

Proposal to the workshop ‘The “Govermediality” of Work, Welfare, and the Life Course...’

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**“Connecting professionalism and self-Governance.
About the regulation of cultural professions in Germany.”**

The rapid spread of digital communication has resulted in information and knowledge becoming a central dimension of societal development. In contrast to the Fordist industrial society characterized by mass production of material goods, post-industrial knowledge and information society has now become established. The main thesis displayed in the paper is that against this backcloth the field of cultural professions becomes of interest to explain changes in the regulation of working structures and the life course. It is claimed that cultural professions represent a post-modern type of professionalism, which is characterized by three features: They represent an expertise which does not claim to have absolute authority, as traditional professions do, but which is significantly involved in the transformation of information into knowledge. Linked to this – as a second characteristic – is the market-related organisation of cultural professions. Thirdly, professional expertise and ‘expertise of themselves’ are intimately connected with each other in this field of work.

The paper examines this theory based on empirical findings on cultural professions in Germany. Focus is placed on two traditional cultural professions: journalism and literary translation. It is characteristic of these professional fields that, on the one hand, they occupy the niche of the national sector of cultural work, and yet on the other hand find themselves within the context of the globally interwoven industry of media and culture. The argumentation proceeds in three steps. At first the national environment and the institutional embedding of cultural professions in Germany is dealt with. A cluster of institutions are involved here, which were set up between 1965 and 1983, and which have had an decisive influence on the structure of earning conditions and social security for cultural professions in Germany. Professional autonomy is not guaranteed as a group privilege, but is intended to be enabled and supported on an individual level. The principle of regulation behind this setting is illustrated by its two central columns: the German law for the protection of intellectual property, and the social insurance for freelance artists and publicists ("Künstlersozialversicherung").

This is followed by a discussion of the change in the regulatory framework of cultural professions in the course of the following decades. Digitalization and international links of the

media market organized on a private, economic basis cause a ‘secularization’ of the media from the national niche of culture, which was previously assumed as a ‘public borne’ landscape. Now, commercialism and market rationality get the upper. Hence reciprocity and constitutive material preconditions of the regulatory framework are undermined step by step.

Finally the findings are summarized and the interrelation of biographical self-governance and individual professionalization which is characteristic for cultural professions is developed. While the classical term, ‘professionalism’ implies an abstract, discipline knowledge basis from which flexibly applicable, ‘case-related’ knowledge and complex competences are derived, professional knowledge of the cultural professions has to be extended beyond the specialist horizon of qualification, performance and value-orientation in order to satisfy individual market requirements. As such, professionalism comprises here a bundle of reflective action resources which- as a complementary essence – results from structural regulatory deficits and individual creative requirements. The development of self-identity or professional self-perception in cultural professions has to be seen as a continuous process in which specialist and cross-specialist competence development and value perceptions of individual motives, expectations and experience are interlinked, and thus possess their own biographical logic. This process, however, is carried out neither in a ‘free-floating’ nor self-evident manner, but as an individual acquisition and reproduction of the context-specific structural requirements.

The paper is based on the empirical research of my PhD thesis, which I will defend in October at the University of Bremen. Analysis relates to the institutional framework, strategies of collective action, individual scope of action and biographical impact. The theoretical frame is developed from approaches of sociology of the regulation of the life course, work and sociology of professions. Methodology proceeding is based upon document analysis, expert interviews and biographical interviews.

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