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Unpredictable Outcomes / Unpredictable Outcasts

A reflection after some years of debates on Creativity and Creative Industries

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In my lecture I like to focus on the question how the actual hegemonic discourse of creativity, creative industries and the artist as a role model for the new economy correspond or conflict with in the field of cultural producers and cultural activists.
For doing so, I would first of all put in question, if creative industries, the issue we are lecturing about and fighting against are already in existence or if we do not face a field of political visions, that try to privatize the cultural sector in general, but has not been able to realize yet such a thing than an industry as such. Neither I

would propose, in the UK, where the discourse on Creative Industries has been originally developed (Anthony Davies 2001), nor in Germany, where Chanceler Schröder established with different outcomes a transformative shift towards a cultural economy (Katharina Pühl 2003).
So, are we in a moment where social interactions and forms of autonomous labor create a self-organized way to make your living, which at the same time can be exploited by capital as an immaterial source? Or are we in transformation process in which the out comes of divers interactions, are produced partially industrial and are more and more dominated by capital interests? Or is there even an unbridgeable contradiction in an industrialization of cultural production that has been addressed by other speakers before, as "creaitivity" has just nothing to do with the sphere of economy?

What I suggest is, to reflect our discourse, as I believe we are in the middle of all of that, which does mean that there is still space to influence and change the discourse, even our own. And I also like to discuss creativity as a discursive term, that has a genealogy in the process of secularization, the emergence of a modern subjectivity and a central role in capitalist social forms of societies.
In relation to the term "Industry" it can be witnessed even in this conference, in our use of language, that the social and cultural might be transform partially to industrialization processes and technologies, - if we are not intervening. Examples are abilities or better terms like social competence, creativity and intelligence that are nowadays more and more discussed as solid elements, abstracted from each other. The question what and why and for whom something can be achieved with this abilities, seems of no relevance. Abilities are treated as a value and a source in itself, a source that could be generated and improved by training methods, or exploited by capital. But, that can only happen if they are

discussed as non-relational and segregated from each other and highlighted and represented from scientific and popular view points as entities. (Like the “Festival of the Brain” that you will have here in December 2006 (remark about research by Tom Holert 2003). Or, to take another expample think about the requirement of “Life Long Learning” as a process that is put into isolation as a value in itself. The concept of Life Long Learning does not ask anymore, what and why to learn, but the process of learning itself, whatever it is, is valued positively. It seems that this abstractions try to create fragment packages of cognitive processes that can be treated industrially in the future.
This processes of abstractions and the establishment of technologies to improve and optimize cognitive capacities, can be linked to the key processes and technologies of industrialization, which have been developed in the formation of the industrial age. Here the body movements have been abstracted and fragmented, as the body of the worker was synchronized with the machines, as only one or a few movements were in use for working on the machine. Movements therefore had to be trained and researched upon, since the Body-Machine-Management relation was fully realized in Taylorism. When this newly composed relation between body, machine, management and sciences was international standardized the Heydays of the Industrial Age and mass production was fully realized; an era in which labor struggles started to be more successful, too. The Marxian analyze of capital and the relation to the labor force was translated into the everyday as well as in the experience of the workplace and in organizations and parties.

I do not think we have such things as “Creative Industries” yet, but we have a discourse around it and the international will and desire to realize them soon. One could also think about the “Creative

Industries" discourse as a technology to capitalize and mobilize not only specific cultural sectors. Because what goes mostly forgotten in the debate of Creative Industries itself is that the talk about creativity and cultural labor has an impact on the understanding and conceptualizing of labor and subjectivity and the society as a whole. With the vocabulary of creativity and the quotation of bohemian life and work biographies a transformation of societies takes place, which do affect policymaking as well as the field of the political and our critique.

The figure of the artist as expetional figure as the creator of innovations in modes of production, authorship concepts, or forms of living is circulating in various discourses on societal transformation today. Moreover, the classical exceptional subjects of modernity – artists, musicians, non-conformists and bohemians – also function as role models in European Union debates on labor and social politics, in Germany, Switzerland or on the forefront in the UK.
„One way to clarify the issue is to examine the arguments presented by this self-consciously "modern" government, which since 1997 has attempted to champion the new ways of working as embodying the rise of a progressive and even liberating cultural economy of autonomous individuals – the perfect social correlative of post-socialist "third way" politics." Argues Angela Mc Robbie in her influencial text: "Everyone is Creative": artists as new economy pioneers?

In the political debate the figure of the artist or cultural-preneur as Anthony Davies once named it, seem to embody that above mentioned successful combination of an unlimited variety of ideas, creativity-on-call and smart self-marketing, which today is demanded of everyone. Subject positions outside the mainstream labor force are presented as self-motivated source of productivity and celebrated as 'creators of new, subversive ideas', innovative life-

and work-styles and passionate commitment. One reason among others for this change in values is the fact that once stable institutional and organizational specifications have been deregulated and loosened and the stereotypically male long-term job biography has been eroded. Because of this it becomes – from the perspective of groups that related to stable labor biographies like bourgiouse or labor parties- difficult to determine how, when, why to differentiate between ‘work’ and ‘non-work’. The artist seem to be the reference figure to understand this relation, or works as a significant for mediating this new understanding of live and work to a broader audience.
In the common political debate in the UK and Germany support for the employed or unemployed depends now on his or her willingness to align working time and lived time ‘productively’ as required. Activity once experienced as private comes to be determined by its economic function. The 'labor-entrepeneur’ must simultaneously be the artist of her/his own life. It is precisely this mystification of the subject of exception, the 'artist' whose way of working is based on self-responsibility, creativity and spontaneity, which grounds the slogans of today‘s discourse on labor. This can be seen in the rhetoric of the Hartz Commission in Germany, where the unemployed emerge as self-motivated 'freelancers' and artist, journalists and other self-employed or freelance profession have been presented as “the professionals of the Nation”. (Hartz Commission)

The classical subject of exception, including her/his precarious employment situation, has been transformed in recent economic discourse into a model economic actor. In the managerial discourse, assessments, trainings, consulting and its literature of today, creative action and thought are no longer merely expected of artists, curators and designers. The new flexible, time based

employees are the customers of the booming creativity-promotion market, provided with the appropriate advice-brochures, seminars, software etc. These educational programs, learning techniques and tools supply applicable methods, at the same time projecting new potential forms of being. Their aim is to make ‘optimising‘ of the self seem desirable. Creativity training demands and supports a liberation of creative potential, without addressing existing social conditions that might pose an impediment. On the one hand, then, creativity shows itself to be the democratic variant of genius: the ability to be creative is bestowed on everyone. On the other hand everyone is required to develop her/his creative potential. The call for self-determination and participation no longer designates only an emancipated utopia, but also a social obligation. The subjects comply with these new relations of power apparently by free will. In Nikolas Rose’s terms, they are ‘obliged to be free’, urged to be mature, autonomous and responsible for themselves. Their behaviour shall not regulated by a disciplinary power, but by ‘governmental’ techniques grounded in the neo-liberal idea of a 'self-regulating' market. These techniques are intended to mobilize and stimulate, rather than discipline and punish. As contingent and flexible as the 'market' is, the new labor subjects shall be.

The requirement or Imperative to be Creative, to fit yourself in the market relates to the very traditional understanding of the artistic production, as the artists income is only possible by selling products over the art market (a myth that nowadays gets very much valued again). But there is an important difference to the field of the managerial discourse at this point. As to fail in the market cannot be equally valued than in the art world, as the artist who fails, still has other subject position he/she can relate and switch over to, and transform the loss. The not recognized artist can be mobilized in every moment of loss, because the loss can be

legitimated with assumptions like “time is not ready for it”, but finally “quality will win” and “recognition can come late”, (or latest after you are dead). But this myth of the non-recognized, unsuccessful but talented and misunderstood artist cannot be integrated into the managerial discourse easily. As I guess we can wait some time for a enterprise that would be explored years after its death/bankruptcy. Or that a super engaged, motivated, flexible and mobile but unsuccessful Unemployed, who just did not get a job over the labor market, would get a retrospective in the MOMA with a coffee table book publication aside, and finally a place in the hall of fame...after his or her death.

But the subjectivity of non-recognition is integrated in the self-description of immaterial laborers at large. The artist as a model for self-describtion of the new flexible labor force was found in several studies in Germany lately on the Media and IT Business World, i.e. a Study T-Mobile Germany showed, that for many employees the humilation of having only a time limited and or bad paid job, was interpreted as a passage, a short-term experience, that will be over come, as once you will get the job you desired, the way to get it might be hard, but your goal is clear. A subjectivity of contingency that embodies the failure of the Free Market into a positive individual experience, a privatization, a transformation of structural changes in the social, political and economical field, that are dealt with as a challenge.

Artist-subjects, intellectuals and bohemians are specifically European constructs. Scince the 16th century the creative, world-making ability was no longer regarded as a divine ability, but (also) a human one in reference to a specific mode of production relating intellectual and manual abilities to one another and distinguished from activities that are purely a matter of craft. In this sense, the term "creativity" included reflexivity, technical knowledge and an

awareness of the contingency of the creative process.
In the 18th century, creativity was defined as the central characteristic of the artist, who was said to bring forth the world a new again as an autonomous "creator". In the emerging bourgouise and capitalist social form of western societies the concepts of aptitude and property were conjoined with the traditionally male notion of genius to produce an "exceptional subject", therefore the concepts of attitude and ownership combined with the idea of an ingenious and exceptional artistic mind.
Ever since, the precepts of c*reative talent, being creative* have served bourgeois individualism as a more general description for creative thought and action in the cultural and economic sense. The culturalization of labour and production is therefore based on eurocentric discourses on “creation” as well as on forms of image production that refers to a specific regime of gaze that has been established in institutional frameworks like museums and galleries as well as it s cultural discourses related, which have been very central as well to constitute the 19th national ideology. "Creative talent", "Creative being" have since then served bourgeois individualism as a general description of activity meant to transcend or elude economic determinants.

The mythology of the artistic production process today continues moreover to project the image of a metropolitan lifestyle, where living and working are done in the same place - at a cafe, on the road – with the further illusory possibility of added enjoyment of 'leisure' . Historically the notions of flexibility and mobility thus originate precisely in the traditions of the drop-out and the generations of artists that sought to resist modernism's dictums of discipline and rationalisation. As Elisabeth Wilson, has shown in her Book *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts*.
The social status and cultural capital attached to the image of the

'artist', but also points to a higher, indeed more ethical form of work, which has discarded the coercion of disciplinary regimes and is destined for something 'better'. The artist's studio or 'loft' is becoming synonymous with the combination of working and lived time and with innovation and diversity of ideas. In this way neoliberal ideology is fully realised as it acquires an aesthetic dimension, which has recently affected office design and living spaces, now become "habitats". Subjects are placed in new environments; associated lifestyle opportunities proliferate. Shared aesthetic experience, then, becomes an instrument of initiation. The style of living and working originally attributed to the artist promises new "urban living experiences" throughout Europe. Today a loft no longer refers only to an artist's studio in an abandoned industrial hall, but is applied to almost all the attic conversion and building extension projects realised for example in Switzerland and Germany in the late 90s. In the European competition for locational advantages in the global market, labour markets have been revamped and city districts enhanced since the late 90s with a culturalised vocabulary. Meanwhile, budget cuts in the social and cultural fields are legitimised under the paradigm of the "self-reliance" of cultural producers as entrepreneurs (the core concept of the Creative Industries Ideology) in this notion of economy based on "talents" and self-initiative.

The Aritist as an resistant figure in the Life of Graphic and Multi Media Designers

All this above mentioned discourses are not marginal. Rather, they have consequences for the whole of society. Meanwhile the conditions of production are disguised, in art and design as well as in the surviving remnants of industrial production and in other precarious jobs in the service sector.

Despite their economic crash, the IT and media industries, which refered constantly to the image of the 'artist', have become as influential a model of labour as the Taylorist and Fordist car industry once was. As shown in the spurious emulation of bohemian lifestyles by the IT industry, among others, much remains to be learned about a discourse on labour suffused with 'cultural language': the everyday circulation of this discourse, its effects on the formation of subjectivity and the relation between adjustment, failure and resistance.
This is because until now the erosion of the old paradigm of production, along with the new working conditions and their reference to 'artistic practice', have been analysed almost exclusively from within the logic of „industrial work" or in relation to stable labour biografies, which in itself only adressed the group if white males, so called breadwinners, in western societies.
With only a few exceptions, there has been little attempt to address these above mentioned phenomena in terms of their cultural rationale and effects, and little attention to the actors, their motivs and desires involved. The real relations of production involved in the construct of 'creative' prrudction (self-employed artists, media workers, designers of multimedia, sound, and graphics) are neglected and/or idealised in the above mentioned optimistic discourses.

With this in mind, I have started scine 2003 a series of studies or projects in which interviews with cultural producers with different background played a crucial role. At the Zurich in 2003 still engaged in the Institute for the Theory of Design and Ar, my investigation began with the cultural labour in the self-organized design and multimedia sector and its agents. The study looked back over the political discourse around labour, rather than the other way round. This approach seems to be necessary for the

development of a theory of the constitution of the social clearly distinct from the notion of productivity that is understood as 'accumulative‘ in the materialist tradition. Instead of argueing for a proof how life is economized I tried to find out how cultural actors in a specific location try to establish tactics or strategies to resist the common discours.

In the research I started with conversations about current relations of production in 'studio/office blocks', where a hybrid cultural production between art, graphics, journalism, photography, multimedia and music production is the norm, and one in which I participated myself. The building I focused on belonged to SWISSCOM Company before it was sublet end of the 90ties to different groups of cultural producers. The floor in the building where most conversations took place was let collectivly by a group of artists, journalists and electronic musiscians in the late 90ties, that gave themselve the name k3000, a appropriation of a former supermarket chain in Switzerland, that was not existing anymore, but was known for cheap goods. The k3000 collective subleted the floor to different producers from social-scientists, multi-media and graphic designers, as well as sound and visual artists. One office space was called <labor k3000> that functions as a space in which multimedia equipement is used and knwoledge is shared collectively. Labor k3000 has been active as a group (which I am myself part of) in critical artistic practices and cultural production scince 1997. In the late ninties the division between the artists and the designers was still quite obviuos. In the last five years it got more and more common that the critical artists together with activists and theorists produced webprojects, mailinglists, newspapers, videos, project exhibitions, actions and events. Which were only possible because of the spatial and social fabric of the Schoeneggstrassse office building, as the friends and colleuages from the other fields of production have been always been included

in this project with their ideas and skills. (see www.k3000.ch > i.e. projects like MoneyNations, Be Creative, Transit Migration, MigMap etc.)
Therefore my research led me to revise several of my earlier assumptions about changes in the conditions of production, in which I took the position that the fields of design would just fit perfectly in the culturalisation of economy. But I had to correct myself, as the people working in that field of production had already work-biographies as freelancers and self-emplyoed creatives, that showed very different out comes already. And this transformations should not be attributed solely to the economic situation in the wake of the crash of the 'e-economy‘.

First of all, the interviews showed that the concepts and imaginations of office and studio as production spaces have already been mixed up to such an extent that after 20 years of personal computer culture, in Zurich‘s graphic design and art scene it is primarily the studio, rather than the office, that survives as a model of self-engaged production . The people I spoke with have been all very active in multimedia applications for multinational companies or branding enterprises in the mid to end 90ties. It was astonishing to see, that this situation shifted a few years later into a common aggreement in the „floor“, that one should try to avoid working in this field of image production in general and that clients, who ever they are, should not be invited in the building for arranging contracts etc.

While multimedia producers and graphic designers shift towards the studio, artists used terms like 'labouratory‘ or 'office‘ in their attempts to describe a more collective and multimedia-oriented mode of production. As both groups shared the same buildung, the entiteling seem for both groups the critical artists and the designers as strategic descision. Furthermore, the conversations

with the divers producers showed, to my surprise, that temporary, collective networks were not anymore common in the graphic design or multimedia scenes in realtion to the production of coorporate images. The production on the „floor“ did not function as a „factory“ at all, contrary to what Maurizio Lazzarato claimed, for example, in his canonical text on ‘immaterial labour'. In Maurizio Lazzarato's essay the connections between the new production conditions in post-fordism and artistic-cultural work were named clearly. Lazzarato presumes that characteristics of the so-called post-industrial economy, in terms of both its mode of production and the circumstances of society as a whole, are condensed in the classical forms of "immaterial" production. If they are found in a fully realized form in the areas of the audio-visual industries, advertising and marketing, fashion, computer software, photography, and artistic-cultural work in general and appear as agents and representatives of "the classical forms of immaterial labor", I would suggest, after having finished the study, to emphasize on their implicit resistance potential and everyday life tactics against processes of economization.

As the self-employed designers in the Zurich scene functioned much more as an 'alternative economy‘, depending on alternative cultural spaces, - where they got their little but quite ok income. The pesented themselves in the conversation as enclosed studio monads that consciously resist cooperation with the 'branding‘ and 'marketing‘ systems, or to make it even clearer, cooperated only when in urgent need of money, - doing a „job“, working fort he rent or a holiday trip. This group I am taking about here has no political strategy, they do not discuss Unions or the change of the society and it’s conditions of labor in general, but invented a way to make their living in this self-organized partially freelance engagement.

In the interviews almost all of them argued, that they did not reject a 9 to 5 job solely because this regimentation of time seems paternalistic to them, but also because they could not bear either business culture and its social dynamics or the idea of having to subordinate themselves to a hierarchical working relationship. Multimedia and graphics jobs – as I could find out in the conversations - did also make it possible for (mostly) young men to move up in class.
However, these jobs do not seem to enact noteworthy transformations in the gender dynamics, even if this is repeatedly postulated in labour market policy assumptions, which could have something to do with the traditional relationships of women and men to technology. On the other hand, it could also be influenced by anachronistic assumptions about the "artist" as solitary male genius.

Moreover, the graphic-designer's self-image comes increasingly to resemble that of the artist (as single author) till today, allowing him or her to discard the image of the success-oriented designer and the idea of the company or as just a crafts person that is foolowing the demands of the client. That is to be found in the Art-scene as well, as a lot of actors here do not appropriate the image of the artist in the hope of economic gain but much more in realtion to social status, as a possibility of social mobbility that is not bound to money exchange solely.
The gesture in the graphic art scene draws even on the opposite as economic success, but on the tradition of the failed and misunderstood artistic subject and its subcultural variations, with little reference to that subject's desirability to capital.

The quoted motifs of the bohemian life do not only come up in the discourse of labour market policies and in the discourse of economic success, but also in this field of applied art, where it is

used as a social value to distinguish yourself from usual business. Among these specific "young creatives", precarious working conditions that are not determined by businesses solely are based on a choice of modes of living in every case that I encountered. In other words, freelancing or working independently, rather than in a position of permanent employment, relates with the desire of living an enjoyable life not structured by others. A life that is not just precarious, but will never get super rich, in which the social status is about a convenient way to make your living and not so much about to get internationally famous. This seems a high privilege that most of the people world wide do not share, and even some of us over stressed theorists do not share.

This cultural Niche Economy only exists because of a still existing alternative cultural scene, alternative networks of institutions that have been established by the riots in Zurich or other cities. It exists as unemployment money is still available in Switzerland for young people who just finished their education, and as well because of a network of cultural producers that relate to this alternative world of cultural spaces, bars and clubs, political initiatives, temporal teaching jobs, self-initiated projects, in always finding ways for small incomes as well as by involving people on the floor or in the building in their little but existing money flow. Here the niche-economy gets to be a key question of cultural policy and a local specifity.

Even if the self-reliance and self-organisation of an 'artist-subject' constituted as historical quotation seem to correspond to the phantasies of labour market-redevelopers and Creative industries apologeths, the success of this conjunction, making this form of subjectification "productive" for economic processes, remains doubtful in theoretical and epistemological terms as well.
Artistic ways of living and working contain forces that cannot fully

be controlled, because they not only engender but also always take part in the dissolution of their own conditions. Furthermore, myths of artistic ways of life are not at the human resource managers' exclusive disposal. These myths can also be used by social groups that would otherwise be silenced within existing power relations. Historical quotation of the artist subject and aesthetic ways of living cannot serve as a source of the measurable data required by economic discourse, because the production of a context of equilibria between the economical and specific forms of life is a reduction of the inherent complexities and antagonisms. In its functioning as ideology, however, it effectively obscures this shortcoming.