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The Labourification of Work

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The contemporary modes of architectural production under the Danish Welfare State

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Thesis Summary

What architects do, when they do architecture, is neither a hobby nor fun. To be named a profession, the architectural one has to be able to generate a turnover to sustain the life of a multitude of actors (*workers*) that operate within the same industry; moreover, it needs a substantial amount of money to reify its outcomes (*works*). To understand the nature of the *architect condition*, this research departs from a clarification of the terminology used to address what architects do. It instrumentally detaches the work itself, from the *labour*, thus from all those toils and painful activities that architects endure in their daily workflow; and it migrates a series of theoretical concepts from political theory to architecture, useful to interpret contemporary modes of architectural production. Specifically, based on the assumption that the architectural profession is bound to the political and economic system in which it operates, this current research addresses the case of Danish architectural profession. It aims to address the neoliberal turn, as a turning point of the Danish Welfare State. It looks thus at the co-existence of local and supranational spheres in which architects operate. Those have had, in fact, many implications on the modes in which architects produce architecture. Such research focus concerning Denmark has not yet been addressed by the architectural discourse scattered, instead, among different focus: typological, urban and sociological studies in which mainly the outcomes are at stake, and not yet their production. The main research question thus is: how the modes of production by architectural practices have been

Dansk Oversigt

Det, arkitekter foretager sig, når de er aktive inden for arkitekturfaget, er hverken en hobby eller særligt sjovt. For at kunne leve op til betegnelsen 'fag', er det nødvendigt for arkitekturfaget at skabe en omsætning, der kan opretholde en mangfoldighed af aktører (workers), som opererer inde for det samme erhverv. Derudover er det nødvendigt, at en betydelige mængde penge er involveret for at kunne tingsliggøre resultaterne (works). For at kunne sætte sig ind i arkitektens vilkår, afviger denne forskning fra en ren afklaring af den terminologi, der anvendes til at italesætte det, arkitekter gør. Den adskiller selve arbejdet (work) fra anstrengelserne (labour) og dermed fra det slid og de møjsomme aktiviteter, arkitekter udstår i deres daglige arbejdsprocesser. Herved overføres en række teoretiske koncepter fra politisk teori til arkitektur. Koncepter, som er nyttige i forhold til at fortolke moderne former for arktekonisk produktion. Dette baserer sig specifikt på den antagelse, at arkitektfaget er forbundet med det politiske og økonomiske system, faget opererer inden for. Forskningen italesætter det danske arkitekturfag som case. Den har til formål at italesætte den neoliberale drejning, som var et vendepunkt for den danske velfærdsstat. Forskningen undersøger derfor sameksistensen af de lokale og supranationale sfærer, inden for hvilke arkitekten opererer. Disse påvirker rent faktisk måderne, hvorpå arkitekter producerer arkitektur. Et sådant forskningsfokus har indtil nu ikke været italesat af arkitektens diskurs. Denne har i stedet bredt sig over forskellige fokuspunkter: typologiske, urbane og sociologiske studier, hvor det overvejende er resultaterne, der er på spil – ikke hvordan de opnås. Det

affected by a neoliberal turn of the Danish Welfare State? To answer such a question, the research after having investigated the origin of Danish architectural professionalism and then addressed two time-spans. The first one, after WWII (1945-1975) covers the *Golden Years of Welfare State* and the modes of production blossomed the international gospel of productivity under the Cold War. This timespan is a first juncture instrumental in identifying and stressing, which were the fundamental implications by the Welfare system at its beginning. The second one, instead, concerns the neoliberal turn (1993-2016) focusing on: the national policies aimed to *flex-secure* the labour market; the supranational agreements of the European Union related to the tenders and the free circulation of service; and, the national counter-legislation to support architectural procurement. In both timespans, the modes of architectural production will be addressed. The research employs a mixed methodology (archival review, literature review and grounded theory), supported by the inscriptive tool of architecture (theoretical diagramming, exhibition design). It theorises two substantive grounded concepts: the *shapes*, seen as the adaptations by Danish practices to the neoliberal implications concerning procurement, and the *mechanisms*, that are the inward and outward operational activities developed by the practices to metabolise the structural conditions in which they operate. The overall argument of the current thesis, instead, regards the *labourification of work*. This latter is the formal grounded theory developed by the research, theorised as a general contemporary architect's condition, that can be recognised with different intensities in Denmark and on a global scale. The *labourification* implies that *labouring* painful activities (e.g. administration, public relations, underpaid commissions, unpaid competitions, unpaid overtime, underpaid internships, and so on...) are accepted at all level among architects for the sake of an exciting reification of *work* as a yearned reward.

primære spørgsmål, min forskning undersøger, er derfor, hvordan de produktionsformer, tegnestuerne anvender, er blevet påvirket af den danske velfærdsstats neoliberale drejning. For at svare på dette spørgsmål, italesætter forskningen, efter at have undersøgt udspringet af den danske arkitektfaglighed, to tidsperioder. Den første periode er perioden efter Anden Verdenskrig (1945-1975). Denne periode omfatter velfærdsstatens guldalder og de produktionsformer, som blomstrede op under den internationale mantra om produktivitet, som var fremherskende under Den Kolde Krig. Perioden er det første kritiske øjeblik i forhold til at identificere og understrege velfærdsystemets grundlæggende påvirkninger i begyndelsen. Den anden periode beskæftiger sig derimod med den neoliberale drejning (1993-2016) og har fokus på de nationale politikker, som sigtede på at indføre flexicurity på arbejdsmarkedet, og på den Europæiske Unions supranationale aftaler for udbud og tjenesteydelse fri bevægelighed. Men også på den modsatrettede nationale lovgivning, der havde til formål at understøtte indkøb af arkitektur. Jeg vil for begge tidsperioder italesætte de forskellige former for arkitekturproduktion. Min forskning gør brug af en blandet metodologi (gennemgange af arkiver, gennemgange af litteratur og velfunderet teori) som understøttes af arkitekturens beskrivende værktøjer (teoretiske diagrammer og udstillingsdesign). Forskningen teoretiserer over to væsentlige velfunderede koncepter: formerne (shapes), forstået som danske tegnestuers tilpasninger til den neoliberale indflydelse på procurement, og de mekanismer (mechanisms), som udgøres af interne og eksterne operationelle aktiviteter, som tegnestuerne har udviklet for at kunne omsætte de strukturelle betingelser, de arbejder under. Det overordnede argument i min tese drejer sig om "the labourification of work". Sidstnævnte er en formelt begrundet teori, der er udviklet på baggrund af forskning, og som teoretiseres som en generel betingelse for nutidens arkitekter. En betingelse, der kan observeres med forskellige grader af intensitet i Danmark og globalt. Labourification indebærer, at labouring – dvs. møjsommelige aktiviteter (f.eks. administration, PR-arbejde, underbetalte opgaver, deltagelse i ulønnede konkurrencer, ulønnet overtid, underbetalte praktikperioder, osv.) accepteres af arkitekter på alle niveauer som en betingelse for den spændende tingsliggørelse af arbejdet (work) som udgør en eftertragtet belønning.

COVER

Abstract elaboration based on the process diagram about case and hours accounting with the indications of which operations be developed with the support of a calculator distributed to architects on December 1st, 1969.

Original in this manuscript: Part II, Chapter 5, Figure 15.
Diagram by the author, 2019.

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