

Chapter 5

Free Choice of Education? Capabilities, Possibility Spaces, and Incapacitations of Education, Labor, and the Way of Living One Values

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5.1 Introduction

Against the background of the continuously increasing demand of “knowledge production” in order to provide “efficient” labor force in contemporary modern (knowledge) societies, this chapter deals with the possibility of individual opportunities to choose one’s individual educational trajectory, inter alia, via the theoretical framework of the capability approach, in general, and the dialectical relation between individual and external capabilities, in particular, i.e., the relation between personal, socio-structural, cultural, as well as institutional conversion factors. Since the financial crisis and the continuing rising youth unemployment in Europe, an educational qualification is mainly considered as a (pre)condition to get access to the labor market. It is regarded as a matter of secondary importance that education provides a viable path leading to freedom to choose one’s educational way and thus to choose between different styles and ways of living. Following the Danish contemporary dominant discourse in education, i.e., the shift from a welfare to a competition regime, the paper discusses the implications for the weakest within this system, i.e., the vulnerable youth, the early school leavers, and disadvantaged, concerning their realistic opportunities to choose the kind of education they have reason to value in order to achieve the kind of life they have reason to value. Firstly, a theoretical framework will be presented showing related approaches dealing with the conception of freedom, i.e., the notion of positive and negative freedom, opportunity and processes of freedom, and the freedom to choose with the concept of the capability approach. Secondly, external and individual capabilities will be

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discussed in order to introduce the notion of incapacitations. Thirdly, the focus will be on education and labor and its relation to the question of possibility spaces of choosing one's education. The following paragraph presents the Danish case drawing from different empirical materials in order to analyze and discuss the findings of these studies within the given theoretical framework.

5.2 Opportunity and Processes of Freedom

The preconditions of contemporary neoliberal rationality – and thus hegemonic ideas of market ideologies and competition – are deeply embedded in the relationship between freedom and arbitrariness. The concept of freedom (or liberty) is generally described as freedom from domination, i.e., being free to the extent that one does not find oneself under the domination of others. “This notion of freedom, we may begin by noting, refers to a condition in which we can find ourselves, namely, the condition where we are not living under the thumb of another. It does not mean the exercise of a capacity, and so in particular it does not signify the control which an individual or community exercises over the shape of its own existence. Another way to put this contrast lies with the categories deployed by Isaiah Berlin in his classic essay of 1958, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’. The idea of freedom as non-domination forms a ‘negative’, not a ‘positive’ conception” (Larmore n.y.: 2f.). According to Berlin the concept of negative freedom is a domain of action of non-interference by others, whereas positive freedom is to be understood as self-mastery (cf. Swan 2003: 117). And Pettit concludes that real freedom requires the absence of all forms of arbitrary interference, including both possible and actual interference by others (cf. Pettit 1999: 22ff) as well as structural interference deriving from the current formation of society. The limitation of the neoliberal concept of freedom lies, especially, in the exclusive promotion of positive freedom. With respect to social (in)justice, questions of responsibility are inevitable embedded within the interrelation of both positive and negative freedom, i.e., positive freedom has to be understood not just as self-mastery but as an ideology serving to transfer responsibility to the individual in the name of liberty as such. It is a question about the balance between the two different forms of freedom (or liberty) with regard to the individual and social (pre)conditions realized by institutions of society. “Whether men are free is determined by the rights and duties established by the major institutions of society. Liberty is a certain pattern of social forms” (Rawls 1999: 55f; cf. 1971). The question that has to be answered is whether major institutions of society are regarded as support or hindrance of (individual and/or social) freedom. Here it is crucial to understand that *real* freedom is inevitably related to the dialectics of negative and positive freedom. These two concepts are supplementary parts of *freedom as such*, i.e., parts of an intrinsic relation. “An intrinsic relation is a relation between two or a set of relata in which *both* or *all* are what they are in relation to each other. They refer to each other and form a unity or a totality ... Since in an intrinsic relation the elements form totality, they are necessary elements. They do not

‘function’ or ‘exist’ independently, but only in relation to each other. Conceptually this means that a pair in an intrinsic relation cannot be defined without referring to each other” (Israel 1979: 84). Thus, Berlin’s concepts of positive and negative freedom can only be understood as real freedom when both freedoms are intrinsically related.

On the background of the abovementioned notions of liberty, freedom, and social justice, it seems to be fruitful to introduce Amartya Sen’s idea of the freedom to choose. “In assessing our lives, we have reason to be interested not only in the kind of lives we manage to lead, but also in the freedom that we actually have to choose between different styles and ways of living. Indeed, the freedom to determine the nature of our lives is one of the valued aspects of living that we have reason to treasure” (Sen 2010: 227). In this context, Sen distinguishes between the opportunity and the process aspect of freedom. The first one is about the ability to achieve what one values, regardless of the processes that lead to its achievement; the latter one deals with the process of choice, i.e., to assure that the processes leading to the aimed achievement are not imposed by others or directed or forced by individuals and social or structural matters (cf. Sen 2010: 228f.). “The focus here is on the freedom that a person actually has to do this or be that – things that he or she may value doing or being. Obviously, the things we value most are particularly important for us to be able to achieve. But the idea of freedom also respects our being free to determine what we want, what we value and ultimately what we decide to choose. The concept of capability is thus linked closely with the opportunity aspect of freedom, seen in terms of ‘comprehensive’ opportunities, and not just focusing on what happens at ‘culmination’” (Sen 2010: 231f.).

5.3 External and Individual Capabilities

Freedom to choose is connected to both the concept of opportunity and the process of freedom that are inevitably related to (social) conditions in a given formation of society, on the one hand (including the vision and conception of mankind; aspects of socialization; societal organizations and social form of organizing economical system; societal norms, values, and belief system) and on the other hand the (unique) individual formation (i.e., agency, preferences, skills, consciousness, etc.). Referring to Gasper (1997), Otto and Ziegler point to the relation between *internal goods*, *practical use values*, and external resources as complementary parts in a capability set. “Analytically, however, one may suggest that the space of capacities, skills, abilities, and attitude may form the realm of ‘S-capabilities’ (with ‘S’ meaning ‘skill’ and ‘substantive’) (see Gasper 1997) which is empirically related to a particular and socially, culturally, politically and economically constrained set of life-paths which is (potentially) attainable to a given person. This socially structured set of attainable life-paths constitutes the realm of ‘O-capabilities’ (with ‘O’ meaning ‘option’ and ‘opportunity’) (Gasper 2002)” (Otto and Ziegler 2006: 272f). As well as the intrinsic relation between the concept of positive and negative freedom, S- and O-capabilities are constituted dialectically and thus are intrinsically related.

That means that trying to map individual (pre)conditions of freedom to choose, including the concept of S- and O-capabilities and the individual and external capabilities, includes to take the societal macro-, meso-, and microlevels into consideration, that is, the social formation of society, the organizational/institutional and organizing dimension, as well as the individual capabilities. With respect to the framework of the capability approach, Otto and Ziegler derive these three levels from the notion of conversion factors concluding that these factors are decisive in order to convert external and internalized social, cultural, and economic capital formations into particular personal functioning:

1. “Personal conversion factors” such as physical condition, literacy, competences, etc. that influence how a person is able to convert the characteristics, commodities, infrastructures, and arrangements into a functioning
2. “Socio-structural and cultural conversion factors” such as social or religious norms, gender roles, power relations and hierarchies, and discriminatory practices
3. “Institutional conversion factors” such as welfare and educational arrangements, collective provisions, etc. (Otto and Ziegler 2006: 279)

Even presupposing that there is no *inevitable* intrinsic relation between a successful conversion of all of these three factors into functioning and well-being, one can presume at least a minimum of successful conversion with respect to the above factors as a precondition for both the freedom to choose and well-being: The more social options and space of action, the more space of freedom and thus opportunity of well-being.

Thus, it makes sense to consider the role of welfare economics (cf. Sen 2010: 272) as an external factor including agents of socialization such as family and especially the education system because they deal with processes of (social) integration with respect to the given formation of society. Therefore, the aim of socialization is to be the human development of individuals to become well-functioning members of this society comprising a range from being passive obedient citizen to active subject in the framework of given norms and values including the rationality of the economic system of reproduction. These processes of socialization are perpetuated by social agents of socialization, such as the family, the kindergarten, schools, youth groups, peers, apprentice ships, military service, university, working place, and so forth. According to Sigel, who mainly works on political socialization, the internalization of societal norms and values are often perpetuated incidentally, and especially because of its incidental nature, it is much more efficient concerning the acquisition of values, norms, and (social) behavior than consciously directed influences of norms and values by others. “Norm internalization goes on casually and imperceptibly, often without either teacher or student being aware that it is taking place” (Sigel 1970: xii f.). With respect to the existence of a given society, it is crucial to mediate social values and behavior in order to preserve the sociopolitical status quo. Therefore, it is obvious that these institutions of socialization have a significant role in order to assign future life chances due to the different distribution of conversion factors. And Martha Nussbaum puts it as follows: “People come into the world with rudimentary abilities to lead a dignified life. These abilities, however,

need support from the world, especially the political world, if they are to develop and become effective. First, they need internal cultivation, usually supplied above all by a nation's system of education – together with whatever support people receive from their families and other voluntary institutions. I call the developed form of innate abilities ‘internal capabilities’” (Nussbaum 2006: s. 11).

The different interplay of socio-structural and cultural conversion factors, institutional conversion factors, and personal conversion factors does vary tremendously in providing possibility space related to the opportunity and processes of freedom. The notion of individual capabilities comprising of external and internalized social, cultural, and economic capital formations that are crucial in structuring the set of attainable life path refers undoubtedly to Bourdieu's theoretical approach of capital formation (cf. Otto and Ziegler 2006: 273). Bourdieu relates the family and the institutions of education as major decisive factors of socialization and thus constituents of conversion factors. According to Bourdieu the education system among other things contributes significantly to the social conservation of the modern society. “I insist on ‘contributes to’, I say ‘contributes to conservation’. It is one of the mechanisms by which social structures are reproduced. There are others. There is the system of succession; there is the economic system, logic, which, according to the old Marxist formula, causes ‘capital’ to go to ‘capital’. But in modern societies the education system contributes more than ever before. An important part of what is passed on through the generations, an important part of the transference of power and privileges happens through the mediation of the school system, which connects other means of transference with each other and especially those which take effect within the family. The family is a very important transference entity that replaces the school system by ratifying the family interposition. The school system will say: ‘this child is mathematically gifted’ without seeing the five mathematicians in its family tree. Or that it is not gifted in Brazilian or French without seeing that it comes from an immigrant background. So the school system contributes to ratifying, sanctifying and transforming the cultural inheritance that comes from the family, as scholastic merit.” (Bourdieu 2001: 175; cf. Sünker 2006)

5.4 Education to Labor

Sünker stresses the outstanding importance of the education system while identifying the policy framework of the OECD: “(...) the emphasis is placed on the connection between ‘basic competence and way of life’, which is seen to be necessary ‘for active participation in social life’ (29); up until showing the life historical consequences of *Bildung*¹ in ‘early years’, or, the importance of a previously level of *Bildung* (31). This all ends with the crucial sentence: ‘Cultural engagement

¹ *Bildung* can be understood as the German conception of education and human development based on continental European philosophy of consciousness, emphasizing on competences to analyze, to judge, to reflect, and to act (socially).

and cultural development, value orientation and political participation co-vary systematically with the achieved level of *Bildung* over the entire life span' (32). In plain language: those who have the opportunity for *Bildung* taken away from them also have taken away from them, when there is a lack of 'class conscience', quality of life (from culture to political conscience/interest); this then has consequences for life circumstances and the chances for self realisation." (Sünker 2006: 3f.) It is crucial to highlight the notion of the capability approach that is directed towards both opportunity and processes of freedom including the freedom to deselect instead of just reaching goals that are (easily) accessible as well as the difference between "*doing something* and *being free* to do that thing" (Sen 2010: 237). Amartya Sen distinguishes between capabilities and achievements, stating that this "concerns the responsibilities and obligations of societies and of other people generally to help the deprived, which can be important for both public provisions within states and for the general pursuit of human rights" (Sen 2010: 238).

On the one hand this sets the question of social provision and individual, community, and state responsibility on the agenda; on the other hand, it raises the question with respect of how to attain the (pre)conditions to have "the freedom to choose how to live" and the "importance of capability, reflecting opportunity and choice, rather than the celebration of some particular lifestyle, irrespective of preference of choice" (Sen 2010: 238). The state's responsibility to ensure the preconditions for one to have the freedom to choose is deeply connected with access to education institutions because – following the argumentation above – education credentials belong to the crucial preconditions for broadening labor opportunities. The choice of labor one values might be seen as one of the factors that influence the life to a major degree because it also (de)regulates extensively one's opportunity space with respect to different matters. Having "the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others ... in work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers" (Nussbaum 2011: 33f.).

5.5 The Danish Case

Like Bourdieu, Mads Meier Jæger points to different decisive factors contributing to the likelihood of being provided with individual and social resources. Besides socioeconomic factors there is also the sibling effect, i.e., the sibling's choice of education and occupation that plays a decisive role with respect to one's social mobility. There is a clear relation between the parent's education and their children's educational and occupational ambitions although it is not deterministic, i.e., the higher the educational status of the parents, the higher their children's ambitions concerning their educational, resp. occupational, trajectory (Jæger 2003: 17). Even if a child has been raised in a family with a low social status and "equipped" with low-class habitus formations, there is still a probability that this child can break this social pattern and move upwards on the social ladder. According to Erik Jørgen Hansen,

this often is wrongly assumed as “pattern break” but he argues that this is an immanent part of the structure, its legitimation (cf. Hansen 2003: 120f.). However, besides family context, education can be considered as central with respect to the distribution of life chances, because having not or having a school graduation diploma and the connected grades is decisive for the placement on the labor market and thus (future) income (cf. Jæger et al. 2003: 19).

Against this background the following risk factors can be identified: growing up in a (financially) poor family, growing up in a family where one of the members is suffering from a prolonged severe illness, growing up in a divorced family or where one of the adults had a breakdown, or growing up in a family that moved a lot (cf. Jæger et al. 2003: 25). Undoubtedly one has to add that factors like gender and migration play a significant role. In this context Hansen relates individual resources and socially structured arenas such as labor market, education system, family, field of politics, etc. Hansen indicates that one’s life chances depend to a major degree upon how individual resources are used within these different social arenas. Thus, it is not just the quality of individual resources related to the specific social arena that is important with respect to one’s (possible) life path but also the number of others that “deal” with the same individual resources and conversion factors in the very same social arenas. Hansen formulates this situation that a person’s life chances and life conditions depend to a major degree on the profile of the sum of the total offer of the person’s resources set in relation to the sum of the social arena’s demand concerning specific individual combinations of resources (cf. Hansen 2003: 114).

As a result from the financial crisis, the worsened situation on the labor market reinforces the challenge to find meaningful education or labor. The youth unemployment rate does not mitigate the challenge, firstly, to get access to the education one values and, secondly, to get access to labor one values. Data from the Economic Council of the Labour Movement show that youth unemployment in Denmark is not only the highest for a long time but also that especially this employment group is the most affected by the current economic crisis. “Since June 2008, when unemployment figures were at their lowest, unemployment among 16–24 year old Danes has trebled to 13.3 % in April 2012. Among 25–29 year olds unemployment has risen almost as much. 12.6 % of them are now without jobs. This is a far greater share than among the population as a whole, where unemployment currently stands at 6.2 %” (Preisler 2012).

Besides the rising youth unemployment, the possibility to find labor one values got worse because a shift from the (social democratic) welfare state to a competition state has taken place in Denmark. From the 1980s the combination of a technologically oriented focus and the discourse about shaping working conditions for labor in Denmark has been the driving force that influenced the form and content of the education system (cf. Pedersen 2011: 134). In the 1990s, the focus changed to the structural competition skills and capacities resulting in shifting such cyclical-based measures to structural changes. At the heart of these changes was the aim to produce available labor, to improve the worker’s motivation as well as to promote an entrepreneurial way of thinking, and thus to broaden the worker’s capacity to acquire entrepreneurial competences. To sum it up, it was all about the mobilization of labor

(cf. Pedersen 2011: 135). This changed focus on creating requirements for effective labor affected public institutions and thus naturally institutions of education. The primary task of schools is to educate (technical) specialized individuals, individuals who are available for the labor market and are capable to adjust their capacities lifelong to the changing market conditions.

According to Pedersen the change from the Danish welfare state to the competition state took place with the publication of the IEA survey in 1991 (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) stating that the pupil's literacy, i.e., their ability to read and write, was below expectations and behind those of other countries (cf. Pedersen 2011: 170f.). Following the IEA survey, the PISA surveys have been regularly carried out by OECD resulting in the implementation of competence tests in Danish schools. Against that background Pedersen concludes that the primary educational task of the Danish school system changed for the first time in its more than 160-year-old history. Previously they focused on human development and educating each individual to strive for active democratic participation in society. Now the aim was to get the Danish pupils ready with respect to the international competition taking place in international surveys and thus to produce "soldiers" armed with knowledge that are ready for the (economic) competition between nation states (cf. Pedersen 2011: 172). "What for instance the PISA study identified as 'functional illiteracy' is therefore not primarily a 'lack of human capital' but a form of poverty in terms of a major 'capability deprivation', which points to subsequent 'voicelessness' and 'powerlessness'. Being assessed as to be relational to impairments of social arrangements, educational failures, deficiencies in the acquisition of literacy might thus be evaluated in terms of subsequent capability limitation (and their contextualisation in education)" (Otto and Ziegler 2006: 273).

5.6 Free Choice and Education?

Taking into account that public education is free of charge in Denmark, one could argue that there is a fair chance for everyone to get access to education one values, even to work one's way up to higher education. Formally it is possible. However, taking into account Erik Jørgen Hansen's work about education and social inequality, one gets other results. Hansen conducted a research consisting of one generation. He started to interview approximately 3,000 14-year-old interviewees the first time in 1968 and the last time in 1992, then 38 years old. The results corresponded with Bourdieu's approach dealing with social class, habitus formation, school system, and the (re)production of social inequality. According to Hansen the social environment one grew up is dominant or at least highly influential with respect to one's educational trajectory. Social mobility has not increased especially not by means of formal education because the education system is precisely the key to perpetuate social inequality (cf. Hansen 2003: 99ff, 1995: 144ff, 1983). According to Glavind the probability of a 25-year-old with parents without a completed education to fail the completion of his or her education or vocational

training was 4.8 times higher compared with a 25-year-old who grew up in a family with an academic background. In 2001, the probability of a 25-year-old with parents without a completed education not to complete his or her education or vocational training was 6.4 times higher in comparison to a 25-year-old who grew up in a family with an academic background (cf. Glavind 2005: 22). However, one can imagine that this situation got even worse taking into consideration the contemporary discourse of competition and its consequences concerning the (re)shaping of the education system in terms of individual competition by means of a test culture. To add on the education expansion or mass education that resulted in an inflation of education credentials (cf. Hansen 2003: 45ff), it is not surprising that a specific group of pupils actually ends up not participating in the education system and not graduating from their education. “The inequalities in early school outcome promote inequalities in their opportunities to *voice* their opinions and participate as democratic members of society. It promotes *less* valuable (from the individual’s perspective) *educational* and vocational opportunities than they are formally entitled to. It promotes *lesser opportunities to enter into the job market* and enjoy the mutual recognition with other workers that this entails” (Jensen and Kjeldsen 2012: 3f.).

The most vulnerable group is the young people who do not complete education, i.e., early school leavers and pupils who have given up for various reasons. According to Noemi Katznelson the main characteristics of this group are (1) the social background, i.e., the capital formation perpetuated via the family plus the family constellation playing an important role in terms of stabilizing factor; (2) former school experiences, i.e., especially experiences in examinations carried out by the pupils, stating the more examinations completed, the higher the probability that these pupils will continue with further education or an apprenticeship or a vocational training; and (3) theoretical skills, i.e., the skills and competences to read, to write, and to do mathematics (cf. Katznelson 2004: 23f.; Birch Andreasen et al. 1997).

But one question remains: Is the nonparticipation in the school system a result of conscious disaffirmation resulting in resistance or is it the reaction of young people who gave up the struggle and competition? What are the future dreams of young people and what makes young people choose their future (educational) trajectory? Jill Mehlbye deals with the question if the young people are free to choose the education they value and he concludes that they by no means are in a position to choose their future (educational) path according to their wishes and dreams. Besides the quality of school grades, i.e., the formal means of selection, he emphasizes the relation between the education path and ethnicity, social class, and the parent’s formal education, i.e., individual and socio-structural and cultural conversion factors. Because the latter two items have been already discussed above, it might be necessary to stress the relation between choice of education and ethnicity. The survey took place in four Danish communities via questionnaires from 1996 to 1999 including 800 pupils, and in the end of the project, some of the pupils have been finally interviewed. Mehlbye found out that young people from ethnic minorities choose typically manual-labor-related education, while Danes choose the theoretical track, i.e., especially the girls choose the gymnasium. Manual-labor-oriented education is to a great degree connected to practical training. Being confronted with a

high unemployment rate and a significant high competition, especially on the field of manual labor, it is another obstacle to find a traineeship. The lack of on-the-job training often results in dropouts affecting mostly young people from ethnic minorities who prefer this kind of education. Aggravating these circumstances, Mehlbye points to the fact that this group lacks Danish language skills, too (cf. Mehlbye 2000: 38f.). One has to add that this argument counts also for working class children, i.e., everyday culture that is not aligned to the dominant educational discourse. Interesting are the outcomes concerning the future expectations. The survey shows a close relation between the young people's ethnic background and their future expectations. While the Danish pupils see themselves as 25 year olds on the educational trajectory, the nonethnic Danes expect themselves to be unemployed. Mehlbye concludes that these negative expectations might lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and therefore serve as an explanation concerning the high dropout rate by nonethnic Danes (cf. Mehlbye 2000: 39). However, it is not as simple to conclude that it is just an ethnic problem. In Denmark it is also important if one lives in urban or outside urban structures because, for example, on-the-job training is rather difficult to find in nonurban areas because of the lack of companies providing practical training and internships. Besides this, immigrant girls do much better in school in comparison to male immigrants and they show similar and even better results than male Danes. However, Pless and Katznelson contribute to the question of early school dropout and school leaving pointing to the fact that deciding about future education and vocational training is also deeply related to identity formation processes. It is a kind of rite of passage to a new part of life, and this decision has to be made while being in the time of adolescence where self-esteem might be challenged. On the one hand, the young people are aware about the educational hierarchies, i.e., the high appreciation of theoretical education trajectories in comparison to manual-labor tracks, but on the other hand they are tired of school because schooling reminds them often of negative experiences, conflicts, and defeats (cf. Pless and Katznelson 2007: 20ff).

These school experiences that have an impact on the young people's motivation and ambition can be understood as S-capabilities having an effect on the O-capabilities. And one has to add that the mutual interplay of the S- and O-capabilities does not necessarily happen in an obvious and conscious way but also work as latent and unconsciously. This limiting effect of S-capabilities is incapacitations resulting from conflicting external capabilities, for example, institutions of socialization.

These incapacitations are diametrically opposed to what the capability approach stands for. The kind of incapacitation where the power of disposition is taken off the juvenile's hands by social agencies is what I call *manifest incapacitation*, whereas I speak about *latent incapacitations* where the individual itself unconsciously "chooses" to be incapacitated. Thus, *latent incapacitations* are internalized values and norms corresponding to social capital formations, i.e., class and milieu structures (cf. Bourdieu 1996, 2007) as well as incorporated governmentality structures (cf. Foucault 2005). To overcome these hindrances and gain consciousness about the possibilities concerning all variations of choices in order to live the life one would like to live, it is essential to draw the sphere of the possible into consideration.

It might be useful to explain the concept of *latent incapacitations* while operating with Ernst Bloch's concept of Not-Yet-Consciousness where he tries to extract senses of possibilities deriving from Freud's concept of unconsciousness and his own concept of day- and forward dream. The Not-Yet-Consciousness is to understand as the still-hidden notion of the (future) possible in today's realities (cf. Bloch 1986).

The Not-Yet-Conscious is admittedly just as much a preconscious as is the unconscious of repressedness and forgottenness. In its way it is even an unconscious which is just as difficult and resistant as that of repressedness. Yet it is by no means subordinated to the manifest consciousness of today, but rather to a future consciousness which is only just beginning to come up. The Not-Yet-Conscious is thus solely the preconscious of what is to come, the psychological birthplace of the New. And it keeps itself pre-conscious above all because in fact there is within it a content of consciousness which has not yet become wholly manifest, and is still dawning from the future. Possibly even content that is only just objectively emerging in the world; as in all productive states which are giving birth to what has never been there. The forward dream is disposed towards this, and Not-Yet-Conscious, as the mode of consciousness of something coming closer, is charged with it; here the subject scents no musty cellar, but morning air. (Bloch 1986, p. 116)

In alignment to social capital formations, i.e., class and milieu structures as well as incorporated governmentality structures – thus resulting in individual *latent incapacitations* – Klaus Holzkamp points out that actions carried out by individuals have to be specified on the background of the possibilities and limitations resulting from milieu-/class-related life conditions, i.e., to consider the societal context in its totality. He outlines that it is crucial to understand the individual's internalized and inherent *structures of meaning* as infrastructures of the wholly societal *meaning constellation* (cf. Holzkamp 1986, p. 398). In this context, Holzkamp emphasizes the importance of the notion of *condition dispositions*: the real extension of the individual's disposition about its societal life conditions (cf. Holzkamp 1986, p. 395). Following the notion of the importance of the disposition of action or rejection of action, it is clear that to broaden the individual's possibility dispositions helps to broaden the individual's life quality via condition dispositions and possibility spaces (cf. Holzkamp 1986). It is of interest to consider Bloch's concept of *Not-Yet-Consciousness* and Holzkamp's possibility spaces in order to face *manifest* and especially *latent incapacitations* thus contributing to the capability approach to emphasize on choices calling for attention on freedoms and possibilities rather than the actual achieved capabilities (functionings) (cf. Sen 1992).

This corresponds to the Danish case study² that has been carried out with pupils who have failed earlier schooling and with teachers and managers from the Basic Vocational Education and Training Program (EGU)³. This study has been conducted in four different EGU institutions in different cities, according to place and size, in Denmark. The interviewees are vulnerable young people having lost track in the transition from school to further education or work (cf. Jensen and Kjeldsen 2012: 1). The reluctance of theoretical school subjects gets obvious when “one of

²The Danish case study, chapter 10.2.5.

³The Danish case study is based on interviews carried out in different Basic Vocational Education and Training Program (EGU).

the young people phrases it: *“books or anything with mathematics – it has never been me, ever, so my school ended when I was in the 7th grade”* (I⁴: pupil 2). In the Danish context this illustrates a very early school leaver, since the Danish primary and lower secondary education is a comprehensive school covering the grades from at least 0–9 grade⁵ or as one of the professionals states it: *“EGU-pupils whom I have, they’ve been through some really, really hard things through life, with a bad school experience and they can’t relate to their own age group”* (I: internship teacher).” (Jensen and Kjeldsen 2012: 3).

With respect to the freedom to choose one’s education or vocational training, it is obvious that the EGU institutions are an important institutional conversion factor in order to help realizing the pupil’s personal and socio-structural and cultural conversion factors, i.e., analyzing the chances to fulfill the pupil’s dream and discuss other options when necessary. In this context one teacher says: *“The youngsters we meet here at EGU do have the same dreams and wishes as other youngsters – a success, i.e., get married, have a small apartment and a car ... we could try to make these dreams real, but the problem is: either they are so unrealistic or they just don’t have dreams ... We have some dreams, but we are not guided by just our dreams. There are also a lot of other things that play a role, and that is what we do then, we sit down and talk with the young people her”* (I: teacher 2). And he summarizes that it often ends in analyzing the abilities, skills and education of the pupil to find a reasonable choice with respect to pupil’s possibilities. Also the manager from the same institution admits that they sometimes have kind of “dream-crushing” discussions with the pupils, but according to their experiences it seems to be unrealistic to be a “horse masseur” or a photographer because of the missing traineeships and the competition with “good students” with more aligning competences that go also for exactly these occupations (manager II). This manager points to the fact that some pupils are disconnected from their (societal) situation and cannot see their opportunities in a realistic way. *“Oh, they also think, that they can be pop-stars and that this has nothing to do with reality, it is difficult to understand that”* (manager II). Besides the young people that would like to become a pop star, there is also a group that has no inspiration and wishes at all and a last group that do have realistic dreams. The young people showing no wishes for their education and future life seem to have given up. They might be disillusioned by “accepting” the realistic perspectives. Concerning the last group, one teacher states: *“Ja, that is typically some craftsmen-occupation as dream job: mechanic. We have four pupils that are fine with the idea to be a brick-layer, it is really not the fact that they would like to become pilots or police officers, it is not like that”* (II: teacher 1). According to this teacher’s statement, one pupil says that: *“I have never had a specific dream-job, I have always thought about the possibility to be a pedagogue, also a veterinarian but I am not intelligent enough and that means that I will never become one of these”* (IV: pupil 1).

⁴This refers to the number of the case in this case study.

⁵Grade 0–9 covers approximately the age span of 6–16 years of age. Pupils in the 7th grade will be 13–14 years of age.

To be a pupil at an EGU institution means already belonging to a group with conversion difficulties – not at least resulting from latent incapacitations. It is a combination of social disadvantages and different sources of deprivation (cf. Sen 2010: 257). Even if the institutional approach of the EGU is to help these young people is at most a great offer to help, it shows at the same time that it is just an attempt to balance the social disadvantages and deprivations resulting from social conditions of social inequalities that have their structural reason mainly in the contemporary formation of society.

Conclusion

Considering Isaiah Berlin's notion of the relation between positive and negative freedom, i.e., self-mastery and the domain of action of noninterference, it seems to be obvious, now, that to attain the possibility to choose the education one values, it is not sufficient enough to require the absence of arbitrary interference by others or societal structural interference. It is crucial to understand the societal conditions and existing realities that are embedded in the social structures related to education and education institutions as such. It makes sense to work with the framework of the capability approach in order to adopt the personal, socio-structural, as well as institutional conversion factors not ignoring the (intrinsic) relations serving as constituents in the interplay between decisive dimensions – such as family background, education institution, social demands, etc. – having a deep impact on the opportunity space with respect to attain the freedom to choose one's educational trajectory. Even education institutions, like the EGU, that are encouraging and very well disposed towards their pupils are confronted with insurmountable problems resulting from former individual experiences (in the family, education institutions, etc.), structural demands, and (financial) restrictions and are influenced, at least to a certain degree, by dominant discourses. Concluding that one's life chances depend to a major degree upon how individual resources are used within different social arenas, the societal and institutional conversion factors especially in the form of coagulated experiences revealing themselves as latent or manifest incapacitations should be emphasized while analyzing possibility spaces and contingencies to choose the educational or occupational trajectory one values.

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