Angela Gigliotti (1986) is an architect, educator and researcher. She graduated in Building Architecture (2011) both at the Polytechnic University of Milan and at the Polytechnic University of Turin. She got a degree with honours at the AUP (Alta Scuola Politecnica), a double degree curriculum for young talents where she has been appointed as Mentor in 2015. Since 2010 she practised as architect within several practices in Italy and abroad, before co-founding the research-based architectural practice OFFICE U67 ApS (2015).

Beyond practice, she has strongly been involved in academic activities: Teaching Assistant Polytechnic University of Milan, Italy at the Faculty of Civil Architecture within the bachelor studio (2010-13) and External Lecturer at NMBU University in As, Norway (Fall 2014; Fall 2015). She was member of the Civil Committee within the OAF Association of Architects (2014-15). In 2015 she was granted as the ”OAFs fellow for videreutdanning 2015-16” to develop an independent research project.

The current doctoral dissertation: "The Labourification of Work: the contemporary modes of architectural production under the Danish Welfare State" has been developed as Ph.D. Fellow at the School of Architecture in Aarhus, Denmark (2016-19), along with the Ph.D. project in Spring 2018 she was Visiting Ph.D. Candidate at the Architectural Association - School of Architecture of London, UK in the City/Architecture program. From Fall 2019, she conducts the research project "The Triangle of Architectural Productivity: The American, Swedish and Danish modes of architectural production under the Cold War (1947-91)" as a spin-off of the current doctoral dissertation.

She currently External Lecturer and Research Faculty at DIS – Study Abroad in Scandinavia in Copenhagen, Denmark (2016-) within the Architecture and Design Department.
The Labourification of Work
The contemporary modes of architectural production under the Danish Welfare State

Angela Gigliotti
The Labourification of Work

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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

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 timespans. 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 adoptions 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.
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.

Graphic design by OFFICE U67 ApS