

Aarhus School of Architecture // Design School Kolding // Royal Danish Academy

Jørn Utzon's rapprochement with the workplace in postwar Iran

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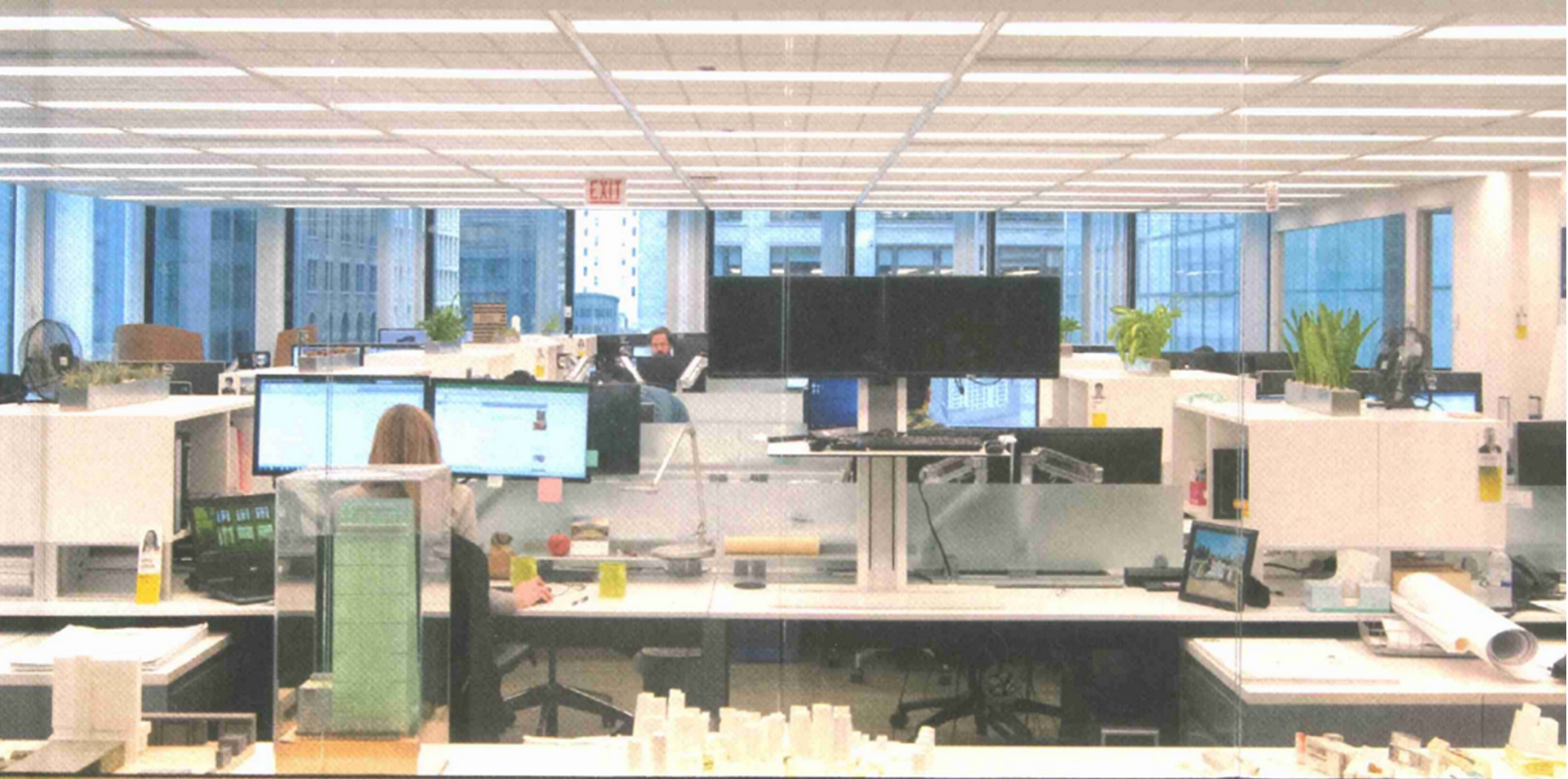
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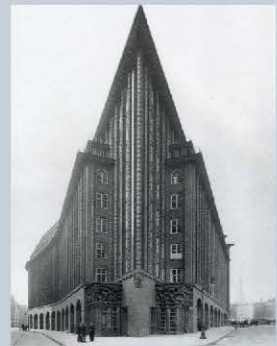
BACK TO THE OFFICE

50 revolutionary office buildings and how they sustained





1895 Reliance Building
Burnham and Root



1924 Chilehaus
Höger



1925 Tribune Tower
Howells and Hood



1935 Kirovsky District Town Hall
Trotsky



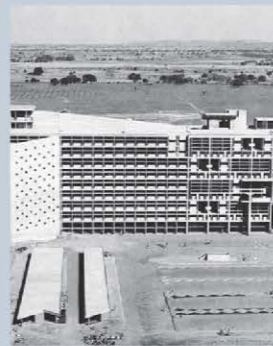
1938 Palazzo Montecatini
Poni



1940 Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana
Guerrieri, La Padula and Romano



1941 Aarhus City Hall
Jacobsen and Møller



1953 Secretariat Building
Jeanneret and Le Corbusier



1955 Rautatalo
Aalto



1956 Price Tower
Wright



1956 National Pensions Institute
Aalto



1958 Van Leer Headquarters
Breuer



1958 Inland Steel Building
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



1958 Seagram Building
Mies van der Rohe



1958 Kagawa Prefectural Office
Tange



1960 Pirelli Tower
Poni



1960 Nestlé Headquarters
Tschumi



1960 Pepsi-Cola Headquarters
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



1961 Buch und Ton
Schnelle



1962 Bell Labs Holmdel Complex
Saarinen



1962 Tomado House
Maaskant



1962 Home Federal Savings and Loan
Mies van der Rohe



1962 Enso-Gutzeit Headquarters
Aalto



1962 Bank Melli University Branch
Ulzon



1962 Bacardi Headquarters
Mies van der Rohe



1964 Unilever Headquarters
Moser, Hentrich, Petschigg, Rüping



1964 Johnson Wax Headquarters Europe
Maaskant



1964 Erieview Tower
Harrison and Abramovitz



1964 John Deere Headquarters
Saarinen



1964 Palaceside Building
Sekki and Hayashi



1966 Finland Haus
HPP



1966 Osram Administration Building
Henn



1966 Meguro Ward Office
Murano



1967 Ford Foundation
Roche and Dinkeloo



1967 Shizuoka Newspaper Building
Tange



1971 Communist Party Headquarters
Niemeyer



1972 Central Beheer
Hertzberger



1973 City (Uni)-Hochhaus
Henselmann



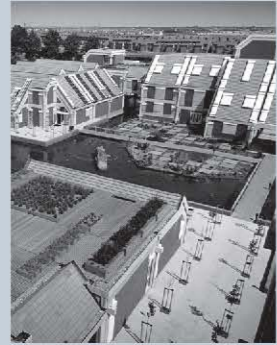
1973 Chicago Federal Center
Mies van der Rohe



1974 BMW Headquarters
Schwanzer



1978 Danmarks Nationalbank
Jacobsen



1982 Pendorp
Bonnema



1985 HSBC
Foster + Partners



1987 SAS Frøsundavik Office Building
Torp



1989 Grande Arche
Von Spreckelsen and Andreu

46 ONCE REVOLUTIONARY AND
ICONIC OFFICE BUILDINGS...



1991 Delfse Poort
Bonnema



1895 Reliance Building
Burnham and Root



1924 Chilehaus
Höger



1925 Tribune Tower
Howells and Hood



1935 Kirovsky District Town Hall
Trotsky



1938 Palazzo Montecatini
Poni



1940 Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana
Guerini, La Padula and Romano



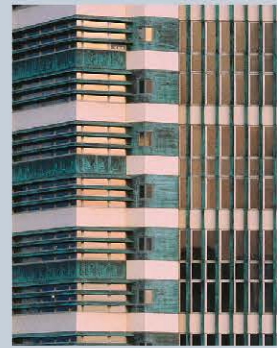
1941 Aarhus City Hall
Jacobsen and Møller



1953 Secretariat Building
Jeanneret and Le Corbusier



1955 Rautatalo
Aalto



1956 Price Tower
Wright



1956 National Pensions Institute
Aalto



1958 Van Leer Headquarters
Breuer



1958 Inland Steel Building
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



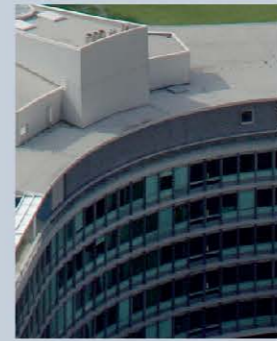
1958 Seagram Building
Mies van der Rohe



1958 Kagawa Prefectural Office
Tange



1960 Pirelli Tower
Poni



1960 Nestlé Headquarters
Tschumi



1960 Pepsi-Cola Headquarters
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



1961 Buch und Ton
Schnelle



1962 Bell Labs Holmdel Complex
Saarinen



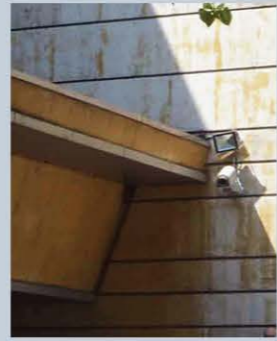
1962 Tomado House
Maaskant



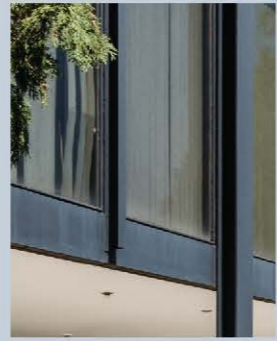
1962 Home Federal Savings and Loan
Mies van der Rohe



1962 Enso-Gutzeit Headquarters
Aalto



1962 Bank Melli University Branch
Ulzon



1962 Bacardi Headquarters
Mies van der Rohe



1964 Unilever Headquarters
Moser, Hentrich, Petschigg, Rüping



1964 Johnson Wax Headquarters Europe
Maaskant



1964 Erieview Tower
Harrison and Abramovitz



1964 John Deere Headquarters
Saarinen



1966 Palaceside Building
Sekki and Hayashi



1966 Finland Haus
HPP



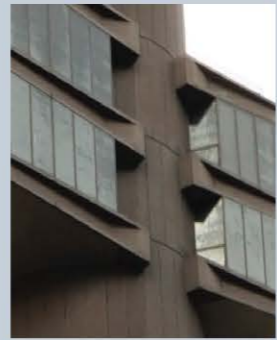
1966 Osrnam Administration Building
Henn



1966 Meguro Ward Office
Murano



1967 Ford Foundation
Roche and Dinkeloo



1967 Shizuoka Newspaper Building
Tange



1971 Communist Party Headquarters
Niemeyer



1972 Centraal Beheer
Hertzberger



1973 City (Uni)-Hochhaus
Henselmann



1973 Chicago Federal Center
Mies van der Rohe



1974 BMW Headquarters
Schwanzer



1978 Danmarks Nationalbank
Jacobsen



1982 Pendorp
Bonnema



1985 HSBC
Foster + Partners



1987 SAS Frøsundavik Office Building
Torp

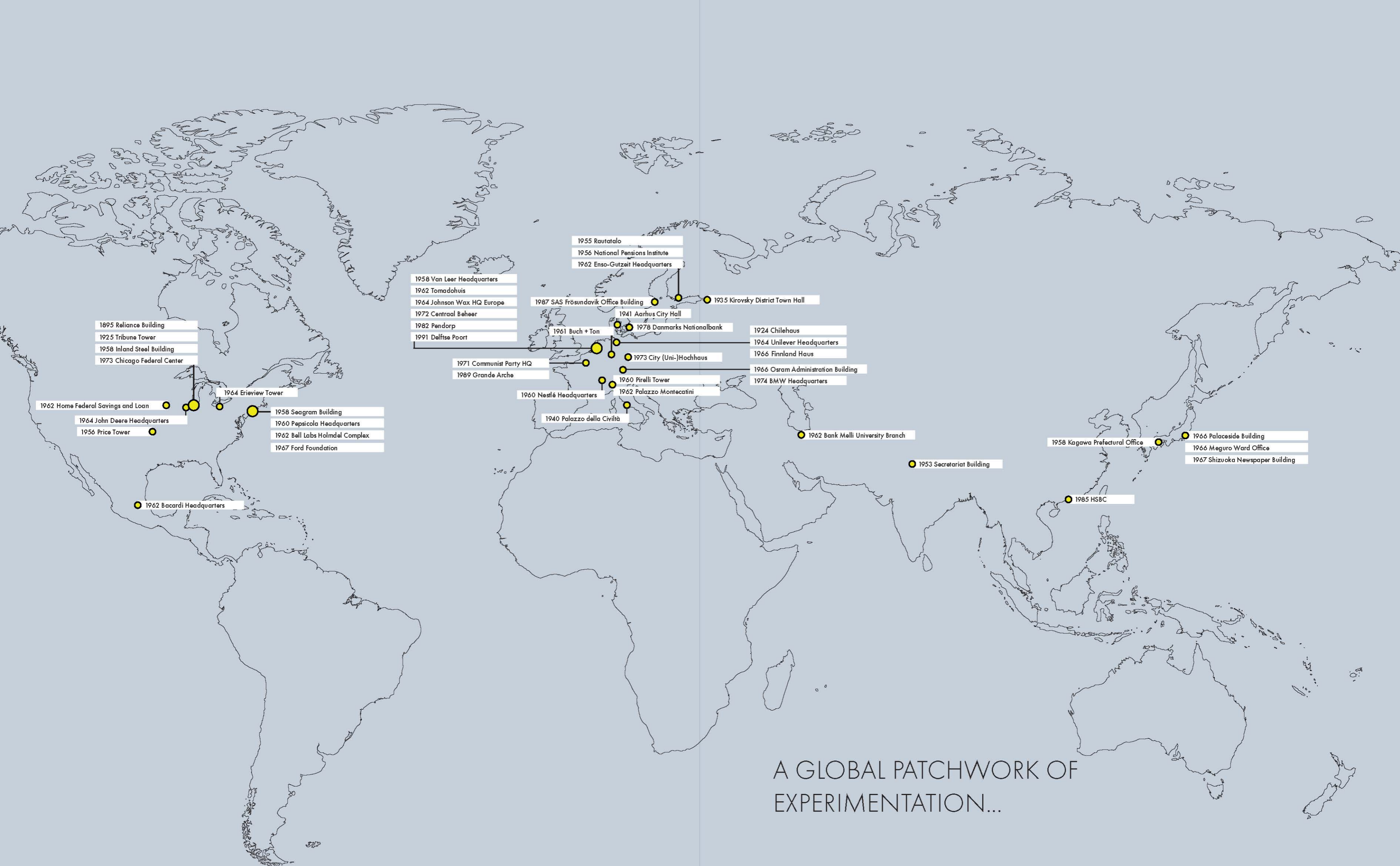


1989 Grande Arche
Von Spreckelsen and Andreu

... AND WHAT IS LEFT OF THEM.



1991 Delftse Poort
Bonnema



1895 Reliance Building
 1925 Tribune Tower
 1958 Inland Steel Building
 1973 Chicago Federal Center

1962 Home Federal Savings and Loan
 1964 John Deere Headquarters
 1956 Price Tower

1964 Erieview Tower
 1958 Seagram Building
 1960 Pepsi-Cola Headquarters
 1962 Bell Labs Holmdel Complex
 1967 Ford Foundation

1962 Bacardi Headquarters

1958 Van Leer Headquarters
 1962 Tomadohuis
 1964 Johnson Wax HQ Europe
 1972 Centraal Beheer
 1982 Pendorp
 1991 Delftse Poort

1971 Communist Party HQ
 1989 Grande Arche

1960 Nestlé Headquarters
 1940 Palazzo della Civiltà

1955 Rautatalo
 1956 National Pensions Institute
 1962 Enso-Gutzeit Headquarters

1987 SAS Frösundavik Office Building

1941 Aarhus City Hall
 1978 Danmarks Nationalbank

1961 Buch + Ton
 1973 City (Uni-)Hochhaus

1960 Pirelli Tower
 1962 Palazzo Montecatini

1962 Palazzo della Civiltà

1924 Chilehaus
 1964 Unilever Headquarters
 1966 Finland Haus

1966 Osram Administration Building
 1974 BMW Headquarters

1962 Bank Melli University Branch

1953 Secretariat Building

1958 Kagawa Prefectural Office

1985 HSBC

1966 Palaceside Building
 1966 Meguro Ward Office
 1967 Shizuoka Newspaper Building

A GLOBAL PATCHWORK OF
 EXPERIMENTATION...

...BY ARCHITECTS...

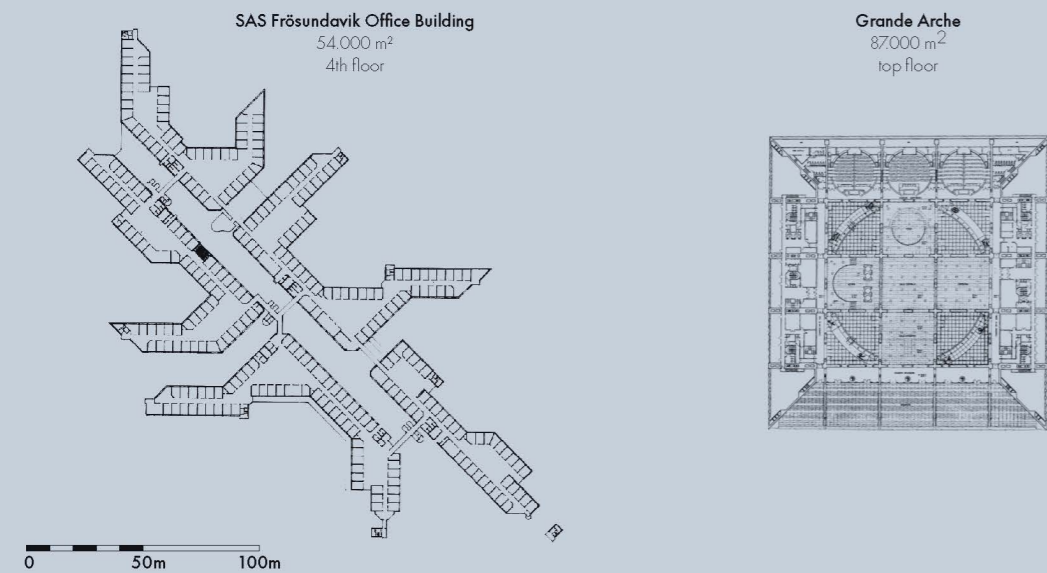
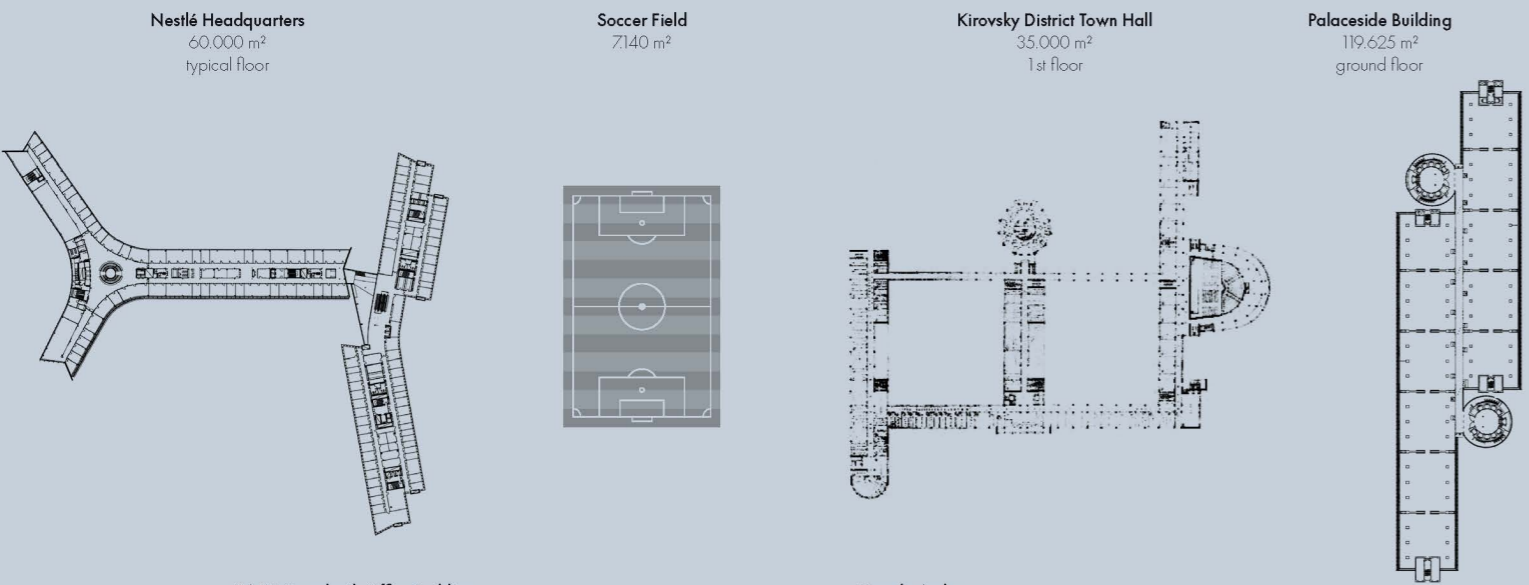
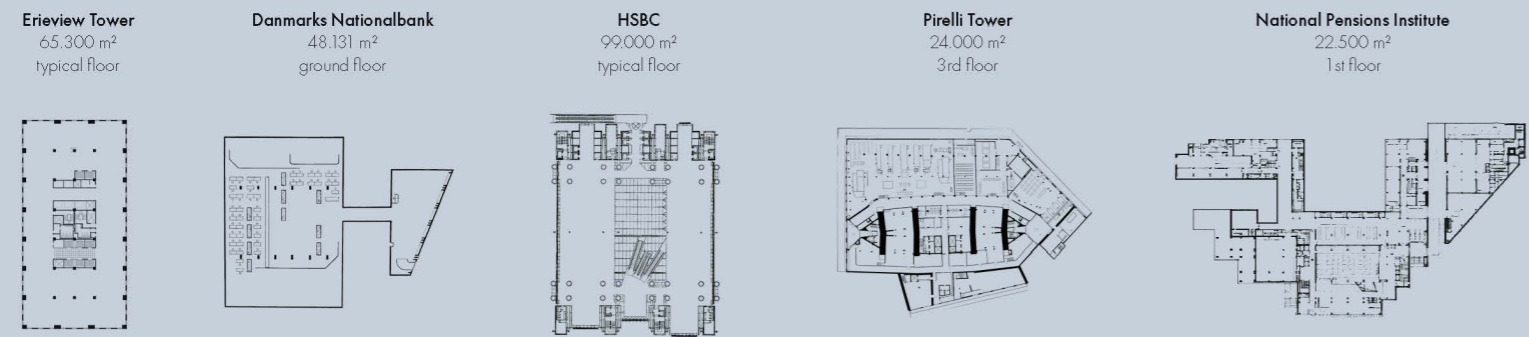
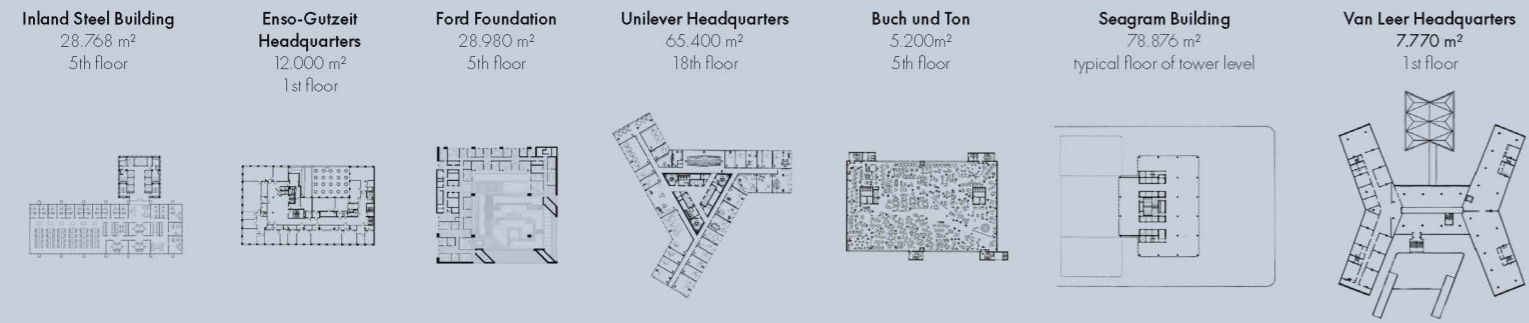
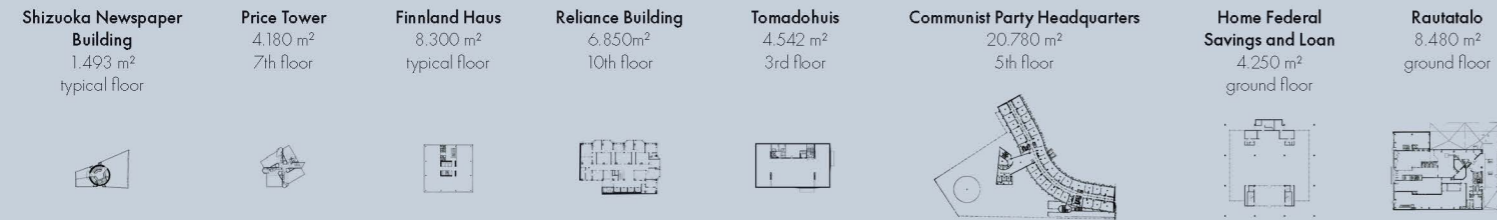


1. Abe Bonnema (1926-2001) Pendorp, Delftse Poort | 2. Wallace Harrison (1895-1981) Erievue Tower | 3. Johan Otto von Spreckelsen (1929-1987) Grande Arche
 4. Karl Schwanzer (1918-1975) BMW Headquarters | 5. Norman Foster (1935-) HSBC | 6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) Chicago Federal Center
7. Paul Andreu (1938-2018) Grande Arche | 8. Jean Tschumi (1904-1962) Nestlé Headquarters | 9. Jern Utzon (1918-2008) Bank Melli University Branch | 10. Bruce Graham (1925-2010) Inland Steel Building
 11. Hubert Petschnigg (1913-1997) & 12. Helmut Henrich (1905-2001) Unilever Headquarters, Finland Haus | 13. Kevin Roche (1922-2019) Ford Foundation, Bell Labs Holmdel Complex
14. Charles B. Atwood (?-1894) Reliance Building | 15. Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) Rautatalo, National Pensions Institute | 16. Max Abramovitz (1908-2004) Erievue Tower | 17. Eero Saarinen (1910-1961) Bell Labs Holmdel Complex | 18. Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971) Aarhus City Hall | 19. Johann Friedrich Höger (1877-1949) Chilehaus | 20. Shoji Hayashi (1928 - 2011) Palaceside Building
21. Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912) Reliance Building | 22. John Mead Howells (1868-1959) Tribune Tower | 23. Huig Maaskant (1907-1977) Tomadohuis, Johnson Wax Headquarters Europe
 24. Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) Van Leer Headquarters | 25. Hermann Henselmann (1905-1995) City (Uni-)Hochhaus | 26. Herman Hertzberger (1932-) Centraal Beheer
27. Gio Ponti (1891-1979) Palazzo Montecatini | 28. Erik Møller (1909-2002) Aarhus City Hall | 29. Noy Abramovich Trotsky (1895-1940) Kirovsky District Town Hall
 30. Ernesto La Padula (1902-1968) Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana | 31. Togo Murano (1891-1984) Meguro Ward Office | 32. John Dinkeloo (1918-1981) Ford Foundation, Bell Labs Holmdel Complex
 33. Le Corbusier (1887-1965) Secretariat Building | 34. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) Price Tower | 35. Raymond Hood (1881-1934) Tribune Tower
 36. Pierre Jeanneret (1896-1967) Secretariat Building | 37. Kenzo Tange (1913-2005) Kagawa Prefectural Office, Shizuoka Newspaper Building
 38. Giovanni Guerrini (1887-1972) Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana | 39. Walter Henn (1912-2006) Osram Administration Building | 40. Walter Netsch (1920-2008) Inland Steel Building

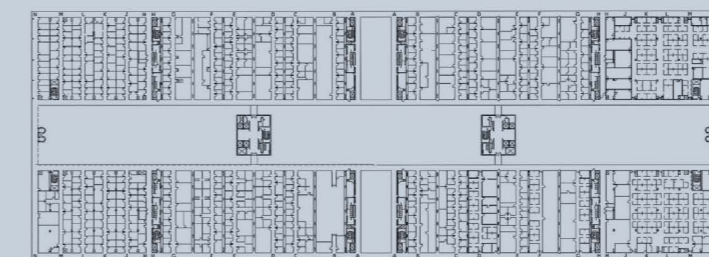
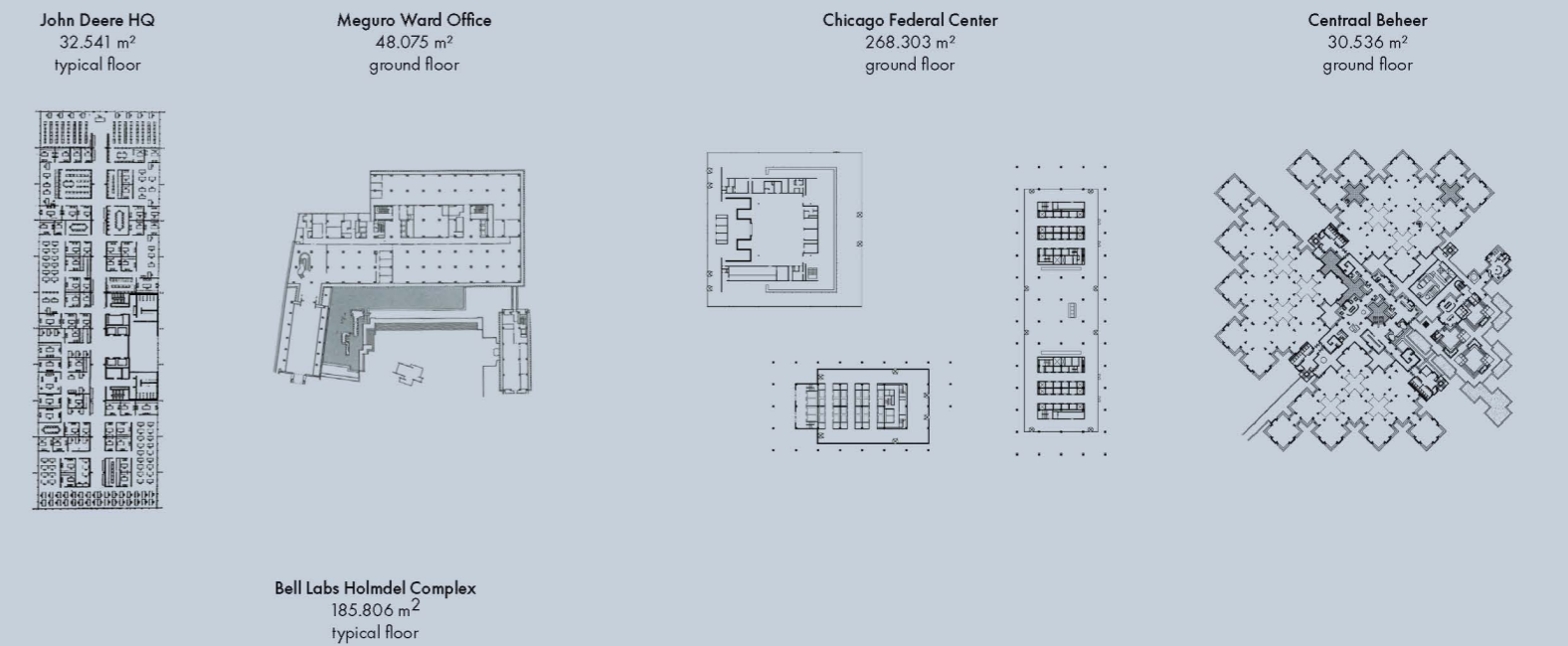
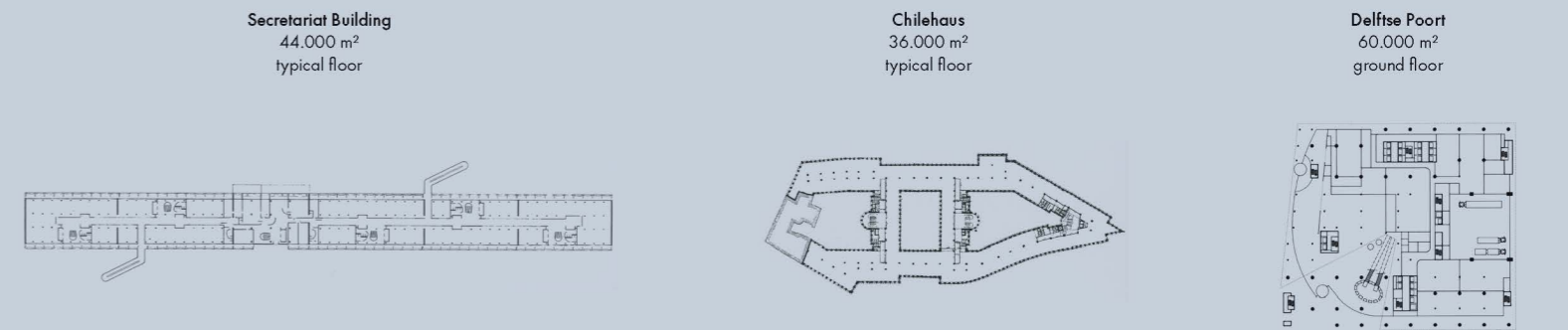
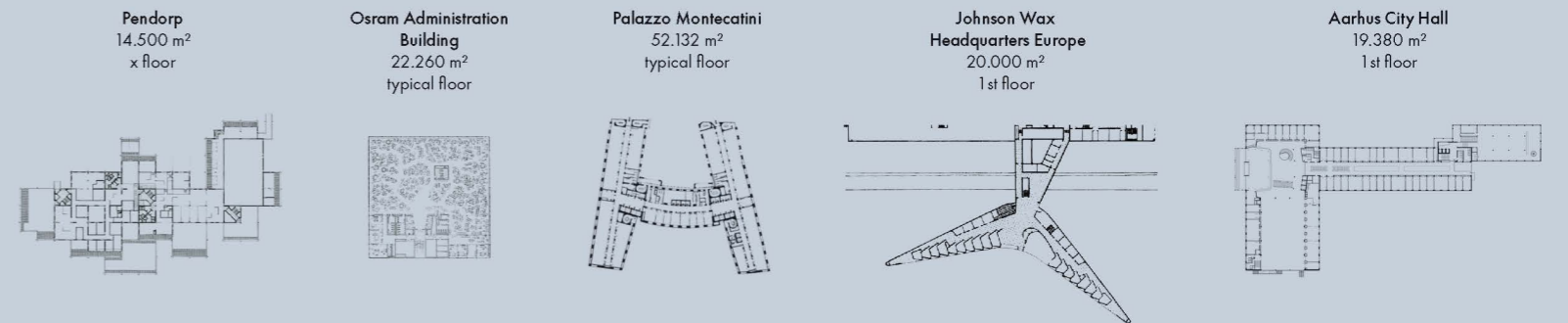
...AND THEIR CLIENTS...



1. Henry Brarens Sloman (1848-1931) Chilehaus | 2. Bernard van Leer (1883-1958) Van Leer Headquarters | 3. Harold C. Price (1888-1962) Price Tower | 4. Robert McCormick (1880-1955) Tribune Tower
5. Reinhard Mohn (1921-2008) Buch und Ton | 6. Jan Carlzon (1941-) SAS Frösundavik Office Building | 7. Phyllis Lambert (1927-) Seagram Building | 8. Joseph Patterson (1879-1946) Tribune Tower
 9. Guido Donegani (1877-1947) Palazzo Montecatini | 10. Henry Townley Heald (1904-1975) Ford Foundation
11. Alfred Steele (1900-1959) Pepsi-Cola Headquarters | 12. Jonathan Fletcher (1914-2004) Home Federal Savings and Loan | 13. Clarence B. Randall (1891-1967) Inland Steel Building
 14. William A. Hewitt (1914-1998) John Deere Headquarters | 15. Jan van der Togt (1905-1995) Tomadohuis | 16. Jose "Pepin" Bosch (1898-1994) Bacardi Headquarters
 17. Masanori Kaneko (1907-1996) Kagawa Prefectural Office
18. Anthony J. Celebrezze (1910-1998) Erievue Tower | 19. François Mitterrand (1916-1996) Grande Arche | 20. William Ellery Hale (1836-1898) Reliance Building



0 50m 100m



...LEAVING
UNIQUE
FOOTPRINTS...

1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

- Reliance Building, Burnham and Root
- Chilehaus, Höger
- Tribune Tower, Howells and Hood
- Kirovsky District Town Hall, Trotsky
- Palazzo Montecatini, Ponti
- Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Guerrini, La Padula and Romano
- Aarhus City Hall, Jacobsen and Møller
- Secretariat Building, Jeanneret, Le Corbusier
- Rautatalo, Aalto
- Price Tower, Wright
- National Pensions Institute, Aalto
- Van Leer Headquarters, Breuer
- Inland Steel Building, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)
- Seagram Building, Mies van der Rohe
- Kagawa Prefectural Office, Tange
- Pirelli Tower, Ponti
- Nestle Headquarters, Tschumi
- Pepsicola Headquarters, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)
- Buch und Ton, Schnelle
- Bell Labs Holmdel Complex, Saarinen
- Tomado House, Maaskant
- Home Federal Savings and Loan, Mies van der Rohe
- Enso-Gutzeit Headquarters, Aalto
- Bank Melli University Branch, Utzon
- Bacardi Headquarters, Mies van der Rohe
- Unilever Headquarters, Hentrich, Ptschnigg and Ruping (HPP)
- Johnson Wax Headquarters Europe, Maaskant
- Erievew Tower, Harrison and Abramovitz
- John Deere Headquarters, Saarinen
- Palaceside Building, Sekkei and Hayashi
- Finnland Haus, Hentrich, Ptschnigg and Ruping (HPP)
- Osram Administration Building, Henn
- Meguro Ward Office, Murano
- Ford Foundation, Roche and Dinkeloo
- Shizuoka Newspaper Building, Tange
- Communist Party Headquarters, Niemeyer
- Centraal Beheer, Hertzberger
- City (Uni-)Hochhaus, Henselmann
- Chicago Federal Center, Mies van der Rohe
- BMW Headquarters, Schwanzer
- Danmarks Nationalbank, Jacobsen
- Pendorp, Bonnema
- HSBC, Foster + Partners
- SAS Frøsundavik Office Building, Torp
- Grande Arche, Von Spreckelsen and Andreu
- Delftse Poort, Bonnema

50 year life-span

... AND WHERE WE TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED IN THEIR LIFETIME...

design and construction
lifetime
competition
award
significant renovation
demolition
building for sale
building sold
main tenant moves out
change of function
(national) heritage designation



1962

Solmaz Sadeghi and Ali T. Dinani (Inter-Esse Studio)

BANK MELLI UNIVERSITY BRANCH

**Scene and Scenario: Jørn Utzon' rapprochement
with the workplace in postwar Iran**

In conversation with Henrik Sten Møller in 2004, Jørn Utzon summarized his foremost intention throughout his career: "The most important thing is to build for people... Being an architect is, for me, being a humanist."¹ Utzon's Bank Melli exemplifies this approach, acting as a backdrop for urban scenes from quotidian life to epochal struggles. However, the ideological foundations of each phase brought many difficulties in following the architect's disegno.

For Iran, the 20th century was the century of nationalization, for both the banking system (1928) and later the oil industry (1951). Postwar Iran pursued rapid urban growth during the reign of Shah Pahlavi II. The oil boom, as much as the social and geopolitical reconfiguration, provided an international stage to explore historical influences and engineering solutions which are reflected in national projects like Utzon's Bank Melli.²

A major renovation in 2010 extended the area for workstations partitioned by ready-to-assemble elements in the hall, re-paved the floors, installed LED lighting under the V-shaped beams, added a glass partition wall on the first-floor balcony, to separate the space from the atrium, replaced the frequent mullions on the façade with a lesser number of aluminum double-glazed windows, filled in openings between three beams above the entrance; and added steel handrails to the steps.

In 2015, aluminum composite panels covered the façade, as part of an effort by the bank to rebrand itself as more upmarket. Alerted by social media, architects and students protested on the bank's steps, leading to the removal of the cladding and later, in 2019, to the listing of Bank Melli as a National Heritage Monument. Yet, following protests of November 2019 against the petrol crisis, the bank intensified its security in 2021 by solidifying half of the entrance next to ATMs with metal panels.

Private interests associated with state dogmas have adversely affected what the bank is. In addition to symbolization and capitalization as the political underpinnings of Pahlavi national projects like Bank Melli, after the revolution, there was a tendency towards the privatization of the public domain. In the bank, privatization serves as a sort of dictated setting: the silent ideology that shrinks public space, invisible but impacting everything. The building has lost dignity as a result. The initial changes to Utzon's design during construction and the many subsequent changes over the decades demonstrate the contrast between the architect's original vision and the interests of the bank's directors. This division has turned into a conflict between the bank and the public over the authenticity of the renovations.

notes

- 1 H.S. Møller and V. Udsen, *Jørn Utzon Houses*, (Living Architecture, 2004), p.23.
- 2 Sadeghi, S and Dinani, A., "Between Red and Yellow: Utzon's Melli Bank in Tehran 1959–1962," *International Utzon100 Symposium*, Utzon centre, Aalburgh, 2018.
- 3 See: Richard Weston, *Utzon: inspiration, vision, architecture* (Blodal, 2002) and Michael Asgaard Andersen, *Jørn Utzon: drawings and buildings* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2013).
- 4 Jørn Utzon, "The Bank Melli Tehran, Iran," *Zodiac*, Vol. 5, 1959, pp.94–95.
- 5 Adrian Forty, *Words and buildings: A vocabulary of modern architecture*, (Thames & Hudson, London, 2000).
- 6 Mohsen Foroughi (1907–1983) developed his proposals mainly by Bank Melli: Bandar Anzali (1939), Tehran (1948), Rasht (1951), and Bank Rahni (1956).

building credits

architect: Jørn Utzon

photo credits

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2019

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