



### **She now works flexible...**

She now works flexibly from home, without external controls. She works when she wants to. However, she has to carry out an incalculable amount of work for a fixed fee. This means that she does nothing but work at home and can't relax there any more. The route to the desk to read emails at the laptop has become as much of a routine as the way to the kitchen to make coffee. The jobs she is paid for, those done and those not, are only a small part of what she does every day. Repairing the fax machine, doing the washing, organising a meeting, learning a new programme, doing the washing up, writing invoices, doing the tax return, booking a flight online, taking the camera to be repaired, keeping up contacts, showing interest - all this becomes too much for her sometimes.

\* \* \*

Recently she has begun, because of these various requirements which often overtax her physical and mental capabilities, to put up post-it notes everywhere in the flat, with the things which she absolutely has to get done. She often can't sleep, sits down to the Internet at night and closes worrying communication gaps from the day. She thinks she would be stuck in her workplace without her diary and address book. On the other hand, she can't imagine a life where she didn't organise her work herself and had to be subordinate to her superiors. As the work is now entirely up to her, it simultaneously stimulates her organisational talent and her well-being, which is simultaneously freed and subdued. She asks herself if it is really a coincidence that her workplace has moved even closer to the kitchen, which she actually wanted to leave behind for ever.

\* \* \*

She is sometimes afraid that she will be fired from her paid job, or that she will not find a new one before it is over. That happened once. As she didn't get unemployment benefits as a freelancer, she lived from welfare. That was a financial disaster, and they also wanted to force her to do the most diverse jobs. She realised that, strangely, without a paid job she wasn't any less busy. For example she finally had time to visit friends abroad and meet her sister's child more often. Besides she also had time to teach herself new programmes and teach them to friends, and begin to experiment with her film camera. She met her current boss in a bar during this time. That is how she got her new job. If she gets the chance to think it all through, she realises that there has to be more to it than the ability to decide what one does and when. Rather she had to be able to decide what she really wanted to do,

what for, and with whom. She would then divide her time so that she could concentrate on one thing which she really wanted to do. One thing, where she was involved in its social effect, rather than feeling like a cog in an invisible machine. But she believes that no one would pay her for this. Like artists, who do what interests them, but don't get paid for it.

\* \* \*

There is much about her (working) life that she likes. She wishes, though, that there were less stress and a greater social balance with her life, with the permanent insecurity in her working biography. This also includes social commitments or "securities" and less of the existential fears that surround her. She thinks that perhaps she should start at a very private level seeking to counter the general retreat into nuclear families, private pensions or self-coaching by striving for more collective ways of dealing with one another based on more solidarity. Yet she also thinks it is urgent that precarious modes of existence should become more visible in society both in their singularity and in their structurality, so that the process of an altogether more broadly conceived de-individualisation could be set in motion. Maybe society-changing battles would not even result from this directly, she thinks, but only new, structurally classical labour battles, which would nonetheless lead beyond the perspective of a re-fordisation at last.

\* \* \*

She has often read in the paper that cultural and creative careers are the model of self-determined work: the Schröder/Blair paper for education used them as a future role model of a "new social midpoint". Or the suggestions of the Harz commission: to decrease unemployment and to increase freelancers, artists and intellectuals in Germany are supported as "professionals of the nation". Whenever she read that, it seemed strange that according to these texts, she had in the extended sense become an artist: her job is comparable to activities of cultural creatives, in terms of organisation, contacts and all the individual decision making. However she is annoyed, as she has a feeling of not being able to decide anything, except for the fact that she can get up when she wants, or work at night. "As if the life and work styles of cultural creatives may be the solutions to economic and social problems. One should ask unemployed people, who are now put under pressure, or their hyper-stressed colleagues in the Munich software company what they think. Maybe cultural workers are the historical avant-garde of this post-fordist drama, but what can such a realization bring us?"

kpD are: Brigitta Kuster, Isabell Lorey, Marion von Osten und Katja Reichard

From: [http://www.ateliereuropa.com/1.1\\_sheworks.php](http://www.ateliereuropa.com/1.1_sheworks.php)