De-limitation as a General Trend?

A Comparison of Mobile Care and Work in the Media and Culture Industry

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SUMMARY

In the German sociology of work and industrial relations there is an ongoing discussion on the “de-limitation” of work. In this debate, it is assumed that the de-standardisation and growing flexibilisation of work may result in a dissolution of the boundaries between work and private life, whereas a separation of both spheres was characteristic of an ideal-type standard working contract during the Fordist period. Up to now, there has not been much empirical research that has taken a closer look at the postulated changes. To get a broader perspective on the changes in work in different occupational fields, the paper compares results from a study on mobile care services with the findings of a research project on freelancers in the new media and the cultural industries. The authors ask whether the assumed de-limitation of work really is a general trend. Are there possibly countervailing tendencies in some fields? Do workers just cope with the changes of work, or do they develop their own, active strategies to re-define the boundaries of work to find a new work-life balance? How are opportunities and risks spread among different groups of workers? What can be learned from such a comparative perspective for the debate on a de-limitation of work?
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

In the German sociology of work and industrial relations there is an ongoing discussion on the “de-limitation” of work. In this debate, it is assumed that the de-standardisation and growing flexibilisation of work may result in a dissolution of the boundaries between work and private life, whereas a separation of both spheres was characteristic of an ideal-type standard working contract during the Fordist period. This development, it is assumed, is placing new demands on workers, which involve opportunities as well as risks. The normal employment contract, which has established itself in Germany and Austria as an ideal for the regulation of paid labour, is taken as reference point for ascertaining the change in the nature of work.

The de-limitation debate has thus far primarily been conducted as a societal-theory debate. Here it is assumed that de-limitation is a general trend in the course of which there is a deep-going transformation in the commodity of work. First studies to investigate the de-limitation thesis empirically primarily concern themselves with the media and culture industry, which is considered to be a pioneer of this development (Mayer-Ahuja/Wolf 2005; Manske 2003; Gottschall/Betzelt 2003). Alongside this, there have been empirical studies on qualified skilled work in industry (Pongratz/Voß 2003), tele-homeworking (Kleemann 2005) and individual freelance work in various sectors (cf. the contributions in Gottschall/Voß 2003a). Comparative studies in which the differences and commonalities of de-limitation tendencies in different fields of activity are worked out, as in the project “De-limitation and Participation”, contrasting mobile care and the IT sector (Eichmann et al. 2004), have so far been an exception.

Such a comparison is necessary, however, in order to establish whether the thesis of the de-limitation of work as a general trend is in fact sustainable. What influence do (labour-) market conditions in the individual sectors and occupations have on the transformation of work? Might there be countervailing tendencies in some fields? Do workers just cope with the changes in work, or do they develop their own, active strategies to re-define the boundaries of work and to find a new work-life balance? How are opportunities and risks of an active de-limitation spread among different groups of workers, for example according to qualifications and gender? And finally, what can be learned from such comparative empirical findings for the debate on a de-limitation of work?

This paper is a further attempt to close this gap in the research. To this end, the results of the project “Neue Erwerbsformen und Wandel von Geschlechterarrangements” [New forms of labour and transformation in gender arrangements’], which investigated highly qualified freelance workers in the fields of journalism, design and software development, will be contrasted with the project “Entgrenzung und Partizipation” [De-
limitation and Participation] on mobile care as a field of work for workers with generally limited or mid-level qualifications.\textsuperscript{1}

Both studies use both quantitative as well as qualitative data. As a first step, in order to gather information on the structure of the field, existing statistical data has been evaluated and expert interviews carried out with representatives of the occupational groups being studied and from the occupational associations and trade unions. In mobile care, the primary empirical survey then took place in the form of four qualitative company case studies. The case studies include document analyses and 33 problem-centred interviews at all levels of the organisation (management, works council, employees with various employment contracts and at differing hierarchical positions). The existing statistical data for the culture and media occupations being studied is unsatisfactory. In a second stage of the research, a questionnaire survey (N=185) was therefore carried out among the members of the respective occupational associations, predominantly in three centres of the sector (Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg) in order to collect additional socio-demographical data.\textsuperscript{2} This made it possible to select the interview partners for the following main survey in the form of open guided interviews according to pre-established sampling criteria (gender, age, income, household type). In all, interviews with 17 journalists, 13 designers and nine software developers were carried out.\textsuperscript{3}

First, the characteristics of the fields of activity investigated are described in order to pursue the question of the influence that (labour-) market conditions in the sectors and occupations investigated have on the transformation of work. Then, with reference to the de-limitation debate, the question of which comparative dimensions seem suitable

\textsuperscript{1} The project „Neue Erwerbsformen und Wandel von Geschlechterarrangements“ (direction: Prof. Karin Gottschall, execution: Dr Annette Henninger) was based at the University of Bremen Zentrum für Sozialpolitik and was supported by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research from 2003 to 2005 in the framework of a combined project on „Limits to the De-limitation of Work“. The research project „Entgrenzung von Arbeit und Chancen zur Partizipation“ (2003-2005) was supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Art in the framework of the research programme „New Orientations for Democracy in Europe“ and is being carried out by the Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA) in Vienna (Working team: Mag. Manfred Krenn, Dr Hubert Eichmann, Dr Jörg Flecker, Mag. Christoph Herrmann, Dr Ulrike Papouschek).

\textsuperscript{2} For the journalists and designers the regional subdivisions of the respective professional organisations inform their freelance members about the questionnaire. For the software freelances, among whom the level of organisation is significantly lower and the association landscape more splintered, the study was supported by two nationwide organisations; in addition, professional networks for making contact with freelances were used. The questionnaire sample covers 114 journalists, 49 designers and 22 software developers.

\textsuperscript{3} The survey period lasted from March 2003 to April 2004. Corresponding to the statistical distribution, pair relationships are taken account of with a ratio of approx. ¾, approximately a third of the interviewees live with children under 18 in one household. For other features, a composition of the sample that diverges from the statistical distribution was chosen. Thus, the ratio of women is approximately 50%, younger women (up to 35) and older women (over 55) are each represented by approximately 1/6, middle-aged groups (35-55) are represented by 2/3, in order to learn more about possible gender-specifics of careers as well as problems of the compatibility of family and occupation in the middle-aged groups. Precarious (under €20,000 annual income), middle incomes (€20,000-€50,000) and top earners (over €50,000) are represented in roughly equal ratios in order to cover the social spectrum as much as possible. In all, ten interview partners have their socialisation in the east, 29 come from western Germany.
for the analysis of the de-limitation processes in both fields of investigation will be discussed. In the empirical part, the results on the freelances in culture and media professions will be contrasted with the results on mobile care. Both the de-limitation tendencies as well as countervailing developments with regard to the strategies workers develop to deal with the changed demands will be queried and analysed. In the following discussion, commonalities and differences between the fields of activity investigated will be examined and opportunities and risks arising from de-limited work will be worked out for different occupational groups. Finally, there will be a discussion of what the de-limitation debate can expect to learn from the comparative findings.
2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIELDS OF ACTIVITY INVESTIGATED

With mobile care and independent self-employment in the culture and media professions it is a question of two fields of activity that, at first glance, have little in common. In relation to the field of work and the level of qualification of those employed, it is almost a question of contrasting extreme cases: on the one hand, dependent workers with a low or medium level of qualification, on the other hand predominantly academically qualified self-employed. Further, it is empirical studies from two countries (Germany and Austria) that are being compared here. As both countries have similar regulatory conditions regarding the labour market and boast social security, a comparison seems reasonable.

Both Austria and Germany can be classified according to the Esping-Andersen typology (1998) as conservative-corporatist welfare states, in as much as workers’ first line of cover against the risks of the labour market is social security contributions. The regulation of direct labour is comparatively strong in both countries. Employment contracts that do not correspond to the normal working contract, such as individual self-employment, part-time work and atypical employment permit the acquisition of only a marginal claim to benefits and show a comparatively weak regulation of work through tariff partners or professional associations. Both countries’ gender regime is oriented on a modernised variant of the male breadwinner model, in that women are assigned responsibility for housework and childcare, which has to be individually reconciled with paid labour, whereas the male breadwinner is released from reproductive work (for Austria, cf. Dackweiler 2003; for Germany, Dingeldey 2002).

True, with individual self-employment in the media and cultural professions and the care professions, which are predominantly dependent employment, it is a question of different forms of work. In both countries investigated, however, the fields of activity investigated are on the margins of normal employment contracts. Freelances in the media and computer sector are seen by Jurczyk and Voß (2000:167) as an exemplary example of a newly emerging ideal type of worker-entrepreneur (the so-called ‘entreployee’). The entreployee thesis (Voß 1998; Pongratz/Voß 2003) assumes that the de-limitation of work is a new phenomenon: with the worker-entrepreneur, in comparison with the previously dominant type of the professionalised employee as a result of the changed company strategies in the direction of increased utilisation of the subjective potential of the workers in the form of greater demands of self-control, self-

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4 In contrast to Germany, in Austria since 1998 all self-employed have been subject to a particular income threshold, and since 2001 all freelance artists have also been subject to an insurance obligation. The risks insured include old age, sickness and accident. At the same time, in Austria formerly self-employed pensioners far more often receive state-financed means-tested supplements to their pensions, intended to ensure a subsistence minimum, than former employees do, as the pension level achieved on the basis of their own contributions is insufficient. (Betzelt 2002: 28ff.)
organisation and self-rationalisation, which for the authors implies the danger of engaging the whole private life in the service of paid labour.

Mobile care as a typical women’s occupation is not generally mentioned as an example in the current de-limitation debate, although the job displays the central features of de-limitation. Mobile care is weakly regulated by employment policy. The activity displays a high ratio of atypical employment and field-work activity and is associated with high demands on the employee’s time flexibility. De-limitation in the sense of the company’s utilisation of the subjective potential of the workers is not a new phenomenon in this field of activity. This has thus far, however, been subject to little theoretical analysis. On the caring professions, however, there is a discourse concerning emotional work with person-related services (Hochschild 1990), which displays parallels with the subjectivisation debate (Baethge 1991; Voß 1998) and thereby offers points of contact with the de-limitation debate.

Even if there is no precise data on the employment figures and the future labour demand in the two fields of activity investigated, forecasts indicate that it is a case of expanding service markets, the quantitative significance of which will continue to grow. Because of the ageing of the population and the falling preparedness of private individuals to take on caring services, a growing need for mobile care with a continuing high demand for labour is assumed. In the culture and media professions, because of the high level of aggregation of official statistics, data on the total number of workers as well as the ratio of freelances in the individual occupations is difficult to ascertain. In general, in recent years it has been possible to see a significant growth in employment in the occupational fields of journalism, design and software development. In view of the expansion in production-oriented services and of services in the field of health, education and culture, it is to be expected that this trend will continue in future (Gottschall/Schnell 2000).

Apart from these commonalities, in mobile care and knowledge-based services in the culture and media industry, it is a question of fields of activity with different characteristics in which presumably different de-limitation phenomena and different employee strategies can be investigated in a contrasting way (cf. Table 2-1).
First of all, the two fields of activity are distinguished by the characteristics of the respective market. Through the introduction of tax-financed nursing allowance[^1] in 1993, a new legally regulated market for person-related services emerged. The development of outpatient care was given clear priority as opposed to inpatient establishments. Approximately 90% of outpatient care in Austria is provided by non-profit organisations. The care rates to which all the providers[^2] must adhere are established by the contractors (federal provinces). An increasing pressure of costs is currently arising through the public cost-cutting measures. The provider organisations are reacting to these through efforts for rationalisation and making the utilisation of care more efficient, among other things through cuts in working hours.

A second strategy by care organisations is to take on differently qualified care personnel (from qualified nurses to home helps) in different conditions[^3]. In Austria, this strategy has largely been made possible by the establishment of a new occupational group, care auxiliaries, whose qualifications lie between those of qualified health and nursing staff.

Table 2-1: Characteristics of the fields of activity investigated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative dimension</th>
<th>Mobile care</th>
<th>Culture and media professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>legally regulated market (nursing allowance) mainly non-profit organisations cost pressure through cuts in the public sector are passed on to employees labour shortage</td>
<td>globalised, dynamic product market mainly private companies cost pressure through high level of competition and speed of innovation; freelances as flexibility reserve partly, oversupply of labour (journalism, design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation of labour</td>
<td>since 2004 collective agreement with weak regulatory effect legally regulated training /activity and care standards Self-employment only possible for graduates</td>
<td>Multitude of professional associations with weak regulatory effect no protected professions, lack of recognised certificates and defined promotion route no access limitation to self-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment structure</td>
<td>low to medium qualification high ratio of women mainly direct employment, frequently part-time; alongside atypical employment, self-employment, moonlighting</td>
<td>highly qualified mixed gender journalism, design: tradition of freelancing; software development: dominance of direct employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^1]: In 1993 care provision in Austria was comprehensively restructured. A system was introduced that linked a seven-stage nursing allowance not oriented on income or insurance but only on the need for care, with the nationwide development of in-patient and mobile care establishments.

[^2]: Only associations that meet certain criteria and have agreed a contract with the provincial government, which also includes a quota, receive a contract.

[^3]: For example, the employment law difference between employees (qualified workers) and workers (home helps) has essential effects on the regulation of working hours and on security of income.
and those of home helps. The development in the occupation field is thereby going in the direction of a hierarchisation of caring activities. At the same time, there is a high demand on the labour market for experienced carers, for whom, alongside out-patient care, there are also employment opportunities in inpatient care (Krenn/Papouschek 2005).

In the culture and media industry, on the other hand, the product markets are globalised and very dynamic. Private companies dominate. The public sector is involved only in statutory public radio and television. Cost pressure emerges here through the intensive competition and through the high speed of innovation in the sector. The companies react to these circumstances with a differentiation into core and peripheral staff. Freelances are here used as a flexibility reserve. The companies are thereby linking the classical cultural professions of journalism and design, in which freelance working has a long tradition, with an existing earning pattern. At the same time, however, in recent years there has been a reduction in direct employment in both labour markets, which has not been compensated by the emergence of additional fields of activity in the new media (Löffelholz i.a. 2003; Wixforth 2004). Because of the difficult labour market situation, freelance activity is now the only opportunity for many journalists and designers to enter the job or avoid the threat of unemployment. On the other hand the rise in employment in the computer professions, which include software developers, does not represent a problem, as up until the crisis that began in 2001 there was a labour shortage in this field. According to expert estimates, for experienced workers with specialisations that are in demand, self-employment in this field still offers the chance for varied activity with a significantly higher income than in direct employment.

Both fields of activity differ further in relation to the regulation of work. In Austria, the “collective agreement for workers in the health and social occupations”, which standardises wages in the caring occupations, came into force for directly employed care workers in 2004. The regulatory effect of the collective agreement is weak, however. This is due on the one hand to the long transitionary regulations negotiated by the tariff parties. On the other hand a range of care organisations is refusing to recognise the agreement, as it envisages changing home helps to employee status, which limits their flexible use (Krenn/Papouschek 2005). At the same time, training and activity as well as access rights to the caring occupations are legally regulated. The training of qualified workers and care workers is regulated in the Austrian health and nursing legislation, whereas the training guidelines and related powers for home helps (right to exercise a profession) are laid down in the provincial legislation. Owing to the legal regulations, self-employment – whether genuine self-employment or new self-employment in the form of a contract for services or a free employment contract – is only possible for qualified health and nursing workers (Krenn/Papouschek 2005). The incomes in mobile care vary according to the individual occupational group, but in general are rather low and are below the income level of inpatient hospitals and care institutions.

The weak employment regulation for freelances in the culture and media industry has a different background to that in mobile care. Individual self-employment in the new

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8 In the GDR, journalists were predominantly directly employed in the state media sector, whereas designers counted as artists and could work freelance.
media is characterised in Germany by a hybrid form of regulation combining particular elements of employment regulation for directly employed workers with regulatory forms familiar to the classical professions (doctors, lawyers) (Gottschall 2002; Betzelt/Gottschall 2004). The result is an individualisation of market risks simultaneously with a weak market position. Whereas the professional associations’ have certainly made attempts at collective employment regulation, these professions lack the monopoly position or a protected market characteristic of the classical professions (Lane i.a. 2000:236). In the occupational fields of journalism and design there are a few large professional associations, which have developed innovative strategies for representing freelances’ interests (Betzelt/Gottschall 2004). The association landscape in the IT field on the other hand is more fragmented. For all three occupational fields studied, however, it is clear that the influence of the associations on the binding setting of price and quality standards is weak. Gottschall and Kroos (2003: 16) therefore describe the dominant form of employment regulation in this field as “informal governance”. The weak employment regulation in combination with the over-supply of labour in journalism and design leads to an income spectrum that ranges from a broad field of lower and middle incomes up to a small elite with top incomes (Betzelt/Gottschall 2004). Software freelances, on the other hand, against the background of greater demand on the labour market, can achieve significantly higher incomes (Henninger 2005).

Differences between the two fields of activity can also ultimately be noted in the employment structure. Mobile care is a mixed-qualification sector, which, with qualified health and nursing carers, includes an employment segment with a medium qualification level as well as the poorly-qualified care workers and “home helps”. Care workers in Austria are denied access to academic training. At 90%, the ratio of women workers is very high. The caring professions are therefore considered to be typical women’s occupations. Mobile care is dominated by direct employment in unlimited contracts of employment that are often part time. It is true that the number of self-employed is rising, but these still form the exception. Alongside this there is an increase in atypically employed caring personnel provided by agencies (nursing pools). Furthermore, alongside the official labour market there is a not inconsiderable level of moonlighting in mobile care (Streissler 2003).

In contrast to mobile care, in the fields of journalism, design and software development in the German study it is a question of highly qualified activities in which there is a trend to academisation. Gender distribution in the occupations investigated is mixed. The ratio of women among the directly employed workers is some 50% in design and 40% in journalism; at around 20%, on the other hand, the IT field has a comparatively low ratio of women. Only for journalists is there representative data for the proportion of women among the self-employed, given as 35.4% for the end of the 1990s (Grass

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10 In 2002 according to data from the Institute for Labour Market and Occupational Research, the proportion of women among directly employed fine artists/graphic designers was 51.5%, among journalists 41.2% and among data processing specialists 20.3% (www.abis.iab.de/bisds/data/seite_821_BO:a.htm, accessed: 18.11.2003). Dostal (2002: 201), on the other hand, estimates the proportion of women in the computer professions at the end of the 1990s as just 16.8%.
The occupational descriptions for culture and media professions are not protected and the barriers for entry to the market as a freelance are low. The rise in numbers employed in all three occupational fields has had different consequences based on the differences between the professional labour markets: in journalism and design there was a shift from directly employed to freelance working. Dostal (2002:203) puts the ratio of freelances in the artistic professions (including journalism and design) at 45.4% for 1998/99. In contrast, the vast majority of workers in the computer professions are directly employed; at 10.6% the freelance ratio here is around the average for all employees (ibid). Empirical surveys confirm that working hours for freelances in the culture and media industry are longer and more irregular compared to directly employed workers (Rehberg et al. 2002). Labour intensive phases alternate with periods of forced idleness. The working hours pattern in the sector is therefore characterised by Pratt (2000) as “bulimic careers”.

In summary it can be said that attempts to regulate working conditions through tariff agreements or professional associations have thus far had only limited success in the fields of activity investigated. An essential characteristic of both fields of activity is the weak collective regulation of employment in comparison to normal contracts of employment. Neither in mobile care nor among the independent self-employed can a deregulation of employment be observed, as it is assumed in the de-limitation debate. However, in care, in contrast to the culture and media professions, both quality standards and access to the labour market are legally regulated.

As it always has been, care work is dominated by direct employment. Care workers can hardly influence the business strategies of the care organisations, which increasingly pass on the pressure of costs to the employees (Krenn/Papouschek 2005). In general, for mobile care it can be assumed that high pressure of work is linked to the generally poor working conditions, so that the employees presumably have limited room of manoeuvre for coping with the consequences of de-limitation, which has been further constricted as a result of the internal organisational efforts for rationalisation and higher efficiency in the utilisation of care.

In contrast, independent self-employment as a form of working already has a long tradition in the culture and media professions. Problems for staff here result against the background of more difficult market conditions, above all as a result of the lack of employment regulation in combination with a to some extent weak market position. At the same time, however, in comparison to mobile care it is a privileged labour market segment: freelances in the new media have high qualifications and owing to their self-employment have a comparatively wide room for manoeuvre, which presumably makes greater resources available for coping with the consequences of de-limitation.
3. **COMPARATIVE DIMENSIONS**

We develop the comparative dimensions, on the basis of which we are researching the de-limitation processes in the two fields of activity, in the context of the de-limitation debate. The aim is the development of an analysis pattern that is suitable for the comparative investigation.

With *de-limitation*, it is not a question of a precise term nor a fully worked out analytical concept, even if there are the first approaches to this (Kratzer/Sauer 2003). Mostly, the de-limitation concept is used as a collective term for and beyond various developments in the organisation of work. Thus Gottschall and Voß (2003b:18) understand de-limitation as the “guiding tendency in the current changes in employer-employee relationships as a whole, which potentially affects all social levels of the make-up of work and earning.” The starting point of the diagnosis of de-limitation is the industrial society’s conception of established norms and standards of the utilisation of labour, the validity of which is now being weakened. The reference grid for ascertaining the change is the ideal type of the normal male contract of employment in large industrial enterprises. Because of the importance of the normal contract of employment for the regulation of employment in Germany as in Austria, this appears to be thoroughly justified. Thus, according to Bartelheimer (2003), in Germany a “standardisation and welfare-state support” of wage labour came about, in the course of which the normal contract of employment became the normative guideline of labour market and social policy. But in the debate it is always easily neglected that this ideal type by no means always corresponded to the reality, and in the past, too, a wide range of forms of employment existed.

In the analysis of the de-limitation processes, sociologists of work and industry as a rule concentrate on the change in company organisation of work (Kratzer/Sauer 2003; Wolf/Mayer-Ahuja 2002). Thus, some authors understand de-limitation as the result of a company rationalisation process with the aim of an extended access to the subjectivity, lifestyle resources and temporal availability of the employees (Kratzer/Sauer 2003; Voß 1998). De-limitation tendencies continue to be recognised in the social organisation of work through internal company restructuring and the dilution of company control guidelines (Voß 1998; Gottschall/Voß 2003b; Eichmann i.a. 2004).

In addition, a de-limitation of company organisation in the sense of the dissolution of company boundaries with regard to the market and the emergence of new types of company and organisational forms has been identified as a dimension for analysis (Eichmann i.a. 2004; Kratzer/Sauer 2003).

Changed company rationalisation strategies are undoubtedly an important driving factor in the de-limitation of work. The concentration on the company, however proves to be a cul-de-sac for the fields of activity investigated: since for employees in mobile care as well as for independent self-employed in the media and cultural industry, the company form in the classical sense of industrial work had never been a central feature of work, both fields of activity are quasi per definition de-limited. In order to be able to
empirically investigate de-limitation phenomena as well as countervailing tendencies, we decided on the comparative dimension of cooperation relationships, which is not geared in advance to a company-form of organisation of work. This makes it possible to carry out an empirical comparative investigation of the various forms of work, the social context in which the work is carried out and the specific competences or areas of responsibility that the workers have. Likewise, workers’ individual design options of work come to the fore. The thesis of a shifting of borders between work and private life through the utilisation of private social contacts for work – as is supposed for independent self-employed in the form of an instrumentalisation of family members in the sense of co-production (Matuschek 2003) or a general marketing of social relations (Manske 2003) – can be empirically investigated.

There is widespread agreement that de-limitation can be understood as a temporal de-limitation of employment conditions in the form of the flexibilisation of the place and length of working hours as well as spatial de-limitation in the form of changing places of work and increasing demands for mobility (cf. i.a. Voß 1998). Work at home, too – in the context of tele-home working (Kleemann 2005) or in the context of a self-employed activity – can be understood as de-limited in comparison to company-type organisation of work in normal contracts of employment. Changes in the relationship between work and private life are linked to the de-limiting phenomena in the dimensions of working hours and place of work: if “work” and “life” are no longer clearly divided spatially and temporally, the individuals themselves must create a new balance in which household and care work and leisure time find their place alongside work (Voß 1998; Jurczyk/Voß 2001; Gottschall/Voß 2003). Here the question poses itself of whether in the course of the changes in work the established gender norms that lay down the responsibilities of men and women for work and family work are open to change. Opportunities for a change in gender relationships thereby possibly open up. Whether the employee manages to utilise the design options linked with the spatial and temporal flexibilisation or whether they become “work monads” (Jurczyk/Voß 2001:155) under the pressure of market forces presumably depends however on the ability to plan the deployment of work.

De-limitation of work is also being discussed as the subjectivisation of work. In his entreployee concept, Voß (1998) makes a strong argument that new company rationalisation strategies are increasingly aiming at the utilisation of the ability of workers for personal motivation and independent sense of purpose and that de-limitation is therefore also to be observed in the dimensions of meaning or motivation. Kratzer/Sauer (2003) and Eichmann i.a. (2004) suppose a change in the relationship between “worker” and “person” in the form of a commercial utilisation of the “whole person” of the worker with their physical, cognitive, psychic and emotional potentials. In this view of de-limitation from the company perspective, it is not taken into consideration that de-limiting tendencies in the meaning dimension also result from changed demands by workers in the sense of a normative subjectivisation of work (Baethge 1991). Based on the subjectivisation debate, we apply the concept pair worker/subject as an analysis dimension for the comparative investigation of the subjectivity...
that is demanded in the labour process or desired by the employees. Here it is a question of empirically clarifying whether the presumed claim for self-realisation leads to an expanded market-sided access to the subjects, as is supposed in the concept of worker as entrepreneur, or whether there are also opportunities for the subject.

Alongside changed company strategies, the comparative dimensions presented in the following analysis grid make it possible to take in also workers’ individual and collective strategies oriented to cooperation and solidarity that are contributing to a de-limitation or to a possible limitation of work.

Table 3-1: Analysis grid for the comparison of fields of activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of de-limitation</th>
<th>Forms of utilisation of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation relations</td>
<td>In what social context? With what competence and responsibility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours</td>
<td>When? How long? When not? How open to planning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
<td>Where? Where not? In what (spatially distributed) cooperation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker/subject</td>
<td>What “proportion” of the worker is demanded in the labour process? What subjective demands on their work do the employees formulate?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These analysis dimensions are not new. They are the current dimensions of the sociology of work and industry. What is innovative, however, is their application to previously little investigated fields of activity and forms of work and their extension beyond the immediate company context, with the connection between work and private life being taken into account.

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11 The analysis grid presented here is a modified variant of the de-limitation phenomena compiled by Eichmann i.a. (2004), which have been adapted to the specific conditions of the fields of activity being investigated.
4. MOBILE CARE AND MEDIA-/CULTURE INDUSTRY: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the following, the empirical findings of the study of mobile care and the findings on freelances in the new media are compared on the basis of the analysis pattern developed in the previous section.

An essential difference between the mobile care workers and the independent self-employed in the media and cultural professions lies in the fact that mobile care is organised in company form. The employees are subject to directives and embedded in company hierarchies. The dominant organisational concept in the caring area is non-profit organisations, whose service spectrum covers both home nursing care as well as the provision of home helps. In all care providers, mobile care work is divided into care areas for which a team consisting of qualified nurses, care auxiliaries and home helps is responsible. The division of labour takes place centrally and on the basis of a care plan drawn up by the qualified workers. To this extent, the cooperation between the care workers is concentrated on this team. Owing to territorial competences there is no competition with other teams, however there is also hardly any contact or communication. The link between the care workers and the organisation as a whole takes place through the respective superiors.

4.1. Cooperation relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative dimension</th>
<th>Mobile care</th>
<th>Freelances in media/culture professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation relations</td>
<td>Organisation as a buffer against customer wishes</td>
<td>Customer relations must be actively taken up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range of services, tasks, competences legally regulated</td>
<td>Negotiation process with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control by superiors, primarily as control of working hours</td>
<td>Control of working hours only for software developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect quality control by colleagues and clients</td>
<td>Self-adherence to professional standards, indirect control by colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team as place of contact with colleagues – minimisation of indirect working hours makes contact more difficult</td>
<td>Contacts with colleagues have to be actively taken up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For care workers, orientation on the team is extremely important, as it breaks through the isolated character of working as a field worker and compensates for its negative effects through mutual support. However, these common team discussions have been diluted by the rationalisation efforts of the organisations, which are aiming at a reduction of indirect working hours. Contact with colleagues is thereby being made more difficult.
A second essential difference between the fields of activity is that the market for the services offered by the care organisations is largely regulated by the public authorities. Stages of care, rates and the timing of care activities are tied by a narrow regulatory corset that allows little room for market-type processes. Care organisations act in the field between contractors, customers and organisational interests. In mobile care, the relations with customers have a particular character. First, many customers have limited opportunities to slip into the role of “the customer is king”: not all clients can afford the services; most require public allowances. Further, in many cases it is a question of “customers” with limited power potential (elderly, sick people) who are frequently more dependent on the nursing staff (that is the service providers) than the other way round. It is therefore also dependent on the age and health of the clients (or the degree of involvement of family members) as to whether they are able to adequately formulate and appropriately assert their claims as customers at all.

Second, customers can bring no influence to bear on the individual care worker on the nature, place and length of the service. Requests regarding duty times must be registered with the central office, where it will then be decided according to the necessities of coordination in connection with the organisation of the whole process. The place and length of duty times are set according to the provision or care requirements of the respective clients (for example care in mornings, afternoons or evenings). The length of the duty, too, is set through the central office. This means that customers do not enter directly into a negotiation process with the care workers but that the organisation here acts as a buffer between them.

The clients, however, have a great influence on the working methods of the caring staff. Without or against the will of the clients, according to the occupational understanding of the caring personnel, it is not possible to provide care in a professional way. It is therefore taken into account that care is an interactive process that demands a social understanding between the clients and the caring staff. Despite the guidelines regarding hours and content of care, the specific activity has to be attuned to the particular requirements of the client and to special situations and events. Whereas the work processes are much more regulated in a hospital, the characteristics of mobile care include improvisation, independent decision-making and individual initiative. For care personnel, a particular space for design in the execution of their work derives from this. However, it cannot be assumed that all three occupational groups have room for manoeuvre. This expresses itself for example among home helps in that because of the current personal situation of the client, the household work envisaged has to be put aside and the needs of the client are met through a discussion.12

12 In Austria the rough areas of action for care are laid down, but there is no precise time limitation or measure of individual activities, so that the nursing and care staff have room for manoeuvre in carrying out their work in agreement with the clients. This is an important difference to the organisation of mobile care in other countries. Thus, for example, in Germany the competition between the providers through the opening of the market for private (not charitable) care services has increased. At the same time there is a meticulous system, introduced by the care insurance scheme, for recording services, which sets, calculates and charges (tight) amounts for individual services such as measuring blood-sugar levels or oral hygiene.
This room for manoeuvre is getting smaller, however. With increasing bureaucratic forms of control and Taylorist approaches (standardisation of performance in connection with time-economic rationalisation) the care organisations are seeking to react to the increasing pressure of costs arising from the limitation of the funding from the public contractor. This relates on the one hand to the elimination of existing gaps in the control of the work process and, on the other, to the minimisation of indirect working time.

In mobile care, control primarily means bureaucratic control. One form of bureaucratic control is self-documentation (care plans, execution plans, proof of action). The control of/ by superiors is limited to an ex-post control of self-recording and spot checks in the context of care visits. An important instance of control are the clients themselves and their family members and their satisfaction with the service. A further not inessential control instance are the colleagues (subsequent care workers or members of another care group). The mutual responsibility of the care workers plays an important role, as because of sickness or their general conditions (e.g. dementia) clients are often not in the position to exercise a control function themselves. Principally, however, control is related to the working hours. These are established by the duty sheets to be signed by the client and the check on the journey route through self-recording. A countercheck of the self-recording (duty plan, route plan) is undertaken by superiors and the control office.

In summary it can be said that increasing checks and an attempted standardisation of the services in connection with time-economic rationalisation are limiting the room for manoeuvre of the care workers and reducing contact opportunities between care workers through a minimisation of indirect working hours which characterise the “cooperation relations” dimension in care work.

For freelances in culture and media professions however, the integration into the market does not take place through an organisation, and cooperation relations are not determined through company hierarchy and division of labour. Cooperation relations with clients and self-employed colleagues must rather be actively produced and analytically managed. The empirical results of the study of freelances show that this is thoroughly successful and sometimes leads to long-term connections.

In view of the importance of “informal governance” (Gottschall/Kroos 2003) as well as the oversupply of labour in particular market segments, personal contacts based either on previous experience of cooperation or on personal recommendations are vital for freelances to acquire new clients. The reputation acquired in a particular field, which manifests itself for example in work for recognised contractors or in the awarding of prizes, can lead to the contractors themselves seeking contact with the freelances. Active acquisition of work with unknown clients on the other hand is regarded by most as tedious and unpromising. A peculiarity of the IT sector are the job agencies that for a commission paid by the freelance will arrange contacts with contractors and thus make the freelances in this sector more independent of personal contact.
The quality of work and the quality of the cooperation are decisive in the continuity of the cooperation and the development of closer relations between the contractee and contractor. Successful cooperation produces mutual trust and creates loyalties that also bind the players together for future projects. Most of those questioned work regularly for a narrow or broader circle of regular customers. This is seen as making the handling of contracts easier. At the same time, however, close relationships also create dependencies. Freelances can attempt to reduce these dependencies inasmuch as they go into business relations with various contractors or position themselves in different sub-markets (e.g. print and TV journalism). Freelances, however, serve as a flexibility reserve for the companies and thereby find themselves in a weaker position. If there is a break in the cooperation relations as a result of changes in the market or changed company strategies, they can react by shifting emphasis or by increased active acquisition of work. There are, however, limits to this possibility, as qualifications and reputation gained in the course of working life cannot just be transferred to other fields of activity. In addition, the success of such strategies is dependent on external factors such as supply and demand on the labour market, which are beyond the influence of the individual.

In contrast to mobile care, where the range of services, tasks and responsibilities is legally regulated and the room for manoeuvre of directly employed workers is limited to the place where they carry out a prescribed task arranged with the clients, knowledge work among the freelances studied is characterised by the openness of the result. The characteristics of a product to be provided can often not be laid down in advance. This makes a negotiation process between the contractor and contractee necessary, in the course of which the freelances attempt to negotiate room for manoeuvre and to assert their conceptions of quality.

The room for manoeuvre in carrying out contracts is different in the occupational fields studied. The journalists questioned generally enjoy a high degree of autonomy in carrying out contracts. The activity of the designers and software developers, in contrast, is characterised by a high degree of consultancy, as the clients often do not know at first what they want or what is technically possible. The contractors function as a co-producer and can have a great influence on the processing of a contract. Among software freelances, there are additional demands for cooperation arising from the incorporation in the client company’s in-house project teams, from the support for users and the need to correct software errors as quickly as possible. These high demands for cooperation require their presence on site at the client’s. At the same time, the work at the clients’ is also a result of their controlling requirement: in contrast to the two other survey groups, software developers active as freelances are usually paid on an hourly basis, whereas in journalism and in the design field, a lump sum or fixed price is paid. The contractee or the contractor thereby carries the risk of a miscalculation and the client’s control of working hours is superfluous.

In the media and culture industry there are no external quality standards comparable to the care standards against which freelances’ work can be measured. Quality control takes place rather through self-adherence to the professional standards gained in
training, the compliance with which must be negotiated with the client. Control takes place in the first place in the form of results control by the client (does the product correspond to the agreement made in advance?). However, colleagues are also an important indirect control authority (is the product presentable in the circle of colleagues?).

Whereas software freelances are often integrated into in-house project teams for long periods, and experience the workers in the client company as colleagues, most of those questioned had to actively develop contacts to colleagues. Drawing on Gold and Fraser (2002), we describe contacts to other freelances that are not based on direct cooperation as a professional network. To develop such networks, freelances use personal contacts of a professional or private nature, professional association events, mailing lists or newsgroups in the internet. Professional networks provide a feeling of community and offer support through passing on information or job offers. In addition they offer the opportunity to get help in specialist or technical problems or for feedback on one’s own work. Alongside this, they facilitate communication on quality and price standards.

Sporadic forms of communication between freelances are the employment of other freelances as sub-contractors when the volume of contracts becomes too heavy, for part contracts that require special qualifications, or in an unexpected absence from work. Cooperation projects in which other freelances work as equal partners, on the other hand, are rare, as the fees in such cases have to be split. Competition between freelances with similar specialities also limits such possibilities for cooperation.

One possibility to increase such cooperation, and thereby to develop closer connections with colleagues, is the association with other freelances in a bureau or studio association. Such a union facilitates social contacts with colleagues in everyday work and is regarded by some of those questioned as being helpful for self-discipline. The intensity of the cooperation in such bureau and studio associations varies; some of those questioned continued to work on their own and only share the costs for the common use of office space and technology. Others work together on projects as part as a team; here the transition to a company-type structure is fluid.

The thesis of a de-limitation between work and private life in the sense of a general utilisation of private social contacts to compete in the market place could not be confirmed for the freelances studied. True, for approximately half of those questioned it was possible to see overlaps between professional contacts and private circles of friends and acquaintances. Others, on the other hand, separate private and professional contacts. Numerous grounds are given for this: previous experience of conflict, the feeling of enjoying little recognition among colleagues because of one’s own specialisation or rather of provoking envy because of an elevated position, the desire to draw boundaries between occupation and private life, or because closer private contacts have not developed for other reasons, e.g. because of the distance between place of residence and place of work or a withdrawn lifestyle. Occasionally in the interviews there are indications of the incorporation of family members in the work in the sense of co-production (Matuschek 2003). This de-limitation phenomenon however seems not to be of any great significance. Presumably it can be ascribed to the high level of
specialisation among the occupational groups surveyed. In addition, the freelances questioned also have the opportunity to create active cooperation relations through professional networks and contacts to colleagues.

4.2. Working hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative dimension</th>
<th>Mobile care</th>
<th>Freelances in media and cultural professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working hours</td>
<td>Flexibility through divided duties; capacity fluctuations; great influence on agreed working hours – more limited influence on the place/length of actual working hours; private life is subordinate to work – problems of reconciling occupation and family</td>
<td>Capacity fluctuations through contract situation; Great room for manoeuvre over place and length of working hours: individual strategies; - de-limitation; - flexible balancing; - drawing of boundaries; Opportunities for reconciling occupation and family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formally, with regard to the agreed working hours, care workers in mobile care have a high degree of opportunity for influence. As a rule, they can very flexibly make changes in the number of working hours laid down in the employment contract. The actual working hours situation, however, is characterised by high flexibility demands and overtime with little planning ability and limited room for manoeuvre.

The framework working hours in care organisations are from 6.00 to 21.00. The nursing and care duties are planned within this period and the care workers can be employed. In addition there is also weekend work, which as a rule is due twice a month. As well as daily and weekly capacity fluctuations, the hours also vary according to season – thus in holiday periods there is regularly a significant increase in care work, when relatives transfer family members to the care organisations while at the same time there is reduced personnel cover due to holidays.

The reasons for flexible working hours are first of all the result of care requirements of the clients and of short-term absence of clients (e.g. because of hospitalisation) or of colleagues (sickness). At the same time, personnel cover is kept thin for cost reasons. More care cases then have to be looked after with the same staffing level. In three of the care organisations studied, there has for some months been significant overtime in excess of the agreed working hours. The result: despite capacity fluctuations among the staff, overtime can hardly be reduced any more. A qualified worker reports that when she has weekend work her agreed working hours are usually exceeded by 100%. An auxiliary care worker explains that she hardly has any days off any more. In one case study company, the duty rosters and duty roster changes are posted over a pocket PC, which all staff possess. This leads to the fact that staff are permanently on call during their leisure time and have difficulties in switching off from their work.
Alongside overtime and capacity fluctuations, care workers in all organisations are confronted with split duties. As a result of this there are more or less lengthy interruptions (from two to four hours), which leads to a fragmentation and splitting of working hours. The problem of these split duties affects the occupational groups in different ways. While the qualified care workers can divide up their duties relatively freely, as there are relatively few activities in medical home-sickness care that are dependent on the time of day, both auxiliary care workers as well as home helps are greatly affected by split duties.

The opportunities for care workers to influence the place and length of actual working hours are limited. They can indeed express their wishes, however, alongside personnel shortages, criteria such as short journey times and the availability of workers play a major role in duty rosters. This limits the workers’ opportunity for influence and leads to the fact that they must be available on a very flexible basis and must be able to cope with changes in duty times at short notice.

Together with the staff shortages and associated long-term overtime, this pressure for short-term flexible availability leads to the fact that the reconciliation of occupation and private demands or requirements is difficult. The overwhelming majority of care workers interviewed reported that they have to adapt their private life to the requirements of the job. The short-term flexibility required is experienced as a significant burden on private life and the coordination of friendships or regular leisure-time activities. The reconciliation of job and private life proves particularly problematic for care workers with care obligations of their own. Qualified part-time workers manage this best, as they have greater room for manoeuvre in planning their work. But in this group, too, compatibility problems also lead to resignations, as is shown in the organisations investigated.

The compatibility problem is exacerbated through the fact that, as always, the female care workers bear the main burden of provision and reproduction work. The care workers interviewed, however, repeatedly reported attempts to delegate at least some household tasks to the partner or to grown up children living in the household. These attempts meet with varied success. Some indicate marginal shifts that have also established themselves – such as the husband does the weekend shopping or the grown-up son prepares breakfast and meals himself. Others report of “daily struggles” without the perspective of even limited change. Thus one care worker says that she always has to have a crying fit before her partner and daughter will take over some housework.

Compatibility problems are not an issue in the care organisations themselves. The demand for flexible employment of care workers is legitimated as a force of circumstance based on care requirements. In one organisation this has in the end led to the situation that above all people without responsibility for children – mostly women with grown-up children – are drawn on for split duties and short-term help.

Flexibility of hours is not only sought after in mobile care but also among freelances in the culture and media professions: whereas a few of those surveyed work a fixed number of weekly hours, the working hours for most fluctuate around the mean. Place
Empirical findings

and length of working hours are not as a rule prescribed by the contractor. Rather, freelances here have much room for manoeuvre. The organisation of work is here determined by the demands arising from the work or private life. For interviewees who take care of children alongside their work, working hours often orientate themselves on their rhythms: they prefer to work when children are being cared for elsewhere. In case of emergency, evening and night-time hours serve as an additional time buffer. Living in a partnership can also lead to a limitation of working hours, if the partners formulate their own demands on availability of the interviewees. What strategies freelances develop to deal with these occasional contradictory demands is greatly influenced by their market position and their own priorities.

A de-limitation with regard to time, in which the difference between working time and leisure time becomes blurred and the place and length of working hours clearly diverges from the normal contract of employment can be observed with about a third of the interviewees, who are clearly work centred. For a few of the interviewees who are dependent on every contract to secure their livelihoods it concerns a poor market position. In this market-driven form of de-limitation, incoming contracts are worked on immediately, sometimes under great pressure of time; phases without contracts follow, which cannot be enjoyed as leisure time. On the other hand, de-limitation tendencies are observable in interview partners for whom the difference between working time and leisure time is losing its meaning as a result of their strong identification with their profession. They represent the majority in this group. To the extent that interviewees with de-limited working hours have children, they are mostly over the age of 14. Only two women have small children; here the partner is primarily responsible for the child care. Alongside this, paid care services are or have been used.

Likewise, for almost a third of those interviewed there was a clear drawing of boundaries with regard to time. They work regularly at the same times; for these interviewees, work and leisure time are clearly separate from each other. For both of the mothers interviewed, who combine part-time work with care of small children, the time framework of the working day is structured around the time spent caring for the children. In other cases, working hours are structured through the incorporation in company processes of the client company. This is frequently the case for software freelances, whose working hours thereby correspond to the normal working day. Among these are also a mother and a father – in both cases the child care is taken over by their partner. For a journalist, too, an integration in the shift system of a TV news editorial office can be seen. For other interviewees the local opening hours of small traders or the normal working day offer an orientation point for the shaping of the place and length of their working hours.

Among the other interviewees, a flexible approach to working hours was noticeable. Demands of working and family life are here flexibly balanced with their own needs. When there is a large amount of work they work longer, but also take time off when there is less to do. The place of the working hours is also determined both by their own ability to work as well as by the needs and demands outside of work, with both of these often merging into one another. The opportunities to chose the place of work is
described by some of those questioned as essential to their motivation, although some at
the same time critically reflect that they are fooling themselves, as this can lead to the
extension of working hours and intensification of work. This group includes the three
fathers interviewed in the sample, who are combining part-time work with caring for
small children. The two full-time working mothers also use the room for manoeuvre
with working hours that self-employment offers in order to better reconcile work with
child care.

To some extent in the interviews it is possible to discern learning processes that can
shift the relationship between work and private life: thus for example those joining the
profession expect an intensive time commitment in the initial years in order to make
their presence felt in the market. Some of the middle-aged interviewees report that after
a phase of intensive professional commitment they now want to impose stricter limits
on their working hours in order to be able to maintain their work in the long term and to
leave more room for their private life. The trigger for this can for example be sickness
or exhaustion. A few of the male interviewees said that the want to impose stricter
limits on their working hours after conflicts in their partnership caused by extended
working hours. Also, an actual or anticipated reduction in working ability with age can
lead to the limitation of working hours. The precondition for this, however, is that a
secure living is guaranteed; otherwise in older age there can also be an extension of
working hours and market-driven de-limitation.

In summary it can be said that room for manoeuvre regarding working hours of the
freelances questioned is significantly higher than that of the care workers, not least
because of the self-employed form of work. At the same time an associated
modernisation of partner gender arrangements can be observed, in that the fathers
interviewed take over more caring tasks in the framework of a still existing division of
labour (Henninger 2004). In comparison to the care workers, both lead to a better
compatibility of work and family. However, the assessment of the gender arrangement
differs between men and women. The fathers interviewed who combine part-time
working with care of children describe this arrangement as positive, as they are relieved
of their breadwinning role. The part-time working mothers interviewed, on the other
hand, have an ambivalent attitude to this arrangement: on the one hand they see the
flexibility associated with self-employment as easing the reconciliation of work and
caring for children. On the other hand, this flexibility serves directly employed partners
as an argument to assign housework and caring work to them, which leads to conflicts
in the partnership.
4.3. Work place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative dimension</th>
<th>Mobile care</th>
<th>Freelances in media and culture professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>Isolation through field work despite company structure</td>
<td>Isolation as feature of type of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place of work prescribed by duty roster</td>
<td>Software freelances: work at customers'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working hours and company strategies make development of counter strategies more difficult</td>
<td>design/journalism: workplace not fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workplace private sphere makes demarcation necessary</td>
<td>Individual strategies: work at home, in office, contact to colleagues, bureau associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the field work, the mobile care workers studied are confronted with the problem of isolation despite being incorporated in an organisation. The care workers work up to almost 95% in the field and are spatially very scattered. The work has the character of isolated individual work with clients. The incorporation in the organisation takes place mainly through telephone communication and coordination. As a rule, the staff have only scant contact with one another. This affects all occupational groups, even if to a differing extent. The qualified workers, not least owing to their care planning and direction function, do some of their work in the headquarters or regional office. However, field work with the clients has increased for them too in recent years.

The reduction of indirect hours in the context of the rationalisation strategies exacerbates this problem, as regular team discussions above all break through the isolation in the working situation and the involvement in the organisation is strengthened through the involvement in the team. This link to the organisation is being weakened through the reduction of indirect working hours. The home helps are most affected by this deterioration. The negative affects of this strategy accumulate for them and they have the least resources to defend themselves against it. However, for the other occupational groups, too, the development of counterstrategies is limited, not least because of the flexible working hours.

The spatial dimension of de-limitation has an additional specific feature in mobile care: the workplace is not only, as in other services, outside one’s own company, but above and beyond this in the private sphere of the client. Whereas in IT services, for example, crossing the limits of one’s own company means working in company-type surroundings of the customer, in mobile care the boundary of the world of work is also crossed when the private home becomes the workplace. As a result of this, care workers faced specific demands for the constant, active re-establishment of working-type boundaries, for example resisting “encroachments” and impositions by clients or their family members that go beyond the sphere of work.

These demarcations have different degrees of success. Again it is the least qualified occupational group, i.e. the home helps, who are most exposed to this form of de-
limitation. On the one hand their occupational and social status is the lowest. On the other, their range of tasks – at least regarding the workplace description – very heavily overlaps with private everyday work or housework. This again leads to the fact that many clients and also their family members feel they are experts, with their own standards and demands, and therefore regard encroachments in the home help’s way of working as legitimate and justified.

For independent self-employed in culture and media professions isolation is a feature of the form of work. However, the presumed absence of involvement in a company in the occupational groups studied is very different. The software developers questioned work predominantly or even exclusively in the client company. For the journalists and designers interviewed, however, work at the client’s, apart from discussion of work, is rare. Only two journalists, who work in TV news editing, are closely integrated in the client company; others use the contractor’s editing and audio technology for TV and radio programmes. The reasons for these differences lie in the cooperation requirements – in the case of the software-freelances, however, also in the clients’ desire to control the working hours.

Apart from clients’ wishes and the demand for cooperation on content, the journalists and designers interviewed are not tied to one place of work; with the aid of information and communication technology they can work just as well at home as in their own office. Divergent strategies can be identified among the interviewees: approximately half of those questioned have an office separate from their residence or a workplace in a bureau or studio association. The prime reason given for this is the desire for clearer demarcation between work and private life. The remaining interviewees work primarily at home. The effort here is to avoid additional costs for office rent and overheads. Some of the interviewees, however, also choose to work at home in order to be able to reconcile work and childcare (see above).

4.4. Worker/subject

The worker/subject de-limitation dimension plays a central role in mobile care. Care is work on and with people, and thus work on and with subjects by a subject.¹³ In order to appropriately take into account the subjectivity of the clients in and through the work, care workers have to bring their own subjectivity to the work process (Böhle 2002). Subjective factors such as feeling, sympathy and experience are by no means minor considerations but central foundations of work that directly functionally affect the result of the work – the well-being of the client.

¹³ The decisive point that differentiates care work from other forms of work is the object of work. In care, it is not a question of treatment of material or immaterial objects. The working process consists rather of the encounter between two subjects. In this sense, care can be understood as an interaction process between the carer and the client, in which both sides actively contribute to the result of the work. This circumstance is taken into account in more recent concepts of the sociology of work inasmuch as care is understood as interactive work (cf. Dunkel/Rieder 2001).
Comparative dimension | Mobile care | Freelances in media and culture professions
--- | --- | ---
Worker/subject | subjectivity is necessary to the work process  
Client orientation as part of professional understanding  
Client orientation and proximity of housework (home helps) make demarcation more difficult  
Chance of demarcation rises with increasing professionalism and requires analysis | potential contradiction between subjective demands and market requirements  
Professional understanding:  
- innovation  
- service  
Orientation on the professional ethos of the classical professions entails the danger of de-limitation  
Analysis of the situation facilitates the development of counter-strategies

The special character of work on people that takes place in care resurfaces in the interviewed care workers’ understanding of work. It is an expression of a particular working culture, a special understanding of the occupation. On the basis of the comprehensive understanding of care, for most care workers interviewed, the response to clients – also as an intuitive involvement – is a central feature of their work. This involvement is important on the one hand in order to achieve good quality care work in the sense of comprehensive care and the well-being of the client. On the other hand, however, it is a source of one’s own satisfaction, as positive feedback from the client is a visible signal of the meaningfulness of one’s own efforts and performance. At the same time, however, the lack of demarcation entails considerable danger for the emotional stability of the care workers, and the workplace in the client’s private space calls for the drawing of boundaries against impositions by the clients or their family members that go beyond the boundaries of the work (see above).

The increasing rationalisation is seeking to exploit the ethical and moral foundations of care work in a contradictory way. On the one hand the time saving in work with the clients (a quarter of an hour less per hour) is argued with the necessity for a stricter demarcation. In this connection, the client orientation of the care workers can contradict the rationalisation objectives. On the other hand, however, precisely the high client orientation of the care workers is exploited in order to achieve “consent” to impositions resulting from staff shortages and increased pressure of work. The possible “non-care” of the clients is employed as a subliminal pressure to nip any resistance in the bud and to guarantee the acceptance of increased pressure of work. A client-oriented understanding of work can thereby lead to a weakening of the interest-group representative perspective of care workers.

Care workers’ possibilities to develop strategies for emotional demarcation from the clients and against the impositions of the organisation are greatly dependent on the level of their professionalism and differ according to qualification levels. The lowest qualified occupational group, the home helps, are the most heavily affected owing to their low professional and social status. Many clients and their family members regard interference in the work of home helps as legitimate and justified. In addition, in this occupational group images of the self-sacrifice of “doing a good turn” – that is, female
role attributes and restricted subjectivity – are widespread, which likewise makes the adoption of professional distance to the activity more difficult.14

The qualified care workers, on the other hand, have significantly better preconditions to develop such a professional distance. These preconditions are on the one hand acquired through training. It is no accident that the aspect of emotional distancing is an important element of professionalisation in the caring professions: away from the reduction to the caring self-sacrificing character of female working resources to specialist skills and professional distance. In addition, for the qualified workers their higher social status and range of caring tasks means that they are less exposed to interference from clients and their family members or, inasmuch as they are responsible for duty planning in the headquarters, they have no direct client contact.

For all care workers, because of the client orientation that is anchored in the professional image, the distancing strategy demands a high degree of self-analysis. One care worker reports about the learning process that is necessary in order on the one hand to distance oneself from exaggerated demands of clients, but on the other hand also to maintain the personal needs in the face of a de-limited availability. This starts with the refusal to apologise for shortages, and leads to the demand on the organisation to make sufficient staff available to balance the capacity fluctuations.15

Among the freelances in the culture and media professions interviewed, the situation was somewhat different: true, subjectivity in the form of creativity or intuition is necessary for many activities. The demands for self-realisation in and through the work that are formulated by the interviewees may be in contradiction with the demands of the contractors, however. This is true in particular of the desire for creative self-realisation, which can be observed among designers and journalists, as well as the ethical demands on their work formulated by some of the journalists interviewed. The interviewees’ other demands are more compatible with market conditions: many interview partners raise the fact that self-employed work is more varied than being directly employed and it offers them the opportunity constantly to learn something new. Some of the interviewees see their professional career as a personal development process, others see the working on projects as a confirmation of skills or as coping with challenges. For software developers and designers, there is the motive of wanting to influence processes of company change in the client companies. The strategies that freelances develop in order to position themselves in the field between their own demands on the work and the requirements of the contractors are heavily influenced by their professional understanding.

14 Such an attitude does not have to appear immediately in connection with an exaggerated helper syndrome. Its prevalence is related to the fact that in the isolated situation of mobile work, the client’s positive feedback represents a central supporting pillar for the experience of the meaningfulness of one’s own work and performance.

15 „So, I don’t need to apologise for what I do in my spare time. I don’t do that any more. You learn that. Because you notice that with patients too. They want, ‘No, stay a bit, I need this and that.’ That would never end, and you have to learn to say, ‘I’m sorry, I don’t have any more time today. I can do something for you tomorrow.’ And you have to be the same with the employer too. Because if you always say yes, then you will always be asked. And I think it is their job to have enough staff that someone is allowed to be sick some time.” (Care worker)
A small group of the interviewees is striving primarily for their reputation in the circle of colleagues on the basis of professional innovation. The reference point for this group is first of all the recognition within the professional community. These interviewees identify very strongly with their profession, as is clear from their descriptions of themselves as “life and soul designer” or “thoroughbred computer scientist”, and thereby indicate similarities with the professional ethos characteristic of the classical professions. Contracts that do not permit the realisation of their own quality standards are refused. In this group, on the one hand there are economically successful interviewees who have succeeded in placing themselves in a qualitatively high-value market segment through this strategy. Occasionally designers and journalists are prepared to dispense with a secure income in favour of artistic self-realisation. On the other hand, the software developers interviewed do not see professional innovation and market success as being contradictory. The orientation on a professional ethic can go together with a de-limitation of work and life. Some of those questioned from this group, however, analyse this risk and develop strategies to draw boundaries inasmuch as they argue that the separation of work and private life is a feature of professionalism, e.g. in that they regard prestigious offices as being a proof of seriousness or that they emphasise the greater efficiency of normal working hours.

The majority of the interview partners orient themselves on professional standards that they have usually acquired during their academic education. Their aim is to offer professional services that fulfil the demands of the customer. Reliability and meeting deadlines seem to be central to them in order to acquire a good reputation on the market. Interviewees who understand themselves as service providers see opportunities gradually to realise their own quality standards and the claim to self-realisation, which varies with the organisational freedom within a project. They attempt to convince clients of their own proposals. If this does not succeed, the contract is worked on nevertheless. For some of the interviewees this service orientation is the result of a learning process in which they have acquired a greater distance from their activity. Some interview partners find a balance between breadwinning and self-realisation in that they combine contracts that primarily serve as a secure income with other projects where there is greater room for manoeuvre but which offer poorer income, or they live out their own desire for creation in free projects.

Tendencies to de-limitation between worker and subject are thus found in both occupational groups studied, but have different causes. In mobile care, it is primarily the less qualified occupational groups that are affected by such de-limitation, and the chances of drawing boundaries rise with increasing professionalisation. In culture and media professions, by contrast, the interviewees who are subject to the danger of de-limitation are primarily those who are in a qualitatively high-value market segment and who are approaching the professional ethos of the classical professions. Analysis of the situation makes it possible to develop counter-strategies in both occupational fields. However, resources for action and the room for manoeuvre is distributed unequally: self-employment and higher qualifications provide better starting conditions to develop a strategy.
5. **CONCLUSION: DE-LIMITATION AS A GENERAL TREND?**

As the comparison of both fields of activities shows, the de-limitation phenomena in the analysis dimensions studied are very different. True, the regulation of work is weak in both of the fields studied, even if for differing reasons. Considerable differences between the fields studied result from the different market conditions, but also from the characteristics of the activities. The different forms of work (direct employment or self-employment) as well as the differing qualification level of the workers provide unequal resources for the development of one’s own strategy.

In the cooperation relations comparative dimension it becomes clear that the company form does not per se facilitate cooperation relations, as the opportunities for exchange among the mobile care workers active in field work are limited by the company rationalisation strategies. In contrast, the starting conditions for the development of cooperation relations with colleagues in among the freelances in culture and media professions studied seem significantly more favourable in view of the greater room for manoeuvre associated with self-employment. The workers’ greater options to overcome isolation resulting from the working situation that arises from the workplace comparative dimension should also be understood against this background.

The comparison also shows that it is not flexible working hours per se that are problematic, but above all in combination with the lack of influence on the place and the length of the working hours, as can be seen in directly employed workers in mobile care, while self-employed workers in the culture and media professions also have more room for manoeuvre on this point. In the context of the de-limitation debate, this leads to the surprising finding that care as a women’s occupation offers worse preconditions for reconciling career and family than independent self-employment in the media and culture professions, although freelances in these professions are generally considered to be pioneers of de-limitation. In the context of the studies on the reconciliation of family and career in typical women’s occupations, however, this finding is less surprising. Thus, in an occupational comparative long-term study, Krüger (1998) shows that the first job learned is decisive for whether women with children remain in the job in the long term – as is the case for example with clerical workers – or change to other fields or to jobs not covered by social security. The latter was the case in the women’s occupations of hairdresser and childcare worker. Alongside company recruitment practices, Krüger (1998:149) presumes the cause lies in job-specific reconciliation problems, for example owing to the place and length of working hours.

In the worker/subject analysis dimension it became clear that in mobile care particular aspects of subjectivity are necessary for the work and the difficulty for the workers is primarily in the distancing from excessive demands of the clients and the care organisations. This is the more difficult the lower the formal qualification of the care workers. The highly qualified freelances, in contrast, face a different problem: they have to maintain professional standards and their own demands in the sense of a normative subjectivisation of work, initially with regard to the clients, and at the same
time develop distancing strategies simultaneously with an occasionally very high identification with their work.

Workers’ opportunities to develop active strategies to set limits on work and to redesign the relationship between work and private life are clearly different between the two occupational fields and in view of the limited room for manoeuvre are significantly worse for directly employed care workers. Here, in addition, an internal differentiation based on the qualifications of the workers can be discerned: the least qualified group (home helps) is the most affected by isolation and the negative consequences of the flexibilisation of working hours, while for qualified care workers the negative consequences of de-limited working conditions are moderated by work in the headquarters and a freer distribution of duties. To formulate it slightly more pointedly, the central problem of care workers is the lack of disposal over their working hours and thereby also over their living time.

In contrast, for the independently self-employed workers all comparative dimensions showed a greater room for manoeuvre, which at the same time is linked with high demands for self-organisation. The majority of those questioned managed to actively organise the open working conditions. The precondition for this, however, is a market income that provides security or the financial security of a partnership. There is an internal differentiation in the sample according to market position: if a secure living is endangered, a market-driven de-limitation can be observed in which the private sphere is called into service to survive on the market. The main problem for the freelances studied is thereby the availability of money, i.e. a long-term guarantee of a secure living in view of the unpredictability of the market.

What can now be learned for the de-limitation debate from the comparative empirical findings? An encouraging effect of the de-limitation debate is first that the attention of researchers into the world of work is increasingly concentrating on forms of work and activity outside the normal employment contract. In the freelances studied, cooperation relations outside of the company are looked at with the assistance of the extended research perspectives used in the comparative analysis. In the worker/subject analysis dimension it is evident that, for the interviewees, self-adherence to professional standards offers an orientation for their professional activity. In both dimensions combination potentials become apparent that could counter the trend to de-limitation of work.

Mobile care as a person-related service has so far hardly be studied from the perspective of the sociology of work. The worker/subject analysis dimension here makes developments apparent that otherwise remain disregarded. In particular, for care workers, the overlying of female norms with the quality demands of the work are evident, which makes it more difficult for the lower qualified workers in particular to distance themselves from their demands and to develop a professional perspective of their activity. The supposedly new trend to de-limitation thereby proves to be the old problem of insufficient professionalisation in the caring occupations.
De-limitation in the sense of a divergence from normal contracts of employment is by no means a new phenomenon in the fields of activity studied. The de-limitation discourse is thereby only to a limited extent suited to the analysis of the transformation of work in both fields, even if the sharpened market conditions (culture and media professions) or the increasing pressure of costs (mobile care) mean that transformation tendencies can well be observed empirically. Through this, the problematic effects for workers in mobile care intensify and there is an accumulation of existing de-limitation tendencies and the effects of an increasing flexibilisation of work. This means, however, to return to our initial question, that the thesis of a general de-limitation of (paid) work as it has been formulated by some authors with socio-critical objectives (Voß 1998; Kratzer/Sauer 2003) is not tenable.

The de-limitation debate thereby requires further empirical substantiation. This means overcoming the previous tendency to neglect external or inter-company contexts of work. This affects the (labour) market conditions and the specifics of individual sectors and fields of activity, which according to our findings have a significant influence on the form of de-limitation phenomena. The organisational options of the workers, on the other hand, are heavily influenced by the differing room for manoeuvre resulting from different forms of work and levels of qualification.

Here it is a question of taking into account that in the comparison of mobile care with freelances in the new media undertaken here, cases are compared that are significantly different both in the form of work as well as in the level of qualification. In care work, in addition, there is a significant internal difference between the individual occupational groups with regard to qualification and level of professionalisation. As in both fields of occupation different forms of work (direct employment in care work and self-employment in the new media) were studied, the question of the degree to which the level of qualification is superimposed on the form of work cannot be answered on the basis of the empirical findings. In any case, the findings provide reasons to assume that a high level of qualification and a higher degree of professionalisation facilitates greater room for manoeuvre in both forms of work.

But the private context of the workers influences their options too. Thus, the comparison of the care workers with the freelances studied shows that de-limited working conditions primarily then become a problem for the reconciliation of career and family if the workers have limited room for manoeuvre with regard to the place and length of their working hours and household and care work cannot be delegated to a partner. Among the overwhelmingly female care workers, this culminates in the burden resulting from the flexibilisation of working hours with the continuation of existing traditional role expectations. Here it becomes clear that a gender-sensitive perspective, which has thus far been largely neglected in the mainstream of the de-limitation debate, can make a considerable contribution to results in the sociology of work.

An encouraging side-effect of the de-limitation debate is that it opens an insight at least for some researchers into the world of work into the strategies of workers in dealing with de-limited working conditions, as has also been the case in this paper. The proposed categories of analysis, which are partly based on a company form of
organisation of work and on changed company strategies in the utilisation of workers prove problematic for such an analysis however.

The modification of these categories that we have undertaken, their application to different forms of work and not least the extension to the connection between work and private life have proved fruitful for the study of our thesis. They are suited to guiding the contrasting comparison of different empirical fields and to opening the research perspective beyond the immediate company connections – a research concept that is thoroughly innovative for research into the world of work.
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