



## Co-Working Space Concept in the Spatial and Urban Context: A Case Study of 'Kolektif House'

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### Abstract

The concept of 'Work' and 'Workplace' started to change in recent decades in parallel with developments in information and communication Technologies. New ways of working have been defined as flexible, mobile and multi-locational. Co-working spaces have emerged worldwide as a new type of workspace concept. These places offer a flexible and appropriate work environment with various usage options. The aim of the study is to define the characteristics and development of the co-working space concept and analyzing the urban and spatial context as well as design criteria, the spatial solution, material and furniture selection of the selected case. In this study the case of 'Kolektif House' a co-working space, in Levent district in İstanbul has been selected, as the location can

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be defined as the central commercial district of the city. The space is created by refunctioning a part of an old factory-building which is evaluated as a sustainable devolepment project. The data used in this study is based on architectural drawings, visual materials, interviews, observations, as well as a literature review. The study demonstrates that changing work habits and user needs created new types of working place and in the selected case the created value in urban and spatial context by re-functioning an existed building was found to be positive.

**Keywords:** Space, co-working space, interaction, sharing, flexibility, re-function.

## Mekansal ve Kentsel Bağlamda 'Ortak Çalışma Mekanı' Kavramı: Kolektif House Üzerinden Bir İnceleme

### Öz

“İş” ve “İş yeri” kavramı son yıllarda bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmelere paralel olarak değişmektedir. Yeni çalışma yöntemleri; esnek, mobil ve çok konumlu olarak tanımlanmıştır. Ortak çalışma alanları (Co-working space), dünya çapında yeni bir çalışma alanı konsepti olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Farklı kullanım biçimlerine sahip bu alanlar esnek ve uygun bir çalışma ortamı vaad etmektedir. Bu çalışmada; *Ortak Çalışma Alanı* kavramı tanımlanarak özellikleri ve gelişimi incelenmiş, seçilen örnek üzerinden kentsel ve mekansal bağlamda analiz edilerek, tasarım kriterleri, mekansal çözüm ve donatıları incelenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında İstanbul'un merkezi ticaret bölgesi olarak tanımlanabilecek Levent ilçesinde yer alan “Kolektif House” mekanı incelenmiştir. Alan, orijinal işlevini yitirmiş eski bir fabrika binasının sürdürülebilir bir gelişme projesi olarak değerlendirilmesiyle dönüştürülmüştür. Çalışmada kullanılan veriler; literatür araştırması, çizimler ve görsel materyaller, görüşmeler ve gözlemlere dayanmaktadır. Değişen çalışma alışkanlıklarının ve kullanıcı ihtiyaçlarının yeni çalışma mekanları yarattığı ve seçilen örnekte yeniden işlevlendirme sonucu üretilen mekan ile kentsel ve mekansal bağlamda yaratılan değer pozitif olduğu düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mekan, ortak çalışma mekanı, etkileşim, paylaşım, esneklik, yeniden işlevlendirme.

## Introduction

Technological developments have altered the relations and organization of production systems. People are connected electronically to each other and the world more and more, with developing information and communication technologies (ICTs). In this age independent professionals and mobile workers can connect to networks via various technological platforms. A growing number of people want to self-manage the time and place of their work and do not want to work a typical work day of eight hours Monday to Friday. They have the chance to do their solitary work anywhere without time restriction, which leads to more spatial independence and flexibility. The content of their space concept is also specific to present time. The conveniences brought by technological development are effective in transforming the sense of place-time-body. Thus the classical definition of work and workspace has transformed into a new type of working and workspace. Gillen mentioned that “Work environments are in a state of transition from something familiar and predictable to something not yet defined, multi locational, virtual and physical”<sup>1</sup>.

Worldwide the Co-working pay to access spaces have emerged as a new type of workspace concept which people choose to adapt. Spinuzzi<sup>2</sup> and Parrino<sup>3</sup> defined co-working spaces as shared offices where a group of individuals with more or less heterogeneous backgrounds co-locate themselves in the same work environment. New ways of working have been defined as flexible, mobile and multi-locational. The concept of flexibility and change relates to the co-working work space semantically and spatially. The term flexible is defined in Webster’s dictionary as; ‘Springy/readily changed or changing to suit circumstances, capable of being changed or adjusted to meet particular or varied needs’. According to Tapan<sup>4</sup>, “flexibility is the ability to respond to different user needs without altering the building system, and benefit from same volumes for more than one function”. The concepts; ‘to grow, to change, to adapt’ are also evaluated together with the term flexible in architecture<sup>5</sup>.

- 1 N. M. Gillen, “The future workplace, opportunities, realities and myths: A practical approach to creating meaningful environments”, *Reinventing the Workplace*, ed. In J. Worthington Ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford, Architectural Press, 2006, 61-78.
- 2 C. Spinuzzi, “Working alone together: co-working as emergent collaborative activity”, *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, ol. 26, no. 4, 2012, 399-441.
- 3 L. Parrino, “Coworking: Assessing the role of proximity in knowledge exchange”, *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 13, 2013, 261-271.
- 4 Tapan M., “Prefabrikte Elemanlarla Yapımda Esneklik ve Değişkenlik Sorunu”, *İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Bülteni*, İstanbul, 1972.
- 5 K. F. Yürekli, *Mimari Tasarımda Belirsizlik; Esneklik/Uyabilirlik İhtiyacının Kaynakları ve Çözümü Üzerine bir Araştırma*, İstanbul, İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi, 1983.

Change is inevitable in the continuity of time, the society and city need to adapt in this ever changing status. In broad perspective the traces of change on individual, society, space, and city will be examined in this study through the changing work concept. The characteristics of the co-working space concept is defined and analysed in the selected case of ‘Kolektif House’. This co-working place is located in the first two stories of a 7 storey building that was designed as a broderie factory and changed its primary function. The data used in this study consists of literature review, observations, websites, event presentations and brochures. The issues such as design concept, principles, spatial features and establishment principles and aims were questioned also by interviews (with the architect and managers). The aim is to understand the characteristic of space concept by analyzing the space in the urban context as well as the spatial solution, material and furniture selection. The functional relations of the spaces are analysed through architectural drawings and visual materials.

### **The New Type of Workspace: Co-Working**

Working habits are in a continuous change in the historical process depending on the professions and the types of production. Change in work environment depends upon social and cultural factors. As workspace in an urban setting in the modern world it is generally thought of as office environment, that is generally described as conventional offices or enclosed private rooms for one or two persons with uniformed furniture or open plan office spaces with personal workstations for many workers which have no interior walls. However, the ways of working and the preferences of users have changed and evolved from conventional offices to a ‘shared office’ scheme. As Kojo and Nenonen emphasised the drivers of new ways of work and mobility need to be taken into account<sup>6</sup>. Johns and Gratton classified co-working spaces into organizational co-working spaces (created by companies), and independently operating co-working spaces for the public – people<sup>7</sup>.

Duffy emphasized that individual desk-centered space need is reduced and need for widely distributed spaces of formal and informal gathering is increased<sup>8</sup>.

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6 I. Kojo - S. Nenonen, “Typologies for co-working spaces in Finland – what and how? ”, *Facilities*. vol. 34, iss 5/6, 2016, 302-313.

7 T Johns - L. Gratton, “The third wave of virtual work”, *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, 2013, 66-73.

8 F. Duffy, “Lumbering to Extinction in the Digital Field: The Taylorist Office Building”, *Harvard Design Magazine*, no: 29, Fall-Winter 2008.

Various spaces are used for working that are defined as 'third places'<sup>9</sup> such as Hotel lobbies, cafés, parks and other open public spaces<sup>10</sup>. Suarez and Segreti<sup>11</sup> mentioned that bars, cafes and maker or hacker spaces can be seen as types of co-working spaces.

In Co-Working spaces where the concepts of flexibility and mobility are emphasized distinctly, the use of common areas is important in terms of the formation of spatial fictions and the definition of the rich forms of action presented to the user. Users are able to choose the disciplines they will work with, or find them randomly in these sharing spaces, they can share their knowledge, learn and interact with each other. It also allows people to attend private events. The main activity is determined as to operate the work space for social entrepreneurs and organize workshops, conferences, and exhibitions. Typically the member of staff person who acts as a host is responsible for the maintenance of the space and the users<sup>12</sup>. These types of workspaces are differentiated from the traditional workplace by the dynamics they own<sup>13</sup>. They provide users with a constantly changing business partnership in alternative attractive spatial solutions which also encourage creativity. In these places different spaces are created for various functions that offer the user the option of a flexible and appropriate work environment with different membership plans. The most frequently used terms in describing co-working by practitioners are: friendly, fun, creative, inspiring, productive, open, free, community, etc.<sup>14</sup>

As the definition of workplace is changing, it becomes a controversial issue that the spatial composition is also related to the success in the working environment. Amabile mentioned that work environment has a direct or indirect impact

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- 9 A. Harrison - P. Wheeler - C. Whitehead, *The Distributed Workplace: Sustainable Work Environments*, Spon Press, 2004.
  - 10 D. Hislop - C. Axtell, "To infinity and beyond: workspace and the multi-location worker", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2009, pp. 60-75.
  - 11 R. Suarez - A. Segreti, *The Co-working Handbook: Learn How To Create and Manage a Successful Co-working Space*, Amazon, Bedfordshire, 2014.
  - 12 J. Y. Huwart - G. Dichter - P. Vanrie, "Co-working: collaborative space for micro entrepreneurs", *Technical Note #1*, Brussels, European Business and Innovation Centre Network EBN, 2012.
  - 13 N. Pohler, "Neue arbeitsräume für neue arbeitsformen: coworking spaces [New workspaces for new forms of work: coworking spaces]", *Österr.Z.Sociologie*, 37, 2012, 65-78, doi:10.1007/s11614-012-0021-y.
  - 14 B. Moriset, "Building new places of the creative economy. The rise of coworking spaces", *Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Geography of Innovation*, Utrecht University International Conference, 2014.

on individual creative performance<sup>15</sup>. Users of these co-working places should feel a sense of belonging to the place and be comfortable. Workplace as a physical space should offer productive and attractive spaces.

The activity-based workplace, in which people have the option to choose the best suited spatial organization according to their activity, is also one of the leading office concept in renowned companies. They want to satisfy the new creative class with physical environments reflecting the new, flexible organization of work<sup>16</sup>. The revision of spatial and social fictions in the workplace, the increase of random interaction and entertainment time, the healthy process of learning and creativity, constitute the factors that affect the employees to generate new ideas. Cummings and et al mentioned that the optional leisure and leisure hours are affecting the efficiency of the employees<sup>17</sup>.

The flexible working conditions of co-working places are provided by: individual working environments (separate office volumes or desks in or meeting rooms) with temporal flexibility, common (event) areas and food facilities (where concepts of interaction, socialization are experienced). Users are able to choose the disciplines they will work with, or find them randomly in these spaces, they can share their knowledge, learn and interact with the other. The shared physical space is used as a tool within the creative process. Bouncken and Reuschl emphasized two aspects of the sharing concept in co-working spaces; tangible value (office, cafe, etc.) and intangible value (Knowledge, experience, etc.)<sup>18</sup>.

### **Historical Timeline of Co-Working Area and Development Process in Turkey**

Typical features of these pay-to access co-working facilities can be defined as; shared work spaces, 24/7 access, reservable/rentable conference and/or board rooms, wi-fi, communal printer/copier/fax, shared kitchens, bathrooms and lounges. By the end of 2016 nearly 1.2 million people worldwide will have worked in a co-working space. The development of the concept of common work area and the situation in Turkey is summarized in the following timeline (Table 1 and Fig.1).

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15 T. M. Amabile, "A Model of Creativity and Innovation in Organizations", *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, vol.10, 1998, 123-167.

16 B. Waber - J. Magnolfi - G. Lindsay, "Workspaces that move people", *Harvard Business Review*, 29 (10), 2014, 69-77.

17 T. Thanem - S. Värlander - S. Cummings, "Open Space = open minds? The Ambiguities of Pro-creative Office Design", *Int. J. Work Organization and Emotion*, vol 4, no 1, 2011.

18 R. B. Bouncken - A. J. Reuschl, "Coworking-spaces: how a phenomenon of the sharing economy builds a novel trend for the workplace and for entrepreneurship", 2016, DOI 10.1007/s11846-016-0215-y.

**Table 1.** Co-Working Historical Timeline (developed by using the URL-1)

1995	C-base in Berlin, was one the first hacker spaces in the world. These spaces can be considered as some of the first pre-models of co-workingspaces
1999	42 West 24 popped-up in New York City. The space was run by a software company and offered a work environment with flexible desks for individuals and teams. Co-Working gets a new meaning, 'Co-working' was first used in 1999 by Bernie De Koven describing collaborative work supported by computer and new technologies of the day.
2002	Vienna's mother of co-working spaces opened as Schraubenfabrik which was first named a community center for entrepreneurs.
2005	The official first "coworking space" opened its door in San Francisco on August 9 by the programmer Brad Neuberg as reactionto "unsocial" business centers and the unproductive work life at a home office.
2006	The Hat Factory opened as the first full-time space that was called a "co-working space". Among the co-founders was Brad Neuberg, Chris Messina and Tara Hunt. It was one out of almost 30 co-working spaces worldwide at this time. Since 2012, it's numbers have nearly doubled each year.
2007	Berlin's first co-working space which was the medium-sized workspace located in his former gallery in Kreuzberg, finally opened on Labor Day in 2007. For the first time, the term "co-working" was seen as a trend on Google's data base.
2010	The co-working movement celebrated the first #CoworkingDay - in memory of the first "coworking day", which took place five years earlier. In Europe, the first co-working conference took place at the Hub Brussels. At the time of the first co-working conference, 600 coworking spaces existed worldwide, with more than half of them in North America.
2012	In October, more than 2000 co-working spaces can be found worldwide. Workington İstanbul opened as a first co-working space in Turkey.
2013	At the beginning of the year, more than 100,000 people worked at coworking spaces. In July, the 3,000th co-working space opened. The same year Atölye İstanbul and Yazane opened in Turkey.
2014	Kolektif House opened in İstanbul-Sanayi with "we are stronger together"s motto.
2016	Impact Hub opened in İstanbul. With this development more than 10 different co-working spaces located in Turkey.
2017	By the end of 2016 nearly 1.2 million people worldwide will have worked in a co-working space.



**Fig. 1.** Co-working Timeline (© Makaklı, Yücesan, Ozar)

In Turkey as well as in the world, co-working space usage is increasing day by day enabling a sharing work environment that allows socialization to be established. In this study the case of ‘Kolektif House’ in the Levent district of Istanbul is selected. Although there are more than ten different co-working spaces located in different parts of the city, Levent district is selected because the cluster of tall buildings are located around this central commercial district (Fig.2). The building which was built as a broderie factory on a horizontal axis, is located in this advantageous location and differentiates from the existing building stock by serving both its own users and the surrounding firms.



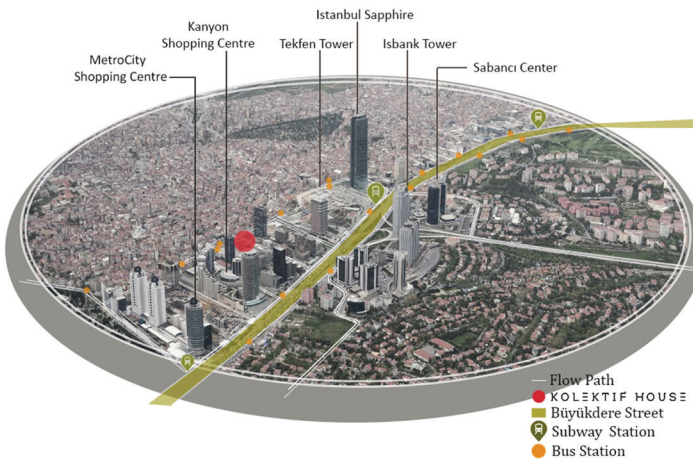
**Fig. 2.** Location of Kolektif House in İstanbul and the building  
(© by Makaklı, Yücesan, Ozar)

### ‘Kolektif House’ as a Co-Working Space; Urban Situation

Cities are changing and developing rapidly, the city concept is based on meeting the needs of society such as housing, working, recreation, etc. which has oc-



curred through a continuous social development. The changing role of work and place in the city has shown in the Istanbul on the Levent-Maslak axes. Between the 1950-60s Levent-Maslak axes was shaped by industrialization movement, production and management units of industrial enterprises located in the same place. Until 1980 these industrial buildings were built on horizontal axis. With the development of the city, the situation of industrial buildings in the city structure has changed. From 1980s to present day the cluster of tall buildings established on the Levent-Maslak axes replace the old and become the central commercial district, forming a highly visible and attractive symbol of the city.



**Fig. 3.** Urban Situation of Kolektif House (© Makaklı, Yücesan, Ozar)

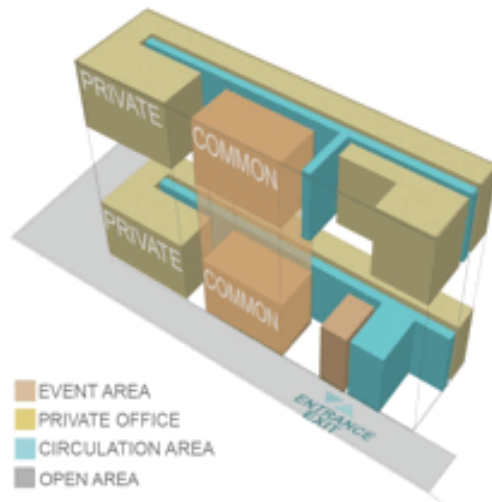
Changes resulting from globalization movements have been reflected in the district and it has a hybrid fabric that houses residential and business areas. Insurance, finance, and banking sectors' headquarters buildings, residential or mixed use office towers, shopping malls become dominating building types and form a highly visible and attractive symbol of the modern metropolis (Fig.3). It is well connected to public transportation; The location of the Kolektif House is in the middle of two main subway stations and public transport is very close. Access is provided by means of straight and parallel roads to Levent-Maslak axe. These roads are open to vehicle traffic. Access to the Kolektif House is provided by a route that is not specifically defined for pedestrians. In contrast to the surrounding high rise buildings, the entrance is obscured and difficult to perceive. In interviews the director has mentioned that the location is one of the most important factors bringing people together. Due to an increasing demand, they are renting two more stories in the same building to create more spaces this is a project in the design stage.

## Spatial Analysis

The building was built horizontally as a broderie factory in 1971, it is 7 stories in height, and has altered to become a workspace organization on its first two floors without necessitating radical formal alterations. The designed area is totally 2700 sqm with 1500 sqm entrance floor and a 1200 sqm mezzanine. The interior design Project was undertaken by the Kontra Architectural Office in May 2016. Refunctioning a building after it loses its primary functions for various reasons depends on whether it is technically possible to respond to the needs of the newly defined function and other different aspects. The load bearing system is the main element which dominates interior design as in the selected case.

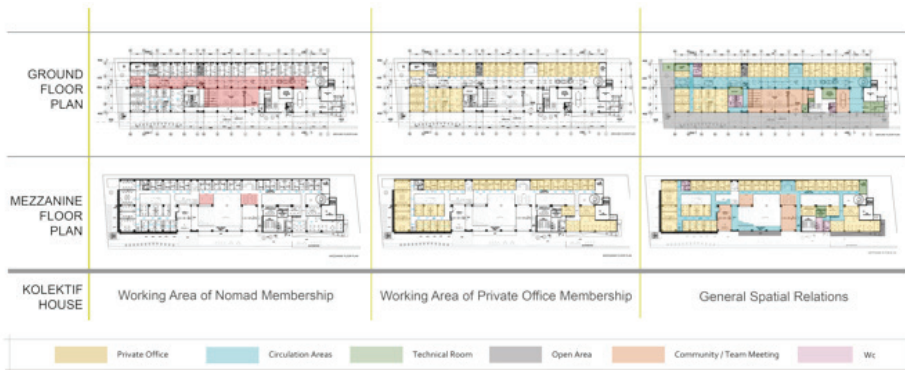
*Kolektif House* provides its users with individual working environments as well as common areas where they can collaborate and interact with each other. This kind of spatial solution increases efficiency and motivation in the work environment, making it easier for users in different sectors to look at each other's point of view and exchange ideas.

The reception at the main entrance gives free access to the members. Common areas and horizontal circulation was resolved in the middle axle by the design team and offices are arranged around this axis (See Fig.4). Kolounge (co-lounge) which is the activity area with its linear shaped plan, occupies 2 floors, is 7 meters high and is surrounded by transparent surfaces from the side in order to keep the visual relation with other areas. Originally, this area, with its huge machines, was used as the production area for the broderie factory.



**Fig. 4** Volumetric Fiction (© Makaklı, Yücesan, Ozar)

It has a flexible seating foyer area and mezzanine floor. The central lounge (Ko-lounge), which offers a huge room, serves as the central meeting point and event area. It is the main focus area for both co-workers and the general public. This centrally located area is spatially emphasized, and increases social interaction as it is intended to be perceived from different points by the user. With the activities held in this central area, it has become a common use place where members with flexible working hours can participate in their free time. The common working area, parallel to the main entrance, directs the offices to the courtyard in the visual and physical context. Office spaces that surround the courtyard are distributed on the ground floor in the form of L, while the upper floor offices surround the courtyard (Fig 5). There are four different exits on the ground floor, two of which are the main exit doors. All the exit doors, which are close to offices, open to the courtyard. Designed office defines the courtyard as a 'secret garden' amidst the density of the city and surrounding area that offers a breathing space for the users. The connection between the upper floors is provided by bridges passing over the courtyard, and these bridges are also used as a joint work area at the same time. The kitchenettes are located at different points on the lower and upper floors to provide easy access to the users. The storage areas (cupboards) are located near the activity area, at a point where the horizontal and vertical circulation intersects.



**Fig. 5.** Plans (by courtesy of Kontra Architecture)

The meeting rooms are located at a point near the entrance on the lower floor and around the activity area on the upper floors. These top-floor meeting rooms have direct visual contact with the activity area. The terrace starts from the entrance and reaches the end at the side. It is connected to the interior by horizontal circulation, as well as to some offices and the activity area on the ground floor.

Also open air access is provided with balconies on the upper floor. The lounge areas consist of comfortable sitting units. These units are located around the horizontal circulation areas, at the point where the terrace and the inner space are connected to each other and the terraces, which offer individual or collective use. The movement between the diversity and location of the common areas and spaces is provided and the transitions are also highlighted by the linear plan. The inner space design of office buildings can be organised according to occupant needs and actions.

### **Membership-Mobility-Autonomy**

In Kolektif House different types of memberships are offered to the users, which allow different usage situations and flexible hours of use. Depending on the membership, they can work on tables in open work areas or they can rent ready-made offices in desired sizes and specifications as well as benefit from working and meeting areas at the other branches in different locations. Common areas are defined for users in all membership types. These are the activity area, kitchenettes, storage areas, meeting rooms, terraces and relaxation areas located at several different points. The user who is in ‘virtual’ membership type can show the place as his business address and without having a physical office space benefit from secretarial services, retrieval and storage. In accordance with these options, the user can select an office close to the job site in the desired locality. Although independent workers, freelancers and start-ups are determined as the main user groups in the design stage, companies are using this space periodically for various actions. They can schedule their times in terms of their objectives, project duration and investment opportunities. They organize events here and use food facilities.

### **Material-Furniture**

The interior of the space represents its past with its original firebrick walls and iron joinery. In addition wood, exposed concrete, glass and raw iron are used dominantly referencing the industrial style. The wooden floor is used both on terraces and inside. Elements such as tables and chairs in separate office volumes have modular structure and form a uniform typology. Outside of the closed offices, common working areas, Ko-Lounge and bar areas are equipped with different types of equipment that provide different usage types. Flexible seating arrangements are varied according to use. The linear yard has seating units that offer ergonomic differences such as chairs, armchairs, bar chairs. The tables are not standardized; they are suitable for different types of work such as rectangu-

lar, square and circular. In the Ko-Lounge area, the amphitheatre offers seating, resting, waiting and lounging functions, while also functioning as a stair which is also wooden. The lighting elements are hidden in the suspended roof as the natural light cannot reach to the inner courtyard. In addition to the general lighting, the offices are illuminated with table lamps. The images on figure 6 shows the lighting and seating elements, furniture and materials which are in a sense connected horizontally or vertically. The different types used are associated with the language integrity of the material. It is seen that wood and metal surfaces are mainly used on all surfaces of open spaces, collective and special areas.



Fig. 6. Graphic of Interior Elements (© Makaklı, Yücesan, Ozar)

## Conclusions

People collaborate with each other in new and innovative ways and connections constantly change from physical to virtual. Different types of actions in a work environment are mostly determined by new means of communication. In this age, knowledge workers, free lancers, start-ups and so on have the chance to do their solitary work anywhere without time restriction, which leads to more spatial independence and flexibility. But what is not changed, is their need of face-to-face inter-actions. New relationship forms and the search for new cooperation possibilities bring people together to work in co-working spaces though it is possible to work at home. Co-working spaces have emerged worldwide as a new

type of workspace concept that meets different and changing user requirements. They provide users with a constantly changing business partnership in alternative attractive spatial solutions which also encourages creativity. The new job of the new generation requires a more flexible analysis in terms of time and space, while socializing in a creative and sharing environment. The space can be shaped by the interaction between the users as well as providing the opportunity to prepare the grounds for interaction and offer different experiences. One of the major reasons for people to join in this pay to access co-working arrangement is to collaborate and socialize in addition to working. These types of workspaces differ from the traditional workplace with the dynamics they own. In these places, different spaces are created for various functions that offer the user the chance of a flexible and appropriate work environment with different membership plans.

To obtain these conditions, the spatial organization should offer different working spaces and provide opportunities to socialize with different events and food facilities. It has been observed that spatial organization of this new type of workplace environment should be open to allow random interactions resulting in a chain of interaction networks. In the selected case, these conditions are available to the users, as the space of the event area and the courtyard are the most distinctive and vivid features. However, the user has no flexibility to intervene in the space and reorganize it; the existing volumes can be used for more than one function which provides the flexibility.

Due to flexible ways of working (temporal and spatial) these places are used more intensively. The ability of the city to respond to this rapid development is achieved in the selected case by creating spaces through refunctioning within an existing building stock in a central part of the city which can be evaluated positively in the context of sustainable development.

Workplaces have evolved in the past due to corporate and user requirements and will go on to evolve and change in the future. The coming decades will define their own workplace with their own needs and culture, shaped by the ongoing developments of technology in every sense. The flexible and optional spatial solutions that may increase the productivity or creativity of people are the main factors that will attract and entice them.

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