



Introduction: Professions and organizations – a conceptual framework

Current Sociology
59(4) 389–405

© The Author(s) 2011

Reprints and permission: sagepub.

co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0011392111402584

csi.sagepub.com



Daniel Muzio and Ian Kirkpatrick

University of Leeds, UK

Abstract

This collection seeks to reconnect two separate streams of work on professional organizations and professional occupations. In particular the articles collected here identify two key themes: (1) the challenges and opportunities that professional organizations pose for established and emerging professionalization projects and (2) the extent to which professional organizations create, institutionalize and manipulate new forms of professionalism and models of professionalization. To this effect, this collection brings together a number of articles from a broad range of disciplines (sociology, management, healthcare, accountancy, law and geography), theoretical backgrounds and national contexts which explore the complex connections between professional occupations and organizations.

Keywords

professional occupations, professional organizations, sociology of the professions

Historically, the analysis of professions has been connected to broad sociological issues such as: occupational closure, social stratification and exclusion, state formation and the development of a capitalist economic order. In the last 15 years or so, however, a new research agenda has begun to emerge. This is characterized by the discovery of the organizational dimension of expert work, and by the focus on the professional service firm (PSF) and its management as an increasingly topical subject area (Ackroyd, 1996; Barley and Tolbert, 1991; Brock et al., 1999; Cooper et al., 1996; Empson, 2007; Evetts, 2004; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008; Greenwood et al., 1990; Hinings, 2005; Leicht and Fennell, 2001).

Corresponding author:

Daniel Muzio, Leeds University Business School, Maurice Keyworth Building, University of Leeds,
Leeds LS2 9JT, UK.

Email: dm@lubs.leeds.ac.uk

This growing interest in organizations might be seen partly as a response to a series of broader developments in the context of professional practice. Today's professionalism is not a small-scale affair, as the work of expert occupations is increasingly dominated by large organizations. The cases of law and accountancy are highly indicative of such trends. The days in which professional practice equated to sole practice or family-based partnership are long over (Abel, 1988). Today's professions are overshadowed by large organizations such as 'mega-law' and Big 4 accountancy firms (Cooper and Robson, 2006; Flood, 1996; Hanlon, 1999; Trubek et al., 1994), operating in dozens of jurisdictions, employing thousands if not tens of thousands of professionals and generating multi-million pound profits. Indeed, most professional activity now takes place in organizational settings, whether this be in the context of publicly run services or large, private sector firms.

It is also notable how the impact of such structural developments has been compounded by changes in the academic mode of production. Arguably, the growing preoccupation with organizations reflects the rise of the business school as an academic institution and the consequent migration of staff from sociology departments to management schools (Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2003). In this context, the business school has emerged as an important production site for work and research on professionalism. This in turn has found expression in a new research agenda, which increasingly draws on the theoretical frameworks, methodologies and vocabularies of new disciplines such as management and organizational studies. It also focuses on new priorities of organizing, managing, marketing, assessing and rewarding professional work and addresses new audiences of practitioners, advisors and policy-makers. This partly responds to the discovery of professions as businesses, leading to the development of a practitioner-focused literature (Empson, 2007; Lowendahl, 2005; Maister, 1997) concerned with issues such as effective leadership, organizational performance and strategic development.

But while this topic is now receiving much attention from a wide constituency of academics and practitioners, our knowledge of how professional organizations and professional occupations interact and the evolving relationship between these actors remains limited (Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2003). On the one hand, management theorists, especially those focused on the internal organization of PSFs, pay little or no attention to the wider context and role of occupations as collective groups outside organizations (for a critique and different approach, see Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd, 2003; Malhotra and Morris, 2009). In turn one finds in many sociological accounts – at least until recently – a relative neglect of organizations. Burrage et al. (1990), for example, identify four key 'actors' in the development of professions – practising members, users, the state and universities – but say little when it comes to the distinctive role of employing organizations (see Muzio et al., forthcoming, for an attempt at updating this framework).

By contrast, the objective of this monograph issue of *Current Sociology* is to present and illustrate the potential of a different research agenda, one that makes a far more explicit connection between organizations and professions as collective agents. The articles that follow explore this theme from a variety of disciplinary standpoints focusing on different sectors and national contexts. However, prior to describing these contributions our aim in this introduction is to suggest ways in which one might frame such analysis. In doing so, we first draw together a number of strands from the existing literature that

have emphasized the importance of organizations as key sites or targets for professional development. We then map out some broader trends in the environment of professions to show how organizations are becoming more important in this respect. Finally, we explore *two* central themes that emerge from the interface between professional organizations and occupations. First is how professionals are responding to these changes through alternative strategies and tactics. Second is how organizations have in some cases become increasingly significant agents in the development of professional identities and modes of regulation more generally.

Organizations as sites for professional development

As suggested earlier, in some respects the growing focus on organizations marks a departure from established sociological approaches to the study of the professions. These have historically prioritized the strategic agency of the professions or the way different groups pursue their collective interests in the wider socioeconomic domain (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001; Larson, 1977; MacDonald, 1995). In this context, the notion of the 'professional project' – the systematic attempt to translate a scarce set of cultural and technical resources into a secure and institutionalized system of social and financial rewards (Larson, 1977: xvii) – has been central. Such projects are usually focused on processes of educational and legal closure (MacDonald, 1995; Murphy, 1988; Parkin, 1979) whereby groups seek to control entry to and competition within labour markets, while at the same time ensuring some degree of 'institutional autonomy' (Evetts, 2002) to regulate their own affairs. Ultimately, the objective of a professional project is to achieve degrees of regulation over a field of practice, both in terms of controlling the supply of expert labour *and* the behaviour of producers (Abel, 1988). Success however will ultimately depend on the resources available to particular occupations, such as their knowledge base and wider legitimacy claims (Brint, 1994; Freidson, 1994, 2001).

It has been suggested these accounts of professional development tend to 'dislocate' the 'relationship between professionals and organizations, shifting the locus of debate to power and labour markets' (Hinings, 2005: 487). Some also link this to a growing division between the 'sub fields' of the 'sociology of occupations' and of the 'sociology of organizations' (Lounsbury and Kaghan, 2001: 25). However, while the organizational dimension has often been neglected, as we suggested earlier, these tendencies should not be overstated. For one thing assumptions about the 'relative independence of professionals . . . from market and hierarchical pressures' (Adler and Kwon, 2007: 139) are very much a feature of the Anglo-American literature, not necessarily shared elsewhere (Krause, 1996; Siegrist, 1990). Collins (1990: 15–18) for example distinguishes between 'Continental' and 'Anglo-Saxon' modes of professionalism. In the former the state represents the main actor in professional development, while the latter emphasizes 'the freedom of self-employed-practitioners to control work conditions'. Such differences have important implications for our understanding of the relationship between professions and organizations. In the Anglo-Saxon model 'the image of an elite profession was not that in the service of the state, nor indeed within any bureaucratic framework modelled after the state' (Collins, 1990: 16). By contrast, a 'Continental' mode is one in which professions have been forced to pursue status and power *through* state

organizations, focusing on the acquisition of credentials (linked to university education) and achievement of high office.

Recognition of organizations as potential sites for (and objects of) professional control and domination is also present within the Anglo-American literature, even if sometimes understated. Ackroyd (1996: 600), for example, suggests that professions 'maintain considerable control by combining a closure in the labour market outside employing organisations' with 'control inside employing organisations as well, through informal organisation'. This he refers to as a kind of 'dual closure' whereby groups aim both to dominate access to labour markets (through processes of registration and credentialism) and to particular work tasks, by controlling the division of labour within their employing organizations. Brint (1994: 73) goes further, arguing that for many professions – especially those in the corporate sector – controlling 'high value added applications' within organizations may be equally if not more important for enhancing status than is closure in the labour market. Successful professions, he suggests, are often those that achieve 'diffuse legitimacy' over the performance of strategically important tasks within organizations (Brint, 1994: 78).

This focus on the organizational context of professional development is also central to Reed's (1996) influential distinction between liberal and organizational professions. Groups such as general managers, technicians, administrators and other specialist management functions (in areas such as human resources, marketing and procurement) are 'unable to realize the degree of indetermination, monopolization and control of their knowledge base enjoyed by the liberal/independent professions' (Reed, 1996: 584). Instead, success for these occupations lies in their ability to dominate 'relatively powerful and privileged positions within technical and status hierarchies' (Reed, 1996: 585). Groups such as managers or administrators may therefore prosper from their ability to control the bureaucratic machinery they inhabit and to resolve central problems of their organization (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008). This in turn means that their 'professional' project is closely related to the attempt to harness, colonize, and monopolize organizational spaces, processes and policies.

The importance of organizations as sites for professional colonization may also be important for what Ackroyd (1996: 606) describes as the 'new model professions'. Under this category fall a diverse number of occupations across both public and private sectors that are to a greater or lesser extent dependent upon organizations (being largely encapsulated by them) while at the same time retaining 'some form of corporate identity outside the organisation that employs them' (Ackroyd, 1996: 606). The dominant strategy of these groups is to defend or expand jurisdictions through practices of exclusion, demarcation and usurpation (Witz, 1992). Such strategies, however, are not just pursued in the wider arena of labour markets and education systems, but within organizations as well, as these occupations seek to mould tasks and the division of labour itself to suit their particular interests. These processes inevitably involve jurisdictional disputes and negotiations with other professions and aspiring occupations equipped with alternative forms of cultural capital and rhetorical claims to expertise (Abbott, 1988).

This situation is clearly illustrated by the case of the medical profession whereby doctors – especially those employed by the state – have used their cultural hegemony to maintain dominance (Coburn, 2006; Freidson, 2001; Larkin, 1983). Similarly, dynamics

of organizational closure have been noted in relation to those professions operating within large capitalist organizations. Armstrong (1985, 1987a, 1987b), for example, has drawn attention to the competition between groups of ‘professionals in management’ – accountancy, engineering and personnel managers – engaged in their own competing ‘collective mobility projects’ aimed at colonizing key positions, roles and decision-making processes within large firms (for a further development of this argument see the contribution by Kirkpatrick et al. in this issue).

A final point to note here concerns the way professions do not just colonize organizations, shaping practice within them, but are frequently instrumental in the very design (or theorization) of organizational fields more generally (see article by Suddaby and Viale in this issue). This idea has been central to neoinstitutional theory where emphasis is placed on the role of professions as bodies that ‘create knowledge and belief systems’ (Thornton, 2002: 83). Thus, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 71) professional associations represent a powerful ‘vehicle for the definition and promulgation of normative rules about organizational and professional behaviour’. Most recently Scott (2008: 219) refers to the professions as ‘the pre-eminent institutional agents of our time’. Indeed, it is suggested that even less well established groups may act as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ in theorizing and legitimating the particular models of service delivery or organization that are permissible in a specific field (Barley and Tolbert, 1991; Baron et al., 1986; DiMaggio, 1988). DiMaggio (1991: 269) for example describes how professions in the US museum sector ‘dominated both reform efforts and field wide organization’ and were able to pursue a particular project to reshape museum design and employment structures in ways favourable to their collective interests (DiMaggio, 1991: 282).

Thus, there has been some recognition in the literature of the importance of organizations as arenas for interprofessional skirmishes as well as territories for professional conquest. Organizations may provide a means through which traditional objectives of collective mobility, status advancement, financial reward and service quality can be better served. As such organizations themselves must be regarded, at least in part, as the *outcomes* of professional action. Implied is a quite different strategy for research, one that focuses on the ‘complex interplay of professional development and organizational evolution’ (Lounsbury, 2007: 303).

The organizational challenge

Recently it has been argued that this organizational dimension has become more important for professions in a range of contexts (Muzio et al., 2007). This can be attributed to some broader trends that are well documented in the literature, such as changes in the nature of capitalist markets, technologies and in forms of state regulation and management. As a result of these combined pressures, collegial forms of governance – based on what Adler et al. (2008) describe as the community principle – are said to be giving way to hierarchical forms, while professional logics of social trusteeship are being displaced by logics of expertise underlined by a more commercial spirit (Brint, 1994; Hanlon, 1998; Leicht and Fennell, 2001; Reed, 2007). Increasingly, ‘professional development’ must be read ‘not just in occupational terms, but in relation . . . to the interests of organizations that employ . . . professionals’ (Brint, 1994: 11).

Accounts of this process are numerous and focus on different aspects of change. Historically, a substantial body of literature has emphasized underlying dynamics of proletarianization, highlighting the progressive subordination of professionals – as employees in organizations – to forms of hierarchical, technological and market rationality (Aronowitz and Di Fazio, 1995; Burris, 1993; Derber and Schwartz, 1991; Dingwall and Lewis, 1983; Haug, 1973; MacDonald, 1995; Oppenheimer, 1973). Employment in a large, bureaucratic and commercially orientated workplace, it is argued, exposes professional practitioners to external sources of power and managerial authority, subordinating the criteria and values of their profession to the rules and objectives of their employer. In this context, professionals may ultimately lose their autonomy and independence not only with regards to the terms and conditions of work but also to the definition, execution and evaluation of their own occupational activities (Aronowitz, 1973).

Such tendencies are strongest in relation to organizational and public service professions, which, as we noted earlier, have been historically more dependent on their employing organizations (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005; Webb, 1999). However, with the rise of global PSFs these tendencies may also be relevant to liberal professions such as: law, architecture and accountancy (Brock et al., 1999; Cooper et al., 1996; Greenwood and Hinings, 1993; Greenwood et al., 1990; Pinnington and Morris, 2003). Accounts of change in these areas note how environmental contingencies are encouraging a paradigmatic shift, from the orthodox professional firm based on traditional notions of partnership, collegiality and informality towards a new archetypal configuration – the managerial professional businesses (MPB) – characterized by increasing levels of bureaucracy and formalization (Greenwood and Hinings, 1993). Such a shift implies a contamination if not displacement of professionalism by the alternative logics of managerialism and commercialism (Freidson, 2001).

A further and more recent dimension of change concerns the way in which private and public corporations are increasingly shaping the *context* in which professional projects develop, sometimes even promoting their own, distinctively ‘corporate’, versions of professionalism. Important here is the role of employing organizations both as ‘significant actors *and* sites for professional regulation’ (Suddaby et al., 2007: 356; see also the contributions by Flood, Kipping and Muzio et al. in this issue).

This latter trend is most apparent in the state sector where neoliberal governments and their managers have encroached on the domain of professional education, training and self-regulation (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005; Kuhlmann, 2006; also see article by Noordegraaf in this issue). However, the importance of organizations as institutional entrepreneurs (Adler et al., 2008) has also been noted in fields where, historically, professional regulation and norms have been more strongly entrenched. Large accounting and law firms, for example, are said to have become increasingly immune to the normative and coercive influence of their respective professional associations (Malhotra et al., 2006; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2006; see also the article by Flood in this issue). This in turn has allowed these firms to act as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ playing a bigger role in shaping the rules and priorities of professional regulation. In law, Malhotra et al. (2006: 194) note how in the UK the largest firms have ‘initiated their own training of associates with different content and standards of assessment’ abandoning the broad programme of education championed by the Law Society in favour of new curricula which emphasize narrow corporate specialisms.

How are relationships between professions and organizations evolving?

Taken together these trends suggest a changing landscape for the professions, one that is increasingly dominated by the interests and priorities of employing organizations (Brock et al., 1999; Cooper and Robson, 2006; Hanlon, 1999; Hinings, 2005). Yet while these changes are well documented in the literature, their wider consequences for the professions as employees and for professional projects, more generally, are less well understood. Specifically our knowledge is limited in *two* key respects. First is with regard to how the professions, as collective agents both within and beyond organizations, are responding to the encroaching influence of organizations. Second, is in relation to how new organizational contexts and demands might, also, be transforming the professions and, indeed, the very notion of professionalism itself. In what follows we elaborate on both of these themes prior to introducing the specific contributions to this monograph edition.

Challenges, responses and opportunities

In some accounts, notably those drawing on notions of proletarianization (see above), professions are depicted as passive victims, almost powerless in the face of encroaching bureaucracy and new regulatory demands. Indeed, it has been suggested that the longer-term trajectory is one of cultural demystification, managerial routinization, technological commoditization and, in short, deprofessionalization (Reed, 2007).

This, however, loses sight of the dynamic and adaptive nature of professional collective mobility projects and of their ability to develop new strategies and tactics in light of emerging challenges and opportunities. It may well be that in the face of powerful new organizational demands the thrust of professional strategies is defensive or conservative, seeking to protect jurisdictions and special privileges from external incursions (Abel, 2003; Muzio and Ackroyd, 2005; Reed, 2007; see also the article by Evetts in this issue). In extreme cases this may include the adoption of unionization strategies (Domagalski, 2007). Equally possible, however, is that professional strategies are expansionary as groups and individuals seek to respond to threats and new opportunities in their environment by moving into new markets, spaces and domains. The latter could mean some attempt by occupations either collectively, or as independent producers, to 'expand their cognitive dominion by using abstract knowledge to annex new areas, to define them as their own proper work' (Abbott, 1988: 102).

Coping strategies may also acquire a particularly exploitative character as professions, whose market hegemony is increasingly challenged in the wider political economy, turn to their own internal labour process and to its 'proper' restructuring as their primary source of profitability (Muzio and Ackroyd, 2005). In this context, Freidson (1985, 1994, 2001) identifies restratification as the most likely prospect for the future. A growing occupational and financial divide, he suggests, will come to separate a 'knowledge' and 'administrative' elite, which controls the largest professional organizations and reaps most of the advantages, from a rapidly expanding cohort of 'rank and file' workers, who are faced by lesser terms and conditions and by increasing levels of managerial scrutiny (for a similar account see Hanlon, 1998).

While such changes imply a growing divide within the professions they may also represent a way in which professions, as 'corporate entities', are able to reinforce or even extend their dominance over organizations or fields of practice. In health, doctors may take on management roles and acquire business qualifications (Domagalski, 2007), in part, to buffer 'the practice of medicine against political and economic pressures of the environment' (Freidson 1985: 30). Similarly, in a broad trend towards a new *organizational* model of professionalism (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008), collegial professions such as law are actively colonizing new organizational spaces, structures, practices and systems and deploying these to sustain traditional occupational objectives and rewards.

A different kind of response to change is at the level of professional projects more generally and how these might be redirected to accommodate the interests of organizations. This theme has already been taken up in some recent accounts of professional change. Leicht and Fennell (2001), for example focus on how elite groups or organizational professionals – senior managers and executives – are launching their own professional 'project' focused on securing absolute social and organizational control over the material and human resources of large private sector corporations. Others also note the possibility for novel patterns of professionalization, which are more sensitive to the interests and preferences of large organizations (Hodgson and Muzio, 2011; Kipping et al., 2006; McKenna, 2006; Muzio et al., forthcoming; see also articles by Kipping and Muzio et al. in this issue). Lounsbury (2002), for example, shows how the projects of newly established professional associations in the US financial services field were heavily skewed to the interests of dominant firms that pre-existed them. As a result, these associations did not develop social trustee logics, but instead became 'important emirs' of an 'emergent market logic' (Lounsbury, 2002: 264).

There are therefore a number of ways in which the professions might respond to the encroachment of organizations, not all of which are concerned with defending the status quo. More dynamic strategies are possible which may be leading to new forms of *organizational* (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008; Muzio et al., 2007; Reed, 1996) or *corporate* (Kipping et al., 2006; Muzio et al., this issue) professionalism. These are characterized by distinctive tactics, meanings and understandings that depart in significant ways from the established professions. But, while these dynamics of change have been highlighted in the literature, our understanding of them remains limited. So too is our knowledge of the wider consequences. On the one hand new professional strategies might serve to extend occupational control into new areas. This however may paradoxically be at the expense of the hollowing out of the meaning of professionalism as it becomes subjugated to the market and to the interests of its most powerful corporate members.

Organizations and the redefinition of professionalism

The second theme, concerning the role of organizations as actors in the process of controlling and managing professional work, has already been addressed in relation to debates about proletarianization and shifting forms of professional regulation. Beyond this it is possible that new organizational demands are also reshaping notions of professionalism in more fundamental ways.

This dimension of change is highlighted in an emerging body of research drawing on Foucauldian and poststructuralist perspectives (Anderson-Gough et al., 1998, 2000, 2001; Cooper and Robson, 2006; Covaleski et al., 1998; Fournier, 1999; Grey, 1994, 1998). Central here is the notion of organizations as sites 'where professional identities are mediated, formed and transformed' (Cooper and Robson, 2006: 416). In accounting, for example, studies illustrate how large firms are more instrumental in shaping the way new trainees enact 'professionalism', setting out behavioural rules relating to presentation, appropriate dealings with clients and even traits associated with social interaction and time keeping (Anderson-Gough et al., 2000, 2001; Covaleski et al., 1998; Grey, 1994). Thus, professionalism becomes a matter of appearance to be monitored through peer pressure and new disciplinary technologies like: performance appraisal, mentoring and management by objectives (Covaleski et al., 1998). Such changes might also imply, at a theoretical level, the need to reframe professionalism as a discourse of occupational/organizational change and control (Evetts, 2006; Fournier, 1999; see also Evetts' article in this issue). According to this view normative discourses are deployed 'from above' by organizations to socialize and reshape individual identities around corporate priorities – thus achieving 'control at a distance'. The effect is to legitimize processes of occupational change, which paradoxically favour rationalization, standardization and accountability over individual autonomy, discretion and judgement.

A further extension of this is the attempt by firms, in new knowledge-intensive fields such as advertising, management consulting or financial services, to hijack notions of professionalism to enhance their own legitimacy or brand reputation (see article by Kipping in this issue). Empson and Chapman (2006) note how some management consulting firms have: 'mimicked the practices and language of partnership in order to assume the mantle of professionalism that it conveyed'. Robertson et al. (2003: 853) also describe attempts by such firms to manufacture a 'professional aristocracy' and a 'collective social identity grounded in elitism'. Such practices may be associated with the need for firms to discipline and incentivize a highly mobile expert workforce, as is suggested earlier. The association with professionalism however might also serve as an important source of reputational capital, providing reassurance to clients and a signal of quality, especially in new or emerging markets (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Greenwood and Empson, 2003).

This emerging body of research therefore raises some important questions about the future development of so-called corporate forms of professionalism. What is ultimately implied is a shift towards 'own brand' forms of professionalism whereby professionalism is appropriated and redefined by large firms as an 'internal matter' (see Kipping, this issue) to be ascertained through the symbolical adherence to corporate standards and behavioural codes and supported by the possession of internal qualifications, credentials and regulations (see Flood, this issue). However, again our understanding of these tendencies remains limited with little attention being placed so far on studies of occupational contexts other than Big 4 accountancy firms, on the response of individual professionals to such processes (but see Mueller et al., this issue), or on how the development of corporate versions of professionalism interfaces with more traditional 'projects' led by professionals themselves (Kirkpatrick et al., 2008).

Outline of the contributions

The aim of this monograph is to address and further develop these emerging themes to better reconnect the study of professional occupations with that of professional organizations. The opening article by Julia Evetts frames the rise of professional organizations within a series of theoretical shifts in the sociology of the professions. In particular, professional organizations and their increasing power are connected to processes of 'professionalization from above' whereby professionalism is deployed by managers and employers as a resource to motivate, manage and regulate individual practitioners and to facilitate processes of organizational change. This is also resonant of discursive approaches to professionalism where professionalism is presented as a normative technology used to normalize and (self-)discipline autonomous individuals and to exercise control at a distance in increasingly complex, competitive and geographically dispersed organizations (Fournier, 1999; Grey, 1994, 1998). The article proceeds to identify what are the changes and continuities within the increasingly organizational context in which professionals operate, before delineating a series of challenges and opportunities that confront professionals working in these settings as well as, more broadly, professionalism as a third occupational logic. This contribution, which introduces many of the issues specifically debated later on in the monograph, certainly notes how new organizational logics are encroaching on professional work and relationships. At the same time it also illustrates the adaptive capabilities of professional occupations as they manipulate these new logics to develop alternative modes of conduct and service provision.

The next contribution, by Suddaby and Viale, seeks to connect the sociology of the professions with one of the most influential perspectives in management and organizational studies: institutional theory. As the authors argue, these bodies of work have clear but unexplored linkages, as after all 'professional projects carry within them, projects of institutionalization'. From this significant premise, their contribution goes on to sketch four different mechanisms through which 'the professional project [acts] as an endogenous mechanism of institutional change'. The article makes a clear contribution by viewing professionalization as a specific form of institutionalization which is surrounded, bounded and influenced by other institutionalization projects such as those pursued by large organizations which employ professionals or rely on their expertise. Thus, the article provides a novel perspective on how to reconnect the study of professional occupations with the study of professional organizations, by exploring the interconnections between different 'institutionalization' projects.

The next article, by Muzio et al., explores patterns of professionalization in a number of 'new' knowledge-based occupations: management consultancy, project management and executive head-hunters. Against a general assumption in the literature that such occupations are unwilling and/or incapable to professionalize, this article suggests how a professionalization project has indeed been in play within these occupational domains. Perhaps most interestingly, it is argued that this can be viewed as a new pattern of 'corporate' professionalization which is increasingly skewed towards the interests and practices of large firms and to the realities of work in organizational contexts. Thus this contribution highlights how professionalization projects are seeking to adapt to a new environmental context which is characterized by the

prominence of large organizations and to develop a new range of tactics designed to engage and win the support of these new powerful actors within professional fields. However such tactical adjustments may come at the cost of a progressive hollowing out of traditional notions of professionalism.

The article by Mirko Noordegraaf moves the debate in a different direction, highlighting connections between professional and organizational logics that arise *outside* organizations during processes of professional education. It is noted how growing pressures to manage expert work are forcing professional associations to look at ways of 'remaking' rank and file professionals, so that their behaviours become more 'organizational'. To achieve this, professional associations might change educational programmes so that their members learn about issues such as efficiency, planning and leadership. However, the extent to which such goals can be translated into practice remains unclear. To explore this topic Noordegraaf focuses on the changing education of British and Dutch medical doctors. The analysis shows that while changes have occurred in educational guidelines, curricula and practices, these have been less significant than is often assumed. To some extent, new connections between professionalism and organizations are established, but primarily at the level of general guidelines with little impact on practice.

Also focusing on the health context, the article by Kirkpatrick et al. focuses more on the question of how professions are managed. Drawing on ideas from the sociology of professions (e.g. Freidson, 1983; Abbott, 1988) the authors note how health organizations (such as hospitals) represent a competing and fluid system of professions. However, while much has been written on this topic, only limited attention has been given to how management itself may represent a contested jurisdiction within hospitals. To illustrate this idea the article focuses on the history of health reforms in Denmark from the early 1980s onwards. This case reveals how both the nursing and medical professions in Denmark actively campaigned to control management work and lay claim to that jurisdiction. In their conclusion the authors argue that more attention needs to be given to the way broader changes in organization and management are mediated by interprofessional struggles and rivalries. Such struggles have implications not only for the division of labour and status order between professions but also for the way management work itself is enacted.

In his contribution, John Flood investigates the re-regulation of the legal profession and the role played by large law firms in this process. This is an area which has experienced unprecedented change, with legislation such as the UK's Legal Services Act paving the way for more corporatized forms of legal practice, potentially including external ownership and stock exchange listings. Large law firms have been important interlocutors and participants in such debates as their activities present a regulatory challenge for existing frameworks with their domestic and individualistic focus. Indeed the realization of how professional malpractice is increasingly located at the systemic and organizational level has spurred the development of entity forms of professional regulation. Equally importantly, large law firms themselves are instigating regulatory change by 'undermining, modifying, escaping and ultimately reconstructing professional regulation regimes' which are ill suited for the realities of transnational corporate practice. Indeed, the article provides several examples of how such firms acted as institutional entrepreneurs lobbying for and driving through desired regulatory changes: such as the

authorized internal regulation (AIR) regime, which effectively subcontracts professional regulation to the firms and their own internal processes and procedures. Thus this contribution provides a clear example of the increasing importance of the large professional services firms as a site of professionalization and of the shift of professional regulation from the occupational to the organizational level.

Taking this idea further, the article by Matthias Kipping shows how over the course of more than a century management consulting firms have managed to cultivate an image of professionalism in order to both gain external legitimacy with their clients and control their own human resources. Adding to the extant literature on 'professionalism as a discursive resource', it demonstrates how, throughout the development of the industry, the sources of this 'image professionalism' changed significantly, ranging from a close association with existing professions (engineering and accounting), to a mimicry of the legal profession, to a purely linguistic notion, akin to 'professional' sports. Hence, the 'professionalism' of management consulting was in many ways hollow from the start and hollowed out even further through its history. However, as the article also shows, there were opportunities for social closure with the creation of specific professional bodies in the industry – leaving open the question why these ultimately failed.

Our final article, by Mueller et al., is framed within the literature on professional careers as it presents a study of how female accountants understand and make sense of their progression within Big 4 accountancy firms. The article is aligned with a long academic tradition that views professionalism as normative discourse and rhetorical resource, deployed to exercise control and manage individual identities. The key notion here is that of performance, as 'being professional' coincides with performing or perhaps more importantly being seen as performing while career structures act as normalizing devices pushing individual professionals towards appropriate values and behaviours. In this context, the authors focus on how female professionals react to such pressures and expectations and reveal ambiguous outcomes. While there is loyalty to the firm and to the notion of performing, there is also distancing and disenchantment with existing practices and a reluctant acknowledgement that professional life in organizational settings is increasingly characterized by a culture of visibility, appearance and exposure. The result is a divided professional self, which does not necessarily internalize self-discipline but display traits such as cynicism, distancing and criticism. This is a significant addition to our understanding of professional identities and how these are mediated within organizational contexts.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Abbott A (1988) *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Abel RL (1988) *The Legal Profession in England and Wales*. New York: Blackwell.
- Abel RL (2003) *The Politics of Professionalism, Lawyers between Markets and State, from the Green Papers to the Access of Justice Act*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Ackroyd S (1996) Organisation contra organisation: Professions and organisational change in the United Kingdom. *Organization Studies* 17(4): 599–621.
- Adler P and Kwon S (2007) Community, market and hierarchy in the evolving organization of professional work: The case of medicine. In: Muzio D, Ackroyd S and Chanlat JF (eds) *Re-Directions in the Study of Expert Labour*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 139–160.
- Adler P, Kwon S and Hecksher C (2008) Professional work: The emergence of collaborative community. *Organization Science* 19(2): 359–376.
- Alvesson M and Johansson AW (2002) Professionalism and politics in management consultancy work. In: Clark T and Fincham R (eds) *Critical Consulting*. Oxford: Blackwell, 228–246.
- Anderson-Gough F, Grey C and Robson K (1998) ‘Work hard, play hard’: An analysis of cliché in two accountancy practices. *Organization* 5(4): 565–592.
- Anderson-Gough F, Grey C and Robson K (2000) In the name of the client: The service ethic in professional service firms. *Human Relations* 53(9): 1151–1174.
- Anderson-Gough F, Grey C and Robson K (2001) Tests of time: Organizational time-reckoning and the making of accountants in two multi-national accounting firms. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 26(2): 99–122.
- Armstrong P (1985) Changing management control strategies: The role of competition between accountancy and other organizational professions. *Accounting, Organization and Society* 10(2): 129–148.
- Armstrong P (1987a) The rise of accounting controls in British capitalist enterprises. *Accounting, Organization and Society* 12(5): 415–436.
- Armstrong P (1987b) Engineers, management and trust. *Work, Employment and Society* 1(4): 421–440.
- Aronowitz S (1973) *False Promises*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Aronowitz S and Di Fazio W (1995) *The Jobless Future: Sci-Tech and the Dogma of Work*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barley SR and Tolbert PS (1991) Introduction: At the intersection of organizations and occupations. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 8: 1–13.
- Baron J, Dobbin F and Jennings PD (1986) War and peace: The evolution of modern personnel administration in US industry. *American Journal of Sociology* 92(2): 350–383.
- Brint SG (1994) *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brock D, Powell M and Hinings CR (eds) (1999) *Restructuring the Professional Organisation: Accounting, Healthcare, and Law*. London: Routledge.
- Burrage M and Torstendahl R (eds) (1990) *Professions in Theory and History: Rethinking the Study of the Professions*. London: Sage.
- Burrage M, Jaraush K and Siegrist H (1990) An actor based framework for the study of professionalism. In: Burrage M and Torstendahl R (eds) *The Professions in Theory and History*. London: Routledge.
- Burris BH (1993) *Technocracy at Work*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Coburn D (2006) Medical dominance then and now: Critical reflections. *Health Sociology Review* 15(5): 432–443.
- Collins R (1990) Changing conceptions in the sociology of the professions. In: Burrage M and Torstendahl R (eds) *Knowledge, State and Strategy. The Formation of Professions in Europe and North America*. London: Sage, 11–23.
- Cooper DJ and Robson K (2006) Accounting, professions and regulation: Locating the sites of professionalization. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 31 (4/5): 415–444.
- Cooper DJ, Hinings CR, Greenwood R and Brown JL (1996) Sedimentation and transformation in organizational change: The case of Canadian law firms. *Organization Studies* 17(4): 623–647.

- Covaleski M, Dirsmith W and Heian JB (1998) The calculated and the avowed: Techniques of discipline and struggles over identity in big six public accounting firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43(2): 293–327.
- Derber C and Schwartz WA (1991) New mandarins or new proletariat? Professional power at work. In: Tolbert PS and Barley SR (eds) *Research in the Sociology of Organizations: Organizations and Professions*, Vol. 8. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 71–96.
- DiMaggio P (1988) Interest and agency in institutional theory. In: Zucker L (ed.) *Institutional Patterns and Organization: Culture and Environment*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing, 3–21.
- DiMaggio P (1991) Constructing a professional field as a professional project: US art museums, 1920–1940. In: Powell WW and DiMaggio P (eds) *The New Institutionalism in Organisational Analysis*. London: University of Chicago Press, 267–292.
- DiMaggio P and Powell WW (1991) The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality. In: Powell WW and DiMaggio P (eds) *The New Institutionalism in Organisational Analysis*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Dingwall R and Lewis P (eds) (1983) *The Sociology of the Professions: Lawyers, Doctors and Others*. London: Macmillan.
- Domagalski T (2007) Organization and subjectivity in the US medical profession: Physician responses to structural changes within advanced capitalism. In: Muzio D, Ackroyd S and Chanlat JF (eds) *Redirections in the Study of Expert Labour*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 118–138.
- Empson L (2007) *Managing the Modern Law Firm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Empson L and Chapman CS (2006) Partnership versus corporation: Implications of alternative forms of governance for managerial authority and organizational priorities in professional service firms. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 24: 145–176.
- Evetts J (2002) New directions in state and international professional occupations: Discretionary decision making and acquired regulation. *Work, Employment and Society* 16(2): 341–353.
- Evetts J (2004) Organizational or occupational professionalism: Centralized regulation or occupational trust. Paper presented at ISA RC52 Interim Conference, Versailles, France, 22–24 September.
- Evetts J (2006) A short note: The sociology of professional groups. *Current Sociology* 54(1): 133–143.
- Faulconbridge J and Muzio D (2008) Re-inserting the professional in the study of PSFs. *Global Networks* 7(3): 249–270.
- Flood J (1996) Megalawyering in the global order: The cultural, social, economic transformation of global legal practice. *International Journal of the Legal Professions* 3(1–2): 169–214.
- Fournier V (1999) The appeal to ‘professionalism’ as a disciplinary mechanism. *Social Review* 47(2): 280–307.
- Freidson E (1983) The theory of professions: State of the art. In: Dingwall R and Lewis P (eds) *The Sociology of the Professions: Lawyers, Doctors, and Others*. London: Macmillan.
- Freidson E (1985) The reorganisation of the medical profession. *Medical Care Review* 42: 11–35.
- Freidson E (1994) *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Freidson E (2001) *Professionalism: The Third Logic*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Greenwood R and Empson L (2003) The professional partnership: Relic or exemplary form of governance? *Organization Studies* 24(6): 909–934.
- Greenwood R and Hinings CR (1993) Understanding strategic change: The contribution of archetypes. *Academy of Management Journal* 36(5): 1053–1081.

- Greenwood R, Hinings CR and Brown J (1990) P2-form strategic management: Corporate practices in professional partnerships. *Academy of Management Journal* 33(4): 725–755.
- Grey C (1994) Career as a project of the self and labour process discipline. *Sociology* 28(2): 479–497.
- Grey C (1998) On being a professional in a big six firm. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 23(5–6): 569–587.
- Hanlon G (1998) Professionalism as enterprise: Service class politics and the redefinition of professionalism. *Sociology* 32(1): 43–63.
- Hanlon G (1999) *Lawyers, the State and the Market: Professionalism Revisited*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Haug MR (1973) Deprofessionalization: An alternate hypothesis for the future. In: Halmos P (ed.) *Professionalization and Social Change, Sociological Review Monograph*, Vol. 20. Keele: University of Keele, 195–211.
- Hinings CR (2005) The professions. In: Ackroyd S, Batt R, Thompson P and Tolbert PS (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Work and Organisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 485–507.
- Hodgson D and Muzio D (2011) Prospects for professionalism in project management. In: Morris P and Soderlund J (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Project Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 107–130.
- Kipping M, Kirkpatrick I and Muzio D (2006) Overly controlled or out of control? Management consultants and the new corporate professionalism. In: Craig J (ed.) *Production Values: Futures for Professionalism*. London: Demos, 153–165.
- Kirkpatrick I and Ackroyd S (2003) Archetype theory and the changing professional organisation: A critique and alternative. *Organization* 10(4): 731–750.
- Kirkpatrick I, Ackroyd S and Walker R (2005) *The New Managerialism and Public Service Professions*. London: Palgrave.
- Kirkpatrick I, Muzio D and Kipping M (2008) From association led to corporate-led professions: The case of management consulting in the UK. Paper presented at International Sociological Association conference, Barcelona, September.
- Krause EA (1996) *The Death of the Guilds: Professions, States and the Advance of Capitalism: 1930 to the Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kuhlmann E (2006) Towards ‘citizen professionals’: New patterns of professionalism in health care in Germany. *Knowledge, Work and Society* 4(1): 59–81.
- Larkin G (1983) *Occupational Monopoly and Modern Medicine*. London: Tavistock.
- Larson MS (1977) *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Leicht K and Fennell M (2001) *Professional Work: A Sociological Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lounsbury M (2002) Institutional transformation and status mobility: The professionalization of the field of finance. *Academy of Management Journal* 45(1): 255–266.
- Lounsbury M (2007) A tale of two cities: Competing logics and practice variation in the professionalizing of mutual funds. *Academy of Management Journal* 50(2): 289–307.
- Lounsbury M and Kaghan B (2001) Organizations, occupations and the structuration of work. *Research in the Sociology of Work* 10: 25–50.
- Lounsbury M and Ventresca M (2003) The new structuralism in organization theory. *Organization* 10(3): 457–480.
- Lowendahl B (2005) *Strategic Management of Professional Service Firms*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- MacDonald KM (1995) *The Sociology of the Professions*. London: Sage.

- McKenna CD (2006) *The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Malhotra N and Morris T (2009) Heterogeneity in professional service firms. *Journal of Management Studies* 46(6): 895–922.
- Malhotra N, Morris T and Hinings CR (2006) Variations in organization form among professional service organizations. In: Greenwood R, Suddaby R and McDougald M (eds) *Research in the Sociology of Organizations: Professional Firms*. Oxford: JAI Press, 171–202.
- Maister DH (1997) *Managing the Professional Service Firm*. New York: Free Press.
- Murphy R (1988) *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Muzio D and Ackroyd S (2005) On the consequences of defensive professionalism: The transformation of the legal labour process. *Journal of Law and Society* 32(4): 615–642.
- Muzio D, Ackroyd S and Chanlat JF (eds) (2007) *Redirections in the Study of Expert Labour: Established Professions and New Expert Occupations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Muzio D, Kirkpatrick I and Kipping M (forthcoming) Professions, organizations and the state: Applying the sociology of the professions to the case of management consultancy. *Current Sociology* 59(6).
- Oppenheimer M (1973) Proletarianization of the professional. In: Halmos P (ed.) *Professionalization and Social Change*. Keele: Keele University Press, 213–227.
- Parkin F (1979) *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Pinnington AH and Morris T (2003) Archetype change in professional organizations: Survey evidence from large law firms. *British Journal of Management* 14(1): 85–99.
- Reed MI (1996) Expert power and control in late modernity: An empirical review and theoretical synthesis. *Organization Studies* 17(4): 573–597.
- Reed M (2007) Engineers of human souls, faceless technocrats or merchants of morality? Changing professional forms and identities in the face of the neo-liberal challenge. In: Pinnington A, Macklin R and Campbell T (eds) *Human Resource Management: Ethics and Employment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 171–189.
- Robertson M, Scarborough H and Swan J (2003) Knowledge creation in professional service firms: Institutional effects. *Organization Studies* 24(6): 831–858.
- Scott R (2008) Lords of the dance: Professionals as institutional agents. *Organization Studies* 29(2): 219–238.
- Siegrist H (1990) Professionalization as a process: Patterns, progression and discontinuity. In: Burrage M and Torstendahl R (eds) *Professions in Theory and History: Rethinking the Study of the Professions*. London: Sage, 177–202.
- Suddaby R and Greenwood R (2006) Institutional entrepreneurship in mature fields: The big five accounting firms. *Academy of Management Journal* 49(1): 27–48.
- Suddaby R, Cooper D and Greenwood R (2007) Transnational regulation of professional services: Governance dynamics of field level organizational change. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 32(4–5): 333–362.
- Thornton PH (2002) The rise of the corporation in a craft industry: Conflict and conformity inn institutional logics. *Academy of Management Journal* 45(1): 81–101.
- Trubeck D, Dezalay D, Buchanan R and Davis J (1994) Global restructuring and the law: The internationalization of legal fields and the creation of transnational arenas. *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 44: 407–498.
- Webb J (1999) Work and the new public service class? *Sociology* 33(4): 747–766.
- Witz A (1992) *Professions and Patriarchy*. London: Routledge.

Daniel Muzio is a senior lecturer in employment relations in Leeds University Business School as well as a visiting professor at Luiss, in Rome. His research interests include the sociology of the professions, organizational theory and the management of professional services firms. He has published in several leading management, sociology and law journals and co-edited the book *Redirections in the Study of Expert Labour: Established Professions and New Expert Occupations* (Palgrave, 2007).

Ian Kirkpatrick is a Professor in Work and Organization at Leeds University Business School. He is a founder member and deputy director of the Centre for Employment Relations Innovation and Change and a member of the editorial team of *Work, Employment and Society*. Ian's research focuses on the changing management and employment of professionals. Recent publications include *The New Managerialism and Public Service Professions* (Palgrave, 2005).

Résumé

Ce recueil cherche à reconnecter les travaux sur les organisations professionnelles et ceux sur les professions dont les objectifs de recherche divergent de plus en plus. Les articles présentés ici regroupent en particulier deux thèmes: (1) Les défis et opportunités que les organisations professionnelles présentent pour les projets de professionnalisation établis ou bourgeonnants et (2) la mesure dans laquelle les organisations professionnelles créent, institutionnalisent et manipulent de nouvelles formes de professionnalisme et de nouveaux modèles de professionnalisation. Dans ce but, ce recueil rassemble des articles d'un large spectre de disciplines (sociologie, gestion, santé, comptabilité, droit et géographie), d'écoles théoriques et de contextes nationaux qui explorent les relations complexes entre les professions et les organisations professionnelles.

Mots-clés

organisations professionnelles, professions, sociologie des professions

Resúmen

Esta colección de artículos busca reconectar con el trabajo sobre organizaciones profesionales y ocupaciones profesionales, puesto que estas agendas de investigación se han visto cada vez más desconectadas. En particular, los artículos recopilados en la presente identifican dos temas clave: (1) los desafíos y las oportunidades que las organizaciones profesionales plantean a los proyectos de profesionalización emergentes y establecidos y (2) el punto hasta donde las organizaciones profesionales crean, institucionalizan y manipulan nuevas formas de profesionalismo y modelos de profesionalización. A este efecto, esta colección recopila una amplia gama de artículos de diferentes disciplinas (sociología, administración, atención sanitaria, contabilidad, leyes y geografía), marcos teóricos y contextos nacionales que explora la compleja relación entre ocupaciones profesionales y organizaciones profesionales.

Palabras clave

ocupaciones profesionales, organizaciones profesionales, sociología de las profesiones