

Sustainable innovations in a new light

h_da

HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADT
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES



s:ne

SYSTEM INNOVATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Did attitudes towards coworking spaces change with the Covid-19 pandemic?

Helena Müller, Charis Stoica, Daniel Hanss

Background

- Coworking spaces in rural areas = office infrastructure shared by people from different professional backgrounds
→ potential to reduce commuter traffic and revive towns/villages (Hölzel & de Vries, 2021; Theis et al., 2021)
- Fear of infection and avoidance of commuting (by public transport) may change intentions to use coworking spaces
→ Covid-19 pandemic as window of opportunity? (Tomaz et al., 2021)

Methods

- Online survey as part of Darmstadt Citizens' Panel
- 2 measurement points: before pandemic (T1: February 2020, $n = 651$), during pandemic (T2: June 2020, $n = 730$)
- Questions on importance of workplace features, work situation during pandemic (T2 only), intention to use coworking spaces

Aim & Research question

Aim

- Preparing implementation of user-oriented coworking spaces in rural areas to reduce commuter traffic and revive towns/villages

Research question

- Did attitudes towards using coworking spaces in rural areas change with the Covid-19 pandemic?

Results: Attitudes towards working from home

| During the pandemic... | <i>n</i> | <i>min</i> | <i>max</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| finding work-life balance is... | 349 | 1 (= a lot more difficult) | 5 (= a lot easier) | 2.71 | 1.02 |
| My attitude towards homeoffice is... | 349 | 1 (= very negative) | 5 (= very positive) | 3.93 | 0.91 |

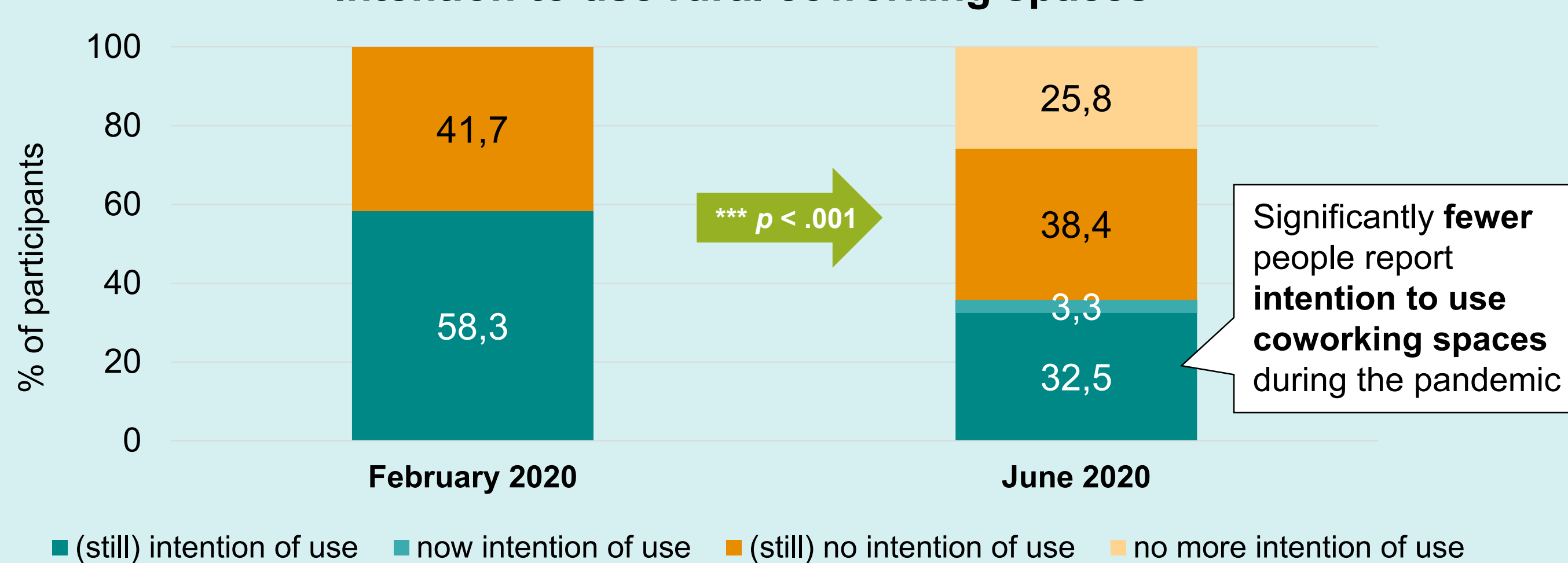
Note. Only asked at T2 (retrospective self-reports)

Results: Attitudes towards coworking

| Coworking implies... | <i>n</i> | T1 <i>M (SD)</i> | T2 <i>M (SD)</i> | <i>Diff.</i> | <i>d</i> |
|---|----------|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------|
| Less isolation through exchange with others | 49 | 3.02 (1.13) | 3.49 (1.08) | * | 0.43 |
| Difficult communication with colleagues | 45 | 3.11 (1.03) | 2.78 (0.80) | ** | 0.36 |
| Saving time for household and hobbies | 46 | 3.89 (1.08) | 4.13 (0.78) | n.s. | 0.26 |

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; n.s. = not significant; 1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely; only participants interested in coworking who took part at T1 & T2

Intention to use rural coworking spaces



Comparing „No intention at T1 and T2“ with „No intention at T2 but intention at T1“

People with children show significantly higher probability to no longer have intention of use ($b = 13,075$; $p < .01$)

Comparing „Intention at T1 and T2“ with „No intention at T2 but intention at T1“

Academics ($b = 0,114$; $p < .05$) and people with higher subjective danger from infection ($b = 0,547$; $p < .05$) show significantly higher probability to no longer have intention of use

Note. $n=132$; Cox & Snell=0.473; Nagelkerke=0.522

Note. $n=132$; Cox & Snell=0.473; Nagelkerke=0.522

Discussion

Summary

- Lower intentions to use coworking spaces during pandemic **but**: significantly less perceived problems for communication with colleagues & higher advantage through less isolation
- Working from home as strong competitor of coworking **but**: difficulties in finding work-life balance
- Saving time as consistently big advantage of coworking in rural spaces instead of commuting

Limitations

- Results from early stages of pandemic → follow-up?
- Sample not representative in terms of education, income level & nationality

Future directions

- Adjustments of coworking necessary (e.g., hygiene concepts)
- Stronger focus on advantages compared to working from home & possibility to avoid commuting
- Create targeted incentives for use of coworking spaces for academics & people with children (e.g., close to child care services)

References

Hölzel, M., & de Vries, W.T. (2021). Digitization as a driver for rural development – An indicative description of German coworking space users. *Land*, 10(326), 1-21.
Theis, A., Helferich, M., Schweikert, M., Eisen, C., Frommer, B., Führ, M., Meyer, H., Müller, H., & Hanss, D. (2021). *Gemeinschaftsbüros – Eine psychologische Analyse der Nutzungsentention und Ableitung von Gestaltungsempfehlungen*. Forschungsbericht des Darmstädter Instituts für Wirtschaftspsychologie der Hochschule Darmstadt.
Tomaz, E., Moriset, B., & Teller, J. (2021). *Rural coworking spaces in the Covid-19 era. A window of opportunity?* Retrieved from: HAL Id: halshs-03235464
<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-03235464> (24.09.2021)

Contact

Helena Müller, Ph.D.
Hochschule Darmstadt - University of Applied Sciences
Department of Social Sciences
Haardtring 100, 64295 Darmstadt
E-Mail: helena.mueller@h-da.de
Web: <https://buengerpanel.h-da.de>

Project partners

Institute for Housing and Environment (IWU)
Institute for Social-Ecological Research (ISOE)
Institute for Applied Ecology (Öko-Institut)
Schader Foundation
Software AG
e-hoch-3