

## A Comparative Comment on the Case Studies

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### 1 Introduction

This paper is the first step in the comparative and cross-sectional work within the EU project Workable and therefore has to be read as providing comments and preliminary answers to a range of ongoing questions. It aims to pick up some central aspects from the aforementioned case studies<sup>1</sup> and brings them briefly together within the analytical and heuristic framework of the capability approach. We want to conceptualise the *capabilities for Education, Work and Voice* as *fertile Capabilities* (referring to Wolff 2009) which have positive effects on other central human capabilities<sup>2</sup> – and can be seen as a subject and field oriented adaptation of the capability approach. Still, these three theoretically and empirically driven concepts will be addressed one by one. Towards the end of this article, we will broaden this conceptual focus by analysing these capabilities in their relational dependencies, conditions and consequences as well as in relation to the different contexts they operate within. Hence, the mentioned subset of *capabilities* is regarded as an important *relational framework* that can “enable young people to act as capable citizens in European societies” (according to the WorkAble objective). Furthermore, it can also be used as an evaluative framework raising questions as to which social and institutional conditions are necessary not only to keep young people in the labour markets, but also to maintain their autonomy and freedom of choice.

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<sup>1</sup> The case studies are presented in this volume, but this article built as well on further empirical insights brought up through the project phase as well as the extended versions of the case studies (available at the project website [http://workable-eu.org/images/stories/publications/4\\_1\\_final\\_report\\_april\\_2012.pdf](http://workable-eu.org/images/stories/publications/4_1_final_report_april_2012.pdf)). For these proceedings a common grid for juxtaposition of the case studies has been developed.

<sup>2</sup> Martha Nussbaum’s conceptualisation of a list of 10 basic capabilities (2001) seeks to figure out “an objective account of human well-being or flourishing. The aim is to identify all of the functionings needed for human flourishing. For each of these functionings, the ideal is that each person should be sustained in the capability to engage in every one of these functionings at a satisfactory or good enough level” (Arneson 2002). In her earlier writings she follows the question: “what are the forms of activity, of doings and being, that constitute the human form of life and distinguish it from other actual or imaginable forms of life” (Nussbaum & Glover 1995: 72) and brought up an argumentation for the central human capabilities. Our specific focus on three capabilities should not be understood as a departure from Nussbaums notion that: “all ten of these plural and diverse ends are minimum requirements of justice.” (Nussbaum 2007: 175); but in a later writing she states as well: “Much depends on our purpose. On the one hand, if our intention is simply comparative, all sorts of capabilities suggest interesting comparisons across nations and regions, and there is no reason to prescribe in advance: new problems may suggest new comparisons” (Nussbaum 2011: 29).

The target groups in the WorkAble project can be seen as ‘vulnerable’ in terms of lack of capabilities. Secondly, these vulnerable groups represent particular problems to policy (and practical implementation) in their national contexts and therefore have been identified as exemplary but crucial issues within the transnational regimes from school to work or referring to basic problems of the educational regimes (such as drop-outs). That is why the case studies in this volume can be differentiated in several aspects. They are:

- embedded in different educational and transitional regimes, which provide general, occupational/industry-specific or firm-specific skills (Atzmüller in this volume, Walther 2006),
- tackling basic mechanisms of social inequality and fundamental questions of poverty, class, race and gender, (see i.e. Sztandar-Sztanderska/Zieleńska 2012)
- focusing on diverse target groups, such as: early school leavers, young unemployed, young adults with no qualifications in secondary education and finally (as a part of theoretical/purposive and contrastive sampling) unemployed young higher education graduates (Albeit the comparative EU project started with these broad and unspecific target groups, one of the first insights was, that these groups are converging in several transitional regimes and they are hard to differentiate from one another),
- bringing in different research methods and different ways and approaches of analysis (cf. Hollywood/Egdell/McQuaid/Michel-Schertges in this volume) etc.

Though, in this chapter we will shed light on *some* of the questions and discussions emerging from the comparison of the individual case study findings. It is obvious that a research this expansive raises new questions to be researched further. Due to the enormous amount of empirical findings, other (sub)conclusions and comparisons could have been drawn and presented. Here we concentrate on the central topics that are crucial from the perspective of the capability approach when shaping the basis for further policy making and renewed professional practice.

### **Making capabilities work in empirical case studies**

Capability research has shown to be a powerful orientation when capturing the often very complex relation between societal conditions and the individual’s freedoms and their actualization of these at the specific time and context. The exercise of agency and the realisation of freedoms one reasonably values - the core of the capability approach - is always bound to the social context in which people live and act. Therefore, capabilities have to be explored in relation to structures and agency. However, before the process of realising valued *beings and doings*, aspirations are formed and institutions enable or prevent the creation of spaces where they can be achieved. Consequently, the different resources and commodities that the individual has access to have to be taken into account. In the following we try to capture this by using the distinction between an *empowerment* and an *opportunity to choose dimension* of the capability approach. As Kjeldsen and Bonvin argue, it is “*the combination of these two dimensions that makes for the originality of the capability approach: while liberals insist only on freedom to choose without caring to empower people (and thus fall into Marx’s objection of formal freedom), radical versions of social democracy insist only on empowerment and fail to adequately guarantee freedom to choose (as could be illustrated by some contemporary workfare programmes)*” (Kjeldsen/Bonvin 2010: 2).

To build an empirical bridge between the societal level and the individual's perspective a case study approach has been applied. Case studies can investigate the actions of individuals as well as those of collective actors. If the research interest is centred on the former, then it is focused on both the individual actions and the interpretations of different situations. If, on the other hand, the focus is placed on the understanding and explanation of collective actions - which allots individual actors some room for manoeuvre - the actions and particularly the sequences of actions of divergent actors (such as professionals, addressees, social service managers and the organisations in a whole) are at the centre of investigation, and the range of possibilities in which this collective structure can reproduce itself. It is clear that neither of these research perspectives can do without the other: individual agency cannot be explained without a conception of social selection mechanisms, and for the explanation of action structures (for example organisations), the reasoned nature of individual actions is a necessary presumption (cf. Ludwig 2005). These two perspectives are taken account of in as much as biographical processes and addressees' interpretations and their coping with the transition processes are explored; moreover, opportunity structures and institutional restrictions are analysed. Hence, "*it is important to bear in mind that our preferences and choices are deeply shaped by the structures of opportunities available to us*" (Bergström 2012: 232). For this reason, central to the operationalisation of the capability approach in the case studies were the perspectives and choices of the young people. While mainly focusing on individual accounts and subjective perspectives, the aim of the comparison of the case studies was to consider how these preferences and orientations are influenced, constrained or even enabled by institutional factors, which translate central policies into local practices. Therefore, an aim of the case studies was to research the status of capabilities on different levels: the *micro*, *meso* and *macro level*.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 The Empowerment dimension

The empowerment dimension is differentiated between capabilities, resources and commodities as well as individual and social conversion factors<sup>4</sup>. For now we will mainly focus on the commodities and conversion factors. Although it is not possible to uncover the mechanisms of social inequality and how these resources and commodities intervene and interrelate in the long run with social and individual conversion factors in these qualitative

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<sup>3</sup> In the beginning of the comparison it has been useful to differentiate and locate these capabilities and their consequences on the micro, meso and macro level. In a broad working definition we use the *Micro perspective as the subjective, professional and interactive level*. This analytical level refers to individuals and their opinions, views, attitudes, patterns of interpretation, individual codes of ethics, skills, physical traits, etc. and interactions between them. These are for instance situated in the classroom and the interaction between teachers and pupils. *The Meso perspective contains the interactive, institutional and conceptual level*. This level of analysis is placed at the level where program implementation occurs as well as focuses on organisations that operate on the *basis of the rules set at the macro level*. Furthermore it refers to organisational cultures, institutional codes of ethics and standard pathways and routines. At this level we for example find the institution and the interactions between administration, teachers, social workers and families and young adults, but from the perspective of the institution or organisation. Finally, the *Macro perspective considers the political and societal level*. This stage covers the level where institutional rules are defined - e.g. through norms and laws - and transitional regimes are pre-structured. This level is constituted by regional/national policy-making (in some case studies represented through the perspectives of main stakeholders; but see as well Work Package 3 in the Workable Project, where an institutional mapping was prefaced), but is interdependent with the other levels and thereby with interactions between policy makers, administration, schools, professionals, families and young adults. For pragmatic reasons, these three levels have been taken into account when drawing the first comparative conclusions from the case studies. However, for easier reading we will present the stages without this differentiation.

<sup>4</sup> For a further interpretation of the two dimensions within the Capability Approach see Kjeldsen & Bonvin "Capability Approach, Education and Labour Market" (under contract)

case studies, we captured them briefly to frame the findings and not to fall behind insights from inequality research.

A key issue is to identify the resources and conversion factors which pertain to this configuration and their impact on capability for work, education and voice. What resources or commodities are provided (money, time, infrastructure, social services etc.) and to whom (schools, families, third sector association, etc.)? Because one of the main objectives in WorkAble “*should be to identify what this bundle of resources and conversion factors is at empirical level, and to assess to what extent it actually promotes (or maybe obstructs, insofar as so-called conversion factors can also act as obstruction factors) the enhancement of young peoples' capabilities*” (Kjeldsen/Bonvin 2010: 8). Hence, in the case studies we therefore scrutinised the context in which capabilities might be realised, based on the assumption that educational organisations and institutions in the transition from school to work intend to act as enabling structures.

## 2.1 Resources and commodities

All *goods, services and income* available for the single young person in question we conceptualise as *commodities*. As stated in Kjeldsen and Bonvin (2010), it is important to bear in mind the commodities possessed by the single individual, but also take notice of those commodities that the individual has access to (that they could potentially use). Some important commodities function as prerequisites for educational support, and thereby the resources held on the an institutional level (educational organisations for instance) greatly influence the individual's possible outcome. When for instance the lack of resources result in overcrowded classrooms with more than 30 pupils (France), or when the young people live in disadvantaged areas with limited opportunities (UK) and the educational programmes do not compensate for this, this directly (or indirectly) influences the individuals' freedoms. The importance of this type of commodity is often bound to a certain time and place. This influences the possibility for cross country comparisons in this situation, but as the different case studies reveal, the young persons' freedom to choose their life - a life they themselves value - require the presence of a whole configuration of context specific commodities and often, if one is missing, capabilities are equally missed or the capability is reduced from a real opportunity to a formal, but not accessible, “right”. This tension represents the empowerment side of the capability approach. But as the case studies reveal: “*It is not enough to give people commodities such as lessons and expect them to make the best use of it, because their ability to do this varies for different reasons and not necessarily their talent.*” (Sztandar-Sztanderska/Zieleńska 2012: 65)

The mentioned resources should not be distributed in equal shares to the young persons. Instead, it should be taken into account that because of the differences in individual conversion factors, every young person requires the access to different shares of these resources to achieve the same level of *functioning* in regard to the three capabilities. If this is not taken seriously, the equal sharing to all would in the world of real opportunities (capabilities) result in unintended inequalities. Therefore, across the contexts it is important to provide resources for (occupational) orientation and secure that young adults can experience and explore possible professional choices and experiment how to lead one's life (Austria). Providing the informational basis for choice making is of importance, not only for those who deviated from the educational main track at an early stage, but also for ‘well-educated’ young people where a lack of information on the part of the university constrain the students' access to the information that would make well informed choices/actions possible (Sweden). All this

is found to be complex and interrelated. Nevertheless, resources for local transition management, guidance or follow up classes do not seem sufficient to compensate for inequalities in outcome of earlier schooling (see especially Germany). In particular, we will now present some of the different factors that have a decisive influence.

## 2.2 Key conversion factors

*Social and structural conversion factors*<sup>5</sup> impact both positively and negatively on the individual's opportunities in actualising capabilities for education, work and voice. They are often related to the individual conversion of resources and services at hand into valuable states of beings and doings. In relation to the informational basis for life-course choices, experiencing autonomous and individual decisions are core issues and it seems to be the case that young people perceive only a few socially acceptable "life scripts" (i.e. Austria). We will focus on some aspects, namely the role of families, peers and the role of the professionals, seen as social conversion factors in relation to the individuals decision making in regard to possible "life scripts".

1. **The role of the families and peers:** The degree of (non)involvement of a young persons' family, social network, peers, etc. influence the choices of youngsters (France, Austria, UK). Also in Italy: "*the families play a key educational role: on one hand often because it's the parents (usually the mothers) who go to the helpdesk [...] the families can support and encourage the young adults in the routines of work, just as they can also constitute an obstacle in terms of the excessive protection for their children, which at times leads to their standing up for them against the educators, thus creating a short circuit among the figures of reference.*" (Bifulco/Monteleone/ Mozzana 2012: 87). When making choices, the young persons are in different ways dependent on their parents and peers, which influences the life transition to becoming an 'independent' adult. In some cases, parents serve as moral references for the young adults (Germany) and thereby the family becomes a social conversion factor in relation to the freedom to choose a life (work and education) the individual values. Hence, the role of the family and peers becomes ambiguous. As an example of this found in the Swiss case: "*The role of peers appears is more ambivalent: they are sometimes presented as possible obstacles towards entering or successfully achieving an apprenticeship [...] but they are also considered as important counsellors at an age where peer recognition is decisive in the construction of one's personality.*" (Bonvin/Dif-Pradalier/Rosenstein, 2012: 181) On the one hand, it may be supportive in the attitude towards education and serve as an important source for information and emotional support as a "stability factor", but on the other hand it may also constrain the individuals' free choice or even promote certain preferences. For the professionals, parents are supposed to be important figures even for those close to adulthood and they declare that it is promising and necessary to "take them on board". The role of the family in reproducing educational outcomes has been studied in educational sociology for decades. The findings point to the influence of the family as a

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<sup>5</sup> Several case studies identified a range of individual conversion factors; but as they are very diverse and even more related to the measures, their target groups and the specific (national) contexts, we will focus on the social and structural conversion factors here.

social conversion factor in the transition periods from a life-course perspective. This needs further investigation with respect to the contextualisation of this influence from the perspective of young people.

- 2. Professionals' norms and practices:** The skills and values of the professionals that provide the mentioned services also influence choices of young adults (see tutors in Italy, social workers/ project workers in Germany, Switzerland and UK, teachers in Denmark and France, Trainers in Poland, Austria etc.) This raises the question whether they “*encourage young people to choose a life they have reason to value, or do they encourage young people to choose a life as defined as valuable by social norms or project workers/organisations?*” (cf. Hollywood/Egdell/McQuaid/Michel-Schertges in this volume). An empirical example of such norms and beliefs are gender stereotypes about vocations and learning skills, according to these existing norms (not empirical facts at all!) there are some vocations exclusively for men and for women, for example that men are better in the natural sciences and women in the humanities (Poland). The professionals are often placed in an intersection between the actualisation of formal rights (e.g. choosing education, occupation etc.) and active labour market legislation. Thereby, they become a social conversion factor with the task of translating formal rights into actual *functionings*, which is in turn influenced greatly by structural conditions. As an example, these conditions forces that “*some youngsters (have to) choose a profession which they actually did not want or plan to choose due to a lack of apprenticeship places in their initially intended profession. Here, the unsatisfactory support of PES [Public Employment Service] having few time resources for extensive talks with youngsters and for preparing individually tailored counseling offers on the one hand and the limited range and numbers of desired apprenticeship professions on the other hand restrict the youngsters' opportunities*“ (Haidinger/Kasper 2012: 152). Insofar, they become 'gatekeepers' for the space of opportunities the young people have at their disposal. Because of the placement between different - often incommensurable - interests (i.e. organisational standards, external market conditions and the professional relationship to the young adult), their major tasks are often reduced to “*motivate for work*”. In this concept, motivation is regarded as an individual disposition which has to be worked on. But motivation has to be understood systematically as the responsibility of all different actors and can then lead to processes of recognition (Germany). In this way, professionals are negotiating the choices and aspirations the young person has in the first place and thereby seek to stifle what they believe are unrealistic aspirations or what they believe does not fit with given social norms. To give an example from Denmark, on the formal level, pupils enrolled in the Basic Vocational and Training programme (EGU) should be given influence on the area of occupation that their individually planned education aims at (an occupation they have reason to value). In practice, however, this only happens if it is possible to attune these ideas to actual internship possibilities at hand. Different professionals become social conversion factors for the capabilities of education in other ways, too. For example through *creaming*, that is focusing on the students with the best results thus reproducing inequalities in terms of capabilities or even

reinforcing them by symbolically and financially awarding the best instead of awarding the progress of the individual and taking into account unequal points of departure. One of the case studies showed that some of the professionals tend to divide students into an “elite” and an “unable to reform”/“unchangeable” group (Poland).

We only highlighted some aspects from the range of the different case studies. In summary, it became clear how resources and commodities as well as social conversion factors are shaped by and shape capabilities and the opportunities of young adults.

### **3 The freedom to choose dimension**

In the following, we will present some of the main issues addressed in relation to the three capabilities in question. They are related to essential resources and commodities, incorporate enabling and constraining aspects and integrate an explicit normative orientation (see table 1). They are all interdependent, but we will start from education to work and at the end emphasize the decisive weight of *voice*.

Fertile Capabilities According to...	Capability for Education	Capability for Work	Capability for Voice
<b>Resources &amp; Commodities</b>	Inequalities in educational regimes / certificate poverty	Sufficient valuable opportunities in terms of available jobs /activities	Voice as a substantiation of citizenship and social rights
<b>Constraints &amp; Enablings</b>	Negative schooling experiences	Prevention of discriminatory practices and labelling processes	Dominance of people processing
	Misregognition of informal and non-formal learning	Infrastructure and (material) resources of the measures in itself	Invisibility of exit options
	Education as 'Bildung'	Work-first vs. life first approaches and the "realistic" reference to the labour market	Participation within the support process
	Informational base for choice making in a professional working alliance	Enabling of adequate skills vs. realistic perspectives	Democratisation of social service organisations
<b>Normative orientation (for institutions)</b>	Capacity to aspire	Good and meaningful work	Sustainable capability space

Table 1: Dimensions of the capabilities for education, work and voice

### 3.1 The capability for education

Capability for education is on the one hand the real freedom to choose a (formal) education or training program one has reason to value (and even includes the choice of not being educated); on the other hand this concepts entails the idea of being adequately empowered to make such a choice and therefore calls for processes of *practical reasoning* and "Bildung". In relation to this capability we find the following issues relevant to take notice of:

1. **The role of inequalities in educational regimes and the issue of certificate poverty:**

The youth in question have "lost their track" either in the transition from school to further education or from education to work. With respect to the latter, not very surprisingly, we find inequalities in the capability for *formal*

*education* as discussed via the questions of “certificate poverty” (Solga 2011)<sup>6</sup> and “educational inflation” (Hansen 2003; Jensen/Kjeldsen 2012: 143)<sup>7</sup>. Should this structural problem of unequal distribution of educational capabilities be compensated at this later stage (see the question of early school selection in Austria)? Or should inequalities rather be avoided at earlier stages of the educational path, providing in Walkers (2010) terms “a just education”? This could also imply equalising differences in outcome in terms of status position (income and recognition) based on educational achievements, that is to equalise the remuneration of jobs that are socially deemed valuable (see Germany).

2. **Negative schooling experiences as a dominant issue:** In nearly all case studies we find that one of the threats against aspirations for (further) learning, job-related desires and ideas of future prospects are negative schooling experiences (i.e. Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, France). As The swiss case study sums up: “*According to the young persons interviewed, school has played a decisive, and even often a dramatic role in their life course. Retrospectively, many of them recall the end of compulsory schooling as a turning point in their biographical trajectory*” (Bonvin/Dif-Pradalier/Rosenstein 2012: 177).<sup>8</sup> The young people adapt their aspirations and preferences to what they assume to be within their reach (caused by negative experiences and low self-esteem). For institutions mainly handling the transition from school to work, these experiences are not only a precondition for their work but a constant phenomenon they have to cope with and overcome.
3. **Education as Bildung and the misrecognition of informal and non-formal learning:**  
An important notion is the aspect of capability for education as “Bildung”, which has been emphasised in several case studies (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria etc.). A precondition for processes of Bildung (understood

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<sup>6</sup> Heike Solga defines „certificate poverty“ on the one hand as a absolute minimum of formal education achieved through basic compulsory school and on the other hand as a relative minimum of education which is much higher due to the increase of higher education and increased (technical) requirements in the working world. For Germany in example, this can be illustrated by 10% of young adults not exceeding a graduate in lower secondary education (early school leavers) as well as those 15% of young adults who can not obtain a training position in the course of their transition process (cf. Solga 2011: 415).

<sup>7</sup> According to Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of “diploma inflation” where “the cheating of a generation” can be found because of the “disparity between the aspirations that the educational system produces and the opportunities it really offers” when “newcomers to secondary education are led, by the mere fact of having access to, to expect it to give them what it gave others at a time when they themselves were still excluded from it” (Bourdieu 2007 [1979]: 143).

<sup>8</sup> Even more examples from the case studies: As one of the interviewees in the Austrian case study utters: “*The teachers simply were a pain in my neck.*” (Haidinger/Kasper 2012: 152) which is quite similar to a young person in the Danish case study who said: “*I’ve been picked at and I have been chopped down by all of my teachers through three to four years and also in the technical school, I really do not know what they had against me*” (Jensen/Kjeldsen 2012: 129). And the German case study reveals “*The young people we interviewed have had bad schooling experiences and do not want to go further in school education (“bockt nicht”, roughly translates as “I can’t be bothered”), on the other hand staying in school seems to them quite easy and familiar (“Irgendwie chillig”, roughly translates as “feels somehow relaxed”) and they know that it is reasonable and promising to achieve higher educational qualifications (the “paradox of qualification”)*” (Düker/Ley 2012: 32).

here as cultural self-formation) is to create a context for and stimulation of practical reasoning and biographical reflexivity. “*Bildung points to a way of integrating knowledge and expertise with moral and aesthetic concerns. (...) It entails openness to difference and a willingness to self-correct. Bildung, in the classic sense, thus also contains a projective anticipation of the ‘good life’, of human freedom enacted with responsibility for self and others in the open-ended project of self-creation.*” (Bleicher 2006: 365) This definition of education as *Bildung* entails a wider perspective on *informal* and *non-formal*<sup>9</sup> learning and points to artistic, creative and non-standardised experiences and can be path breaking for the orientation, formation and the recognition of young adults (Switzerland, France). In fact, artistic expression is often not acknowledged as a resource due to the dominance of labour market employability. But apart from the intrinsic value of artistic expression, there is a risk that focusing on hard skills will turn out counterproductive in relation to aspirations for education and learning? (Nussbaum 2010)? In terms of the CA again, education can be understood as an end in itself concerning ‘a truly human life’ – a part of Nussbaum’s capability for: “*Senses, Imagination and Thought.*” which is: “*informed and cultivated by an adequate education*” (Nussbaum 2011: 33) and to finally support and achieve democratic citizenship (cf. Nussbaum 2006).

#### 4. **The informational base for choice making in a professional working alliance:**

Different guidance services, such as study and career counsellors already in the compulsory schools and in the transition from school to work or further education, should strive for equipping the individual with a *comprehensive informational basis for making choices*. This should not only pertain to the transition, but also to employment-related aspects as well as the potential decision to return into education for a certain period (life-long education). For the group of vulnerable young citizens, this service could also include that the professionals in these services mediate between the youngsters and the company or training placement when problems occur in the relationships. For instance in the Swiss case study: “[t]he coaches also play an important role in relation to employers. They act as intermediaries and/or mediators between the youngsters and their bosses” (Bonvin/Dif-Pradalier/Rosenstein 2012:

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<sup>9</sup> The understanding of life long learning and the differentiation between formal, non-formal and informal education can be found in EU commissions’ communication on: “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality” (COM (2001) 678) where the: “*Members States will be encouraged to provide the legal framework to implement more widely the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.*” (ibid.: 17). The three terms are defined as. 1) **Formal learning:** “*Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective*”(ibid.: 32). 2) **Non-formal learning:** “*Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.*” (ibid.: 33). 3) **Informal learning:** “*Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or “incidental”/random).*” (ibid.: 32). For a more comprehensive discussion and literature review on the these three types of learning see (Colley/Hodkinson/Malcolm 2002) or (Hodkinson/Colley/Malcolm 2003)

191).<sup>10</sup> In this way, professionals could help to avoid a rupture in the internship / apprenticeship placement (see also Denmark). Furthermore the case studies demonstrate that it is important to go beyond the sole question of getting full access to information. Moreover, education to choice and decision making is a fundamental aspect of this crucial process and can only be established within a trustful and persistent working alliance between professionals and addressees (France, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland).

5. **Capacity to aspire as a normative orientation (for institutions):** Institutions can make a major difference if they facilitate a *capacity to aspire* in young people. The capacity to aspire indicates the desires for and imagination of the future and the normative frameworks from which they take form (Appadurai 2004). Thereby, institutions can become the main driving force behind the development of positive attitudes towards learning and becoming *capable citizens in European societies*. This could entail to discuss with young people in vocational training to the possibility of continuing on in higher education in a later period of their working life. We found that one of the main drivers against positive future prospects are the dominant *negative schooling experiences*. Of course, the capacity to aspire has its limits when expression of limited educational aspirations is not the outcome of adaptation to a limited set of opportunities. Partly, the capacity to aspire can be helpful when persons characterised by very negative schooling experiences are brought into situations where they experience themselves as “able to learn”. Therefore, it is of paramount importance not to lower the educational expectations for youngsters at risk. Education is a full capability when standards are not torn down and when youngsters have the feeling to succeed the same level of expectation encountered by others youngsters. The role of institutions is then to function as enablers so that the learning process becomes empowering.

### 3.2 The capability for work

Even though there are several similarities to the aforementioned capability for education – indeed both are close to the subject matter and field the case studies are oriented at – the capability for work is the main objective of the researched institutions and encompasses future oriented opportunities for young adults. Hence, the capability for work is the real freedom to choose the job or activities (including as well informal care work etc.), that one has reason to value. This central capability includes: “*being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition*” with others (Nussbaum, 2011: 33-34). It encompasses being free to choose ones’ job or activity without being forced.<sup>11</sup> This entails already a crucial link to the capability for voice, which will be addressed below.

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<sup>10</sup> They further find that: “*the role of the coaches can be decisive with regard to the employers. Indeed, several forms of abuses have been mentioned. In these situations, the coaches can intervene as a kind of lawyers, defending apprentices’ working conditions and voicing their claims*” (Bonvin/Dif-Pradalier/Rosenstein 2012: 192).

<sup>11</sup> There should be at least some entitlement to be inactive without unbearable costs. Again, passive empowerment matters – e.g. the issue of available cash benefits for inactive people and their conditionalities, i.e. what kind of inactivity is socially recognised and compensated for? What kinds of inactivity are not? etc.

In relation to the capability for work we find the following issues relevant:

1. **Sufficient valuable opportunities in terms of available jobs and/or activities**

As it can be seen in many of the case studies, the lack of internships, practice or work opportunities in terms of available jobs is not only a question of resources, commodities and social justice in general, but is also the condition and the predetermined corridor wherein the institutions and measures have to navigate (i.e. Germany, Denmark, Austria, Italy); if valuable options and choices are effectively missing, professionals are not able to create a broader and deliberative information basis and are trimmed to external market conditions. Moreover, the free choice of occupation is often formally granted, but if the related internships or apprenticeship positions are not guaranteed it remains merely an empty formal right with no possibilities for realisation. Just to mention an empirical fragment from the German case: For the real freedom to choose an occupation, a ratio of 112.5 vocational training places per 100 applicants should be secured (cf. Federal Constitutional Court), but with a current ratio of 89.9 to 100 this resource is not provided. This has an impact on the capabilities for work and education. Therefore, enabling youth to actualise their voice and choice in the selection of placements cannot be achieved without taking the services' external context into account such as local labour market conditions, funding issues, the social responsibility of companies and the wider policy environment. For now this may serve as an example of how a capability can be missed when a needed *commodity* is not obtainable. In this regard the Austrian government passed a so-called "training guarantee" for all young people under the age of 18. The aim of the guarantee is to provide every school leaver, who cannot continue school-based education, with an apprenticeship place. The main instrument for this is to replace existing ALMP measures that mainly served to prepare young people for an apprenticeship in the regular labour market with so-called supra-company apprenticeship. (see Atzmüller in this volume and the Austrian case study as well) Despite the differences in national transition regimes this policy can serve as a practical answer to the growing crisis in VET, but only if the earned certificates are not devaluated due to their misrecognition.

2. **The prevention of discriminatory practices and labelling processes with regard to measures and institutions:** Keeping in mind that the target group in this project has been designated as being 'vulnerable' in terms of a lack of capabilities, the question of labelling processes becomes apparent and questionable at the same time. On the one hand, the individualisation and contractualisation of programmes is one of the objectives in several institutions and seems to be conducive due to the variety of biographical transitions. On the other hand this promotes the idea (and sometimes myth) of a pedagogical feasibility to solve (structural) problems on the individual level (see Germany, Denmark, Switzerland). As the swiss case illustrates, "*the move towards contractualisation is intrinsically ambivalent. It potentially opens the way towards social policies fostering individual emancipation, but at the same time, it also makes access to welfare benefits more constraining and*

*selective*” (Bonvin/Dif-Pradalier/Rosenstein in this volume) and induces a transfer of responsibility from society to the youngster. Furthermore within measures discriminatory practices became evident (see Poland).

3. **The infrastructure and (material) resources of the transition measures in itself:**

The infrastructure and (material) resources of the transition measures in itself is a yardstick for practical learning and the encouragement for participating in constructive - in terms of productive, useful and tangible - learning processes. According the Austrian Case Study, it became obvious that [t]he motivation for learning and working was positively influenced by youngsters’ chance of doing something productive, useful and tangible. This involves several features: Learning processes in apprenticeship training must imply the production of something visible and a useful outcome (1). The production process itself is not only physically or psychically tiring but also makes youngsters aware of their capacity to form and shape raw material into something of completely different appearance (2). The production of things for daily usage opens up immediate alternatives of agency and ‘empowers’ them in daily life – as professionals and as social agents. Youngsters not only learn for an abstract exam or for the commodification of their labour but for the application of their skills in daily life (3). Finally, taking on responsibility for entire production processes – their supervision and self-determined organisation – strengthens the motivation to learn and consequently enhances the development of capabilities (4)” (Haidinger/Kasper in this volume). Here, the importance of a practical and supportive work environment in helping young people sustain their work placement and educate them about the world of work becomes essential.

4. **Work-first vs. life first approaches and the “realistic” reference to the labour market:** One of the research questions in the case studies was: Which skills are seen as relevant and how are they enabled? In several case studies, the question of “realistic” reference to the labour market became crucial. A follow up question would be: do professionals refer to concepts of employability and do they go beyond this instrumental perspective? This involves how each measure is structured (work-first vs. life first approach) and which opportunities they provide. Whereas in some case studies there is direct and concrete link to the working world (see Austria, Poland, UK) in other studies the working world is dominant but more virtual (see Germany, Denmark, Sweden). Both can be an empowering and constraining at the same time, whereas on the one hand this transition phase can be a space for manoeuvre in both ways (as a safe space or as a leeway for creativity) and on the other hand the working world and the labour market can be an objective which problematically becomes very dominant in the interactions between professionals and young adults. So while it may be important for the young adult to be integrated into society partly through meeting their wider obligations to others and society, only some of these may be met through (paid) work in general, and the young people should not be explicitly or implicitly forced into a particular type of work when other forms of work or activities may be more appropriate and valued.

5. **The enabling of adequate skills vs. realistic perspectives:** The findings of the case studies provide useful insights into what kind of work young people find reason to value. On the other hand, it sometimes turned out that it is hard for young adults to reflect on what they value, on their social positioning as the major predictor of life chances and especially on the desirability of different options which are all essential preconditions for moving beyond functionings and realising the possibility for (positive) social mobility in the sense that measuring progress is by the extension of freedom (Sen 1998: 8), which is at the heart of the capability approach. This also implies that the constraints of the labour market and aspirations for valuable work may not be developed because of a lack of education or a lack of knowledge about working life due to the biographical backgrounds and social networks in which the young person operates. Furthermore, the type of work that young people value is not static and preferences change over time. “Realistic perspectives” and their handling and negotiation became a crucial point within several case studies (see Germany, Denmark). This can be read in two directions: in a positive version as the creation and support of a condition for practical reasoning, in a negative reading as a form of adaptive preferences. In the negative interpretation, individual reflexivity is transformed through institutional practices with the aim of aligning aspirations with institutional demands. In this respect, aspirations and opportunities are curtailed by the adaptation to circumstances. This can be considered as the problem of “adaptive preferences”. However, “realistic perspectives” are not inherently a bad thing - indeed they are inescapable - but if the adaptation leads to a massive displacement from a person’s original inherent concerns, young people are forced to cope with alienation – an eminent issue in this context. Our assumption is that young people’s concerns are already supported by reasoned valuations – which themselves are bound and adapted to their context. This dialectic of respecting and regulating young people’s aspirations (and sometimes even wishes and desires) has to be coped with institutionally.
  
6. **Good and meaningful work as a normative orientation:** In a normative reading, capability for work entails a social definition of “good and meaningful work” (i.e. those jobs that are recognised as valuable by society at large) and ought to be wide-ranging enough to encompass all types of activities that young people consider as valuable. This means that the definition of what is a “valuable job” should be wide enough to take into account the wishes and desires of all young people. This normative idea of good and meaningful work becomes relevant on all levels. It does not only pertain what could be desirable for each young adult and which aspirations are favoured (and socially accepted), but also to the opportunities the transitional sector itself offers - as an institution of social mobility or as an institution tending only to the demand side of the labour market and thus activating young people for employability. In several institutions and transitional regimes the idea of what constitutes good and meaningful work is lacking (i.e. Germany, Italy).

### 3.3 The capability for voice

The concept of capability for voice designates the real freedom to voice one's opinion and to make it count within the public policy process on the one hand and social work practice on the other hand (cf. Bonvin 2012). On a subject oriented (but not individualistic) level, capability for voice is the real freedom to express one's wishes, expectations, desires, etc. and really make them count when decisions concerning oneself are made. In relation to this capability we find the following issues relevant:

1. **Voice as a substantiation of citizenship and social rights:** The capability for voice becomes relevant on the societal level when looking at questions of citizenship and social rights within national transition regimes. Being in a (material and facing) situation in which the transition from school to work is seen as a developmental space and is socially perceived as less problematic, would be generally desirable and a productive normative orientation for youth policy. Nevertheless in employment centred regimes disadvantaged young people are - quite paradoxically - even more pressured to make decisions on their future that might have only partly predictable consequences by applying practical reasoning, but without the preconditions for practical reasoning being met (such as access to all relevant information, time for reflecting one's conception of the good in the light of available options etc.).
2. **The dominance of people processing and the invisibility of exit options:** Looking at the institutional level, the main objective of public action is - in the words of the CA - to create a broader (and deliberative) informational basis on the one hand and open up new opportunities on the other hand. Within the case studies, critical questions were raised about whether the dominance of people processing technologies and a narrow view on employability within Active Labour Market Programs (ALMP) is constraining these aims (see especially Germany). Furthermore, in several local transition institutions the possibility of an exit option<sup>12</sup> was not made clear or even not assumed, and the young adults felt like having the last – and not very likely – chance to jump on the bandwagon to the labour market. As the Austrian case study puts it: “the opportunities on offer are inevitably limited and constraining since, due to a lack of resources or non-feasible conversion factors, not everybody has all options or the possibility to convert all these options into strategies to be pursued. What is more, the exit option – alternative pathways that go beyond other forms of training or a badly paid job – is perceived as very negative. The youngsters are full of fear of ‘getting lost on the street’, becoming delinquent, falling from grace. Often they see no way back from a non-conforming way of living” (Haidinger/Kasper in this

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<sup>12</sup> Bonvin states that “in the capability perspective, the achievement of this processual dimension of real freedom requires the equal availability of three alternatives (Hirschman, 1970) for each and every individual: he or she should be able to choose between either loyalty to the collective prescriptions or norms, or voice in order to contest or negotiate the content of such prescriptions without being subject to heavy sanctions, or exit so as to be able to escape these collective norms at an affordable cost (e.g. by refusing to take up a badly remunerated job without having to abide by excessive financial penalties imposed by the public employment agency). The effective availability of these three options features as a necessary condition for the enhancement of his or her capability set” (Bonvin 2012: 12)

volume). Therefore, the assumption of voluntariness within the programmes and the aspect of agency in general have to be challenged.

3. **Participation within the support process and the democratisation of social service organisations:** Within the case studies, it was asked to what extent young people are able to have voice in the design and delivery of the institutions and measures. In almost all case studies, ‘voice’ options are mainly available in the young adults’ relationship with local agents and professionals. Insofar, participation within the support process becomes crucial. This does not only entail that multiple opportunities and aims are possible and made transparent in the support process, but also that youngsters are involved in the process of decision-making and perceive themselves as part of a working alliance. According to Lareau (2003), a “sense of constraint” can typically be observed in working class and ‘underclass’ youth. First of all, many young people may have very narrow horizons in terms of what type of employment they aspire to, partly shaped by gender stereotypes and a lack of role models, but still: *“While young people’s voice and choices may be developed through providing role models and encouragement, the extent to which they can articulate their voice and choice is still shaped and restrained by the context of wider labour markets and by the skills and experience of the young people themselves. It is not always clear how much voice the young people have in terms of being able to challenge their working conditions and roles.”* (Hollywood/Egdall/McQuaid 2012: 220). Secondly, they are not seeing themselves in the position of demanding anything and remain sceptical and doubtful towards agents of social institutions. They tend to comply with the decisions and actions of state agents, at least on the surface. Moreover, they do not expect that institutions meet their needs and requirements. Insofar, a “sense of entitlement“ has to be institutionally enabled and subjectively enacted aiming at fulfilling young peoples’ self-conscious expectation that institutions and their agents respond to their needs and aspirations. Here we traced the basic question of adaptive preferences and the code of realistic perspectives (see above and as well the German and the Swedish case). There was even less evidence that programmes sufficiently involved young people in the development and implementation of the programmes (see every case study).
4. **The need for a sustainable capability space for young people:** In this respect, basic questions of self-determination and agency have to be raised within this concept of the capability for voice (i.e. Zimmermann 2005). This pertains to methodological issues as well as to the evaluation of transition processes and finally to a normative orientation in transitional regimes and society in general. Understanding youth as a specific transition period can be seen as an important aspect when securing the opportunity to re-make choices made within this time of transition either from school to further education, from school to work or even from early youth to adulthood. This period could be conceptualised as a sustainable capability space (see Denmark, Germany in detail but other case studies as well). In our conceptual understanding a sustainable capability space preserves a period and a space for flourishing in a supportive and developing environment..Whereas adolescence is often seen as

a delay or suspension of an activity or a law – which would point to stagnation – the concept of a sustainable capability space refers to a time of growth and human flourishing, wherein the young persons have time and space to express their desires, develop their aspirations and life plans they have reason to value. This is therefore a new kind of understanding and it fits well to the dynamics of the capability approach: *"This amounts to seeing a person in as it were, an 'active' rather than a 'passive' form (but neither the various states of being nor even the "doings" need necessarily be 'athletic' ones).*" (Sen 1990: 44) Accordingly, job orientation could be understood as a long-term issue and leave acknowledged "space" for trial and error as a part of a period of self-determination. In the case studies, young people often experience a lot of time pressure in terms of decision making (Austria). In this sense the resources provided by schools aimed at equalising skills of their students, catch-up classes and individual consultations (see Poland) could become a part of a sustainable capability space. The informational basis likewise seems of importance as it influences unintended programme drop-out (France).

It appears that voice was a crucial element of some projects. A capacitating project in terms of voice is one that implies the active involvement of young people but also grants them the freedom not to participate. More generally, a project will be enabling if its operation is one of value in the eyes of the young adult and they for that reason chose to participate. Young people should not be compelled to participate in experimental programmes; rather they should be invited to get involved which requires that they are well informed. According to this, we can say that among the studied projects, very few if any, pay special attention to the capability for voice *per se*. Capability for voice is not explicitly an end or a means to be achieved by the projects.

So far we can state that the capability for voice can be seen as a 'transmission belt' for the other two capabilities and perhaps as a link between them. On the one hand, having a voice only becomes crucial when (real) opportunities of education and work are provided; because if valuable options and choices are effectively missing, this processual dimension of freedom turns out to be a chimera and can be stated as a biographical reflexivity without embodiment and materialisation. On the other hand these opportunities are in need of a practical reasoning for being able to form a conception of the good, to engage in reflection about the planning of one's own life and in the end to value educational and occupational choices.

#### **4 Conclusions - A meta understanding of combined resources, commodities and capabilities and their conversion factors**

##### **Means and end confusion in relation to education and work**

Education and certificates gained through educational programs are supposed to be necessary prerequisites for work opportunities and thus related to the capability for work. As can be seen from the case studies, however, in some cases learning on the job is the best way for some of the youngsters. Therefore, one may call education a *means* for another *end*, namely the freedom – or capability – to seek the work position one has reason to value and as a result have the freedom to shape one kind of life rather than another and *vice versa*. In many of the cases, work and education are situated in bi-dimensional relations. Within the relation between capability for work and education we find that education often assumes an instrumental role and is devoted to a substantial capability, namely the capability for work.

Capabilities for education become valuable because being successful at school is important to guarantee the realisation of what the youngsters we met valued. If this cannot be achieved, it leads to unbearable situations: “without studies, no work and your life is ruined”. Therefore, the capability for education is not seen as an end in itself but rather as a means for access to a chosen life. As a result of the empirical investigation it has become quite clear that one of the three single valuable capabilities should not be promoted at the cost of the others. The studies show that the capability for education in particular is an important necessity for the good life in other domains. In the French case, for example, students’ diplomas matter in different situations. The Baccalauréat (A-levels) is envisaged here as a conversion factor, increasing the young persons’ positive ability to achieve something worth doing. The social norm does indeed favour this qualification in order to access the job market more securely. Thus, formal educational achievements act as a social conversion factor. This has important implications for the young people that will not be encouraged or even given the opportunity to choose the life they have reason to value. Instead, they are being persuaded to pursue a kind of life conduct which is valued according to external norms. As can be seen from the Polish case, this is outside their real influence and thus: “*In this sense, it is connected to Bourdieu’s assessment that its role is to reproduce social order and legitimise this reproduction.*” (see Poland) The reproduction of inequality through education is by no means ground breaking or an unexpected finding. In a sense education forms ones: “*ability to exercise freedom*” and the individual freedom “*may, to a considerable extent, be directly dependent on the education we have received, and thus the development of the educational sector may have a foundational connection with the capability-based approach*” (Sen 1989: 55).

### **A strong relationship between the capability for education and work**

As mentioned earlier, there is a conceptual and important difference. We can observe in the different case studies that education is often closely connected to the capability for work. This double perspective on education in relation to work and the good life one has reason to value raises several problems for vulnerable young people within Europe, especially when the certificates and qualifications are unequally distributed and thereby cause inequalities in the space of other valuable capabilities, such as the capability for voice. Therefore, on a macro level, this causes several paradoxes and counterproductive practices particularly in life-course transitions whether from finished education into the labour market or from compulsory education to further job-qualifying education. For instance in the case of Germany, when leaving lower secondary school it is obvious that finishing school with a general qualification for apprenticeship entrance is by no means an absolute guarantee for a job and training placement. Therefore it can be stated that to foster the capabilities for education and learning, learning methods or processes should lead to concrete, useful and sensually tangible outcomes appreciated by the apprentices themselves and by others. We find similarities across several different contexts as risks when facing these transition periods.

### **The capability for voice as a just negotiation with exit options**

When making informed professional and political decisions within this field of interest it seems of relevance to have in mind the relation between resources (commodities) and the different structural and individual conversion factors. The decisions made need to secure what could be called a *just negotiation with exit options* between youth services and families with the young persons’ aspirations, wishes and needs at the centre. *Just negotiation with exit options* would imply that a young person is not forced to adapt his or her choices to the counsellors or families idea of „realistic perspectives” in relation to the labour market situation at the present. Real freedom to choose in this matter requires that the choices the

young individuals make do not result in discrimination when it comes to valuable social and professional integration. On the other hand this does not indicate that the young person should not reflect his or her wishes in relation to the *de facto* structures in the labour market or educational system, but they should be equipped with *an adequate informational basis for making choices*. In this manner, just measures will tend to allow youth on a well informed basis to choose what type of education they have reason to value. This opens up for a double sided understanding of education, both as a means for *good and meaningful work* and as an end in itself. In addition, the France case study highlights that the capability for voice can be developed through education and thereby the capability for education becomes fertile for the development of young people's ability to voice their concerns. When: "*The interviews show that developing capability for voice is at the very heart of the educational approach*" and "*a weak performance at school is generally related to a poor capability for voice*", then the three capabilities have "*transversal characteristics*" between each other (Berthet/Simon/Castets-Fontaine 2012: 106, 107, 111). Then again, "the capabilities for voice and work are bound to the capability for education. A weak capability for education results in lowering down the two other capabilities. On the one hand, claiming and voicing requires some self-confidence and skills provided by education. Capability for voice is not given per se but comes out of a formal and informal education. On the other hand, the access to the labour market and a valuable job is in France strongly dependent on the kind of degree gathered in education" (Berthet/Simon in this volume).

The mutual dependencies of the *empowerment* and the *freedom to choose dimension* go hand in hand with the finding that "*programmes that were most 'successful' tended to be those that were holistic, multidimensional and integrated in their approach to addressing youth disadvantage*" (Hollywood/Egdell/McQuaid/Michel-Schertges in this volume).

At last, if the above is brought into perspective, it could be discussed whether *enabling young people to act as capable citizens in European societies* in a just educational (transitional) system would entail a *sustainable capability space* for young adults that would secure:

1. through a manifold service system that each young person not only has access to information, but can form their own *informational basis for choice making in relation to education and work*,
2. the real freedoms and not merely the formal entitlements (veto or exit opportunities and necessary commodities for their actualisation) in relation to transitions between employment and education *vis a vis*. This implies that the voice of the young is seriously taken into account,
3. *interventions based on individual needs and resource alignment* for all young citizens that secure the real opportunity to enjoy the capabilities for voice, work and education meeting or exceeding a threshold determined through a democratic political process.

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