

# Working Orders

Long before industrialization produced canonical buildings or recognizable typologies, it reorganized territories, redistributed populations, reshaped everyday life, and established enduring relationships between work, space, and power. The architectures that emerged from these processes did not merely accommodate production; they articulated social hierarchies, encoded political ambitions, and gave material form to changing conceptions of labor itself. From infrastructural landscapes and agricultural reforms to company towns, domestic interiors, and post-industrial ruins, labor has functioned as a structuring principle of the built environment at multiple, interdependent scales. As Henri Lefebvre famously insists, “(social) space is a (social) product,”<sup>1</sup> a formulation that allows labor to be read not merely as an activity housed by architecture, but as a force that actively produces spatial relations across territory, city, and everyday life.

The volume *Architectures of Labor. Narratives on Industry and Cities* departs from the premise that labor cannot be confined to the factory or reduced to architectural types. Instead, it approaches labor as a spatial condition that traverses territories, institutions, homes, and landscapes, leaving behind material traces that persist long after productive systems have transformed or disappeared. The contributions assembled here investigate how architectures of labor have been conceived, inhabited, contested, and reinterpreted across different political regimes, economic models, and cultural contexts. Taken together, they propose a reading of industrial heritage as a dynamic field in which past regimes of work continue to inform contemporary spatial practices.

The contributions gathered in this issue span a wide range of geographies, political contexts, temporalities, and analytical scales. From maritime towns and agrarian landscapes to socialist industrial cities, domestic interiors, post-industrial ruins, and speculative futures, the articles approach labor through infrastructures, housing, education, gender, representation, and law. This diversity is not incidental. It reflects the fact that labor has never produced a singular architectural form or spatial logic, but rather a multiplicity of regimes through which societies organized production, structured everyday life, and articulated collective aspirations. The issue therefore resists a unifying typology or linear narrative, proposing instead a constellation of cases that reveal how deeply labor has permeated territories, institutions, and imaginaries.

## Landscapes After Labor: An Opening Conversation

The issue opens with a conversation with **Iris Dupper**, landscape architect and partner at Latz + Partner, whose work has been instrumental in shaping contemporary approaches to post-industrial landscapes in Europe. The interview situates industrial heritage within a long-duration perspective that privileges process, material continuity, and ecological succession over formal preservation. Dupper's reflections articulate a way of working with inherited structures that refuses the opposition between conservation and transformation, instead proposing an ethics of engagement grounded in reading, reuse, and temporal openness.

Central to the conversation is the idea that industrial landscapes are not frozen remnants of a concluded era, but rather sites in which multiple temporalities coexist: the rational geometries of production, the scars of abandonment, spontaneous ecological processes, and persistent social

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1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 26.

narratives. Dupper emphasizes the importance of identifying “identity-giving elements,” from monumental structures to modest infrastructural fragments, and of allowing them to remain active agents within new spatial configurations. Decay is framed as a form of knowledge that reveals how materials behave, how nature intervenes, and how places adapt over time.

The interview establishes several conceptual threads that resonate throughout the issue: the refusal of *tabula rasa* approaches, the productive tension between memory and future use, and the recognition of labor’s traces as both material and affective. It also foregrounds the political dimension of industrial transformation, particularly in contexts where redevelopment pressures threaten to erase social meaning in favor of aestheticized reuse. As such, the conversation provides a critical lens through which the subsequent contributions can be read: not as isolated case studies, but as part of a broader inquiry into how landscapes after labor can be responsibly inhabited and reimaged.

### **Territorial Regimes of Industry**

The first set of contributions frames labor at the scale of territory, examining how industrialization functioned as a tool of spatial organization and national modernization. Here, industry appears as an expansive system that reorganized coastlines, agricultural landscapes, and infrastructural networks, producing new relationships between natural resources, technical innovation, and social life.

**Andrew Gipe-Lazarou’s** study of Marblehead, Massachusetts, offers a nuanced account of industrialization unfolding through maritime experimentation rather than through the canonical factory model. Tracing successive cycles of fishing, shipbuilding, shoemaking, and seaplane production, the article shows how labor adapted to the specific geography of a coastal town, generating an industrialism embedded in landscape, seasonal rhythms, and proximity. The coastline itself becomes an infrastructural surface, continuously reshaped by work practices that blur distinctions between urban form, production, and everyday life.

A different, yet equally territorial logic underpins the analysis by **İrem Baz Sözüer and Nisa Semiz** of Sümerbank textile factories in early Republican Türkiye. Their article examines how state-led industrialization was conceived as a comprehensive modernization project that integrated production facilities with housing, education, leisure, and cultural life. The social centers embedded within these factory complexes emerge as key architectural instruments through which a modern worker identity was constructed, aligning bodily routines, social practices, and ideological narratives within a carefully designed spatial framework.

**Isabel Rodríguez de la Rosa’s** examination of Spanish autarkic agro-industrial landscapes further expands the territorial scope of labor by focusing on large-scale agrarian transformation under Franco’s regime. Through the case of the Badajoz Plan, the article demonstrates how water management, colonization policies, and infrastructural investment converged to produce a vast factory–territory system. This system reconfigured rural landscapes and social structures alike, producing a new environment often misrecognized today as “natural,” despite its recent, highly engineered origins.

Together, these contributions demonstrate that territorial regimes of industry operate through distinct but comparable logics: adaptive engagement with landscape, state-led modernization, and authoritarian planning. These large-scale industrial landscapes reflect what Jean-Louis Cohen has described as the condition of modern architecture’s “permanent mobilization,” in which industry, infrastructure, and planning function as coordinated territorial instruments of political organization.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, architecture operates not through autonomous form, but rather through the continuous structuring of the territory itself, shaped by logistical imperatives and ideological projects that extend well beyond the factory. By foregrounding territory as a primary scale of analysis, this section establishes the foundational context for the subsequent discussions of urban communities, domestic infrastructures, and post-industrial afterlives.

2 Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 13.

## Socialist Urbanization and Industrial Communities

The second thematic constellation shifts the focus from territory to urban forms generated by socialist industrialization. In these contexts, labor structured cities and settlements not only economically, but also socially and culturally, producing environments in which housing, public amenities, and production were conceived as parts of a unified system. Unlike capitalist industrialization, which often generated fragmented urban growth, socialist urbanization explicitly sought coherence: the spatial alignment of work and life, the synchronization of collective routines, and the architectural articulation of social belonging. As David Harvey has observed, “spatial forms are created to facilitate production, but they outlive the conditions that created them,”<sup>3</sup> a temporal mismatch that becomes particularly visible in post-socialist cities, where industrial urbanism persists even as its economic foundations erode. This section examines how industrial communities were planned, inhabited, and transformed within such frameworks, with a focus on the material and social legacies of socialist urbanism.

**Barbora Vacková** and **Nina Bartošová** address the company town of Zlín as a paradigmatic case in which industrial rationality extended into the residential sphere. Rather than centering on the factory as a monument of production, the article examines housing as a living component of industrial heritage, one that continues to structure daily life long after the original economic system has shifted. The authors focus on the tensions between preservation and adaptation, highlighting how standardized housing typologies designed to support industrial efficiency now accommodate contemporary forms of living. Through the notion of “expert activism,” the article explores the role of architects, planners, and local actors in negotiating between regulatory frameworks and lived practices. Zlín thus emerges as a site where the socialist project of integrating labor and life persists in altered form, embedded in the city’s ordinary fabric.

**Vladimir Bojković** and **Jelena Bajić Šestović** examine the urban development of Nikšić through the lens of the Boris Kidrič Ironworks, foregrounding the role of heavy industry in shaping not only housing but also the broader urban and infrastructural structure of the city. Workers’ settlements, transport networks, educational institutions, and leisure facilities were conceived as parts of a unified urban vision driven by industrial growth. The article emphasizes how these components contributed to a shared spatial identity, even when many projects remained incomplete or were later altered. By tracing the transformations and degradations of workers’ neighborhoods, the authors reveal the vulnerability of socialist industrial urbanism in post-socialist contexts, where piecemeal adaptations often undermine the coherence of the original system. Labor remains present here as an organizing memory, inscribed in spatial patterns that continue to influence urban life despite economic decline.

These contributions frame socialist industrial communities as environments structured by ambition as much as by constraint. They reveal how the promise of collective life—embedded in housing layouts, public facilities, and infrastructural networks—was materialized through architectural and urban design. At the same time, they expose the fragility of these constructs when the industrial systems that sustained them dissolve. Positioned between the territorial regimes of industry and the domestic infrastructures of labor, this section underscores the city as a crucial mediating scale. It is at the urban level that large-scale industrial strategies intersect with everyday practices, translating abstract economic and ideological models into concrete spatial arrangements. By examining socialist urbanization through housing, infrastructure, and community life, the section contributes to a broader understanding of how labor has shaped—and continues to shape—the architecture of collective existence.

### Domestic Infrastructures of Labor

If industrial modernity is often narrated through factories, infrastructures, and urban plans, its most pervasive effects were arguably registered at the scale of everyday life. The domestic sphere, traditionally framed as external to production, was repeatedly reorganized by industrial regimes, becoming a site where labor was extended, redistributed, and naturalized. Housing layouts,

3 David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 428.

daily routines, gendered roles, and ordinary objects absorbed productive functions, blurring the boundaries between work and life, paid and unpaid labor, and public and private space. This section brings together contributions that interrogate these thresholds, foregrounding domestic space not as a residual category, but as a critical infrastructure of labor.

**Javier Pérez-Herreras** and **Jorge Tárrago Mingo** address this question through a theoretical and architectural reading of *vita activa*, revisiting the relationship between dwelling and production across modern and contemporary paradigms. By examining two distinct moments, Le Corbusier's modernist projects and the architecture of SANAA, the article traces how architectural form mediates daily transitions between home and workplace. Rather than treating circulation as a neutral functional problem, the authors read the commute as a spatial and temporal device through which labor, work, and action are hierarchized and made perceptible. The comparison reveals a shift from modern architecture's attempt to stabilize and rationalize life's rhythms toward contemporary practices that embrace indeterminacy and coexistence. In doing so, the article situates architecture as an active participant in shaping how labor is experienced, negotiated, and embedded within everyday existence.

**Cassandra Pop** and **Cosmin Anghelache** move the discussion decisively toward the interior of the socialist apartment, examining the phenomenon of "industrial homework" in communist Romania. Centered on the sewing machine as both object and symbol, the article reveals how domestic space was mobilized as an auxiliary site of production, particularly for women. State-promoted practices of home-based labor transformed standardized housing into hybrid environments in which industrial productivity, ideological narratives, and family life intersected. Through an analysis of manuals, propaganda, and spatial arrangements, the authors demonstrate how domestic labor was simultaneously rendered invisible and normalized, framed as a moral duty rather than an economic activity. The apartment emerges here as a micro-infrastructure of industrial society, one that complicates distinctions between emancipation and exploitation, autonomy and control.

**Pelin Gürol Öngören** extends the domestic-industrial nexus to rural factory settlements in early Republican Türkiye, focusing on sugar factories conceived as comprehensive socio-spatial systems. These environments integrated production facilities with housing, education, and social services, thereby redefining women's roles within rural communities. By enabling women's participation in industrial labor while simultaneously restructuring domestic arrangements, the factories operated as instruments of social engineering as much as economic development. Öngören's analysis highlights how architecture and spatial organization facilitated new forms of collective life, embedding gender transformation within the material fabric of industrial settlements. The factory appears as an ecosystem in which domesticity, labor, and ideology were mutually constituted.

Taken together, the contributions in this section demonstrate that domestic space functioned as a crucial interface through which industrial regimes extended their reach. This normalization of domestic production echoes Kathi Weeks's argument that "work is not only an economic activity, but a social and political institution,"<sup>4</sup> sustained through moral obligation as much as through necessity. Rather than opposing factory and home, they reveal a continuum of spaces and practices in which labor was distributed, normalized, and rendered socially meaningful. By foregrounding gender, everyday routines, and architectural thresholds, the section reframes domesticity as an active component of industrial landscapes.

### **Post-Industrial Afterlives: Memory, Ruin, and Reappropriation**

The final thematic constellation examines the moment when industrial labor withdraws from the spaces it once shaped, leaving behind landscapes marked by interruption, uncertainty, and contested meanings. This section opens by addressing the cultural and representational frameworks through which industrial decline is first perceived, narrated, and imagined. In doing so, it foregrounds the role of interpretation in shaping how industrial afterlives are understood and acted upon.

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4 Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

For this reason, the section begins with **Ioana Cecălășan**'s contribution on industrial heritage in science fiction. By examining decay as a narrative and visual device, the article situates post-industrial landscapes within a broader cultural imaginary in which abandoned factories, infrastructure, and extractive sites serve as speculative terrains. These representations do not merely aestheticize ruin; they articulate anxieties about technological excess, ecological collapse, and the exhaustion of industrial modernity. Labor appears here as a structuring absence—its former centrality rendered visible precisely through its disappearance. Positioned at the opening of the section, Cecălășan's article establishes a critical distance that frames post-industrial space not as a purely technical problem, but as a cultural condition shaped by storytelling, imagery, and projection.

**Marta Kurkowska-Budzan**'s article then shifts from representation to lived experience, focusing on mining sites at the moment of closure. Through attention to rituals, testimonies, and spatial conditions, the article captures the fragile temporal threshold where productive activity ceases while social identities formed around labor remain unresolved. The mine becomes a space of collective disorientation, where visibility and invisibility overlap: work is no longer performed, yet its traces intensify. By attending to this moment of suspension, the article highlights how post-industrial landscapes condense social memory, uncertainty, and the politics of transition.

**Eliana Saracino** addresses post-industrial transformation through the lens of infrastructural reuse, examining the former Circummarpiccolo railway in Taranto. By shifting the focus from buildings to linear systems, the article reframes infrastructure as an active mediator among environmental remediation, urban regeneration, and historical continuity. Rather than proposing erasure or scenic preservation, Saracino advances reuse strategies that acknowledge industrial damage while enabling new ecological and social connections. Infrastructure is thus repositioned as a framework capable of sustaining long-term transformation.

The section concludes with **Smaranda Todoran** and **Raluca Manoliu**'s contribution, which occupies a threshold position within the dossier, both thematically and methodologically. The article addresses the current condition of labor, increasingly characterized by digitization and the fragmentation of stable productive frameworks. In this context, work becomes spatially dispersed, intermittently anchored, and often immaterial, thereby challenging inherited architectural categories such as the workplace, infrastructure, and industrial buildings. The authors examine how these categories lose descriptive and operative precision, revealing a growing gap between architectural form and contemporary modes of production. In implicit dialogue with Arendt's distinctions between labor, work, and action, and with Aureli's insistence on architecture's role in organizing life, the text positions architecture less as a site of production than as a framework for structuring relations and access to work.

### **Fragments of Romanian Industry**

The *Romanian Situations* section brings the questions raised in the main dossier into close contact with specific sites, actors, and practices in Romania. Conceived as a space for situated, focused inquiries, rather than a comprehensive survey of national industrialization, the case selection is deliberately partial and strategic, addressing different industries, scales, and forms of legacy (from vocational education and domestic labor to manufacturing platforms, oil refining, and river-based infrastructure) to illuminate the diversity and unevenness of Romania's industrial heritage. This field remains under-researched and weakly institutionalized, and many of the sites discussed are currently endangered, subject to neglect, speculative pressure, or demolition, sometimes while these texts are being written.

The first group of contributions addresses **education and social modernization through labor**, focusing on institutions and domestic environments that developed *around industry, alongside industry, and in relation to it*. These articles reveal how labor functioned as a formative social framework, shaping knowledge, gender roles, and everyday life. Education and housing appear to be key mechanisms through which industrial societies structured the conditions of social life, shaping skills, gender roles, and everyday spatial practices. Domestic space, in turn, emerges as a place where these processes are absorbed, negotiated, and transformed. Together, these

contributions articulate labor as a cultural and social infrastructure, one that extended beyond factory gates into classrooms, homes, and urban communities.

**Yvonne Toader's** article focuses on two Jewish trade schools in Bucharest—the Ciocanul Industrial Training School and the Filip and Rașela Foçșăneanu Girls' Trade School—examining their role in training skilled labor for an industrializing city under conditions of legal exclusion. Through archival research and spatial analysis, the article situates these institutions within the economic networks, urban geography, and communal strategies that enabled professional integration while compensating for restricted access to state education.

**Dan-Ionuț Julean** and **Dana Julean** analyze the former tobacco factory in Cluj, one of the city's earliest industrial complexes, through three distinct but overlapping narratives: state monopoly and industrial policy, urban transformation, and employee housing. By tracing the factory's successive uses and its associated residential building on Gheorghe Șincai Street, the article examines how industrial production shaped urban growth, labor organization, and domestic life, even after the factory itself was demolished.

**Zenaida Florea** examines women's labor in interwar Bucharest by spotlighting aspects of domestic servants' lives in the city during the period of industrialization and modernization. Drawing on housing typologies, legal frameworks, and everyday practices, the article analyzes how paid and unpaid domestic labor were spatially organized and rendered invisible, thereby revealing social inequality and the gendered architecture of modernization.

The second group of contributions shifts toward **projective and regulatory approaches to the former industry**, examining how architectural projects, territorial strategies, competitions, and legal frameworks actively shape the transformation—or disappearance—of large industrial sites. The cases discussed include former railway workshops, manufacturing platforms, oil refineries, and river-based industrial landscapes that once played a strategic role in regional or national economies. Today, their value lies not only in their material fabric but also in their spatial scale, infrastructural position, and capacity to structure future urban development, even as their legal and institutional status remains fragile.

**Radu Andrei**, **Ramona Costea**, **Mihaela Agata Cehan**, and **Tiberiu Teodor-Stanciu** examine the former Frumoasa Workshops (later the Nicolina factory) in Iași, an early railway-related industrial complex that was largely demolished after 1989. Combining historical research, architectural survey, and speculative design, the article investigates how intermediary spaces can be used to negotiate between preservation and transformation, proposing alternative futures for one of the few remaining structures on a rapidly disappearing site.

**Sorin Vasile Manea**, **Angelica Stan**, and **Mihaela Hărmănescu** present studies of abandoned industrial and infrastructural sites along the Lower Danube, including ports, processing facilities, and logistics platforms in small and medium-sized cities. At the intersection of landscape, ecology, and pedagogy, the article examines how academic research and design education can serve as instruments for territorial regeneration in contexts marked by deindustrialization and limited institutional capacity.

**Radu Tudor Ponta**, **Emil Burbea-Milescu**, and **Laura Covaci** analyze the international architectural competition for the Rulmentul industrial platform in Brașov, a former bearing manufacturing complex central to the city's socialist industrial expansion. Treating the competition brief itself as an operative tool, the article examines how strategic planning, phased development, and architectural intervention were mobilized to address uncertainty, heritage value, and long-term urban integration.

**Ștefana Pascu** examines the "Steaua Română" oil refinery in Câmpina, the oldest and most complete historical refinery in Romania, focusing on its post-industrial condition as a landmark increasingly disconnected from its surrounding community. The article analyzes the refinery's architectural coherence, technological significance, and cultural landscape, while foregrounding the social consequences of industrial decline and the risk of irreversible loss.

**Ana Maria Pițur**'s juridical analysis of the same industrial complex brings to the fore a critical issue. By examining the tensions between heritage protection and intellectual property law, the article exposes an unresolved problem concerning the regeneration of industrial sites: the conflict between cultural value and ownership regimes. This legal dimension does not merely conclude the section; it reframes the entire debate by revealing how the future of industrial heritage is ultimately conditioned by regulatory frameworks that determine who has the right to act, preserve, transform, or erase. In this sense, the juridical question emerges as a central challenge facing post-industrial sites today.

The thematic dossier concludes with **Elisa Barsanti**'s reporting on the International Conference on Adaptive Reuse held in Pisa in 2025. The text outlines how questions of transformation, authorship, pedagogy, and responsibility are currently being addressed across diverse geographical and disciplinary contexts. Rather than proposing a unified doctrine, the conference emerges as a platform where heterogeneous practices — from post-industrial sites and religious heritage to domestic architecture and modest structures — are discussed as part of a shared concern for continuity, care, and method.

### **Toward a Critical Reading of Labor's Architectures**

Taken together, the contributions assembled in this issue demonstrate that transformations in labor are inseparable from transformations in society as a whole. Changes in how work is organized, valued, and distributed inevitably alter relationships between individuals and institutions, redefine gender roles and educational structures, and recalibrate the balance between production and care. Architecture and planning, situated at the intersection of these processes, are never merely reactive. They translate economic and political shifts into spatial arrangements, materialize social contracts, and participate in the making or unmaking of shared worlds.

In this sense, *Architectures of Labor* is not only a reflection on industrial heritage or post-industrial transformation but also a broader inquiry into the role of architectural practice and theory in moments of systemic change. As labor continues to mutate under the pressures of technological acceleration, ecological crisis, and social reconfiguration, the responsibility of architects, planners, and theorists becomes increasingly acute. To engage labor critically is to engage the foundations of society itself, questioning how we will inhabit, organize, and imagine collective life in the future.

By juxtaposing extended analytical studies with situated investigations, *Architectures of Labor* invites a critical reassessment of industrial heritage as an ongoing field of inquiry, one in which the traces of work continue to shape how we inhabit, remember, and transform the environments left behind. Thus, this condition reopens a fundamental question of architectural agency. As Pier Vittorio Aureli insists, “architecture is political not when it represents politics, but when it takes a position within the organization of life,”<sup>5</sup> a stance that frames labor not as an external theme, but as a core problem of architectural theory and practice.

### **Ilinca Păun Constantinescu**

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5 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011), xiii.

