



Giving an account of one's work: From excess to ECTS in higher education in the arts

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abstract

Within the last 10 years, the implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education in the arts has introduced a time-based economy – the counting of ECTS points. Through a reading of protocols of self-study in the bachelor programme Dance, Context, Choreography at the Inter-University Centre of Dance in Berlin, I will show how art students are trained in accounting for leisure time as study time, for life as work. An institutionalised meritocracy is thus turning hours outside art school into ECTS points. In this note, I analyse the performativity in the protocols of the students. Protocolling working hours outside the curriculum with extreme accuracy, the students are led into what I call a meritocratic paradox: they are complicit with neoliberalism when they subject themselves to counting hours 24/7, and at the same time, some of them exercise a feminist critique of the same neoliberal economisation when they over-perform the imperative of calculation and collect *grey-zone hours* in their life as work. Deciphering the performativity of the protocols of self-study, I demonstrate how the infrastructural demands of meritocracy from the Bologna Process change, challenge and politicise the temporality of artistic work and the production of artistic value during artistic education.

Introduction

Recherche /Eigene Projekte

Lesen, Schreiben, Ideen und Inspiration sammeln, Gespräche und Ideenaustausch mit befreundeten KünstlerInnen (Musik, Illustration, etc.).

Total Stunden: 50

Research/ Own Projects

Reading, writing, collecting ideas and inspiration, conversations and exchange of ideas with befriended artists (music, illustration etc).

Hours in total: 50¹

What counts as labour and what counts as life, as hard work and as passion, what is networking and what is friendship? How do we measure? Artistic practice is a merging ground between work and life and conceptual artists and performance artists have since the late 1960s put on display how their ideas, bodies and social relations generate value in capitalism (Bryan-Wilson, 2010 Kunst, 2015). Artistic education is a founding institution in the ecology of the artworld, training students to become professional artists in the frame of their historical present. With the implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education in the arts, the neoliberal economisation of the artist's practice between work and life has become explicit: the rationality of calculating hours of study and off-study is manifested in the counting of ECTS points and this measuring rationale has been installed into the concept of what it means to make art.

On the bachelor programme Dance, Context, Choreography at the Inter-University of Dance in Berlin, where I was teaching in the years 2011-2016, students write protocols recording hours of cultural consumption, reading and conversation *outside the school*. As part of assessing modules in *project work* the students are trained to calculate their hours of *self-study* at home, in the museum or with a friend and turn them into ECTS points. Every term they give an account of their work. During my period of teaching in Berlin, it

¹ My translation. All the samples from the protocols cited in this text are printed with permission from the anonymised students.

became striking to me how the counting of hours was forming the notion of artistic work that the students learnt during their study of dance and performance art. Knowing the numeric form of self-accountancy brought about by the ECTS-system and having observed the daily subjectivation through the measurement of time, I decided to depart my PhD research from the implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education in the arts (Schmidt, 2019). The central question in this note is consequently how measuring standards of the Bologna Process are responded to and performatively subverted by art students.

I have looked at the self-study protocols in Berlin from the period 2011–2015: the protocols of approximately 45 students develop from recording somewhat private time in the first term – e.g.: dinner conversations, *resumés* of theories read at night, lists of very diverse activities from ‘sauna practice’ to a walk in the park – to more professionalised activities in the final term, such as rehearsals with colleagues and application writing. Yet the students’ practice of measuring self-study has a friction of submission and resistance: it is complicit with neoliberalism, because it instils measuring governmentality in future art workers, but it also acts as a critique of neoliberalism when art students overdo the demands of calculation, and thereby become increasingly aware of the time-economy of *grey zone hours*. I will refer to the two interpretations as a meritocratic paradox of complicity and critique. I will read the protocols of self-study as a socio-aesthetic form: a form that reports on and performs the distribution of time between artistic study and private life in the material encounter of excel spreadsheets and diary notes. The procedure of writing protocols – from the institutional request to the everyday practices – shows how Dance, Context, Choreography motivates a continuation of the reflection and discourse on art as work started in the 1960s. I propose to analyse the performativity of this socio-aesthetic form – the protocol. Methodologically, I lean on performance theory stemming from Jacques Derrida, who understands all utterances, signs and intentions as iterable. Thereby, meaning can change from context to context, despite any original meanings when first introduced (Derrida, 1982: 320). With my materialist analysis of samples of protocols from dance students, I want show that exactly the performativity of the protocols is what the students take

advantage of when they start questioning and over-performing the imperative of measurement.

Art historical context: Maintenance work

Large areas of artistic production have – similar to domestic labour and affective work – traditionally been invisible and consequently unnoticed and unpaid. For freelance artists, who are both their own employers and employees, ‘extra hours’ or ‘night work’ – making connections with potential collaborators, networking, writing emails and applications, researching for future works through cultural consumption and conversations, evaluating finished projects – are notched up on top of the *actual* artistic work, for example, in the studio or performances in institutions (Sholette, 2011; Kunst, 2015; Krikortz et.al., 2015). These *grey-zone hours* of rather profane and exhausting work are not part of the picture painted of the artist genius. Often this profane work does not figure in the budget of an application. Further on, in the life of professional artists, grey-zone hours are not counted as regular working hours because they fall ‘between projects’. Not only do artists always get paid for less hours than they actually work, but also the grey-zone hours potentially produce a structural precarity for them: in the social security system artists are registered as unemployed despite working 24/7. As Maurizio Lazzarato has pointed out, the reality of working in capitalism – as artists, cultural producers, start-ups, journalists etc. – includes periods of official unemployment while continuing the basics of freelance work ‘self-realization, identity-formation, and social recognition’ (Lazzarato, 2014: 121).

Looking closer at the relation between art and life in art history and art theory in the 1960s, there is a difference between the expansion of the artwork and an expanded notion of what artistic work is. For example, conceptual artist Allan Kaprow works outside the museum and downsizes the status of painting for the sake of art moving closer to life, to the everyday, in the happening and the site-specific assemblage works. When Kaprow looks at *nontheatrical performances* in public spaces by amongst others Fluxus artists Wolf Vostell and George Brecht, he does so in order to show how art is researching into the conditions of life (Kaprow, 1976). The nontheatrical happenings and

researching performances and scores, however, he appreciates as 'very impressive and very elegant' (*ibid.*, 168), and he defends artistic virtuosity, inspiration and independence when defining what performance art is. To my regard, Kaprow still represents and defends the exceptional position of the artist as genius, or the artist as a genius researcher, being more interested in the originality of the deterritorialised artwork than in the sociality and temporality of working. In other words, Kaprow expands the notion of art, but not of the artist as worker and consequently, I would state that he represents a rather conservative, modernist position. Another example is Chris Burden's *Bed piece* exposing the sleeping, in-bed-lying artist in a gallery in New York for 22 days in 1972. The work plays with the exposure of private life in public and launches the intimacy of the artist's life as the core of performance work. But whereas Kaprow and Burden are genius-affine in their self-promotion, -reflection and -exposure of their conceptual performance art in the 1960s and 70s, the feminist artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles proposes including childcare and cleaning as artistic work, saying: 'Everything I say is Art is Art' (Ukeles quoted in Jackson, 2011). She starts counting the artist's hours of care work *outside* the art gallery. Similar to Art Workers Coalition, collectively focussing on the psychically draining and socially demanding entanglement of art workers in capitalist economy (Bryan-Wilson, 2010: 15), Ukeles politicises what counts as artistic work, particularly from a feminist perspective. She uses her performative power as an artist to shed light on the unrecognised *maintenance* work of the artist. Her *Manifesto for maintenance art 1969!* (1999) expands the modernist, male conception of *everyday inclusion* to cover not only the everyday objects and situations but also the demanding, invisible everyday life of the working artist: art is happening in the unfettered, domestic field and in the fields of preparing, cleaning, archiving and maintaining art in public buildings, claims Ukeles. Not only does the original and surprising objects and events by traditional and conceptual (male) artists count as work but also the production of art in all its dull, repetitive and boring forms – this must be considered as well.

Polemically, Ukeles opposes 'maintenance' to 'development' in her manifesto: where the development-artist being the '*avant-garde par excellence*' creates the big changes and 'the new', the maintenance-artist has 'little room for alternation', she writes. 'Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the

fucking time (lit.)' (Ukeles, 1999: 122-123). Thereby Ukeles moves the perception from the originality of the *avant-garde* artwork to the unsexy shadows – no 'fucking time' – of artistic production, from the object to the temporality of the making. Her aim of writing the manifesto at a time where she also becomes a mother is to draw attention towards unrecognised hours of work within the temporality of domestic, artistic and capitalist production. Ukeles' artistic manifesto from 1969 can be regarded as a prelude to the second wave feminist fight in the Wages for Housework movement, also fighting for unrecognised hours of invisibilised work, but mainly in the domestic field (Federici, 1975).

Accounting for life

The attention to the temporality of making and the time-economy in the arts can be revisited in the frame of the neoliberal university understood as a space of economisation of the self (Petersen and Davies, 2005; Brown, 2015). I will now analyse of the specific practice of registering what can count as artistic work, trained and defined during artistic education.

I spent three days at Inter-University of Dance in Berlin in January 2018 to read through so-called *protocols of self-study*, which students hand in to staff in order to give an account of their artistic study outside the curriculum. In Germany, compared to the Nordic Countries, the registration of students' activity is offline: the archives in Berlin therefore contain big plastic folders full of A4 pages, partly printed, partly handwritten, in which the protocols of self-study are officially attached to the assessment papers in the files of graduated students. Compared to registering students' activities online, the very materiality of the handwritten, printed and collected requires registration and archival practices as additional work of staff and students. It keeps bureaucratic and meritocratic tasks tangible and present, and the registration literally takes time. Not only is the off-line paperwork a demanding task in the everyday, also the registration could be perceived as unnecessary. Usually in higher education, self-study is not explicitly controlled and measured, but only assumed and then assessed at the end of the term.

In the protocols of self-study, I noticed a variety of recorded activities belonging to the broad spectrum of what it means to study – and with this, learning to work within – the arts: meetings, mail correspondences, rehearsals, watching performances, movies and exhibitions, making applications, but also more personal and affective work like conversations with friends, reading or dreaming at night. In the protocols, the avant-garde dissolution of boundaries between life and work appears on a discursive and material level. Over three pages, one student categorises her activities in the following headlines:

PRACTICE/ VERDAUUNG. IMPROVISATION SAUVAGE / EMBODIMENT. VORTRAG/LECTURE. GESPRÄCH. ÜBERLEGUNG. COACHING HOURS. MUSEUM. PROJEKT/ MITARBEIT. ON VIEW. THEATRE. DIVERS.

PRACTICE/ DIGESTION. WILD IMPROVISATION / EMBODIMENT. LECTURE. CONVERSATION. CONSIDERATION. COACHING HOURS. MUSEUM. PROJECT/ COLLABORATION. ON VIEW. THEATRE. DIVERSE.

In a mix of French, English and German vocabulary the categories show how inner and outer activities count: motifs from inner bodily processes ('digestion') merge with rather simple descriptions of cultural consumption through the naming of an activity ('lecture') or an institution ('museum', 'theatre'). Not only do the borders between life and work dissolve but also those between the private and the public body, between the person and the institutions, and between making and reflection. The calculation of artistic study – and hence, artistic work – obviously traverses a complex temporality and physicality.

Throughout the education, the understanding of artistic work is formulated and iterated as *projects*: students interviewed for my research generally talk about what they do as 'projects'.² Project work figures in the study regulations literally named as 'Project Work' (Ger. *Projektarbeit*) and unfolds as the most

² A deviation is students in their 4th year (i.e. students who have prolonged their 3-year study), who are explicitly informed by the discourse on artistic labour as defined by, amongst others, art theorist Bojana Kunst (Kunst, 2015). The 4th-year students are presumably informed by this discourse when they talk about their 'practice' or their 'work' and avoid the term 'project' – a term that has been extensively criticized by Kunst. See also Schmidt, 2019.

substantial discipline in the programme in three modules of total 62 ECTS points, i.e. over a third of the total 180 ECTS points of the bachelor degree education. In the study regulations, the number of hours of self-study within the modules of project work is high, around 80%. But how do we actually measure and survey this 80% of self-study? How are the students taught what to record? Interestingly, the teaching staff in Berlin have a checklist of what counts, so that students can calculate their project work:

Rehearsals and organisation of rehearsals (studio booking, communication, finding material, pre-meetings)

Developing concepts

Meetings within the study programme and in relation to projects

All kinds of research

Applications, requests

Video-filming, photography, editing

Costume

Attending others' performances, trainings, workshops and exhibitions

Working on other projects (paid and unpaid)

Mentoring hours.³

The list above is from 2017 and is circulated in written form amongst staff and students. The list informs about a wide range of activities entailed in the profile of the future freelance dancers and choreographers; they are trained in artistic generalist skills (filming, documenting, making costumes etc.) as well as learning to *project* and invest in the future and manage productions (pre-meetings, writing applications, requesting etc.). There is a remarkable parenthesis: '(paid and unpaid)'. When *paid* work outside the school counts in the ECTS economy, this means that the students' hours count twice: once in money and once in ECTS points. This gives an advantage to students who

³ Official list for internal circulation received via email correspondence with student helper Verena Sepp 30.1.2017 (my translation).

already have paid work during their education: they develop their career and fulfil their education obligations within the same hours.

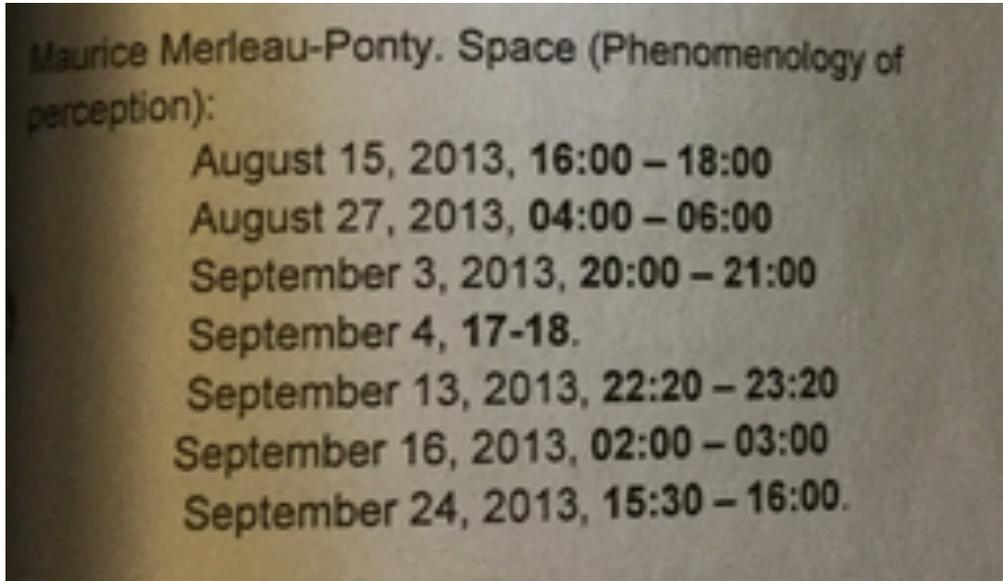
The checklist epitomises and exercises the meritocratic paradox. First, the practice of accounting is complicit with neoliberal demands of calculation and investment: an economisation of all spheres – as Wendy Brown's definition of neoliberal rationality has it (Brown, 2015) – through the counting of hours spent nearly anywhere; it is even possible to make hours count twice. Second, the institutional checklist and the attentive practice of recording work offer a critique in the form of a de-mystification of artistic work. When becoming aware of all the grey-zone hours spent with maintenance work, in communication and application writing, the less glamorous work of artists is recognised and politicised as an invisible part of the cultural economy.

Temporality formed by the protocol

A protocol is a formal or official record of scientific experimental observations, a way of tracking something seen or experienced. Protocols have a very dry language – originating from the scientific laboratory – and are kept in short and efficient sentences, often linked to a progression in time. A protocol requires an object, an activity or a process to be observed, an observer/writer and an authority to collect, compare, approve and store the protocol. The writer of the protocol simultaneously obeys directions from the institution and becomes conscious of their practice. A protocol in higher education is thus part of a larger infrastructural logic: it implies a chain of meritocratic tasks distributed among staff and students and continues into institutional recognition ending with a graduation certificate.

The institutionalisation of protocols of self-study urges students in Berlin to count the unrecognised and traditionally unpaid hours, legitimising and offering legibility to what artist and writer Gregory Sholette has called 'dark matter' of artistic production (2011). I suggest understanding the protocol of self-study as a socio-aesthetic, subjectivising form structuring time in the context of the neoliberal university. Accounting for one's activities is known from the academic field when publishing online profiles on the university's website, writing applications for funding and counting points for publishing

articles. Impact is listed in the narrative form of the individualised portfolio (Brown, 2015: 33), where private life is also a part of your professional identity in the knowledge economy.⁴ When the students in Berlin register their protocols, an economy of time structures the rhythm of the page. A student accounts for her reading activity with dates and exact hours spent:



Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Space (Phenomenology of Perception):

August 15, 2013, 16:00 – 18:00

August 27, 2013, 04:00 – 06:00

September 3, 2013, 20:00 – 21:00

September 4, 2013, 17-18

September 13, 2013, 22:20 – 23:20

September 16, 2013, 02:00 – 03:00

⁴ In their research on subjection within academia Bronwyn Davies and Eva Bendix Petersen have – through several *poetic representations* of daily life’s ‘painful, risky, and passionate attachment’ (2005: 52) to work – revealed how private life is colonised by neoliberal rationalities and governmentality.

September 24, 2013, 15:30 – 16:00

This student is protocolling her reading hours in a print form possibly written in an excel spreadsheet. The temporality of work formed through her protocol of self-study is dictated by the clock. The protocolisation demands a self-surveillant activity even when the lights are out. The romantic Marxist ideal of the worker writing poetry and reading philosophy at night celebrated by Jacques Rancière in *La nuit des prolétaires* (1981), has been taken to its extremes when the student records her activities by clocking in and out of work at night. The accuracy in the recording of minutes in the sample above – twenty minutes past ten in the evening, half an hour in the afternoon – and the nighttime activities show an intense performance of self-governance.

At Dance, Context, Choreography, the protocol depicts exactly the union of professional and private: it unites the excel spreadsheet and the handwritten diary notes, computer registration and writing by hand in bed. This materiality reflects the encounter between standardised meritocracy and intimate *memoires* for oneself. The union of life and work is, as already argued, old wine in art history, but the institutionalised form of registration transposes this union from an avant-garde way of producing to a neoliberal way of measuring. Through the ECTS, a legibility of the temporality of study is structured, and a calculable and comparative time-based economy is proposed.⁵ The protocol as a socio-aesthetic form captures the encounter between the rhythm of everyday life and the temporality proposed by the Bologna Process. Absurdly enough, while the student above is studying phenomenology at the library in the afternoon and in bed at night, the private space and biorhythm is occupied by the meritocracy of the Bologna Process.

⁵ Two overall aims of the Bologna Process in higher education are comparability and mobility: programmes should be able to easily exchange students between the EU countries. The comparability is made possible through modularisation of study and the calculation of hours into European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) points. Studies – within Europe – are divided into working hours counted in ECTS points, where 1 ECTS point is approximately 25-30 working hours. One year of study consists of 60 ECTS points. However, it differs from study programme to study programme how ECTS points are accounted for. Mostly, self-study is not documented and thereby this is an illustration of an extreme case.

To quantify one's artistic study and work by counting hours could be characterised as what media theory scholar Sarah Sharma has called a 'power-chronography', a 'micropolitics of temporal coordination and control' (Sharma, 2014: 139). Sharma proposes in her book *In the Meantime* (2014) that we pay attention to the specific power interests and technologies of control layered in temporalities of everyday work and life under capitalism. She opts against the dystopian discourse of 'The world is getting faster' by left-wing speed theorists such as Paul Virilio, Frederic Jameson, David Harvey and Jonathan Crary. Instead, she sets out to analyse the particular grids of 'temporal power relations' (Sharma, 2014: 9). Following Sharma's call for descriptions of particular temporalities of work under capitalism, I would describe the temporality of work trained by students of dance in the protocols of self-study as a performative grid that can lead to a constant self-measurement and self-surveillance. This performative grid is politically initiated by the Bologna Process and possibly inscribed in a greater neoliberal technology of the self. To be accounting for one's life in hours as part of one's study to become an artist proposes an occupational temporality of potentially always being at work, as seen in the example of reading Merleau-Ponty at night. It is probably 'a drag', as Ukeles describes the maintenance work, and usually not an activity the students would consider to be central to their actual artistic *oeuvre*. Perhaps it is draining and boring but, as I will show below, also allows a feminist politics of work where unrecognised hours of maintenance count.

Naysaying, healing, caring

In Autumn 2018, when I return to the Dance, Context, Choreography programme in Berlin to have a look at recently written protocols, I come across new kinds of recorded work:

18.1.2018	listening to travis	1
21.1.2018	taking time off to heal, total so far:	6
21.1.2018	listening to travis	2
21.1.2018	pillow	3
22.1.2018	taking time off to heal	3
23.1.2018	taking time off to heal	3
23.1.2018	flat earth cinema business	2
26.1.2018	cabaret at sophiensæle	2
28.1.2018	reading THE BLAZING WORLD	3
29.1.2018	looking at korean dance on youtube	1
29.1.2018	pillow (failed)	3

Screenshot from a digital list handed in by a student, showing self-study of project work in module 11, 'Project Work'.

The student writes down twelve hours of 'taking time off to heal'. The inclusion of the healing of an injury is far away from the image of the actively working, virtuoso dancer, yet it is a very concrete and time-demanding obstacle in the everyday of both dance students and professionals. Waiting for the injury to heal, doing nothing, enduring the pain, does not match the imagined effort of everyday training attached to the dancer. It is not even clear what exactly she is healing from reading the few words in the protocol; it could be the healing of love wounds or, what I immediately supposed, the healing of an injury she got during training or rehearsals.

Despite the uncanny tendencies of neoliberal subjection learned during artistic education when students survey and calculate their activities, I also – in line with Ukeles' expansion of what artistic work includes – read a feminist critique in the protocols because they make visible, count and de-mystify the unrecognised and invisible working hours of the dancer. Besides the feminist expansion of the notion of work presented through Ukeles' notion of maintenance, a second feminist strategy occurs: the strategy of 'naysaying'

understood as the practice of saying ‘no’ to virtuosity, ‘no’ to the harming demand of hyper-productivity, ‘no’ to the ideology of constant strokes of the genius. The choreographer Yvonne Rainer suggests naysaying to artistic virtuosity, to the star-image and the heroic artist-figure in her *No Manifesto* in 1965. The 1970s feminists such as Silvia Federici and Shulamith Firestone and more recently, Kathi Weeks, have been arguing on a theoretical level against positive affects – love, happiness and passion – as compensation for work (Federici, 1975; Firestone, 2015 [1970]; Weeks, 2011). The second wave feminist theorists reveal the private household as an obscure component in the economic model, where even Marx never counts domestic work as part of the greater calculation. Love and happiness have traditionally been the wages for housework.

In a post-Fordist era, this kind of romantic relation to hours spent with children, in the kitchen or groceries shopping, has travelled into other spheres of work. The entrepreneurial subject’s desire to self-fulfil is similarly fuelled and mystified by love and passion and often accompanied by the image of the creative, innovative force of artists.⁶ Feminist research has shown how the mystified relation to work – in households as well as for the entrepreneurial subject – masks the role of economic motives and utilities. To put it simple: when artists are immersed in passionate projects, they do not count hours or ask for social security. Love is an ‘unlimited individual resource’ and only economic worries will distract from enjoying work (Weeks, 2017: 45). I am intrigued about Rainer’s naysaying to artistic virtuosity and the naysaying to unpaid invisible labour. The two feminist ways of saying ‘no’ bring together resistances against the divisions of being on-stage and off-stage, of recognised production and unrecognised production, of soloist value production and necessary work in the background. The strategies of artistic and feminist naysaying dismantle a romance with artistic work, both when spectacularly performed on stage and when exploited by one’s own passion.

Kathi Weeks sums up a feminist approach to work: ‘The first step in any critical project is to make the familiar strange’ (Weeks, 2017: 42). Alienation

⁶ Within Theatre and Performance Studies the actor as model for the engaged, self-fulfilling employee has taken its extremes in Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore’s (1999) *The experience economy*.

from the romance with work means in an artistic context to translate a mystified imaginary of artistic excess and virtuosity into a pragmatic counting of hours spent at work. Not only does counting profane the artist genius and the aura of artistic practice but it also exposes what kind of material practices artistic work actually covers. Sitting still and waiting for an injury to heal is, as in the protocol above, on the one hand, maintenance work, caring for the production apparatus, which is the dancer's own body, and on the other hand, it is a protesting practice of bodily naysaying: while sitting immobile and enduring the healing process, the dancer is inactive yet at work. By noting down the hours of self-study as 'taking time off', she says 'no' to the physical possibility of working (or studying) passionately 24/7. The naysaying allows the dancer to win time for herself while working. But is it a 'win' to sit around immobile and injured or rather a painful act of maintenance work?

A less ambivalent version of naysaying becomes clear when the same student records one hour with '8.11.2017: helping Katla with homework'. Where the healing time is still in a field of necessary work in order to dance (again), the student here frankly 'wins' time for friendship with her hours recorded as work. A few days later she notes spending an hour with '11.11.2017: emotional hungover poetry'[sic]. While possibly referring to a moment of writing poetry in a state of hangover blues, in my view, she may actually challenge the boundaries of what can count as artistic work. Is hangover poetry not just junk? Or where does the 'great inspiration' start if not in the shadow of a bottle of alcohol? Thinking back to Ukeles' question on which aspects of the everyday have been included in the image of artistic work, a gendered and idealist ideology is performatively re-examined, exposed and mocked: the artist in excess and on drugs, dealing with mental issues, producing artistic objects (poetry), but not including time to heal physical and rather profane injuries. This polemic, naysaying protocol, being the most recent sample in my analyses of protocols of self-study, performatively explores what counts as artistic work by including regenerative work, friendship and hangover poetry. With mocking self-irony towards the image of a romanticised, semi-drunk artist genius excessively creating out of the dark sides of the soul combined with a serious longing for what has been excluded from the artist's life when working conditions 24/7, namely both friendship and time off to heal, this student questions the premises of artistic value production.

Feminist politics of work

By opening with the question ‘what counts as work?’ I have analysed the *temporality* of the everyday of the art student after the implementation of the Bologna Process: how the temporality of artistic study and the notion of artistic work are formed by the educational infrastructures and questioned by students’ application of feminist politicisation of unrecognised hours of work. When students write protocols of self-study within project work during their artistic education, their days and nights are interpellated by a temporality of measurement and calculation proposed by the local interpretation of the Bologna Process. I have analysed samples of the protocols of self-study understood as socio-aesthetic form that carries information about the context but are also always-already iterable, making exaggeration and denaturalisation possible. I have thus demonstrated how giving an account of one’s artistic study and work is a performative act exposing a meritocratic paradox in higher education in the arts. The institutionalised overmeasurement of work can be seen as extreme self-governance, but also used in resistance, as naysaying to an obscured economy within the arts and an insistence on time without work – for friendship, healing and caring.

When reading the protocols of self-study through a feminist perspective, I interpret them as an institutional demystification of artistic work as well as a particular recognition of the dancer’s work with themselves as production apparatuses. Through the act of accurate protocolling of grey-zone work, students are reclaiming an influence on the temporality of production and maybe even a re-installment of the division between life and work. The protocol politicises the dark matter of artistic study and thereby exposes a profane temporality of the dance student’s workday and night, in the studio and in bed, in cultural institutions and at home, with colleagues, friends and family. While the blurring of life and work of the avant-garde artist of the 1960s was both expansive and exhaustive, the protocol as institutionalised accountancy is a new socio-aesthetic form, potentially capturing the concrete deficits of the avant-garde blur: the romantization of passion, excess and availability. Can the calculation and over-measuring of time become an advantage of the future (artist)worker? Could there be a moment of solidarity in counting individual, but structurally similar hours ‘in concert’?

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