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Studio Life: mechanisms of competition and collaboration in the design labour process

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Abstract:

This paper explores creative labour production in architectural design studios (in Brazil, UK and Italy). In contrast to narratives of free autonomy, participant observation revealed conflicting mechanisms, such as: subjectification, distinction, and hierarchical expropriation. This is pivotal in a transition period where architecture confronts the myths of geniuses aiming for paradigms of knowledge exchange and inclusion. For investigating that, architecture was not approached as a substance (an immutable essence or ideal), rather, it was explored as discipline and dialectics. Discipline was investigated with Grounded Theory to code conflicts and recurrences focusing on how it reinforces subjectivities and acting ways. In addition, Action Research was used to explore architecture's social dialectics, focusing on collaborative methodologies and how it (re)produces ways of seeing in three aspects: revealing (visualizing hidden properties), imagining (conceiving future scenarios) and refunding (articulating virtual seeds for shared social realities). Results indicate proposals were collaborative, subjectivities are enclosed in the hegemonic narratives of the field and fantasies were hiding the actual collective production, where allegedly individual creations are forms of fetish. That suggests a transition overlapping of conflicting paradigms between: competition and collaboration; distinction and dialogue; invention and labour; mythological narratives and negotiated practices.