**Professional Judgment and Legitimacy Work in an Organizationally Embedded Profession**

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Abstract

Professions have traditionally been understood as an institution that emerged from the intersection of the market and the state and which offered an alternative occupational category to that offered by bureaucratic organizations. Increasingly, however, modern professions emerge from *within* bureaucracies. Rather than standing in opposition to organizations, new professions tend to serve managerial interests, while simultaneously advancing the interests of the profession. Despite this awareness, we have little empirical understanding of the process by which professional norms and standards emerge in bureaucratic settings. We do so in this study of the emergence of professional judgment in a national film institute created by the Danish government to evaluate and allocate resources to film projects. Our process study reveals a synergistic relationship between emerging standards of professional judgment and provisional elements of an emergent professional identity. We identify four provisional roles – civil servant, film worker, artistic merchant and guardian of culture – each of which reflect experimental attempts to make sense of their competing demands to balance bureaucratic interests while maintaining their own nascent standards of autonomous professional judgment. As the standards of professional judgment coalesce, so too do the boundaries of professional identity. We conclude with an argument that, increasingly, the site of professionalism occurs at the level of the organizationally embedded individual professional.

**Introduction**

Professions have been traditionally understood as an institutional form that exists between the market and the state (Abel, 1989). As an institutional form, professions have always stood as an alternative to the organization or bureaucracy as a means of structuring expert work (Abbott, 1988). Indeed, most early research on the classic professions, such as law and medicine, suggested that professionals who worked primarily in corporations suffered from intense stress because the demands of the corporation were in conflict with institutionalized assumptions of autonomy and independence by professional workers (Aranya & Ferris, 1984; Hall, 1967).

Increasingly, however, new occupational categories that make claim to professional or quasi-professional status are emerging from, or in alliance with, large bureaucratic organizations (Heuskinkveld, Gabbioneta, Werr & Sturdy, 2018; Muzio, Hodgson, Faulconbridge, Beaverstock & Hall, 2011). So, for example, human resource professionals evolved from the need for the efficient alignment of individual capabilities with bureaucratic occupational needs that arose as the US military entered World War II (Baron, Dobbin & Jennings, 1986). Similarly, accountants, who never fully achieved the social closure of classic professions such as law or medicine, thrived commercially by attaching their professional project, not to the nation state, but to large multi-national corporations (Suddaby, Cooper & Greenwood, 2007). Perhaps unsurprisingly, more recent studies of organization-profession conflict tend to show that traditional professionals have adapted well to life in bureaucratic organizations (Wallace, 1995).

Organizations, thus, offer more than an alternative to professions. Increasingly, they offer an alternative *source* of professions and professional expertise. However, we have scant empirical understanding of the process by which new managerial professions emerge from large bureaucracies. How do large corporations generate professional expertise? More specifically, how does professional judgment form in an emergent professional group housed in large corporation or a state bureaucracy? We address this issue in our study of the emergence of standards of professional judgment in the Danish film industry. Using archival and interview data between 2000 and 2012, we examine how experts in the Danish National Film Institute determine which projects are granted public funding. We use this data to determine how the micro-foundations of professional judgment emerge as legitimate practices and normative standards of expertise.

Our analysis demonstrates that norms of professional judgment emerge in a process that is intimately linked to the emergence of professional role identities. As the standards of professional coalesce, so too do the boundaries of professional identity. We identify four provisional roles – civil servant, film worker, artistic merchant and guardian of culture – each of which reflect experimental attempts to make sense of their competing demands to balance bureaucratic interests while maintaining their own nascent standards of autonomous professional judgment. We demonstrate how each of these provisional role identities reflect different and evolving norms of professional judgment that move through four stages of increasingly abstract manifestations of expertise, from technical/scientific expertise to meta-expertise.

Our core empirical contribution is the discovery that the evolution of professional judgment and expertise is inextricably intertwined with the clarification of professional role-identities. Our core theoretical contribution is the observation that the legitimacy work of managerial professions operates in two spheres; first, it legitimates the role of the bureaucratic organization by grounding professional judgments in broader societal norms. Second, it legitimates the nascent professions, themselves, by grounding their identity in increasingly abstract expressions of expertise.

We present our analysis in four parts. In the next section we elaborate the theoretical foundation of legitimacy work in the context of professional judgment drawing on the literature in the sociology of professions, but with a specific focus on new managerial professions. We then describe our empirical context and our method of collecting and analyzing data. In the third section we present our core findings and in the last, we explain how our findings contribute to a new understanding of processes of professional judgment formation and legitimacy work in the context of new managerial professions. We also offer some suggestions as to how this project might be extended both theoretically and empirically.

**Professional Expertise, Judgment and Legitimacy Work**

In moving from innovation to mass diffusion, products must typically first pass through a preselection phase in which the prospective product is screened by an expert panel devoted to evaluating its value (Barnett, 1953; Hirsch, 1972). As such, the expert panel acts as an institutional gatekeeper whose expertise is used to make a professional judgment on the legitimate value or worth of the product. In some cases, such as the research and development division of a consumer product corporation, the institutional gatekeeper is *internal* to the organization that created the innovation. In other cases, such as venture capital financing, the institutional gatekeeper exists at arms-length from the producer. In still other cases, the gatekeeper becomes institutionalized in the regulatory apparatus of the industry, as in the gatekeeper role played by the US Environmental Protection Agency or the US Food and Drug Agency.

In all cases, however, the ability of a product to gain access to competitive markets is dependent upon a stamp of legitimacy conferred by a group of experts whose professional judgment will provide the applicant with the necessary capital, regulatory approval or assessment of worth. Abbott (1988: 184) reminds us that this type of professional judgment is a form of “legitimating work” that “connects professional diagnosis, treatment and inference to central values in a larger culture”. At first glance, legitimacy work might be perceived to be a form of institutional work identified by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006: 215) as purposive action directed toward “creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions”.

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that legitimacy claims underpin each of the specific categories of institutional work identified by Lawrence and Suddaby. So, for example, advocacy or “the mobilization of political and regulatory support through direct and deliberate sources of social suasion” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 221) describes overt legitimacy seeking behavior. Similarly, vesting, defined as “the creation of rule structures that confer property rights” restates Weber’s definition of formal legitimacy. Legitimacy work, thus, can be viewed as the micro-foundation of all forms of institutional work.

The forms of legitimacy work captured in the categories of institutional work tend to describe practices by which external actors seek to acquire legitimacy from an external actor with the ability to confer legitimacy. This view of legitimacy bears a theorization of legitimacy as a reified property that can be discretely transferred between actors. While there is substantial empirical support for this view of legitimacy, theorists observe that this view is somewhat incomplete in that it overlooks an emerging view of legitimacy as a process or perception subject to active and ongoing efforts to create and maintain it (Suddaby, Bitektine & Haack, 2017). This is the aspect of legitimacy that we are interested in here. Our focus is not on understanding how legitimacy is transferred between actors, but rather in how norms and standards of legitimacy are established by a community of experts. We view this as a form of professional judgment created, not across actors, but by a select group of experts granted the power to engage in the legitimacy work necessary to establish norms and standards of legitimacy for a given product within a defined community.

This type of legitimacy work requires expert knowledge that resides in the knowledge mandates of three different types of professions – scientific knowledge, normative knowledge and syncretic knowledge (Halliday, 1985). We are perhaps most familiar with the legitimating work of experts who employ scientific knowledge to exercise professional judgment in areas such as engineering, medicine, and the physical sciences. In determining the standards for bridges, appropriate treatment of disease and the use of chemicals by industry we rely on scientific experts who make judgments of fact. The norms of scientific judgment are, largely, established by the scientific community at large and are premised on well-known practices of investigation based on empirical observation and experimental inquiry using procedures that are refined in universities and research centers that share knowledge widely.

While not immune from political pressure or questions of social appropriateness, the professional judgment of scientists is distinguishable, according to Halliday (1985), from that of the normative professions, such as the clergy or law. In these professions, judgments are made primarily on the premise of values or community standards of appropriateness. As Shils (1965) observed, while scientists are concerned with the laws of the universe, lawyers and the clergy are concerned with the laws of humanity. Again, there is no question that normative professions use scientific facts to inform their judgments of legitimacy, but the facts alone are not the determinative factor in their decisions. Facts are important contextual information used to make decisions based on assessments of normative value.

More challenging, however, are the professional judgments made in contexts where values and facts bear equal probity. This occurs in professions like academia and the military, both of which rely on knowledge mandates that Halliday (1985: 426) observed evince a *syncretic* epistemological foundation where their professional expertise “comprises an amalgam of scientific and normative elements”. Contexts in which values penetrate facts with relatively equal value, tend to be much more difficult to adjudicate because they occur in ambiguous epistemological spaces where there are few external determined standards of decision making. That is, syncretic professions cannot rely on a broadly based and highly institutionalized epistemic community where the standards of professional judgment are well established. Rather, syncretic professions must generate their own knowledge standards often on a relatively localized basis. What, for example, are decision standards for determining an outstanding poem, novel or a film?

Syncretic decisions are neither exclusively objective nor normative, but tend to be judgments that attend to the knowledge mandates of both fact and value without being subordinated to either. These are often judgments of taste that are manifest by appeals to higher normative orders in an effort to resolve disputes that occur in ordinary social life. The standards by which these decisions occur tend to be subject to relatively standards of legitimacy based on relatively localized “orders of worth” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) that are typically achieved by processes of argumentation, negotiation and eventual agreement. The orders of worth literature, thus, offers a glimpse into the interior processes of legitimacy work.

A significant oversight of the orders of worth approach to legitimacy work, however, is that it overlooks the powerful role of professionals in the process of making judgments of taste. Most judgments of aesthetic taste, for example, occur not through a societal wide form of deliberation, but, instead, depends on the direction of highly influential cultural critics, who are often professionally trained and tend to avoid, rather than embrace community norms or standards of value. Syncretic judgments are not mere summaries of deliberative democratic opinion. Rather, they are nuanced amalgams of highly specialized scientific and normative knowledge claims made by groups of professionals whose backgrounds are strategically selected to reflect the continuum of these two very different knowledge mandates.

Syncretic professions tend to work in the context of large bureaucracies. Cultural critics work in newspapers, academics in universities and military engineers in academies embedded in large military organizations. As such, they are professions that fit within Heusinkveld et al’s (2018: 10) definition of the new “corporate professions” whose knowledge mandate is typically “based on a broader set of knowledge than is common in the traditional professions” (see also Muzio, Hodgson, Faulconbridge & Hall, 2011). But we know very little about the processes by which syncretic professionals exercise their knowledge mandate. That is, we have scant understanding of how the norms and standards of professional judgment is exercised by new professionals working in a syncretic context. Our research question therefore is *how does syncretic professional judgment form in an emergent professional group housed in large corporation or a state bureaucracy*?

**METHODS AND EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

We address our research question through a case study of the professional experts in the Danish Film Institute, a government agency charged with responsibility for evaluating proposals for film projects and funding successful applications. The decision to fund a prospective film project falls within the bounds of a syncretic knowledge mandate in several respects. Foremost, the decision is premised on both scientific and normative criteria. On one hand, the Institute is subject to a high degree of political pressure for ensuring that the decision to use taxpayer money to fund a film proposal is made in a rational, objective and financially accountable way. Part of the decision to fund a film is based on a reasonable expectation of commercial success. These considerations are subject to scientific expectations of objective oversight and rational calculability.

On the other hand, the Institute is also subject to a high degree of aesthetic pressure to fund films that reflect ideas and aspirations of the artistic community, and to generate content not fully represented by the commercial film industry. The Institute also carries a cultural mandate to “ensure that Danish film can maintain its role as an essential cultural factor and thereby strengthen the Danish language and sense of Danish identity (DFI Result Agreement, 2003-2006: 1). These considerations fall within the domain of normative expectations characterized by culturally subjective norms and standards that are typically informed by standards of value and taste rather than fact and calculation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the decisions made by professionals employed by the Institute are complicated and often controversial. Indeed, the motivation for creating the Institute was, in part, based on a need to relieve politicians, and their civil servants, from making decisions that might be difficult to justify. Creating an institute populated by arms-length professionals was a strategic means of rationalizing and distancing the decision-making process from political controversy, as making complex normative and scientific judgments is a recognized societal function of professionals (Abbott, 1988; Lamont, 2009; Scott, 2008). As such, funding decisions made by film professionals in the Danish Film Institute offers an ideal empirical context within which we might analyze syncretic professional judgments in an emerging managerial profession.

**The Danish Film Institute (DFI):** The DFI was established in 1997 by the Danish Ministry of Culture with an aim to professionalize the Danish film industry (Mathieu, 2006). It was the product of a merger of three pre-existing institutions, the former Danish Film Institute, the State Film Central and the Danish Film Museum. The syncretic mandate of the new super-agency is best illustrated by the breadth of highly specific criteria applied to the selection of its first CEO:

“The CEO should have worked practically and achieved artistic recognition in the branch, have a proven track record as a public sector administrator, understand the industry aspects of film production and marketing, and finally, at the organizational level, be neutral, impartial or sufficiently respected throughout the field to deal with the existing problems that the merger sought to solve” (Mathieu, 2006: 245).

The complex knowledge mandate of the CEO serves as a useful micro-cosmic illustration of the syncretic knowledge mandate of the professionals selected to make funding decisions for the agency. The individual professionals should be able to address questions that relate to the aesthetic, commercial and political value of any proposed film project. As we demonstrate in our results, the DFI addressed this question by populating the roster of film consultants with individual professionals with both the expertise and the autonomy needed to make funding decisions, but without autonomy over the allocation, division and budgeting of work.

Nearly all films produced in Denmark have received funding from the DFI. In 2012, for example, the DFI issued grants to the ‘Production and Development’ of films totaling DKK 285,500 million or €38 million (DFI 2013). The DFI has been successful on both aesthetic and commercial measures. Between 1999 and 2006 Danish films provided twenty-five percent of the domestic box office. Only France can claim a higher domestic market penetration for their domestically produced films (DFI, 2012). Overall, the DFI has been identified as a key factor in making Danish films a commercial success (Strandgaard, Pedersen & Mathieu, 2009). In that same period Danish films achieved critical acclaim for the high artistic quality of their films and won international recognition for several highly creative films including, *The Celebration*, *Breaking the Waves*, *Dogville, Italian for Beginners* and the *Pusher* trilogy, in what has been described by the critics as a creative “Danish New Wave” in film (Bondebjerg, 2005; Hjort 2006; Mackenzie, 2016).

The structure of the DFI is operationally organized into four departments, each headed by a director: Production and Development, Audience and Promotion, Archive and Cinematek and Administration. The CEO oversees these departments and is responsible for day-to-day management. In 2012 the DFI employed approximately 135 people with a budget of €63 million, seventy-four percent of which was allocated to film projects. Within this large organizational context our primary focus is on the Film Commissioner Program where film consultants employed by the DFI, are obligatory points of passage – professional gatekeepers – for a film to be granted any form of funding. With this program, the artistic quality of a proposed project is judged and co-developed from within the DFI. At any time, the DFI employs six film consultants; three devoted to feature films and films for children, and three that focus on documentaries. The film consultants, each with different expertise profiles as we show in the results section below, are given the mandate of determining whether a given proposal has the potential for artistic success that would warrant financial support. It is important to note that the film consultants’ power to decide is unequivocal and cannot be overturned by the management team (Lundgaard Report, 2000: 21). Because of their syncretic mandate, however, the consultants are in constant dialogue with financial, technical and managerial experts that offer data about the financial and technical feasibility of any given project.

**Research Design and Data Collection**: We adopted a qualitative case study design that focused on a single organization, the DFI. While we engaged with the organization more broadly, our primary focus was on the film consultants appointed to the Film Commission program and the processes used to make evaluations on individual proposals. Our temporal focus is on the consultants and their practices between 2000 and 2012. The time frame selected was based on a strategy of initiating observation shortly after the creation of the DFI with its newly professionalized mandate, but allowing sufficient time for the newly created managerial profession to consolidate its decision-making routines and practices. Our analytic focus was in understanding the stated criteria for which the film consultants were selected, their professional biographies and, most particularly, their reflective perceptions of how they make professional judgments.

We drew data from several archival sources in the form of job advertisements posted by the DFI to recruit film consultants, background information from public sources used to construct the personal and professional biography of the successful film consultants hired by the DFI between 2000 and 2102. We also collected substantial contextual financial and statistical data relating to the budget of the DFI, the total amount of money allocated to film subsidies, their distribution amongst the various projects and performance data for the 92 films that were approved by the DFI for support during the period of this study.

We also compiled a variety of documents, protocols and public communiques produced by the DFI with the purpose of describing the evaluative practices that a film consultant is supposed to apply during his or her term as an appointed expert. These documents, bearing such titles as *Guide for the Work of the Film Consultant* (DFI 115); Criteria for *Evaluation of Full Feature Films Covered by the Film Scheme* (DF1 211); and The Art of Being a Film Consultant (Weideman, 2009), were of critical importance in establishing the official knowledge mandate of the DFI and analytically comparing those norms to the actual practices described by the consultants themselves. Collectively, these documents provided an essential database that provided us with critical insight into the formal standards of the DFI in how professional judgments of film consultants were to be made.

To better understand the actual practices of the film consultants and how they perceived their role in making professional judgments, we also interviewed the consultants. Our original intent was to interview all 13 film consultants employed by DFI between 2000 and 2012 (the term of the last hire extended to 2015). Of this population of 13, two film consultants had no films in cinematic release during their term of employment, one consultant declined to be interviewed, and one consultant did not respond to our invitations. As a result, we interviewed the remaining nine consultants (listed in Table 2). In addition to these interviews we also interviewed the first CEO of DFI as well as an experienced industry informant and former film consultant, in order to get contextual and historical information and to test and refine our interview protocol.

The interviews were conducted in two tranches; the first between 2014-15 and the second in 2015-2016. The split timing of the interviews was to wait for the last group of film consultants to end their service in the DFI, thereby avoiding potential conflicts of interest that might inhibit their ability to speak freely about their role and their decisions. The interviews lasted approximately ninety minutes, and all were fully transcribed. The analytic focus of the interviews was based on understanding the process and criterion by which the film consultant was hired by the DFI, the process by which films are evaluated and a retrospective evaluation of the process by which evaluative norms and standards evolved. While we had some general ideas of the content of the evaluative practice based on our pilot interview and our analysis of the archival documents provided by the DFI, our interest was in getting the subjective accounts of the decision-making process from the consultants themselves.

**Data Analysis:** We analyzed data as it was collected. Our ongoing interpretation of data informed the selection of new data sites. Our analysis was informed by principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006) which provide the basis for the structured analysis of various forms of qualitative data guided by a clearly defined research question, and focused on developing emergent themes in the data through stages of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and then aggregating those themes into larger conceptual categories (Gioia et al, 1994). Our emergent themes were subject to constant comparison with specific instances or key events described by informants in our data that were applicable to the emerging theoretical categories.

Informed by the guiding question of how the organizational managers in the DFI and the individual film consultants each understood the role of film consultants as professionals, we began our analysis by structuring the interview and archival data into open codes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this phase of analysis revealed two key categories of themes, those relating to knowledge claims and those relating to identity claims. While we accepted the possibility that these two themes were related to each other, in the next phase of axial coding, where we searched for relationships among the emergent themes, we tried to maintain the initial distinction between knowledge and identity. The final data structure is presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

**RESULTS**

We present our core findings in two sections. The first section shows the results of our inquiry into how the organization – i.e. the DFI – originally theorized the role of a film consultant professional and their ideal conception of how their professional judgment ought to be exercised. In this section we also examine how the organization enacted professionalism in practice with data on the biographical profiles of the individuals that were ultimately selected to fulfill the role. The second section shows the results of our inquiry into how the film consultants made sense of their role and their norms of professional judgment.

**The Organizational View of Professional Judgment: The division of expertise**

The DFI’s approach to organizing professional judgment was premised on the division and specialization of expert knowledge. It accomplished this in four distinct practices. First, it created a sharp structural division within the organization between artistic and primarily commercial decisions. Second, it recruited individual consultants that each represented somewhat different functional specialties, but which, collectively, provided a pool of expertise that reflected all of the knowledge demands of the process of film production. Third, in the various documents outlining the professional role of the ideal film consultant, the DFI articulated a step-model of film production that dissociated professional judgment into distinct decision criteria at each stage of the process. Finally, the DFI deliberately made the roles transitory, delimiting each professional to a four-year term as a film consultant. We elaborate each of these practices in the balance of this section.

*Structural Division:* A critical element in creating the DFI and in defining the role of the professional film consultant was the strategic decision to separate the commercial film projects from the artistic film projects. This division was accomplished with the creation of two distinct funding schemes, the Market Program and the Film Commissioner Program. The former is primarily aimed at feature fiction films with high commercial potential. These films tend to be similar to most Hollywood films with a mass market target audience (e.g. comedies, family films, sequels). As described on the DFI website the Market Scheme:

“This scheme supports films with broad audience appeal – films that fascinate because they tell a popular story or cultivate a familiar genre….Applications are evaluated on criteria of quality and audience potential, including narrative, production value, market position, distribution, marketing and the film's overall economic viability. To qualify, films are expected to perform better at the box office than an average Danish feature or perform well with a specific target group, e.g., children and youth” (DFI website, 2019)

Film consultants working in this scheme, thus, are expected by their employer to apply a clear financial logic when exercising their professional judgment.

The Film Commissioner Program, by contrast, is primarily aimed at feature fiction films with high aesthetic potential. Again, the DFI website sets out the decision criteria for funding films in this category:

“This scheme supports films with unique cinematic ambitions – artistically innovative films that challenge their audiences. The scheme funds features, documentaries and shorts. The work of the film commissioner involves prioritizing the funding to secure the continual production and dissemination of a wide range of films, defined in terms of artistic quality, diversity, volume and audience appeal” (DFI website, 2019)

In contrast to the Market Program, the Film Commissioner Program privileges aesthetics and artistic innovation as the primary decision criteria, over the potential financial return of a project.

The division of film projects into two categories premised on either financial or aesthetic criteria represents a significant departure from individual professional autonomy where, we might assume that film professionals, directors, producers or writers, might want to accomplish both mass market appeal and artistic integrity. The fact that they are organizationally divided into two separate schemes – business on one hand and art on the other - presents an interesting challenge for the consultants who tend to see these elements of film as inextricably intertwined:

So, from what I said, I think when you have a film commissioner model, it is not, despite what almost anybody claims, that the scheme is just about targeting artistic films. From my point of view, this is an utter misconception. This is about how to evaluate projects in the best way by making an individual evaluation because you follow [the development of] the projects in a way a board could never do.

The informant, thus, expresses the need to sometimes resist the DFI’s attempt to neatly separate aesthetic and financial elements of a project in his/her individual professional judgement and hints at the threat presented by possibility of having these decisions made by a committee or board rather than by individual consultants. As we demonstrate below, this structural division of the subject matter of film into two, somewhat artificial components is part of a larger pattern of division of expertise and labor in the DFI.

*Specialization:* Over the time frame of this study, thirteen film consultants were recruited to the DFI, nine of which participated in our study. According to the first CEO, the individuals were chosen based on a deliberate strategy of “professionalizing” the DFI (Mathieu, 2006). In order to accomplish this, the DFI focused on recruiting industry experts with a wide variety of individual expertise. We present a summary of the personal biographies of the nine film consultants that comprise our data set (See Table 2). Six of these consultants were recruited directly from the Danish or Swedish film industry, and the remaining three had extensive contact with the industry. Of the three, one holds a university degree in dramaturgy, one worked as a journalist and one had prior experience in Danish television broadcasting.

Insert Table 2 about here

As Table 2 demonstrates, not only do the individual film consultants each have prior industry experience, they also represent somewhat specialized knowledge domains. Two are trained as editors, two are script-writers, one is a script-editor, two are producers and two are educators or trainers in the industry. In justifying his recruitment strategy, the CEO explained that the focus on prior industry experience was an effort to introduce professional judgment into the film subsidy allocation process made by experts on the basis of specific knowledge, professional credentials, impartiality and credibility, not simply as ad hoc statements of personal taste:

We need to get away from the notion that [subsidy allocation] is just a personal position or standpoint on a project, and one’s taste, and say that [pause] …A more professional role, where they [the film consultants] can go in as a sparring partner in a development process (CEO, quoted in Mathieu, 2006: 247).

The CEO’s focus on professionalism and expertise was designed to address several issues faced by the DFI. Foremost was the question of legitimacy. As a newly formed institute the DFI had to overcome a lingering doubt about the effectiveness and objectivity of the institutes it was designed to replace. Related to this was an issue of accountability. Aesthetic judgments are notoriously risky and the selection of experienced industry experts was designed to reduce the objective risk by bringing in industry professionals, while simultaneously distancing the government from risky decisions (Strandgaard, Pederson, Darmer & Mathieu, 2013).

The success of the DFI in addressing the legitimacy and accountability questions is highly dependent upon the extent to which the assembly of film consultants is perceived as professional – i.e. people held in high regard in the industry. In part, the strategy of hiring highly specialized experts as film consultants made sense, particularly with respect to hiring editors. As one informant advised:

…the editors were obvious (choices) because editors are very strong ‘structure people’ who are held in high regard in the industry in terms of their professionalism as film makers. Arguably it is much more problematic to hire scriptwriters or directors…editors are familiar with the fact that they are not the drivers, i.e. it is not ‘their’ project (MDS, 33)

However, as the quote above indicates, the decision to recruit from a range of specialty areas cannot be fully explained by the need to satisfy questions of accountability and legitimacy.

Instead, the array of specialties represented here appears to be equally motivated by the well-known practice of the division of labor, first articulated by Adam Smith in the context of industrial production, and applied by the DFI in the context of professional expertise. While the strategy was not openly articulated by our DFI informants, a cursory examination of the range of expertise in this group clearly suggests that while the individuals each represent highly specialized functions in the process of producing a film, collectively the group of film consultants represents a diverse group of professionals who, at the level of analysis of the group or team, reflect the expertise required to complete the entire process of creating a film.

To be clear, during the period of our study, the decision-making authority to grant funds was exercised exclusively at the level of the individual film consulting professional. However, in constructing the entire group of film consultants, we see the nascent elements of an effort to organize a division of expertise. The credibility of this claim becomes more acute with the observation that, after the period of our study, the decision making criteria for the Market Scheme was amended to allow for decisions to be made by “by a committee of two representatives from the DFI and three external film-industry representatives” (DFI website, 2019).

*Division of Expertise:* When the role of the professional film consultant was first conceived, the DFI set out a formal description of the four key types of decisions and activities that the consultants would typically encounter. We summarize the tasks of the professional consultant, drawn from our archival documents, in Table 3, below. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the four categories of decisions and activities describe a process model that follows the journey of a successful film project. From the overview, it is clear that the consultants’ tasks are complex and cover a vast array of different types of professional expertise, social skill and technical insight. Moreover, it is also clear that the consultant’s role is a powerful one with an expectation that the consultant will fully engage in the quotidian detail of a project in a highly engaged and collaborative relationship with the successful project holders.

Insert Table 3 about here

It is important to note that the stage model of decision making reinforces the perception that the DFI’s conception of the role of the film-consultant professional is premised on an implicit model of industrial production in which the key elements of professional judgment are divided into different stages of the productive process. As such, the assumptive metaphor appears more closely aligned with an assembly-line mode of production, more typically associated with a factory, than the more holistic craft mode of production that we tend to associate with classic professions.

*Temporality*: A final key characteristic of the film consultant role, as defined by the DFI, is its unique temporal nature. Film consultants are hired by the DFI on short term contracts, typically of four years duration but, on occasion, extending as long as five. The justification for limited term appointments, according to the DFI, is to avoid entrenchment of the aesthetic opinion of an established cultural elite. By moving individuals out of the role on a regular but staggered basis, the DFI can maintain continuity of expertise while encouraging the constant flow of new ideas and new forms of individual expertise.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the temporary nature of the appointment was not viewed positively by the consultants themselves, most of whom pointed out that it made it difficult for them to leverage the experience gained and the relationships formed during their short tenure. As the quote below illustrates, most consultants complained that they reach a point of competence or expertise only when they approach the end of their formal role:

“Well, it takes a couple of years to become a good film consultant. And the drawback is that at that point you have to stop and then it takes at least two years [for the successor] to become [equally skilled]” (C-9, 20).

“Well, I had worked a lot in the industry, and knew people. I knew most of the people who applied. I thought that I could perform as if I had a certain level of expertise from the start. I experienced that, the first year, for better or worse, is a learning process and that you can actually only begin to become a good consultant the moment you have seen some of the projects you have developed reach the opening nights, and then say: there now, I have just learned something about what to believe and what not to believe in” (C-3; 01.08.57-3)

*Summary:* Collectively, the DFI’s approach to creating a new profession in the form of film consultants presents two conflicting views of how professional expertise is organized in a corporate or bureaucratic context. In many respects, the DFI’s approach might be seen as a strategy of coercive professional deskilling (Wilensky, 1964). By structurally dividing the commercial and aesthetic elements of film making, the DFI signals a clear division between rational commercial practices on one hand and aesthetic artistic practices on the other, each of which require different forms of professional judgment based on a distinction made, not by the professionals themselves, but rather by the formalization of rules in the bureaucracy. The other practices – specialization of role function organized in teams, the division of expert labor in a process model of film production, and the short term of the appointment – all speak to well-researched elements of organizational control designed to reduce professional discretion, commitment and autonomy (Pugh & Hickson, 1976; Mintzberg, 1993).

The deskilling effects of these four organizational practices are, perhaps best seen in the instruction manual generated by the DFI to describe to film consultants how they are to exercise their professional judgment. The document, titled “Internal Guidelines for Film Commissioners”, revised at the end of our observation period, mandates in intimate detail how consultants are to process cases, respond to applications and, ultimately, how to accept or reject applications. The level of detail includes the time frame within which a consultant must reply to an application (4 weeks for first time applicants, 2 weeks for second-opinion), and even extends to managing the facial expressions of a consultant in meetings:

“A smile or an arched eyebrow by the commissioner is sometimes interpreted as a sign that the commissioner has accepted a subsidy amount mentioned by the producer. Such pressure can strain the dialogue with applicants” (DFI, 2012: 8)

Consultants are cautioned that they should never discuss finances with an applicant without a DFI producer present. While the individual film consultants have autonomy over the funding decision, they clearly lack the degree of autonomy in determining the criteria, process or organization of their work that we expect to see in a traditional professional.

An alternate view, however, suggests that the formalized workflow and division of expert labor are simply mechanisms designed to nurture the successful evolution of a novel form of corporate professional. In this view the DFI has identified an important but relatively obscure societal function that lacks a clearly defined knowledge base and provided the foundation of a professional knowledge jurisdiction that can evolve within the context of an “enabling bureaucracy” (Adler & Borys, 1996). Here we observe a nascent model of organizing professional work in an undefined knowledge jurisdiction by providing a rational model of written rules, procedures and legal jurisdiction within which professionals can develop a new knowledge mandate to make professional judgments on aesthetic values.

As we demonstrate in the next section, at the individual level of analysis, the film consultant professionals adopt a strategy that, largely, reverses the formalization practices of the organization and re-integrates the various elements of professional judgment in individual practices. At the same time, the consultants begin their professional project of identity construction by experimenting with a range of provisional professional roles.

**The individual view of professional judgment: Reintegration through Identity**

Despite the efforts of the DFI to formalize the role and practice of the film consultant professional at the organizational level, we observe a powerful effort by individual film consultants to emphasize their autonomy from the organization and their ongoing capacity to define the parameters of their evolving knowledge mandate. Professional autonomy was manifest in two critical ways. First, the film consultants clearly emphasized that, despite the oversight of the DFI, professional judgment and therefore professional autonomy, in practice, occurred at the individual level of analysis. Second, and perhaps more critically, the film consultants appeared to use an emerging sense of professional identity as the primary mechanism through which the fragmentation of professional judgment by the DFI, was reintegrated. We elaborate both of these reactions in the balance of this section.

*Professional Autonomy*: In nearly every interview, the film consultants pointed out that their independence from the DFI was important, not only for their own legitimacy as a profession, but also for the legitimacy of the DFI. In the absence of a cadre of professional decision makers, the DFI would be open to criticism of political interference and bias in their funding decisions. Consultants, thus, typically (though not always) constructed their professional role as neutral facilitators whose professional judgment is unmarked by their own artistic preference or taste but rather draws on an emerging knowledge structure that informs their decisions to fund or not fund a project:

…you need to rise above your private preferences. That is, I have to use myself as a person, but that is not the same as using myself in a private way. This is a critical decision (C1 00:33:41)

The same informant also invested a lot of time and energy in describing how individual film consultants made sense of their dual role as part professional and part bureaucrat. Asked whether assuming the job as a film consultant created an identity shock, she observed:

To me (it was) a very great leap…as a matter of fact, I felt it, in a very important way, was a mantle of office you take upon you (C1 00:31:30)

Notwithstanding a clear understanding of the civil-servant elements of their role, the film consultants conceived of the independence of their position as professionals in a large heteronomous bureaucracy (Scott, 1965) somewhat metaphorically as though they were protected by a bubble or as if they were a ruler “in a kingdom” (C6 00:13:56) that protected them from all the outside interests that might undermine their integrity. They emphasized how they shared an important difference from their civil service counterparts based, largely, on their creativity and their somewhat bohemian lifestyle which stood in stark contrast to the bureaucrats that surrounded them. One informant (C-6), a film editor who had never held a traditional ‘job’ in his life, reported how surreal it was to suddenly have to come to work at regular hours, sit behind a desk and use the DFI canteen for lunch.

On occasion, the consultants engaged in action that served to further signal their autonomy from the bureaucracy. For example, shortly after assuming his position, C-6 initiated the practice of meeting with his project applicants at their own locations rather than at the DFI, in part because he didn’t feel comfortable behind a desk (C6 00:24:01). The consultant was particularly sensitive to the expectation that his duty was not only to further the interests of the profession, but also those of the bureaucracy:

And then we were asked to define what the aims of the DFI were. And the permanent employees aim was to fulfill the demands set up by the Ministry of Culture. Mine were to make some good films. These two, you might say, was much at odds (with each other)…(C-6, 00:19:12)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, C-6 only served two years with the DFI. He left in protest over, in his view, the insufficient funding provided to projects at the time.

Collectively we observed a distinct effort amongst the individual film consultants to express and exert a degree of independence from the employing organization. While they clearly understood their subordinate position as somewhat unique and temporary employees in a large bureaucracy, they also understood the power they held as legitimating agents of the organization and were not afraid to engage in rhetoric and practices, including exiting the organization, to reinforce their professional autonomy.

*Provisional Professional Identities*: All of these activities can be seen as an emerging sense of professionalism which, ultimately, became manifest in a series of provisional role identities in which individual film consultants begin to experiment with different models of professional selves. We observed four distinct experimental models of professional identity, the civil servant, the film worker, the artistic merchant and the guardian of culture. We briefly describe each of them in the balance of this section.

**The film worker:** The film worker is a highly specialized role identity in which the claim to professionalism is premised, largely, on technical expertise in a specific area of film production – i.e. writing, directing, cinematography. When drawing on this particular role-identity, informants were skeptical about their relationship with the DFI as they did not perceive themselves as administrators or government employees. Rather, their primary affiliation was with the film industry which informed the conception of what it meant to be a professional. As one film consultant reported:

…you need to always heed the fact that the interesting aspect of being a film consultant…is not just about saying ‘no’, but also about supporting the best projects…this system is designed to support the best projects found in the film community. This means that the initiative never rests with the film consultant, it lies in the film community. It is the film community which wants to make the film…(C-1, 00:35, 18-7)

Informants were proud of their prior history and reputation in the film industry and valued their network of connections within the industry (e.g. the consultant who moved meetings from the DFI headquarters to the film project sites). They also prided themselves on their ability to communicate the arcane intricacies of film production to bureaucrats in the DFI.

When invoking the role identity of the film worker, informants explicitly rejected any sense of professionalism drawn from their relationship with the DFI and any notion that they might be considered civil servants. As one informant, C-6, observed, he often felt nostalgic for having left the film community:

When I entered (the DFI), the money was dried up. At that point, I had descended to a level at which I actually didn’t think it was really fun anymore. I was close to think[ing] that, hell, this is more becoming like a ‘door-man’ job now. It was more about keeping people out than getting them in…I could also feel, in relations to the role change, as a matter of fact, when I wrote a check and sent people out to make a film, I sat back and thought ‘ouch, why am I not with them?’ (C-6 00:32:39)

Collectively, the film worker role identity was dismissive of the hierarchical authority of the DFI and their political public-policy mandate. Rather, the key knowledge mandate for this role identity was purely scientific-technical, and their loyalty was a clan or guild like commitment to their occupational community rather than a bureaucratic commitment to their employing organization.

**The civil servant:** Informants would regularly invoke their role identity as a civil servant when describing their understanding of professionalism in the DFI. The defining element of this role identity was a commitment to promoting film projects that would fulfill the ‘public interest’. One consultant expressed this role identity as follows:

It is very simple…the general misunderstanding is that the consultant is there for the [film] projects. But you are not. You are consultant for the taxpayers. That is, you are their extended arm who makes sure that the tax money are spent in the best possible way” (C-1:00.25.36-0).

Related elements of the civil servant role identity were an ongoing awareness of, and commitment to, good governance, fairness and efficiency. Consultants were acutely aware of the importance of adhering to bureaucratic norms of exercising their professional judgment in a codified and procedurally legitimate way that could be justified within the hierarchy. This included training on how to communicate like a bureaucrat:

Yes, we attended a course in “proper conduct” in administration at the [Parliamentary] Ombudsman. We went through the concept of good governance in the civil service. When you are handling such a large amount of applications, you may become prone to act a little crazy now and again, in the way that you write something silly or quaint. You learned to leave it out and be very level-headed and precise so that the communication became very much to the point” (C-3:00.38.48)

Overall, when informants drew from their role identity as civil servants, their sense of professional judgment was premised more on a normative knowledge mandate that appealed to an admittedly vague notion of what might fulfill the public interest. Despite invoking a normative commitment to the public interest, however, the loyalty of the civil servant was clearly a local, bureaucratic commitment to their employing organization

Yes, it [the bureaucracy] was coming from the State, I think. M [a DFI producer] and K [a DFI division executive] both fight to make it tolerable for everybody, for the consultant but very much for the applicant as well…To me it seems as if it is very hard for the civil service to accept that somebody has this role [film consultant]. Actually, that is the impression I get. They really fight to make it look like ordinary civil service work as much as possible” (C-5: s 22).

The role also invoked a degree of technical knowledge, but not one premised in scientific rationality. Rather, informants described a commitment to procedural notions of fairness, inclusion and accountability. Their knowledge mandate, thus, was syncretic in that it drew from both normative and technical strands.

**The artistic merchant:**  The artistic-merchant role identity reflects a relatively technical knowledge mandate similar to that of the film worker, but one which is embedded in an entrepreneurial commitment to the industry rather than the bureaucracy. This external knowledge mandate arises, largely, because of the film consultant’s awareness of the short-term nature of his/her employment with the DFI and how that might affect opportunities after the film consultant role is over. This awareness makes the artistic merchant very conscious of using the role to develop his/her own artistic brand in the film industry and to develop network relationships with future collaborators. As one informant acknowledged, in his first year in the role he viewed his role as an ideal opportunity to grow his reputation by disseminating resources:

“Well…I will admit that I used the first year, and you will be able to see that from the numbers … [that] … I supported eight films the first year…it was a unique occasion to walk out and be a serious Santa Claus” (C-8: 1:01:56)

The artistic merchant role identity does not, however, justify their entrepreneurial action in the context of some higher social ideal or normative purpose, as we observe in the civil servant role-identity. Nor do we see an aspiration to fulfill a cultural-aesthetic ideal of elite taste in film. Instead, the artistic merchant is a pragmatist, using his or her authority to fulfill the overall mandate of making films that conform to his or her individual standards of taste:

“ … I thought, God, now I have an opportunity to support what I find interesting to watch as a feature film …” (C-8: 1:01: 56)

Overall, the artistic merchant role-identity comprises an interesting hybrid of a claim to professionalism that embraces a knowledge mandate that is much broader than the employing organization, one which extends to the industry as a whole, but a knowledge mandate whose context is technical rather than ambitiously normative.

**The guardian of culture:** The guardian of culture sees the role of the film consultant as a public protector of the art of film making in Denmark. The role-identity is a platform for the broad artistic vision of the individual consultant, but this vision is positioned in a higher ideal of acting, not only for the public good, but also as a somewhat elitist view of protecting film as a form of high culture:

“It may happen that I choose to engage with a project, which I think will not attract an enormous audience in the cinemas. I know that. But I also know that it sometimes takes 3-4 films to make a good director. It is an awareness I have from the industry. But even so I may see a special film language, a very special fragile film voice, which is under development. And I think, damn, it would be a pity if Danish film misses this one” (C-9, 22).

In this quote we see the film consultant as a role-identity that incorporates a supra-normative knowledge mandate that extends beyond the civil service aspiration of protecting the public good to become a role that protects film as an art form.

Relatedly, the scope of knowledge mandate of the guardian of culture role-identity extends well beyond either the employing organization, the film industry or the consumptive tastes of mass market audiences. Like any social or cultural critic, the loyalty of the guardian of culture film consultant is devoted to protecting elite taste in the art form, regardless of its market appeal. The guardian of culture is completely detached from a commitment to, or constraint from, any traditional institution and, like the professed commitment of lawyers to Justice and physicians to Health, the film consultant justifies their professional judgment on the basis of a commitment to art and culture.

*Summary:* Collectively the four role identities described by the film consultants represent a series of what Ibarra (1999: 764) termed *provisional selves*, “trials for possible but not yet fully elaborated professional identities”. While the process by which individuals navigate their transition from technical to professional roles is well documented, the four identities described by our data reveals an interesting tension between two competing dimensions of professional knowledge.

One dimension, described in the introduction to this paper, reflects the tension between scientific and technical professional knowledge on one hand, and normative, value-based knowledge on the other. As demonstrated by Halliday (1987) the middle ground between these two ideal type forms of professional knowledge is syncretic knowledge, an integrative mid-point that draws from both the objective and subjective elements of these two extremes. The second dimension, reflects a previously unacknowledged tension between a commitment to the internal more localized standards of expertise that conform to the expectations of the organization within which a newly formed profession is embedded and the broader, externally based standards of expert knowledge that conform to the more widely-held societal expectations of a knowledge mandates of the traditional professions.

These two forms of knowledge mandates, though related, are somewhat orthogonal to each other and, in intersection, capture the range of provisional identities discussed by the film consultants (See Figure 1 below). The range of provisional identities reflect the efforts of the consultants to make sense of the competing demands of profession and bureaucracy, on one hand, and normative and technical knowledge mandates on the other. As we suggest in the next section, these provisional identities represent a complex exercise of sense-making in which individual film consultants experiment with different role identities in an effort to reintegrate their core professional knowledge mandate into a syncretic model of professionalism that can thrive autonomously within a large corporate bureaucracy.

Insert Figure 1 about here

It is important to note that the types of provisional identities described by our informants do not represent discrete identities held by individual film consultants. That is, we cannot place individual consultants within each of these categories. Rather, at different stages in their interviews, each individual film consultant drew on all or nearly all of the four identity roles described above. As such, the role identities described here are ideal-type constellations distilled from the data collected across all informants. The identities, thus, are provisional in the sense that they provided a comprehensive repertoire of distinct identities that each individual professional could selectively draw on to describe how they addressed the various tensions they experienced on a day-to-day basis while working in the DFI.

**DISCUSSION**

Prior research has distinguished “pure” professions like law and accounting from “corporate” or “managerial” professions such as accounting, HR, and project management, on the basis of their ability to use their expertise to resist bureaucratic pressures that, effectively, deskill professionals (Heusinkveld et al, 2018; Muzio et al, 2011; Noordegraaf, 2007; Reed, 1996; Wilensky, 1964). These processes reflect a range of strategies that prior research has shown to make manufacturing organizations more efficient; the structural division of labor, task and knowledge specialization and the concentration of managerial authority (Pugh & Hickson, 1976). Each of these practices is viewed as antithetical to professionalism because the reductive deconstruction of complex and ambiguous tasks commodifies them (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001) thereby weakening the jurisdictional boundary of the profession (Abbott, 1988).

Prior research has also distinguished pure professions from corporate or managerial professions on the basis of their capacity to position their professional projects in higher societal values or ideals (Abbott, 1988; Halliday, 1985). Successful professions legitimate their jurisdictional boundaries by attaching their knowledge mandate to “some transcendent value, whether that be Truth, Beauty, Enlightenment, Justice, Salvation, Health, or Prosperity” (Friedson, 1999: 127). Indeed, some have argued that management’s failure to fully professionalize has been a direct result of their inability to attach their professional project to a higher social value (Khurana, 2007). The capacity to attach one’s knowledge mandate to transcendent social ideals, thus, is a second defining feature of pure professionalism that distinguishes it from the new aspirational professions which are embedded in organizations.

We use both of these knowledge tensions – normative versus technical and local versus societal – to describe the range of role identities observed in this study and depicted in Figure 1. The provisional identities articulated by our informants can also be placed on a continuum that, theoretically, describes a progression of bureaucratic professions that range from “captive” to “pure” professionalism. The continuum, depicted in Figure 2, describes a range of alternative models of organizational professionalism that have appeared in prior literature (Noordegraaf, 2007, 2015; Evetts, 2016; Blomgren & Waks, 2016; Muzio et al, 2011) and which encapsulate the range of provisional models of professional identity generated by our interviews.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The first category of organizational professionalism, which we term “captive professions” are ones in which the organization has expressed full control over professional judgment. In these cases the knowledge mandate has been reduced to a purely technical form of mechanistic diagnosis and treatment. The complexity and ambiguity of the core knowledge has been deconstructed into a series of highly predictable and well-defined processes and decision stages that can, with some effort, be captured in an algorithm. Consider, for example, the role of the franchised mass-market tax professional whose professional work is so commodified that it requires a cadre of low-paid, temporary, non-CPA workers to project an image of professionalism despite the profound degree of managerial control over their work (Galperin, 2017). Captive professionalism is also characterized by a knowledge base that is so organizationally focused that it constrains the mobility of the profession beyond the employing organization. The diagnostic work of franchised tax accountants, thus, is premised not on generalized knowledge of the tax code, but instead on particularized knowledge of a proprietary computer program. In our informant’s description of their various professional role-identities, the captive professional is best illustrated by the FILM WORKER, in large part because it relies heavily on technical or scientific knowledge that it is easily susceptible to commodification (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001).

The second category of organizational professionalism is the “hybrid professional” characterized by a relatively technical knowledge base, but one which has the capacity to make a transcendent value claim. The librarian perhaps best illustrates this professional category, which can attach its professional project to a claimed transcendent value of ‘curator of human knowledge’ (i.e. Budd, 2008), but which, increasingly, struggles to protect its jurisdiction from the deskilling of digital processes by which knowledge is increasingly stored, curated and retrieved (Abbott, 1988; the Museum book). In the role-identities generated by our film consultants, the ARTISTIC MERCHANT best reflects this category of organizational professionalism. While the artistic merchant can make a claim of aesthetic authority that extends beyond the boundaries of their employing organization, the nature of their work has been sufficient managed by the organization as to remove most of its ambiguity and normative mystery.

The third category of organizational professionalism is the “embedded professional” characterized by a relatively complex or ambiguous knowledge base premised on a normative knowledge mandate, but which is so closely attached to the employing organization as to raise questions about the autonomy and independence of the profession. This category is best illustrated by professionals whose early training is based in an established “pure” profession, like law, accounting or medicine, but whose career is so embedded in an organizational context that their exercise of professional judgment is almost completely determined by the interests of the employing organization. In our study, the identity role of the CIVIL SERVANT most closely approximates this category.

The final category, that of the “pure professional”, is so well established in the literature that it scarcely requires description. The pure professional pursues a normative mandate that enables the profession to make nuanced judgments about ambiguous and abstract subjects. Relatedly, pure professionals attach their professional projects to knowledge mandates that extend beyond the interests of the employing organization and, indeed, are often in opposition to those interests. In our data, this form of professionalism was best illustrated by the category of role-identities that claimed the transcendent value of being a GUARDIAN OF CULTURE. This is a knowledge mandate that aspires to higher social ideals while making a knowledge claim about culture, a notoriously elusive and ambiguous, but highly socially relevant, knowledge jurisdiction.

Much of the prior literature on organizationally based professions suggests an inexorable push to deprofessionalization by reducing an occupation’s knowledge mandate to highly technical knowledge employed in narrowly localized applications. Yet, our results do not neatly support an argument of professional deskilling. In the context of the various role identities identified by our informants, this would suggest that the ideal role identity of the film consultant, from the point of view of the DFI, would be that of the FILM WORKER. However, our data from the DFI and the film consultants themselves clearly indicates that the DFI placed a high value on the external legitimacy provided by the professional judgment of independent film experts. The fact that the DFI structurally separated technical and normative decisions and encouraged the film consultants to focus on the latter rather than the former, clearly suggests that the normative knowledge mandate of the film consultants was as important to the organization as it was to the consultants themselves.

Somewhat contradictorily, however, the organization did embrace a range of practices designed to focus the film consultants on decisions that were highly technical and highly organization-specific, rather than on decisions of broad societal concern. So, for example, in the internal guidelines that described the duties of film consultants, the DFI reminds the consultants that their primary duty in making decisions is to comply with “the intentions of the Film Act and the performance contract between the DFI and the Ministry of Culture” (DFI, 2012: 1). The guideline clearly reinforces the understanding that, while the individual film consultant may have autonomy over funding decisions, that autonomy is clearly circumscribed by the nature of their employment relationship and the legal statute under which their employing organization was created.

The DFI, thus, seems to have encouraged the film consultants to pursue the middle range of professional role-identities that exist between “captive” and “pure” professionalism. These mid-range role identities are also consistent with the need of the film consultants to balance the organization’s need to formalize workflow and their own aspirations for professional autonomy. It is unclear, but highly doubtful that the DFI adopted the workflow management practices with a deliberate intent to coercively subordinate the professional aspirations of this nascent occupational category. As noted earlier, it was in both the organization and the profession’s interest that the professional judgment of the film consultants be perceived as independent from the DFI. Rather, as Adler and Borys (1996) suggest, the formalization of workflow may well be an inherent function of large organizations best understood as a positive means of enabling the new profession to master complex tasks under conditions of high ambiguity.

While we can only guess at bureaucratic motives, our study clearly demonstrates that the efforts of the organization to deconstruct the complex work of film consultants into scientifically manageable pieces was met with counterbalancing efforts by the film consultants to reintegrate their work into a form of professional judgment that was more holistic, ambiguous and craft-oriented. The DFI clearly sought to separate normative from technical subjects and to break the process of film making into a series of highly discrete stages characterized by different functional specialties. By creating heterogeneity in organization of work, the DFI effectively retained control over much, but not all, of the professional work. *Heterogeneity in professional work thus fosters heteronomy* (Scott, 1965).

The individual film consultants, by contrast, resisted the idea that the technical elements of film making could be excised from the normative elements and sought to reconstruct the stage model of film development into a holistic process managed by a single professional. One clear insight from this study, therefore, is that the site at which professionalism is contested in the new forms of professionalism is no longer a jurisdictional tension between different occupations, but rather is a *jurisdictional tension between the organization and the profession as to the knowledge mandate by which professional judgments are made*.

A second key insight from this study, is that the primary integrative mechanism, by which the individual professional reconciles the competing knowledge mandates of the organization and the profession is by experimenting with a variety of provisional role identities of professionalism. We identify four such provisional role-identities in this study and observe that, while the aspirational identities for the organization and profession are at extreme ends of a continuum, in practice, the role-identities for organizational professionals exist between models of “captive” and “pure” professionalism and, pragmatically, adopt the syncretic knowledge mandates of “hybrid” or “embedded” professionals. Our second insight, thus, is that while the key site for contesting professionalism may be at the organizational level, *the key site for resisting deprofessionalization is in the cognition of individual professionals who struggle with a range of possible professional identities*.

A final insight of this paper is the critical relationship between forms of knowledge and legitimation work. Our data demonstrates a previously undetected relationship between different forms of knowledge (technical/scientific, normative and syncretic) and different claims of professional legitimacy. The legitimation claim of the FILM WORKER was premised on the technical ability to make films efficiently. This is comparable to Suchman’s (1995) observation that some claims to legitimacy are based on pragmatism – i.e. they are legitimate because they work. By contrast, the legitimation claim of the GUARDIAN OF CULTURE was premised on the ability to make films that appeal to higher social norms. This is comparable to Suchman’s observation that some claims to legitimacy are based on morality, or higher normative values. Of most interest, however, are the legitimation claims of the ARTISTIC MERCHANT which seem to illustrate best the hybrid knowledge mandates of a true syncretic profession and which, if integrated seamlessly, may become so taken-for-granted as to approach Suchman’s (1995) standard of cognitive legitimacy.

It is far too early in the evolution of this nascent occupational category, however, to come to any firm conclusions. We can, however, observe that different professional knowledge claims correspond to different rhetorical claims of professional legitimacy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). In turn, these claims of professional legitimacy are closely connected to the form of knowledge upon which the profession is founded. Our motivating research question was to understand how professional judgement forms in an emergent professional group that is embedded in a large organization or state bureaucracy. Our study offers a tentative answer; syncretic knowledge emerges as a form of professional judgment of organizationally embedded professionals seeking to integrate the conflicting demands of their organizational control over work and their need for professional autonomy. Syncretic knowledge is a compromise between the employer’s need to organize work and the professional’s need to organize knowledge. Syncretic knowledge reflects a need, felt at the level of the individual professional, to use their expertise to maintain legitimacy both with the employing organization, on one hand, and with the broader interests of the society of writers, producers, directors and other members of the film community, on the other.

**CONCLUSION**

Professions are the primary mode of organizing knowledge in modern society. The traditional or “pure” professions emerged in the medieval era as an institution that generated scientific ways of knowing but in the organizational context of a craft-based guild, most typically monasteries (Krause, 1996). After the industrial revolution, expert knowledge became embedded in the “professional gentleman”, a Victorian conception that knowledge, even technical scientific knowledge, was only legitimate when packaged in the structure of liberal arts education:

“What “made the professions ‘learned’ was the embedding of their specialist knowledge or technical expertise in the science of law, medicine or theology. And here we are using ‘science’ in the way it was used until late in the nineteenth century to refer to any body of logically coherent, rational, systematized knowledge. In this sense professional education was conceived to be a part of, or an extension of, a liberal education comprising both general and specialist components” (Gidney & Millar, 1994: 5).

Historically, professions have been able to legitimate their knowledge, not exclusively because of their technical or scientific expertise, nor exclusively because of their ability to articulate normative societal ideals. Rather, it has been because of their *ability to pursue both* knowledge mandates, sometimes with technical expertise in the foreground and normative knowledge claims in the back, as in the case of medicine, or the reverse, as in the case of the clergy and law.

Historically, professions have served as a bulwark against the rationalizing pressures of modernity that seek to partition and reduce knowledge into increasingly narrow disciplines. Professions have assumed the function of knowledge integrators in their knowledge mandate, even as they have adopted the role as agents of rationality in their professional projects (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). We see this paradox play out in our case study of an emergent profession in a large bureaucratic organization. The provisional role identities displayed in our interviews provide a kaleidoscope of options, choices in which the informants appear to be struggling over, and experimenting with, provisional selves that express the entire spectrum of knowledge claims, from the purely technical role of the film worker to aspirational ideal of the guardian of culture. Their various role identities can be understood as a means of resisting the fragmentation of their expertise imposed by their employing organization. As proto-professionals embedded in a large bureaucracy, film consultants represent an emerging profession housed in the belly of the beast, an organization that cannot help but impose practices and structures that, ultimately, serve to deskill the profession by partitioning knowledge.

What is most surprising in our findings is that, despite this pressure, the core elements of a professional knowledge mandate still emerge, albeit wrapped in an existential debate about professional identity. The professional knowledge mandate appears to be focused on generating syncretic knowledge, i.e. holistic ways of knowing that overcome the disenchanting outcomes of the inexorable rationalizing effects of science, management and bureaucracy in modernity. Like the children’s fable of Humpty Dumpty, organizational pressures coalesce to break the egg of knowledge into its component parts, and the individual professionals, as they work on making sense of their own role and identity, simultaneously work to put the egg back together again.

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**List of Archival and Documentary Sources**

**Table 1A: Data Structure – Knowledge Mandates**

Aggregate

1st Order Concepts Second Order Themes Dimensions

* Knowledge of film production
* Prior industry experience
* Focus on facts, data, precision of measures

Government/

Regulator

Public Interest

Mass Market

* Satisfy expectations of the DFI
* Attend to rules
* Hierarchical Authority
* Size of audience will determine quality
* Commercial success/Efficiency
* Technical Authority
* Key audience are social ‘opinion leaders’
* Need to ‘speak truth to power’
* Quality as an end in itself
* Cultural Authority

Elite/Cultural Critics

Normative

Knowledge

* Knowledge of audience/critics
* Focus on film as a cultural subject
* Judgment of taste/value/ethics
* Values identity as a “generalist”
* Holistic understanding of film production
* Film is both an art and a science

Technical

Knowledge

**Table 1B: Data Structure – Provisional Identities**

Aggregate

1st Order Concepts Second Order Themes Dimensions

* Knowledge of film production
* Highly specialized functional knowledge
* Focus on facts, data, precision of measures

Precision

**Table 2: Film Consultant Biographies**

* Commitment to Aesthetic Quality
* Elitist Taste
* Independence from Mass Market & DFI
* Efficiency/Accountability
* Self-interest/self-promotion
* Opportunity orientation/Commercial success

Rule Orientation

Public Mandate

Technical Knowledge

* Artistic quality
* Creativity
* Mass market orientation
* Good governance
* Fairness
* Efficiency/Accountability
* Prior Industry experience/recognition
* Meet on site with film crew
* Strong personal networks

Social and Cultural Critic

Aesthetic Creativity

Economic Opportunity

Industry Focus

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date of interview | 26.11.14 | 18.01.14 | 12.11.14 | 14.11.14 | 12.11.14 | 11.12.15 | 15.01.16 | 18.01.16 | 01.02.16 |
| Intitials | C-1 | C-2 | C-3 | C-4 | C-5 | C-6 | C-7 | C-8 | C-9 |
| Period in  position | 1999-2003 | 2002-2007 | 2003-2006 | 2004-2009 | 2006-2009 | 2008-2009 | 2010-2014 | 2010-2015 | 2010-2015 |
| Training | Script Editor | Film & Media bachelor | Script writer | Producer | Editor | Editor | Journalist | Major in Drama | Script writer |
| Occupa-  tional  Back-  ground | Film-school  Teacher | TV-production Children & Youth, at DR, and Film-reviewer | Author/ writer | Producer  Film-consultant in  Sweden | Editor | Editor | Journalist  TV Children &Youth, at DR | Theater- drama-turgy  University teacher Film-drama-turgy for DR TV | New Danish Screen  Talent development at DFI |
| Current job | Principal  Danish Film school | New Danish Screen Talent development at DFI | Author/ writer | Retired | Editor | Editor | Director | Script consultantReader  Writer | Manager of Script training  Danish film school |
| Number of projects | 70 | 86 | 79 | 97 | 118 | 59 | 101 | 130 | 101 |
| Produc-  tion support total  DKK (millions) | 64,047 | 122,348 | 120,472 | 185,520 | 102,614 | 28,347 | 99,209 | 207,117 | 174,999 |
| Average produc-  tion  support  DKK  (millions) | 3.2 | 4.8 | 4.1 | 5.6 | 5.1 | 7 | 6.3 | 6.1 | 6.7 |
| Films approved for Cinematic release | 10 | 11 | 18 | 21 | 12 | 2 | 9 | 25 | 15 |
| Tickets sales total | 926,936 | 1,561,874 | 2,470,641 | 2,976,532 | 832,573 | 106,138 | 604,836 | 3,601,859 | 1,539,540 |
| Funding per ticket sold DKK | 69 | 78 | 49 | 62 | 124 | 264 | 159 | 57 | 113 |

**Table 3: Film Consultant’s Project Management Process**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Phase | Action | Month (Approx) |
| 1. Rejection/ Selection of projects eligible for support | First, the consultant screens the applications in order to select a number of projects, which seem promising (DFI 1, p. 2). The guidelines stipulate that first time applicants can expect response within 4 weeks (and 2 weeks for ‘second opinion’ evaluations). To give an idea of the quantity of the work, one of the consultants told us he read 579 applications in the period 2010-15 and rejected 273. The initial evaluation is based on the artistic content and story of the project and secondarily on an evaluation of the potential and competence of the involved people. | 1-2 |
| 2. Script support | The next iteration in the evaluation process is the decision of what kind of script support is offered to the selected projects. Each project receives allowances successively along the development of the script, concluding only with the ultimate rejection or nomination for production grant. The script pool contains three kinds of support; synopsis support, treatment support and script support. | 2-24 |
| 3. Develop-ment support | The third stage is allocation of support from the development pool, which the consultant can use for supplementary support to other aspects of the film project than the script development and to which the applicant can apply for supplementary funding which is relevant for the specific project (e.g. research, casting, testing special effects etc.). The development support can be given simultaneously with script support or afterwards. | 6-24 |
| 4. Production support | The big allotment of support is naturally directed at the production phase. It is only a fraction of the applications, which is selected for production support in the end. The guidance from DFI specifies that the decision to nominate support for a project is entirely at the discretion of the consultant. When the consultant deems that a project is mature in terms of artistic content, DFI initiates the administrative procedure which leads to the establishment of the size of the funding (DFI 1, p. 3). | 24- |

**Figure 1:** **Syncretic Knowledge Tensions and Provisional Identities**

EXTERNAL

KNOWLEDGE MANDATE

INTERNAL KNOWLEDGE MANDATE

TECHNICAL

KNOWLEDGE MANDATE

NORMATIVE

KNOWLEDGE MANDATE

**FILM WORKER**

**ARTISTIC MERCHANT**

**GUARDIAN**

**OF**

**CULTURE**

**CIVIL SERVANT**

**Figure 2: A Continuum of Models of Professionalism**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TECHNICAL  PROFESSIONAL | EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL | HYBRID PROFESSIONAL | PURE PROFESSIONAL |
| FILM WORKER | CIVIL SERVANT | ARTISTIC MERCHANT | GUARDIAN OF CULTURE |
| TECHNICAL RATIONALITY | SYNCRETIC RATIONALITY | | NORMATIVE RATIONALITY |
| LOCAL KNOWLEDGE CLAIM | OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE CLAIM | | SOCIETAL KNOWLEDGE CLAIM |