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A Capability perspective on Youth transitions in the Labour Society under consideration of Welfare and education Institutions. –exploring the heuristic value of an Agency perspective

Western societies hold the normative posit of work-orientated integration into society while providing less and less opportunities for participation in the labour market. This sets under pressure especially those who are at the lower strata of society, mainly those without vocational education, low educational attainment and restricted assistance by social networks. In the last 15 years, institutional responses as well as research efforts dealing with this crisis of the traditional integration rationalities of late capitalism emerge. In this paper, I am going to analyse and to formulate a critique on the normative goals and presuppositions of institutional responses as well as theoretical analysis addressing the vocational and social integration of populations often labelled as “vulnerable”, lacking of “employability” by proposing a heuristic framework for the analysis transitions from school to work.

The question of social and professional integration or “insertion” is at its centre a Social pedagogical question, as it a.) Addresses the relationship between the individual and the Society insofar as it is conflictual and b.)Historically, the emergence of Social Work itself can be rooted in the upheaval of an industrial society, which consecutive transformations affected the character of Social Problems Social work had to deal with. Contradictorily, the response deemed adequate to these rather structural Problems is seen in a “pedagogisation” of Interventions, which implicates a targeting of individual responsibilities, aspirations, and modes of life conduct of service users. Modes of operation genuinely designed for Social Work practice find their uprising in this field of practice more and more, without nevertheless moving from the normative aim setting of “work-integration” as the non-plus-ultra yardstick of success and efficiency of interventions.

In this Project outline, I will delineate in how far the aim of enabling people for “enjoying an individual life in a manner one has reason to value” (TiSSA Call for Papers), changes the perspective on this topic, which consequently will be reformulated as an analytic perspective which focuses on individual development of young “disadvantaged” in their social contexts. This also entails a description of their specific life-circumstances, as the description of their historic-generational space of experience.

By proposing a perspective guided through the analytical category of “Agency”, I aspire adapting a perspective deemed more appropriate for researching the pathways of adolescents into Labour, by referring on findings of youth research, biographical research and socio-psychological research. This will be done by discussing the socio-theoretical, sociological and empirical operationalization of Agency and Autonomy in their particular application to the context of “young disadvantaged”, by

taking into consideration the -in contemporary research on youth- rather underemphasized issue of “key ecologies” (friends, family and relatives, leisure time, everyday life-conduct) of the Life’s of the young. This argumentation will furthermore highlight the impact of precarisation and marginalization on future projects and aspirations of the young, investigating the “temporal horizons” of young marginalized youth in precarious transition periods. After having developed the theoretical background and research questions of this project, I put first thoughts of an framework for empirical analysis to discussion.