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Torn between the Old and New World of Work: Insights into the Modernised Semi-Profession of the Fashion Industry**

Abstract

This paper explores how persistent gender inequalities of the old world of work are amplified by the new world of work. Focusing on the fashion industry of Berlin, the article offers insight into a female-dominated field of labour as a particular field of labour of the cultural and creative industries (CCI). The CCI is regarded as a role model for new work. However, they entail deep gender inequalities in terms of segregation, low status and low pay. The paper addresses the question of how these gendered inequalities in the fashion industry are intertwined with its professional mechanisms and training structures. Based on a qualitative study, I argue that the fashion industry is a modernised semi-profession, which has been undergoing a market-driven professionalisation. However, this new pathway into the fashion industry fails to fully professionalise that industry. On contrary, it erects new occupational barriers into the field of labour that help establish high qualified and low qualified fashion work that also aids in polarising the still mostly female workforce in terms of status and rewards. Overall, it should become clear that the fashion industry is torn between the old and new world of work which helps to maintain or even reinforce traditional gender inequalities.

Keywords: fashion industry, gender, semi-profession, cultural creative industries
(JEL: I24, J44, J81)

Torn between the Old and New World of Work: Insights into the Modernised Semi-Profession of the Fashion Industry[1]

This paper presents an analysis of gendered structures within the small-scaled fashion industry in Berlin, Germany. It provides insight into a particular field of the cultural and creative industries (CCI), which are regarded as a role model for new entrepreneurial though insecure patterns of work (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006; Florida, 2000; McRobbie, 2016; Menger, 2006). The CCI span a wide range of workforce labour, such as performing and visual arts, publishing, music and design, including fashion design (DCMS, 2001; Deutscher Bundestag, 2007). In fact,

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40 % of the CCI have an overdue percentage of self-employed work, representing a labour force of more than 1.3 million people, which is 3 % of Germany's total labour force. Furthermore, there is a lot of empirical evidence that cultural-creative work is experienced as profoundly satisfying, which, to a certain extent, seems to legitimise precarity as in Germany more than 30 % of the CCI's labour force earn less than 17.500€ per year (Bertschek et al., 2017, p. 20; McRobbie, 2016, p. 108). While the CCI vastly differ from the 'good old' standard relationship between labour and industry that offers full-time employment, permanent contracts and social insurance (Manske & Schnell, 2018), there are deep gender inequalities, considering pay, contractual status, segregation, and boundary work (Conor et al., 2015, p. 6).[2] This is particularly true for the fashion industry. It is marked by poor income conditions, meagre remunerations and severe patterns of segregation as more than 80 % of the workforce in the fashion industry are female (McRobbie, 2016; Schulz, 2016). However, little is known about how the particular precarity of the fashion industry relates to its professional training system. By investigating the fashion industry with particular respect to its training structures, this paper addresses gendered inequalities within the CCI, which has been not yet been fully considered. Herewith, the paper seeks to deepen the understanding of how persistent gender inequalities of 'the good old days' are amplified by the sociography within the new world of work. The paper addresses the following question: How do gendered structures of low status and low pay in the fashion industry intertwine with its professional mechanisms of training? Based on qualitative data, I argue that the fashion industry is a modernised semi-profession that offers little autonomy, little control over the field's knowledge base and meagre remunerations (see Bolton & Muzio, 2008, p. 284). I further argue that during the last three decades the particular training system of fashion designers has been professionalised by business schools that address a certain professional figure, the entrepreneurial auteur (McRobbie, 1998; Strandvad, 2015). Despite these new training structures enhance the occupational pathways into the fashion industry, they do not improve the status of low pay and weak labour market position of fashion designers, in general. On the contrary, they erect new occupational barriers into the field of fashion work, which generate new social inequalities as they carry the risk of polarising the still mostly female workforce with regard to training and jobs. Overall, it should become clear that the fashion industry is marked by poor professional standards and traditional gender inequalities which are reinforced within the new world of work.

The argument will be developed as follows: First, I will outline the theoretical approach concerning gender and semi-professions. Here, I will elaborate on the VET and its gender boundary, on semi-professions in the old and new world of work as well as the auteur as a creative professional. Then, I will introduce the research methods. The fourth section presents the empirical results of the study. It offers

2 In Germany, the gender pay gap within the CCI is even higher than in the German economy in general, namely 24 versus 21 % (Schulz, 2016, p. 215).

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deeper insights into the working and employment conditions as well as the training structures of the fashion industry in Berlin. In this light, the sociography of the fashion industry is contextualised using case studies that portray the working and living conditions of self-employed fashion designers. Subsequently, the empirical results are discussed with regard to professional standards. The concluding remarks address the traits and contradictions of a modernised semi-profession.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

Due to the informality and flexibility of cultural work, the fashion industry, in general, represents a precarious profession (Mueller-Jentsch, 2005), herein similar to the organisation of the new media industries (i.e. Christopherson, 2002; Gill & Pratt, 2008; see also Alberti et al., 2018). However, the particular precarity of the fashion industry in Germany is rooted in the cultural traditions of the gendered labour market system, which particularly is reflected in the relationship between professions and semi-professions (i.e. Davies, 1996).

Profession, Semi-profession, Gender: The German Case

The German VET consists of a two-track path that also marks a gender boundary. It divides professions from semi-professions. While professions are about occupational control, semi-professions have a weak labour market position (Brante, 2013; Bolton & Muzio, 2008). According to Freidson (2001, p. 12) a profession "gains the power to determine who is qualified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that work, and to control the criteria by which to evaluate performance". Therefore, it is the individual autonomy of professionals and the level of academic training that distinguishes a profession from other types of occupations and contribute to its jurisdictional boundaries (Abbott, 1988). However, the definition of a profession has been revised, as the line between professions and occupations increasingly blurred (Bolton & Muzio, 2008). This is particularly true for the German case because professional occupations (*Beruf*) are also apprenticeship-based with strict rules about qualifications and rewards. Furthermore, they are institutionally unified by the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsbildungssystem*). It includes free training in a company flanked by a school education in an institutionally standardised setting (i.e. a vocational school or *Berufsschule*) (Krueger, 2001).

In the next section, I analyse semi-professions as part of the German VET.

Semi-professions in the Old World of Work

Within the institutionalised division of labour of the German VET, semi-professions have little autonomy in terms of political entities and bureaucratic administration (Brante, 2013; Krueger, 1995). They do not impose comparable professional barriers; they are open to lateral entrants. Moreover, they consist of occupations

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with a vocational school education rather than academic training (Haasler & Gottschall, 2015; Krueger, 1995; Vester, 2010). Thus, semi-professions have been less successful in closing their jurisdiction. This decreased exclusivity corresponds to an education system for semi-professions that is not as specialised and is institutionally less regulated than professional occupations within the German VET (Haasler & Gottschall, 2015, p. 80; Vester, 2010, p. 62).

Historically, the semi-professional, school-based vocational training system was instituted around the turn of the 20th century. It was geared towards a female clientele whose careers were to be compatible with their roles as housewives or governesses (Krueger, 1995, p. 209). Thus, in Germany, the semi-professions are rooted in Vocational Education and Training (VET) which is based on a gender-specific education and training system from the early 20th century that corresponds with stereotyped gender characteristics, and a lack of institutionalized characteristics that cement gender inequalities (Haasler & Gottschall, 2015; Krueger, 2001; Schlüter, 1987). Therefore, the rise of the semi-professions is a phenomenon of the late 19th century as part of establishing modern society (Schlüter, 1987). However, its training structures not only constitute a (gender) boundary of profession and semi-profession, they are deeply rooted in the educational culture tradition (Graßl, 2019, p. 29). Corroborating this argument, Schlüter (1987) showed that the gender agenda of the VET corresponds with the simultaneously established, polarised gender characteristics (Hausen, 1976). It refers to and strengthens a gender labour division in which women are linked to the private sphere while men are seen as the breadwinner within the working sphere (Lewis & Ostner, 1994). Thus, the gender structure of the semi-professional training system cannot be explained by supposedly gender-specific aptitudes; rather, it is understood in relation to questions of social power within the constitutional process of modern society (Gottschall, 2018). Within this process, the semi-professional training system subjugated women to less privileged positions in the labour market while simultaneously enabling young women to enter the labour market and engage in training-based, gainful work. Thus, around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, women were included in the vocational system for the first time, although at the semi-professional and gender-stereotyped level. In this way, they gained legalised entry into the labour market. However, even today, the school-based vocational routes, about 100, mostly operate outside of the elaborate scheme in which trades and professions are standardised in Germany (Haasler & Gottschall, 2015, p. 80). In light of the lack of legal protection of the skills acquired, the school-based educational system became characterised as semi-professional (Krueger, 1995, p. 211). Thus, it entails a gender segmentation in terms of sectoral segmentation but also in terms of working time, pay structures and representation in job hierarchies. Haasler and Gottschall (2015, p. 80) concluded that the VET as a whole, but the school-based system in particular, significantly contributes to the perpetuation of gendered professions. Consequently, stereotyped female semi-professions are associated with relatively low

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social status, limited career opportunities and low wages (Bulton & Muzio, 2008; Krueger, 2001).

Semi-professions in the New World of Work

For the last three decades, semi-professions have been undergoing a process of professionalisation (Graßl, 2019; Haasler & Gottschall, 2015). According to Abbott (1991, p. 380), professionalisation is "a complex dynamic process with several levels of action". Usually, it is regarded as a process that is about to gain more 'power' in the system of professional relations and achieve a more powerful labour market position, defined as the degree (of freedom, independence and discretion) to which an individual can determine the kind of work he or she does (Saks, 2012). However, as Sena (2017) argued, professionalisation also can generate social inequality between different levels of actors. In this respect, Kuhlmann (2003) and Bulton and Muzio (2008) showed that, as a result of the influx of women in the workforce since the 1970s, the percentage of females in professions has generally increased. In terms of professionalisation, academic-based knowledge can be conceived as an attempt to self-regulate the occupational field (Schnell, 2018, p. 4). However, Bulton and Muzio (2008) compared different professions (law, teaching, management, teaching) and found that the sociography of occupation is more relevant than academisation or gender for accomplishing professionalisation. Thus, Kuhlmann (2003, p.85) proposes to refer to professionalisation as a process that does not automatically follow the logic of gender relations. Therefore, the sociography of the labour market conditions might be the primary reason why certain female-dominated occupations have failed to fully professionalise in terms of wages, social security and prestige.

Business Schools and Professionalisation

Another reason why semi-professions may fail to fully professionalise becomes obvious in what Graßl (2019) terms a market-driven professionalisation. Graßl (2019) showed that, in Germany, the public academic sector has changed since the mid-1980s as private universities set out to align with the public university sector. From that point on, private (business) schools could become part of the academic education sector as long as they obtained legalised status from the Ministry of Education (Buschle & Haider, 2016, p. 76). In general, these new institutions are run by private initiatives. Therefore, business schools are often private enterprises that charge fees to re-finance their business. Nevertheless, the private sector of higher education has shown impressive growth rates. Since 2013, the number of private universities and business schools nationwide has increased to 163 (Buschle & Haider, 2016). Although private schools offer new training paths and upgrade semi-professionalised training structures, they do not endow their graduates with more 'power' to achieve a leveraged labour market position in the system of professional relations (Freidson, 2001).

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Consequently, corroborating the findings of Bulton & Muzio (2008), Graßl (2019) indicated that while academic knowledge might improve an individual's labour market position, it does not necessarily help overcome the sociography of the respective labour field. However, business schools do affect the sociography of labour fields, which will be discussed in the next section with regard to the CCI.

The Author as a Professional

The new world of work of the CCI inhibits a certain professional figure. It can be regarded as a distinct outcome of a market-driven professionalisation (Graßl, 2019; Taylor, 2015). McRobbie (1998, 2016), McRobbie and Forkert (2009) and Strandvad (2015) analyse the production of this particular professional figure by exploring how private art and business schools affect the sociography of certain fields of labour within the CCI. These authors discuss a particular professional figure—the entrepreneurial auteur—as a distinctive way of controlling and doing design work (see Abbott, 1988, 1991). With regard to London art schools, McRobbie (2016) argued that during the New Labour Era and the rise of the creative industries as a promising realm of entrepreneurial labour and economic growth according to the DCMS (2001, see also Deutscher Bundestag, 2007), the art-school system had been in danger of losing its intellectual approach by adopting a "business-school model" where "entrepreneurial pedagogies find their institutional (…) home" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 86). With this ideological and semantical shift to entrepreneurial pedagogies from the 1990s onwards, artists and designers are increasingly being trained to regard their work as an innovative commodity. Moreover, with the focus on market-related innovation, training structures emphasise an entrepreneurial self in a Schumpeterian sense, according to the concept of the creative class that will fit market trends (Florida, 2000; Schumpeter, 2005). Therefore, McRobbie (2016) and Manske (2016) concluded that, within this discourse, artists are regarded as human capital while the increasing number of business schools train and educate students for knowledge transfer, industry links, sponsorship and placements. However, they install pathways to employment, which, frequently is flexible, poorly paid and not fully professionalised (McRobbie & Forkert, 2009, p. 1).

With regard to fashion school admission tests, McRobbie (1998), furthermore, stressed the consequences of a market-oriented training system. She showed that applicants need to demonstrate whether they are able to sew in a proper professional manner *and* present convincing ideas for how they would establish a fashion brand. Thus, due to the rise of the creative economy and the CCI seen as an innovative new world of work, there was also a shift within the training structures towards a corresponding professional. Consequently, a central feature of being acknowledged as a professional fashion designer is "based on a shift from craft to concepts" (Strandvad, 2015, p. 153). As a result, designers are trained to become entrepreneurial auteurs (McRobbie, 1998, p. 38); paradoxically, this paraphrases

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the romantic conception of the artist as a genius with extraordinary abilities for self-expression aligned with an entrepreneurial spirit (Strandvad, 2015, p. 144; see also Banks & O'Connor, 2017; Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Manske & Schnell, 2018).

Against this backdrop, the relationship between gender injustices, labour market conditions and professionalisation within the fashion industry becomes accessible as a particular sociography of work, whose training structures increasingly address the auteur as a creative professional. Before delving deeper into this problem, the next section addresses the methods used in this study.

Methodology: Case Studies and Field Research

A key objective of this article is to investigate the gender structures of the fashion industry by exploring its professional conditions and training pathways. The empirical material used in this article comes from a qualitative study of the small-scaled fashion industry in Berlin. I explored the world of the self-employed working force of the fashion industry that holds a weak market position. The empirical research was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Hans Boeckler Foundation.

Research Strategy

The research strategy was based upon Bourdieu's concept of field sociology (Bourdieu, 1996), aligned with the methodological approach of Grounded Theory, comprising case studies (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). According to Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 30), a case study is an "intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or a community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment" (see also Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 26). In this research method, a small sample (often less than 20) enhances the in-depth inquiry of the empirical data (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 484). It is a particularly appropriate way to gain an in-depth analysis of the specificities of a certain phenomenon (like the labour market status of fashion designers). (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 489).

Data

In this study, I used different qualitative methods to collect five types of data (see Flick et al., 2015), as follows: 1) I conducted 14 interviews with self-employed fashion designers in Berlin. The interviews lasted between 60 and 110 minutes, were recorded, protocolled, transcribed and coded. They entailed questions about the every-day-working experience of fashion designers (i.e. how the interviewees' find their way into the fashion industry, their professional status, boundary work); 2) I used field observations and field protocols, including informal discussions, city walks and participant observations of industry meetings and lifestyle behaviours,

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such as vernissages, fashion shows and the like; 3) To obtain information about developments in the industry regarding its dynamics of employment, labour and social policy, I conducted interviews with 16 experts from professional associations of the CCI, in general, and the fashion design industry in particular, i.e. the Association of German Fashion and Textile Designers (VDMD); 4) I gathered additional information regarding the admissions criteria of fashion business schools by conducting documentary research, which was supplemented by telephone interviews with two fashion business schools in Berlin. I obtained information related to the schools' admission tests and training subjects, tuition fees and payment models; 5) The empirical research was complemented by a broad array of survey material and statistical reports regarding the CCI (Bertschek et al., 2017; IHK, 2011; Schulz, 2016; Schulz et al., 2013; SenWTF, 2008).

Data Analysis

A key methodological assumption of the study presented is that the researcher's experience within the field is indispensable in order to gain insight into the working and living conditions of the interviewees (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2010). However, the researcher needs to maintain an analytical distance from the research subjects (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This analytical distance is achieved by employing a number of systematic steps to analyse the data material. First, I took field protocols, which were categorised along with general keywords (time, duration, spatial conditions, atmosphere, main topics) (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2010, p. 63). Second, I extracted the thematic strands of the interviews related to the dimensions of working and living experiences, i.e. pathways into the fashion industry, every-day-work, work ethic, collaboration with other fashion designers or multiple jobs. Furthermore, I composed inductive single case reports, which resulted in case comparisons, two of which will be presented later on in this paper (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The case studies were composed by combining inductive and theory-based approaches (Reichertz, 2007, p. 225). Finally, I compared the material using theoretical codes (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 493; Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2010, p. 338). The codes reflect the key categories of the analysis as working conditions and constellations, the boundary between work and life, work ethic, family status and the interviewees' perceptions of the core institutions that structure labour relations. Based on the analytical categories of work ethic (passionate work), professionalisation and family status, the presented case studies capture the individual characteristics of the fashion designers as well as the general features of employment relationships in the fashion industry. The next section presents a dense field description of the fashion design industry in Berlin with the help of case studies.

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Empirical Results: The Fashion Industry as a Sociography of New Work

Given what has been said about professions versus semi-professions, the fashion industry is a specific example of a semi-profession, which is undergoing a market-driven professionalisation process as the traditional training system for fashion designers is increasingly aligned with private business schools. Although these schools severely affect the field of fashion work, they fail to fully professionalise it. In addition, they contribute to dividing the workforce into fashion school graduates and lateral entrants, namely auteur versus craft-based designers.

Fashion work involves the manufacturing of clothing and fashion accessories, such as blouses, shoes, belts and gloves. The market segments are haute couture and/or ready-to-wear fashion. However, a lower number of pieces is what unequivocally distinguishes fashion design from the clothing industry. In the following section, fashion design is understood as work on a small, or at least a non-industrial, scale. It comprises a production cycle that can be divided into five phases: fabric fairs and collections, design, production, fashion weeks or trade fairs, and distribution (Copercini, 2015, p. 76).

Careers and Labels

Throughout Germany, the fashion industry, with less than 46,000 workers, is a relatively small, yet female-dominated field of labour within the CCI. Berlin is the city in Germany that has the highest concentration of fashion workers. It consists of approximately 600 to 800 fashion labels that predominantly manufacture their goods in proprietor-owned fashion studios, supply shops and sales platforms (Copercini, 2015, p. 78). Since 2000, the fashion industry has been one of the sectors with the highest growth rates among Berlin's CCI (SenWTF, 2014).

Berlin has developed a certain kind of 'fashion identity'. In addition to small fashion stores, which are primarily run by self-employed fashion designers or small collaborations, Berlin has seen the arrival of major fashion retailers such as Acne or Cos, as well as fashion, sewing and production projects (McRobbie, 2016, p. 117). These include relatively well-established fashion labels, such as Kaviar Gauche, Lala Berlin, Esther Perbandt or Augustin Teboul. Despite these fashion labels are certainly exceptions within the Berlin fashion industry, in the data I analysed, they seem to function as a kind of benchmark for the burgeoning fashion industry. To take one example from this group, the Augustin Teboul label is a German-French partnership based in Berlin. On its website, the label announces that it is "positioned on the edge between ready-to-wear and haute couture (…). Inspired by Surrealism (…), the label stands for an exclusive, avant-garde and yet mind-blowingly feminine look" (Augustin Teboul, 2020). The label's international success has been fuelled by the media, i.e. the magazine, *Vogue*, which in 2017 noted that Augustin Teboul's clothes are worn by international pop stars, such as

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Rihanna and Lady Gaga (Vogue, 2017). They produce couture pieces, such as lace collars, or evening dresses, including couture accessories. Their work functions like pieces of art, as they are imbued with the influence of contemporary art theory, philosophy and (sub)cultural studies. Although these fashion designers are known for their fine arts approach and are economically successful, McRobbie (2016, p.135) emphasised that they face a variety of problems, including low customer sales, difficulties in capital investment, high staffing costs and high costs of exporting their fashion items.

However, most of the so-called fashion stars are graduates from art and/or business schools. Their reputations are high; they have won national and international prizes. The careers of the designers behind these labels suggest that it is feasible to make the transition from working at an autonomous local fashion studio to being an internationally renowned auteur. The image of those fashion stars and the fashion industry as a promising industry is reflected in the comments below from an expert from the VDMD I interviewed:

> In Berlin, you can make money with fashion. For sure, Berlin is a fashion niche and design city that is becoming stronger. We are just beginning. It is developing so quickly and according to reports we are seen as an exciting city— even more than New York (E 8, p. 3).

Despite its 'fancy' position in the CCI realm, labour in the small-scaled fashion industry implies not only a high percentage of self-employed workers—the self-employment rate is about 75 %—but also unpaid internships, multi-jobbing with extremely low incomes of less than € 1.100 per month (Liersch & Asef, 2015, p. 29). Thus, it is not surprising that about 45 % of all fashion designers located in Berlin cannot make a living from their fashion work (IHK-Berlin, 2011, p. 9). In fact, 9 % earn no income from fashion work, while 10 % of all fashion designers, particularly those that are innovative labels, receive financial support from structured programmes for fashion design start-ups administered by the Senate (SenWTF, 2008).

Considering this sociography of the fashion industry, fashion designers might conclude that they only need to professionalise their work by applying to one of the new business schools in order to become a renowned fashion designer. However, this kind of investment is only beneficial for a minority of fashion designers.

New Occupational Pathways

In Germany, fashion schools are part of the two-track pathway of the VET. Therefore, in the German context, fashion schools can be qualified as part of the semi-professional education system. The vocational training offered in fashion schools reinforces the fashion industry as a semi-profession for predominantly female workers. Since the 1990s, the number of private fashion schools has increased. In 2016, there are about 40 fashion schools throughout Germany (VDMD, 2016), 12 of which are in Berlin, showing a remarkable density even in comparison to interna-

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tional data (SenWTF, 2008, p. 71). Women comprise 92 % of the students enrolled in fashion schools (Schulz et al., 2013, p. 76).

Table 1 provides an overview of the 12 fashion schools in Berlin. My analysis revealed that, in Berlin, sometimes fashion design is taught at art colleges, but over the last 20 years, it increasingly has become a subject at business schools. With regard to the knowledge base, business schools offer academic training on a variety of academic subjects, while others are organised according to traditional fashion schools and focus on semi-professional subjects. Eight of those fashion schools are private schools; only four are publicly financed. My survey also shows that applicants have to complete different steps to be admitted into those schools. By a portfolio, the applicants need to prove their artistic suitability and their idea of being a fashion designer. Furthermore, there are bureaucratic admission criteria. Some schools require a middle school degree (*mittlere Reife*) while others require a high school diploma (*Abitur)*; in exceptional cases, those schools also accept students who have not graduated from any academic institution. With regard to the training programmes, some primarily offer fashion design training while others, preferably the newly installed business schools, specialising in marketing and management courses. Therefore, next to fulfilling craft skills, the training structures focus on the trade qualifications needed to establish one's own brand. With regard to fees, nine fashion schools in Berlin charge tuition, ranging from 95 € per month (public vocational school) to a one-time fee of 25,600 € (private business school).

Table 1. Fashion Schools Berlin

Fashion School	Status	Founded in year	Require-ments	Gradu-ation	Tuition fees
Lette	Public vocational school	1866	Secondary school	Federally recognized Fashion Designer	€95 /month
Best Sabel	Private vocational school	1896	Secondary school	Federally recognized Fashion Designer	€360 /month
EBC	Private business school	1934	Abitur (*college-prep* track high school degree)	B.A. Fashion Management	€325 /month, plus €500 registration fee
Weißensee Academy	Public art school	1946	Abitur (*college-prep* track high school degree)	B.A./M.A. Fashion Design	-----
UDK	Public university of arts	1975	Artistic aptitude test, internship	B.A./M.A. Fashion Design	----

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Fashion School	Status	Founded in year	Require-ments	Gradu-ation	Tuition fees
OSZ	Public voca-tional school	1979	Secondary school	Federally rec-ognized Fash-ion Designer	----
AMD	Private fash-ion school	1989	Abitur (*col-lege-prep* track high school de-gree)	B.A. Fashion Design	€675 /month, plus €595 registration fee
Medien-col-lege	Private voca-tional school	1991	Secondary school	Federally rec-ognized Fash-ion Designer	€345 /month
Esmod	Private fash-ion school	1994–2017	Secondary school	B.A./M.A. Fashion De-sign	€388 /month
HTW	Univ. of Ap-plied Science	1994	Abitur (*col-lege-prep* track high school de-gree)	B.A.	----
EMBA	Private busi-ness school	2007	Abitur (*col-lege-prep* track high school de-gree)	B.A. Business Management	€25.600 one-time fee
MD.H	Private busi-ness school	2014	Abitur (*col-lege-prep* track high school de-gree)	B.A. Fashion Design	€670 /month

SenWTF (2008); VDMD (2016), author's illustration

According to an expert from the VDMD that I interviewed, these costs prevent many fashion workers from attaining a fashion school degree, especially lower middle-class students that cannot afford the fees for business schools. This view corresponds with the experiences of the study's respondents, who claimed that the costs are an obstacle to professionalising their labour, especially when the applicants have "no financial resources or no familywise financial backup", as one of the fashion designers stated in an interview. Although not institutionally standardised, business schools tend to promote the auteur designer as discussed by McRobbie (2016) and Strandvad (2015), as the following quote from an expert from the VDMD indicates: "Many graduates who come from the schools are not qualified well enough since their training sometimes focuses more on drawing and designing than on imparting knowledge of the textile machine theory or of dyeing techniques" (E 8, p. 3).

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However, only a small number of graduates from fashion schools become 'fashion stars'. About 30 % to 40 % of fashion graduates get jobs in retail or journalism; others specialise in styling or other activities in the fashion sector, while annually about 400 fashion designers become self-employed (Kluen, 2014; SenWTF, 2008). Considering these different careers, one of the interviewees referred to it as a "training problem".

> It is a training problem. These structures need to be adjusted to practical issues of the needs fashion designers really have (…). People don't learn to walk that fast. And that's not because they are stupid or lazy, but that is an economic as well as political problem (FD 8, p. 7).

Consequently, the majority of Berlin fashion designers cannot rely on professional training; often, they are lateral entrants into the fashion industry that start their business on a poor professional basis. Furthermore, costly production factors exceed the work and financial capacities of many fashion designers. To cope with these challenges, they often work within small collaborations—whether or not the individuals concerned to share their label or try to achieve synergies by selling their separate labels in the same shop. Moreover, the data show that fashion designers tend to adopt a strategy of multi-jobbing to stay afloat. Hence, their weak labour market position explains why many fashion labels have a life cycle of only a few years (Manske, 2018).

Thus, the occupational pathways into the fashion industry have broadened. However, the workforce still is overwhelmingly female. The next section offers deeper insight into the working life of fashion designers by presenting two case studies.

Working on a Poor Professional Basis: Two Case Studies

Craft-based fashion designers mostly work on a poor professional basis. They are bound to the Berlin niche, even if they have some international experience or if they try to expand internationally. Although they also design individual pieces, in their view fashion is ultimately something that is comprehensible not as 'mind-blowing', but as "clothes that look nice on the average woman", as one of the interviewees stated. Typically, their economic condition involves multi-jobbing. Therefore, many designers have reduced the complexity of their fashion creations by minimising the individual production steps. Thus, they often design and sew by themselves and keep their seasonal collections to a minimum. However, my data shows that craft-based designers tackle these challenges in different ways, including the paradox of passionate work versus precarious labour, as the following two case studies highlight.

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Staying Away From the Professionalised Fashion Industry

An example of craft-based fashion work is presented by the case study of Katharina K[3], a 47-year-old fashion designer who gained access to the fashion industry through a variety of internships and sewing courses, including some in London. She describes herself as an autonomous fashion designer who is not interested in doing 'high end' fashion; she prefers to create streetwear.

> I love fashion! Working as a fashion designer is exactly what I want to do. But I don't need to do haute couture, that is not what I'm interested in. To me, fashion rather is what people wear on the streets. Therefore, I am happy to sell my stuff on the market even though I know that this is no big business (FD, 4, p. 2).

To Katharina K, fashion is an "exploitation business" as many fashion designers work desperately for very little money. Therefore, she tries to stay away from the professionalised fashion industry. She does not even consider obtaining an additional degree in fashion design or an apprenticeship as a tailor. Instead, she relies on her craft skills and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which she has acquired through years of working experience. Benefiting from the informal word-of-mouth system for learning about jobs in Berlin, she found a particular niche within the fashion industry. In this niche, she finds customers who also serve as her professional network. However, her income stems from multiple sources: from private collections, which she sells primarily at weekly street markets, from temporary work in costume departments at theatres and from teaching creative courses at an adult education centre. When asked how she calculates and negotiates her fees, she explained that she bargains the prices for fashion items individually with her clients. This demonstrates how much love and effort she is ready to invest in a fashion job. She subsidises these meagre remunerations by engaging in informal bartering with a certain kind of gift economy within her personal networks (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986).

> For when I'm working in the theatre as a freelancer, they have fixed salaries, anyway. However, as a self-employed fashion designer or costume designer, the fee needs to be negotiated every time (according to, AM) the client's budget. And of course, I will also decide whether I really want to do this job (…) this is the landmark for how much love and effort I put into the particular job. Actually, within my social networks, we do a lot of bartering work, for example, photography for styling. Or men's suits. Friends help. You pay for it sometimes, but the exchange relations work well (FD, 4, pp. 11ff.).

By maintaining a social distance from the fashion industry as a glamorous market sector, she tries to cope with the paradox of cultural work and with the fact that she does not fit professional standards. On the one hand, her fashion work is a genuine part of the small-scaled fashion industry; on the other hand, she works beyond it, in a tiny niche. However, in order to be able to afford to work in this tiny niche, she significantly depends on her long-term partner, who works full-time in the public service. Thus, she needs her partner's financial support as she cannot make a living from her fashion business. While her private constellation enables her to do

3 The participants' names are pseudonyms.

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'passionate work', her weak working status simultaneously implies an economically dependent, private status. This private status of economic dependency from her partner seems to be the pitfall as well as the precondition for her being able to remain in the fashion industry. Thus, her private living arrangement represents a particular sort of the traditional breadwinner model that proves to be a crucial social mechanism of the semi-professions.

Trying to Keep Up With Rising Professional Standards

In another case study, Doris M, a self-employed fashion designer, tries to keep up professionally. However, she does not have sufficient private resources to make ends meet. Now 42-years-old, she began her career with a conventional apprenticeship as a seamstress, which she completed before she moved to Berlin. Her professional situation is aggravated by the fact that, as a single mother of an 18-year old daughter, and the sole wage-earner, she suffers from conflicting demands to reconcile her work and life responsibilities. Currently, she produces and sells her ready-to-wear fashion products under her own fashion label. When asked to describe what her fashion work is about, she referred explicitly to the retail and sales aspect:

> Actually, it's almost a bit like social work. There are many women who want to be nurtured with confidence. A main component is to show them that also an expressive colour suits them; I tell them things like 'be you again' or 'you can show off a little'. Therefore, my work consists of designing and sewing but goes beyond production and sales (FD, 6, p. 2).

Doris M has worked in Berlin's fashion scene for almost 20 years in different social constellations, continually maintaining and building her network, which she sees as a key element in her survival tool kit. She has worked alone at home, alone in sales studios, together with others in pairs or in groups of three, and in a combination of fashion, art and catering/gastronomy or in dedicated fashion projects. Amidst these ups and downs, she opened a store in an established trendy district in Berlin with support from two other female fashion designers from her professional network. In this store, the three partners sold their creations under their respective individual labels. However, as she explains, this arrangement proved to be "economically very difficult in that area", although the situation did not improve following a move to a "top-notch sales location". The cooperative project ultimately folded. She experiences her struggle for survival as being extremely tough.

> Very bad <<laughs>> I am totally unmotivated. (…) no periods of rest. I process incoming orders; otherwise, I put together a seasonal program. It is difficult to find the time for new ideas, always the same, I know that from all my colleagues, and that is because that economically (---) yes, (-) you can't come up << laughs >>, that is really an economic problem. But I try to find the time to create new ideas. But the biggest thing is to organise my biz because I just do everything on my own; I have no employees right now. So, there are days when I just do the cutting and choose colours. Then, there are days when I only do sewing. It's a terrible pressure of time. It doesn't stop when I go home because my daughter, she also needs me (…). Now, I try to get more effective with processing, like for industrialised work (...). However, doing so bothers me (…). It's frustrating (…) (FD, 6, p. 4).

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In summary, she stresses that she has not been able to find an economically prosperous way to develop her enterprise.

> Actually, I would have liked to slide into two larger, more prestigious trade fairs this year. Unfortunately, it did not work out. In addition, I consider to design a high-quality product range, like a few products at least. (…). Sometimes, maybe once a year, I say to myself: it's enough, I am just starting off again, doing something totally different. But then again, if a design idea comes up to me, it needs to get expressed, doesn't it? (FD, 6, p. 6).

To Doris M, professional design is the key to making ends meet in the fashion industry, particularly with respect to the increasing number of graduate fashion designers. She tries to keep up by establishing her own brand, by rationalising her craft techniques, reducing the season's work and focusing on customer service. However, her professional ambitions must be regarded with respect to her boundary work as a sole wage-earner and single mother. Therefore, her struggle within the fashion industry is framed by her obligations as a family breadwinner. Thus, she copes with a precarious business while gradually losing her passion for work. However, she finds it frustrating to regard fashion work as a normal job, even though doing so is seemingly inevitable due to the need to balance her work and life responsibilities.

Discussion: Working against and Below Professional Standards

In Berlin, the small-scale fashion industry as part of the CCI is shaped by paradoxical economic and social processes. On the one hand, it has become a dynamic and symbolically highly-charged labour market segment. On the other hand, the analysis shows that fashion work is a female-dominated field of labour that professionally is rooted in the semi-professional training structures of the VET. Thus, while fashion work is passionate work, it generates low income, meagre remunerations and reinforces traditional gender inequalities as fashion workers often depend on a breadwinner. However, by implementing business schools as a new training path for the fashion industry, there can be detected two types of fashion designers, auteurs and craft-based designers. While the auteurs are graduated designers, who comprise a successful fashion label and often see themselves as artists, they are rather exceptions within the Berlin fashion industry. In contrast, craft-based designers often are lateral entrants who produce ready-to-wear-fashion, and who neither go to university nor have the necessary economic resources to attend one of the expensive private fashion schools or, more recently, business schools. Therefore, working in the fashion industry is characterized by a hodgepodge of female-dominated, self-employed and marginal employment, precarious income and a semi-professional training system. Nevertheless, within my data material, the auteurs function as a kind of benchmark for the burgeoning fashion industry of Berlin. By contrasting these two types of fashion designers, social inequalities among the still predominately female workforce become obvious. While the auteurs often are internationally renowned and, thus, have the freedom to regard their fashion work as pieces of

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art, craft-based designers often work on a poor professional basis. Rather than graduating from a fashion school, they often gain access via internships, traineeships and work placements with at best token remuneration. Although the auteurs face the economic difficulties of the fashion industry's sociography of low capital return work (McRobbie, 1998), they are the happy few who can make a living from fashion design. They even seem to work and live in a different fashion world than the less privileged craft-based designers. Corresponding to their weak labour market position, they work within shifting constellations, including multi-jobbing. Although most of them can barely stay afloat economically, overwhelmingly, the interviewees in this study declared that they entered the fashion industry because of their passion for design. However, the in-depth analysis of the cases presented in this paper reveals its contradictions. Based upon the analytical categories of passionate work ethic, professionalisation and family status, the case studies shed light on different ways to cope with the paradox of passionate work versus precarious labour.

The Katharina K case study shows that she experienced the fashion industry as an exploitive industry. Therefore, she distinguishes herself from it by escaping into a tiny niche in order to secure satisfying projects. As a result, distinguishing herself from what the VDMD expert termed a promising and innovative business, enables Katharina K to adhere to her passion. Against this background, she downgrades the relative importance of well-remunerated and stable work. However, working against professional standards, not only enables her to hold on to passionate work but also intensifies her status as being dependant on a breadwinner. In contrast, in Doris M case study, it becomes obvious that she tries to professionalise herself in a Schumpeterian sense in order to keep up with the *professional* fashion industry. Moreover, this case study shows that the idealised notion of a passionate work ethic, which is supposed to legitimatise precarity, seems to decrease its relevance to her. As a sole wage earner and single mother, she is facing a decreasing passion for design work. Consequently, as she constantly is suffering from her semi-professional status, she seeks to distinguish herself, at least partially, from the idea of passionate work. However, this experience is aggravated by the demands of reconciling work and life. Therefore, if there is no breadwinner available–as in the case of Doris M–fashion designers seem to be forced to use an exhausting muddling-through strategy. In contrast, the case of Katharina K indicates more traditional contradictions of semi-professionals as she economically depends on her long-term partner, which seems to be the precondition and, of course, the drawback of her fashion work.

In a nutshell, the cases illustrate how craft-based fashion designers meet new professional challenges, how they stay afloat economically and by what kind of work ethic as well as family status their work and employment condition is framed.

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Conclusion: Traits and Contradictions of a Modernised Semi-profession

In this article, I analysed a particular link between the old and new world of work by exploring the gendered implications of the professional training structures of the fashion industry which represents a field of labour of the CCI. I have argued that despite the CCI is regarded as a forerunner of the new world of work, the gendered structures of low status and low pay qualify the fashion industry as a modernised semi-profession. I have further argued that the fashion industry's training system is rooted within the VET of the German labour market system and that the fashion industry is undergoing a professionalisation, which is primarily driven by a number of recently established private businesses and fashion schools. I discussed this new pathway as a market-driven professionalisation, which addresses a new professional within the fashion industry: the entrepreneurial auteur as a distinctive way of controlling and doing design work. It became clear that this way of professionalising the fashion industry is an ambivalent process. On the one hand, the training pathways are broadened and offer specialised knowledge, on the other hand, they do not overturn the sociography's harsh economic conditions as they do not offer the power to close the fashion industry's jurisdiction or provide a common strategy for establishing academic training for fashion designers, in general. On contrary, they impose new economic and institutional barriers on the fashion industry, at the same time. These new barriers help establish high and low qualified routes; rather, they generate social inequality between different levels of actors as the high qualified path is only feasible for a small portion of fashion designers, the auteurs (Abbott, 1991; McRobbie, 1998). To them, the market-driven training structures offer more 'power' to organise and control their own work (Freidson, 2001). Thus, the increasing prevalence of business schools and their particular occupational pathways not only contribute to a new kind of fashion professional, they also aid in polarising the still mostly female workforce in terms of autonomy, status and rewards while, at the same time, fashion work inheres a breadwinner model. Moreover, by stressing individual factors in relation to the environment, my analysis reveals that those who hold the status of craft-based fashion designers lack the power to control and organise their work in a professional manner. Furthermore, my findings help to refine the assumption that a passionate work ethic legitimises precarity (see Banks & O'Connor, 2017; McRobbie, 2016). Despite creative work, in general, is passionate work, suffering from a weak labour position and meagre remunerations obviously can lead to a diminished 'passion' for work and thus de-legitimises, at least to a certain extent, precarious labour.

In conclusion, the presented empirical findings stress that the sociography of the fashion industry corresponds to a traditional semi-professional training system, which is strongly influenced by the German VET. Despite the training system for fashion designers is increasingly professionalised, it fails to fully professionalise

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the fashion industry but rather helps to polarise the workforce into auteurs and craft-based fashion designers. Therefore, the analysis unveils paradoxical forms that link the processes of a market-driven professionalisation and gender within the deeply segregated field of fashion work. In sum, the fashion industry represents a modernised semi-profession that is torn between the old and new world of work which helps to maintain or even reinforce traditional gender inequalities within the new world of work.

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