age*. Work organisation labour & globalisation. London: Analytica Publications Ltd.
- Huws, U. 2010. Expression and expropriation: The dialectics of autonomy and control in creative labour. *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. **10**(3/4), pp.504–521.
- Huws, U. 2014. *Labour in the circuits of global markets: theories and realities*. London: Analytica Publications Ltd.
- Huws, U. 2012. *Technical Annex to Memorandum of Understanding for EU COST Action on the Dynamics of Virtual Work*. Brussels: EU Co-operation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research.
- Huws, U. 2013. Working online, living offline: labour in the Internet Age In: U. Huws, ed. *Working online, living offline: labour in the Internet Age*. Work organisation labour & globalisation. Analytica Publications Ltd, p.1-11.

- Hytti, U. and O’Gorman, C. 2004. What is ‘enterprise education’? An analysis of the objectives and methods of enterprise education programmes in four European countries. *Education & Training*. **46**(1), pp.11–23.
- Illouz, E. 2007. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Jakonen, M., Kivinen, N., Salovaara, P. and Hirkman, P. 2017. Towards an Economy of Encounters? A critical study of affectual assemblages in coworking. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*. **33**, pp.235–242.
- Jameson, F. 1991. *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jenkins, A.S., Wiklund, J. and Brundin, E. 2014. Individual responses to firm failure: Appraisals, grief, and the influence of prior failure experience. *Journal of Business Venturing*. **29**, pp.17–33.
- Justo, R., DeTienne, D. and Sieger, P. 2015. Failure or voluntary exit? Reassessing the female underperformance hypothesis. *Journal of Business Venturing*. **30**, pp.775–792.
- Karachalis, N. 2011. The regeneration of inner city neighbourhoods and the role of cultural industries: The case study of Psiri in Athens. In: M. Cremaschi and Eckhard, eds. *Changing places, urbanity, citizenship and ideology in the new European neighbourhoods*. Amsterdam: Techne Press, pp.142–159.
- Karamessini, M. 2015. The Greek Social Model: Towards a Deregulated Labour Market and Residual Social Protection In: D. Vaughan - Whitehead, ed. *The European Social Model in Crisis. Is Europe Losing its Soul?* Geneva, Switzerland/ Cheltenham: ILO/ Edward Elgar.
- Katz, L. and Krueger, A. 2017. The role of unemployment in the rise in alternative work arrangements. *American Economic Review*. **107**(5), pp.388–392.
- Kautonen, T., Down, S., Welter, F., Vainio, P., Althoff, K., Kantola, J. and Kolb, S. 2010. ‘Involuntary Self-Employment’ As A Public Policy Issue: A Cross-Country EU Comparison. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*. **16**(2), pp.112–129.
- Kavoulakos, K.I. and Gritzas, G. 2015. *Alternative economic and political spaces: Social movements and spatial development* [Online]. Σύνδεσμος Ακαδημαϊκών Βιβλιοθηκών. [Accessed 3 October 2020]. Available from: <https://repository.kallipos.gr/bitstream/11419/6131/1/Enallaktikoi%20oikonomikoi%20kai%20politikoi%20horoi%20PDF.pdf>.
- Kelly, P. 2013. *The Self as Enterprise: Foucault and the Spirit of 21st Century Capitalism*. Ashgate/Gower: Farnham.

- Kennedy, H. 2012. *Net Work: Ethics and Values in Web Design*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kiessling, T. 2004. Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Austrian School of Economics to Schumpeter to Drucker to Now. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*. **9**(1), pp.80–91.
- Kinisi, M. 2014. *A Fiasco@Megaro, Athens 20 Feb 2014* [Online]. Athens Megaron. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYva1Q-u4bk>.
- Knight, F. 1921. *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*. New York: Hart, Schaffner & Marx.
- Kucklich, J. 2005. Precarious playbour: Modders and the digital games industry. *Fibreculture*. (5).
- Landry, C. and Bianchini, F. 1995. *The creative city*. London: DEMOS.
- Lange, B. 2011. Re-scaling governance in Berlin's creative economy. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*. **3**, pp.187–208.
- Lapavitsas, C. 2017. The Future of Greece: An interview with Costas Lapavitsas. [Accessed 6 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/08/greece-syriza-tsipris-eu-eurozone-emu-greek-debt-crisis>.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lazzarato, M. 1992. Immaterial Labor.
- Lazzarato, M. 2007. Immaterial Labour *In*: M. Hardt and P. Virno, eds. *Radical Thought in Italy: A potential politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.133–147.
- Lazzarato, M. 2009. Neoliberalism in Action: Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **26**(106).
- Leadbeater, C. and Oakley, K. 1999. *The Independents Britain's new cultural entrepreneurs*. London: Demos.
- Leforestier, A. 2009. *The Co-Working Space concept*.
- Leighton, P. 2015. *Future Working: The Rise of Europe's Independent Professionals (iPros)*.
- Lovink, G. and Rossiter, N. 2007. *My Creativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries* (G. Lovink & N. Rossiter, eds.). Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

- Lund, A. and Zukerfeld, M. 2020. *Corporate Capitalism's Use of Openness*, Springer International Publishing.
- Lynn, J. 2018. Finding positivity in failure: Silicon Valley leaders talk about past setbacks. [Accessed 14 February 2019]. Available from: <https://scet.berkeley.edu/silicon-valley-failures/>.
- Mandl, C., Berger, E.S.C. and Kuckertz, A. 2016. Do you plead guilty? Exploring entrepreneurs' sensemaking-behavior link after business failure. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*. **5**, pp.9–13.
- Manimala, M. 1999. *Entrepreneurial Policies and Strategies: the Innovator's Choice*. London: SAGE.
- Mariotti, I., Pacchi, C. and Di Vita, S. 2017. Co - working Spaces in Milan: Location Patterns and Urban Effects. *Journal of Urban Technology*. **24**(3), pp.47–66.
- Markusen, A., Gilmore, S., Johnson, A., Levi, T. and Martinez, A. 2006. *Crossover: How Artists build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work*. Minnesota: The James Irvine Foundation, and Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC).
- Marlow, S. and McAdam, M. 2012. Analyzing the influence of Gender Upon High-Technology Venturing Within the Context of Business Incubation. *Entrepreneurship, Theory & Practice*. **36**(4), pp.655–676.
- Marlow, S. and McAdam, M. 2013. Gender and entrepreneurship: Advancing debate and challenging myths; exploring the mystery of the under-performing female entrepreneur. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*. **19**(1), pp.114–124.
- McDonald, S. 2005. Studying actions in context: a qualitative shadowing method for organizational research. *Qualitative Research*. **5**(4), pp.455–473.
- McDowell, L. 2004. Work, workfare, work/life balance. *Progress in Human Geography*. **28**(2), pp.145–163.
- McGrath, R.G. 1999. Falling forward: Real options reasoning and entrepreneurial failure. *Academy of Management Review*. **24**(1), pp.13–30.
- McGuigan, J. 2009. *Cool Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- McGuigan, J. 2010. Creative labour, cultural work and individualisation. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **16**(3), pp.323–335.
- McGuinan, J. 2010. Creative labour, cultural work and individualisation. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **16**(3), pp.323–335.
- McKinlay, A. and Smith (eds.). 2009. *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- McKinney, J.C. 1966. *Constructive Typology and Social Theory*. New York: Meredith Publishing Company.
- McNay, L. 2009. Self as enterprise: Dilemmas of control and resistance in Foucault's The Birth of the Biopolitics. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **26**(6), pp.55–77.
- McRobbie, A. 2016a. *Be creative*. Cambridge: Polity.
- McRobbie, A. 2015. *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McRobbie, A. 1998. *British fashion design: rag trade or image industry?* London: Routledge.
- McRobbie, A. 2002a. Clubs to Companies. *Cultural Studies*. **16**(4), pp.517–531.
- McRobbie, A. 2002b. Clubs to Companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies*. **16**(4), pp.516–531.
- McRobbie, A. 2006. Creative London-Creative Berlin: notes on making a living in the new cultural economy.
- McRobbie, A. 2002c. Fashion culture: creative work, female individualization. *Feminist Review*. **71**.
- McRobbie, A. 2002d. From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at work in the new cultural economy? *In*: P. du Gay and M. Pryke, eds. *Cultural Economy*. London: Sage, pp.97–114.
- McRobbie, A. 2011. Re-Thinking Creative Economy as Radical Social Enterprise. *Variant*. **41**, pp.32–33.
- McRobbie, A. 2016b. Towards a Sociology of Fashion Micro-Enterprises: Methods for Creative Economy Research. *Sociology*. **50**(5), pp.934–948.
- Menger, P.-M. 2006. Artistic labor markets: Contingent work, excess supply and occupational risk management. *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*. **1**, pp.765–811.
- Merkel, J. 2015. Coworking in the city. *ephemera*. **15**(1), pp.121–139.
- Merkel, J. 2019a. Curating Strangers *In*: R. Gill, A. C. Pratt and T. Virani, eds. *Creative Hubs in Question*. Dynamics of Virtual Work. Palgrave Macmillan, pp.51–68.
- Merkel, J. 2019b. 'Freelance isn't free.' Co-working as a critical urban practice to cope with informality in creative labour markets. *Urban Studies*. **56**(3), pp.526–547.

- Merriam, S. 1998. *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Michailidou, M. and Kostala, E. 2016. Young entrepreneurs and creative collectives: articulations of new media work in conditions of constant crisis In: J. Webster and K. Randle, eds. *Virtual Workers and the Global Labour Market*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Miller, T. 2010. Culture + Labour= Precariatat. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. **7**(1), pp.96–99.
- Morgan, G., Wood, J. and Nelligan, P. 2013. Beyond the vocational fragments: Creative work, precarious labour and the idea of ‘Flexploitation’. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*. **24**(3), pp.397–415.
- Morini, C. 2007. The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism. *Feminist Review*. **87**, pp.40–59.
- Moriset, B. 2014. Building new places of the creative economy. The rise of coworking spaces In: Utrecht (The Netherlands). Available from: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00914075/document>.
- Mortara, L. and Gontran Parisot, N. 2016. Through entrepreneurs’ eyes: the Fab - spaces constellation. *International Journal of Production Research*. **54**(23), pp.7158–7180.
- Mullings, B. 1999. Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross - cultural setting. *Geoforum*. **30**, pp.337–350.
- Naudin, A. 2018. *Cultural Entrepreneurship: The cultural worker’s experience of entrepreneurship*. London: Routledge.
- Nazneen, S. and Sultan, M. 2014. Positionality and transformative knowledge in conducting ‘feminist’ research on empowerment in Bangladesh. *Women’s Studies International Forum*. **45**, pp.63–71.
- Neff, G. 2012. *Venture Labour: Work and the Burden of Risk in Innovative Industries*. United States: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Neff, G., Wissinger, E. and Zukin, S. 2006. Entrepreneurial Labor among Cultural Producers: ‘Cool’ Jobs in ‘Hot’ Industries. *Social Semiotics*. **15**(3), pp.307–334.
- Neilson, B. and Cote, M. 2014. Introduction: Are We All Cultural Workers Now? *Journal of Cultural Economy*. **7**(1).
- Neilson, B. and Rossiter, N. 2005. From precarity to precariousness and back again: Labour, life and unstable networks. *Fibreculture* **5**.
- Neilson, B. and Rossiter, N. 2008. Precarity as a Political Concept, or Fordism as Exception. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **25**(51).

- Nightingale, P. and Coad, A. 2013. Muppets and gazelles: political and methodological biases in entrepreneurship. *Industrial and Corporate Change*. **23**(1), pp.113–143.
- Noy, C. 2008. Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. **11**(4), pp.327–344.
- Oakley, K. 2016. Whose creative economy? Inequality and the need for international approaches. *Les enjeux de l'information et de la communication*.
- Oakley, K. and Leadbeater, C. 2005. Why cultural entrepreneurs matter *In: Creative Industries*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp.299–311.
- Oldenburg, R. 1989. *The Great Good Place*. New York: Paragon House.
- Oriola, T. and Haggerty, K.D. 2012. The ambivalent insider/outsider status of academic 'homecomers': observations on identity and field research in the Nigerian Delta. *Sociology*. **46**(3), pp.540–548.
- Papageorgiou, A. 2020. The emergence of desperate optimists: managing the start-up working life in times of crisis A. Afouxenidis & M. Tsampra, eds. *The Greek Review of Social Research*. (153).
- Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Petelczyc, C.A., Capezio, A., Wang, L., Restubog, S.L.D. and Aquino, K. 2018. Play at Work: An Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research. *Journal of Management*. **44**(1), pp.161–190.
- de Peuter, G. 2014a. Beyond the Model Worker: Surveying a Creative Precariat. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*. **6**, pp.263–284.
- de Peuter, G. 2014b. Confronting Precarity in the Warhol Economy. *Journal of Cultural Economy*. **7**(3), pp.31–47.
- de Peuter, G., Cohen S, N. and Saraco, F. 2017. The ambivalence of coworking: On the politics of an emerging work practice. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. **20**(6), pp.687–706.
- de Peuter, G. and Dyer-Witford, N. 2005. A playful multitude? Mobilizing and counter-mobilising immaterial game labour. *The Fibreculture Journal*. **5**.
- Pitts, F. 2013. 'A science to it': flexible time and flexible subjectivity in the digital workplace *In: Working online, living offline: labour in the Internet Age*. Work organisation labour & globalisation. London: Analytica Publications Ltd, pp.95–105.

- Pitts, F.H. 2016. Rhythms of Creativity and Power in Freelance Creative Work
In: J. Webster and K. Randle, eds. Virtual Workers And The Global Labour Market. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., pp.139–159.
- Plester, B. 2015. ‘Take it like a man!’: Performing hegemonic masculinity through organizational humour. *ephemera*. **15**(3), pp.537–559.
- Pongratz, H.J. and Voß, G.G. 2003. From employee to ‘entreplooyee’. Towards a ‘self-entrepreneurial’ work force? *Concepts and Transformation*. **8**(3), pp.239–254.
- Portaliou, E. 2016. Greece: A Country for Sale. *Jacobin*. [Online]. [Accessed 6 November 2019]. Available from:
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/09/greece-tsipras-memorandum-privatization-public-assets/>.
- Potts, J. and Cunningham, S. 2008. Four models of the creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **14**(3), pp.233–247.
- Pratt, A.C. 2012. A world turned upside down: the creative economy, cities and the new austerity *In: Smart, Creative, Sustainable, Inclusive: Territorial Development Strategies in the Age of Austerity*. London: Regional Studies Association.
- Pratt, A.C. 2008. Creative Cities: the cultural industries and the creative class. *Geografiska Annaler Series B Human Geography*. **90**(2), pp.107–117.
- Pratt, A.C. 2002. Hot Jobs in Cool Places. The Material Cultures of New Media Product Spaces: The Case of South of the Market, San Francisco. *Information, Communication, and Society*. **5**(1), pp.27–50.
- Qin, R. and Nembhard, D. 2015. Workforce agility in operations management. *Surveys in Operations Research and Management Science*. **20**(2), pp.55–69.
- Rae, D. 2014. Graduate entrepreneurship and career initiation in the ‘New Era’ economy. *Journal of General Management*. **40**(1), pp.79–95.
- Ranga, M. and Etzkowitz, H. 2010. Athena in the World of Techne: the Gender Dimension of Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*. **5**(1), pp.1–12.
- Reed, B. 2007. Co-working: The ultimate in teleworking flexibility. [Accessed 20 April 2019]. Available from:
<https://www.networkworld.com/article/2287504/co-working--the-ultimate-in-teleworking-flexibility.html>.
- Reimer, S. 2016. It’s just a very male industry: gender and work in UK design agencies. *Gender, Place & Culture*. **23**(7), pp.1033–1046.
- Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. (eds.). 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

- Rose, N. 1989. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge.
- Rose, N., O'Malley, P. and Valverde, M. 2006. Governmentality. *Ann. Rev. of Law Soc. Sci.* **2**, pp.83–104.
- Ross, A. 2009. *Nice Work If you Can Get It: Life and labor in Precarious Times*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Ross, A. 2007. Nice Work if You Can Get It: The Mercurial Career of Creative Industries Policy *In: My Creativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp.17–40.
- Ross, A. 2004. *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ross, A. 2000. The mental labor problem. *Social Text*. **18**(2), pp.1–31.
- Ross, A. 2008. The New Geography of Work: Power to the Precarious? *Theory, Culture and Society*. **25**(7–8), pp.31–49.
- Rossiter, N. 2006. *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers & Institute of Network Cultures.
- Sang, K.J., Dainty, A.R. and Ison, S.G. 2014. Gender in the UK architectural profession: (re)producing and challenging hegemonic masculinity. *Work, Employment and Society*. **28**(2), pp.247–264.
- Scheyvens, R. and Storey, D. 2014. *Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide* 2nd ed. (R. Scheyvens, ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Schmidt, E. and Rosenberg, J. 2014. *How Google works*. London: John Murray.
- Schmidt, S. and Brinks, V. 2017. Open creative labs: Spatial settings at the intersection of communities and organization. *Creativity and Innovation Management*. **26**(6), pp.60–76.
- Schneider, F. and Enste, D.H. 2013. *The Shadow Economy: An international survey* 2nd ed. Cambridge.
- Seelos, C.J. and Mair, C.J. 2005. Social Entrepreneurship: Creating new business models to serve the poor. *Bus. Horizons*. **48**(3), pp.241–246.
- Sennett, R. 1998. *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: WW Norton.
- Shepherd, D.A. 2003. Learning from Business Failure: Propositions of Grief Recovery for the Self-Employed. *The Academy of Management Review*. **28**(2), pp.318–328.
- Shih, J. 2004. Project Time in Silicon Valley. *Qualitative Sociology*. **27**(2), pp.223–245.

- Sloane, P. 2010. Failure - The Mother of Innovation. *Blogging Innovation*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 February 2019]. Available from: <http://www.business-strategy-innovation.com/2010/02/failure-mother-of-innovation.html>.
- Souliotis, N. 2009. Cultural strategies and urban regeneration in the historical centre of Athens: Local conditions and global trends *In: V. Kotzamanis, A. Kougoulos, I. Beriatos, D. Economou and G. Petrakos, eds. Proceedings of the 2nd Pan-Hellenic congress of regional planning and development, Department of Regional Planning and Development, University of Thessaly, Volos 24-27 September*. Volos: University of Thessaly Press, pp.665–674.
- Spinuzzi, C. 2012. Working Alone Together: Coworking as Emergent Collaborative Activity. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. **26**(4), pp.399–441.
- Spinuzzi, C., Bodrozic, Z., Scaratti, G. and Ivaldi, S. 2018. ‘Coworking is about community’ but what is ‘community’ in coworking? *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. (In Press).
- Standing, G. 2014. *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Stokes, A. 2017. Fashioning Gender: The Gendered Organization of Cultural Work. *Social Currents*. **4**(6), pp.518–534.
- Strangleman, T. 2007. The nostalgia for permanence at work? The end of work and its commentators. *The Sociological Review*. **55**(1).
- Swail, J. and Marlow, S. 2018. Embrace the masculine; attenuate the feminine - gender, identity work and entrepreneurial legitimation in the nascent context. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. **30**(1–2), pp.256–282.
- Terranova, T. 2000. Free Labor. Producing Culture For the Digital Economy. *Social Text*. **18**(2), pp.33–58.
- Thomas, G. 2013. *How to do your research project: a guide for students in education and applied social sciences* Second edition. Sage Publications.
- Thrift, N. 1999. Capitalism’s Cultural Turn *In: Culture and Economy After the Cultural Turn*. London: Sage Publications, pp.135–161.
- Tran Kim, S. 2017. GOOGLE: a reflection of culture, leader, and management. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*. **2**(10).
- Trinca, H. and Fox, C. 2004. *Better Than Sex: How a Whole Generation Got Hooked on Work*. Australia: Random House Australia.
- Trott, B. 2007. Immaterial Labour and World Order: An Evaluation of a Thesis. *ephemera*. **7**(1), pp.203–232.

- Ucbasaran, D., Westhead, P., Wright, M. and Flores, M. 2010. The nature of entrepreneurial experience, business failure and comparative optimism. *Journal of Business Venturing*. **25**, pp.541–555.
- Ursell, G. 2000. Television production: issues of exploitation, commodification and subjectivity in UK television labour markets. *Media, Culture and Society*. **22**, pp.805–825.
- Viasasha, S. 2017. The Coworking Movement Is All Grown Up And It's Actually Pretty Cool. *Spokephone*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 May 2018]. Available from: <https://blog.spokephone.com/the-coworking-movement-is-all-grown-up-and-its-actually-pretty-cool>.
- Vinodrai, T. 2013. Design in a downturn? Creative work, labour market dynamics and institutions in comparative perspective. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. **6**, pp.159–176.
- Vogel, D. 2007. *The Market for Virtue*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Vroey, M.D. 1984. A regulation approach interpretation of contemporary crisis. *Capital & Class*. **8**(2), pp.45–66.
- Ward, J. 2015. *Cultural Labour in the Context of Urban Regeneration: Artists' Work in Margate and Folkestone*. UK: University of Kent.
- Watson, D. 2019. Fordism: a review essay. *Labor History*. **60**(2), pp.144–159.
- Webb, J. 2004. Organizations, Self-identities and the New Economy. *Sociology*. **38**(4), pp.719–738.
- Webster, J. and Randle, K. 2016. Positioning Virtual Workers Within Space, Time, and Social Dynamics In: J. Webster and K. Randle, eds. *Virtual Workers and the Global Labour Market*. Dynamics of Virtual Work. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.3-.
- Weeks, K. 2011. *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wittel, A. 2001. Toward a network sociality. *Theory, Culture and Society*. **18**(6), pp.51–76.
- Woodman, D. and Wyn, J. 2015. *Youth and Generation: Rethinking Change and Inequality in the Lives of Young People*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Wreyfold, N. 2013. The Real Cost of Childcare: Motherhood and Flexible Creative Labour in the UK Film Industry. *Studies in the Maternal*. **5**(2), pp.1–22.
- Wyer-Egan, C., Muhr, S.L., Pfeiffer, A. and Svensson, P. 2014. The ethics of the brand. *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*. **14**(1), pp.1–12.

- Yin, R. 2009. *Case Study Research: design and methods* 4th edition. London: Sage.
- Zorba, M. 2009. Conceptualizing Greek cultural policy: the non-democratization of public culture. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. **15**(3), pp.245–259.
- Λαζαρέτου, Σ. 2014. Η έξυπνη οικονομία: “πολιτιστικές” και “δημιουργικές” βιομηχανίες στην Ελλάδα. Μπορούν να αποτελέσουν προοπτική εξόδου από την κρίση;