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Unintended Consequences of Quantification, Metrification and New Public Management in Higher Education: The Rise of a New Spirit of Academic Capitalism (0478)

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The paper demonstrates the increasing move of professors towards a new spirit of academic capitalism. It argues that employment in higher education must be interpreted as a prototypical example of a new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski/Chiapello 2005 [1999]) which calls for entrepreneurial selves (Bröckling 2016 [2007]). Their main characteristics are the economization and marketization of academic life, a significant increase of network structures and the flexibilization of working conditions. The emergence of an academic capitalism (Slaughter/Leslie 1997; Slaughter/Rhoades 2004) due to the implementation of new public management (Pollitt/Bouckaert, 2004) tools in higher education results in a change of the academic working ethos (Enders/Weert 2009; Lenger 2015). Consequently, modern forms of collaborative working practices (Narin/Whitlow 1991), the quantification and metricisation of science (Espeland/Sauder 2007), the uncertainty and precariousness of academic careers (Reuter et al. 2016; Reitz 2017) are constitutive for becoming a professor and therefore have to be considered analytically.

Within the sociology of science and higher education research, however, the interest in academic biographies usually focuses on the activities of researchers and their corresponding working ethos (Merton 1973). Empirical studies on the careers of German professors show that biographies in academia are structured in line with the demand of “science as *Lebensform* [way of life]“ (Krais 2008). Such a way of life is characterized by incorporating the whole person and by encompassing the private way of life as well which must be subordinated to the necessities of science. Professors follow a calling for science. Structures of academia, like rankings, ratings, working conditions, career concerns etc., are seen as marginal conditions for professors to fulfill their destiny. For German professors, the idea of research in solitude and freedom, derived from the Humboldtian conception of the modern university as independent from the state, is still the guiding principle. It is matched by their constitutionally granted freedom in research and teaching. However, given the fact that professors have had to cope with an extended qualification process until tenure, they were subject to a field specific biographical socialization conflict between precarious, short-term contracts on the one hand and permanently tenured positions on the other hand. Academia is a “winner takes all market” (Rogge 2015) and academic careers are still hazardous (Weber 2007; Schmeiser 1994, Reuter et al. 2016).

The goal of the paper is to demonstrate the consequences for the profession if academia is transformed in accordance with new public management, output orientation, acceleration and the measurement of research grants, and journal publications using scientometric indicators. In short, it demonstrates a transformation of the *academic habitus* (Bourdieu 1988 [1984]) aligned with the innovative production on knowledge into a managerial habitus aligned with the successful positioning in the academic field and therefore a strategic interest in the reproduction of existing knowledge.

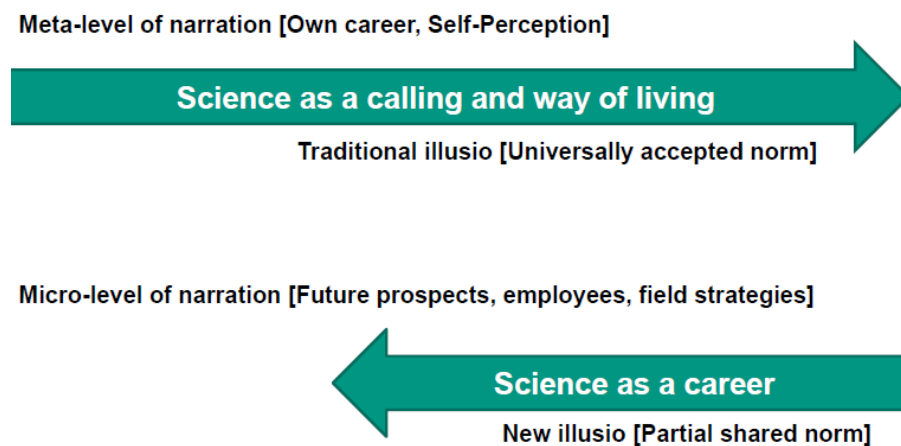
To reveal these effects, 32 in-depth biographical interviews with professors from various disciplines were conducted. Theoretically, the empirical approach rests on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu covering the social position in the field (status), the positioning in the field (statements), and the underlying habitus of interviewees (dispositions). To implement this heuristic research design, the guided interviews comprise four dimensions:

- (1) Life Career and biographical analysis (Position, Habitus)
- (2) Knowledge production and epistemology (Positioning, Habitus)
- (3) Academic field and action strategies (Positioning, Habitus)
- (4) Time budget and sociographic issues (Position, Habitus)

All interviews were analyzed within a triangulation frame, i.e. combining problem centered expert interviews, biographical narrative analysis, qualitative content analysis, agency-analysis, and typification.

Findings show that a change of the *illusio*, i.e. the normative reference point of scientific work, takes place in the academic field. If there was no change, we would expect a biographical narration of autonomy and self-reliance due to genuine research interests and excellent academic performance in comparison to other scientists. However, two competing narratives (figure 1 and 2) with three coping narratives can be found.

Figure 1: Transformation of the *Illusio* of the Academic Field



On the meta-level of narration, the traditional *illusio* (Bourdieu 1988 [1984]; Engler 2001; Beaufays 2003) is still active. Professors reconstruct their academic career *ex post* in line with the field *illusio*, consisting of a belief in the non-monetary interest of scientific knowledge, a belief in the success of the best and most qualified as well as a calling and habitual matching as scientist. However, on the micro-level of narration another norm can be revealed: Doing science as a career and profession. Here, strategic action, managerial competences, and goal-oriented success dominate the narratives of professors. Consequently, there is clear evidence to suggest that the institutionalized rules of academia essentially affect the individual

environment and thereby structure the qualification phase, scientific careers, and behavioral patterns in academia.

Additionally, three corresponding coping mechanisms can be identified.

Narrative I: Science as a calling

→ Experience and suffering as structuring structures in the academic field

Narrative II: Professorship as the result of strategic action and career-oriented pragmatism

→ Active agentivation and construction of agency

Narrative III: Academic career as a result of socialization into higher education structures

→ Structuring and shaping through the field

Figure 2: New Spirit of Academic Capitalism



The findings can be seen as indicators for a structural shift within academia and the emergence of a new spirit of academic capitalism (see figure 2). A new mode of scientific action takes place in academia and becomes the normative reference point of academic life. The intrusion (or colonialization) of this spirit might be seen as an order of justification guiding the actions of the profession (Lenger 2015, 2017, 2018; Lenger et al. 2016). Especially quantification and metrification can be seen as driving forces of this transformation.

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