

3rd Ph.D. Summer School of Cultural Transformations, Summer 2015:

Commons and Commodities: Immaterial Rights and Cultural Solids under "Europeanisation" (7,5 hp/ECTS)

The Summer School in Cultural Transformations was initiated at Aarhus University in collaboration with the University of Southern Denmark, Warwick University, the Critical Cultural Theory Graduate School at Södertörn University, and Hamburg University. Previous Summer Schools have taken place at Warwick University (2013) and at Aarhus University (2014).

Description

The ongoing process of "Europeanisation" of Europe can be described as a closing of a gap between two conceptions of Europe – one Socialist and one Capitalist; known as "East" and "West". The European Union project and the values championed by the European Council affect Europe as a whole (and allies elsewhere). Engagement with the Commons as a counter-strategy may reflect desire for an alternative to Capitalist ideals and management, in the wake of (post-)Marxism. Manifestations of this "Europeanisation" apply to standards of democracy, conceptions of human rights, legal frameworks, migration patterns, communication protocols, views of the "international" and "world culture", to name a few areas. It implies a radical re-mediation and re-interpretation of intellectual-cultural heritage.

This summer school focuses on the Commons in a world thoroughly formed by digital environments and mediascapes. Common resources are property or goods that are shared and maintained collectively, for the benefit of a community. Departing from Medieval English reference to common government and use of land that did not belong to crown or church (e.g. forests and pastures), conceptions of the Commons now include immaterial goods (knowledge, skills, and sensibilities). Even bodies, human identity and behaviour are subsumed under the category – for instance as patented genomes in the medical industry. The historical counter-process of "Enclosure" of the commons through privatization and centralized government has been criticized for its effects on the management of immaterial intellectual property or cultural heritage. Even the 'tragedy of the commons'-argument that private ownership is the most effective management system has been challenged. Meanwhile, Communist ideals and Socialist government in Europe and elsewhere have withered and given way to actually existing Capitalism. The disbelief and distrust of communal solutions vie with the need to resist effects of raw capitalism and hopes awakened by collaborative modes of production not least in digital media. There may still be use for a Utopia and for promises to

revolutionize and democratize production and management of common goods.

The summer course seeks to attract PhD students from several academic fields (aesthetics, art history, cultural studies, ethnology, history, media studies, political science, etcetera) who research topics that touch on the commons in a broad sense, awareness of how use of resources affect power structures, ecological and democratic concerns, opening to interdisciplinary approaches and methods.

Course design

The course work takes place during five days, Wednesday June 10 – Sunday June 14, at Södertörn University Campus. It is organised as a combination of lectures and workshops and includes oral and written presentations.

In preparation for the course, each participant should hand in a short PM that relates to the course topics (ca. 2.500 words, by June 5). Participants will present the PM together with colleagues in thematically composed groups (decided by the organisers), who coordinate and give feedback between themselves during the workshop days. By August 15, each PhD student is asked to hand in an expanded version of the PM revised with respect to lectures and workshops.

Areas or topics to explore include (but are not restricted to):

- Poetics-Aesthetics of the commons
- Unspeakable commons
- Heritage commons and commodities
- Opening common spaces
- Networked commons
- Borderline commons
- Participation
- Audiences
- Identity and the self
- Texts
- Narratives
- Surveillance

Course assessment

The PhD student's work is examined through participation in course workshops including a collective presentation, and production of an individual PM that is prepared and handed in before the course starts and finalised upon the completion of the classes. The PhD student's oral and written work is graded by the course leader.