

**T**HINGS ARE CHANGING PROFOUNDLY AND RAPIDLY. Working life, work organization and work management are on the verge of radical changes. We can no longer, as before, rely on conflicts being settled by conventional methods and compromises in production processes. Simultaneously, the structure, function, design and context of industrial buildings and workplaces are accompanying these fundamental changes.

Since the early years of the 1970s, as a result of the sudden spread of the global energy crisis, the modern production management of the advanced industrial countries has entered into a new critical phase. New production and work management theories have been rapidly introduced, some being adapted to the new 'post-industrial' situation, others having become renewed and entrenched again as production and work management guidelines. In many countries a post-version of the Fordist regime has taken over the readjustment tasks of new transformations in workplaces.

By exercising the free movement of capital over territorial boundaries, applying labor intensive assembly operations in the very low-wage economies, decomposition of the labor schedule, flex-time work management, the involvement of modern information and telecommunication technologies in work processes, the reconstruction of super-modern infrastructures, experimentation with decentralized/ recentralized types of work entities and other structural changes, the roads towards a new phase of development have become surfaced.

Parallel with the huge global crisis of energy and production systems, the spatial order of the existing industrial structural design has revealed inefficiencies, and new orders and new design languages have been applied.

For decades new architectural-structural styles symbolizing a high-tech and post-modern era spread a doubtful attitude towards the trust and reliability of the existing design and planning styles. Very soon, different 'ironic' and 'double-coded' aesthetic fashions crystallized themselves on the features of workplaces and industrial buildings as the sensitive recipients.

At present, at the turn of the 20th Century, new tendencies and developments in the architecture of industrial buildings and workplaces are even indicating alternative theories and methods for meeting new challenges. The keywords for these growing trends in workplace design include efficiency, quality, sustainability, flexibility, synergy, locality, user friendly and uncertainty.

Industrial buildings and workplaces are complex objects, and should not be studied as fragmented, divorced, isolated phenomena. These buildings cannot even be studied thoroughly without considering their operative environmental contexts. Specific aspects that are regarded as characteristics of industrial buildings and workplaces can even be found in issues related to urban design and urban planning. A line of thought that might bring us closer to understanding the interrelationship and complexity of industrial buildings and workplaces in urban contexts are their mutual aspects such as economicality, locational decision, land-use pattern, zoning and local environmental fitness.

In industrial countries, states and municipalities often provide regulations and acts of parliament to influence locational decisions and thereby the planning strategies. In such land-use planning, 'industrial zones' are often locations for any production-related activities, from storage and assembly workshops to related offices, power-plants, laboratories, warehouses, etc. While all of these buildings can be grouped under the umbrella of 'industrial buildings' or 'workplaces', their structural design problems and their architectural solutions may still differ sharply from each other. For instance, in the design process for each industrial building and workplace, specific attention is paid to the particular function, site, building material, technique, size, safety, architectural design, work organization, productivity and so forth. These 'wicked' workplace design problems, questions and solutions are highly individualized and remain open for further investigation.

The theme of this special issue of the Nordic Journal of the Architectural Research is devoted to studies of the historical transformations, theoretical dimensions and design implementations of industrial buildings and workplaces. It is our overall goal to reflect new international research findings, experiences, methods, ideas, debates and discussions on design and planning of the present and the future of industrial buildings and workplaces. We also believe this special issue of the Journal might be seen as a step towards improving the needed cooperation between academics and professionals engaged with these issues. With this belief, we look positively at every contribution that with a critical view seeks to understand the underlying problems and trends. We appreciate efforts that through new assessments, questions and solutions are developing the role of designers and planners to take a more dynamic part in shaping a sustainable world in dialogue with the people who are directly affected by their artefacts.

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