

# Profiles of Coworking Networks in Homes and Neighbourhoods in the UK, France and Sweden

**Dr Annabelle Wilkins**  
ERC WORKANDHOME  
University of Southampton  
[A.H.Wilkins@soton.ac.uk](mailto:A.H.Wilkins@soton.ac.uk)

Acknowledgment: This research is funded by the European Research Council of the European Commission (ERC-StG-639403).

## Introduction

This working paper examines coworking in homes and neighbourhoods in the UK, France and Sweden. It draws upon qualitative research on coworking that takes place in people's homes, including Hoffice (Stockholm) and Cohome (Paris), as well as coworking that takes place in public spaces including cafes, community and leisure centres (Wimborne, Somerford and Winchester Jellies). The paper examines the background, organisation structure, location and users of each network, and provides information on the activities that take place as part of coworking in each case. Photographs taken by the researcher and participants are also included to visually document the coworking spaces and activities.

### 1. Cohome

#### *Background*

Cohome brings together freelancers and independent professionals to work together in their own home or others' homes. While most users are located in Paris, they also have networks in other cities around France. The founder, Laura Choisy, developed the idea in 2015 when working freelance, initially by inviting friends to work at her home. Most of the coworking takes place in apartments, but the network also includes a boat, café and an art gallery.

#### *Organisation*

The Cohome online platform (Cohome.in) was launched in October 2016 and now has around 4000 users. Users are invited to upload their profile information and can sign up to cowork in homes up to 7 days before they attend. Hosts can upload pictures and descriptions of their homes. Cohome charges around 10 euros a day, and users are offered financial returns as they take part in more coworking days. Groups are usually restricted to 3-6 people depending on the size of the home.



## *Users*

Most users of Cohome are aged 20-35 and work in creative and digital professions. They include founders of start-ups, freelancers in IT and coaches/therapists. The majority of users are located in Paris, but Cohome also has networks in Rennes, Nancy, Lyon, Nantes, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lille, Marseille, Montpellier, Pau, Metz, Strasbourg, Toulouse. The motivations of users include networking with other freelancers or entrepreneurs, Cohome as a source of income, and social interaction. Several participants expressed a preference for coworking in their neighbourhood or locally, and often visited the same homes on a regular basis.

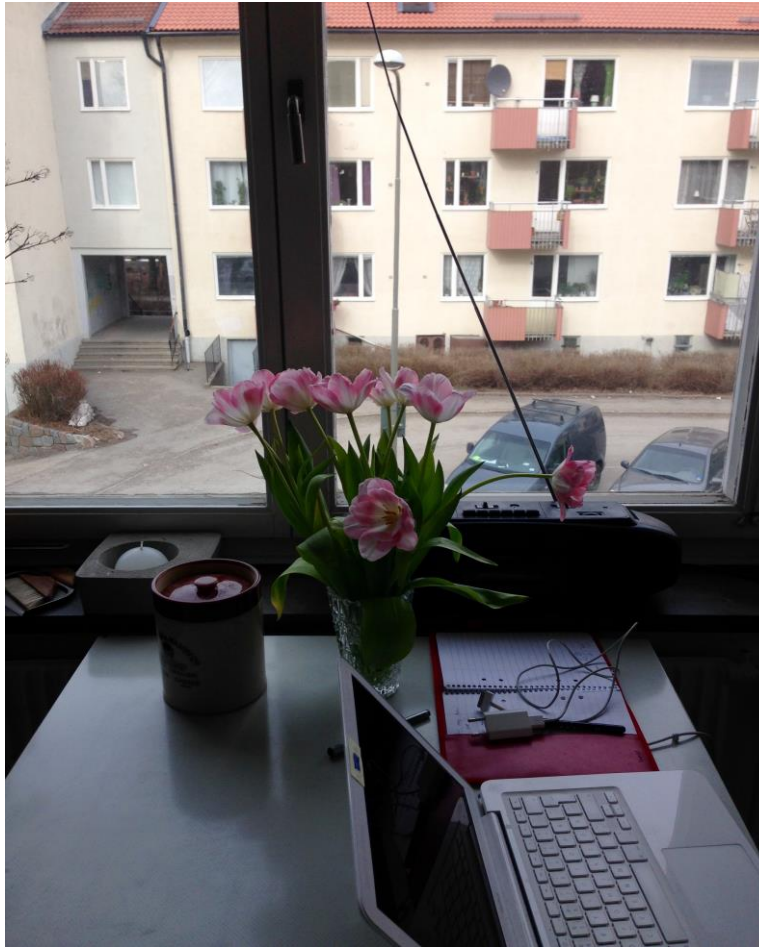
## *Structure/activities*

Each host decides how they want to organise the coworking day, but users are encouraged to introduce themselves when they arrive, plan breaks and reflect on goals – otherwise, people work on their own projects. Users often eat lunch together at a local café or bring their own food to eat at home. Most days are structured around working hours, e.g. 9-6pm.

## **2. Hoffice**

### *Background*

The Hoffice movement invites freelancers and remote workers to work together in each other's homes with the aims of tackling social isolation and boosting productivity. Hoffice was founded in 2014 by Christofer Franzen, a psychologist living in Sweden. The network now has members worldwide, but most users are located in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. While most coworking takes place in homes in cities and suburbs, the Stockholm Hoffice group has links with the local authority, who organise coworking in their offices. The founder plans to expand this to include working with local job centres, inviting unemployed people to join Hoffice groups and get support with their applications.



### *Organisation*

Hoffice events are free to attend and organised through Facebook. Most Hoffice Facebook groups are closed and users must request to join. Groups are organised in particular cities around Europe, with Hoffice Stockholm and Hoffice Copenhagen among the largest. Within each group, individual members can advertise their own Hoffice coworking days. Hosts can choose to make their event public or private. In practice, most users are known to each other or learn about Hoffice through their personal or professional networks. Each Hoffice event has a facilitator (usually the host/homeowner, but not always) who explains the structure of the day and suggests activities. Groups vary in size depending on the size of the home, but are usually around 4-6 people. The founder is currently working with developers to create a dedicated online booking platform.

### *Users*

Members of the Hoffice network include freelancers, employees who can work remotely and start-up entrepreneurs from a range of backgrounds. The founder does not hold specific data on the demographics of users, but the groups observed during this research included participants in their 20s, 30s, 40s and older (mostly younger participants).

### *Structure/activities*

Users introduce each other and set goals for the day, but mostly work on their own projects. The facilitator invites the group to work in silence for periods of 45 minutes, after which they take a break for coffee, lunch or activities including exercise and meditation. Users also reflect on their progress before starting the next 45-minute work period. Users often eat lunch together at a local café or bring their own food to eat at home. Most days are structured around working hours, e.g. 9-4pm.





### 3. Winchester Jelly

#### *Background*

Winchester Jelly was established in 2011 and started by Charlotte (business consultant) after she found out about the UK Jelly network. The group started meeting in a local pub but couldn't find a permanent base, so put a story in the local newspaper and were offered meeting space in the local leisure centre, and have been meeting there once a month ever since.

#### *Organisation*

The Jelly meets once a month and is organised through Eventbrite and advertised on Twitter. While they welcome new members, the 'core' group consists of 5-6 people who know each other well and have been participating for several years.



#### *Users*

The group include a freelance translator, illustrator, an architect who also ran a shop in the town selling children's clothes; and a business consultant with her own company. The group were all aged between 40 and 55. They emphasised the need for social contact as a main motivation, but also sharing skills, knowledge, networking and collaboration opportunities.

## *Structure/activities*

The Jelly operates a loose structure, with most members arriving between 10 and 12pm, working on their own projects and occasionally stopping to chat or have coffee. Most people ordered lunch from the café inside the leisure centre and ate at their desks. Several members left at around 2pm to collect children from school. The Jelly finished by 4.30pm.

### **4. Somerford ARC Jelly**

#### *Background*

Somerford ARC Jelly was set up 9 months ago as part of a business development project organised by Christchurch and East Dorset Council. The Council decided to establish the Jelly in the Somerford area, because it is an area of relative disadvantage, and the Council want to support local microbusinesses in the area (Dorset also has a relatively high rate of self-employment and home-based business). The Jelly takes place in a local community resource centre on a residential housing estate, and is also supported by a local housing association.

#### *Organisation*

The Jellies take place once a week and are free to attend. The Council and ARC promote the Jelly through social media and local publications. The Jelly is facilitated by Lydia, the business manager of the Somerford ARC.





## *Users*

The numbers of the group vary on a weekly basis. This group included 4 women – an accountant, a pet food business owner, a writer and business consultant. All were aged between 40-50 and lived within 2 miles of the Jelly. Their main motivations were social contact, gaining advice and business skills, and networking opportunities.

## *Structure/activities*

The Jelly takes place between 12-3pm. The Council invites key speakers from business, funding and training providers to offer advice to members. Members can also work on their own projects and discuss business ideas. Tea and coffee are available. The Jelly is organised to fit around childcare commitments, with several users leaving at 2.30pm to collect their children from school.

## **5. Wimborne Jelly**

### *Background*

Wimborne Jelly was set up alongside Somerford ARC Jelly (see above) by Christchurch and East Dorset Council to support local micro-businesses. The Jelly takes place in a café in the Allendale Centre, an events space and community centre in Christchurch.



### *Organisation*

The Jelly takes place once a week and is free to attend. The Council and Allendale Centre advertise the Jelly on social media. Members can purchase coffee or food in the café, though this is not required to take part in the Jelly.

### *Users*

Group numbers vary on a weekly basis, but can include up to 12 members. This group included a wedding planner, a baker, a writer and a freelance IT worker – 2 men and 2 women, aged between 30 and 55. Their main motivations were social contact, gaining advice and business skills, and networking opportunities.

### *Structure/activities*

The Jelly ran between 10am and 3pm, and was also timed to fit around childcare and family commitments. Members could arrive and leave at any time, and had coffee and lunch at different points of the day, which they bought from the café. Members mostly worked on their own projects, occasionally stopping to chat or ask each other about their business.

## **6. Crystal Palace Freelancers Jelly**

### *Background*

The Crystal Palace Freelancers Jelly was set up by Roberto, a self-employed translator who lives in the local area of Southeast London. The Jelly was set up around 2 years ago, and takes place in the café of a cycle shop in Crystal Palace.

### *Organisation*

The Jelly takes place once a month and is organised through the Crystal Palace Freelancers' Facebook page (currently around 500 members). Members can sign up to attend the Jelly on Facebook, though the group is open to all and it is free to take part. Members discussed the Jelly on Facebook and tagged each other in posts, prompting other members of the group to interact even if they could not physically attend.

### *Users*

The group included 2 freelance translators, a freelance market research consultant, a researcher and facilitator. Group numbers vary each month. One member wasn't aware of the existence of the group, but joined in after seeing them working in the café. Most members lived locally in Southeast London. Their main motivations were social contact, sharing knowledge and networking opportunities.

## Structure/activities

The Jelly ran between 10am and 6pm, though most members were present between 11 and 5pm. Several left at 3pm or earlier to collect children from school. The day was very loosely structured, and members could come and go at any time. Most members bought food and drinks in the café. Most time was spent working on their own projects, and occasionally stopping for discussion or breaks.



## 7. LnD Cowork

### *Background*

LnD Cowork (Learning and Development) was set up 2 years ago by Fiona and Michelle, both of whom work freelance in Learning and Development. LnD Cowork is a network of individuals working in Learning and Development who come together once a month to work and socialise, get feedback on their work that they can't get from working at home – the emphasis is on getting together and working on independent projects alongside each other rather than formal collaboration or business networking. They meet in different venues each month, including the BFI, National Theatre and The Office Group (serviced offices and coworking). They are allowed to meet at The Office Group premises for free because they tweet about the coworking meetup and this offers good marketing for the coworking space.

### *Organisation*

LnD Cowork events are held monthly in different locations and are free to attend. Members are asked to sign up on Eventbrite, and up to 20 spaces are available. The network has a strong presence among Learning and HR professionals on Twitter, and many members tweet about the event using the #LnDcowork hashtag.



### *Users*

Freelancers and remote employees working in the area of HR, coaching, learning and development. The group included around 15 members over the course of the day, with a balance of men and women aged between 25 and 50. Main motivations were social contact, knowledge and skill sharing, networking and collaboration opportunities.

### *Structure/activities*

The day began at 10am and went on until 6pm, though most members were present between 11 and 4pm. Some members stayed for drinks afterwards. The day was loosely structured, with people introducing themselves as they arrived and sharing as much or as little about their work as they wanted to. Most people worked on their own projects and stopped for lunch between 1 and 2pm.

