

# THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF A SMOKE-FILLED ROOM: ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE HUMAN AT OMA

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines ethnographic studies of design processes within the celebrated Dutch architectural practice OMA, studies undertaken from an Actor Network Theory perspective as promulgated by the anthropologist-philosopher Bruno Latour. Considering the participant-observation work of Yaneva, the article contrasts the relative absence of discussion of issues of labour and working conditions with their prominence in recent work by observers of architectural education and by activist academics such as Deamer, Tombesi and Wilson. Why might this ethnographic study have overlooked or de-emphasised these aspects of human relations at OMA? With critiques of Latourian and ANT-based approaches in mind, the paper asks if this is an aversion characteristic of such perspectives, with their defining self-distinction from critical theory. This paper argues for at least four reasons that these studies of OMA do not tackle the issues of architectural “labour in the making,” reasons that are respectively ethnographic, methodological, epistemological, and ontological. The article draws upon the reflections of Ignacio Fariás and Alex Wilkie on the evolution of “Studio Studies” from Latour et al.’s laboratory studies. From a philosophical point of view, it proposes potential extensions of studio studies to foreground labour conditions, which can be seen as central to design processes in studios such as OMA.

The year is 1991. The scene is a two-bedroom apartment in Rotterdam. I am visiting former classmates working at Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Five OMA employees share the flat. My friends, a couple with some means, have one of the bedrooms. The rest are, in effect, camping. One, from the States, has a thin mattress on the floor. All his possessions are scattered around it, like those of a homeless person under a bridge. I have come to visit OMA, but also to see significant Modernist works in Rotterdam. But my friends do not know where those are. All they know is the route between the apartment and the office, and the cafes where they eat breakfast and dinner when they can.

When I arrive, trouble is brewing. No one, other than Rem and the three associates, has been paid for two months, say the junior architectural staff. Simply, no cheques have appeared. A letter of protest is being drafted: the staff, after all, do have bills of their own to pay. And the pay, when it has come, is not great: 14,000 pounds a year, or a dollar figure in the 20,000s. A typical work week consists of 70 to 100 hours. The average time to burnout and departure for a staff person at their level, they report, is two to three months, although my classmates, with more personal resources at their disposal, have lasted longer. The staff are international, but many have come to Rotterdam without work permits, under the radar; they receive no employment benefits.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, did success change OMA? Did the practice become able to offer working conditions befitting trained professionals, recognizing that they too have lives to lead outside the office, obligations to others to fulfil? Anecdotal but firsthand web reports from 2015 suggest otherwise. One former employee of less than a year describes a spirit of camaraderie on all-nighters, but nonetheless acknowledges "Extremely long hours—Below market pay—Very high turnover rate," and remarks that "if everyone is going to be there for 15-18 hours a day, maybe include more than just a coffee machine and microwave in the kitchen".

Another former staff member recognizes the attraction of an OMA stint on one's resume, and reports receiving benefits, but confirms a

"[r]uthless working environment. Management really doesn't care if you don't sleep for days in a row as long as deadlines are met. Working hours are ridiculously long. You basically never stop working, specially [*sic*] if you are an intern or junior architect. Forget about having anything resembling a life outside of the office, the office is open 24/7. Office culture is bad. Lots of dissatisfied employees. Incredibly disorganized

project environment. Very high rate of turnover [...] most employees who [have been] here for a long time have been raised in these types of environments so they ‘don’t know any better’ and have little ‘real world’ experience.” A third former staff member observes more succinctly: “No sleep ever. Tense environment. And no sleep ever. Ever. Ever.”<sup>2</sup>

While the review comments on OMA are among the more extreme, such concerns are not unfamiliar among architectural firms that seek celebrity status within the discipline, indicating a set of labour issues endemic to culturally ambitious “starchitect” practices and certainly worthy of investigation.

#### ANT AND ARCHITECTURE, LABORATORY AND LABOUR

To think back today to the mattress of the 1991 OMA employee, to his belongings scattered on the floor around him, is to be reminded all too easily of other more recent sleeping accommodations associated with the production of culturally ambitious architecture. Those in the Rotterdam apartment were admittedly less dire and more self-chosen than those of migrant workers with which we are now familiar in the Emirates, as evidenced by the work of investigative journalists and activist groups,<sup>3</sup> but as those activists have argued, the two instances are connected by a disciplinary complex of issues as regards architectural labour. These issues, however,



FIGURE 1: DUBAI MIGRANT WORKERS' SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS

do not appear to have surfaced in the ethnographic studies of OMA's practice, despite their focus on the daily practices of design as a necessary component in the understanding of architecture.

Trained as a philosopher and anthropologist, Bruno Latour has brought influential attention to design in the more recent decades of his career.<sup>4</sup> Drawing upon his applications of Actor Network Theory and the concept of the Thing in studies of science and technology, Latour seeks, as Ariane Lourie Harrison observes, to challenge architecture

*to revise its conception of buildings as static objects, to understand that buildings develop agency as sociotechnical systems, through negotiations among people, institutions, and technologies. [...] Any entity (human or non-human, individual or organization, architecture) can be conceptualized as both an actor and a network, in actor-network theory, its constitutive actions redistributed accordingly. [...] By this approach, it becomes more difficult (and less productive) to refer to an entity as a discrete or isolated object. [...] All phenomena are networked assemblages of actors, each capable of reconfiguring the network, affecting each of its constituents. Latour proposes the term Thing to describe these socio-technical assemblages that make up the bulk of our environment and experience, and to distinguish his hybrid schema from the more rigid, modernist categorization of phenomena into subject and object. An ANT approach to architecture highlights the discrepancy between the manifest Thingness of a building (multiple constituencies, overlapping material, technological and discursive systems, inherent spaces of controversy) and its representation as a rendered object (static, set serenely in Cartesian space). [...] [A]n ANT's view would suggest that buildings be represented as dynamic 'spaces of controversy'.<sup>5</sup>*

Latour and Yaneva remark that, "It is paradoxical to say that a building is always a 'thing' that is, etymologically, a contested gathering of many conflicting demands and yet, having said that, to be utterly unable to draw those conflicting claims in the same space as what they are conflicting about."<sup>6</sup> Latour himself asserts that, "What is needed instead are tools that capture what have always been the hidden practices of modernist innovations: objects have always been projects."<sup>7</sup> Particularly through his students and collaborators, he has encouraged close studies of the processes of the studio. Transposing their techniques from Latour's earlier studies of laboratory life, and seeking to understand "architecture in the making," his colleagues have undertaken ethnographic enquiries into the process by which architecture comes into being, and have challenged conventional interpretations. In philosophical terms, these studies constitute a search for, if not "truth," a more accurate understanding of the construction of knowledge and the relationship between architecture

and the social. In examining the respective roles of human and non-human actors, this work alters normative assumptions about the extent of human agency.

Albena Yaneva has made notable contributions to this endeavour. She claims that architecture cannot be understood by conventional narratives of its production and reception. In essays such as “Give Me a Gun and I will Make All Buildings Move,” of 2008, by Latour and Yaneva, they seek to reverse Etienne Jules Marey’s ambition to build a “photographic gun” that would freeze the stages of a bird’s action in flight. Instead, they seek a theoretical device to reveal “that a building is not a static object but a moving project, and that even once it is has been built, it ages, it is transformed by its users, modified by all of what happens inside and outside, and that it will pass or be renovated, adulterated and transformed beyond recognition.”<sup>28</sup>

In the process of this argument’s elaboration, theorists as notable as George Baird, Neil Leach, Ian Borden, and Jane Rendell are set aside as representative of superseded paradigms of interpretation:

*Everyone knows that a building is a contested territory and that it cannot be reduced to what is and what it means, as architectural theory has traditionally done. [...] As long as we have not found a way to do for*



FIGURE 2: BRUNO LATOUR  
LECTURING AT HARVARD  
UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF DESIGN, 2009.

*buildings the reverse of what Marey managed to do for the flights of birds and the gaits of horses, architectural theory will be a rather parasitical endeavor that adds historical, philosophical, stylistic, and semiotic 'dimensions' to a conception of buildings that has not moved an inch.*<sup>9</sup>

In writing of her observations of OMA, Yaneva insists that, “You can still appreciate a building, like or dislike it, praise or dismiss it, without knowing anything about the design experience that made it happen; but you cannot *understand* a building without taking these design experiences into account.”<sup>10</sup> Thus Yaneva asserts that there is a deep and wide knowledge (attainable by both outsiders and, ultimately, by those involved in its production) of a work of architecture that takes into account the extensive processes and controversies through which it has come into physical being; and, indeed, she is asserting that the work of architecture is that assemblage of processes, controversies, actors... Without that recognition, Yaneva is claiming, there is no adequate knowledge of architecture; rather, only a superficial appreciation or casual evaluation. But given these substantial epistemological claims, it is surprising—even though Yaneva picks up clues in the texts under consideration here—that issues of employment ethics, conditions of work, and their rationalization by staff members, do not surface as foregrounded parts of the assemblage.

Yaneva’s work opens up in detail the day-to-day working practices in an ambitious and influential practice such as OMA. Her painstaking observation of the role of physical models and digital representations in their process of design undoubtedly offers valuable insights. Years of fieldwork, the demanding tasks of collation of notes, transcripts and correspondence, and the continued research enterprise through the University of Manchester are worthy of respect, and the writings of both Yaneva and Latour have become increasingly evident in architectural discourse in recent years. But as others have observed,<sup>11</sup> Latour’s aggressive promotion of paradigm shifts and his inclination to use the language of warfare in seeking to colonize and dominate intellectual fields suggest that some circumspection is warranted in assessing these claims regarding the formation and adequacy of knowledge (at least scholarly and practitioners’ knowledge) of architecture. And in this particular instance, that circumspection needs to address the downplaying of those aspects of studio life that pertain to the ethics of architectural labour.

In the early 2000s, Yaneva undertook research as a participant observer within OMA. The results of this ethnographic observation were published as *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (2009), hereafter *Made by OMA*, and *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture*, also of 2009. In her interviews excerpted in *Made by OMA*, in particular, she confirms that there is an “overproduction” of design ideas in blue foam model form; hears of staff being asked to “put a [design] proposal on the table overnight;”<sup>12</sup> and hears another say, “[S]ometimes I don’t have dinner for like two days, because I work during the evenings. [AY:] [T]hat’s how everybody works here? [Abji:] Yes, we even work in the weekends, but it’s OK, it’s a good atmosphere.”<sup>13</sup> In *The Making of a Building*, Yaneva observes that:

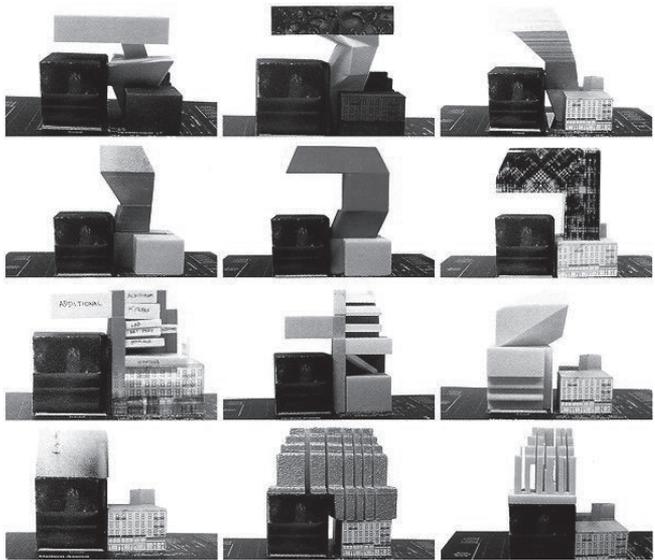


FIGURE 3. OMA ‘NEWHITNEY’  
SELECTED STUDY MODELS

*at the end of the ordinary working day (around six o’clock), computer music announces the beginning of ‘the evening shift’. Architects start buzzing with excitement following the departure of all the administrative staff. They find themselves alone with specific design tasks to complete surrounded by the sounds of the same music they have listened to during the day in the privacy of their earphones. Now the music is given the opportunity to contribute to the office*

*hubbub, and to amplify the excitement. The architects share a pizza around the table of models [...] [S]ometimes a new model arrives with the sunrise, more updated drawings are printed out and set up on the table just as the city of Rotterdam is about to wake up.*<sup>14</sup>

The young architects recover from their nocturnal labours with “one of those strong OMA coffees that really wake you up even if you have only slept for a couple of hours.”<sup>15</sup>

Yaneva remarks that, because designs for terminated projects are sometimes resurrected in later commissions, “the sleepless nights spent in the company of a foam-cutter, a computer and a couple of fellow architects from the same [project team] have not been in vain.”<sup>16</sup> The blue foam “smells,” she notes, when cut on the hot-wire cutter<sup>17</sup>—and it does so because it is releasing toxic fumes—but no one, we might note, seems concerned with the health risks to the staff. Indeed, the demands of OMA’s working conditions seem to serve Yaneva’s larger claims regarding knowledge and reality:

*“The fact that there is no urban life ‘out there’, far from the studio, has been demonstrated by all those who never visited the Whitney [Museum] site in Manhattan but kept on designing for it, by all those who never learned Spanish but built in Cordoba, and by those who never borrowed a book from the Seattle Library but reinvented the library typology. Designers never go ‘outside’; there is no outside. [...] The studio constitutes their world. [...] OMA and Kooolhaas treat the studio as the world.”*<sup>18</sup>

One may well ask whether these descriptions and assessments constitute an apologia for the conditions observed, or whether they serve instead to expose the conditions of labour without direct accusation or criticism? The tone of the description of the musical all-nighter is positive, even approbatory, conveying the student-like “excitement” of the participants without evident irony; generally speaking, irony is by no means absent from the Latourian rhetorical repertoire, but conspicuous by its absence in this instance.

## REFLEXIVITY

Yet Yaneva’s observations, undertaken in the early 2000s, overlap with a period of notable reflexivity within architectural practice and education, particularly within the North American context. Brought to professional attention in the publication *Progressive Architecture* in the early 1990s,<sup>19</sup> given intensity by the accidental deaths of several students after

multiple all-night work sessions, exposed to the wider academy and the public at large through further journalistic exposés,<sup>20</sup> concerns with the adverse effects of the traditions of the design discipline and profession were confronted in *The Redesign of Studio Culture*, of 2002.<sup>21</sup> In these and subsequent reports, the reproductive cycle between the architectural academy's tradition of do-or-die work practices and a similar culture in the profession, particularly among its most culturally ambitious members—with all the implications for work-life balance, health, and the perceived value of architects' time—was indicted. But traditions die hard, bound up as they are with identity, and debates over such concerns and indictments have continued internationally to the present day.<sup>22</sup>

Philipp Oswald and Matthias Hollwich, who between them had experienced working at OMA from 1996 to at least 2000, published in that latter year “OMA at work,” an account of that experience. Oswald, editor of the journal *Arch+* from 1988 to 1994, evidently brought a critic's eye to that endeavour. They describe and explicate in detail the processes of the office, and it is worth quoting these accounts at some length for comparison with Yaneva's observations and the more recent ex-employee reports online:

*An important precondition is that the majority of the employees are quite inexperienced and young. Not only do they work unbelievably hard for relatively little money and thereby make it possible to pursue thousands of ideas, to try them out and reject them, which no client would ever want or be able to pay for, but more importantly, it is the naivety with which they approach the tasks they are set. Ignorant of how the problem would normally be solved, they can experiment with a childlike lack of inhibitions and thus develop new ideas. [...]*

*Rem's instructions are mostly so vague, his presence over long periods only intermittent and his distance*

*to the design team so great that some employees opine that he is not really a designer at all, it is his staff who produce the architecture. [...] [But t]he distance between the team of designers and Rem leads to great flexibility: at any time, the direction can be changed unexpectedly, and the more doggedly the design team sticks to a solution or a problem, the likelier it is that this will happen. The work of days or weeks can be discarded in the space of a minute without much discussion. [...] [O]ther members of staff are occasionally drawn in at short notice. [...] Less in awe of that which has already been achieved, the staff who have been uninvolved until then foil the intentions of their colleagues, which makes it at the same time much easier to develop substantial new ideas.*

*Basically, almost any form of destabilization appears to be welcome. It is rather unlikely that the team that has begun a project takes it through to realization. It may happen that a team, having worked through the night and an interim presentation, comes into the office to find that the workplaces have been seized by colleagues and the team has to find new ones. The concept of private property does not exist in the office anyway: every drafting pen, every adhesive film, every geodesic triangle that you have with difficulty acquired for yourself can disappear again within days or hours. And it would not surprise anyone in the office if he or she were told that they had to fly that very day to Hanoi for several days because of a project. One hundred per cent availability is implicitly demanded—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, with the exception of Christmas. [...]*

*It can happen that just a few hours before a presentation or a deadline Rem wants to change the design, the model, the drawings or collages. Then arguments of time or costs are of no import, to the despair of the financial director and the curses of the staff who have to change everything at the last moment.<sup>23</sup>*

As Oswalt and Hollwich suggest, these accounts describe, by comparison with conventional professional practices, a deliberately unstable and chaotic situation, one in which “human resources management” evidently occurs in part by placing staff and their design ideas in a quasi-Darwinian struggle for recognition, with status, approval, and reliable communication and decision-making constantly undermined; the possibility of predatory internal competition apparently tacitly condoned. Billable hours (those hours of work charged to the fee that the client has agreed to pay) are clearly far exceeded by actual hours expended and, from that conventional professional perspective, the financial viability of such an office is enabled only by the absence of overtime pay, an intense stigma attached to time-in-lieu (paid time off equivalent to unpaid overtime worked), and significantly below-par compensation for the majority of staff.<sup>24</sup> Drawn in, it seems, by the cachet of being known to have worked for OMA, and by its apparent value—if not in monetary terms—in one’s portfolio and CV

(especially given Koolhaas's international renown and influence), young staff in particular appear to find themselves in an exploitative situation. Mutinies, by the time that Oswalt and Hollwich are working there (and Yaneva is about to undertake her observations), seem less likely, as some of the "voluntary prisoners"<sup>25</sup> turn out to be the warders of their co-workers: in a passage of sharply ironic tone, Oswalt and Hollwich note that, "The office is characterized more by an American mentality than a European one: produce, criticize and don't ask for reasons, don't argue, show unlimited commitment, don't expect any solidarity from your colleagues – don't worry, be happy. It is not by chance that almost all the project leaders come from the USA."<sup>26</sup>

Yaneva cites Oswalt and Hollwich's article in *The Making of a Building*, but takes pains to distinguish her intentions from theirs: "My aim is not to present the habits of the office and the general rules of their design philosophy [...] but to make the reader hear the architects' voices, to follow the reactions and discussions of architects, engineers, stage designers, cost evaluators, curators and artists, to see them draw, build models, negotiate the costs of a building, and design the NEWhitney."<sup>27</sup>

#### RESISTANCE

In her participant observations, Yaneva adheres to Latour's exhortation to "follow the actors" (both human and non-human), and to describe rather than seek to explain, in order to observe "architecture in the making." Such an approach contrasts with recent investigations into attitudes in the discipline and profession to work and labour, regarding the fabrication of buildings but also regarding the production of design. These include the studies undertaken by Peggy Deamer, Paolo Tombesi et al.;<sup>28</sup> by the artists' activist group Gulf Labor with Andrew Ross on the exploitation of migrant labour

“PRODUCE,  
CRITICIZE AND  
DON'T ASK  
FOR REASONS,  
DON'T ARGUE,  
SHOW UNLIMITED  
COMMITMENT,  
DON'T EXPECT  
ANY SOLIDARITY  
FROM YOUR  
COLLEAGUES –  
DON'T WORRY, BE  
HAPPY.”

for cultural projects in the Gulf States;<sup>29</sup> and by Mabel Wilson and others of the academic activist group Who Builds Your Architecture,<sup>30</sup> who have argued that the conditions under which architecture is produced are an integral part of its ethical dimension. It might be asserted that such studies revisit Marxist concerns characteristic of the 1970s, and indeed Deamer's edited collection *The Architect as Worker* opens its "Foreword" with a quotation from Marx distinguishing between mental and material labour. Nonetheless, the contributors are at pains to identify the differences at play in our times: Joan Ockman, in that same "Foreword," acknowledges that:

*intellectual labor has become increasingly arduous and stressful today by virtue of the expansion of the workday to the 24/7 cycle, 'flexible' hiring and firing policies, insecurity with respect to healthcare and other social benefits, and—in the particular case of young, highly educated architects—low compensation and unpaid internships. [...] These problems are compounded today in the context of a disorganized global 'precariat' that has to market its own skills as 'entrepreneur of itself.'*<sup>31</sup>

To these formulations we might add other dimensions of the neoliberal dispensation: the virtuous social roles ascribed to "creativity" as "innovation," construed as bringing economic liberation to cities (through the creative class itself; the Bilbao Guggenheim, etc.) and individuals (liberated, by means of digital platforms, from the need of nanny-employer conditions such as benefits, unions, workplace rights) alike. And, indeed, in her online summary of *Made by OMA*, Yaneva declares her intention to show "how innovation permeates design practice, how everyday techniques and workaday choices set new standards for buildings and urban phenomena."<sup>32</sup> In contrast, as Manuel Shvartzberg confirms, under that neoliberal dispensation, "In material terms, creativity is the measure by which workers will cannibalize themselves for the sake of the company—extreme work hours, no parallel commitments (love, friendship, community, etcetera)."<sup>33</sup>

OMA's location in this complex of concerns has in part to do with the firm's status as an acknowledged generator of innovation in those terms (the Seattle Public Library's impact on library usage and the city's economy, for example), and in part with its principals' and former staff's status in the world of architectural education (Koolhaas's appointment at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, for instance). If the university—in spite of the ongoing attempts to reconstruct it in the image of neoliberal values—is still expected by some to engage in challenges to the ideological conventions of its time, then the prominent architectural

practitioner-teacher might well be expected to use their affiliation with the academy not simply as a source of clients and junior staff, but rather as a venue to be openly reflexive about the conditions of their own professional practices. As Dariel Cobb observes:

*Academics now need to do more: examine the labor rights of architecture workers and the labor practices of architecture offices within a larger social history. Having personally experienced the unmitigated drudgery of long hours and low pay within a purportedly elite professional architecture setting, I think it's time to move workers' whispers and complaints from blogs and trade publications to the arena of sustained critical discourse. Generations have passed during which such engagement would have been vilified, only to arrive at this ripe political moment for reexamination.<sup>34</sup>*

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With such initiatives in mind, could one suggest that an additional path of observation might have been undertaken in the ethnography of OMA; namely, Who Builds Your Foam Models?

“ WHO BUILDS  
YOUR FOAM  
MODELS? ”

#### THE METHODS OF SISYPHUS

A further objection might be raised, however, that many culturally ambitious architects have obtained from their staff, by one means or another, long hours at low pay, and that this is indicative of the low value placed by society at large upon architectural work. Quality of ideas and execution takes more time (so the argument goes) and therefore costs more than most clients are willing to pay; thus, in this noble shared cause, the shortfall in income has to be passed on to staff. In other words, inadequacy of compensation is a condition forced upon the practice as a whole for those who set their ambitions high; and (by implication of this argument) the moral issue is shifted to the societal level. Might this constitute a rationale for Yaneva's

overlooking of the labour issues at OMA? It seems unlikely, given this invocation of Latour in *Making*: “society has to be composed, made up, constructed, established, maintained, and assembled. It is no longer to be taken as the hidden source of causality which could be mobilized so as to account for the existence and stability of some other action or behaviour.”<sup>35</sup>

Oswalt and Hollwich, though, in their laconic recounting of the particularities of OMA’s design method, offer apologies for some of its more extreme demands:

*Settling on a solution, or to put it more precisely, filtering out a solution from the pool of ideas, takes place very late; the alternatives are developed in parallel over a long period. The decision is postponed as long as possible, because it always implies the loss of other possibilities, limitation. [...]*

*When you are involved in this process, you can sometimes despair over the inefficiency and the absence of conventional professionalism. But in the end, you are obliged to concede that the non-linearity of the design process, the lack of routine or an established canon of methods or solutions are the basis for the quality of the office’s work. [...] It is characteristic that Rem assesses a project sceptically precisely when it has developed continuously without conflicts, crises and interruptions. [...] It is the ambition of the office to structure the design process in such a way that the maximum number of influences, criteria and ideas are included. [...]*

*It is indicative that innumerable alternatives will also be investigated when an obviously brilliant idea has already been come up with: although Rem had already had the basic idea at the beginning of the IIT project [the McCormick Tribune Campus Center of 1997-2003], all the same he kept the team investigating and developing completely different ideas for weeks. As none of the newly developed options was any more convincing, though, the idea that was there from the start was taken up again.*

*This Sisyphus-like way of proceeding may appear totally inefficient, but it proves to be extremely fruitful.<sup>36</sup>*

## RATIONALISATION

Sisyphian indeed; yet as Yaneva’s interviewees demonstrate, OMA’s young staff nonetheless rationalise their intense and difficult working conditions. In the OMA publication *Content* (cited by Yaneva as one of her guides to the office’s practice),<sup>37</sup> staff chosen to collaborate with Herzog and de Meuron at their Basel office comment ironically but disparagingly

on the more civilised and relaxed conditions they see there: “We don’t have time for long weekends, lunches, coffee breaks, and short workdays. We want to work hard, do things fast, have no free time, learn, and move on. In Basel, people do not move on; they have good lives.”<sup>38</sup> Contrary to the Studio Culture studies’ alarm at inadequate rest and poor eating habits, the OMA staff writing in *Content* “dread the hour lunch break, during which we have to roam the boring streets of Basel in search of expensive, tasteless food. Thank God for globalism, Mr Wong and McDonald’s.”<sup>39</sup>

Angela McRobbie, in her studies of the individualization of precarious labour in the culture industries, observes that:

*One of the most perplexing issues facing social scientists and policy-makers is the sheer enthusiasm on the part of young people for ‘creative’ jobs they know in advance will require long stints of working, often through the night, for relatively low pay. Such enthusiasm is unabated even for those who are well-versed in the politics of precarity, and this opens up important questions for the future of work. In particular, does this ethos confirm Michel Foucault’s oft-quoted insight that power works most effectively when it is tied to the promise of pleasure and self-reward, in this case through ‘creative enterprise’ or ‘passionate work’?*<sup>40</sup>

In the example from *Content*, there is an identification of the working conditions as a kind of rite of passage, indicative of the seriousness and substance of the endeavour. Some might suggest that there is an internalization of abuse as a badge of courage, as a confirmation of the most serious commitment to the field; but also that this internalization constitutes an essential mechanism of social reproduction, a process by which a prized identity is handed down from one generation to another.

William Wiles, reporting in 2011, assembles a further set of telling rationalisations by the firm's managers themselves:

*OMA's breakneck internal pace comes at a cost – the company has an extremely high turnover of staff, as implied by the number of independent practices that spin out of it; high numbers of burnouts are also rumoured. Incredibly, this high turnover is company policy. 'We want to refresh and renew our organisation on a permanent basis,' says [Victor] Van der Chijns [managing partner]. 'We really want every year at least 25 percent of our people to be new. And we want them to be young, bright people. The idea [is] [...] that we really need those people to feed in new ideas, make sure that OMA stays relevant and really understands what is going on.'*

*Many companies would balk at this kind of turnover. A high churn rate of staff is very costly—time is tied up training, knowledge and experience is continually leaking away, good practices can be hard to maintain. [...] 'Most people know that when they join OMA, that they work on average for three years here and after that, they leave,' says Van der Chijns. 'It's already in their minds.'* [...]

*Looked at with these expectations in mind—people join OMA knowing they are in for an intensive but short and valuable experience that will leave them ready to start up on their own—and the office starts to look more like an elite college than an architecture and research firm. 'The environment that is generated from the projects here is an incredibly strong learning experience, a fast-track learning experience,' says [project architect Mark] Veldman. 'You learn much more here in a year than you would learn in a university.'*<sup>41</sup>

In these passages, the upper echelons of OMA invoke familiar neoliberal shibboleths as justifications of the office's work practices: the casualisation of labour;<sup>42</sup> employment as a springboard to personal entrepreneurship (every short-term employee is, regardless of their prior socio-economic status, potentially the next Bjarke Ingels, Jeanne Gang, or Joshua Prince-Ramus); and the value of experience in the firm as a form of education (implicitly justifying low compensation). The nature of OMA's design method, in which many non-linear directions are explored and physical-model options generated—almost as if a process of emergence were being set in motion out of multiplicity—is evidently inextricably tied to high demands on low-cost labour (of which there has been a reliable supply, given the practice's ties to academies). Thus an *understanding* of OMA's approach to design would seem to necessitate attention to this relationship to labour. Such a situation might even have been considered from the Actor Network Theory (ANT) perspective as worthy of study

as a controversy in itself: “Design,” after all, “has a proactive power to incite public controversies over thorny issues and generate social effects.”<sup>243</sup> But in the case of OMA’s labour practices, these opportunities appear not to have been taken up.

Why might this ethnographic study have overlooked or de-emphasised these aspects of human relations at OMA? What are the constraints on this project of philosophical anthropology? Is the Latourian approach inherently unable to tackle such a topic, or are there affordances that could adjust its scope? Variations in interpretations of that method’s assumptions suggest that it has versions that are more or less circumscribed. Greater circumscription does not appear to result from an inherent limitation of pragmatist ethics per se, which after all seeks to adapt its practices on the basis of experience, unless one equates pragmatism in this instance with a cynical realism, in the Sloterdijkian sense,<sup>44</sup> on Koolhaas’ part (a valid concern, given Latour’s enthusiasm for Sloterdijk as a philosopher of design).<sup>45</sup> Latour’s ethics, construed by Gabriel Hankins in the context of literature, occurs in the “nonmodern” condition, where nature, society and culture no longer exhibit the categorical distinctions presumed in the Modern. “Action,” observes Hankins, “becomes distributed between actants [human and non-human] that coproduce the action rather than figured as a subject acting on its object.”<sup>46</sup> He quotes Latour: “An ‘actor’ in the hyphenated expression

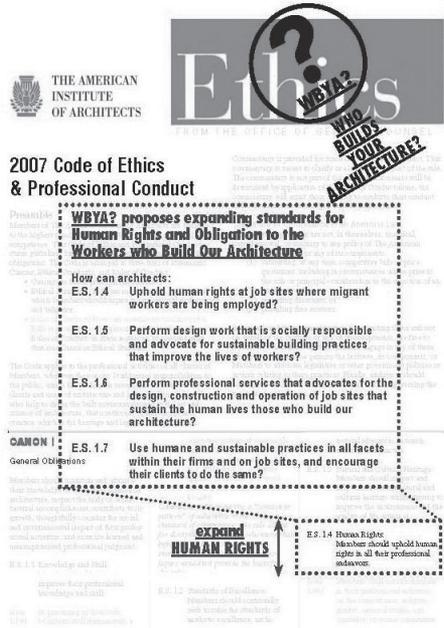


FIGURE 4: WBVA PROPOSED REVISIONS TO AIA CODE OF ETHICS P.1

actor-network is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming towards it.”<sup>47</sup> “A Latourian account,” continues Hankins, “remains uncertain as to location of agency.”<sup>48</sup>

Such a situation, and the emphasis on description over explanation, has led to the charge for ANT of descriptivism. Whittle and Spicer assert that:

*by producing descriptions of existing networks of actors in an apparently neutral, apolitical manner, ANT actually reinforces the state of affairs that it describes. Indeed, Law (2003) recognizes the possibility that ANT simply reproduces rather than challenges the hegemony of the networks they describe. [...] ANT remains indifferent about the specific means through which power is established (Amsterdamska, 1990). For instance, coercion, corruption and intimidation are not distinguished on any normative basis from persuasion, negotiation and reward. [...] ANT brings with it a tendency to legitimize hegemonic power relations, ignore relations of oppression, and sidestep any normative assessment of existing organizational forms.*<sup>49</sup>

In an essay published in 2004, Latour famously asked, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?”<sup>50</sup> His purpose was to distinguish the methods he was propounding from those of critical theory, which he felt had fallen prey to popularization and misapplication. Extending this position in a debate of 2011 with Neil Brenner and others over the methods of urban studies, Ignacio Fariás emphasizes inquiry as ANT’s “style of cognitive engagement,” as distinct from critique. He acknowledges Brenner et al.’s charge that assemblage-based urban studies risk a “naïve positivism” and ideological affirmation of current conditions, but seeks to argue against that charge. “Three methodological principles,” observes Fariás, “summarize [ANT’s] commitment to the empirical: ‘follow the actors, forget the contexts’, ‘describe, don’t explain’ and ‘do not switch conceptual repertoires when you describe’.”<sup>51</sup>

*The world is not all in, [...] it is in the making. [...] The most obvious consequence of this ontology is that it involves accounting for all actual entities involved in such processes of construction, whether human or nonhuman, their interactions and transformations. The most important consequence [...] is that the notion of assemblage involves no outside, no exteriority. [...] Assemblages are self-contained processes of heterogeneous associations calling for a positive description of their becoming, not external explanations.*<sup>52</sup>

Here, journalist Sander Pleij’s interviews in his 2014 article “Who is Rem Koolhaas” affirm the connections. Koolhaas remarks: “But being critical is the basis of it all, I think that in the last 25 years the critical from outside

is no longer existent. Just like Žižek, Latour and all those other ones are declaring. You can't look at it from the outside.”<sup>53</sup>

Fariás, however, continues: “Precisely because asymmetry is not presumed and explained structurally or contextually, the study of urban assemblages involves unveiling the actual practices, processes, sociomaterial orderings, reproducing asymmetries in the distribution of resources, of power and of agency capacities, opening up black-boxed arrangements.”<sup>54</sup>

By contrast with Fariás' qualification, Yaneva asserts that her “intentions were humble: I did not try to explain the OMA practice or Koolhaas's approach [...] [I had] the pure purpose of generating infra-reflexive descriptions of invention which would keep the freshness of design experiences [...] far from the reach of the prevailing meta-reflexive theories of design. [...] I simply described various design practices without sticking to references outside architecture.”<sup>55</sup>

““WHY HAS  
CRITIQUE RUN OUT  
OF STEAM?””

#### ARCHITECTURAL 'LABOUR IN THE MAKING': CONCLUSIONS AND OPENINGS

In her “Introduction” to *The Making of a Building*, Yaneva notes that “I have deliberately chosen not to discuss Koolhaas's early works and his theoretical and philosophical thinking [...] as this can bias my description of the design process at OMA.”<sup>56</sup> This is in keeping with Yaneva's interpretation of the descriptive approach, but carries certain risks. In its 1978 project for the extension of the Dutch Parliament in the Hague, OMA had proposed a generously equipped chamber for what they saw as the characteristic “orgies of speech” of Dutch politics, but down the hall had also provided a “smoke-filled room”—Miesian in its aesthetic—where the actual decisions would be made. The ironic tone of this contrast occurs innumerable times in OMA's work, suggestive of Koolhaas's

cynical realism about transparency and democracy and, later, of his equivocal embrace of authoritarian clients (for example, China's CCTV). In the context of this paper, metaphorically the Hague Parliament's debating chamber embodies the public presentation of OMA's intentions and values; the smoke-filled room, its actual internal practices. In the latter we find the "black-boxed arrangements" of Fariás's analysis. In this instance, has the smoke prevented the black box of labour ethics from being opened up? "Give Me a Gun and I will Make All Buildings Move," wrote Latour and Yaneva in 2008; for all the benefits of this idea, one would not want to think that the gun was adding to the smoke in the metaphorical room. OMA, after all, in its daily practices had been able to implement, by the early 2000s, the neoliberal corporation's wildest dreams: an unending supply of short-term contract labour, entirely flexible, eager to work up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week for minimal fixed salary, self-unorganised and self-policing, readily pitched into predatory competition, abnegating any expectations of structured career advancement, enthusiastic about unrelenting stress as the normal state of affairs, with work-life balance a non-issue, and conveniently departing when burnt out, before the right to an unlimited contract would kick in. Are not the staff's acceptance of this situation—its relationship to their sense of disciplinary belonging and "chops"—and its fundamental role in OMA's disciplinary reputation and success also vital circulating components of the actor network in play?

There may be at least four reasons that these studies of OMA do not tackle the issues of architectural "labour in the making." First, in the ethnographic project, the studies may have encountered a twin hazard for anthropologists: becoming too close to their subjects and yet, in other respects, not close enough. There is a sense of identification with the practice, and not only through the daily intimacy with their studio activities and thoughts: the design of the book *Made by OMA* (presumably the work of an actor network of which the author was a part) also pays a conspicuous homage, in its use of a sequence of quasi-cinematic images on its opening pages, to those of *SMLXL*, the 1995 bible of OMA's practice to that date. Latour was a contributor to the 2006 *Domus d'Autore* volume on "AMO Post-Occupancy," edited by Koolhaas and AMO, the research arm of OMA.<sup>57</sup> OMA was a participant in the 2005 exhibition "Making Things Public," curated by Latour (with Peter Weibel) at the ZKM Karlsruhe, and Latour has been an apologist, enthusiast, and kindred intellectual spirit for Koolhaas in interviews.<sup>58</sup>

Fariás and Wilkie, in their Introduction to *Studio Studies*, make a series of observations relevant to the larger implications of this first reason and

those that follow. The intimacy of studio life, they assert, means that ethnographers “almost inevitably cannot restrain themselves from becoming ‘native’ members of studio collectives and thus actively involved in creation processes.”<sup>59</sup> We may observe that the countervailing need to “come home” periodically is thus made more difficult, in spite of—or perhaps also because of—the fact that the researcher’s grant, academic contract, or salary enables them to maintain a certain immunity to the coercions of studio employment. If we may propose here a possible extension of the OMA study, what might be needed is a periodic process of more sustained auto-ethnographic reflection on the researcher’s own enthusiasm for the culture of the studio.

Second, in the methodological project, there is the resistance to “external” perspectives and values, in which labour ethics may have been implicitly and *a priori* defined as outside. Yaneva takes pains, particularly in *The Making of a Building*, to distinguish her pragmatist approach from that of critical sociology and theory, which would be “to mobilize and evoke ideas from *outside* architecture to interpret design and reveal a myriad of hidden meanings and mechanisms of architectural practices.”<sup>60</sup>

Here, Fariás and Wilkie’s remarks indicate that this resistance is indeed characteristic of the larger Latourian and ANT projects. In their literature review, Fariás and Wilkie touch on the issue of labour, but appear to distance their research program from it, both as a concern of “critical” scholars and as a condition (they imply) not manifested in the day-to-day practices of the studio itself:

*In examining the political economy of creative labour, critical scholars (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010) have pointed to the market and institutional arrangements that allow firms in the media and cultural sector to extract the surplus value of creative work, such as exploiting unpaid labour time. [...]*

*As such, the social and cultural sciences overlook the very settings where the products of the creative industries are brought into being by focusing on the ... inter-institutional conditions in which creativity is achieved.*<sup>61</sup>

Earlier sociologists such as Richard Petersons, Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker dwelt, Fariás and Wilkie note, on the “broader” social, industrial and institutional contexts” of cultural production. Against this approach, they invoke Antoine Hennion’s charge that it “only attempted the study of milieu, professions, institutions, markets, policies—that is, everything ‘around’ the object itself.”<sup>62</sup> This categorical exclusion of “institutional contexts” from studio studies<sup>63</sup> seems, however, at odds with Fariás’ own earlier confidence (cited above) that ANT-derived methods do enable foregrounding of “the asymmetries of distribution [...] of power and of agency capacities [and] opening up black-boxed arrangements,” which seem entirely worthy goals.<sup>64</sup>

Third, in the epistemological project, there is an evident parallel exclusion of the context of the socialization of architects into generationally reproductive labour practices. Yet as Yaneva herself observes, “For me, the ‘apprentice’ in architecture [...] [t]he rhythm of the office tamed me at the end to the extent that I became ‘trained by the field’ and began, up to a certain point, to think and act *like* an architect.”<sup>65</sup> But “[t]he protagonists of my story were always quicker than me [...] and always spent more time working overnight.”<sup>66</sup> Even so, “[my] routine of interview and observations followed by transcription was loading my fieldwork weeks in such an intensive way that I was literally living in the office.”<sup>67</sup> Thus in her own “apprenticeship,” Yaneva herself reproduces, albeit initially by choice, the labour practices of her subjects. Her overall approach is “inspired by William James’s project of radical empiricism. [...] Empirical would mean to be faithful to what is given to experience and the numerous connections that are revealed in it. [...] Such an approach to architecture consists in investigating the architectural culture and the practices of designers rather than their theories and their ideologies.”<sup>68</sup> However, reflexive analysis of that experienced process of reproduction does not appear to figure in this empirical investigation of OMA’s culture of “voluntary prisoners of architecture” and the connections potentially revealed within. Could we then imagine the project being extended such that the researcher arranges to “follow the actors” further, to accompany the staff home (when they do go home); when they quit, are terminated or their contracts expire; or when they attempt to deal with the rest of life? Fariás and Wilkie acknowledge, after all, that in the laboratory studies that they take as initial inspiration for studio ethnography, “equal attention

is paid to all the activities undertaken by scientists and lab technicians, whether routine informal talk, strategic career decisions, or fact-making efforts. All such practices are considered part of knowledge-making processes.”<sup>69</sup>

Fourth, in the ontological project,<sup>70</sup> the drive to ascribe agency to non-human actors (in this case, the blue foam models) may diminish perception of the agency of human actors. The junior staff, though identified in the “Acknowledgements” of *The Making of a Building*, appear by first name only in the “short stories” that form the chapters of *Made by OMA* (an exemplification of Latour’s early advocacy of story-telling as an alternative to explanation); some of the female architectural staff are there described as “girls”; and design is presented as a form of play that generates its own rewards. This can have the unfortunate effect of a kind of infantilisation of those most affected by the firm’s working conditions. Again, the broad ambition to describe “distributed creation processes” in the studio ensemble is shared by others coming from a similar intellectual formation: Farías and Wilkie assert that “the notion of studio life [...] designates a vitality: a generative capacity that inheres in the human-material arrangements and circulations taking place in studios and converging in the creation of new cultural artefacts.”<sup>71</sup> Such a vitalist narrative of creativity can sometimes obscure, though, the possibility that the studio organism is self-devouring.

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## ENDNOTES

[1] Observations by the author.

[2] “OMA\*AMO ARCHITECTURE Reviews,” *Glassdoor*, <https://www.glassdoor.com/Reviews/OMA-AMO-ARCHITECTURE-Reviews-E429120.htm>, accessed January 31, 2016. From an informal survey of employee reviews published on Glassdoor of practices such as Zaha Hadid Architects, ShoP, Foster + Partners, Bjarke Ingels Group, Heatherwick, DS+A, Mecanoo, MVRDV, Asymptote, Steven Holl, Gehry Partners, Morphosis, Jean Nouvel, etc. Recurring complaints include long hours, chronic understaffing of projects, poor pay, unpaid overtime, poor work-life balance, inadequate professional development or advancement opportunities, junior staff treated as replaceable, limited technical depth among the long-term staff, predatory internal competition promoted by the firm’s culture, unskilled and bullying but inequitably rewarded management.

[3] See, for example, “Migrant Workers’ Rights on Saadiyat Island in the United Arab Emirates,” *Human Rights Watch*, published 2015, accessed February 18, 2015, [hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uae0215\\_ForUploadR.pdf](http://hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uae0215_ForUploadR.pdf). See also “What can architects do about workers’ rights in the Gulf?,” *Icon*, published March 26, 2015, accessed May 21, 2015, [iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/11715-what](http://iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/11715-what).

[4] See, for example, Bruno Latour, “A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk),” keynote lecture for the *Networks of Design* meeting of the Design History Society, Falmouth, Cornwall, September 3, 2008, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/112-DESIGN-CORNWALL-GB.pdf>.

[5] Ariane Lourie Harrison, “Latour and Yaneva: an ANT’s view of Architecture,” in *Architectural Theories of the Environment: Posthuman Territories*, ed. Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2013), 107-8.

[6] Bruno Latour and Albená Yaneva, “‘Give Me A Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move’: An ANT’s View of Architecture,” in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. Reto Geiser (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008), 86.

[7] Latour, “A Cautious Prometheus?,” 13.

[8] Latour and Yaneva, “‘Give Me A Gun,’” 80.

[9] *Ibid.*, 86-88.

[10] Albená Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009), 104. Indeed, Latour comments disparagingly on architectural theory in general in Rania Ghosn, El Hadi Jazairy, and Stephen Ramos, “The Space of Controversies: An Interview with Bruno Latour,” *New Geographies 0* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard GSD, 2008), 122–135.

[11] Olga Amsterdamska, “Surely You Are Joking, Monsieur Latour!,” *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 15, 4 (Autumn 1990), 495-504; Sal Restivo, “Politics of Latour,” review essay, *Organization and Environment* 8, 1 (March 2005), 111-115.

[12] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 72.

[13] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 43.

[14] Albená Yaneva, *The Making of a Building: A Pragmatist Approach to Architecture* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 38.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 89.

[17] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 58.

[18] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 84-85.

[19] Thomas Fisher, “Patterns of Exploitation,” *Progressive Architecture* (May 1991), 9.

[20] Patrick Monaghan, “The ‘Insane Little Bubble of Nonreality’ That Is Life for Architecture Students,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 2001); and Jody Temkin, “For would-be architects, grad school like boot camp,” *The Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 2002.

[21] Aaron Koch et al., *The Redesign of Studio Culture: A Report of the AIAA Studio Culture Task Force* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Architecture Students, 2002).

[22] See, for example, “Mental Health Reports 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16,”

*Graduate Architecture Landscape and Design Student Union*, University of Toronto, <http://www.galdsu.ca/Mental-Health-Report-2013-2014>. See also, Richard Waite and Ella Braidwood, “Mental health problems exposed by AJ Student Survey 2016,” *Architects’ Journal* 243, 16 (July 28, 2016), n.p. See also, Leah Sottile, “The AEC Industry’s Deadly Problem,” *Architecture*, August 31, 2016.

[23] Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, “OMA at work,” trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Archis* 7 (1998), n.p. Also available at Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, “OMA at work,” trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Volume Project*, <http://volumeproject.org/oma-at-work/>. Also available at Philipp Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, “OMA at work,” trans. Fiona Greenwood, *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*, <http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/wolke/eng/Subjects/991/Oswalt/oswalt.html>.

[24] And perhaps, given the hindsight now available, Koolhaas’s reported semi-retirement to Switzerland; which would tend to confirm that the strictures of inadequate fees have not been evenly distributed across the hierarchy of the office.

[25] The phrase is Koolhaas’s, from his widely published Architectural Association student thesis project Exodus. See Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, “Exodus: or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture,” *The White Slave*, 1972, <https://thewhiteslave.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/exodus-or-the-voluntary-prisoners-of-architecture/#jp-carousel-333>.

[26] Oswalt and Hollwich, “OMA at work,” n.p.

[27] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 24.

[28] Peggy Deamer, ed., *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

[29] Andrew Ross, ed. [for Gulf Labor], *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor* (New York: OR Books, 2015).

[30] *Who Builds Your Architecture?*, <http://whobuilds.org/>.

[31] Joan Ockman, “Foreword,” in *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design*, ed. Deamer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), xxi-xxii.

[32] Albenya Yaneva, “Abstract,” for *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010, 2009), the University of Manchester Library, available at <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/uk-ac-man-scw:87450>.

[33] Manuel Schwartzbarg, “Foucault’s ‘Environmental’ Power: Architecture

and Neoliberal Subjectivization,” in *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design*, ed. Deamer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 189-90.

[34] Dariel Cobb, “Dispatches from MIT: Becoming Political,” in *Asymmetric Labors: The Economy of Architecture in Theory and Practice*, eds. Aaron Cayer, Peggy Deamer et al. (Brooklyn, NY: The Architecture Lobby, 2016), 147.

[35] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 198 n. 4, from Bruno Latour, “When 186 Things Strike Back: a Possible Contribution of Science Studies to the Social Sciences,” *British Journal of Sociology* 51, 105-23.

[36] Oswalt and Hollwich, “OMA at work,” n.p.

[37] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 32 n. 34.

[38] Fenna Haakma Wagenaar, “Astorology: Protect us from what we want,” in *Content*, ed. Rem Koolhaas et al. (Köln: Taschen, 2004), 204.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Angela McRobbie, “Is Passionate Work a Neoliberal Delusion?,” *Transformation*, published April 22, 2015, accessed July 19, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/angela-mcrobbe/is-passionate-work-neoliberal-delusion>. See also Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (London: Polity Press, 2015).

[41] William Wiles, “Inside OMA,” *Icon*, published September 30, 2011, <https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/9554-inside-oma>.

[42] In Dutch employment law, three years has been the maximum total duration of fixed-term employment contracts, beyond which further employment would automatically be for an unlimited term. See *Expatriate Survival Guide 2014* (Haarlem: Expatica, 2013), 60.

[43] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 199. But see also Albena Yaneva, *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

[44] See Kazys Varnelis, “‘We Cannot Not Know History’: Philip Johnson’s Politics and Cynical Survival,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 49:2 (November 1995), 92-104. As Varnelis observes, “The modern cynic understands what false consciousness is, Sloterdijk explains, but uses that knowledge to pull a fast one. Acting fundamentally in their own self-interest, cynics ‘see to it that they are not taken for suckers.’” Quotation from Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5, quoted in Varnelis, “‘We Cannot Not Know History,’” 101.

[45] See Latour, “A Cautious Prometheus?” See also Bruno Latour, “Spheres

and Networks: Two Ways to Interpret Globalization,” *Harvard Design Magazine* 30 (Spring/Summer 2009), 138-44.

[46] Gabriel Hankins, “The Objects of Ethics: Rilke and Woolf with Latour,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 61:3 (September 2015), 333.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. Latour, ever the agile guru in his “On Recalling ANT” essay of 1999, acknowledged concerns about moral issues, while not appearing to respond fully to them. See Bruno Latour, “On Recalling ANT,” in *Actor-Network Theory and After*, eds. J. Law and J. Hassard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 15-25.

[49] Andrea Whittle and André Spicer, “Is Actor Network Theory Critique?,” *Organization Studies* 29:04 (2008), 622-623.

[50] Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004), 225-248.

[51] Ignacio Fariás, “The politics of urban assemblages,” *CITY* 15:3-4 (June-August 2011), 367.

[52] Fariás, “The politics of urban assemblages,” 369-70.

[53] Sander Pleij, “I hate being an architect,” *Medium*, published June 8, 2014, accessed December 1, 2015, <https://medium.com/@pleij/i-hate-being-an-architect-7c42abbc6d#.b7v4rvms2>.

[54] Fariás, “The Politics of Urban Assemblages,” 369-370.

[55] Yaneva, *Made by OMA*, 100-101.

[56] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 26 n. 29.

[57] Rem Koolhaas and AMO, “AMO Post-Occupancy,” *Domus d’Autore series*, 2006.

[58] María J. Prieto and Elise S. Youn, “Interview with Bruno Latour: Decoding the Collective Experiment,” *agglutinations*, published July 5, 2004, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://agglutinations.com/archives/000040.html>.

[59] Ignacio Fariás and Alex Wilkie, “Studio Studies: Notes for a Research Program,” *Studio Studies: Operations, Topologies, Displacements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 9.

[60] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 25-26.

[61] Fariás and Wilkie, “Studio Studies,” 3. The internal reference is to David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Creative labour: Media Work in three*

*Cultural Industries* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2010).

[62] Antoine Hennion, “An Intermediary Between Production and Consumption: The Producer of Popular Music,” *Science, Technology and Human Values* 14:4 (1989), 401, cited in Farías and Wilkie, “Studio Studies.”

[63] As a further example, the ethnographic studies by Sophie Houdart of image production in the architectural studio of Kengo Kuma also appear to eschew the topic of labour conditions. See Sophie Houdart, “Copying, 188 Cutting and Pasting Social Spheres: Computer Designers’ Participation in Architectural Projects,” *Science Studies* 21:1 (2008), 47-63.

[64] Sophie Houdart, “Multiple Ways of Being Real: The Representations in Perspective in the Architectural Project,” *Land* 46 (2006), 107-122.

[65] Yaneva, *The Making of a Building*, 34-35.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 196-197.

[69] Farías and Wilkie, “Studio Studies,” 4. As a further possibility for future research, one might also propose a comparative ethnographic study of at least Herzog & de Meuron’s practice, whose design techniques have resembled OMA’s (including blue foam models), but whose working environment is seen—at least by their OMA collaborators in *Content*—as quite different.

[70] Here I refer to the Latourian concern, in propounding the notion of the complex and contested Thing, to move beyond distinctions between objective and subjective agencies in order to acknowledge the active role of inanimate entities in actor networks. See also, for a more extended discussion of the topic, Pauline Lefebvre, “From Autonomy to Pragmatism: Objects Made Moral,” *ArchitecturePhilosophy* 2:1 (2016), 23-37.

[71] Farías and Wilkie, “Studio Studies,” 6.

