
Newworkplaces

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Project description

The main objective of the project is the design of a space able to meet the requirements stated by UniCredit Business Integrated Solution, which proposed this exercise. In particular, the final outcome should have been a place outside the traditional offices where their employees can work remotely. The solution developed must be environmentally sustainable, for example this is possible by reducing the travel time to go to work and encouraging the use of public transports. The project needs also to have a solid financial structure that enables the bank to recover the initial investment and make it self-sustainable. The initial analysis focuses on the available literature about workspace and new trends around the

world, so the research team has been able to develop a draft of the project that, subsequently, has been proposed to the employees which potentially could have been affected by the project. The space described is a mix of already existing places: a café and a co-working area where the general users and UniCredit employees are separated because of privacy issue. After a positive feedback, the following phase was the definition of possible locations. The aim is to create a network around the city, so it has been taken into account where employees live, the main public transports and exploitable areas for a co-working space. The whole phase has been supported with a strict definition of the possible stakeholders. The team proposed a partnership with a public institution (Municipality of Milan) in order to find pre-existing buildings, other than new ones, that satisfy the criteria of accessibility, size, conservation state and cost in the selected area of the city. Analysing the possible architectural solutions, the result has been a definition of building typologies with the subsequent design of how space are organized and connected.

The project has a strong technological basis which is a strength that makes it extremely innovative. In fact, as reported in the business plan, there are different revenue streams: the co-working area, with the fees paid by the user; from the café, thanks to the products sold and to the companies paying for their advertising shown on the technological devices. In conclusion, the result of this project is a new model of workplace that meets the stated requirements of the client, and the trends in the field.

Tasks and skills

The five members of the team have worked in sub-groups taking advantage of their complementary backgrounds.

Ingrid Angelica Noe Colonia and Federica Mazzola have both a deep knowledge of architecture and design that allowed them to collaborate on the analysis of the urban context, define the criteria for the selection of the spaces, study the relationships between the spaces and represent the developed workplace model through graphical tools and 3D visualisation.

Barbara Francesca Cicconetti and Marco Vitale worked on the analysis of the urban context and the definition of possible locations derived from the application of the main regional economic theories. Additionally, Marco worked on the relationship between the space and the technology looking for innovative economic revenue streams.

Giorgio Ranza worked on the analysis of the users' needs (e.g. collection of the requirements and surveys) and the economic assessment of the project (e.g. market analysis, business plan, estimation of the financial impact).

The great effort of each team member as well as the excellent support from both academic and external tutors contributed greatly to the outcome of the project.

Abstract

Technology allows people employed in certain jobs to work everywhere, as long as they have a laptop, a phone and internet connection. However, this does not mean that offices are no longer needed, especially in environments where creativity and problem-solving are

daily activities. Human interaction is often the key to address such issues and come up with innovative solutions. This is one of the reasons why physical spaces still play an important role, although they present some challenges such as:

- Current locations force employees to long and expensive daily commutes;
- Need for sustainable space, from an environmental and economic point of view (current office space is mainly a cost-centre);
- Obsolete spaces often do not encourage smart working;
- Maximum potential for innovation is not fully exploited due to low interaction and socialisation among employees and third parties;
- Need for more flexible spaces;
- Lack of transparency and permeability of the space towards its surroundings (i.e. openness to the public).

The early requirement analysis has been performed on the basis of the information provided by UniCredit Business Integrated Solution. This was the starting point for the design of a draft solution to the exercise. Afterwards, thanks to surveys, it has been possible to fine tune the collection of requirements and have an early feedback on the draft. In this way, it has been possible to base the approach on flexibility rather than on vested limits: a mock up model to be validated by the users and gradually adjusted based on the suggestions.

Subproject description

Understanding the problem

In the recent years, the working dynamics in the world of knowledge workers have been irreversibly altered by the more and more pervasive use of the new mobile and digital technologies. In particular, there has been a gradual migration towards working frameworks with a high level of interaction that replaces the “one person - one desk” paradigm with an approach to the workplace as a community in which connections and interdependencies arise spontaneously, exceeding the standard hierarchical functional relationships.

Today it is possible to figure out organised working contributions in an increasingly autonomous and physically-separated way from the company’s headquarters, with significant advantages in terms of energy savings, environmental sustainability and human work-life balance. According to this approach, the company is able to optimise the use of spaces, while the employee can acquire a greater autonomy in managing her/his own work and time.

As a consequence, there is the need for a new vision of workplaces that are more and more characterised by the issues that they are intended to solve. In particular the working areas will be increasingly permeable and open to the city making blurred the boundary between public and private dimensions until to dissolve it.

Exploring the opportunities

The trends observed on the state of art in the new organization of work and workforce, implementation of the newest technologies in the day to day operations arises the need to adjust the workplace from an architectural, organizational and technological point of view.

For instance, in NYC was clear that the interest in coworking spaces is growing constantly, at a global level and especially in big cities with highly inflated rents. The innovation cases lay mainly on the space optimization and the different uses of the same space giving a series of connection between café and workplaces.



Spacious, NY coworking

However, these considerations have to match the specific complex set of requirements set by the bank. An additional element of complexity is provided by the fact that in this historical phase in Italy, even the biggest companies tend to watch their expenses more than they used in the past. This phase is associated with the sharp increase of competition, with the consequent shrinking of aggregate profits in the banking industry. This element generated the need for a fully economically sustainable solution, which is not always an easy target to reach as it may seem.

This is the reason why the solution proposed, the BankCoffice (i.e. Bank, coffee and office), may look like an unconventional answer one would give to the call specifications, but it was the result of a long journey and many revisions and modifications.

Generating a solution

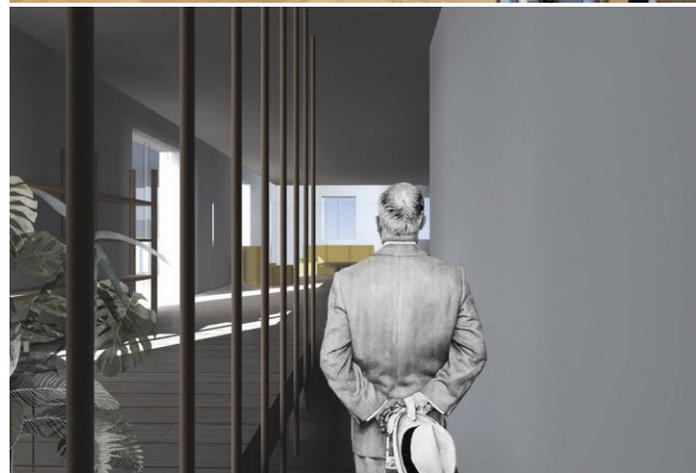
The office environment should be seen as a place that makes working more enjoyable, productive and reachable for everyone, a place where relations can happen, where you can work and be delighted with a nice and calm atmosphere of the space. This must be achieved considering the main goals of saving on real estate expense, environmental sustainability and the possibility to add value to the city through a urban regeneration factor.

The concept aims to create a new hybrid space that merges the bank office space for Unicredit with a co-working environment and a café open to the public. One of the main goals is to make a workplace more enjoyable and reachable for bank employees, students, free-lancers etc., and can obtain an important value for the external users.

The solution proposed, the BankCoffice (i.e. Bank, coffee and office), may look like an unconventional answer one would give to the call specifications, but it was the result of a long journey and many revisions and modifications.

The solution is a space composed by three main elements:

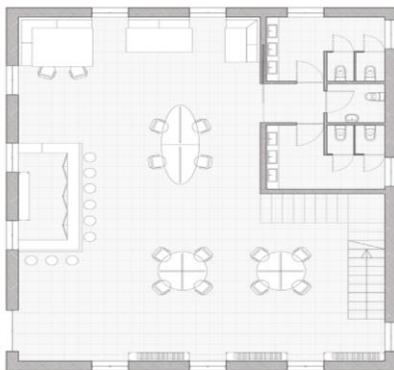
- The café, which represents the public permeable space and a double revenue stream, both from the bar and the stay of the guests;
- The professional coworking, which acts as an additional revenue stream and exploits the design knowledge and professional environment connected to the bank;
- The coworking devoted to the activities carried out by the bank employees, designed following the specifications.

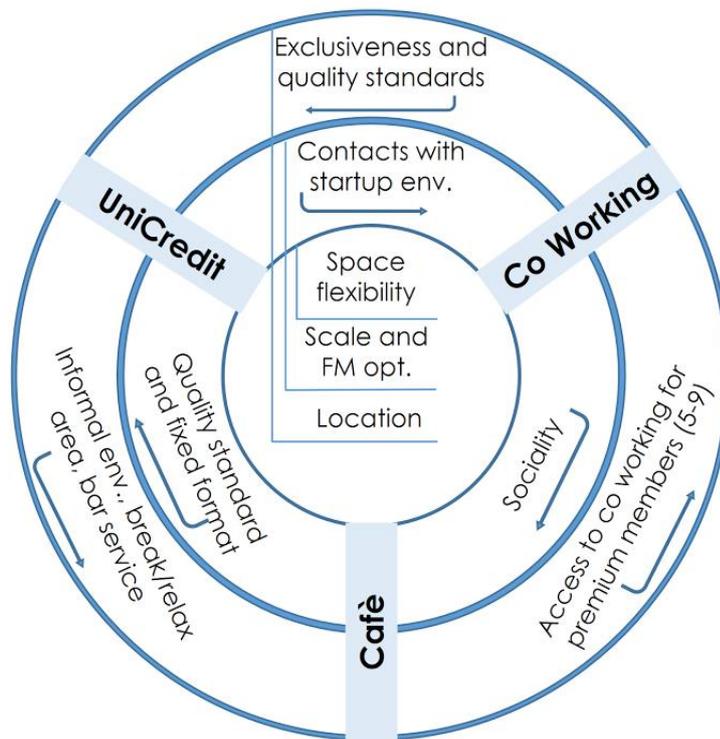




This concept provides several benefits for its stakeholders:

- Unicredit employees will have a greater satisfaction at work. They will be able to work close to home, saving time and money, and work in an informal atmosphere surrounded by an innovative environment;
- The bank will benefit from operative and strategic advantages. This concept will allow to increase employees' satisfaction, support the bank's image and brand as long being sustainable from an economic, social and environmental point of view;
- Local communities will have a new space where to work or study without paying any fee.





Tags

- Coworking
- Flexible workspaces
- Freeconomics