

Long Abstract – Free Section

SOCIAL AGRICULTURE BETWEEN NEW AND OLD SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY INNOVATIONS.

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The Reorganization of Workspaces in Italian SMEs after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Emerging Trends and Employee Preferences

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This qualitative study investigates the post-pandemic reorganization of physical workspaces in Italian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a segment often overlooked in international literature.

Based on ninety semi-structured interviews within a purposive sample of thirty SMEs, selected from the Great Place to Work and Welfare PMI Index databases to ensure diversity in sector, size, and geographic location, the analysis focused on three key dimensions: occupational welfare, workspace configuration and use and work-life balance. This holistic approach was chosen to explore the factors driving spatial decisions and employees' subjective experiences by examining the interplay between physical space, organizational policies and wellbeing.

The findings reveal a predominant, yet nuanced, trend toward hybrid configurations that blend shared collaborative areas with private spaces. A clear divergence emerged based on company size: micro-enterprises, constrained by space and budget, predominantly adopted pragmatic, informal adaptations like flexible hot-desking. In contrast, medium-sized companies demonstrated a greater capacity for investment, introducing modular workstations, dedicated call boxes and differentiated zones. Employee perspectives were divided, shaped by organizational culture, task nature, and personal living conditions. While some valued open spaces for fostering social cohesion, others highlighted challenges related to noise and concentration, expressing a preference for remote work or enclosed areas.

The study concludes that workspace redesign in Italian SMEs is an adaptive, incremental process, where physical space is reconceptualized as a key organizational device for balancing operational needs with employee wellbeing. The research offers practical implications for HR management and contributes to the workplace design discourse by highlighting the unique, context-sensitive strategies employed by SMEs, ultimately positioning workspace quality as a strategic lever for talent attraction and organizational resilience.

The reorganization of work spaces in Italian SMEs after the COVID-19 pandemic: trends and preferences emerging

Cite me: Pezzolo Marino, "La riorganizzazione degli spazi di lavoro nelle PMI italiane dopo la pandemia di Covid-19: tendenze e preferenze emergenti", in "Welfare e Ergonomia (ISSN 2421-3691, ISSN 2531-9817), 2025, 1", pp. 233-248.

DOI: 10.3280/WE2025-001014.