OFFICE-PARTY

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When workspaces have already appropriated the aesthetics of leisure as a way to increase productivity, the question becomes inescapable: is there any possibility of resistance? This project bets for a deviation from the rules of workspace architecture, resisting by means of an alteration of the codes, that is, as if it were an ‘architectural hack.’

The current form of the office environment is the result of a lineage of spatial adjustments, organizational experimentations, and labor struggles performed by corporations, researchers, and workers. This multiplicity of actors (from industrial designers perfecting the ergonomic relationships between body and workstation, psychologists testing the impact of environmental factors on productivity, sociologists manipulating group dynamics, and space planners optimizing floor plans based on economic models) has contributed to data sets used to justify labor’s spatial and aesthetic regimes. Analysis and synthesis of this data finds reification through three primary structures: new spatial logics, furniture systems, and technology platforms. Together, this soft disciplining of the worker’s body constitutes a *nomos*, a terrain of latent rules and laws that govern the ‘ideal’ office environment.

Spatial logics deploy the reciprocal relationship between furniture, structure, and architectural elements to organize social interaction and labor process. Traditionally, the governing spatial system of the office was a clear give-and-take between open desk areas and private offices, establishing a hierarchy between workers and management. One of the most radical spatial counter-narratives against this dominant system was the *bürolandschaft* (office landscape) planning model. In the late 1950s, Eberhardt and Wolfgang Schnelle – then planners at the Velox furniture company – formed an office planning and research organization called the Quickborner Team. Initially the *bürolandschaft* system appears to be an organic, scattered, and random array of desks in an open plan office. However, the Quickborner

Team used organizational cybernetic principles (*organisationskybernetik*) – thoroughly analyzing and tabulating information flows within the office – to systematically and precisely organize furniture, partitions, plants, storage, circulation, leisure spaces, and atmospheric conditions. The resulting data fed into a logistical system that constantly restructured the relationship between worker and environment, establishing an unstable spatial condition controlled by the process of work itself. In opposition to the visible hierarchies established by the architecture of the private versus open office, the *bürolandschaft* smoothed these class differences, blending structures of power through an indifferent cybernetic process. The abstraction of the office environment itself became the governing machine, incessantly retooled to fit the changing needs of the corporation (Rumpfhuber, 2011).

The ideology underpinning the *bürolandschaft* model was not merely to increase efficiency and productivity, but also to overcome traditional hierarchical organizational structures by creating a ‘flat’ office. This cybernetic process orchestrating the office environment came to symbolize a growing belief in the promise of the future automation of administrative work. As noted by Andreas Rumpfhuber (2017), this belief led to the idea that made the space of leisure one of the most important spaces in the office landscape, as automation systems reduced the amount of necessary labor time. Any advances in the efficiency of the cybernetic engine would bring the office environment a step further towards this ideal, and the aesthetic regime of the *bürolandschaft* was merely a byproduct of this techno-positivist automation.

1 Plantas / Plans
S. E. / N. S.

Furniture systems also play a fundamental role in the performance of labor in the office. Embedded in the workstation is a double nature of private individual use and pervasive managerial control, functioning as micro-architectures that precisely define and control the subjectivity of the worker through their daily processes of work. The evolution of the workstation – especially contract furniture systems by manufacturers like Steelcase, Knoll, and Herman Miller – appeals to a deep desire for the worker to stake claim to private property and assert identity in an otherwise homogenizing and indifferent environment. Customizable, combinatorial, and component-based interfaces work to provide the illusion of satisfying diverse personal needs while discretizing the worker within the terrain of the office interior.

The contract furniture example that most precisely reveals this double nature is Herman Miller's Action Office system. Inspired by the ideology of the *bürolandschaft*, the research division of Herman Miller began experimenting with furniture systems recognizing the need for adaptability to modulating information flows and working processes. In 1964, designers Robert Propst and George Nelson developed the Action Office, consisting of a variety of modules including desks, shelving units, chairs, and tables, deployable at any orientation and angle. Despite its cybernetic intent, due to value engineering and a change in the tax code, the system devolved into the rigid cubicle landscape that constructs our labor imaginary. Contract furniture companies continue to produce these systems but rebrand them with new material palettes and diverse spatial arrangements using terms like 'hives,' 'clusters,' 'forums,' and 'coves,' to demarcate optimized spaces of social exchange and 'collaboration.' Such jargon of productivity, diversity, collectivity, and personal privacy clearly appeals to both worker and corporation but serves to naturalize a multiplicity of human interactions expected in the spaces of immaterial labor.

Underneath this jargon, companies integrate new technologies into the furniture itself to further advance the worker-as-data model. Herman Miller's new Live OS furniture platform contains sensors that "capture space utilization data" and ergonomic preferences of workers, synthesizing this data through an easy-to-use digital interface. The platform is capable of determining when people are at their desks and for how long, helping office managers with space planning decisions and 'energizing' the workplace by helping "individuals gradually achieve activity goals" (Miller, 2018). This Internet of Things (IoT) integration was the inevitable next step for companies to gather minute-by-minute data about their workforce. With increasing access to these biopolitical surveillance systems, the invisible operators of the office have more control over these systems of labor and productivity than ever before.

What forms of spatial and architectural resistance are possible given such embedded and pervasive

3 Instalaciones
en cielos / Ceiling
systems

regimes of surveilled subjectivity, aesthetic homogeneity, and social control? How can we begin to conceptually challenge these ever-refining procedures? Or, as John Harwood (2014) asks in his essay “Corporate Abstraction”: “how can architecture remediate the corporation?” Can architecture help rebrand our expectations of labor itself? Although tempting, a revolutionary stance of rehearsed appeals to Bartleby’s “I would prefer not to” or “unworking” *à la* Valerie Solanas’ *SCUM Manifesto*, offering legitimate modes of personal and collective revolution, although failing to offer a sufficient spatial proposition that resists regimes of work and their attendant spaces of labor.

An Accelerationist politics, like that promoted by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams (2014:357) is also tempting: calling for “the left [to] develop [a] sociotechnical hegemony: both in the sphere of ideas, and in the sphere of material platforms.” While full automation and applied technological evolution in tandem with careful socio-political analysis may diminish work and ameliorate struggle, how can we ever ensure that it won’t be co-opted by corporations and infrastructures that generate the imbalance of power? Maybe something even

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more extreme is in order: a reverse Taylorism enacted by workers themselves, collectively confronting our own labor time through contemporary modes of technological surveillance. Could such an ethos subsequently generate new spatial systems, furniture, and technologies? An office of voids and absences: spaces for a more radical form of unproductivity. As *precariat/cognitariat* workers become dispersed and diffused through the seamless imbrication of spaces of work and life, is it possible to define a new ethos for the office interior to challenge this dominant condition?

OFFICE-PARTY is situated within this data-driven delirium of immaterial labor – flows of information, surveillance, and efficiency analytics demanded by corporate interests, managerial consultancies, and new technologies of production. In what ways can these digitally analyzed and arranged terrains of labor be reframed to deny work, encourage unproductivity and play? Co-opting contemporary technologies that track flows of efficiency and logistics in the office landscape, the workers can remake the frenetic jumble of desks and filing cabinets, punching out on their fit-bit timesheets and reassembling space to subject the office to a new regime of diversion and distraction.

The project puts into play architecture's ability to embolden the hidden conditions within the performance of work, a secretive game of counter-productivity measures that undermine corporate desires for order. By re-designing the office through a counter-BIM – a condition that exists parallel to the regimes of data-driven productivity and performance – this proposal seeks to co-opt tactics of digital management to support an alternative ethos of work, one of anomic abandon – a condition of lawlessness, disobedience, and disorder. Through a simple enhancement of the

4 Trazados en pisos / Floor patterns

componentry of furniture systems that proliferate within the office environment, the furnishings are suddenly moveable and itinerant, able to drift into position or slip quickly into space depending on the moods and desires of the workers. The addition of brightly colored casters with geo-tagged and motorized wheels for increased desk mobility, all integrated into the smart-desk interface of each individual workspace, makes visible the possibility for new arrangements of desks, countering the homogeneity of the typical plan to produce a more provisional, spontaneous, and impulsive context for either production or unproductivity. A software platform allows users/workers to alter and undermine these furniture systems to create absurd proliferations, unfamiliar re-arrangements, inefficient clumpings, choreographies, and orchestrations operated in secret by the same employees charged with their maintenance.

5 Detalles de conexiones /
Connections details

In addition to new software protocols and office componentry enhancement, the project also included a patent application, one of the most dominant codes of office planning and desking design. Using the technical language and tone of the patent description, the documents describe an enhancement of the componentry of ready-made, off-the-shelf contract furniture systems that already proliferate within the typical office environment. The implications of these techno-disciplinary devices on the bodies and actions of workers are both performative and aesthetic, and as such can be appropriated to re-empower our quantified selves to produce new capacities for resistance.

The ground and ceiling conditions – the two horizontal datums of the office environment – are further reprogrammed. Covering the slab is a graphic landscape

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RELATION TO OTHER APPLICATIONS

This application is a division of Home-Office Ser. No. 01/5,343,684 filed March 28, 2019, nationalized from Brittany Utting and Daniel Jacobs and applied PCT/US93/0573; the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the condition of OFFICE-PARTY, and more particularly, to the objects embodied within it. The application describes a set of desking componentry that will enable the workspace to be continuously re-organized through cybernetic processes to promote increased un-productivity. Office desking is typically designed to be easily configured into two types of arrangements. The most efficient organization is a grid of desks equally spaced apart to promote a legible distribution of tasks and authorities. Desking can also be arranged into groupings of different sizes to promote team work and horizontal collaboration amongst workers. The condition of OFFICE-PARTY has the capacity to produce a third type of arrangement into clearings of desking in order to produce a space in which to un-work the labors of the office.

Office chairs and desking units are typically configured to allow for the adjustment of the seat relative to the work surface in order to achieve an ergonomic position for the exercise of immaterial labor. Desk tops are generally supported by four legs that rest evenly on the ground to provide a stable work space and useful surface on which to balance the instruments of production. This series provides for the supplemental installment of motorized caster wheel componentry on each table leg to allow for increased mobility of desking unit. While the addition of wheels decreases the potential productivity of workspace and makes workers less efficient, the wheeled units provide for the arrangement of all office furniture into organizational structures contrary to The Management's desires for productive collaboration in a calm and quiet setting. The arrangement of desking is further enabled through a mobile application available to each employee that provides an interface through which new geometries of desking organization can be implemented. The application functionality is enabled with a digital interface that continuously monitors geo-tagged positions of each workstation and controls motorized casters of all office equipment, directing each mobilized object to destination based on interface input.

To further ensure un-productivity of each worker and enhance the enjoyment of users who desires to leave a given position, it is necessary to provide all office furniture with a motorized set of caster wheels integrated into smart desking interface. To allow for this disobedience while increasing the possibility of disruption, it

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is also desirable to provide the office space with an infrastructure of movable power cables that allow for the complete rearrangement of the office. Such a feature decreases the effort required to reorganize work spaces after an evening of pleasure and reduces the evidence of misbehavior in order to optimize each act of un-productivity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The application for mobile workstation componentry is to increase user's capacity for un-working within the office. Such a feature decreases the effort required to un-work, reduces the pressure for efficiency at each work station, and enhances worker's capacity to reorganize the office counter to the principles of productivity.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an oblique view of a preferred embodiment. FIG. 2 is a front view of the desk with mobile app. FIG. 3 is a front view of mobile application interface. FIG. 4 is a left side and front view of a file cabinet. FIG. 5 is a right view of a planter. FIG. 6 is a left side view of a caster wheel. FIG. 7 is a front view of a motorized caster wheel. FIG. 8 is a top view of a caster wheel motor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows a preferred embodiment of OFFICE-PARTY. The arrangement includes a chair 1a, standing upright and provided by an external manufacturer. Chair 1b has been knocked over by desk 2 as it's cybernetic path was interrupted by a secondary gesture. This particular embodiment is composed of a desk 2, is positioned next to a filing cabinet 3, which sits adjacent to a planter 4. A secondary working table 6, which includes a filing cabinet 3, a spilled cup of pencils 9, and a binder 7, is equipped with motorized caster wheels 10 and is provided as an additional work surface. Mice 8 are not adhered to surfaces and may find themselves removed from their pads. A mobile interface 20 is provided to each employee of the office and can be used to rearrange geo-tagged desks 2 into new figures 20a and to also dim workplace lights for the after-hours party 20b.

As best shown in FIG. 2, the desk 2 is comprised of shows a preferred embodiment of OFFICE-PARTY. The arrangement includes a chair 1a, standing upright and provided by an external manufacturer. The chair 1a is positioned at a desk 2 backrest 34, and a pair of armrest assemblies 36.

7 Interfaz de usuario /
User interface

of brightly colored markings: geometric terrains that suggest alternative compositions, arrangements, movements, and spatial structures for play. The ceiling is littered with a confetti of cord trays, outlet extensions, and retractable power reels, all hanging from mobile ceiling hooks, straps, and brackets that are integrated into an adjustable grid. Supporting the proliferation of desking arrangements below, the infrastructure of cords and cables allows for the most imaginative of configurations, prompting new performances for productivity.

Controlled by a simple phone/desktop application, the office desks and lighting can transform with a simple swipe and toggle. Co-opting the cybernetic project for office landscaping, the project denies the workplace model of top-down supervision and control, instead offering a platform for participatory misbehavior and collective unproductivity. While cybernetic models assumed autonomous, self-directing, and logical actors, we instead assume an irrational user, with an end-game other than productivity, enabling a fundamentally antagonistic act against work. How can we create new rules, using digitally enabled desking componentry to let the desks reconfigure themselves, to allow their users to surrender to their suppressed desire for motion? Countering the goals of the management, the project is an update of the cybernetic vision for

labor, the accessible interface for office re-landscaping creates a new platform for participation, cooperation, and bottom-up organization. Against contemporary appropriations of the *bürolandschaft* as a static and aestheticized arrangement (such as Frank Gehry's design for the Facebook Headquarters – known as MPK 20 – in Menlo Park, California), this new componentry allows for a continuous office-party, an immediate possibility of 'un-working.'

Adopting the tropes of corporate aesthetics – pop colors, glossy surfaces, playful shapes and irreverent dispositions, even the rhetoric of mobility, collaboration, and adaptability – OFFICE-PARTY functions as a sort of Trojan horse, quietly embedding disruptive protocols within the emerging platforms of corporate surveillance. Tacitly accepting the technologies and aesthetics of corporate utopian 'playbor' offices, a radical reformatting of work culture is perhaps possible by un-fixing the spatial conditions of the office environment. Pushed to the extremes between the managed and the deviant, the disciplined and the lawless, the OFFICE-PARTY offers a possibility of play within the already compromised rules of work. **ARQ**

Notas / Notes

- 1 Nota del traductor: *playbor* corresponde a un juego de palabras entre *play* (juego) y *labor* (trabajo).

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Arquitectos / *Architects*: HOME-OFFICE, Daniel Jacobs, Brittany Utting

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Año de proyecto / *Project year*: 2019

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HOME-OFFICE

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