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DOSSIER TRANSLATIONS

Studio/Office:
Place, Agents, Production

Guest Editor: Claudio Palavecino

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As a discipline, architecture has built its cultural heritage to a great extent from concepts or ideas that may be recognised with a certain degree of precision and which are useful for knowledge building. Architecture studio and office do not form part of this conceptual matrix. Their conceptualization is elusive, embodying itself in different figures – studio, office, atelier, laboratory, workshop – that more than intending to clarify their identity, would seem to be responding to opportunist agreements, modelled by different professional and academic circumstances with the purpose of naming the generic space where architects work and are trained.

In this context, all definitions of architecture studio and office may seem rather biased if we consider that every architectural practice is different, that it pursues subjective interests and articulates its own work systems, thus singularizing its workspace starting from unique conditions. In these circumstances, architectural studio and office are understood from a useful ambiguity. We can visualize them like a 'place' where several actions occur, a physical space, an environment that allows architectural work to be developed. Thus, studio and office build a culture, a system of relationships between 'agents', whether they are people, objects, resources, data or tools, that are activated under rules and connections at the service of a common objective that could not work in isolation. Lastly, studio and office can be justified as a means of architectural 'production', as they pursue an objective that can be translated into objects, information, research or another form of expression.

This issue of Materia Arquitectura places the architecture studio and office as study phenomena, taking advantage of their conceptual ambiguity to escape any attempt at definition and assuming its complexities as a reflection of the constant – and necessary – reformulations of architectural practice. In order to do so, the dossier poses from three approximations from where to examine the studio and the office: the physical and virtual space that embraces them; the agents that compose them and their interactions; and their academic as well as professional production. 'Place, agents, production' build a triad in conflict and dependence, a prism where to build critical discourses on the way in which we build, experience, represent and socialize architectural knowledge and, through this, observe the space from where these actions emerge.

The paradox of studio and office is that, being omnipresent institutions in the practice and teaching of architecture, their intellectual importance is left in the background. However, "the 'studio' is a staple of the disciplinary tradition of architecture" – as Emmanuel Petit argues. The knowledge of architecture emerges there, giving form to a creative workspace that may be taken to other fields of knowledge. This is exemplified by coworking spaces emerging from the studio/office model in architecture – as explained by Gonzalo Carrasco – and become known commercially as attractive spaces for creative work. This is not a superfluous matter: architectural workspaces are, themselves, ideological projects – as stated by Esteban Salcedo –, architectural objects that assume a critical position about the professional production – even regarding a market model, as argued by José Sánchez – and may materialize in workshops, exhibition galleries or – as stated by Tamao Hashimoto – deploy intermittently and strategically in the city.

Beyond its object condition, the architectural studio and the office are represented in the interaction of their agents, either by means of the dialogue that specifies their ideas – as expressed by the text edited by Ernesto Silva and Rayna Razmilic –, unveiling the imperfections, negotiations and collaborations of project work – as shown in the conversation with Amale Andraos and Dan Wood –, or illustrated by images of the actions, accidents and malpractices occurring there – as illustrated by Michelle Fornabai in her graphic report. At present, architectural studio and office – according to Esteban de Backer – embrace the complexity and contradiction of the processes of architectural work, often being understood from a kind of 'creative pragmatism', beyond simple efficiency and professional productivity.

*It is possible that architectural studio and office may never be captured in the pages of a publication as such, only as references, reimagined, criticized, commented upon or expressed between lines. 'Place, agents, production' is a phrase that expresses this, it does not have neither subject nor verb nor object, it is just a set of words that trigger an imagery between authors and readers. **m***