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## MODERNITY OF WORKPLACE ARCHITECTURE

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## NOWOCZESNOŚĆ ARCHITEKTURY MIEJSC PRACY

### Abstract

Architectural traditions associated with the design of workplace architecture give way to modernity. Originality and technological novelties determine today's spatial planning of creative workplaces. Innovative ideas related to the development of a functional program for employees practicing office work mode dynamically transforms the contemporary understanding of the common workspace. Architecture becomes a working tool. It is no longer just a surface in which the processes of practising a profession take place, but also supports users by stimulating their creative invention. Modern architecture can influence the quality of the effects of its users' actions. Breaking with tradition means opening up to new solutions, that take into account the current and future needs of employees. The aim of the research is to diagnose the effects of a break with traditional thinking about the workplace on selected examples of foreign and Polish architecture. The research process was based on the methodology of inventory research, literature analysis, quantitative and statistical research and the Computer Assisted Web Interview survey.

*Keywords: Workplace architecture, modernity, mental work*

### Streszczenie

Tradycje architektoniczne związane z projektowaniem architektury miejsc pracy ustępują miejsca nowoczesności. Oryginalność oraz nowości technologiczne determinują dzisiejsze planowanie przestrzenne miejsc pracy kreatywnej. Innowacyjne pomysły związane z rozwijaniem programu funkcjonalnego dla pracowników praktykujących tryb pracy biurowej dynamicznie przekształcają współczesne rozumienie powszechnej przestrzeni pracy. Architektura staje się narzędziem pracy. Nie jest już tylko powierzchnią, w której zachodzą procesy wykonywania zawodu, ale również wspiera użytkowników stymulując ich inwencję twórczą. Nowoczesna architektura może wpływać na jakość efektów działań jej użytkowników. Zerwanie z tradycją oznacza potrzebę otwarcia się na nowe rozwiązania uwzględniające współczesne i przyszłe potrzeby pracowników. Celem badań jest zdiagnozowanie efektów zerwania z tradycyjnym myśleniem o miejscu pracy na wybranych przykładach architektury zagranicznej i polskiej. Proces badawczy oparty został o metodologię badań inwentaryzacyjnych, analizy piśmiennictwa, badań ilościowych i statystycznych oraz ankietę *Computer Assisted Web Interview*.

*Słowa kluczowe: Architektura miejsc pracy, nowoczesność, praca umysłowa*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of a workspace is a fundamental element affecting its efficiency and final value. How important is the architectural environment of the place, where the work and professional duties are performed. The advent of digitalisation and cyber technology has had a dynamic impact not only on the way people work, but also on the architectural space in its visual and functional context. Standard terms and conditions of work offered to Polish employees require constant updating in order to achieve the highest possible spatial and utility standards. Traditional Polish employee spaces are starting to be not only modernized, but also extended with additional functions for employees. This process is particularly noticeable in the sectors of intellectual work<sup>2</sup>, characterized by an innovative and creative mode of operation. Contemporary thinking about modern workspace architecture is no longer just about multifunctional furnishings or the use of innovative interior design. The design of workplace architecture was confronted with a redefinition of the concept of worker and his or her role in employee facilities. Innovative work style, focusing on the use of the potential of people employed in the company is increasingly supported by a specially programmed functional scheme. Its role is to develop and sustain the creativity of its employees. The discussed issues do not refer only to the ways of locating employee positions in a given space, but also to the core of the process of designing workplace objects. The aim of the article is to contradict or confirm the thesis that *contemporary Polish standards of workplace architecture design require modernization and updating in terms of the functional program*.

## 2. TRADITION IN POLISH WORKPLACE ARCHITECTURE

### 2.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Several research methods have been used to compile a database on workplaces. Literature research, local inspections of selected objects and community interviews with employees and employers were conducted. In order to obtain measurement indices, inventory tests of selected objects were carried out. In order to examine contemporary standards of Polish workplace architecture, six buildings located in the Wielkopolskie and Śląskie Voivodships were selected. The research has been conducted since 2017. The facilities differ in terms of location, number of employees, size of usable area, style of work and professional sector. The surveyed companies combine typology of work performance based on office work. To verify the results of the research, data was collected on foreign objects designated as reference examples of workplace architecture.

### 2.2. THE RESULTS OF THE *WALKTHROUGH* AND INVENTORY STUDIES

Traditional Polish workplace spaces are based on the strategy of architectural solutions concerning the layout of spaces dedicated strictly to the performance of professional duties<sup>3</sup>. This boils down to decisions about the organisation of work and how to provide space for employees

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<sup>2</sup> Witczak W., *Zdolność do ciężkiej pracy umysłowej*, TeKa Komisji Prawniczej PAN Oddział w Lublinie, 2008, no. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Niezabitowska E., *Projektowanie obiektów biurowych*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2006.

to carry it out. As a result, plans for multi-person and single-person rooms and open space spaces are created, which are connected by communication routes. As a result, you can encounter typical solutions available in literature, such as cellular, group, zonal or large space offices. As a result of research of selected Polish objects, the occurrence of traditional organization of rooms in cellular typology, open space or as a result of mixing these two systems was diagnosed (Table 1).

Table 1. Spatial arrangement types of the examined objects.

No.	NAME OF THE COMPANY	SPACE TYPE
1.	<i>Grupa Euvic</i>	Cellular
2.	<i>Future Processing</i>	Open space + cellular
3.	<i>G.EN. Gaz Enerģia</i>	Cellular
4.	<i>XSolve</i>	Agile office
5.	<i>Future Coworking Lab</i>	Open space + cellular
6.	<i>Biuro Huta Łabędy</i>	Cellular

*XSolve's* office is an outstanding building among the surveyed buildings. It uses a different specificity of room organization called agile office<sup>4</sup>. The space is based on the activity based working scheme<sup>5</sup>, but differs from it in the way of fulfilling professional duties. Agile office as well as activity based working distinguishes the diversity of available workstations, which results in the lack of a permanent workstation. Employees can freely change them every day depending on their needs and current preferences. Typically, standard office desks, standing boards, armchairs or hanging seats are offered. The common element of these spatial types are also the additional spaces offered to employees during the working day. These are usually single-seater, chill out or library spaces. Agile office, however, is characterized by a strong emphasis on interaction between employees. It is implemented by, among other things, providing employees with one common kitchen where meals prepared by employees are organized. The organization of this type of space also assumes the elimination of visual barriers, which results in the use of a large amount of glass and transparent surfaces, so that employees have the opportunity to have permanent visual contact. Agile office is also characterized by a lack of hierarchy between employees. The *XSolve* office was not located in the premises of the management and the owners of the company. While in the office, they occupy positions next to other employees.

### 2.3. ADDITIONAL ROOMS FOR EMPLOYEES. BREAKING TRADITION

Apart from standard working spaces, the traditional spatial elements of Polish workplace architecture are the rooms of service, social, hygiene and sanitary zones. The right to benefit from a social area which enables hygienic eating is connected with health and safety regu-

<sup>4</sup> Kasperkiewicz P., *How to create a teal space for enhancing creativity and productivity of self-managing teams*, Boldare, source: [www.boldare.com/blog/teal-space-for-creativity-and-productivity/](http://www.boldare.com/blog/teal-space-for-creativity-and-productivity/) (access: 12.06.2019).

<sup>5</sup> Lenkiewicz M., *Activity Based Working: czas na zmiany w miejscu pracy*, Harvard Business Review Polska, source: [www.hbrp.pl/b/activity-based-working-czas-na-zmiany-w-miejscu-pracy/1CzNIYS3X](http://www.hbrp.pl/b/activity-based-working-czas-na-zmiany-w-miejscu-pracy/1CzNIYS3X) (access: 04.06.2019).

lations<sup>6</sup>. Hence the obligation to provide such rooms in work areas, which is also connected with the common presence of kitchen rooms in the examined objects. Service areas ensure proper functioning of the facility and its elements enabling people to stay in it and carry out their work. Additional rooms supporting work processes are becoming an increasingly common element (Table 2). They are located in Polish enterprises to a greater or lesser extent.



III. 1. Zone for making animations. Future Processing Company, Gliwice. Photo taken by Izabela Piklikiewicz-Kęsicka on 29.03.2017

Their role is to ensure the comfort of work, increase productivity, professional development of employees and building proper relations between employees. In order to ensure the above mentioned needs, entrepreneurs decide to locate leisure and recreation zones, library rooms with literature, green zones, game rooms, multimedia zones and many others in their workplaces. The location of recreational zones at workplaces was already implemented in the second half of the 20th century<sup>7</sup>. They were present as part of a complex of industrial buildings and their aim was to provide employees with space to maintain their physical condition. Today's recreational zones are distinguished by the possibility to use them during the working day. Employees use them at any time of the day. Some companies are extending their sporting

<sup>6</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Pracy i Polityki Socjalnej z dnia 26 września 1997 r. w sprawie ogólnych przepisów bezpieczeństwa i higieny pracy (Regulation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy of September 26, 1997 on general health and safety at work regulations), Dz.U. 1997 No. 129 pos. 844, Section V.

<sup>7</sup> Henn H., Henn W., *Obiekty socjalne w zakładach przemysłowych*, Arkady, Warszawa 1974.

activities to include spa areas. Future Processing company, apart from the gymnasium, also provides its employees with massage rooms and jacuzzi. For this purpose, the company shall employ qualified personnel to look after the workers. The building also has a video games room and a special area for animation and professional photo shoots.

Table 2. Typology of additional rooms for employees

No.	NAME OF THE COMPANY	ADDITIONAL ROOMS FOR EMPLOYEES
1.	<i>Grupa Euvic</i>	Multimedia rooms, Recreational areas, Chill out zones
2.	<i>Future Processing</i>	Green areas, Thematic rooms, multimedia rooms, recreation areas, individual rooms, chill out zone, library
3.	<i>G.EN. Gaz Energgia</i>	Space for children, Theme rooms, multimedia rooms, chill out zone
4.	<i>XSolve</i>	Space for children, green areas, Theme rooms, multimedia rooms, Recreational areas, individual rooms, chill out zone
5.	<i>Future Coworking Lab</i>	Library, multimedia rooms, chill out zones
6.	<i>Biuro Huta Łabędy</i>	Multimedia rooms, Chill out zones

### 3. TRADITION GIVES WAY TO MODERNITY. NEW TRENDS IN POLISH WORKPLACE ARCHITECTURE

#### 3.1. MORE GREEN

Green areas and elements of greenery are increasingly used in Polish workplaces. It is used externally as a recreation area, as is the case, for example, in the company Future Processing in Gliwice described above. Green roofs located in office buildings are also becoming popular, among others, they were used in the Poznań office building *Za Bramką*<sup>8</sup>. In addition to outdoor use, plant elements are also well suited for indoor working environments. Both in the visual and climatic context. Modernity and availability of technological solutions make it possible to implement them on a larger and smaller scale. Green vertical walls are a popular solution, used among others in the Skanska building<sup>9</sup>. Plant elements increase the comfort of a long stay in the building, improve the quality of indoor air and can provide acoustic insulation<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> AO, *Najlepszy budynek Poznania w 2016 roku – biurowiec przy ul. Za Bramką. Nagroda Quadro przyznana.*, Bryła, 2017, source: [www.bryla.pl/bryla/7,85301,22613315,biurowiec-przy-ul-za-bramka-w-poznaniu-nowoczesna-bryla-w.html](http://www.bryla.pl/bryla/7,85301,22613315,biurowiec-przy-ul-za-bramka-w-poznaniu-nowoczesna-bryla-w.html) (access: 04.05.2019).

<sup>9</sup> PropertyDesign, *Tu zieleń wylewa się na korytarze. Oto niezwykła przestrzeń Skanska szkicu Workplace i Florabo*, PropertyDesign.pl, 2018, source: [www.propertydesign.pl/design/185/tu\\_zielen\\_wylewa\\_sie\\_na\\_korytarze\\_oto\\_niezwykla\\_przestrzen\\_skanska\\_szkicu\\_workplace\\_i\\_florabo,19511-75361.html](http://www.propertydesign.pl/design/185/tu_zielen_wylewa_sie_na_korytarze_oto_niezwykla_przestrzen_skanska_szkicu_workplace_i_florabo,19511-75361.html) (access: 02.04.2019).

<sup>10</sup> Hadart Polska, *Rośliny w biurze – zielona strategia podniesienia produktywności*, Hadart Architektura Wody i Krajobrazu, source: <http://hadart.pl/rosliny-w-biurze-zielona-strategia-podniesienia-produktywnosci/> (access: 14.03.2019).

In addition to green walls in the interior, pots are also used, both located on horizontal flat planes and inverted by suspended structures.

### 3.2. DIFFERENTIATED WORKSPACE

The research proves that Polish entrepreneurs decide to diversify their employees workspace. Opportunities arise in relation to the daily choice of another station to work. Three office buildings offering this type of choice to their employees were located in the conducted research. These are Future Processing, Xsolve and Euvic. Companies locate standard computer stations, sofas, standing stations and places in theme rooms. These are rooms stylized on the basis of a selected thematic area. In this way, employees can stay in rooms that resemble a beach or jungle. This type of solution was used, among others, in the *T-Mobile* office in Warsaw<sup>11</sup>. As a result, the employee decides himself in what position and in what environment he wants to perform his duties on a given day. The popularity of using open spaces resulted in the lack of a zone for individual work and comfort associated with excessive noise. For this purpose, individual rooms are placed in the offices, which can be used at any time. They are used not only for the work itself, but also for telephone calls and internet conferences.

### 3.3. RELAXATION AND LEISURE ZONES

Stress and nervous tension are common elements accompanying mental work. They are also factors that definitely adversely affect the effects of work and its processes. In order to maintain the mental comfort of the employees, many companies decide to invest in chill out helmets and relaxation rooms. As a result of the research, there were located such spaces in all six investigated objects. However, there are significant differences between them in terms of the size of rooms, their equipment and location. At *G. EN. Gaz Energia, Future Coworking Lab* and *the Office of the Huta Łabędy* (the Łabędy Steelworks) are part of the social zones. In other facilities, they constitute a separate room or are located in communication routes. Chill out areas are equipped with seating, conversation and interaction areas and other elements for short relaxation.

### 3.4. RECREATIONAL AREAS

The benefits of exercise are well known. They help to reduce the negative effects of long-term work. As a result, they improve the functioning of people working both individually and in teams. They can be located in the form of gymnasiums and gyms as it takes place in the studied facility of Future Processing company. A common solution are recreation zones, which do not require a cloakroom and shower facilities. They are realized using devices for team games such as billiard tables, table football tables or space for throwing a ball. *Euvic* decided on such a solution. Recreational areas include game rooms in the *Future Processing*,

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<sup>11</sup> PropertyDesign, *Kreatywne i niebanalne biuro w T-Mobile Office Park*, PropertyDesign, 2016, source: [http://www.propertydesign.pl/design/185/kreatywne\\_i\\_niebanalne\\_biuro\\_w\\_t\\_mobile\\_office\\_park,8590-33336.html](http://www.propertydesign.pl/design/185/kreatywne_i_niebanalne_biuro_w_t_mobile_office_park,8590-33336.html) (access: 02.04.2019).

*Euvic and Xsolve* offices. Such rooms can be equipped with stands for video games, board games or team games. *Xsolve*, which operates a relatively small office space (about 1 120,00 sqm), applied an interesting solution in this matter. The building has a multifunctional stage, which is used for various purposes. Both for recreational and exhibition purposes, as well as to organize group meetings.

### 3.5. MULTIMEDIA ROOMS

With the widespread use of digitisation and computer technology, multimedia rooms are becoming a kind of compulsory part of any workplace. They are realized by means of conference rooms equipped with advanced multimedia technologies such as screens, projectors and other communication devices. In the *Future Processing* office building screens for videoconferencing are also installed in corridors. Thanks to this, employees can communicate with the customer at any time and update their work progress on an ongoing basis. The company also has a special zone for recording images, equipped with appropriate equipment and screen. The *Xsolve* office decided to locate a mini cinema in its building, where employees can watch a movie or a match together. This measure is aimed at building positive employee relations and professional contacts. It is also a space for interaction and relaxation.

### 3.6. LIBRARIES

Literature and written sources are an integral part of mental work. Locating libraries in workplaces is certainly a good solution for updating the knowledge of those in employment. They can be implemented as a separate room, such as in *Future Processing*. Some companies decide to use this zone on a smaller scale. They use part of the work area and place shelves with industry literature items in it. In this way, the employer is confident that his employees are using up-to-date data sources. The library zones are an excellent place for the exchange of experiences between employees and a platform for solving professional problems.

### 3.7. LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL SPACES

As a result of the conducted research, a significant spatial relation between work spaces and additional rooms for employees was observed. Because of their function and purpose, these rooms have been called creative supplemental spaces for research purposes. They were named after them because of the benefits of their use, which are: improving professional qualifications, stimulating creativity and building an appropriate working environment. In the research process, a certain spatial arbitrariness was detected in locating creative supplemental spaces in the work surface. They are placed directly in the work space, in its vicinity, in separate rooms or in communication zones. Some companies decide to locate them in mixed mode and use several solutions in one facility. As a result, employees are free to use rooms such as libraries, relaxation and recreation areas. An important factor in choosing the type of location of additional rooms for employees is the consistency of their arrangement in the facility. They are to be primarily a working tool and access to them should be unrestricted and legible in the functional layout of the object.

## 4. SELECTED FOREIGN EXAMPLES WITH THE USE OF INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS. PRELUDE TO DESIGNING MODERN WORKPLACES

### 4.1. FACTORS GENERATING THE CREATION OF MODERN WORKPLACES

The space of workplace architecture is a source of ideas and solutions, that concern almost every area of life. It is a platform for saving human life, making political and economic decisions, providing various types of services, creating new technologies and finally building a future vision of the world. The emphasis placed on its development is therefore fully justified. Designers and scientists are constantly looking for new solutions that will improve work processes and support professionals. Especially important recipients of new workplace technologies are mental workers. They are required to have a research and inquisitive mode of operation, which in effect should result in innovative ideas concerning a given professional field. The labour sector in question concerns occupations such as doctors, engineers, authors of scientific works and other intellectual creators<sup>12</sup>. In order to improve their performance and support work processes, a properly designed architecture is necessary. Modernity plays an important role as a factor in generating progress in the creation of modern and future workplaces. The article presents the most modern solutions in workplace facilities, which may give rise to the creation of future standards of the employee environment. The examples cover many aspects. They refer both to the functional system, the use of modern technologies and commonly understood thinking about the working space.

### 4.2. MODERN USE OF GREENERY IN THE WORKPLACE

The possibilities of using greenery in the Polish workplace architecture environment have been presented above. There are, however, examples of foreign workplace architecture that are worth presenting in the context of innovative thinking about the role of plants in the workplace. One of them is *the Amazon* office building in Seattle. The project was designed by the *NBBJ* architectural studio. The company's headquarters was designed as a complex of buildings, some of which were built of three balls. They constitute a place for over 40 000 plants from all over the world<sup>13</sup>. Employees from the rest of the building complex have the opportunity to spend time among the plants in the form of relaxation, business meetings or as part of their professional work. The building is characterized by an interesting building structure in terms of technology. The balls were made of 620 tons of steel and embedded in a concrete substrate. The construction was covered with glass panes. *Amazon* representatives emphasize that their research shows that the facility has a beneficial effect on stimulating creativity and brain function. The aim of the company's investment in this facility was to create a meeting place for employees and a space for cooperation among biodiversity. This facility is dedicated to about 800 employees.

Another example of creative thinking about the role of greenery in the workplace is *the Timberland* office in Stratham. The footwear company provides its employees with vegetable

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<sup>12</sup> Witczak W., *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Cogley B. *Plant-filled spheres open at Amazon headquarters in Seattle*, Dezeen, 2018, source: <https://www.dezeen.com/2018/01/30/plant-filled-seattle-spheres-open-amazon-headquarters/> (access: 05.03.2019).

and fruit gardens. The people employed by the company are involved in the breeding process, taking care of the development of the plants together. The garden is home to pear, plum and berry farms, among others. Fruit and vegetables are donated to a local food bank or sold to employees. The local community is also involved in office gardening activities.

#### 4.3. DOGS IN THE WORKPLACE

*Nestle Purina*, based in the UK, enables its employees to bring their dogs to work. The company produces, among other things, animal feed. The owner of the company claims that thanks to the possibility of the employees' dogs staying in the workplace, the atmosphere is more friendly<sup>14</sup>. The employees also express their satisfaction when they say that the presence of a dog helps them to relax during a busy working day. The company believes that the presence of a dog at work warms the image of their company and contributes to positive behaviour among groups of employees. It turns out that *Nestle Purina* is not the only company that can bring your pet to work. *Kurgo Products*, *Pedigree* and *Whiskas* also decided on such a solution. During the research process it was found that also in the Warsaw branch of *Nestle Purina*, employees were authorized in 2016 to bring four-legged pets to the office. Perhaps in the future other professional sectors will opt for such a solution and the presence of animals in the workplace will become widespread.

#### 4.4. SLEEP AT THE WORKPLACE

The fight against stress and overwork is one of the biggest challenges for employers and employees. *NASA*, as well as *Google*, offered its employees an interesting solution to this problem. Companies offer their employees sleeping spaces. This involves the use of a suitable technique which involves the ability to take short 20–30-minute naps during the working day. They are designed to ensure rapid regeneration of the body and a return to professional challenges. Snooze rooms can be replaced by special devices called *Nap pod*. They look like a deckchair, which is equipped with a special helmet that allows you to calm down and move faster into the sleep phase. Enterprises quite reasonably argue the presence of sleep zones in the workplace. Sleepy areas allow the body to rest after a long business trip involving, for example, a change in the time zone. In this situation, sleep at work allows the employee to attend scheduled meetings that cannot be postponed. This type of solution is also dedicated to employees with children, who may affect the daily sleep rhythm at night.

### 5. MODERN NEEDS OF THE USERS OF POLISH MENTAL WORKPLACES

A Computer Assisted Web Interviews survey was conducted to investigate the utility needs of Polish users of intellectual workplaces. The study was conducted in March 2018. The survey was attended by 88 people aged 20 to over 50. The survey used 18 questions. As a result of the research, modern needs of users of Polish intellectual workplaces were diagnosed. For

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<sup>14</sup> Ferguson D., *Paws for thought: why allowing dogs in the office is a good idea*, article *The Guardian*, source: [www.theguardian.com/money/2016/may/18/dogs-in-office-canine-colleagues-staff-wellbeing](http://www.theguardian.com/money/2016/may/18/dogs-in-office-canine-colleagues-staff-wellbeing) (access: 23.10.2017).

the most part, they carry out their duties in an office mode or with elements of office work. On the day of the research, the respondents worked in educational institutions, courts and universities. 56% of the respondents admitted that innovative and creative ideas provide them with time spent outside work. The level of employee satisfaction with the current workplace environment was examined. 65% of respondents are satisfied with the conditions in which they perform their professional duties. 87,5% admitted, that their work requires them to create creative and innovative solutions. Respondents were asked what kind of creative supplemental space they would like to use to support their work processes. The question is set with multiple selections. 51% of respondents believe that rest areas and chill out areas would have a positive impact on their work effects. 44% chose green spaces and water as a determining spatial factor to increase the comfort of daily work. 39% of employees would like to be able to use recreational spaces. 35% of those surveyed decided to choose nap zones. 23% of respondents would like to be able to use individual work zones. The rest decided to choose thematic (18%) and multimedia (18%) rooms for dogs (8%), office gardens (8%) and libraries (7%). 52% said, that there are no creative supplemental spaces in their workplace.

## 6. SUMMARY

The research process has shown that contemporary Polish standards for workplace architecture design need to be modernised and updated in terms of the functional programme. In order to create modernity and modern workplaces, it is necessary to be aware of the progress made in the architecture of workplaces and to accept the changes it brings. Shaping innovative workplaces with a particular focus on user needs seems to be an inevitable action, that can generate processes for shaping the future vision of our world. To this end, it is not necessary to break away from traditions carrying knowledge and project experience, but to develop and modernise them. Due to the contemporary universality of international cooperation with foreign entrepreneurs, the Polish architecture of workplaces should strive to ensure the best possible conditions for the creation and maintenance of the global cooperation environment. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to create an innovative architectural working environment, which will use tools to support the development of employees and ensure their comfort at work. The belief in originality and technological innovation, thus realized, may influence the building of a vision of modernity in the future.

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