

PhD Project

Professionally and Materially Ambitious People: On the Biographical Origins of Professional and Material Goals

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Western culture currently assigns a central role to proactivity, active decision-making and the pursuit of individual objectives. Since the 1950s social modernisation processes have expanded the radius of possibilities and the choice of possible goals, including the possibilities of achieving professional and material success. But what biographical circumstances lead people to strive for and realise such goals? In this biographical research project I investigate the influences that affect the origination and modification of material and professional life goals and the conscious and latent meanings ambitious people attach to these goals. In this project the life histories of professionally and materially ambitious people were recorded, reconstructed and analysed on the basis of biography theory and the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. I consider the interaction of various influences and demonstrate the significance of objectives learnt in the family of origin and their interaction with significant biographical events, social transitions, political and social circumstances for the emergence and development of life goals.