Abstract

An economic rationality, dating back to the early days of capitalism in the 18th Century, has since the financial crisis 2007-08 reached new dimensions: across work and life, we are counting hours, optimising our profiles, investing in an uncertain future. In the arts, the production conditions have changed due to austerity policies, a thorough reform of artistic education – the Bologna Process – and an increasing number of professional artists in the field.

The dissertation departs from an analysis of how, since the implementation of the Bologna Process, young artists in Denmark and its neighbouring countries are educated to become workers of the future. Based on a reading of assessments, schedules and documentation of ECTS-points given at higher artistic educations, the dissertation displays a rationality of self-accountancy and economisation of life, but also an expanded notion of what we can perceive as artistic work.

Furthermore, the dissertation interprets the way performance artists currently organise in collectives as a form of response to increased economisation and individualisation. Artists restructure their everyday together: make schedules for freelance lives, include ‘private’ maintenance work or redistribute money beyond the nation state. These art workers are here understood as both living in precarity and on the same time being politically agile subjects - especially when signing ‘in concert’.

By synthesizing theory from both historical materialism and feminist theory about unrecognised work, the dissertation contributes to Cultural Studies with its own theory on a materialist aesthetics of production; it proposes that the artwork is co-created by economical, temporal and social circumstances. On the same time, the dissertation affirms that production conditions within the arts are performative; that artists are powerful worker subjects who do have influence on their own conditions.