



**Truly smart, comfortable, functional and sustainable office spaces – why wait?**

# Key takeaways on building technology trends from IFMA's World Workplace Europe 2022

New technologies and new interfaces are entering the workplace at high speed. The pressure to comply with sustainability legislation, such as the European Union's Green Deal, is increasing. Yet at the same time, the requirements of office spaces have changed massively, and it is essential we acknowledge the changing role of the office as a result of hybrid working. How can we make sure we build new or optimise existing offices ensuring they are truly smart; offices that are comfortable and functional as well as sustainable, fulfilling the different social requirements of users? In this article, we would like to share three of the latest trends and developments in building technology in relation to office spaces, as some of our key takeaways from IFMA's World Workplace Europe 2022.

## Mixed-use buildings and areas

With over 50% of the world's population living in cities and numbers constantly increasing, there is continuous pressure to improve the liveability of cities. This forces developers to rethink the functions of real estate and as a result, we see more mixed-use development arising. Mixed-use buildings aim to combine three or more uses into one structure, so for example a combination of office space, retail and residential functions in one building. The focus of the building is no longer a singular function, but evolves around the needs of the users of the building. However, besides taking on board the needs of current users, it should also consider the requirements of future occupants, the impact on its surroundings and the benefits for the wider neighbourhood.

Mixed-use office buildings can have a positive effect on users. Consider, for example, the opening of a staffless convenience shop in an unused part of the office space; bringing services or shops closer to people can make areas or buildings more liveable. With the help of digital technology, this is an easy to implement solution which can improve

the user or employee experience, as people could save time by shopping for their groceries on their way home or during their lunch break. Offices could set up sharing hubs, allowing people to borrow or rent a bike, a high pressure cleaner or an electric saw for their DIY at the weekend. This way people are encouraged to borrow things, which is sustainable in itself and as a bonus, it increases employee satisfaction. Both of these examples are low-cost solutions that can contribute substantially to the experience of building users and areas. This type of new development offers increased flexibility to adapt to changing needs. Additionally, the increased social 'neighbourhood' character of buildings or areas appeals to the growing need for a sense of belonging after two years of global restrictions.



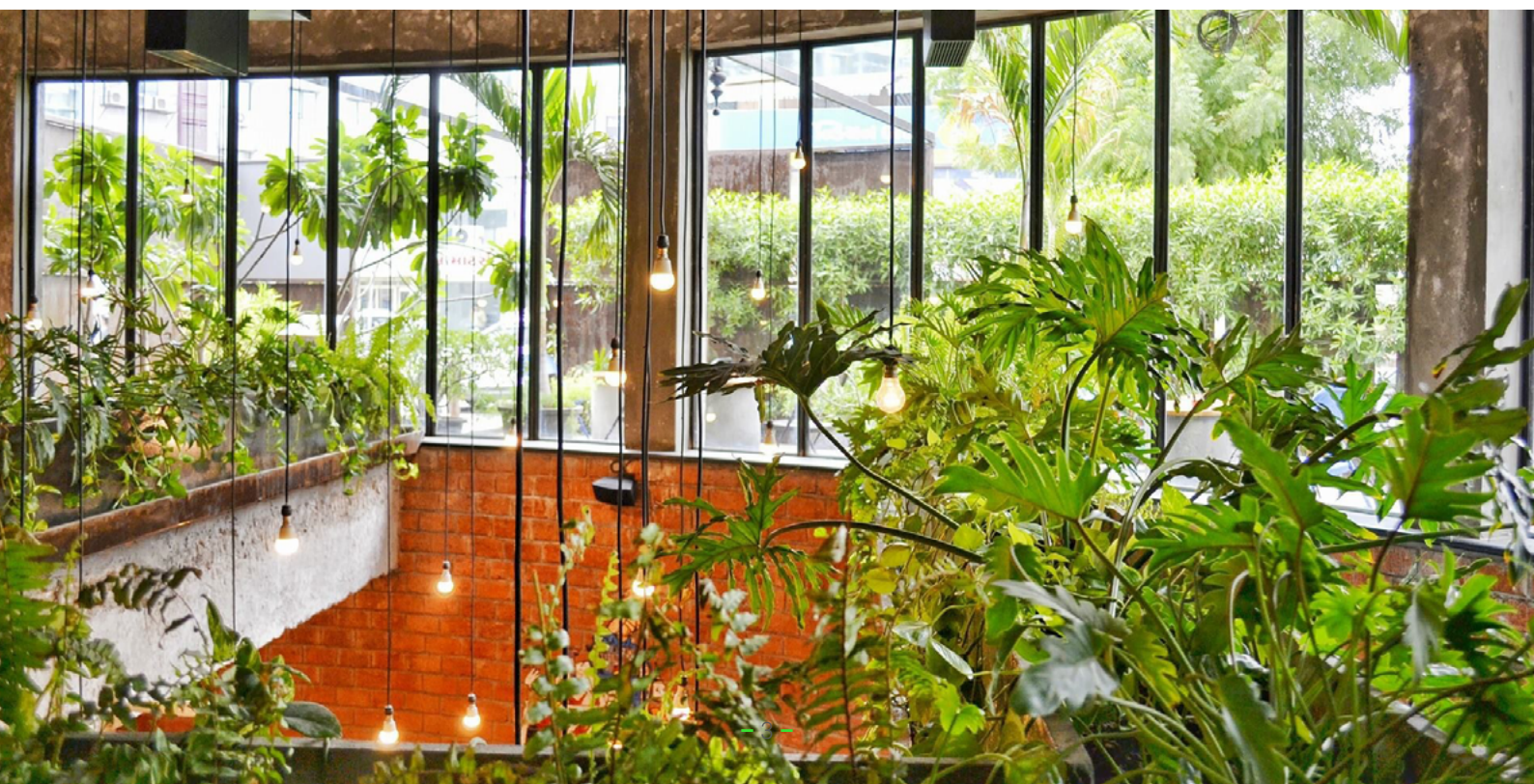


## New ways of looking at energy & sustainability in a wider context

Sustainability has been a major topic for years and energy has now become the new gold. In fact, energy can be seen as the currency of the real economy, according to Arash Aazami, entrepreneur and owner of [Unify.energy](#). If we want to conserve our supply of fossil fuels, we need to consume 1 million times less energy than we do today. He states that we need to rethink the ways we deal with energy; we should consume less energy, but we should use more energy. He claims that we can change our consumption without compromising our way of living, our level of wellbeing, comfort and mobility. But in order to do so, we need to develop the systems we need based on tomorrow's principles, instead of incrementally trying to improve the status quo. Aazami states, 'What we need is a 100% renewable, circular, ownerless, decentralised, distributed, regenerative energy system. Start with the system you want, and then build it. Don't try to change the existing system.' His ideas include the Internet of Energy, a peer-to-peer network in which every user also generates renewable energy and delivers back to the network.

Placing his innovative and actionable way of thinking into a wider context; the current transition we are in requires new mindsets. Circular building is a way to move away from the traditional life cycle of buildings to multiple life cycles. The concept of circular entails more than just re-using building materials; it means that each stage of the life cycle of a building is a continuous, yet closed loop of resources, in which no resources are lost or wasted. Considering the role of the end user is critical for successful circularity. All stakeholders need to be involved, as day-to-day issues like maintenance should also be workable.

Circularity is not limited to the building itself, and innovative concepts like furniture as a service for office spaces are new and upcoming. Start-up [NORNORM](#) is partly funded by IKEA, offering office furniture subscriptions. Besides the sustainable aspect, focus also lies on flexibility. Flexible offices require flexible services, so scaling up or down should be easy. Jonas Kjellberg, chairman of NORNORM explains, 'We must rethink how we create new business models. The fact that the planet is running out of resources means that the linear, take-make-waste economy will have to make way for a circular approach in all aspects of life, including the office.'





For existing office buildings, there are many other ways to achieve the set sustainability goals. As we know that data is critical in helping companies to identify opportunities, technology plays a major role in this transition. [IoT](#) can be essential for this process, as it will give facility managers real-time information and valuable insights into, for example, temperature, energy usage and air quality, empowering them to take immediate action.

## The new role of the office

The office is the new social place after the pandemic. As most companies have adopted hybrid working, offices now serve a different purpose to before. Acknowledging the psychological impact of the crisis, companies need to create a safe environment for employees to come back to. People are more conscious of when to work in the office or when to work from home and they have a choice, so the office should offer them different benefits.

The office itself is still the centre of the workplace. Dr. Marie Puybaraud, Global Head of Research for JLL Corporate Solutions defines the new role of the office very clearly, saying, 'A place of work is more than just a property, more than just an office. It's an opportunity to create memorable experiences with real estate.' In fact, positive experiences are essential for business performance. Factors like health and safety protocols, optimal air quality and robust cleaning standards are hygiene factors, but elements such as natural daylight, meditation spaces, collaboration tools and innovative design can help employees to perform better. Focus in the office is on collaboration, which requires not only suitable spaces, but also empowering technology

Smart integrated workplace management systems enable both companies and employees to plan the workday optimally. [Planon's Workplace Engagement App](#) for example can enable an enhanced employee experience through smarter meeting management capabilities. After all, colleagues need to be able to check on which days the co-worker they would like to meet is present, and plan their days accordingly. The app can also help facilitate safe and healthy workplaces.

The past two years have served as a catalyst for developments that would have taken longer without the global pandemic. Innovative ways of thinking about work, people and planet can help to shape a better world. There are many opportunities to get it right, and in this changing world, we all long for positive change. So why wait?





# About Planon

Planon is the leading global provider of Smart Sustainable Building Management software that connects buildings, people and processes. By eliminating data silos and aligning solutions into one shared information platform, Planon provides all building stakeholders with actionable and meaningful insights. Independent market research and consulting firms have consistently rated Planon as a global leader in the market. Planon has implemented its comprehensive solutions for more than 2,500 clients, supported by offices and partners around the world.

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