

The Jungle: Freelance Labor, Living Knowledge, and Generic Architecture

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Precariousness is the desert of the world returned to jungle.– Franco Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (2015)

Losing projects in a competition often resonate longer than the winners. The nature of a project is to exceed the conditions within which it has been conceived. More than solving problems or making the world better, the etymology of the word “project” implies an ingenious acceleration, a tendency towards the unknown, a forward conjecture. A project always confronts reality like a vector running on a line with twofold directions: the proposition of an alternative scenario to the present or, the intensification of the given conditions. If we assume that the validity of an architectural statement lies in the way it either reaffirms or dismantles the categories through which we assess the city, then we can learn from those often left unmentioned.

In 1972 Archizoom Associati submitted an entry to an international competition for the expansion of the University of Florence. Calling their proposal “Projects Need to Be Signed,” Archizoom indeed signed their boards, despite the requirement of anonymity, thus deliberately disqualifying themselves from official consideration. The competition was launched in 1970, in response to increasing enrollment at the university, which the municipality of Florence sought to accommodate by extending the campus toward Prato and Pistoia and reorganizing the surrounding region.

The brief solicited ideas for relocating educational facilities, decongesting the city center, and planning strategic administrative functions for the city. Of the 18 submissions, the jury awarded prizes to three projects, each epitomizing one of three typical approaches to competitions in those years: the traditional architectural project, focused on developing a pragmatic, realizable object; the critical project, contesting the premises of the competition and of architecture as an operative tool; and finally the analytical project, which did not provide solutions to the question but aimed to discover and test new relations between the proposed theme and context.¹

In their introductory text, Archizoom declared their rejection of any “funny utopia,” proposing instead a “rigorous experiment based on rigorous premises.” Submitting only a series of endless plans and a continuous cross-section, they circumvented the problem of architectural form altogether, conceiving of territory as a neutral surface and denying the existence of any *outside* beyond the pervasive relations of production: “The only architectural form we wanted to propose was a fogbank roaming between Firenze and Pistoia,” they claimed, “This is not just as inspiration or poetic invention, for we refuse to design an object, preferring instead to design its use.”²

For Archizoom, the problem of inventing a better or more efficient form for the university was irrelevant. A new form would have no effect on its institutional structures, nor would it change its academic ranks and obsolete programs. They sought instead to expose the logic on which the university, and the city at large, was based.³ In opposition to a city conceived as an agglomeration of objects, Archizoom offered their Universal Climatic System, a stratified surface on which all components would be evenly

distributed, each afforded an equal degree of autonomy. Exploiting air conditioning and electric lighting to design infinite hermetic interiors, Archizoom envisioned the space of the university as any other architecture of production, whether factory or supermarket, warehouse or housing complex. The project consisted of a series of superimposed platforms stretched to a geographical scale, similar to the productive plinth of Ludwig Hilberseimer's Hochhausstadt or Mies van der Rohe's concrete Bürohaus. These massive endless platforms, punctuated with supports, toilets, shafts, and elevators, featured floors dedicated to recreational facilities, libraries, classrooms, information centers, research laboratories, and parking for residents.

The premises for the Florence university were first formulated in their manifesto "City Assembly Line of Social Issues: Ideology and Theory of the Metropolis," published in the July/August 1970 issue of *Casabella*, just before the competition launched. There Archizoom defined the modern metropolis as the culmination of capitalist production: an assembly line driven by its inherent contradictions, the irreducible distance between individual impulse and collective interests, irrational desires and moral order, technology and nature.⁴ Archizoom postulated labor struggle and social strife as the true engine of the metropolitan machine against the "Policy of Balance between Opposites" promoted by the Social Democratic government of the time which, in order to preserve and control its divisions, had to constantly fabricate new ideologies, masking the logic of exploitation beneath commercial slogans and cultural facades. This homeostatic spectacle had to be broken, awakening rather than sedating, the many-headed hydra of knowledge production.

Every society constructs the relation between its forms of knowledge and the apparatuses for distributing it. Whereas in the past knowledge remained siloed within different institutions — protected in monasteries, ordered in libraries and codified within disciplinary hierarchies — for Archizoom the hastening of communication, circulation, and consumption of information demanded to reinvent not just the institutions of wisdom but the way knowledge was effectively generated and made accessible to the masses. As a result architecture was no longer able to represent “the system itself, as the city is no longer a ‘place’ but a market condition.” If once the city and its functions were tangible and understandable through its very built form, the new “immaterial” forms of production severed any relation between the city and its architecture. Thus, a new university could only emerge from the critical dissection of the status quo and the radical elaboration of a theory of cognitive labor. Rather than indulging in a symbolical recovery of the past Archizoom accelerated the conditions of the present defining territory as an extended knowledge factory and universities as the logistic centers for distributing education as a commodity, measuring its circulation and intensity through series of control nodes.

Forty-five years later, the radical assumptions of the Archizoom project for Florence still resonate within the current architectural debate. In their proposal for the university, Archizoom affirmed the general intellect as a driving force of production, blurring distinctions between living and working, rent and profit: a condition that became ubiquitous within the jungle of any contemporary metropolis. Archizoom’s instrumental use of architecture at a territorial scale as a managerial device for allocating and distributing resources, reconciling contradictions, and unleashing desires anticipated the

recent concern for logistics and manufactured landscapes, architectures without contents and without humans, the countryside as infrastructural spine of urbanization and accumulator of consensus. Finally, the Universal Climatic System foresees the emergence of an entrepreneurial attitude toward life that transforms the very act of dwelling into a source of value.

1.

In Italy, postwar reconstruction made land a scarce resource, driving up property values and encouraging speculation while also obstructing social housing and public interventions. Despite the first legislative body on territorial and urban planning at a national scale — the renown “legge urbanistica”— was issued during the war, in 1942, it was only during the late 60s and the early 70s that a coherent definition of discipline and its juridical framework was truly constructed.

Rapid uncontrolled urbanization, combined with discontent among workers and students, had forced the Christian Democratic Party (DC) to reach out to the moderately left-wing Italian Socialist Party, forming a coalition in an attempt to consolidate support from the working and middle classes. This pact treated programming as a crucial governmental instrument for not only reducing the imbalances of postwar reconstruction but also for consolidating consensus among the social classes, reorienting mass consumption and industrialization at a national scale, neutralizing workers’ opposition, and laying the foundation the expansion and reform of the university apparatus.⁵

That same year, 1962, Minister of Public Works Fiorentino Sullo proposed an urban reform that challenged the juridical foundations of city planning. Drawing on Hans Bernoulli's theories on public land ownership, Sullo established the General Expropriation for Public Utility to allow municipalities to acquire land to lease for public or private use at low cost, thus curbing gratuitous rent profits and ensuring a more equal distribution of income and welfare rights. Quoting Bernoulli, Sullo claims the city is not the result of private interests or a disordered accumulation of single buildings, people and activities, but a collective artifact exceeding the individuality of its components. The multitudinous lives and activities constituting such assemblage, stratified through time and space, constantly produce an inestimable value, which for decades had been capitalized through the mechanism of rent. By extending private property, limiting accessibility and boosting prices, private interests adapted the form of the city to the one of the market, shaped by the logic of maximum exploitation and the anarchy of profit. For Sullo, in order to preserve the value of the city as a collective work-of-art, land had to remain undivided, ensuring the availability of its spaces for its inhabitants but retaining its common ownership. In effect, this replaced the idea of ownership with the idea of *use*, giving the state control over the land market. The city needs to grow on public land leaving a "surface right" to its users and entrepreneurs for a limited number of years, killing rent, eliminating market antagonisms, lowering dwelling prices, improving affordability and reversing the wealth produced by the collectivity to public interventions.

Although Sullo was fiercely attacked by his own DC colleagues, and his reform swiftly rejected, the proposal had huge resonance within the wider contemporary

architectural debate on the relation between city and territory.⁶ Rejecting the capitalist understanding of territorial planning as “a surface on which every point would be perfectly equivalent to the other and ready to get functions or destinations,” Manfredo Tafuri, Giorgio Piccinato, and Vieri Quilici, proposed the idea of a *città-territorio*, incorporating the whole of natural and human resources as an integrated concatenation of qualitative punctual interventions. Directional centers, industrial nodes, commercial hubs, housing developments, cultural facilities, infrastructural networks: the whole national territory could be structured as an archipelago of architectural nodes.⁷ Instead of simply subdividing the urban form into separate problems, the *città-territorio* worked at a regional scale, tackling the complexities and contradictions of its extension by modulating their fields of influence, locating lines of development and basins of productivity according to the different local conditions.⁸

By proposing a university configured as a public plateau covering the whole plain between Florence and Pistoia, Archizoom reread the hypothesis of *città-territorio* through Sullo’s promise of public land ownership. In their first two competition boards, a Maginot-like cross-section and continuous plans are juxtaposed with examples of 20th-century architecture, which appear by comparison as modest isolated objects: Groupius’s Siedlung Dammerstock, Le Corbusier’s Unité d’habitation, Archigram’s Plug-In City, and the Metamorph group’s Metamorphic Pattern, as well as samples of urban fabrics from Paris, Buenos Aires, and New York.

For Archizoom, the war against capitalism had to be waged not on a qualitative but on a quantitative level, fighting the system through its own principle of accumulation.

If the market's abstraction turns the whole territorial extension into an endless, unbroken exploitable surface, then a "homogeneous living diagram" provided a viable response, eliminating the problem of urban form and architecture once and for all. The age of shocking alternatives was over. Reality for Archizoom was boring and repetitive, a system that you could only be part of. Behind the whirl of consumerism and the farce of difference is what Archizoom called "a Marble Chicken that you can neither eat nor move," or the repetition of the identical, the isotropic artificial nature of exchanges that recognize only quantitative distinctions.⁹

Insofar as it mirrored the extended network of capitalist exchanges, the productive campus of the Universal Climatic System could not be represented from neither a perspectival nor an external point of view but only seen in plans and isometric diagrams. In their third panel, Archizoom dissects the elements of the Universal Climatic System: columns, elevators, technical and hygienic facilities, green areas, and furniture. As a system of standardized parts, the university could be indefinitely extended across the whole territory following a 125-meter-square grid, articulated in different sectors configured as empty rooms. The idea of departments, faculties, and other disciplinary divisions, so heavily debated by government reformers, is replaced here by a generic, infinitely replicable scaffold available to any content.¹⁰

The main functions are organized around centrifugal crosses (numbered one through eight), which alternated with collective facilities (nine through sixteen), serially repeated as urban cores. In this combination of centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, there are echoes of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Ampio Magnifico Collegio and Thomas

Jefferson's University of Virginia: two paradigmatic attempts to construct and destroy an idea of the city, as well as an idea of an institution.¹¹ Whereas Piranesi aimed to reveal both the creative and destructive power of reason through the exuberance of language and the redundancy of combinatory invention, Jefferson deployed rationality as a pragmatic and anti-ideological technique for measuring and ordering territories, letting the university's elements evolve in space according to alignments and projections. The University of Virginia's open structure of lawns and pavilions in effect inverted the central hierarchy of the Collegio.¹²

The Collegio was a nonsense machine, a gigantic enclosed forest of rooms whose centrality and formal rigor was contradicted by the clash of multiple sequences of spaces. The core of the composition was a vacant space, a flight of stairs considerably smaller than the peripheral rooms, which included a temple on the central axis, a theater, a canteen, an oratory, and stables on the sides.¹³ The plan was simultaneously generated and dismantled by the clashing energies of its rooms: "The independence of the parts and their montage obey no other law than that of pure contiguity."¹⁴ Similarly, the continuous plan of Archizoom's university is formed by the multiplication of classrooms, conference spaces, auditoriums, and programs of all sorts, recalling Piranesi's assault on the well-balanced compositions promoted by the Accademia di San Luca.

Jefferson's University of Virginia, heavily influenced by Palladio's villas on the *terraferma*, was conceived as a territorial diagram rather than as a centralized plan. The porticoed wings of the rotunda neither limit nor focus the composition; they configure the campus around an empty U-shape without restricting the proliferation of its pedagogical

infrastructure. Similarly, Archizoom's university plan is internally punctuated by public facilities and technical cores, without enclosure or boundary. Any distinction between labor and leisure, factory and society, university and city, or campus and territory is eliminated: students were both citizens and inhabitants, producers and consumers, finally liberated from oppressive domestic compartments and free to live in a generic "furnished void."¹⁵

In its paradoxical extension, the Universal Climatic System paralleled the totality of the working force – an army that would "make mad the Brain of the System" and ultimately reveal the impossibility of measuring what cannot be measured: knowledge, or the generic human potential. At the same time, by unleashing the forces of circulation and consumption, the surface of the university could have been conceived as a cross-section of social desires: a modulator of people's unconscious. It is no coincidence that the declared model for the homogeneous living diagram was the supermarket, an architecture that, as Archizoom wrote, "foreshadows an image-free structure, but one that is an optimum system of information about goods and merchandise, within which the homogeneity of the product is directly produced . . . the experimental field in which two different cultures of the 'soil' are actually exceeded: urban culture and agricultural culture. . . In the Supermarket, the Tertiary Sector and the Control of Interests become a two-dimensional vertical diagram, a homogeneous and transparent neutral section of exchange between different Interests, without any structure of their own."¹⁶

The modularity of the university frames evokes the series of Gazebo furniture pieces Archizoom had been developing since 1967: a series of rectangular brass tubular

structures used to showcase different objects in perverse assemblages as surrealist exquisite corpses. The elementary simplicity of the gazebo acts as a conceptual device to destroy the serenity of the bourgeois interiors eliciting the critical response of their inhabitants. By removing objects from their daily functions and estranging users from their own habits, the gazebo abolishes the granted or automated gestures instilled by the consumerist society. Not dissimilarly from the Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdung* effect, in order to stimulate the attention of their inhabitants, the Universal Climatic System did not re-present the world but made it strange, foreign, impassible and repeatable as the mechanism of a car, transforming its everyday features into something unfamiliar.¹⁷ As clearly showed in the collages and the models accompanying the project, the university activities were abruptly juxtaposed in a sequence of territorial gazebos aimed at preventing its dwellers from the passive consumption of the city and their own lives.¹⁸

In this sense, the Universal Climatic System is more than a logistical apparatus for speeding up exchange and circulation; it is a machine for unleashing the irrational tensions of territory, with all its geological, symbolical, kitsch, sacred, and perverse stratifications, but also to produce consciousness and dis-alienating the self from the encompassing social frames of production. Archizoom university project unveiled the dark side of the architecture of territory, opposite and yet related to the expanded field of infrastructure and mechanization of the surface: the same one that erupted in the recent American election or in the British referendum, whereby manipulable sad passions and discontent proliferate.

2.

In 1964, a crucial passage from Karl Marx's notebooks the *Grundrisse* appears for the first time translated into Italian in the pages of the review *Quaderni rossi*, whose editors were relatively close with the members of Archizoom and the League of Architecture Students of which they were part.¹⁹ Marx's Fragment on Machines predicts that knowledge would eventually become the real propeller of capitalism, being the totality of fixed capital always the tangible expression of what he called a "general intellect." Cogs, assembly lines, factories, railways, buildings, bridges, cities, and infrastructures were nothing but accumulations of collective knowledge: the concrete achievements of science, research, and technology at a certain point in history. For Marx, each moment in history produces its own machines, which become the material and conceptual indexes of human industriousness, "organs of the human will over nature . . . the organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified."²⁰ Thus, machines should not be considered simply as technical instruments but rather as the embodiment of material, intellectual, individual, and collective energies. Suddenly, the austere rationality of industrial architecture, the orchestration of the labor force, and the mathematical circulation of materials across the manufacturing floor appeared as segments of a much wider territorial concatenation embracing all of society, of a restless cognitive factory pulsing at the rhythm of all human activity.

At the same time, by assuming the general intellect as a primary source of production, Marx also implied the gradual displacement of physical labor time as a measure of value, with wealth and profit no longer being produced entirely by

expenditures of “necessary labor-time” but by the proper elaboration and circulation of ideas that stand outside the factory. Whereas the mass production of goods relies on the scientific management and coordination of activities across the integrated layout of the factory, the production of knowledge is not so easily confined – an enclosed system of exploitation would indeed threaten its intrinsic value. Unlike raw materials that can be processed and assembled mechanically, knowledge is alive, exceeding any single individual, collectively produced across space and time.

In this way, Marx unveiled a contradiction within the capitalist laws of accumulation: if knowledge could not be constrained, then its potential could be exploited only through the minimization of fixed capital and the simultaneous spatial integration of the whole natural environment. As Michael Hardt puts it, “The more the common is corralled as property, the more its productivity is reduced; and yet expansion of the common undermines the relations of property in a fundamental and general way.”²¹ In other words, the more the factory extended across society, the more it had to physically deny itself, reducing its architecture of exploitation to the barest structural form to avoid inhibiting the creation and circulation of knowledge.

Similarly, if the capitalist had an active role within the process of industrial production – providing the means of cooperation, arranging the labor force, and ordering the manufacturing layout – then, in the expanded field of knowledge production, the capitalist is expelled to a more *external* role, exerting only indirect control and collection through tactics of rent. This is what Carlo Vercellone defines as “the becoming-rent of profit” – that is, the emergence of an economic system in which the laws of profit cease

to compartmentalize spaces and begin to speculate across regimes of rent, providing fields where exchanges, relations, and forms of life can freely proliferate within the conditioned extensions of intellectual property. Rent is a passive form of revenue obtained through ownership and control of land, buildings, patents, copyrights, and other property. In simple terms, the rentier does not produce anything but simply owns something that exploits living knowledge.²² Rent produces an architecture of emptiness, of spatial frames or gazebos that simply sheltering human activities: an architecture, to use Mies' words, made of "bright wide workrooms, uncluttered, undivided, only articulated according to the organism of the firm. The greatest effect with the least expenditure of means."²³

The formal evolution of the architecture of the university confirms this tendency. As a business, knowledge production has no fixed demands; it is indeterminate enough to inhabit any architecture. Because of such typological uncertainty and programmatic flexibility, the debate over the form of the large universities that exploded in Europe in the 1950s and '60s offered an opportunity to test architecture at a territorial scale and to consolidate the scattered forces of the social brain within coherent spaces. From Candilis Josic Woods's Free University Berlin to Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt to Franco Purini and Vittorio Gregotti's linear University of Calabria, the project of the university became, in Paola Navone and Bruno Orlandoni's words, "an effective intervention in the growing debate over the new dimension and utopianism of architecture; exalting in the fantastic element of design praxis; transcending mere functionalism; and in a linguistic structure that could take account of all kinds of architectural languages."²⁴

Today, following the Archizoom's trajectory, the territorial extension of production seems to have been introjected into endless conditioned interiors. Their project declared the impossibility of containing the production of knowledge within a specific architectural enclosure, considering knowledge to be the total sum of human activity on the earth's crust throughout history. If the metropolis has become a cognitive factory, then libraries, research institutes, museums, learning centers, and office spaces cannot but be just vacant stages, silent backgrounds for life and its activities. Looking at the woven emptiness of SANAA's Rolex Learning Center or Junya Ishigami's Kanazawa Institute Technology Workshop, the plan for cognitive production seems no longer measured through walls and floors but by "intervals" of programmatic intensities and rarefactions, topographical alterations, and abstention – just as in the Universal Climatic System. Walls and partitions have been eliminated, floors and roofs turned into continuous surfaces, outdoor and indoor spaces merged into artificially conditioned environments, interior landscapes without boundaries, public living rooms, coworking spaces or sprawling workstations: as Archizoom predicted, the world appears as a primitive future in which the savage wanders a jungle of IP addresses.²⁵

Such precarious condition is an ontological character of the human species. Whereas animals are unconsciously bound to instincts and specific milieus, men are biologically undefined. Devoid of an environment, they are forced to constantly construct their own nature, reducing the worldly infiniteness through cognitive frames and spaces, practices and rituals, institutions and disciplines, codes and behaviors or, in one word, within what Arnold Gehlen generally defined as "culture".²⁶ Culture is product of the

human defective existence: it is what compensates the lack of an environment and relieves a life within the generic openness of a world. Any attempt to tackle such an undefined status is a project, an act of knowledge by which progressively becoming aware of themselves. What men are is never a predetermined point of departure but always the result of a process, a continuous use and negotiation of the self with a context.

The capacity to project and thus overcome its natural precarity, is what truly characterizes the human potential — or what Marx broadly called labor power – the generic predisposition to produce, the “aggregate of mental and physical capabilities existing in the living personality and the body of a human being.”²⁷ Labor power exists in the body of the workers only as possibility to be actualized, as a capacity that develop according to their material circumstances. The whole development of capitalism could be thus summarized as the attempt to consolidate knowledge and human potential within systems of measurement in order to control and exchange them as commodities.

For centuries, the ordering of the world through forms was necessary to ward off the anguish of humanity’s natural indeterminacy and its lack of a specific environmental niche.²⁸ By contrast, within neoliberal capitalism, this process has been reversed. The present forms of production exacerbate precarity rather than repressing it, elevating the indeterminacy of human nature as its highest source of profit, and encouraging new ways of dwelling and making use of the self. When life as such is put to work, the very act of dwelling takes on a political and economic resonance, coinciding with the extension of life and the actualization of its embedded power.

In this sense, Archizoom's university project anticipated and intensified such a reversal. The architecture of the Universal Climatic System, like any architecture of production is *generic*, not just for its lack of qualities but because it puts to work the innate generic potential of the human species: language, dexterity, industry, creativity, affectivity, and openness. Architecture becomes generic when the genericness of labor power becomes a supreme source of value.²⁹ Thus, as Archizoom saw, architecture could finally be released from the impediments of machinery, roofs, and facades and developed as a pure infrastructure of connections: a typical plan circumscribing frames of emptiness to enable life to take place freely.

3.

Following the financial turn long ago initiated by the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union, the slow demise of the welfare policies, and the withdrawal of state support for education, the so-called Bologna Process perversely realized what Archizoom sought to halt: the transformation of knowledge production, research, and creative activities into factory work.

The Bologna Declaration, signed in the June 1999 after the previous agreements between France, Germany, United Kingdom and Italy of the Sorbonne Declaration the year before, aimed at establishing an intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological framework for all the European countries. The first objective of the agreement was the adoption of a system of comparable degrees, which would have allowed the “employability” and the “international competitiveness” of the educational

system, immediately demonstrating the market-oriented character of the reform and the reinforced relation between university and industry, technology and research, production and innovation. The other main objective was the establishment of a system of credits to promote not only the “most widespread student mobility” across the European union, but also to integrate within the accreditation system also the personal universe of the students’ interests, passions, and desires, transforming the universities into homogeneous fields of formative evaluation.

Considered as the industry that would drive the European economy of the future, the university had to be rearranged as a territorial cognitive factory, an almost logistic apparatus in which knowledge, students, and teachers are circulated as commodities, measured through credits, and evaluated with algorithms and ranks as they are obliged to partake in perennial learning and training, scrutinized through competitive input-output selections, and compelled to “invest” in – and borrow against – better professional qualifications.³⁰ Behind the alleged standardization of the higher education curriculum, the Bologna Process not only encouraged universities to adapt their programs to the requirements of the market, collaborate with private sectors, and rely on private funding, but it also instilled competition and precariousness within the very process of learning. Students, as well as teachers, are now trained to become entrepreneurs, to shape their own expertise according to the most profitable requirements of the market, to increase their mobility and widen their personal connections, to produce at an ever more hectic pace, and to live out their lives in precarious conditions.

The deliberate precarity of Archizoom's project has today become a standard feature for any "well-tempered environment." Paralleling the worker's generic potential with the flexibility of the space of production, the neoliberal cognitive factory dismantles the traditional form of salaried work through a whole pattern of unstable relations, from informal internships to project-based tasks to mechanical Turks to zero-hour contracts. Precarity has become the norm of the labor market rather than its exception, and everyone has no choice but to become an entrepreneur. In this sense, the freelancer seems an exemplary embodiment of Archizoom's premonitions.

A freelancer is a one-person company, or, in Sergio Bologna's definition, a worker who assumes all three traditional roles of enterprise within a single person: the capitalist, who provides the investment capital; the manager, who administers and controls the activities of investment; and the salaried employee, who propels the activities of the firm. Her own accumulated experiences, competencies, and knowledge are all she has; working in the midst of fierce competition, she is solely responsible for the identity and success of her business. Freelance labor does not include health insurance, paid holidays, parental leave, dismissal-notice periods, or redundancy rights. Not unlike a debtor, who shapes her own subjectivity in order to fulfill a promise to a creditor, the freelancer must complete tasks and adhere to deadlines to maintain the credibility of her work, and so to obtain future commissions.³¹

Freelancing is a mode of dwelling. Whereas the salaried worker was assigned to specific and definite workplaces, the freelancer's place of work is inseparable from her body. Devoid of any prescribed routine or mandatory protocol, the freelancer needs to

plan her time, space, tasks, and deadlines while maintaining a solid psychological attitude, productivity habits, training competencies, and social relations. For the one-person enterprise, architecture is interiorized as a bodily and mental practice, delimiting and selecting intervals of possibility for expression. Whereas salaried workers could collectively bargain their contracts thanks to their space of work and trade unions, freelancers are spatially fragmented and devoid of any professional trade association.

Freelancers thus succumb to a whole microphysics of power, which incorporates their subjectivities not only into the activity but also into the places in which they engage with other people. As Archizoom intuited, at the apogee of immaterial capitalism and financial austerity – in the desert of the world returned to jungle – architecture is becomes the art of “organizing possibilities.” When everybody is transformed into an enterprise, curation becomes a way to expose the self, to express and sometimes even to brand a personal dexterity – the obligation to self-design, to use Boris Groys’s term. Not unlike the financial algorithmic order, the freelancer must get rated, reviewed, and liked, just as the scholar must get ranked and quoted, in order to extend the network of trust and support, clients and commissions.³²

The problem, for both freelancers and Archizoom’s futurist savages, was no longer how to plan the world outside – since there was no longer any outside to be planned – but how to design themselves and how to deal with the way the Universal Climatic System constantly redesigns them. Not by chance, the *curator* derives from the Latin word for care. For the freelancer, curating both relates to the management of personal affects and business contacts, intimate affections and practical abilities.

A freelancer might be defined as a curator of potentialities, an architect of the self: selecting, assembling, displaying, and framing actions, administering and distilling life, relating thoughts and objects into theories by affinity or difference. Following the same mechanisms that rule the world of exhibition value, it would be easy to demonstrate how the architectural profession has recently undertaken a curatorial shift, as architects are no longer just in charge of designing, writing, and building but also concerned with the promotion and critical arrangement of content, the documentation and fundraising of projects, the advancement of research, the publication of outcomes, and the construction of a public image through social networks and public relations.³³ This somehow justifies not only the flourishing of curatorial studies in a plethora of degrees, specializations, and workshops – but also the parallel market of “archizines,” blogs, debate platforms, publishing houses, essay collections, guest-edited journals, biennials, pop-up exhibitions, independent galleries, and so forth.

Yet it is precisely when the genericness of human potential becomes totally parasitized – as if the Archizoom project ad absurdum – that new and stronger strategies of opposition emerge, deepening the internal contradictions of capitalist accumulation. For example, the recent claim for a guaranteed basic income of existence in many European countries could be considered as a possible radical proposition against the instability of freelance labor. The remuneration for any living activity, independent of any other form of income, could be considered the same quantitative opposition advanced by the Universal Climatic System.³⁴

The basic income is a generalized, egalitarian, and nondiscriminative redistribution of wealth that precedes any labor relation: it is not a form of assistance but rather a minimal reappropriation of the capitalist profits accumulated through the gratuitous rent of common prosperity, knowledge, information, and creativity collectively produced at a social level. It is *generic*, granted for life-engendering activity and its unmeasurable potential; it is *unconditional*, given simply for human existence, without any further obligation; it is *individual*, corresponding to the life of each single person; it is *residential*, and thus guaranteed to everybody living or residing in a territory without discrimination of race, gender, or nationality. The establishment of a basic income at an international level would create possibilities for the recomposition, protection, and organization of the fragmented working class, and of those who have been excluded from the benefits of citizenship, employment, and social welfare. Moreover, the universal basic income would offer support not only to those who have been compelled or who have chosen a precarious working activity but also to those who have consciously decided not to work at all, legitimizing the possibility of abstention from labor.

The right *not to work* in place of the right to work would legitimize human labor power in any form, ensuring a basic wealth and freedom of dwelling, ultimately repositing Archizoom's claims as a juridical revolution. In the Florence project the issue at stake was not to innovate the form of the university but rather to find a strategy to demystify the logic on which the university—and eventually the city at large—were currently based. Paraphrasing Friedrich Engels' *Housing Question*, as the aim of the Universal Climatic System was not to propose an optimal solution for the city to work

but, as Andrea Branzi would later recall, “to prevent the present-day city from functioning (with barricades)” and dismantling the principles on which it has been constructed, so the universal basic income is a project to unfold and reverse the logic on which the neoliberal jungle has been grown.

¹ The winning entry, titled *Amalassunta*, consisted of a linear series of parallel building blocks hosting not only the educational facilities but also commercial and business functions. The repetition of these territorial walls at calculated intervals measured and delimited the plain around Florence into functional compartments, while the buildings' spacious interiors ensured openness and flexibility for the "dense spatial fragmentation that the complex university functions demand." Second prize went to a project titled *Aquarius*, which rejected the idea of a confined campus outside the city center. Architects Luigi Cervellati and Italo Insolera imagined the university as a public cultural plan, offering both students and citizens the ability to reinvent daily the most appropriate form for the production and distribution of knowledge. They proposed a covered forum inspired by Kenzo Tange's Osaka Expo and other interventions within existing buildings. The third prize winner, *Sistemi Congiunti Tre*, by Ludovico Quaroni and Pierluigi Spadolini, made a project of the project, calling attention to the vagueness of the brief with a sophisticated programmatic elaboration. On the competition and the events related to the jury see "Firenze Università: Concorso per pochi intimi," *Casabella* 362 (1972); and "Firenze città di concorsi," *Casabella* 434 (1978): 19–60. See also *Progetti per due città: Firenze e Perugia*, *Controspazio*, no. 1–2 (Rome: Dedalo Edizioni, 1972). The team was composed by Emilio Battisti, Edoardo Detti, Gian Franco Di Pietro, Giovanni Fanelli, Teresa Cobbò, Vittorio Gregotti, Raimondo Innocenti, Marco Massa, Hiromichi Matsui, Mario Mocchi, Paolo Sica, Bruno Viganò, Maria Zoppi, Francesco Barbagli, Peo

² Archizoom Associati, "Archizoom: Progetto di Concorso per l'Università di Firenze," *Domus* (April 1972).

³ Massimo Morozzi, Claudio Greppi, Paolo Deganello, Gilberto Corretti and Andrea Branzi met during the first occupation of the Architecture Faculty in Florence in 1963 and were among the founders of the League of Architecture Students, which was largely influenced by the magazine *Classe Operaia* led by Mario Tronti and Alberto Asor Rosa. See Paola Navone, Bruno Orlandoni, *Architettura Radicale*, Documenti di Casabella: Milan, 1974: 19; and Andrea Branzi, “Postface”, in *No-Stop City*, Orléans: Editions HXX, 2006.

⁴ Archizoom Associati, “Città catena di montaggio del sociale,” *Casabella* (July/August 1970); and “No-Stop City: Residential Car Park, Universal Climatic System,” *Domus* 496 (March 1971).

⁵ In 1962, the Budget Minister Ugo La Malfa in his famous “Nota Aggiuntiva,” proposed to find a correct equilibrium between the State economical dispositions and their territorial application adopting the practice of ‘programming’ as a mandatory policy to readdress the directions of national developments and instituting the CNPE (National Committee for Economic Planning). At the center of the future reforms there were the problematic conditions of the poorest southern regions of Italy, the plan of industrialization and large infrastructures, the reforms for public health and education: all issues inherited in the following 1964 plan proposed by Giovanni Pieraccini, Minister of Public Works and successively Budget Minister between 1964 and 1968, heavily contested by the students. For the university it was necessary to design new buildings, ameliorate their spatial and internal organization, to adequate the field of education to the demands of the market: often, the provided qualifications did not correspond to the real progressive exigencies.

⁶ Moving from the CIAM conferences and Giuseppe Samonà’s “L’urbanistica e l’avvenire delle città europee,” the theme of city-territory was first discussed at the 7th INU Congress in 1959 in Stresa, later at the following 9th INU Congress in Milan by Ludovico Quaroni, Giancarlo De Carlo, Giovanni Astengo, and finally elaborated by Manfredo Tafuri, Giorgio Piccinato and Vieri Quilici in their renown essay “La Città Territorio.” See “Il IX Congresso INU a Milano: Programmi di sviluppo economico e pianificazione urbanistica,” *Casabella-Continuità* 270 (1962): 9–15.

⁷ Giorgio Piccinato, Vieri Quilici, and Manfredo Tafuri, “La città-territorio: Verso una nuova dimensione,” *Casabella-Continuità* 270 (1962): 16–25. Another crucial class-analysis of territory were the researches led by Alberto Magnaghi and his *Quaderni del Territorio*, such as *La città-fabbrica, contributi per una analisi di classe del territorio* (Milan: Clup, 1970).

⁸ Tafuri uses the term *configuration* to indicate such a dynamic system of settlements, evoking Fiorentino Sullo’s new planning tool at a regional scale known as *comprensorio* used to arrest the private land consumption and facilitate large public housing interventions. Within this game of weights and quantities, the directional centre had the fundamental role of orienting and configuring the productive infrastructure. As clearly demonstrated by the CIAM urban interventions or, in a closer detail, by the AUA project for directional and productive structure for the southern territories around Rome. The AUA, Associazione Urbanisti ed Architetti, was founded in 1962 by Manfredo Tafuri, Giorgio Piccinato and Vieri Quilici. See their “Ipotesi per la città: Territorio di Roma; Strutture produttive e direzionali nel comprensorio pontino,” *Casabella Continuità*, no. 274 (1963).

⁹ Archizoom used the metaphor of the “Marble Chicken” in the description of their proposal for the Milan Triennale in 1968. See Andrea Branzi, “L’Africa è vicina,” *Casabella* (May 1972).

¹⁰ “Logically speaking, the grid extends, in all directions, to infinity. Any boundaries imposed upon it by a given painting or sculpture can only be seen according to this logic—as arbitrary. By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame. This is the centrifugal reading. The centripetal one works, naturally enough, from the outer limits of the aesthetic object inward. The grid is, in relation to this reading a representation of everything that separates the work of art from the world, from ambient space and from other objects. The grid is an introjection of the boundaries of the world into the interior of the work; it is a mapping of the space inside the frame onto itself. It is a mode of repetition, the content of which is the conventional nature of art itself. See Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9 (Summer 1979): 60–61.

¹¹ In a private interview with the author, Gilberto Corretti explicitly stressed the intense reading of Tafuri's article, appeared in 1968 on the pages of *Contropiano*, in which both the projects are deeply discussed. On a note dated April 7, 1969, Corretti claims, "Architecture does not exist anymore. The city as an artifact or as a finite form does no longer exist; it only remains a city as condition for efficiency, a city able to self-represent itself. The two levels of the system, the petty-bourgeois demagogy and the large structural grid. The industrial system do not produce values. Architecture disappears. Production and demagogy. Demagogy concedes spaces for spontaneity within its productive network. Los Angeles, a city of detached villas within a network of complex highways, consumption poles and management." Gilberto Corretti, *Archivio Corretti* (Florence), 2012. See Manfredo Tafuri, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica," *Contropiano*, no.1 (1969).

¹² “We are commencing here the establishment of a college, and Instead of building a magnificent house which could exhaust ail our funds, we propose to lay off a square of about 7. or 800, f. wide, the outside of which we shall arrange separate pavilions, one for each professor and his scholars. Each pavilion will have a schoolroom below, and 2 rooms for the professor above and between pavilion and pavilion a range of dormitories for the boys, one story high, giving to each room, 16 feet wide and 12 feet deep. The pavilions about 36 feet wide in front and 24 feet, in depth, this sketch will give you an idea of It. the whole of the pavilions and dormitories to b e united by a colonnade in front of the height o f t he lower story of the pavilions, under which they may go dry from school to school, the colonnade will be of square brick pilasters (at first) with a Tuscan entablature, now what we wish is that these pavilions as will show themselves above the dormitories, shall be models of taste & good architecture, & of a variety of appearance, no two alike, so as to serve as specimens of the Architectural lectures. Will you set your imagination to work & sketch some designs for us, no matter how loosely with the pen, without the trouble of referring to scale or rule; for we want nothing but the outline o f t h e architecture, as the internal must be arranged according to local convenience a few sketches such as need not take you a moment will greatly oblige us.” See Thomas Jefferson, letter to Dr. William Thornton with the early plan of the University of Virginia, May 9, 1817.

¹³ On this account see Paolo Melis, “G.B. Piranesi: Un ‘ampio magnifico collegio’ per l’architettura; Intenzionalità iconologica di un documento storico dell’Illuminismo,” *Psicon* 4 (July–October 1975): 84–100; but also the sharp analysis of Richard Serra’s work by Yve-Alain Bois and John Shepley, “A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara,” *October* 29 (1984): 32–62.

¹⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, “The Wicked Architect,” in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970).

¹⁵ Archizoom Associati, *IN: Argomenti e immagini di design* 2, no. 2–3 (March–June 1971).

¹⁶ Archizoom Associati, “Città Catena di Montaggio del Sociale,” *Casabella* (July/August 1970).

¹⁷ “People today know little about the laws that govern their life. They usually react emotionally as social beings, but these emotional reactions are vague, imprecise, ineffective. The sources of the emotions and passions are just as muddied and polluted as the sources of their knowledge. Living in a rapidly changing world and changing rapidly themselves, people today lack a picture of the world that is accurate and can provide the basis for acting with a view to success. Ideas about how people live together are biased, inaccurate and contradictory, and the picture is what we would call impracticable, that is, with this picture of the world, of the human world, before their eyes they cannot control this world. They lack a sense of their own dependencies, they have no grip on the social machinery that is necessary to bring forth the desired effect. As much and as ingeniously deepened and expanded as it is, knowledge of the nature of things without knowledge of the nature of people, of human society in its entirety, is incapable of making the domination of nature a source of happiness for humankind. It is far more likely that it will become a source of unhappiness. (...) What is *Verfremdung*? *Verfremdung* estranges an incident or character simply by taking from the incident or character what is self-evident, familiar, obvious in order to produce wonder and curiosity.” See Bertolt Brecht, “The Experimental Theatre,” (“Über experimentelles Theater,” BFA 22/540-56) (“Über experimentelles Theater,” BFA 22/540-56), written in March/April 1939 and first published in two parts in the journal of the Swiss Association of Socialist Students in Zurich, *Bewusstsein und Sein*, Nr. 3 (1 July 1948) and Nr. 4 (1 November 1948) partly

¹⁸ The first series was designed for *Pianeta Fresco*, a magazine published by the designer Ettore Sottsass jr. and the journalist Fernanda Pivano: the catalogue was similar to a selling brochure for commercial correspondence and the gazebos were illustrated by means of isometric drawings and accurate descriptions of the contained objects. The name of the company *Gazebo's Inc.*, as Roberto Gargiani pointed out, was not so much dissimilar from the *Muslim Mosque Inc.* founded by Malcom X in 1964. See Roberto Gargiani, *Dall'onda pop alla superficie neutral. Archizoom Associati, 1966-1974*, (Milan: Electa, 2007), 47-100. See “Le Stanze vuote e i Gazebi”, *Domus* 462, May,(1968): 51-53; and also “Architettonicamente”, in *Casabella*, no. 334, March, (1969) and Franco Raggi, “Radical Story. Storia del pensiero negative nella pratica del Radical Design dal '68 ad oggi – Il ruolo delle avanguardie tra evasion e impegno disciplinare”, *Casabellla*, no. 382, Oct. (1973), 37-45.

¹⁹ See “Frammento sulle Macchine,” *Quaderni rossi*, no. 4 (1964): 289–300; and also Raniero Panzieri's accompanying essay “Plusvalore e Pianificazione,” 257–288. On the relations between Archizoom Associati, *Quaderni Rossi* and the members of *Classe Operaia*, see Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics within and against Capitalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 69–79.

²⁰ “The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process.” Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Outlines of Political Economy*, (London: Penguin, 1973), 706.

²¹ “Whereas in the case of industrial capital and its generation of profit, the capitalist plays a role internal to the production process, particularly in designating the means of cooperation and imposing the modes of discipline, in the production of the common the capitalist must remain relatively external. Every intervention of the capitalist in the processes of the production of the common, just as every time the common is made property, reduces productivity. Rent is a mechanism, then, to cope with the conflicts between capital and the common.” See Michael Hardt, “The Common in Communism,” in *The Idea of Communism*, ed. Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2010), 131–44.

²² If we roughly consider the three main forms of income — salary, profit and rent — the last is the only one for which a specific activity or social interest is required. If salary corresponds to an executed performance, profit to the entrepreneurial capacity, then rent only compensates the privilege of ownership. But rent is not only material. Its tentacles multiplied within the current knowledge economy. The purpose of credits, copyrights, patents, immaterial properties, nondisclosure agreements, and so forth is to capture and exploit value that has been collectively produced by the common, endless concatenations of the general intellect. See Andrea Fumagalli and Sandro Mezzadra, “The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-Rent of Profit: Notes on the Systemic Crisis of Cognitive Capitalism” in *Crisis in the Global Economy: Financial Markets, Social Struggles, and New Political Scenarios* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 85–110.

²³ Mies van der Rohe. “Office Building” in *G. Material for Elemental Form-Creation*, 1, July 1923, published in Philip Johnson (trans.) *Mies van der Rohe*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947.

²⁴ Paola Navone and Bruno Orlandoni, *Architettura radicale* (Milan: Documenti di Casabella, 1974).

²⁵ See Andrea Branzi, “For a Post-Environmentalism: Seven Suggestions for a New Athens Charter,” in *Ecological Urbanism*, ed. Mohsen Mostafavi and Gareth Doherty (Baden: Lars Muller, 2010), 110–13; “The Fluid Metropolis,” *Andrea Branzi: The Complete Works* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 50–51; and *Weak and Diffuse Modernity: The World of Projects at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (Milan: Skira, 2006).

²⁶ See Arnold Gehlen, *Man In the age of technology*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and Paolo Virno, *Scienze Sociali e “Natura Umana”. Facoltà di linguaggio, invariante biologico e rapporti di produzione*, (Rubettino Editore, 2003)

²⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1977), chap. 6.

²⁸ Paolo Virno argued that the post-Fordist society is more a “world” than an “environment,” meaning that the biological instability of the human species assumed new empirical evidence in the form of raw capacity to live. Paolo Virno, “Natural-Historical Diagrams: The New ‘Global Movement’ and the Biological Invariant,” in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5, no.1 (2009); but also *Mondità: L’idea di “mondo” tra esperienza sensibile e sfera pubblica* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1994).

²⁹ The same etymology of the term generic – from the Greek substantive *genos* (γενος, “race,” “kind,” or “species”) and the verb *gignomai* (γιγνομαι, “coming into being,” “generating,” or “producing”) – confirms this interpretation, indicating both the innate potential of the human species, the Marxian *Gattungswesen*, and its common ability to produce, the human “life-engendering life.” See Karl Marx, *Economical and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress, 1959).

³⁰ See The Bologna Declaration on the European space for higher education: an explanation,” available online at <http://ec.europa.eu>. See also Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013).

³¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).

³² Matteo Pasquinelli, “The Number of the Collective Beast: Value in the Age of the Algorithmic Institutions of Ranking and Rating,” (2014) available at <http://matteopasquinelli.com/number-of-the-collective-beast>.

³³ To use Boris Groys’ words, the self-employed worker or independent curator is “a radically secularized artist. He is an artist because he does everything artists do. But he is an artist who has lost the artist’s aura, who no longer has magical transformative powers at his disposal, who cannot endow objects with artistic status. He doesn’t use objects – art objects included – for art’s sake, but rather abuses them, makes them profane. Yet it is precisely this that makes the figure of the independent curator so attractive and so essential to the art of today.” See Boris Groys, “On the Curatorship,” in *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008): 50–51; and “The Obligation of Self-Design,” in *Going Public* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2010), 21–37.

³⁴ The basic income is *generic*, because granted for the life-engendering activity and its unmeasurable potential; it is *unconditional*, and attributed to the sole human existence, without demanding any further obligation; it is *individual*, corresponding to the life of each single person; it is *residential*, and thus guaranteed to everybody living or residing in a territory without discrimination of race, gender or nationality; it is an *income* and not a form of assistance, consisting of a minimal retribution for the proper act of living, indifferently from other salaries, incomes or welfare measures.