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Studio Life: Mechanisms of Competition and Collaboration in Architectural Labour Processes

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Abstract. The aim of the current study is to explore creative labour production and reproduction processes in architectural design studios in Brazil, UK, Belgium and Italy. In contrast to free autonomy narratives, participant observation has evidenced three conflicting mechanisms in creative labour processes, namely: subjectification, distinction and hierarchical expropriation. This issue is pivotal in a transition period-of-time when architecture confronts the myths of geniuses and focuses on knowledge exchange paradigms. Architecture was not herein approached as substance nor as form (an immutable essence and ideal), rather, it was explored as processes engaged with discipline and dialectics. Discipline was investigated based on the Grounded Theory used to code conflicts and recurrences by focusing on how it reinforces subjectivities and practices. In addition, Action Research was used to explore architecture's social dialectics by focusing on collaborative methodologies and on how architecture (re)produces ways of seeing by revealing (visualizing hidden properties), imagining (conceiving future scenarios) and refunding (articulating virtual seeds for shared social realities). Results have indicated proposals to result from collaborative work, subjectivities to be enclosed in hegemonic narratives, fantasies to hide the actual collective process of production, and allegedly individual creations to be forms of fetish. This finding suggests a paradigm transition still in course, with overlapping conflicts between invention and labour, competition and collaboration, distinction and collective dialogue, as well as seductive narratives and negotiated practices.

Keywords: Creative Labour · Design Process · Architectural Studios · Discipline · Collaboration

1 Approaching Creative Labour Production in Design Studios

The current study explores creative labour production and reproduction in architectural design studios, by analysing experiences lived in Brazil, UK, Belgium and Italy. This investigation was inspired by Bruno and Woolgar's book "Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts" [1], who approached scientists' practices from the perspective of an anthropologist who arrived in a remote tribe and tried to understand how social representations and relations interacted within the production of facts. In our case, it was done to develop a similar approaching distance to help better understanding theoretical device types adopted by people to reflect on their own practices.

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This engaging-distancing movement enabled focusing participatory investigation on ideas supporting different actors involved in creative labour production. The investigated scenario has evidenced a structured process of both disciplining subjectivities and dialectical exchanges (among subjects and context). On the one hand, disciplinary aspects set different subjects into different roles and actions, by both creating distinction among them and promoting creative surplus value-extraction processes. On the other hand, dialectic social conditions and collaborative processes were traced in revealing and imagining processes associated with social reality refunding.

This finding has evidenced an ongoing paradigm shift, according to which, subjectivities are still enclosed by hegemonic narratives, individual creation fantasies and power relations. In contrast, results have shown that creation is a collaborative process with scarce narratives available, since architects tend not to see their work as labour. This issue is pivotal in a transition period-of-time when architecture confronts the myths of geniuses and focuses on paradigms of knowledge exchange and inclusion. Furthermore, this is an overall spread narrative system that encompasses different human activity fields. Thus, a new approach to it can help better understanding other phenomena taking place in the neoliberal context. For instance, we tend to say that Thomas Jefferson "invented" the lightbulb and to hide the fact that he had a laboratory structured as assembly line, where hundreds of scientists worked in different parts of the whole assemblage of that invention [2]. Similarly, the narrative goes that Steve Jobs "invented" Apple and the Iphone, although economist Mariana Mazzucato [3] has provided evidence that most Iphone-related inventions were produced by state funded research and appropriated by individual companies, latter on. Not surprisingly, the most significant shift in Frank Lloyd Wright's style took place with the Broadacre City project. Funded by his wife's fortune, the project took place at Taliesin Fellowship, which was a school that gathered hundreds of architects to exchanging knowledge in a messianic community in the middle of the desert [4].

Therefore, the current study focused on investigating architectural production as process, in contrast to narratives about free individuals acting with free autonomy to develop new architectonic things. Gilbert Simondon [5] calls this process of creating things 'ontogenesis' and he explains it based on the example of a brick 'taking form'. According to him, the 'clay'—as matter—is not just passive raw material,it has multiple possible transformations, as well as aptitudes and tendencies. However, clay is already a processed material whose production is based on selected grains added with the right amount of moisture. Moreover, it was collected in, and transported from, a known specific spot. Its identification and properties' description were only possible based on a long knowledge-acquisition process. The 'mould', in its turn, is not just an abstract shape previously defined through intellectual processes. It plays a procedural role in limiting clay transformation. It performs an active action, more precisely, a reactive action presenting equal and opposite force to the one exercised by the clay in it.

The brick individuation process comprises—already so far—a dynamic interaction system, according to which, potentialities and forces interact with each other to enable a final stability state. However, one should add to this scenario the actual work of artisans, who separate, discharge and press the clay, while using complex and subtle artifices to

open and close the mould, and to provide it with perfect geometrical limits. Nevertheless, Simondon continues, the individuation of physical and technical objects happens (usually) only once, whereas living individuations take place in 'metastability', i.e., in the continuous process of becoming.

According to Simondon [6], seeing reality as becoming transforms the finite being of 'substantialism' into a being that is instead 'limited'. Being, as such, can be understood in more dynamic terms, as an undefined being bearing potential energy bigger than its factual actualisation. Thus, the idea of a 'limited being' acknowledges how being can relate to outside matter and how it can incorporate, reorder and transform itself in interaction with external elements. According to the aforementioned author, this is the only way transformation (creation and invention) can be understood in a consistent manner. Finite and eternal beings would not be able to change because what is said to be 'fundamental' is assumed as 'being as such' (the pure ultimate and supreme undifferentiated reality, which is, therefore, inaccessible and immutable). However, Simondon [7] advocates that the limited aspect of a given being is not fixed. This limit is a structuring process, the process of structuring a relational space between the inside and the outside.

Thus, looking back to the current object of study, it is possible to see that architecture is not a substance. It is not an immutable essence, something based on some specific features regardless of its actual production process. Moreover, architecture is not a set of formal properties abstractly defined based on a set of ideal features. Rather, the current study explored how the discipline of architecture limits its being and how the dynamic process of dialectical transformations works.

Discipline was herein approached as a social practice capable of framing ways of behaving, seeing and acting in the world. Therefore, this term refers to no distinctive boundaries, yet the phenomenon encompassed by it is fragmented, porous and interpenetrates different social life domains. The herein adopted approach was mainly inspired in Bourdieu's [8] sociology of the rules of art and expanded Foucalut's [9] argument towards an open disciplining process that do not completely lock subjects in an 'iron cage' [10], but it rather limits practices in a dynamic circumstance of exchanges.

Based on these terms, architecture should be seen through its social dialectics and disciplined production practices, and as a social product that, in its turn, disciplines habits. Thus, the current research started with fieldwork, which was carried out as a starting point to trace the logic-epistemological elements set in motion in concrete social practices and to investigate how they reproduce and reinforce social relationships. Paradoxically, based on these terms, what is socially understood as 'architecture' matters exactly because it guides concrete practices and is what we focus on to deconstruct.

Therefore, the next sections will briefly explore a way of opening architectural studios' "black boxes" to analyse the disciplinary aspects manifested in them, the dialectical dynamics likely to be explored and, finally, to explore how these aspects may suggest an ongoing paradigm shift. Discipline will be herein explored based on the way distinction established in the classroom gives voice to some individuals and to others gives a duty to obey, as well as on how it produces specific subjectivities and results in a hidden creative surplus-value estrangement process. Dialectics will be explored through action research based on flipped classroom, collaboration techniques and a concept of micro-utopias. It will be done to explore the way it might create different ways of seeing things by

revealing hidden properties of both society and space, and by imagining future possibilities based on how it can articulate new shared social realities. Finally, the current study aims to explore how we live within conflicting paradigms and between concepts such as invention and labour, competition and collaboration, distinction and collective dialogue, as well as seductive narratives and negotiated practices, thus, pointing towards the need of finding new collaborative approaches to creative processes in the architecture field.

2 Discipline: Subjectification, Distinction and Hierarchical Expropriation Framing Subjectivities

Field investigation comprised a series of "constant comparative analysis", as proposed in the Grounded Theory approach [11, 12]. Overall, it is a qualitative sociological method aimed at developing theories based on rigorous observations. In order to do so, four one-week live-project workshops (two in London, one in Belgium and one in Italy) and two four-month studios in Brazil were approached through participant observation of 100% of their activities, which were recorded in field journals. In addition, interview forms were applied to participants. All collected data were coded to enable retrieving key aspects and repetitions, secondly, they were thematized in concepts presented and discussed in conferences, before being finally reviewed in the present report.

Furthermore, Tedlock [13] set the grounds for an 'ethno-sociology' capable of developing a self-reflexive ethnography (Tedlock, 1991, pp. 78–80). It means that 'participant observation' became a more personal 'observation of participation' by keeping the crucial dilemma between "participation" (which entails emotional involvement) and "observation" (which requires detachment). Thus, its findings result from a unique and specific dialogue that dilutes the mediations shared by those "who observe" and those "who are observed". According to Tedlock, this knowledge 'belongs neither to the realm of objectivity nor to that of subjectivity, but rather to "human intersubjectivity"'. To preserve participants' privacy, we will only mention that the field investigation involved studio experiences from 2014 to 2021.

2.1 Opening Architectural Studios' 'Black Boxes'

The overall aim lied on understanding how architecture is seen as 'things' rather than as processes, thus turning 'things into persons, and persons into things' [14], during this journey. The argument approaches architectural discipline as a non-trivial abstract machinery capable of framing subjectivities [15]. Therefore, this discipline cannot be seen as a closed system no one can escape from. Thus, we traced architecture's non—trivial machinations and limitations rather than seeing this discipline as an 'apparatus'. Subsequent According to Von Foerster [16], a trivial machine is featured by a one-to—one relationship between input and output; this invariability is precisely what defines the machine. However, the non-trivial machine presents varying input-output association, wherein the input, once processed, leads to changes in machine structure, and wheresoever the output also creates a new context that further changes the machines' internal structure. Thus, the non-trivial machine operates with conflicting internal structures.

Therefore, the concept of non-trivial machines can explain how a given social space operates in a complex field of historical and conflicting relations.

Based on that account, it is possible to explore a renewed approach to Marx's 'Fragments on Machines' [17]. According to Marx, machines are objectified knowledge, and the increasingly complexity of machines creates frames that capture collective labour and fragments it into individual efforts. In Marx's condition, he was talking about actual machines capturing collective productive forces. However, authors such as Virno [18] and Lazzarato [19] have updated this idea for contemporary abstract machines capable of capturing intelectual labour, such as mass culture, advertisement, ideologies and institutions. The same process of objectifying abstract scientific knowledge into fixed capital takes place in these abstract machines by articulating inter-subjective dead (past) labour and live labour, in such a way that dead labour both controls and exploits live labour.

To approach architecture as a such complex abstract machinery, the current study focused on investigating how the architectural discipline creates 'black boxes' and hides operations behind the process to produce architectural things and truth, as well as methods implied in this production process. Three black boxes-opening procedures played a relevant role in this process. On the one hand, Bruno Latour [20] has investigated how whenever a given scientist uses an apparatus to observe certain phenomena, what he/she sees on the other side of the apparatus' black box is framed by past theories and hypothesis that account for the production of that black box in first place. According to the aforementioned author, phenomena seen by this scientist only existed through the mediation of this machine, whereas the machine only existed through the past labour reified on it (theories inscribed in this material basis). On the other hand, based on Vilem Flusser's [21] argument about photography, the camera is the one performing the operation of turning reality into codified signals of visual communication, whereas the photographer is manoeuvred by the few potentialities inscribed in the apparatus. Therefore, the photographer actually looks inside, rather than outside, the apparatus; thus, he/she 'reveals' rather than creates things. However, according to Cabral and Baltazar [22], it is not a matter of destroying the 'magic' of the black box or of making its devices predicable and dull, but rather of opening its internal mechanisms to enable potential interactivity processes.

This is the only way we can approach the architectural discipline system in a way—other than being the product of a sort of 'Big Brother conspiracy'—to develop an approach to this metastable field where conflicts and tensions can dialectically emerge. Thus, architecture is not just the reflection of a pre-established status quo system. Although it operates in reproducing specific 'traces' and in conserving specific social structures, there is also room for conflict and transformation in it.

2.2 Distinctions: Who Has a Voice in the Classroom?

The first aspect noticed in architectural productions developed in these educational experiences lies on the distinction among several subjects involved in them. Distinction plays a key role in placing agents in different social positions, so both teachers and students' voices are structured in a hierarchical manner among themselves.

According to Bourdieu [23], pressures mediating the production of different works are both internal and external to the associated field. Moreover, they relate to the symbolic

capital associated with participants' previous creative experience. In addition, the routine imposed by institutions on agents establishes a symbolic order, a valuation circle, a publicity level and a definition of legitimacy.

Distinction is the first step in the subjectification process, since it establishes the one(s) accounting for guiding common knowledge production. This process is not straightforwardly objective; but it results from social struggles for dominant positions. However, the distinct centralities of the classroom are those entitled to create habitus, to foment desires, as well as to establish references and hierarchies to properly mobilise individuals' libido and acceptance of order. Precisely because other subjects crave for the same distinction in the field, agents in distinct positions take leading roles and define what is good or bad, in a continuous circular reinforcement.

2.3 Subjectification: The Production of Architectural Subjects

A classical essay written by Judith Butler [24] aimed at denaturalizing the understanding of our own body and sought to understand gender as performance, or as socially constructed phenomenology. Helene Shugart [25] also explored how femininity in women and masculinity in men can be understood as social performance by de-fetishising their mechanisms, based on parody studies. The aforementioned author sees the possibility of denaturalizing the nature of gender and, consequently, of reconstituting desire, by doing so. Arguably, we could also denaturalize architecture and the creative labour involved in its production to set the ground for seeing architecture as it performs.

According to Bronwyn Davies [26], who analysed Butler's relevance for education, subjectification is the process that simultaneously establishes mastery and submission. To master a given topic, students submit themselves to the perceived order of distinctions. It is herein possible tracing a link to Althusser's [27] concept of 'interpellation' (an identity mirror). Interpellations create the subject because they create an image of the world, and place the individual in a relationship with this world, and in a position based on which he/she can act in this world. Interpellations functions through ordinary objects address a subject setting ideological expectations and interaction rules, incorporating ideological discourses (such as the placement of chairs in a studio establishes institutional roles). Thus, these ordinary objects become embodied ideologies shaping internal subjectivities. Therefore, the material condition of a given production mode has a dialectical relationship with subjects' cognitive awareness of their place in this condition. Accordingly, discipline and distinctions produce subjectivity by framing the way architects see the world, their position in it, as well as how they understand the way they can act in the world.

Following Jason Read, the idea of the 'production of subjectivity' implies a double meaning: it is both something 'productive' and something 'produced'. Subjects emerge always in the context of a collective of subjects, i.e. there is no subject detached in an abstract empty space. This means that subjectivity is formed by elements a priori (language, culture, structure, social expectations, among others) 'externalised in machines and internalised in concepts, habits, and ways of thinking' [28]. The dialectic operation of these abstract machinery of subjectivities creates a problem that is specifically political, because they act across the whole society, seizing for individuals what was once formed by collective efforts.

Jodi Dean [29] advocates that the representation of the individual is, itself, a fantasy that places what one can only do among 'others' into an imaginary ego; consequently, the concepts of genius result from a point of view that imagines an abstract individual detached from any context. Dean mentions that Freud's theory produces this type of 'enclosure of the individual'. It is worth emphasizing two additional points in Jodi Dean's account of the enclosure of the subject. She inverts Althusser's famous formula by stating that it is not the case that ideology interpellates individuals as subjects, rather, capitalism interpellates subjects as individuals.

Nonetheless, although the traditional architecture discipline encloses subjects in individual creativity and invention narratives, the observation of participation suggests that the most creative moments in architecture emerge from long processes of exchange, discussion and maturing of alternatives. Thus, collective subjectivity is gradually produced, and it allows eventual individual creation to emerge from this transversal experience. Furthermore, according to Simondon, subjects can change, therefore, they are in a metastable condition that includes non-actualised potentialities. These are non-actualised potentialities that exist in all subjects, and are formed of internal tensions and multiplicities, besides being in constant exchange with their surroundings. It is through these tensions that the architectural discipline operates its abstract machinery, enabling the development of both a given architectonic object and the production of architectonic subjects, themselves.

2.4 Creative Surplus-Value Estrangement

Case studies helped investigating how architecture is not just a practice, but also a subjectification process based on narratives capable of reproducing estrangement before requiring submission and providing mastery. Thus, these narratives stand on a previous acceptance of instrumentalisation.

Notably, instrumentalisation resulted in a continuous authorship appropriating process that can be called 'surplus of creation' estrangement. The dominant group not only proposed ideas to be followed by students, but also appropriated students' work. In a given situation, a door was to be made by subtracting modules from the external wall of the pavilion. The tutor continuously shouted that she had already solved the problem and that students' only task was to 'draw it'.

But a series of issues the tutor was unaware of emerged as students engaged in the design process, namely: symmetry of his sketches was unfeasible; position of the door was impossible because it would make the cantilever bigger; among others. However, the tutor would return to the table many times, commenting with irony as if the students were incapable of drawing his solution; however, there was no solution, yet. Students were aware they were being observed and maintained a subservient attitude agreeing that 'the problem was solved'. After the tutor turned away, they worked on a viable solution, which was only attainable by changing the shape of, and rotating, the entire structure by a few degrees. However, once the solution was found, the tutor joyfully asserted that they had finally understood it.

In another case, the tutor repeatedly changed the ground floor plan designed by students, although his changes made no practical difference. Better solutions proposed by

students were re-sketched until the tutor felt to own the solutions. Again, in a paradigmatic case, a design was structured with larger modules in the base and with smaller modules at the top. The tutor took the model and inverted it, asking a fellow teacher, 'Should we do it like this? It will create an optical illusion that the structure is bigger'. Although the intended optical illusion would technically be delivered by the original proposal, students (tired of continuous conflicts) accepted the tutor's suggestion as the 'stroke of a genius'. Their initial design was magically reworked by the genius (a change without changes), and the whole thing now belonged to his act of 'creation'.

Thus, the working subjects became instruments through a double step: first, they became estranged from their own background to fit the distinction structure in the classroom; later on, they were estranged from the product of their own work. This process not just fulfilled the desires of the group in power, but also genuinely created new solutions, which were later assumed to result from their obedience. Thus, the disciplinary black box of architecture not only produces distinctions, but the way subjects see the world, their place in it, and how they can act in it. Those are the cogs and gears of this abstract machinery.

3 Dialectics: The Production and Reproduction of Ways of Seeing

Several authors (including David Harvey and Boaventura Souza Santos [30–32]) have argued that we are experiencing a great time in history, when great changes in social structure, culture, technology and production, as well as the threat of an eminent environmental collapse, force us to imagine new social alternatives. As we started opening the black boxes of architecture, we could recognize how the architectural discipline reproduces social relations, both internally and externally (framing the possible life of ordinary people). Nonetheless, besides acknowledging that design and architecture have strongly contributed to the way people see the world, their place in it and how they can act in the world, if we open that black box to scrutiny, it can also become a way of visualizing alternatives, of exploring different places potentialities and of envisioning new futures.

It means that architecture not only reproduces ways of seeing things, but it also has the potential to explore new ones by revealing hidden properties of social reality through new imaginative tools of representation and critical narration; by imagining other possible future scenarios based on using its design-thinking methodologies; and, finally, by refunding social realities in itself based on articulating virtual seeds and on building shared knowledge. Thus, we explored these issues in action research experiments (these experiments were analyzed in other perspectives in previous studies, see [33]). Just as a chemist would mix different compounds in a lab, we mixed ideas in the studio practice, such as hacking objectified social relationships and developing micro-utopias (understood as the virtual power of concrete potentialities of inexistent worlds).

In order to do so, we adopted 'flipped classroom' methodologies, according to which hierarchy and knowledge production in the classroom was inverted, so the studio became a place of shared knowledge production. In addition, collaboration techniques, such as workshops, kanban and assemblies, were explored to emphasize the collective construction of the debates. Finally, the studios aimed at developing 'live projects' to overcome the

traditional 'simulation studio'—where inputs are imagined and assumed—by focusing proposals on the strategies to put them into practice.

In a workshop held in London, UK, a given area was facing a Regeneration Action Plan that proposed the privatization of a square and the demolition of social housing to open room for new luxurious flats. Because the consultation process was a simulacrum, the local community and one association reacted to it by developing an autonomous process. The University engaged in the process by developing an event with students, when a spatial device was built in the square and the community engaged in the resistance to the initial proposal. Students from the local school helped build the design pieces and participated in structure assembly testing. Leaflets were distributed and the local cafeteria provided food for the event. Proposals by locals were collected and kids were encouraged to contribute to the project with their drawings. Moreover, an internet platform was launched to collect stories describing the importance of those spaces to the community and, consequently, the need of protecting them—in compliance with the British law.

A series of interviews regarding alternative practices also helped to see those paradoxes. According to Sarah Wigglesworth [34], participation is a fundamental element in her architectural design process. In fact, she spends most of the time on any presentation she gives for a new project talking about participation. Nevertheless, participation appears to be a 'consulting' process, wherein users are invited to provide input and steer decisions. The architect works as guide in this process. However, the resulting product is a conventional design, an object that hides the means of its own production in its cleanness. By contrast, participation in the architectural studio 'MUF' becomes part of the elements being 'represented' in architecture and participation traces become a set of elements in the final products' aesthetics. Moreover, according to the multi—disciplinary collective Assemble, participation not only enters the process as input, but it also becomes an output. According to an interview [35], the aesthetics of products keeps a certain openness, as if users could see the way the object was produced and think 'I could do that myself'. Thus, the product becomes an empowering object, rather than a form to mask processes with appearances. Furthermore, based on the Assemble's Granby Four Streets project, the design process is actually the means of bringing a community together to actively produce their own spatial conditions.

One of the workshops held in Belgium serves as counterexample of how this line is blurred. The workshop aimed to identify local desires and elements that could be realized, but students struggled to determine the limits of their agency and were continually concerned with meeting their teachers' expectations. This experience brought further questions to light. It was paradoxically unresolved to what extent the resulting objects were more than sculptures representing specific community interests and to what extent they were merely educational activities. Additionally, because the objects symbolized community participation, they were no less constrained by the prevailing ideology than the average 'good citizen' This raised concerns about whether architecture was effecting change or merely reinforcing the status quo, ultimately questioning whether it had become an empty community game.

Departing from these experiences, several studios in Brazil worked with the idea of micro-utopias by taking into consideration immanent potentialities and by exploring their development with the aim to break up established ways of seeing social structures.

Nonetheless, besides the utopian intent, it was quite common for students to rather develop dystopias, a fact that can be read as sign of our times: it is easier imagining society's collapse than any alternatives to current scenarios.

Accordingly, our social-environmental issue is also an aesthetical issue: how can we collectively see the solution for unsustainable development? Cities' aesthetics goes far beyond simple 'beautification', since it establishes a way of perceiving and establishing relevant issues for a given community. Thus, urban space creates an "aesthetic field", i.e., a setting that expands, or limits, the vision shared by a group of citizens.

A studio in Goiânia City (Brazil) worked in partnership with the local environmental agency to investigate and propose solutions to help recovering its main river. As the analysis went by, the collective conclusion was that it was not possible to develop one single project to solve issues faced by the river, since they involved all tributaries of the aforementioned river and the whole city's relationship with them. Therefore, the proposal lay on developing a series of actions to gain public attention to these issues; thus, architecture was no longer a means of designing things, but of making visible the hidden city-local nature relationship. In addition, a collaborative web platform and a NGO were launched as a means to permanently address and share proposals and visions to build new paths.

As a counterexample, the workshop 'Into the Green' held in London also implemented an intervention in a public space during an event that mobilised the local community. As a consequence, an office was opened at the university to develop interventions in that space, so that the ephemeral community activities held in it could become permanent. However, the office was dismantled due to the university's bureaucracy, the community became disengaged, and it put an end to the process.

Finally, a form was applied to participants to help better understand students' experience. The 'labour condition' issue was assessed as the best dimension of their experience, with 80% considering it positive. This topic assessment involved the role played by participants in the production and sharing of ideas, the openness of debates, and the democratic decision-making in comparison to previous academic experiences. Surprisingly, students did not consider this experience significantly different from other past practices. This finding suggests that the actual work experience is always collective in practice. Although the narrative in the field is that the production is done by the main architect in the office, in practice the involvement of trainees in the design process resembles the collaborative methodologies explored in the workshops. This might be the case of any office, where the collective work is anonymous, and the main architect is the reference. Again, Assemble functions on the opposite pole, where the work is done in a collective process, according to which, all activities—from design process to everyday reproduction—are shared.

Form results for the 'delivered products' dimension were mostly paradoxical given the Live Projects' intentions. Based on students' perception, products had weak positive impact on the place (only 19% above neutrality), the connection between creativity and construction was limited (19.8% above neutrality) and the product was quite similar to that of a conventional architectural practice (3.4% above neutrality). However, the analysed interventions were considered a 'valuable project' (31% above neutrality).

This condition points out that the architectural studio has a long tradition and that even counter-practices remain entangled in this long tradition. Thus, it is not the case of advocating for a fully free practice, but, as Hanna Arendt [36] suggested in a different context, we should focus on the continuous fight for freedom, on the continuous deconstruction and critical awareness of limits imposed by the discipline, and on potentialities enabled by a dialectical attitude towards design and social structuring.

4 Design is Always Collaborative: A Dangerous Idea in the Form of Conclusion

The Competition [37] is a documentary movie focused on telling the story of several star architects competing for a project in Luxembourg. Among several similar scenes, one shows the moment when a team of architects explains their proposal to the main architects, and one of them takes the model, turns it upside down and asks whether that was not the best solution. Thus, several hours of hard work by the team were "magically" estranged from the collective effort to become the genius stroke of one single man.

The main argument that can be built in the current research is that architectural production is a long process, just as the previously used brick example, since it involves traditional knowledge and several hours of creative and design-thinking experimentations. Nonetheless, both narratives and field structure set our perception to see individuals as creative drivers. Thus, what is essentially collaborative is captured in an abstract machinery that is reproduced by the discipline and it ends up being perceived as a single-person invention.

Although this machinery operates in quite abstract and subtle terms, the aim of the current study was to investigate how distinction establishes a hierarchical structure in creation processes, how subjectification establishes a thought pattern by placing different subjects in different positions where they can act in and by limiting how they think and act in the world. Finally, this machinery produces the estrangement of collective products, in such a way that subjects involved do not see the product of their work as their own.

This is only possible because field narratives depict architects as individuals in competition, thus enclosing their subjectivities. That hides the actual collective production of architecture. If hegemonic narratives create this process of estrangement, we need new counter-narratives to oppose them. If fantasies of individual creation seed competition between architects, we need a new paradigm for envisioning the collaborative dimension at play. If we should care more about architects being explored in unpaid extra-hours, we need new perspectives to envision power relations inside the discipline and a new consciousness of architects as labourers. Although the collective production is captured by this abstract machinery, contradictory forces are at place. In this sense, there is space for a dialectical paradigm to be built to rethink our practice as fundamentally collaborative.

In this dialectical practice, architecture plays the social role of revealing, reimagining and refunding social structuration. Through representation, diagrams and spatial analysis, architects can make aspects of reality that were not seen by common people before visible. By using design-thinking methodologies, architecture can radically reimagine the foundations of social space. And by setting these ideas into practice, we can collaborate to create more sustainable social structures.

Ultimately, this contradiction between disciplining forces and dialectical processes represents a transition time of conflicting paradigms. Between invention and labour, architects do not see themselves as workers; between competition and collaboration, architects see themselves as individuals in fierce fight; between distinction and collective dialogue, internal hierarchies give voice to few and estrange others; between seductive narratives of great masters and hard-time assemblies of negotiated practices, architects still tend to use the few symbolic power they still have.

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