Capitalism(s) and the future of adult education policy
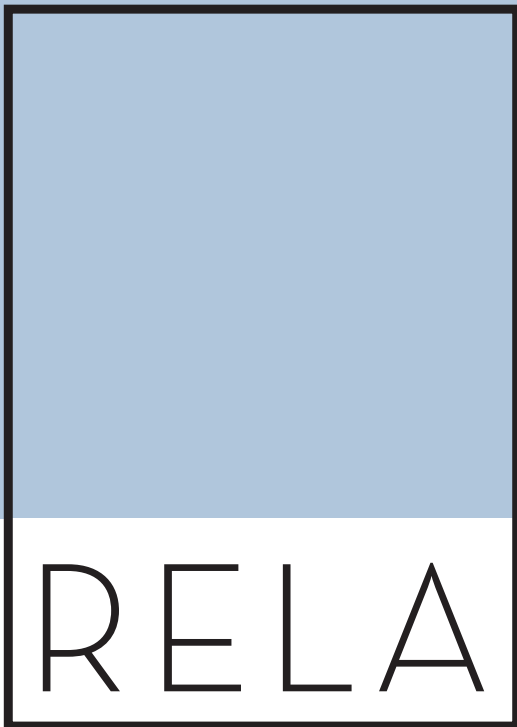
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Editorial: Capitalism(s) and the future of adult education policy

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Introduction

More than a century ago, Max Weber ([1904-05] 1930) spoke of the capitalist economy as 'an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live ([1904-05] 1930, p. 19). On this basis he criticised the capitalist economy for forcing the individual 'to conform to capitalistic rules of action' ([1904-05] 1930, p. 20), which are based on private ownership by individuals or corporations, market competition and the pursuit of profit. Of course, fifty years ahead of Weber, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ([1848] 2002) had already examined and critiqued the expansive and exploitative nature of capital in the *Communist Manifesto* and they continued to build and elaborate these ideas throughout their lives (Marx, [1867] 1990). These and other thinkers have created a rich body of scholarship exploring the tendencies and characteristics of capitalism through history[1] from varied ideological positions (e.g., Braudel, 1981; Marx, [1867] 1990; Polanyi, 2001; Smith, 1776; Wallerstein, 1980 inter alia).

Debates on the nature and direction of capitalism, and its relationship to flourishing and freedom, continued for most of the twentieth century. But from the 1980s onwards for both political and intellectual reasons work examining capitalism largely fell out of favour in social science, even amongst critical theorists (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018). In the past decade this has shifted again and there has been a remarkable renewal of interest in such work in both the mass media and mainstream academia (Dörre, Lessenich & Rosa, 2015). This change can be attributed to the impact of a particular 'event' in recent history,

as well as the effects of long wave of capitalist globalisation, and growing concerns and the future direction and sustainability of the contemporary social order.

The event, of course, is the 2008 global financial crisis, the effects of which rippled outwards leading to major recession and which prompted a great deal of reflection and research on the tendencies of capitalism. Related but distinct from this is the growing evidence of a secular rise inequalities in wealth and power (Piketty, 2014; Sayer, 2015; Staab, 2019) and dramatic signs of the intensifying environmental crisis (Latour, 2018; Malm, 2020; Raworth, 2018), linked by the expansive logic of capital accumulation. This new body of research has also served to remind us that capitalism is the result of material and ideological interactions between social groups, over property rights and the pursuit of profit and social stability, rather than a natural fact (Piketty, 2020).

Although capitalism has experienced, and continues to experience crises of all sorts, it has continued to expand its reach causing new type of challenges (Beck, 1999). It remains unclear whether capitalism might be replaced, in foreseeable future, with anything other than merely a version of itself (Tanuro, 2013). Among other things, capitalism has shown a marked capacity to creatively absorb diverse critiques (social, environmental, feminist and cultural) and oftentimes uses them to its own advantage (della Porta, 2015).

In summary, capitalism's extraordinary dynamism has created a highly complex world system which is now beset by crises. A world, as one commentator put it, of 'brave new anxieties', in which there appears to be a lack of confidence in the future, increased pessimism among the working classes, and the rising and worrisome support for political extremism (Collier, 2018). Without a theory of the dynamics and tendencies of capitalism, it is argued, not only will we faill to grasp a great deal of what is happening in the world we will also be unable to shape it in any meaningful sense (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; Harvey, 2016; Sayer, 2015; Wright, 2010).

Capitalism and adult education (policy) research

Despite this renewal of interests in capitalism there is still relatively little sustained discussion of capitalism in adult education. While critiques of neoliberalism, human capital theory and instrumentalism are very common in adult education research situating this in a more general analysis of capitalism is quite rare. Perhaps this is because historically, as Griff Foley argues (1994, p. 121), there has historically been a relative 'neglect of political economy' within the field. Certainly this criticism applies to a great deal of liberal and humanist forms of adult education research but includes also a great deal of critical pedagogy and even to Freire (1972, 1998),

In issuing the Call for Papers for this thematic issue the ESREA Policy Studies in Adult Education wanted to create the conditions for a sustained examination of the topic in contemporary adult education. Our hope is that this will build on previous work on this topic for example, and this is no way an exhaustive list, in comparative adult education and research on lifelong learning (e.g., Jarvis, 2008; Rubenson, 2009), adult education and development (e.g. Youngman, 2000 adult education and work) (e.g. Livingstone, 2010; Sawchuck, 2003), and among critical researchers (e.g. Finger, Jansen & Wildemeersch, 2000; Heller, 2016; Olson, Dahlstedt, Fejes, & Sandberg, 2018; Walters, Borg, Mayo, Foley, 2004), and researchers interested in institutionally mediated 'varieties of capitalism' drawing on Hall & Soskice (2001) (e.g., Rees, 2013; or critically Reichart & Kaufmann-Kuchta, 2020) or on the idea of varying forms of capitalist welfare states (e.g. Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020).

The ESREA Policy Studies in Adult Education acknowledges that policy developments are subject to various trends, among which globalisation, the trans-nationalisation of education policy making, and a renewed pressure for strategic and policy relevant research. At the same time, the network believes that alongside critiques of capitalism(s), and debates around new forms of capitalism, scholarly work is needed to unleash the 'sociological imagination' (Wright Mills, 1959; see also Rasmussen in this issue) not only to explore how different forms of capitalism interact with and influence adult education, but also - paraphrasing Paul Collier (2018), to assume an alternative point of view on 'the future of adult education'. In light of what we have written above about futures it follows that thinking carefully about the future of adult education requires exploring if capitalism can be managed, substantially altered or transcended. How this can play out on day to day basis is illuminated in a recent study of learners' will formation, which suggests that adult education in many forms is orientated to adapting 'to the prevailing societal situation—that of late capitalism, which is a situation not considered by the adult students as possible to change' (Olson at al., 2018, p. 95). The relationship between capitalism and alternative futures has become of even sharper interest over the 2020-21, with some researchers tracing the increasing incidence of zoonoses to the way capitalism is organised (Foster & Suwandi, 2020) and also evidence that it has consolidated the power of capital while social inequalities have worsened (William, 2020).

The articles in the thematic issue

In launching this call we also wished to begin to mark out how adult education might be fruitfully linked to research on capitalism in other disciplines. In this regard we discern four areas within contemporary research on capitalism that are especially pertinent to the articles in this thematic issue. First, there is the question of how we define periods and phases within capitalism, and the importance of the precise way one describes contemporary capitalism (e.g. whether one terms present day capitalism as neoliberal, financialised, cognitive, accelerated, 'late', etc.), and how this is positioned in relation to previous phases of capitalism (e.g. Fordist, welfare, monopoly, Keynesian, social democratic etc.). As we will explain below the coordinates we use to look backwards and forwards in thinking about the future, and the associated politics of memory, is a key concern in this issue and taken up in striking and unusual ways. Second, the articles in this thematic issue illustrate commonalities and differences in capitalism across national and regional boundaries. Third, each article grapples with how we might best analyse how the symbolic and material aspects of capitalism mesh. Fourth, all the articles treat adult education as both a force for social reproduction and resistance to capitalism drawing mainly on radical, Marxist and post-structuralist informed accounts of capitalism today.

The first two articles in this thematic issue focus on the futures in adult education through a careful evacuation of past ideas. Both articles are also concerned with how we can hold onto and enlarge our sense of possibilities in a period of crisis. In this sense the history of adult education is read strategically and 'to seize hold of a memory as it flashes it up in a moment of danger' (Benjamin, 1992, p. 247).

In the first article Palle Rasmussen focuses on the sociological imagination as a precondition of a truly democratic politics and society. It only looks back at Charles Wright Mills and Oskar Negt as adult educators who saw a critique of modern society and capitalism as a foundational part of critical adult education and a living democracy. Rasmussen works through and critiques their contributions and also argues for the value

of dystopian (and utopian) fiction in fully developing a sociological imagination in adult education that is able to (however indirectly) hint at the possibilities of preventing social, environmental etc. degradation.

The second article by Barry J. Hake draws on Raymond Williams' cultural materialism to trace the way various adult education scholarship has been linked to capitalist and sometimes anti-capitalist imaginaries. Combining sociological analysis with a fine-grained historical account of adult education policy development Hake casts a critical eye on the way we remember and use notions of the past in adult education in response to contemporary capitalism. Hake describes the three post-war decades as a crucial period of interest. The author demonstrates convincingly (and perhaps surprisingly to many) that it was just that era that gave rise, in the Western world, to a number of central assumptions of the technocratic and managerial approaches to governing society that emphasise the role of education and learning – approaches we often tend to associate with the emergence and establishment of neoliberalism in the 1980s. Notably he also suggests that critical adult education research needs to be wary of nostalgia for the past and the need to hold onto a sense of the deep conflicts over the purpose of adult education across and through distinct phases of capitalism.

The third and fourth texts focus on problematic aspects of social practices and economic orientations of education policies in the context of global capitalism. Through comparative analysis they contextualise the various ways capitalist logic operates in specific national and regional contexts.

Borut Mikulec and Tadej Košmerl's article explores changes in adult education policy in Bavaria and Slovenia and seeks to identify some of the key characteristics, drivers and modalities of marketisation processes in adult learning and education. They outline the various ways this can occur and then, based on empirical research on policy documents and interviews, outline the extent to which marketisation is being promoted by federal and national states and to which this is then responded to by adult learning and education institutions. In doing so they draw on critical theories of power alongside work on varieties of capitalism on a 'macro' level to situate the study. They also deploy a framework developed by Lima and Guimarães (2011) in exploring the findings. From this they discern drivers towards marketisation from 'above' and 'below', and clear evidence of neoliberalisation of adult learning and education but also resistance to this agenda.

The final article of the thematic issue theme by Alisha M. B. Heinemann and Lilia Monzó focuses on second language education in Germany and the USA. Building on critical pedagogy and humanist Marxism they situate their discussion of second language education in relation to capitalism, racism and migration. The article examines the links between the logic of capitalism and specific historical traditions, institutions and practices in adult education in their two contexts. They argue that second language learning is primarily being used to ensure social reproduction in Germany and the USA. Both contributors share a keen interest in the ways educators and education organisers can resist the implementation of current education policies and make the case there is also space for a 'pedagogy of dreaming' and the creation of what Foucault termed 'heterotopian spaces' of dissent and alterity.

When we started considering a thematic issue on capitalism(s) and (the future) adult education policy, it became apparent that such a broad field cannot be fully covered by a few articles brought together in a single thematic issue. In spite of this, we believe that the collection of articles herein included depict the relevance, breadth, and dynamism of the debate among adult education (policy) scholars, and we hope might spark further discussions, venturing well beyond the usual critique of neoliberalism and human resource development policy, as we have known it since the late 20th century. Taken

together the contribution to this thematic issue prompt further research in at least two directions. The first direction invites to focus on capitalism in terms of both its general characteristics and the way its development has been shaped in the past generation. The second direction calls for in-depth analyses and critique of selected manifestations of global capitalism, and its changing forms, including by unfolding crises in health, the economy, the enviroment and democracy, as we write.

Open papers in this issue of RELA

There are three other articles featured in this issue of RELA.

The fifth article in this issue is a fascinating theoretical essay by Peter Alheit entitled 'Biographicity as 'mental grammar' of postmodern life'. Peter Alheit is one of the key figures in European biographical research and has over several decades analysed the modes, structures and processes biographical learning with great acuity. As part of this Alheit and Dausien (2000) elaborated a theory of biographicity (building on work by Martin Kohli and others) which seeks to understand how people reflexively and creatively reshape their lives. Alheit has continued to refine this idea and in this article draws on neurobiology and work on linguistics as well as a longstanding interest in Bourdieu and Luhmann, who he also critically engages with here, to puzzle through the complex interplay of agency and structure in modern life in a non-deterministic way. In reviewing these ideas he reflects in particular on gender. The implications of the arguments in this article for how we think about research and adult learning are profound and worth quoting some of the conclusion Alheit offers directly. He discusses '*Biographicity* as a unique social grammar of the individual [...] an *'inner logic'* grows, which can also change again and again through new external impulses. But it does not change according to a principle of determination' Alheit's careful discussion of agency is highly stimulating and adds to his very rich body of work

Paula Stone is the author of the sixth piece and is also concerned with auto/biographical learning and in particular the injuries of class. In the article Stone tells 'the story of 'who I was' to 'who I am now'", in a bid to address issues around misrepresentation and exclusion' She focuses in particular at her experiences in academia and doing a PhD. The author offers a compelling account of how the classed assumptions of the academy and particular academics help produce feelings of vulnerability and misrecognition in working class academics. Using a feminist and critical lens and a 'sociological imagination' Stone thoughtfully discusses how social class inequalities are produced, experienced and researched and how class and gender have shaped her own trajectory through education and the dilemmas and questions this has provoked. Bridging feminist standpoint theory and Axel Honneth's critical theory she concludes by discussing how the award of her PhD gave here some of 'the desired recognition that Honneth (1995) argues is essential for human flourishing'. In doing so Stone deftly illustrates the way agency operates and is constrained through a careful and evocative reflection on her lived experience.

The final piece in the issue comes from Paula Guimãres and Borut Mikulec and this is a comparative analysis of recognition of prior learning (RPL) policies in Slovenia and Portugal based primarily on documentary analysis. They succinctly and helpfully outline the various models of RPL and then detail the continuities and discontinuities in the development of RPL policies in Slovenia and Portugal. They also discuss the strong influence the European Union has played in the development of RPL, not least in linking RPL to employability. The article illustrates just how differently embedded RPL is in

different European countries (RPL is quite central in adult education in Portugal but is more marginal in Slovenia). A key finding across both contexts is that RPL is being developed in a utilitarian and market driven way and even more strikingly that RPL aimed solely at professional certification currently lacks educational and social value. This points to the need for careful consideration of how we link adult education to decent employment.

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Public reason, adult education and social imagination

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Abstract

Communities of publics where citizens together develop informed opinion as basis for political decisions is crucial to democracy; and adult education can contribute vitally to such communities. This was argued by two critical social scientists, Charles Wright Mills and Oskar Negt. Researching and writing in different situations and drawing on different traditions, they voiced many of the same concerns about the inequalities and contradictions of modern capitalist societies. Mills and Negt argued that citizens and publics need to grasp the interrelations between society at large and individual lives and troubles. It is also necessary to transgress the immediate reality and its options, to imagine how societies and lives could take different turns, both in negative and positive directions. This article makes a case that imaginative fiction literature can help critical social science and adult education in promoting such social imagination.

Keywords: Adult education, democracy, liberal education, science fiction, sociological imagination, trade union

Introduction

Crises are an endemic feature of the economic and social system of capitalism, reflecting fundamental shortcomings and contradictions of this system. The current economic crisis, provoked by the COVID-19 epidemic, is still unfolding. Governments over the world have tried to combat the epidemic by closing down public institutions and placing restrictions on citizens' behaviour, with the result that public spaces have been emptied and service industries have suffered. Although economic support from governments has delayed and partly reduced the impact, the crisis is still deep. The previous economic crisis, the financial crisis of 2008–2009, was provoked by excessive loans for private housing in the United States; and when this 'housing bubble' burst, many banks and

financial institutions broke down, and many people lost both jobs and savings. In the present COVID-19 crisis, however, the main impact of the crisis is not on financial institutions and real estate, but on people with precarious work and life situations, for instance in the private services sector. Such crisis situations inevitably raise fears, hopes and debates about what will happen after the crisis, if there will be long-term changes and if critics of capitalism may influence changes.

Capitalism exists in many forms. There are basic elements, such as production for profits and accumulation, circulation and exchange of commodities in markets, private ownership of the means of production, value produced by waged labour but mainly claimed by others; but there are differences in the quality and combination of the elements and in the way they interact with other forces and levels in societies. Ownership today has more complex forms than the family-based capitalist firms discussed by Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Most states intervene in markets, but the extent and purposes of state intervention can be very different. The dominant trend in recent decades, often called neo-liberalism, emphasises de-regulation of markets and introduction of market logics in the public sector.

Adult education is intimately involved in structures and everyday life of societies, probably more so than other types of education. Most adult education is part-time; students have jobs and other activities alongside education. They often have much experience from the spheres and obligations of adult life, and in contrast to school students, adult students are citizens with political rights. This character of adult education means that even though governments and policy actors talk and write much more about school education and higher education, adult education has an important role to play in social and political changes and strategies.

In this article, I will discuss how the tasks of adult education in modern capitalist societies have been analysed and discussed by two social scientists, Charles Wright Mills and Oskar Negt. Although researching and writing in different situations and drawing on different traditions, they have voiced many of the same concerns. Both Mills and Negt have based their work on a broad sociological approach, involving a commitment to observing and interpreting the general structures and processes of societies as a whole as well as the situation of groups and individuals. In other words, they have pursued analysis of macro and micro phenomena and the interrelations between them. Their approach also implies that understanding society must be based on a combination of conceptual and empirical work. Further, Mills and Negt have shared a concern for the full realisation of democracy and an awareness of the tensions between this and the social structures of capitalism, calling for more or less radical reforms. They argued that adult education has a key role in enabling adult citizens to think and communicate about social issues and change (Mills, 1959, 1963; Negt, 1968, 2010). To do that, adult education must draw on the experience of adults but also engage them in imagining how lives and societies could be different. Following this line of thought, I discuss how science fiction literature can contribute to such powers of imagination. Science fiction opens the possibility of thinking through developments and situations that may result from historical or current conditions but have not occurred – and the possibility to present such developments and situations in ways that highlight human needs, potentials and dilemmas.

Between mass society and the community of publics

In 1954, Charles Wright Mills wrote an essay on adult education published as a pamphlet by the Centre for the Study of Liberal Adult Education. This centre had been established

a few years earlier, and it worked with universities that were seeking to run adult education programmes based on open and undogmatic knowledge on societal issues. In the essay, entitled 'Mass society and liberal education' (Mills, 1963, p. 353–373), Mills discussed the development and the problem of society in the United States and the tasks facing adult education in this situation.

Charles Wright Mills was an American sociologist active in the 1940s and 1950s. Starting in philosophy, he moved into the sociology of knowledge. After the Second World War Mills became a professor at Columbia University and affiliated with the Bureau for Applied Social Research, where he contributed to a series of empirical investigations on social problems and change. Mills drew on this empirical work in books such as *White Collar* (Mills, 1951) and *The Power Elite* (Mills, 1956), where he analysed social and political issues in the United States, often focusing on the social classes and using a broad historical and theoretical approach (Aronowitz, 2012). Mills developed a critical view of power relations and politics in the US society, arguing that powerful groups in business, public administration and the military were undermining democracy, and he called for a type of social science that could uncover such developments and contribute to public democratic debate. In his opinion the predominant types of sociology and political science did not live up to this, and in the book *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills, 1959) he criticized both the 'grand theories' and the 'abstracted empiricism' of Talcott Parsons and other mainstream sociologists, calling instead for a historically aware sociology that could investigate and demonstrate the mutual links between societal structures and individual experience. Mills was a controversial scholar and person, who stated the conclusions of his research strongly, sometimes in 'either-or' terms (Gillam, 1975, p. 466), and often in polemic conflict with mainstream social science. His works have sometimes been criticised by mainstream social science for not being sufficiently worked through and lacking rigour in arguments, but he emphasized the importance of confronting real-life issues and arguing from an empirical basis.

The essay on adult education draws on Mills' studies of American society as well as on his ideas about social science. He discusses the role and tasks of liberal adult education in the context of an ongoing general transformation of American society, a transformation from a community of publics to a mass society. In characterizing this transformation, Mills points to four crucial elements or dimensions: In the community of publics, as many people express opinions as receive them; it is possible immediately and effectively to answer back without internal or external reprisals; opinion finds an outlet in effective action with powerful consequences and publics have a high degree of autonomy from instituted authorities. In the mass society, on the other hand, far fewer people express opinions than receive them; it is difficult or impossible for individuals to answer back to opinion givers; realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities, and agents of instituted authorities interpenetrate the mass, undermining the autonomy of publics. Mills expanded this argument in the conclusion of his book on the power elite, published two years after the essay on adult education (Mills, 1956).

To Mills, a key difference between a community of publics and a mass society is the way that they use mass media:

> In a community of publics, discussion is the ascendant mode of communication, and the mass media, if they exist, simply enlarge and animate discussion, linking one *primary public* with the discussions of another. In a mass society, the dominant type of communication is by the formal media and the publics become *media markets*, by which I mean all those exposed to the contents of given mass media (Mills, 1963, p. 355).

Mills emphasizes that 'community of public' and 'mass society' are extreme types, constructions that serve to highlight certain features of reality and of ongoing changes. The US is not altogether a mass society, but it is developing in that direction.

The idea of the public is a key element in classic democratic theory (Held, 2006). Democracy is based on free flow of discussion among people organized in autonomous fora, and discussions result in decisive public opinions that are implemented in public action through decisions in parliaments. Mills (1963, p. 356 f.) points out that this idea of public opinion parallels the idea of a free market economy, composed of freely competing entrepreneurs. The market price is the result of anonymous individuals bargaining on equal terms, while public opinion is the result of each person having thought things out for himself, discussing them in small circles and contributing his weight to the formation of opinion. The process from discussion circles to decisions partly goes through political organizations trying to acquire places in parliament, but the autonomy of the discussion circles is important to democracy.

After presenting the classic idea of the public, Mills states that while this idea is still often used in describing democracy in American society, it is in fact like images out of a fairy tale, misleading as description of how American society works. The situation of the community of publics indicates that the US has moved a considerable way along the road to a mass society, a road that can lead to totalitarianism.

Structural trends

Mills describes four structural trends that he sees as explanations for the ongoing transformation towards a mass society. These are (1) the rise of bureaucratic structures of executive power; (2) the growing range and efficiency of institutionalised opinion making, especially the mass media; (3) the decline of the old middle class of independent entrepreneurs and the rise of the new middle class of white-collar workers; (4) the rise of the metropolis, the big city.

The rise of bureaucratic structures means that the institutions of power have become large-scale, centralized and hard to access; and that they have become less political and more administrative. This is the case not only for government and the military, but also for voluntary organizations such as political parties. They have become larger and more centralised in order to become effective, and because of that, they have become inaccessible to individuals who would participate in their politics through debate. Elections in the US have become a contest between 'two giant and unwieldy parties' (Mills, 1963, p. 361); and elections are increasingly decided not by clear statements on genuine issues, but by silly appeals. Along with the bureaucratisation of public and voluntary organizations, the means of opinion making, especially the mass media, have also grown in range and efficiency. Some social scientists have earlier thought that mass media would enlarge and animate the public, but in fact, the media, especially television, have encroached upon the small-scale discussion among people, undermining the public:

> These media do not connect the information on issues that they do provide with the troubles felt by the individual. They do not increase rational insight into the tensions, neither those of the individual nor those of the society which are reflected in the individual. On the contrary, they distract attention from such tension (…). As they now generally prevail, the media not only fail as an educational force, they are a malign force – in that they do not reveal to the viewer the sources of his tension and anxiety, his inarticulate resentments and half-formed hopes (Mills, 1963, p. 362).

A further cause of the development towards a mass society is changes in the class and occupation structure, especially in the middle class. The old middle class of independent entrepreneurs had an independent base of power for political freedom and economic security. These people represented the balance between free markets and representative democracy. The white-collar workers constituting the new middle class do not have such a base; they are property-less wage workers and in contrast to the blue-collar workers, they are not organized. Mills argues that the old middle class has been important for what he calls the civic spirit, the identification between interests of ordinary people and interests pursued by people at top levels in a city or a nation. The situation and work of the independent entrepreneurs gave them experience and initiative to engage in civic affairs. The white-collar workers, in contrast, depend on the corporations that employ them, and the result is that loyalty is shifting from the city to the corporation.

The growth of big cities and their subordinate surroundings, establishing in effect a metropolitan society, is the fourth structural trend. Mills argues that the social structures of big cities segregate people into narrow routines and settings and lead to a constant loss of community structure. In this kind of society, most people know each other only fractionally, as the man who fixes your car or the girl who serves your lunch.

> The city is a structure composed of *milieux*; the people in the *milieux* tend to be rather detached from each other; being more or less confined to their own narrow ranges, they do not understand the structure of their society. As they reach for each other, they do so by stereotype and through prejudiced images of the creatures of other *milieux*. Each is trapped in his confining circle; each is split from easily identifiable groups. It is in such narrow *milieux* that the mass media can create a pseudoworld beyond, and a pseudoworld within, themselves as well (Mills, 1963, p. 365).

In his diagnosis of the transformation towards a mass society, Mills clearly assigns much importance to the mass media: especially television appears as a powerful force killing off the community of publics. But what drives the media in this direction is not indicated, except for the fact that media organizations have grown in parallel with the bureaucratic organizations. Mills description can be compared to an analysis of the same phenomena published a few years later, Jürgen Habermas' 'The structural transformation of the public sphere' (Habermas, 1989). Habermas identifies some of the same developments in the character of the public and the role of the mass media but, in his view, this is not only caused by the size and the bureaucratisation of the media; it is also a result of the fact that media organisations increasingly pursue profits by giving priority to stereotypical 'human interest' content and by making papers and channels attractive to advertisers.

It is noticeable that Mills gives little attention here to the role of private business. To be sure, it is not absent in his argument, as he sees the uncontrolled growth of business organizations and their drive towards monopoly as a development upsetting the economic order of the market and making classical democratic theory seem like a fairy tale. But in his description of the four structural trends towards mass society, the special power of private business is not discussed, and in fact he presents an idyllic picture of small-scale business. This illustrates the comment made by Theodor Adorno, who said that that Mills' critique of power remains within the horizon of mainstream sociology because he has used 'such concepts as power and elite primarily in terms of personal control over the production apparatus, without engaging or seriously engaging with the analysis of the economic processes themselves' (Adorno, 1993, p. 237–238).

Mills and the tasks of adult education

On the background of his diagnosis of the ongoing transformation of American society, Mills discusses the tasks of the liberal college for adults. The basic task he sees is that adult education should protect people from being overwhelmed by the burdens of modern life that he has outlined. He is aware that this must be pursued in specific ways in a college for adults. The knowledge and teaching must be made directly relevant to the human needs and social practices of adults troubled by the changes and tensions in society.

> What the college ought to for the individual is to turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues and rationally open problems (…). What the evening college ought to do for the community is to fight all those forces which are destroying genuine publics and creating an urban mass; or stated positively, to help build and to strengthen the self-cultivating liberal public (Mills, 1963, p. 367–68).

Mills expressly does not discuss the training of skills for vocational life. He argues that the political function of education, making knowledgeable citizens, was originally the most important one, but that attention has gradually shifted to the economic function of training people for better paying jobs. The political element in adult education has more or less been reduced to inculcation of nationalist loyalties. Instead, adult education institutions should take on the task of helping reinvigorate substantial public discussion.

> In the absence of deep and wide political debate that is really open and free within the framework of a metropolitan community, the adult school could and should become a hospitable framework for just such a debate. Only if such procedures are built into the college for adults will that college be liberal, that is liberating, and at the same time real; encouraging people to get in touch with the realities of themselves and of their world (Mills, 1963, p. 370).

In his later book on 'The sociological imagination', Mills discussed the educational role of social scientists along the same lines as in the paper on adult education. He described the core concept in this way: 'The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise' (Mills, 1959, p. 6). Mills offered informed and penetrating critical analysis of society in the leading capitalist power, the United States. He was very much aware of the structures and interests of capitalist business, and he knew Marxist theory; but in analysis, he mainly used more general theoretical categories such as power, elite and inequality. As the paper on adult education shows, had a strong identification with the American democratic culture of the late 19th century, where he saw a sensible balance both in economic markets and in public communication and debate; but he was acutely aware that this culture was gone. He argued that the two major orientations of modernity, liberalism and socialism, which both assumed an inherent relation between reason and freedom, had '… virtually collapsed as adequate explanations of the world and ourselves' (Mills, 1959, p 166). In response to this Mills did not present an alternative model of society; he looked for and studied situations with liberating potential, such as the Cuban revolution (Mills, 1960) and he tried to promote a social science with the potential to intervene critically and positively in public affairs; '… social science as a sort of public intelligence apparatus, concerned with public issues and private troubles, and with the structural trends of our time underlying them both' (Mills, 1959, p. 181).

Capitalism and self-regulation

The concept of the sociological imagination outlined by Mills was an inspiration for many young European social scientists. One of them was Oskar Negt, who in his early work on worker and trade union education (Negt, 1968) combined the concept with elements from other contemporary social research and pedagogy.

Oskar Negt is a German sociologist and philosopher. He studied in Göttingen and Frankfurt am Main, where he worked as a research assistant for Jürgen Habermas. From 1970 until his retirement in 2002, he was professor of sociology at the Leibniz University of Hannover. Since the start of his career, Negt has studied, theorized and commented on the trends and contradictions of modern society, and the problems confronting individuals in this society. Among his theoretical inspirations, the two main ones are Marxism (not in the versions developed in the former Soviet Union, but rather the original work of Marx and Engels) and the Frankfurt school of critical theory, as developed by Horkheimer, Adorno and others (Jay, 1996). The form of Negt's work is different from mainstream social and educational research. His long series of publications are mainly theoretical, but not in an axiomatic or formal way. Although seldom based directly on systematic empirical investigations, his work reflects the sociological commitment to confronting empirical phenomena and focuses on important social and cultural issues, such as unemployment, labour market flexibility and European integration. He explores the perspectives, the paradoxes and conflicts of such issues in theoretically informed discussions. While his writings are full of important insights, theoretical consistency as well as the empirical anchoring are sometimes left behind in the eagerness to present critical conclusions.

Education and learning have been important themes for Negt, and apart from his university teaching, he has worked with two different types of education. One is childhood and alternative school pedagogy (Negt, 1997), inspired by his involvement in an alternative school project in Hannover; the other is adult education, especially in the context of work and the tasks of trade unions. This is the part of Negt's work that I shall discuss here.

Negt's understanding of work and its role in society is partly inspired by classical Marxism, which pictured work as a potentially positive force providing societies with wealth and individuals with welfare and dignity; but Negt is also aware that work can be a strong force of instrumental rationality and alienation, as argued not least by early critical theory. His fundamental assumption is that all work builds on the basic human skill of self-regulation, and that work is continually reshaping this skill. Work processes produce not only goods or services, but also needs and experiences. Within the context of wage labour only some of these needs and experiences may find legitimate expression, others remain unexpressed and homeless.

Together with the author and filmmaker Alexander Kluge, Negt has explored the concept of work in a broad historical context (Kluge & Negt, 2014). They see their analysis as a continuation of Marx's investigations of work under capitalism. Where Marx developed a theory of the political economy of capital, they contribute to a necessary counterpart of that: a theory of the political economy of labour power, about the human work potential, the constitution and possible emancipation of work. Kluge and Negt link the human work potential to the capacity for self-regulation and discuss this both as physical activity, the handling of objects and tools, and as the ability to maintain relevant actions and natural relationships in complex worlds of objects and men.

In later works, Negt has related this line of argument to contemporary issues. An important example is his analysis of the question of a general shortening of work hours,

which was a key demand of the German trade unions in the 1980's (Negt, 1984). In his broad argument supporting the demand, Negt confronts Max Weber's classical analysis of work and rationality. He argues that because Weber saw the development and social character of work as dominated by the 'iron cage' of instrumental rationality, he came to wonder whether the human spirit could survive at all in this environment. But this is not how mature capitalism has turned out to be. When living labour tends to be completely consumed by dead labour through processes of mechanization and automation, the iron cage loses its character of fate, and it becomes possible to react towards it. Work has not lost its place in the culture and values of modern society, on the contrary vocational activity is 'a central medium of social recognition, of social contacts and the development of individual identity' (Negt 1984, p. 46).

Adult education and experience

Experience is a core concept in Negt's work. The world of work is a predominant framework for experience in modern societies, and the opportunity for active experience is a criterion for judging the quality of work. To Negt, experience is not just a question of sensory cognition, it is a comprehensive process of cognition, acquisition and transformation, through which humans relate to the reality surrounding them (Negt & Kluge, 1993). If the human senses are to remain alive, persons need to recognize themselves in the surrounding world of objects, which we deal with in everyday life. But in the modern world, the senses are too often overwhelmed by masses of unconnected impressions through the mass media and in other contexts. To clarify his argument, Negt (1989) refers to the dramatist Bertolt Brecht and his concept of estrangement (Brecht, 1992). Brecht understood that culture builds on a dialectical relationship between senses and thinking, between empathy and rationality. In his plays he used estrangement effects to invite the audience to use their conscious judgement, to engage in 'reflection on the characters portrayed, not superficial identification with them' (Negt 1989, p. 169).

Trade union education was another prominent theme in Negt's early work. During the first half of the 1960's, he worked as an assistant in the educational division of the German metalworkers union; and as described by Zeuner (2013) and in a recent autobiographical work (Negt, 2018), this led him to critically consider and try to restate the principles of trade union education, drawing on Mills' concept of sociological imagination. In the book that came out of this (Negt, 1968), he criticised the existing educational programmes for trade union officials and activists, arguing that they that separate theory and practise. On one hand, instrumental knowledge is taught in subjects like labour law, drawing on mainstream social science. On the other hand, the programmes offer general political knowledge, for instance about the history of the labour movement, with little consequence for practical trade union work. One consequence of this problematic division of knowledge is learning and motivation difficulties in many of the courses.

Negt argues that the learning processes in trade union education must connect with workers' and activists' experience from everyday life at work or in other spaces and integrate this experience with more general concepts of society. Everyday experience will be ripe with the contradictions of capitalist societies, in the economy as well as in other areas of life. In characterizing the ability to structure and generalize collective experience, Negt draws on Mills' concept of sociological imagination. The curriculum should not be based on transmitting a certain "sum" of knowledge, but on choosing topics and problems

suited for linking of collective experience with systematic knowledge about modern capitalist society.

Negt developed the concept of experience-based exemplary adult education (Zeuner, 2013) early in his career, before his major works on experience, public spaces, work and culture. In subsequent contributions to educational theory, he has maintained the basic principles, but gradually integrated them with his general work in social theory.

Key competences for modern life

In more recent contributions to the theory of adult education, Negt (1989, 2010) has restated his ideas. The core argument remains that learning has to build on people's experience of contradictions in work organisations, labour markets and other contexts and develop the links between this experience and systematic knowledge about present-day society. But in these later contribution Negt also discusses the competencies to be taught and learned. In a lecture given at a university extension college, he poses the question: "What does a worker need to know, if he is to know what is happening in the current situation of crisis, and what possibilities does he have to improve his life conditions in solidarity and cooperation with others?" (Negt, 1989, p. 262). Negt does not recommend a curriculum in the form of given disciplines or theories; this would also be in discord with his view of knowledge as dynamic and responsive to social change. Instead, he indicates a number of important societal competencies, argued from his diagnosis of contemporary western societies. He finds signs of a fundamental crisis in these societies, not in the ordinary form of an economic or even political crisis, but at a deeper level. Layers of motivation, social cohesion and belonging in people's everyday lives are being stripped away by the increased pressure from modern capitalism and conservative social policies. To characterise this situation, Negt uses the term 'erosion crisis' (Negt, 1984, p. 55 f.). A key example of this is the imbalance in the labour market; after centuries of training most citizens of modern western societies have finally internalised a strong work ethic, and when they then find themselves workless, is has very damaging consequences for their self-esteem, their sense of time and whole personality.

Negt proposes the following six key competencies (Negt, 2010, pp. 218–234):

- Identity competence, also called a competence of self-perception and perception of others
- Historical Competence, the capacity of remembering the past and imagining the future
- Awareness of expropriation – the loss of individual and societal rights - and competence in perceiving right and justice
- Technological Competence, not only as individual technical capacity but also understanding societal consequences of technological developments
- Ecological Competence, recognising and caring for the natural basis of human existence and the existence of other living beings

This is the most recent version of the competencies, adjusted in some ways from the original presentation. The origin and logic of social competencies in Negt's thought has been discussed by Christine Zeuner, who has also led a project in developing the competencies as guidelines for adult education programmes (Zeuner, 2013).

What Negt calls the historical competence, the ability of remembering and of utopian imagination, is crucial to comprehensive understanding. Negt emphasizes the historical

aspect because he sees the ability to remember previous historical situations and conditions as an important precondition for the ability to imagine lives and communities different from the ones experienced today. 'Who cannot mourn the losses of the past has no power for utopian imagination' (Negt, 1989, p. 267). This competence is clearly linked to his earlier use of the concept of sociological imagination.

Although presented in the context of trade union education, the social competences and Negt's arguments for them clearly represent a general diagnosis of the situation and needs of ordinary people in the world of erosion crisis. His concept of competence draws on the sociology of work, where the concept is used in analysis of the changing demands for skills; but as pointed out by Salling Olesen (2013) it is also an attempt to intervene in current educational discourse, where narrow economic concepts of competence have proliferated. The competences that Negt outline are at a more general level and bear some resemblance to the educational objectives developed in the German tradition of 'Bildung'.

Negt has used and developed Marx's critique of political economy in his own way, focusing on the human potential. Politically he has roots in the socialist tradition of European social democracies and the new left. He would not agree with Mills' argument that socialism has collapsed as a model for the world and for humanity, but like many in the new left, he has strongly rejected the versions of socialism that were instituted in the Soviet Union and in China. His concept of socialism is not a finished model, but a vision of a society where full democracy is realized, and the potentials of human work, culture and experience can be richly unfolded. This is also reflected in the title of one of his papers, 'No democracy without socialism, no socialism without democracy' (Negt, 1976). Like Mills, he thinks that democracy must be kept alive from below, through public spheres where experience can find expression in debate, commitment and action. In contrast to Mills, who tended to see workers as conforming with corporations, Negt regards workplaces as important settings for public debate and learning, alongside such setting as educational institutions and local communities. During the seventies he was actively engaged in the so-called 'Socialist Bureau', a grassroots organization that attempted to develop a non-party framework for socialist activities. Negt's contributions to the theory of adult education, as well as to social science in general, represent a modern and politically aware development of German critical theory. He addresses urgent social and political issues, and he has involved himself with interests and actors confronting these issues.

Social science and imaginative fiction literature

Mills and Negt both emphasize the need for sociological imagination in social science as well as among citizens, and they call for adult education to help developing this competence. Nonetheless social science, even the type pursued by Mills and Negt, finds it difficult to produce knowledge which engages the imagination deeply. Social science developed with the aim of producing conceptually consistent and empirically based knowledge of the present and its historical origins, and even though social scientists uncover tensions and trends pointing beyond the present, they are most often unwilling to engage in describing future social orders and communities. The opposition of utopian and scientific socialism, as described by Engels, is an early example of this (Engels, 1970). Some types of social science do try to forecast future development, and there is even a specialized branch called futures research (Bell, 2003), but this work tends either to focus on macro indicators such as economic growth and the development of populations or to identify lifestyle trends in a relatively superficial way. Both approaches

lack the ability to describe imagined real-life situations in a way that highlights connections between present and future as well as between general societal and technological developments and people's lives and concerns.

Here fiction literature can serve as an important supplement to, and inspiration, for social science. In introducing the concept of sociological imagination, Mills wrote: 'In the absence of an adequate social science, critics and novelists, dramatists and poets have been the major, and often the only, formulators of private troubles and even of public issues' (Mills, 1959, p. 18). He saw the ability of art to express the feelings of troubled men and women, but he also realized that artistic representations lacked the intellectual clarity necessary to look for solutions. He hoped that a social science informed by sociological imagination could incorporate some of the qualities of artistic work, but as argued above, this development has been limited by the barriers of the institutionalised concept of social science. Social science still needs to be inspired and supplemented by artistic work – and vice versa.

For imagining future situations, the genre of science fiction holds relevant resources. Much science fiction writing has focused on more or less fanciful technological imaginaries and the perspective of space exploration, while it has reproduced well-known stereotypes in describing human behaviour and social organization. However, there are also science fiction authors who have tried to think through and present human life and society under the conditions of the close or the more distant future, and who have presented this in vivid and compelling narratives (Baron, Halvorsen, & Cornea, 2017; Thomas, 2013).

Imagining the future

The novel 'New York 2140' (Robinson, 2017) is an example of this kind of science fiction, exploring possible developments of humans and societies in new – often radically different – situations. The author, Kim Stanley Robinson, is a well-known and recognized science fiction writer who has been publishing since the 1980es. His novels, often having ecological, cultural, and political themes, have won the highest awards in the genre, the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award (Dalgaard, 2017).

As the title indicates, the novel presents a story about persons, events and locations in New York 120 years in the future. The narrative follows some ten different persons living in the same high-rise building, the Met-Life building, over a year and a half. They have different personalities, life histories and jobs, but gradually they come to know each other and collaborate. However, the main theme is not the persons and their stories, but the environmental, social and political challenges of life in the future metropolis.

By 2040, melting of icecaps in Antarctica and Greenland have gradually raised the level of the world's oceans by fifteen meters, partly or fully submerging coastal areas and cities around the world. In New York, the lower end of Manhattan is under water, while the higher northern end remains dry. This has meant that that the wealthier people cluster in the north end, and enormous skyscrapers of new composite materials have been built there. But people still inhabit lower Manhattan and other partly submerged areas. Many buildings have collapsed during the pulses of flooding, but a good deal of the skyscrapers are inhabited, having had their lower floors, now beneath the waterline, reinforced and made watertight. Local travel takes place in boats or by footbridges been built between many buildings. In the building where the main characters of the novel live, one of the lower floors has been transformed into a boathouse, dining halls for the inhabitants have been constructed and some upper floors have been made into gardens in order not to

depend too much on the availability of foodstuffs from elsewhere. The building is owned collectively and managed by a board. Many from other flooded areas want to move to New York, because there is still business and abandoned buildings that may be restored. This is a hot issue in local politics, where the mayor wants strict limits on immigration to the city, while others defend the constitutional rights of citizens to move. In Robinson's description, the everyday life of lower Manhattan is in many ways familiar in spite of the drastically changed conditions. People go to work, to meetings and to bars, although they move by water or on foot. In the background of the narrative there is also information about other changes, such as long-distance travel, which has largely changed from airplanes to airships and sailing ships in order to limit emission of greenhouse gases. We learn the polar bears in the North are almost extinct and follow an attempt to re-locate some of the last bears to Antarctica.

One of the persons living in the Met-Life building, Franklin, is a financial manager working in a Hedge Fund specializing in real-estate business in the half-submerged areas of the world. This is complex business, because the values of real estate in these areas depend on many factors, such as water levels, population movement, wear on buildings, tides and risks of further flooding. Franklin is successful in his job; he has constructed an Intertidal Property Pricing Index, which integrates and constantly updates information about relevant sites. His work is financial capitalism, earning money by moving money. But through his contacts with the other persons of the story, including two homeless boys and the woman who heads the board of the Met-Life building, he gradually becomes interested in developing new sustainable housing for the half-submerged areas.

Through the daily life of Vlade, the building supervisor of the Met-Life building, we follow the work of keeping a half-submerged skyscraper safe. He helps inhabitants with practical problems, such as the docking of boats, but his main task is to check and secure the integrity of the building. Amid other events, he detects unexpected seeping of water in the submerged floors and finds out that this is in fact the result of sabotage from the outside, done by remotely controlled drilling robots. The building has received a bid from a fund who wants to buy it, and both Vlade and the head of the building board suspect that the sabotage is connected to that.

The head of the board, Charlotte, was earlier a city official but now works in an non-governmental organisation helping immigrants who are trying to find a place to live in New York. In her job, she is often involved with city administration and local politicians, trying to secure rights and housing for people immigrating to the city. She resents the way that the mayor's office act to protect the wealthy citizens of higher Manhattan and their interests. As head of the board of the Met-Life building, she tries to make the inhabitants turn down the offer to buy the building, although many of them are tempted. In her conversations with Franklin and with her former husband, who is head of the Federal Reserve Bank, she learns that the offer is part of a bigger move to take over housing in the half-submerged area, and she considers ways of raising funds to prevent the takeover.

Towards the end of the story, a violent storm hits New York, driving waters high and making many older buildings collapse, but not the Met-Life building. The head characters of the story participate in different ways in rescue operations. After the storm subsides, Central Park fills with homeless and starving people. The city provides help, but does not acknowledge how desperate the situation is, and in the end, an angry crowd moves from the park to seek refuge in upper Manhattan, where there is in fact much empty room in the new skyscrapers. Private security forces protect the buildings, but a police inspector (who also lives in the Met-Life Building) helps avoid a violent confrontation, and the people are temporarily housed in the new buildings. In the aftermath of the storm and the riot, important economic and political changes take place. Strategies for hostile take-over

of housing is uncovered and countered; a householders' strike, where tenants refuse to pay rent, is initiated and joined by many; Charlotte runs for and is elected to Congress on a programme of protecting citizens against the strategies of financial capital.

There is little mention of education in the novel, but it tells stories of learning through involvement and collaboration for all the head characters. They increasingly use their different expertise and networks in protecting the Met-Life building and helping others, and in the process of this, they sort out some of their personal troubles.

Robinson's novel is long and complex, and I cannot do it justice in this short summary. But the novel shows the power of quality science fiction in imagining social change and its consequences for humans. It describes the kind of conditions that may follow from current trends, both in the natural environment and in capitalism, and it describes how solidarity may emerge and provoke social change. Robinson provides convincing projections of climate change, technological development, financial dealings and other issues, and he combines this with vivid narratives about persons and events. In analysing and discussing prospects and strategies for social change, this kind of knowledge is an important addition to critical social science.

Conclusion

The work of Charles Wright Mills and Oskar Negt explore the connection between critical approaches in social science and in adult education. Researching and writing in different socio-political contexts and drawing on different theoretical traditions, Mills and Negt have both developed penetrating analysis of the contradictions and injustices of modern capitalist societies, and they have suggested how adult education can contribute to better and more humane social conditions.

Mills and Negt discuss how the kinds of adult education that focus on general knowledge is relevant to life and citizenship in the modern world. Mills explicitly argues that the political element of adult education is being pushed aside by vocational training and should be restored; Negt writes about education and key competences in a general way but has mainly discussed the institutional context of trade union education. However, vocational education and training constitute most adult education provision and activity today and is an indispensable element in lifelong learning because people need to adjust changes in work and the labour market. The critical potential of adult education cannot be pursued only in separate institutional contexts; it needs to enter in combination and dialogue with the vocational contents and objectives (Lundvall & Rasmussen, 2016).

Sociological imagination was the concept proposed by Mills and adopted by Negt for trade union education. Mills did not want to reserve the concept for the discipline of sociology; he understood it as referring to many types of social science knowledge. In fact, he was not comfortable with the term 'social science', because he thought the word science has acquired much prestige without a precise meaning (Mills, 1959, p. 18). But he wanted to avoid confusion with high school civics education, and he thought sociology was the broadest social science field, so in the end he chose to talk about sociological imagination. This is a fruitful concept, because it refers the imagination to the field of social life and also to showing the logics involved. However, it does involve the risk of an exclusive link to the discipline of sociology, and for that reason I also use the less specific term 'social imagination'.

Realising democracy fully is the fundamental concern of both Mills and Negt, and this concern also underlies Robinson's exploration of possible future life in New York. In a key paper on democracy and socialism, Negt quotes the social scientist Wolfgang

Abendroth saying that 'Socialism is nothing else than the versatile realization of the thought of democracy, which will be transformed from a system of political ground rules to the substantial principle for society as a whole, to a social democracy' (Negt, 1976, p. 461). Mills would probably have agreed on the need for such versatile democracy, but maybe not on calling it socialism. And it is true that the types of regimes that have called themselves socialist have tended to halt the process of democratizing the different sectors of society, leaving centralized control in the hands of a more or less closed elite. This partly reflects the historical conditions under which different socialist regimes have emerged but it also demonstrates some fundamental problems in the original concept of socialism, which needs to be rethought (Honneth, 2017). This is of course a question far beyond the scope of this article. The arguments and the perspectives from Mills, Negt and Robinson may not point to the abolition of capitalism, but they do point to a type of capitalism that combines with versatile democracy (also in the economic sphere) and strong social responsibility. This is in fact a very ambitious goal, which has not yet been realized anywhere. The COVID-19 crisis has reopened discussions on such issues, as demonstrated for instance by a manifesto published in newspapers all over the world and signed by several thousands of academics and intellectuals (Ferreras, Battilana, Méda et al., 2020). The authors call for democratization of firms through employee representation in management and de-commodification of work through job guarantees. It is difficult to predict whether the crisis will in fact lead to steps in this direction or capitalist socio-political 'normality' will just be restored, but at least the perspectives and proposals have been voiced.

As emphasized by Mills, versatile democracy must include communities of publics where citizens together can develop informed opinions as basis for political decisions. It is a core task for adult education to support the establishment and maintenance of such publics in all spheres of society, and to help citizens acquire the competences needed. In forming opinions, citizens and publics need to be able to grasp the interrelations between structures and processes in society as a whole on one hand, individual life courses and troubles on the other. They also need to be able to transgress the immediate reality and its options, to imagine how societies and lives could take different turns, both in negative and positive directions. Imaginative fiction literature can help critical social science and adult education in promoting such social imagination.

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Looking forward backwards: Varieties of capitalisms, alternative futures, and learning landscapes

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Abstract

Critiques of capitalism have constituted the backbone of political economies addressing living, working, and learning conditions in a variety of forms of capitalism. This paper explores different approaches to representations of the future of (adult) education in capitalist Europe. It examines the 1960s and 1970s as a period when rapid technological change was addressed in studies of the future of Europe by proponents of post-industrial society, New Left public intellectuals, professional futurologists, and critics of late capitalism. These studies envisaged quite different futures for both society and organised adult learning. Attention is subsequently focused on the pan-European project Educating Man for the 21st Century during the early 1970s which envisaged the future as 'neo-industrial/neo-capitalist society' in the year 2000. In conclusion, the paper offers a critical account of early encounters with neoliberal politics during the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly the cultural materialist work of Raymond Williams.

Keywords: alternative futures, cultural practices, utopias, dystopias, futuribles

Introduction

From a historical perspective, the oft-forgotten world of utopias and dystopias as cultural narratives of the future has been a continuing source of collective inspiration for creating and sustaining radical cultural repertoires, particularly those of organised workers' and women's movements, in envisaging possible emancipatory or repressive consequences of future developments, including organised adult learning. Indeed, the history of organised adult learning has been characterised by repertoires that constituted critical, if not radically subversive, reflexive cultural practices (Allison, 2018; Bellamy, 1888; Hake, 2017; Morris, 1890; Peters & Freeman- Moir, 2006; Thompson, 1963; Williams, 1978, 1981, 1983). The theoretical understanding of 'organised adult learning' adopted here

addresses these richly diverse cultural practices in terms of a political economy of communication and learning during the 'long revolution' of modernisation (Fuchs, 2017; Shapiro, 1982; Williams, 1961, 1966, 1981).

Historically, these cultural practices have been socially organised in diverse cultural formations, movements, and institutions only some of which are readily recognised as institutionalised 'adult education' provision (Williams, 1961, 1977, 1981; 2011, 2018). They have also found expression in widely different formulations of the future of organised adult learning; indeed, the study of 'alternative educational futures' (Hake, 1973; Bengtsson et al., 1975; Livingstone, 1983). Castoriadis's (1975) original work on the cultural construction of collective 'social imaginaries' has contributed more recently to interest in collective cultural representations of societal and educational alternative futures for contemporary neoliberal repertoires (Beckert, 2016; Brown, Rappert & Webster, 2000; Milojevic, 2005; Rahm, 2019; Taylor, 2004; Tett & Hamilton, 2019). This involves a 'cultural political economy' (Sum & Jessop, 2015) perspective on economic, political, communal, and cultural imaginaries, which addresses the social organisation of the production, dissemination, reception, indeed active acquisition, of 'images of society' (Williams, 1961, p. 120-142). More specifically, attention will focus here on the socially organised production and dissemination of cultural representations of social and educational futures constructed by collective actors in partisan public spheres (Castoriadis, 1975; Habermas, 1962; Steele, 2007; Thompson, 1963).

This paper explores how different approaches to the future of (adult) education in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of rapid scientific and technological change, addressed the future society and organised adult learning. It focuses respectively on debates involving 'prospective' studies of the future, notions of 'cultural democracy' among New Left public intellectuals, the work of professional 'futurologists', and varieties of Marxist critiques of late capitalism. Attention subsequently turns to–studies of the future–within the pan-European project, Educating Man for the 21st Century. In conclusion, the paper offers an historical analysis of early encounters with neoliberal politics during the 1970s and early 1980s, which is focused on the cultural materialist critique formulated by Raymond Williams with reference to the impact of emergent neoliberal thinking and practices on representations of communication and learning landscapes.

Disparate responses to post-war capitalist crises

Growing concerns with post-war structural inequalities in western capitalist societies have been traced to closure during the 1970s of the 'glorious thirty' years of economic growth, prosperity, and educational opportunity (Atkinson & Piketty, 2007; Collier, 2018; Grusky & Maclean, 2016; Levinson, 2016; Piketty, 2014, 2020). On the one hand, post-war Western Europe was characterised by economic growth, technological innovation, particularly automation, reduced working hours, rising incomes, and bourgeoisification of affluent workers (Galbraith, 1958; Lockwood, 1960; Zweig, 1961; Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer & Platt, 1968). On the other hand, despite the post-war expansion of educational opportunities in secondary schooling, particularly raising the school leaving age, from the late 1950s, there was evidence of growing structural educational inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970; Floud, Halsey & Martin, 1957; Glass, 1954; Woodin, McCulloch & Cowan, 2013). In seeking to resolve these contradictory tendencies, social and educational policies pursued the transformation of capitalist industrial economies towards post-industrial societies in conjunction with reforming the architecture of post-initial education. Policies pursued also sought to meet popular

educational movements' aspirations favouring long lives of learning with policy repertoires promoting different understandings of *éducation permanente* (Arents, 1959; Hake, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Throughout the 1960s, however, policy landscapes in Western European were marked by grass-roots activity articulating discontent with capitalist society, administrative bureaucracy, democratic deficits, and the failure of initial formal education to provide equal opportunities for individual personal development and collective social emancipation. In both Western and Eastern Europe, discontent with (adult) education was articulated by broad based coalitions comprising left-wing political parties, trade unions, students, women's groups, and community-led organisations. Social-democratic reform agendas addressed second chance and second way opportunities for adults to acquire qualifications by broadening access to long lives of learning.

Worldwide, this discontent was accompanied by a crisis of confidence in formal schooling. UNESCO's 1967 Williamsburg world conference, which was addressed by President Johnson, discussed a report by the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) on the world crisis in education (Coombes, 1968). This report proposed that intergovernmental organisations and nation states should adopt non-formal education as the proto neoliberal 'necessary future' required for education to meet labour market needs of capitalist economic development (Bock & Papagiannis, 1975). At a more esoteric level, apocalyptic narratives, including *Compulsory Miseducation*, *School is Dead*, *De-schooling Society*, *Crisis in the Classroom*, and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, offered diagnoses of global cultural crisis in education. Does education have a future? (Bengtsson et al., 1975a), became a question posed by many of education's critical advocates.

While the still distant year 2000 did not yet generate a sense of *fin de siécle*, these different understandings of crises inherent to both capitalist society and institutionalised education contributed to diverse approaches to rethinking the future development of both society and organisation of (adult) learning. In this transnational environment, four major ideological formations constituted sources of 'guiding images' for alternative futures: a) '*prospective*' studies of rapid technological change; b) cultural democracy of the New Left; c) technocratic forecasts of 'post-industrial society', and d) neo-Marxist interpretations of 'late capitalism'.

Prospective studies of rapid technological change and éducation permanente

During the late 1950s and 1960s, French policies favouring *éducation permanente* stimulated policy debates addressing alternative architectures to replace traditional front-loaded systems of initial formal education. Systematic reflection on futures for organised (adult) learning became evident among a coalition of French progressive public and private employers, senior civil servants, and public intellectuals, who embraced *éducation permanente* in response to rapid advances in scientific knowledge and technological change (Hake, 2018, 2019). Informed by Gaston Berger's theory of the *accélération* of history and work of *Centre International de Prospective*—created by Berger in 1957 together with the journal *Prospective*—they promoted *études prospectives* of possible futures particularly with reference to social and educational consequences of scientific and technical change (Berger, 1962, 1967). Leading spokesmen for this milieu–at the Ministry of Education Berger was head of higher education, while Jean Capelle (1966) was responsible for reform of secondary education–called for an entirely new architecture for French public education advocating radical proposals involving 'permanent education'.

Given their analysis of dirigisme in public and private enterprises, rapid innovation, particularly automation, persistent skill shortages, structural unemployment, and decline of traditional industries, this future-oriented policy repertoire articulated radical changes to education and training. Including executives of public and private enterprises (Hartung, 1966; Vatier, 1960), this futures repertoire demanded far-reaching state intervention to radically reform the entire French initial education system; expansion of post-initial education; and strengthening in-company training within both public and private enterprises. Many ideas and practices associated with French policies on *éducation permanente* influenced not only national and intergovernmental policymaking, with appointment of experts, advisory committees, and policy reports, they also fuelled critical left-wing proposals for democratic social and cultural policies. Following Berger's untimely death in 1960, the Ford Foundation sponsored Bertrand de Jouvenal's 1961 international committee for study of so-called *futuribles* (De Jouvenal, 1964), and activities of the Futuribles International Association in 1967.

Cultural democracy and the New Left

During the temporary East-West ideological détente of the 1960s, New Left public intellectuals in western Europe, among them Abendroth, Bottomore, Fromm, Marcuse, and Williams, together with socialist humanists in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia, including Marković, Petrović, Schaff, and Suchodolski (1961, 1965), demonstrated common interests in '…a permanent education of a democratic and popular kind' (Williams, 1966, p. 15), as a cultural force for radical humanist social change. Focusing on egalitarian democracy, cultural citizenship, and personal development as related projects, these networks articulated progressive cultural responses to rapid transformation of societies and cultures, including the Yugoslavian-inspired reorganisation of working life as a democratic self-managed activity (Garaudy, 1969). These cultural democratic repertoires articulated egalitarian policies focused on a 'polytechnical' conception of socialisation and 'out-of-school' learning stressing development of collective cultural capacities for creating the *future* rather propagating 'instrumental skills' and individual adaptation to labour markets (Richta, 1969). Future society was regarded as demanding cultural citizenship where 'citizens' have access to democratic education, a pluralistic public sphere, and a 'social state' promoting the common welfare (Williams, 1966).

Cultural repertoires of permanent education advocating participatory democracy included collectively organised access to mass media, libraries, radio, film, and television as 'public media'. Critical grassroot cultural movements in working-class neighbourhoods focused a militant 'public pedagogy' involving mobilisation repertoires featuring collective sites for community learning based on popular literacy work via writers' workshops and community-based publishing (Hassenforder, 1963; Woodin, 2018). Imaginary futures rooted in grass-roots social activism and egalitarian cultural democracy in 1968 ranged from progressive social discontinuity practices (Willener, 1970), political disruption of everyday routines (Morin, Lefort & Castoriadis, 1968; Touraine, 1968), and Maoist political imageries (Wolin, 2010), through 'democratic' aspirations opposing authoritarian regimes in Greece, Portugal and Spain, together with the Prague Spring's socialist reform critique of Soviet Russian repression, and the *May Day Manifesto* (Williams, 1968) as sources of democratic cultural renewal.

Social-technological forecasts of 'post-industrial society'

Both the critical cultural analysis of New Left public intellectuals, together with studies of 1960s counterculture (Reich, 1968; Roszak, 1969; Toffler, 1970), were regarded with marked disdain by those engaged in constructing 'surprise-free' futures of capitalist society that focused on the implications of unfettered technological change (Kahn & Briggs, 1972; Kahn & Weiner, 1967). Possibilities of social rupture were regarded as avoidable by eradicating remaining pockets of poverty, deprivation, and disadvantage through the social spin-offs of continuous economic growth in 'post-industrial society' (Bell, 1967, 1973, 1976; Fourastié, 1965). In combination with the 'end of ideology' thesis (Bell, 1959), it was argued that social conflicts would give way to a socio-technological future based on service industries and proliferation of higher education. Primacy of scientific knowledge and technological change as the driving future social development, including the original reference to 'knowledge society' (Machlup, 1962), constituted influential imaginaries of societal and educational futures (Ferkiss, 1969). For Touraine (1969), post-industrial society was a 'programmed society' emerging from technocratic modernisation characterised by technological innovation, automation, and growth of distributive, financial and information services. Bell's and Touraine's studies envisaged post-industrial society as a 'surprise-free future' involving the potential convergence of capitalist and socialist societies driven by the scientific and technological revolution. Common East-West representations of technical efficiency and rational organisation of production and consumption were fuelled by shared notions of an emergent socio-technological imaginary of a self-regulating cybernetic culture (Garaudy, 1969; Richta, 1969). This transformation was characterised by economic restructuring involving demise of heavy industries together with rapid technological innovation, particularly automation, and expanding distributive and financial services, while Bell's notion of 'information economies' was increasingly regarded as marking post-industrial societies. In this ideological context, the concept of knowledge industries referred to the complex of education, research and development, mass media, information technologies and services, which accounted in the US for 29% of GNP by 1959 (Machlup, 1962). This had fundamental implications for the '…way economic and social exchanges are conducted, the way knowledge is created and retrieved, and the character of work and occupations' (Bell, 1973, p. 14). Indeed, the notion of 'post-industrial' society as an 'information economy' was based on markets involving messages as commodities, with 'work' and 'communication' viewed as synonymous (Hayashi, 1970; Heilbronner, Morley, Frankel & Glazer, 1974). This was the presupposition of quasi-utopias such as *Teg's 1994: An Anticipation of the Near Future* (Theobald & Scott, 1972).

Neo-capitalism becomes late capitalism

While French and Belgian Marxists referred to 'neo-capitalism' (Gorz, 1964; Mandel, 1964; Michelsen, 1969), the Frankfurt school argued that society was increasingly marked by the exploitive social relations of 'late capitalism' (Habermas, 1968; Marcuse, 1969). In his 1968, presidential address to the Federal German sociological association, Adorno questioned whether 'industrial capitalism' continued to dominate, albeit in modified forms, or whether it was being replaced by 'late capitalist' social formations. Late capitalism referred to the historical epoch since 1940, which, contrary to leftist prognoses, included the post–war economic expansion from 1945 to 1975, and subsequent international recession. Mandel (1972) also subsequently adopted 'late capitalism' to refer to the survival of post-war capitalism, while, Habermas, however,

sought to identify structural transformations as sources of crisis in late capitalism with his focus on its the strategic vulnerability in the sphere of politics rather than in the economic sphere. *Legitimation Crisis* (Habermas, 1973) examined how the late capitalist states sought to maintain its legitimacy in the context of growing state power, reduced class conflict, and declining class consciousness, particularly among the working class. More libertarian Marxists, including aesthetic situationists (Debord, 1967) and eco-socialists (Bahro, 1977; Gorz, 1973; Marcuse, 1972), developed a critique of advanced capitalism's combination of information technologies, exploitive consumption, environmental concerns, and expanding structures for surveillance in 'authoritarian capitalist' social formations. A fundamental challenge for the left was a future capitalism characterised by internationalisation of capital, rise of multinational corporations, and global finance in late capitalist social formations. This required accounting for the hegemonic influence of global oligarchies in determining social applications of advanced technologies in information-based economies.

Towards Europe 2000: surprise-free or alternative futures?

In addressing political, social, and cultural consequences of rapid economic and technological change, the new profession of 'futurology' enjoyed strong organisational support among foundations, such as Ford, Rand, and Hudson, together with intergovernmental and transnational organisations, while significant resources were pumped into futures research, albeit of a 'non-bourgeois' variety (Bengtsson et al, 1975, p. 5), in Eastern Europe (Kumar, 1972). Financed largely by global corporate sponsors, including Shell International, Unilever, and the Gulbenkian Foundation, institutionalised futures research served the reconstruction of industrial economies on the road to post-industrial societies and information economies. In projects such as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Commission on the Year 2000, established in 1965 (Bell & Graubard, 1968), the *Polska 2000* commission chaired by Suchodolski (Andersson, 2018), and Plan Europe 2000, the year 2000 became a symbolic marker of transformation from industrial towards post-industrial society and information-based economies (Galtung & Stoetzel, 1970; Jungk & Galtung, 1969).

Surprise-free futures

Launched by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) in 1968, Plan Europe 2000 comprised four projects devoted respectively to education, industry, urbanisation, and agriculture, historically the four pillars of European modernisation, with ECF's project *Educating Man for the 21st Century* addressed the future organisation of education in Europe in the year 2000. This project recruited *éminences grises* on the European circuit to a Scientific Committee supervising projects addressing specific aspects of future education, all well-established peripatetic scholar-consultants in comparative education on inter-governmental and transnational circuits including UNESCO, IIEP, OECD, Council of Europe (CoE), and European Economic Community (EEC). Involved in predicting future trends in education with the Swedish Board of Education (Husén, 1970), Thorsten Husén, for example, became involved in Plan Europe 2000 (Husén, 1974), and contributed, in the early 1970s, to OECD reports on alternative futures for educational systems (Husén 1972; OECD, 1972). Henri Janne, chair of ECF's education project, was a renowned sociologist, ex-Minister of Education in Belgium, chair of CoE's project on permanent education (Janne, 1969), author of EEC's 1973 report on education policies

(Janne, 1973), and submitted expert papers for OECD, and UNESCO's Faure committee (Hake, 2017). Most studies commissioned by Plan Europe 2000 adopted variations on the theme of 'surprise-free' future development towards varieties of capitalist 'social welfare' societies (Benveniste & Benson, 1975; Borghi, 1974; Husén, 1974; Poignant, 1973; Reuchlin, 1972; Sauvy, 1973; Deurinck, 1974; Schwartz, 1974).

Alternative futures

The exceptions to this dominant pattern were studies by Jensen (1972), Hake (1972, 1975), Visalberghi (1973), Bengtsson et al (1975a, 1975b, 1975c), which adopted a distinctive methodology for constructing 'alternative futures' for societal and educational development (Hake, 1973). These studies constructed futures based on macro-sociological alternatives for economic, political, communal, and cultural structures. Economic structures concerned the means of production and distribution, thus enabling statements about economic production and how economic activity is regulated. Political structures involved political processes, forms of decision-making, and patterns of political communication. Communal structures related to allocation of status, social roles, working life and leisure time, and organisation of households. Cultural structures entailed the socialisation and resocialisation practices centred on involving the creation and maintenance of meaning and belief systems, and the social organisation of dissemination and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities.

Regarding the alternative futures they constructed, these studies differed significantly. Jensen (1972) identified three *futuribles* (De Jouvenel, 1964) referred to as: a) a 'Neo-Capitalist' future based on surprise-free development of the capitalist economic system (Kahn & Wiener, 1967); b) a 'Welfare' future focused on political priority of collective provisions ensuring equality of opportunity (Gross, 1966); and c) a 'New Culture' focused on the future involving continuous creation of new cultural meaning systems (Marcuse, 1969). Hake (1972), however, applied Galtung's (1970) distinction between individualist-collectivist and hierarchical-egalitarian societies in an exploration of the social organisation of collectivist-egalitarian cultural practices based on libertarian Marxist pedagogies (Read, 1963), and proletarian revolutionary praxis of 'cultural enlightenment' (Fitzpatrick, 1970). This theoretical framework was subsequently applied by Bengtsson et al. (1975a, 1975b, 1975c) in a report which established a distinction between surprise-free, crisis, critical, and constructive futures in different approaches to the study of the future (Bengtsson et al., 1975: pp. 3-13).

Originally intended as an integration of the major findings of ECF's education project, this report presented four alternatives societal and educational futures for the year 2000 at ECF's 1972 European conference in York (Centeno, 2011). This 'ginger group' of young social scientists and educators presented a critical analysis of two hierarchical societal futures manifesting 'Neo-Industrial' and 'Social Welfare' varieties of Western capitalism, which they contrasted with 'Voluntary Collective' and 'Compulsory Collective' varieties of state and associational socialism/communism. Entitled *Does Education Have A Future? The Political Economy of Social and Educational Inequalities in European Society*, this 'controversial' report (Centeno, 2011, p. 139) concluded that growing social inequalities in European societies during the early 1970s pointed to a capitalist 'neo-industrial' society as the most likely future of Europe in the year 2000. Contrary to ECF's institutionalised expectations, this report crucially argued that 'permanent education' in neo-industrial society would be geared to producing a labour force capable of meeting the occupational requirements of a capitalist neo-industrial future. As such, it constituted an ideology critique of the contradictions arising from the

otherwise unquestioned social practices characteristic of methodology of 'surprise-free' futures (Bengtsson, et. al., 1975; Claisse & Delvenne, 2015; Guigou, 1972; Hake, 1973).

Following the York 'debate', subsequent Plan Europe 2000 reports were informed by the hegemonic normative future of hierarchical social welfare societies as the surprise-free societal future (Emmerij, 1974; Fragnière, 1976; Hall, 1977; Janne, 1976). These studies explicitly rejected discussion of transition, let alone questions of transformation and political strategies, to other possible futures. In sharp contrast, Bengtsson et al., (1975) emphasised that their 'alternative futures' were based upon the evidence of historical analysis of ideological representations of socially organised adult learning in European societies, which constituted alternative political strategies for dealing with growing social inequalities in the early 1970s. Furthermore, political responses to the 1973 oil crisis signalled that the end of the 'glorious thirty' years of post-war prosperity would be associated with austerity measures when the social organisation of neo-industrial/neo-capitalist economies was increasingly informed by putative neoliberal political repertoires. By the late-1970s, there was clear evidence that nascent economic deregulation of markets entailed regulatory regimes focusing on efficiency and performance indicators, while emergent neoliberal cultural formations were refocused on enhancing individual employability.

Towards 2000: A short history of the future, 1945-1983

As a marker of changing structural, institutional, and aspirational landscapes, the year 2000 has featured in utopian and dystopian accounts of the social organisation society and learning from quite different ideological sources in widely differing epochs. Among socialist representations of the future, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (Bellamy, 1888) narrated the experiences of Julian West, who falls into a deep sleep in 1887 to subsequently re-awake in the year 2000 to find that capitalism has been abolished and a socialist society established. Critical of Bellamy's narrative of an almost mechanical transition to a socialist future, Raymond Williams (1978) agreed with William Morris (1890), in his literary answer to Bellamy in *News from Nowhere*, that transition to utopia is neither discovered, encountered, nor projected, but it must be fought for. In other words, utopias constitute histories of revolutionary praxis during proletarian struggles under capitalism (Hake, 2017).

While periodisation remains a recurring problematic in the historiography of post-war organised adult learning, these historical narratives of struggles, with their rich imaginaries of radical proletarian praxis, have largely disappeared from the literature on organised adult learning and social movements since the 1980s. Well aware of Walter Benjamin's analysis of 'left-wing melancholia' during the 1930s (Traverso, 2016), Williams engaged critically with its re-emergence during the 1970s and 1980s in relation to the sense of historic failure prevalent among social democratic, socialist, and communist parties confronted by expanding neoliberal repertoires (McGuigan, 2019). Seeking to maintain a relational continuity with subversive engagements in the past, Williams contributed to a critical cultural formation supporting oppositional practices in the face of active dissolution of the democratic practice of permanent education.

Recent critiques of neoliberal hegemony by some academics associated with adult education have contributed, however, to a nostalgic orthodoxy involving revisiting the promise of lifelong education during the 1970s. Among a faction of these specialised intellectuals, this tendency involves engaging in celebration of the Faure Commission's report *Learning to be* (Faure et al., 1972), together with the 'political utopia' of lifelong

education as embraced by UNESCO (Barros, 2012; Biesta, 2006; Boshier, 1997; Elfert, 2018; Milana, 2012). This myth-making exercise fails to recognise that the short life of lifelong education during the 1970s historically marked the swan song of thirty years of co-operation between social democratic parties and global capitalism's drive to reform both itself and society during the post-war transformation of industrial capitalism towards post-industrial society. When recollecting the '…international '"magnificent seven" led by Edgar Faure' (Bengtsson et al., 1975a: p. 122)—this new orthodoxy has projected Faure himself as a French socialist politician (Elfert, 2018), thus suggesting a 'socialist imaginary' of lifelong education at work, for which no evidence is provided. Faure was, however, a Gaullist right-of-centre career politician, who later refused office in coalitions with the Socialist Party. In this manner, the new orthodoxy fails to recognise that Faure's report was rejected in radical libertarian and left-wing circles during the 1970s (Guigou, 1975), but then myths do not draw their influence from facts. This reaffirms, as Chase (1996, p. 53) reminded us, that Williams considered much of what passes for theory in adult education is an '…extraordinary combination of sectarianism, special pleading, mythmaking…' (Williams, 1959, p. 750); the dead hand of inalienable privilege.

In comparison with this myth-making and absence of visionary imagination in the 21st century, Williams' own critical oeuvre from the early 1960s constituted a rigorous cultural materialist analysis of the neoliberal cultural formation together with a critique of its emergent policy repertoires geared to dismantling all vestiges of permanent education associated with the practice of cultural democracy. Originally conceived as the sequel to his *The Long Revolution* (Williams, 1961), Raymond Williams (1983) used *Towards 2000* to offer a radical democratic reinterpretation of post-war social change and cultural practices (Jones, 2006; McGuigan, 2019). He sought to question simplistic understandings of post-war reconstruction from 1945 to 1975, *Les Trente Glorieuses* (Fourastié, 1979), as a period of unprecedented beneficence and well-being, emergence of affluent workers, leisure-time, and consumer society. Williams made it clear that following massive economic, political, social, and cultural disorganisation generated by the Second World War, post-war educational reforms in Western Europe constituted political responses to challenges confronting governments and citizens in rapidly changing societies. These were also societies engaged in learning to deal not only with material and immaterial ravages of war, but with loss of empire, wars of independence and decolonialisation, post-colonial migration to erstwhile metropolitan states, and Cold War geo-politics. Furthermore, Williams provided a necessary corrective reminder that post-1945 'welfare capitalism' was the long-term product of often-violent struggles by the organised working class to secure decent working hours, living conditions, health care, and education in the 19th century, and that it was vital to secure their maintenance in the second half of the 20th century in the face of neoliberal austerity repertoires.

Williams used *Towards 2000* to position his critical analysis of post-war tendencies in cultural practices in relation to the often hesitant and disorganised struggles of a disintegrating 'left' when confronted by the neoliberal social formation, multinational corporations co-operating with the European Union as a market, nation-states embracing pro-market domestic policies, and cultural practices manifesting the hegemony of capitalist consumption (Milner, 2010). Re-reading Williams is also a reminder of the critique of the 'prospective ideology' at the root of Plan Europe 2000, which was marked by the absence of critical reflection and utopian imagination (Gigou, 1972). Williams (1978) argued the significant difference between use of 'imagination' to connote: a) speculation about the future which reproduces existing structures in externally altered circumstances, and b) deliberate and sustained thought about possible futures, which both precedes and succeeds recognition of commitment to take 'another path'. According to

Andersson (2018), 'establishment futurology' as practised by Plan Europe 2000, constituted a mode of analysis that does not tolerate envisaging how the present and future of education and training practices can be other than those envisaged these responsible for the present. This prepared the ideological soil for imminent neoliberal occupation of the future, in other words a world which knows no past nor future, no history nor vision: all that is possible is the day-to-day preoccupation with the precariousness of the present (Guigou, 1972; Bengtsson et al., 1975a; Bourdieu, 1998).

During the 1960s and early 1970s, Williams' critical work on material cultural forms focused on the long-term historical transformation of capitalism and the social organisation of mediated culture, with particular reference to 'communication and learning' (Williams, 1961, 1977, 1981). This led him to investigate neoliberal repertoires in relation to the commodification and marketisation of mass media, leisure-time consumption, and the cultural practices characteristic of participation in organised adult learning. In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Williams, 1974), he analysed the social conditions of cultural production and circulation in relation to increasing domestic consumption of radio and television by households (Bengtsson et al., 1975a, p. 46-48; Jensen, 1972, p. 75). With the term 'mobile privatisation', Williams argued that the collapsing distinction between work and leisure in the 1970s was key to understanding the growing significance of neoliberal markets in serving the private home as the key spatial-temporal location of media consumption. This domestic sphere of audio-visual communication embraced radio, television, cassettes, and, more recently, media players, portable phones, digital devices, internet, and streaming services in deregulated global markets. Closer to organised adult learning in 1979 was '…the Walkman nightmare version of the learning society. This is the dystopia of long series of individuals permanently plugged into their personal training programmes, but with no sense of the value of learning as something shared with others, including friends, colleagues, families, or their wider social milieu' (Schuller, 1996, p. 122).

Williams' final chapter in *Towards 2000*, referring to neoliberalism as 'Plan X'—an appropriate almost Science Fiction code—constituted a critical analysis of the economic, political, communal, and cultural contradictions of neoliberalism in terms of permanent crisis-management and '…politics of temporary tactical advantage' (Williams, 1983, p. 11-12). This involved the destructive onslaught of market deregulation in the United Kingdom in the Thatcherite late 1970s, followed elsewhere in Europe in the 1980s. Marking the emergent '…neoliberal hegemony' (McGuigan, 2015, p. 27), this was a transformation of capitalism, that aimed to both grasp and control the future. Williams' prescient analysis argued that emergent, yet still disorganised, neoliberal agendas had recognised the structural decline of capitalist profitability margins and sought to reorganise the state to foster capitalist accumulation favouring financial élites. This was the inevitable present of un-negotiable demands by financial capitalist élites that tolerated no calculation of any meaningful challenge to the repertoire of unbridled capitalist accumulation. In 1984, the national strike by British miners made it all too clear that the dystopia of neoliberal policies was unfolding as the history of a present dominated by permanent insecurity as a way of life for those, the overwhelming majority, who would have to learn to adjust to living precarious lives in increasingly unequal capitalist societies. Neoliberal regimes ensured that deregulation of markets involved disruption of all forms of resistance to the interests of capital, while neo-liberal regulation, by the state, guaranteed capitalist accumulation, accompanied by growing structural inequalities.

By the late 1980s, Williams untimely death was in 1988, it was already all too obvious that neither a revitalisation of the socialist project in the East, nor a socialist turn in the West, played any meaningful part in the future of Europe (Williams, 1989). This

was accompanied by the total corrosion of organised learning as a collective activity devoted to the still necessary struggles to secure social justice and emancipation. Repeatedly reconstructed as 'individual competence', the hegemonic neo-liberal policy repertoire of employability has now become the gospel of matching oneself to the skill requirements of employers and the demands of the 'employability agenda'. This repertoire has come to articulate lifelong learning, from nursery schools, through higher education, vocational training, into retirement, as the 'permanent education marketplace' serving the interests of financial capitalism, economic performativity, employability, and individual skill formation (Bengtsson, et. al., 1975; Hake, 1999, 2009, 2016). Persistence of the employability agenda hinges on the success of its proponents in continually redefining employability as 'progressive modernisation' in information economies steered by capitalist oligarchies utilising their socially and culturally manipulative artificial intelligent algorithms. They remain the masters of mediating employability in the cultural form of individualised performativity in combination with their ability to perform ideological work in masking the un-reflective habitus of the precarious inhabitants of late financial capitalism (Bourdieu, 1998).

Epilogue: Learning the way out

Published in 1722, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* was replete with situations recognisable during today's Covid-19 pandemic (Defoe, 2003). In 1665, the wealthy inhabitants of cities all over Europe thundered in their carriages down country lanes to the safety of their rural retreats, leaving the urban poor condemned to the riskiest and most precarious of essential employments involving guarding the deserted mansions of the rich, nursing the sick, and burying bodies in the cities. Pandemic was a source of dystopia. In contemporary information economies, pandemic is also a rich source of fake news and conspiracy theories, with populist authoritarian regimes engaged in systematic distortion and repression. It is now more necessary than ever to investigate the cultural forms through which citizens endeavour to actively participate in critical cultural practices by creating and sharing meanings with others in the public sphere. This demands an acute awareness of those seeking to reproduce hegemonic social relationships of cultural production and consumption. It is vital to critically investigate the social forces and cultural forms which influence the inhabitants of the digital world by transposing active cultural subject positions to passive consumerist positions for the purposes of unbridled capitalist accumulation (Wierzbicki, 2016). To paraphrase Walter Benjamin (1936), a radical critique of the social organisation of adult learning must address the social forces engaged in the cultural 'making' of the subject in the age of his/her digital reproduction (Hake, 2014). In the words of Williams, when referring to William Morris's socialist utopian representations in the 1880s, 'It belongs to a general renewal of a form of utopian thinking—not the education but the learning of desire—which has been significant among Western radicals since the crises and since the defeats of the 1960s' (Williams, 1978, p. 213). Despite 50 years of disorganised opposition and uncoordinated subaltern resistance to orchestrated neoliberal repertoires, current failures of incompetent and corrupt governments in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic offer some hope of change. This incompetence of governance might yet open critical social sites that can trigger the regeneration of utopian imagination as a cultural resource for collective socio-political engagement by the commons in rebuilding the public sphere in the 21st century.

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'You have to run it like a company': The marketisation of adult learning and education in Germany and Slovenia

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Abstract

This paper identifies some of the key characteristics of the marketisation of adult learning and education (ALE) and analyses the effects in the contexts of Germany (focusing on Bavaria) and Slovenia. ALE policies and institutional practices are analysed through the method of document analysis and interviews. Policy models of ALE proposed by Lima and Guimarães—the democratic–emancipatory model, the modernisation and state control model, and the human resources management model—are used as an analytical framework. Our findings indicate that the latter model prevails in the analysed policies, while the market forces are introduced on the organisational level of ALE from 'below' through the increased influence of the market demand coming from the learners/customers, and from 'above' through calls for tenders that shape the 'quasi-market' in which the ALE organisations compete for funding. However, signs of resistance to the marketisation of ALE practices are also identified.

Keywords: Adult learning and education organisations, adult learning and education policy, Germany, marketisation of adult learning and education, Slovenia

Introduction

The marketisation of adult learning and education (ALE) that represents a kind of 'new common-sense about education', in which the economic effects substantially influence the educational aims and educational policymaking, has been growing over the last three decades (Holford, 2016, p. 180). In line with such views, individuals need to adapt to the economy through learning and education, and education systems need to become flexible and adaptable, achieved by introducing new approaches in public management, the retreat

of the state, and the privatisation, commercialisation and marketisation of education (Holford, 2016; Lima & Guimarães, 2011). Accordingly, the contributions of education to social justice and equality are diminishing, and the dominant conception of education is changing (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019).

In this paper, we primarily explore those forces of capitalism that lead to the marketisation of ALE. However, as ALE can also play an important part in the resisting and re-construction process (cf. Käpplinger, 2019; Tett & Hamilton, 2019), we shortly reflect on resistance to the marketisation forces arising from our data as well. Having said that, the main aim of this paper is to identify some of the key characteristics of the marketisation of ALE, and to examine to what extent these are reflected (or not) in the national (regional) ALE policies and chosen public institutions in two different contexts—in Germany (Bavaria) and Slovenia. As in Germany, where the governance of ALE is divided between the federal and state (*Länder*) levels, we acknowledge a regional focus as well by concentrating on the state of Bavaria, which we considered as a state-like unit of analysis due to the role of *Länder* in shaping ALE policies and provision.

In what follows, we first discuss the characteristics of the marketisation of education and ALE, outline our methodological approach, and then analyse selected Slovenian and German ALE policies and institutional practices in line with the paper's aim. In the final section, we discuss the main findings and emphasise the characteristics, similarities and differences of the marketisation of ALE shaping national (regional) policies and institutional practices.

Marketisation of education and ALE

Simons, Lundahl and Serpieri (2013, p. 419) describe the marketisation of education as the process of organising market forces (e.g. school choice, competition) in education 'instead of hierarchical (bureaucratic) modes of coordination and provision by local or national governments'. Among the elements that contribute to the marketisation of education, Helgøy and Homme (2016, p. 53) include contractual relationships, public-private partnerships, subcontracting, decentralisation, competition, output control, and the privatisation of public services. The latter is often understood as a prerequisite for the commercialisation of education, 'a process where private, for-profit agencies and commercial transactions have an impact on or become part of the scene of education' (Simons et al., 2013, p. 420). To add further conceptual clarity to the marketisation of education, which is often used as a 'popular phrase' in (adult) education research, we adopted a three-way frame through which marketisation influences educational practice as proposed by Käpplinger (2019): (1) marketisation by ideas and words, (2) marketisation by instruments and methods, and (3) marketisation by resources and finances.

Marketisation by ideas and words

This manner of marketisation is supported by 'ideas, concepts, rhetoric or discourses' (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 4) that primarily consider ALE as markets, as these are acknowledged to be more efficient than the state. Marketisation by ideas and words is strongly influenced by *neoliberalism*, which is characterised by its 'maximalist' attitude towards capitalism (the drive towards increased capital accumulation in all areas of social life). Neoliberalism is an ideology and political project of capitalist globalisation that encourages the implementation of basic market principles in all spheres of society

(Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016; Lynch, 2006), and is most often related to thinkers such as Friedrich Von Hayek, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan and other collaborators at the Chicago School of Economics (Biebricher, 2020; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Although neoliberalism is commonly associated with an Anglo-Saxon approach related to Thatcher and Reagan reforms at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, its eminence is built on earlier examples of ordoliberalism found in Germany, and authoritarian varieties of neoliberalism of Latin America (Chile) (Biebricher, 2020). Neoliberalism has spread globally, but influenced countries to varying degrees (Desjardins, 2013, p. 184).

Contrary to the *Keynesian* perspective that argues in favour of the welfare state, i.e. the state that promotes social welfare and economic policies for the well-being of citizens, and macro-economic policy tools (fiscal and monetary policy), neoliberalism rejects the idea that the state should play a sigificant roles in steering development and emphasises the role of the market in steering economic, political and social development, while the individual (and not the state) is responsible for their well-being (Desjardins, 2013). However, although neoliberalism downplayed the role of the state and government, neoliberals were very involved in policymaking and also worked closely with authoritarian governments like in Chile (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 4), while contemporary examples of right-wing populist (or authoritarian) parties in Italy, Austria, Germany, Hungary or the USA call 'for a strong state and the espousal of authoritarian *neo*liberalism' (Biebricher, 2020, p. 15, italics in original). Therefore, while authoritarian neoliberalism with strong government control is achievable, this does not mean that neoliberalism is necessarily authoritarian or that variations of neoliberalism with 'radical decentralization of state sovereignty' (Biebricher, 2020, p. 15) do not exist. Thus, the role of the state is in the developing and maintaining of economic order - by legal and repressive means - based on competition.

The main defining features of neoliberalism, i.e. free markets, private property rights, free trade, privatisation, deregulations, and a reconfigured state that promotes marketisation, all influence ALE; education and lifelong learning (LLL) are seen as economic tools that play a crucial role in maintaining (inter)national competitiveness (Desjardins, 2013, p. 183; Tett & Hamilton, 2019, pp. 1-2). Knowledge is promoted as the cornerstone of competitiveness, economic growth and the improvement of living standards and, consequently, competitiveness becomes the main aim of education that governments and individuals need to follow (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Desjardins, 2013). ALE programmes that address labour market needs have been prioritised over programmes with less direct economic value (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016), as well as activities of recognition of prior learning (RPL) leading to qualifications (Lima & Guimarães, 2016). Additionally, due to the rise of authoritarian neoliberalism in some countries, ALE might also be used in citizenship education to 'form obedient patriotic citizens' (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 9).

Marketisation by instruments and methods

Besides ideas, marketisation is supported by 'instruments, tools and practices', such as '[c]ontrolling, cost-benefit-analysis, management by objectives, benchmarking or quality assurance' (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 5). In line with these, educational systems shaped by marketisation emphasise cost reduction, and also view the educational institutions and facilitators as commodities that are easily replaceable (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019). Educational provision is directly subjected to market exchanges, meaning it is consequently regulated and financed under the market principles of supply and demand (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2016). Furthermore, educational institutions and facilitators

become the producers of commodities and the learners become the consumers (Holford et al., 2014). Consequently, the competitiveness between educational institutions increases (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019), which makes it difficult for them to plan their long-term strategies (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019), while public ALE institutions are cooperating with private organisations to a greater extent (Helgøy & Homme, 2016; Lima & Guimarães, 2011).

At the same time, the pursuit of performance indicators and quality assurance measures is becoming increasingly important as the ascertaining of measurable educational outcomes gains significance (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This makes learning outcomes easier to manage while, at the same time, increasing the risk of education being too focused on measurable educational outcomes (Desjardins, 2013). The introduction of accountability, standards and measurements 'is seen as a solution for balancing the need for a more decentralised market-oriented approach while at the same time allowing for greater centralised control over quality and cost efficiency' (Desjardins, 2013, p. 190; cf. Tett & Hamilton, 2019, p. 2). Market forces have expanded into the public sector in a manner that follows private sector principles (Olssen & Peters, 2005), therefore, becoming an instrument of its improvement. Additionally, marketisation changes the way that institutions are managed and the role of the institutions' leader can become more similar to that of a company CEO than a pedagogical leader (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019).

Marketisation by resources and finances

Finally, marketisation is shaped also by resources, meaning that 'the sources have changed, but also that the ways and how the resources are spent have changed' (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 6). In line with marketisation ideology, customers (learners) have to pay if they want to learn in an organised way, while providers make profit. Therefore, marketisation means that 'the learners have to spend more privately', while the 'state subsidies and support are reduced' (p. 6). Similarly, Helgøy and Homme (2016) and Milana (2012) argued that increasing funds obtained through participants' fees and decreases in public funding and governments' influence is a sign of marketisation, while Fejes and Holmqvist (2019) added to the latter by also focusing on the decreasing of financial stability.

However, what is also important to observe is the shift in the ways that finances are spent. If in the past, financial resources were distributed according to the legal basis and given directly to the ALE providers that enjoyed a high degree of professional autonomy, then currently the regulation is much higher and linked to project funding, with projects having clearly defined goals, indicators and timetables that are observed and measured by different agencies working outside the educational field, which also have consequences for the de-professionalization of ALE (Käpplinger, 2019, p. 8). Moreover, as national funds for ALE have declined in some European Union (EU) countries, these are increasingly dependent on the project funding provided by the European Social Fund (ESF)—the instrument the EU uses for the policy transfer of ideas and best practices that also shape the marketisation of education (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016)—while project work also increases the precarity of professionals (cf. Finnegan, Valadas, O'Neill, Fragoso, & Paulos, 2019, p. 165). The expansion of project work and financing is, therefore, a clear sign of marketisation (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019; Lima & Guimarães, 2011).

Methodology

In line with the aim of the paper, the following research questions were formulated: (1) To what extent is the marketisation of ideas and instruments promoted in ALE policies in Germany and Slovenia, and (2) To what extent do the marketisation by ideas, instruments and resources influence chosen public ALE institutions in selected countries?

Selection of country cases

For the comparative empirical analysis, we have chosen Germany and Slovenia, both of which are Central European countries and EU member states, but which have different histories and governance structures. After World War II, German history becomes related to post-Nazi developments and the reunification of 'East' and 'West' Germany in 1990, while Slovenia's is related to the establishment of a socialistic state—this being part of Yugoslavia until Slovenia declared its independence in 1991. Germany is a federal parliamentary democratic republic with 16 federal states that have their own state constitution and enjoy a high degree of autonomy, while Slovenia is a parliamentary democratic republic with a high degree of centralised governance. However, observing both countries from the welfare state regimes first introduced by Esping-Andersen, which originally distinguished between three regimes of state-market relations (see Roosmaaa & Saar, 2017, p. 262)—liberal, with minimal state intervention within the market; conservative, based on social-insurance schemes related to labour market status that retain status differences among citizens; and social democratic, promoting social equality and universal benefits to all citizens—both mainly represent conservative welfare regimes. These regimes typically invest in 'firm-specific and industry-specific skills, they favour skilled workers and largely ignore the interests of low-skilled and semi-skilled workers' (Roosmaaa & Saar, 2017, p. 263). While it is well known that neoliberalism has been most prominent in Anglo-Saxon states, and that some countries, such as most of the Nordic ones (except Sweden; see Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Lundahl, 2016), have been less affected by neoliberal reforms and, to a larger degree, remained within social democratic welfare regimes (Desjadrins, 2013, pp. 193-184), it is less known, especially within the ALE field, to what degree countries from conservative welfare regimes have been affected by neoliberal and marketisation forces, and to what extent are these shaping or not shaping ALE policies and provision. Furthermore, as EU members, both countries' ALE policies are to a certain extent shaped by European ALE policy and its instruments (Holford, Milana, & Mohorčič Špolar, 2014). While the latter is conceptualised instrumentally and is primarily based on economic (market) objectives and vocational perspectives of LLL, as many researchers argued (Holford, 2016; Mikulec, 2018; Milana, 2012), it might be important to explore to what extent European ALE policy and its instruments influence ALE policies in 'old-large' (Germany) and 'new-small' (Slovenia) member states as important power imbalances between the two exist (Sabour, 2009).

Historically speaking, both countries have long traditions in institutionalised forms of ALE; for example, in 2019, many ALE centres in Germany (*Volkshochschulen*) celebrated their 100th anniversary (Field, 2019), while in Slovenia the *Association of Folk Universities of Slovenia* celebrated its 60th anniversary, while the first folk school (ALE centre) started to operate in 1921. Today, the main focus of the ALE system in both countries is predominantly on vocational education and training (VET), while a variety of state, market or civil society organisations provide ALE in both countries. However, countries differ in the governance of ALE systems: while in Germany responsibilities for the legal regulation of ALE, the public recognition of providers and their basic funding

rest mainly on the 16 federal states (*Länder*), in Slovenia the governance of ALE is mainly state based, where the ministries responsible for education and labour have the main responsibilities, but are also supported from other ministries and relevant national bodies (Desjardins, 2017; Grotlüschen & Haberzeth, 2018; Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016).

Method and sources

Empirical data for qualitative research was gathered through the method of document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In document analysis, we focused on a thematic analysis, interpreting data by following a deductive approach through preconceived themes as presented in more detail below. Therefore, national (regional) policies were analysed in line with three analytical policy models of ALE with the four models' categories used as analytical tools (Lima & Guimarães, 2011).

On the national and federal state level, we analysed six policies: two Slovenian Resolutions on the Master Plan for Adult Education (Državni zbor, 2004, 2013), the German Vocational Training Act (Bundestag, 2005), the German Federal Government's Conceptualisation of Lifelong Learning (2008) and the Bavarian and Slovenian ALE acts – both adopted in 2018 (Bayerischer Landtag, 2018; Državni zbor, 2018). Due to the division of power in Germany between federal and state (*Länder*) levels (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Förschung [BMBF], 2008b, p. 146), in our analysis, the German national policies and the Bavarian ALE law are treated as policies on the same level (in relation to the chosen Bavarian ALE centre), considering the ALE area they are covering. Since vocational education (outside the school sector) is the main area of ALE practice in the domain of the federal government, the policy was taken from this area to reflect the relationship between federal and state levels in the ALE policy, although other laws and policies at a federal level also shape ALE in Germany (for an overview of these see Desjardins, 2017, p. 114).

On an organisational level, we gathered data through the institutions' webpages and their publicly available documents, observations of their learning spaces, and by conducting two semi-structured in-depth interviews with leaders of selected ALE institutions. The interview guide was prepared beforehand. The interviews were conducted in June 2019 and each lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, while interview data was manually coded and analysed by following an inductive approach through the open coding and formulation of categories and themes.

Two comparable ALE centres (*Volkshochschulen*)—Slovenian and Bavarian, which we had the opportunity to visit a few times—were selected for analysis. Both are the main public ALE providers in their local areas. The chosen German institution (DEI) was founded by its municipality about 70 years ago. It mainly offers ALE programmes to residents of 32 Bavarian municipalities with a total population of 250,000. It fully employs 30 people (11 of them being ALE professionals) as well as over 500 lecturers as freelancers. The chosen Slovenian institution (SII) was founded by its municipality around 60 years ago. It mainly offers its programmes to residents of 26 municipalities with a total population of half a million (about a quarter of Slovenia's population). It fully employs 32 people (15 of them being ALE professionals) as well as 150 lecturers as freelancers. The chosen ALE institutions were compared within four selected comparative categories related to three different ways through which marketisation influences educational practice (Käpplinger, 2019): (1) educational provision, (2) participants (related to marketisation by ideas and words), (3) competitive activities

(related to marketisation by instruments and methods), and (4) public management and funding (related to marketisation by resources and finances).

Analytical policy models of adult learning and education

For the analysis of national (regional) ALE policies, we used an analytical framework developed by Lima and Guimarães (2011). The authors developed three models for analysing ALE policies that can, in turn, be used for an analysis of ALE policies at different levels (cf. Doutor & Guimarães, 2019). The three models are: *the democratic-emancipatory model* (DEM), *the modernisation and state control model* (MSC) and *the human resources management model* (HRM). The models were developed as 'ideal types' on a continuum since policies usually combine elements of different models.

(1) DEM views education as a fundamental social right that should contribute to social (as well as economic, cultural and political) development, social justice and cosmopolitan citizenship. Basic and non-formal education programmes emphasise the values of solidarity and the common good. The political priority of education is to build a democratic and participatory society. Policy-making processes are decentralised (stressing 'bottom-up' dynamics). (2) MSC values education primarily as a contribution to social and economic modernisation shaped through interactions of democracy and economics. ALE is largely reduced to formal literacy programmes, school-type vocational trainings and academic learning. The education of vulnerable groups is important for social justice. The governments independently formulate policies and also have all the means to achieve them ('top-down' approach). (3) HRM perceives education and training as instruments of human capital and adaptation to the needs of the economy. The main role is played by the market, civil society, and individuals (market logic and individual choice)—the demand-side primarily shapes ALE, with public bodies having limited capacity for intervention. Education remains an important political issue, but more responsibility for learning and education is placed on individuals, who also contribute more funds to ALE. The focus is on useful learning outcomes. There is still some public funding of ALE, but the market principles are also followed in this respect and the public institutions compete for financing with private organisations (Doutor & Guimarães, 2019; Lima & Guimarães, 2011).

By presenting different models, it can be acknowledged that HRM—which is related to the crisis of the welfare state and the 'emergence of the neo-liberal state' (Lima & Guimarães, 2011, p. 28)—most clearly resonates with marketisation by ideas (neoliberalism), instruments and resources (Käpplinger, 2019), while MSC is related to conservative welfare state regimes and DEM to social democratic ones.

The three described analytical models can be differentiated further by four sub-categories (Lima & Guimarães, 2011): (a) *political-administrative orientations* (the laws, rules, and norms that allow for the adoption of the policy, as well as the necessary means and established conditions for policy formulation and implementation, (b) *political priorities* (the role and focus of ALE policy, target groups, projected funding), (c) *organisational and administrative dimensions* (the process of adopting a policy through (de)centralised structures and the technical procedures for carrying out ALE activities), and (d) *conceptual elements* (the underlying theoretical perspectives of the policy implementation processes as well as ALE aims and methods).

Results

In this section, the main characteristics of the Slovenian and German ALE policies are first analysed through presented analytical models. Secondly, the main characteristics of the chosen ALE institutions are identified and compared within four selected categories. ALE policies and institutions are presented in separate sections due to analytical purposes (addressing macro and meso levels), although we are aware that, in practice, links between ALE policies and provision are inseparable. Our results indicate that: HRM dominates ALE policies in Slovenia and Germany, flexible provision and competitiveness between organisations has increased in ALE institutions, participants' fees and project funding are current realities, while care for the education of vulnerable groups remains present.

Slovenian ALE policies: The dominance of HRM with the presence of MSC and elements of DEM

Table 1: The prevailing analytical models of the analysed Slovenian policies

	political-administrative orientations	political priorities	organisational and administrative dimensions	conceptual elements
Resolution on the Master Plan [...] until 2010	HRM	MSC & HRM	HRM	MSC & HRM
Resolution on the Master Plan [...] for 2013–2020	HRM	MSC & HRM	HRM prevails	MSC & HRM
Adult Education Act	MSC	DEM & MSC	MSC & HRM	MSC prevails

Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until 2010 (Državni zbor, 2004), which was accepted the year Slovenia entered the EU, emphasises the global changes that require 'accelerated human resource development' (HRM). This stresses the importance of following EU policy, the promotion of public-private partnerships, individual responsibility, RPL, and ALE as a constant adaptation to the needs of the labour market (HRM). The resolution states that education 'is not an end in itself, but is in the function of active inclusion in social life, and the latter is today measured primarily by its ability to actively integrate into the labour market' (p. 8,582). Social inclusion and active citizenship are promoted (possibly DEM), as well as access to ALE, raising the levels of educational attainment and providing opportunities for the acquisition of basic skills (MSC). The described state's role is mainly in the coordination of ALE providers (HRM), while encouraging local communities to develop ALE (DEM if it means supporting local initiatives and democratising ALE—encouraging a bottom-up approach in such a way).

The Resolution [...] until 2010 (Državni zbor, 2004) was succeeded by the *Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia for 2013–2020* (Državni zbor, 2013), which promotes formal ALE, second-chance ALE, raising levels of educational attainment and literacy (MSC), increasing employability,

RPL, the development of human capital for the needs of the labour market (HRM) and ALE for active citizenship, environment protection and cultural development (DEM). It also reiterates the pursuit of the EU policies' objectives and aims to address demographic, socio-economic and technological developments, as well as the needs of the labour market through ALE (HRM). The resolution highlights various state partnerships and its contribution to increase the demand for ALE and to monitor the implementation of ALE programmes (HRM).

The resolutions determine the public interest in ALE, while the *Adult Education Act* (Državni zbor, 2018) regulates it. However, the act regulates only non-formal and basic formal ALE. In accordance with the act, the basic ALE programme, together with ALE counselling, forms a public service in the field of ALE, which is provided to all citizens and is fully publicly funded (MSC). The act emphasises the inclusion of vulnerable groups in ALE, raising the levels of literacy and basic skills, improving educational attainment, including non-formal ALE in the public education system with systemic connections to informal learning as well (MSC), enhancing critical thinking, community learning and empowerment for democratic participation and active citizenship (DEM). The role of the state still incorporates the coordination of ALE providers, stimulating demand and removing ALE barriers (HRM), although stronger control and bureaucratic procedures than in the previous policies are evident (MSC). At the same time, suitable private organisations can compete with public institutions for the funding of certain ALE programmes (HRM). Because of the presence of such strong features of all three analytical policy models, the ALE act is the policy (out of the analysed Slovenian policies) in which most tensions between the three models were identified. For example, it emphasises the wide accessibility of quality ALE to be ensured by the state (MSC), while defining the coordinating role of the government and including private organisations in the process (HRM). It also emphasises the freedom and autonomy of educational approaches, contents and methods as among the key principles of public ALE (DEM), despite defining areas of public ALE, pre-determining the components of educational programmes in calls for tenders and implementing them according to bureaucratic processes (MSC, HRM).

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that HRM is the dominant model in both Resolutions on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia, while this is not the case with the ALE act. The act is formulated from the standpoint of regularly providing ALE rather than addressing the current demand. Its organisational and administrative dimensions are also the most centralised (involving the largest state role) and its educational programmes the least focused on contributing to the labour market. The main reason for this more diverse orientation is likely the fact that the act does not regulate the entire field of ALE, but only those programmes that should already be the least focused on the needs of the labour market (basic and non-formal AE).

German ALE policies: The dominance of HRM with elements of MSC on a national level and MSC with elements of DEM on a federal state level

Table 2: The prevailing analytical models of the analysed German (and Bavarian) policies

	political-administrative orientations	political priorities	organisational and administrative dimensions	conceptual elements
Vocational Training Act	MSC	HRM prevails	MSC & HRM	HRM
Federal Government's Conceptualization of Lifelong Learning	HRM	HRM	HRM	HRM
Bavarian Adult Education Act	MSC	MSC	DEM & HRM	DEM & MSC

In Germany, the federal government's *Vocational Training Act* (Bundestag, 2005) regulates training in vocational schools, as well as continuing training. The act establishes the centralised management of the vocational training system with specific conditions, under which the participants can acquire vocational qualifications (MSC). It also establishes cooperation with private organisations and retraining (HRM). There is considerable control over VET in public institutions (MSC), however, the state's coordinator role is seen here as well (HRM). At the same time, the main focus of the act is on the development of human resources for labour market participation and on skills updating through retraining (HRM).

The *Federal Government's Conceptualisation of Lifelong Learning* (BMBF, 2008a) addresses the 2007 federal government's decision to make workforce qualifications and competences a priority ALE area (HRM). Dealing with the effects of demographic changes on the economy is defined as a key objective of learning (HRM), while learning for active citizenship and personal development is also mentioned (possibly DEM). Emphasis is placed on access to learning opportunities for vulnerable groups (MSC), on the easier acquisition of vocational qualifications for people with special needs, on increasing the participation of low-qualified people in ALE, on improving in-company (re)training opportunities, promoting RPL and on the greater adjustment of educational provision to meet demand (HRM). A significant governmental role is described, but mainly in a supporting manner with the provision being left to market demand (HRM).

In accordance with the division of political responsibility between the German federal and state governments, the *Bavarian Adult Education Act* (Bayerischer Landtag, 2018) entered into force in Bavaria in January 2019. The act establishes ALE's diverse aims and areas and highlights the right of every individual to education (MSC). It defines four areas of cofunding ALE—sustaining existing and developing new learning opportunities, providing and developing accessible needs-based ALE, fostering citizens' equal learning conditions, and supporting basic and voluntary ALE activities (MSC)—of which the recipients are non-profit associations recognised by the Bavarian government that deal exclusively with ALE. These associations then divide the funds among their members who must also follow certain regulations. With this system, the state's coordinator role is partially present (HRM), while at the same time the development and control of ALE are decentralised and local initiatives supported (DEM). The act also

promotes the adaptation of ALE to local areas, ALE for reducing discrimination (DEM), ALE for better understanding the social and political processes (MSC, possibly DEM), as well as the personal responsibility of learners and their contribution to state efficiency (HRM, possibly MSC). In line with these different policy orientations, it is also among the German-analysed policies that the ALE act shows the most tensions among different analytical models. One such tension is the mentioned coordinating role of the federal state that encompasess elements of both DEM and HRM and could, depending on the policy implementation, lean either way. At the same time, the described role also includes the moderate centralised influence of the federal state with determination of the general areas and conditions for (co)funding the ALE programmes (MSC). Furthermore, the public insurance of different educational opportunities for everyone is emphasised (MSC), while the participants' fees are necessary and project funding introduced (HRM).

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that both German national policies express many more HRM elements than the federal state policy. The Vocational Training Act focuses on human resources development (HRM) with the federal government's conceptualisation of LLL having a similar focus. The Bavarian ALE Act is the most difficult to place into a particular analytical model because of its scarcity of data, however, we have identified it as closest to the MSC. The main reason for the difference of predominant models on national and federal state level is most likely in their division of political responsibilities. The national government being primarily responsible for vocational ALE and the federal state government for general ALE (BMBF, 2008b) results in the dominance of HRM in the national ALE policy and a less neoliberal orientation on a federal state level. Nevertheless, the coordinating role of the government in ALE is present on both levels.

Slovenian and German ALE organisations

Flexible provision following demand on the rise, while interest in vulnerable groups is maintained.

In regard to educational provision, DEI and SII share some similarities. They both provide basic and upper secondary ALE programmes, vocational training, programmes for immigrants, ALE in prisons, and different one-time educational events. In none of the institutions does the vocational training (yet) represent the majority of total provision, although it is increasing significantly in both institutions, as they are making their provision more flexible and following the demand to attract participants and secure funding. At the same time, neither is currently reducing any major ALE programmes that do not directly contribute to the needs of the labour market. They are only expanding their existing provision and have increased employee numbers in the last 10 years for this reason.

However, there are also significant differences between institutions' provisions. An important part of SII's offer is career counselling and providing support for entrepreneurs in developing their business, while this is not present in DEI, which provides counselling only for immigrants. SII also provides more opportunities for individual learning activities than DEI. SII's leader describes a constant shift related to the need to contribute to participants' employability: 'We are definitely developing into an extended arm of the human resources development services. That being said, our focus is on employees, less educated, over the age of 45.' In comparison, DEI has been less flexible in its past provision but is now facing a 'wave of changes', as described by DEI's leader, in order to ensure sufficient funding. In the future, DEI intends to strengthen vocational

training, programmes for the elderly, and youth programmes. In line with the German 'decade of literacy', they will also offer more literacy programmes. The near-future provision of SII is more unpredictable, as it mainly depends on public funding—however, this is related to ESF (see Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016, pp. 164–165)—and so is dependent on the areas of EU and national funding of ALE until 2030. In regard to the modest stable funding and the unpredictability of sufficient financing through different projects, the SII's leader points out that 'even though we are a public institution, you have to run it like a company'.

In the category of participants, the target group that has increased the most in both institutions is that of immigrants, with the largest increases in 2014 and 2015. In both institutions, the share of children and adolescents among participants has also increased, as both have recently developed new programmes for this population. The two institutions are more alike in their programmes for the elderly, who also represent an important share of participants in both cases. Furthermore, they also want to attract different vulnerable target groups, for whom the SII offers mostly free (publicly funded) programmes and the DEI offers participation fee discounts. A similarity of the analysed institutions is also found in the increase of the working population among the participants, although this increase is higher in SII. The main target group of both institutions within the working population is lower-educated adults, whose participation in programmes for raising employability is (co)funded by the Slovenian and German governments.

Competitiveness between ALE organisations, public and private organisations increased significantly

In regard to competitive activities, the number of organisations competing with SII and DEI has increased tremendously. As SII's leader illustrates, the competition is now 'on every corner'. Both institutions experienced a large increase of competing organisations in the fields of language and sports programmes. Additionally, SII is encountering a large increase in competing organisations in relation to entrepreneurship programmes, and DEI in vocational and immigrant programmes. Both institutions compete with others in addressing demand and attracting participants, while also competing with them for the obtainment of public funding through various calls for tenders, with private organisations often being more successful, as they require less funding to implement certain programmes. On the example of the implementation of educational programmes for the Employment Service of Slovenia, the leader of SII describes that now 'private organisations get everything. We are no longer doing anything for the Employment Service because we cannot set such low prices if we want to pay the teachers properly and finance ourselves properly'. The two institutions are also similar in their increased advertising investments, with DEI being more restricted and controlled by the municipality. Both institutions have boosted their online advertising and promote their events and programmes in the public media, while making their provision increasingly more flexible to better address demand.

Participants' fees share increased and is high in DEI, EU-project funding dominates in SII, while surpluses are also used for the education of vulnerable groups

The systems of public management and financing for the two institutions are quite different. In SII, many programmes are fully publicly funded and, therefore, free of charge, while in DEI the vast majority of activities require participation fees. The

financing of Slovenian public ALE programmes follows the principle of thirds—one-third of the funds are obtained from the state, one-third from the municipalities and one-third from participants' contributions. A similar principle has also been applied in Bavaria in the past, however, current funding with participants' fees exceeds 50% of all ALE funds. Because of the increased dependency on participants' contributions, DEI's provision has become more flexible. At the same time, the number of one-time educational events in DEI has reduced as they usually represent a financial loss.

The analysed institutions are also quite different in relation to the public management under which they operate. SII is a rather autonomous institution, while DEI is administratively part of the municipal government that closely controls its finances, but does not influence the areas of educational provision. This municipal influence has increased in recent years and so have financial earnings from immigrant programmes, of which the surpluses are flowing into the municipal budget. At the same time, DEI's financial losses can be covered by the municipal budget. Contrarily, SII directs surpluses from its certain programmes to fund those that do not have sufficient public funding. SII obtains most of its funding through projects (EU funding), while this type of funding represents only a small proportion of DEI's financing. Both institutions also receive a small share of the funds through donations, which they use for the education of vulnerable groups.

The national or federal-state policy defines the general regulations and areas of public ALE (co)funding for the analysed institutions, which are, however, broad enough to allow the introduction of various learning topics and programmes. SII is more dependent on policy because it relies on ESF public project funding that follows EU and national policies. The programmes, funded in this way, are free for participants and adapt to current political orientations that may not even be (yet) articulated in national policies. This way, funding can have faster political influences than policies. The pursuit of public project funding is, to a much lesser extent, also present in DEI.

Both interviewed institutional leaders acknowledge that the marketisation of ALE poses various challenges for them, however, they both wish for their institutions to keep experiencing (partial) marketisation, as the instability of financing it brings, according to them, leads to the development of better quality educational programmes. Furthermore, they both want more autonomy in financial management and see marketisation as a good way of improving their employees' work motivation, although through different approaches. The Slovenian interviewee emphasises that an increase in employees' motivation would occur with more freedom to financially stimulate the excelling employees, while the German interviewee would fund the development of new programmes with the financial surpluses (which is already happening in SII) to bring the employees space for educational innovations and, thus, increase their motivation for work.

Discussion

In this paper, we have explored forces of capitalism leading to the marketisation of ALE by analysing the extent to which market forces are reflected in chosen ALE national (regional) policies and public institutions in Germany (Bavaria) and Slovenia.

In the ALE policies of both countries, we identified the dominance of HRM and the promotion of the marketisation of education, which is most evident in the role of the state governments that should coordinate different ALE providers instead of providing ALE themselves, (partially) payable ALE programmes, public project (co)funding of ALE

providers, strengthening of public–private partnerships, individualisation of learning responsibility, promoting RPL, focusing on working-age participants, and flexibility of educational provision in accordance with labour market needs. Lima and Guimarães (2011) describe the reduction and change in the role of the state from the provider to the coordinator, which began to be introduced at the same time as the conceptual shift from (adult) *education* to (lifelong) *learning*. Such public management of ALE increases the participants' demand and its influence on the development of educational provision and competition between ALE organisations. The latter also increases in competing to obtain the public (project) funding of ALE programmes through tenders. Therefore, we argue that the market forces shaping ALE into an economic instrument are introduced on an organisational level from two sides as a consequence of marketisation on the state level: (1) from 'below' through the increased influence of the market demand coming from the learners/customers, and (2) from 'above' through calls for tenders that shape a sort of 'quasi-market'—where the state is stimulating the market competition (cf. Hake, 2016, p. 183; Käpplinger, 2019, p. 2)—on which the ALE organisations compete for funding.

Furthermore, being EU members, both countries' ALE policies are also shaped by the EU ALE policy (Holford et al., 2014), while its economic objectives are to a greater extent reflected in Slovenian, i.e. promotion of adaptability and employability of the workforce, vocational learning and RPL, LLL and individualisation of learning responsibility, development of public–private partnerships, and new managerial mechanisms, than in German policies. The reason for this, we would argue, lies in the smaller Slovenian international political influence, this being a small and new member state, and the shorter tradition of ALE policy compared to Germany. Field (2018) describes the impacts of the EU's ALE policy as smaller in the countries with well-developed ALE systems and larger in countries with a shorter history of ALE policy. Moreover, Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 during the Lisbon Strategy period (2000–2010), when the ALE was already an important EU policy domain that, under the Europeanisation process and extensive financial ESF support contributed to the adaptation of its national ALE policy to the EU's policy (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016).

As previous research shows, the market orientation of the German ALE centres has been increasing since the 1980s simultaneously with the reduction of their public funding (Klemm, 2019), while the market orientation of the Slovenian ALE centres started increasing in the 1990s after Slovenia became independent (Perme, 2008). With our analysis, we identified the following effects of ALE marketisation on the analysed institutions: in both institutions, the share of the working-age population among the participants increased, cooperation with the private organisations strengthened, competitiveness between organisations and the advertising of ALE programmes increased, project work and funding became more common, and educational provision became more flexible in accordance with the (quasi-) market demand. In DEI, there is also an increase in the share of funds obtained from participants' fees and a decrease in public funding, while SII is largely dependent on EU or public project funding. Therefore, we argue that project funding through EU mechanisms is the key factor in shaping SII's provision, while DEI is changing its provision in line with the participants' demand. Marketisation is, thus, mostly introduced through the (real) market in the case of DEI and through the quasi-market in the case of SII. However, certain effects of ALE marketisation identified in previous research (cf. Helgøy & Homme, 2016) are not present in any of the analysed institutions: a reduction of the provision that has less economic value and a decline in the influence of the public authorities.

Nonetheless, in our research, we were also able to identify forces of resistance to the marketisation of ALE practices. As we have shown, both ALE institutions, although struggling for the funds, covered educational programmes for vulnerable adults with their surpluses or donations. This way, they used what they see as a benefical effect of the marketisation of ALE (institutional financial freedom) to negate what they see as a negative effect of that same process (decrease of accessible non-vocational programmes for vulnerable groups). By doing this, they were pursuing social justice goals and challenging social inequalities rather than following market principles, as well as addressing the educational gap (or Matthew effect) that is leaving behind those (vulnerable) adults who would most need ALE. By securing hope to vulnerable adults through ALE, they challenged neoliberalism as a fatalistic discourse (Tett & Hamilton, 2019), and by acknowledging and addressing adults as learners with different needs, they also challenged the formation of desirable subjectivity, i.e. subject as consumer, which global capitalism fosters (Biesta, 2006).

Finally, the limitations of our research should be identified. We analysed six Slovenian and German ALE policies based on documentation analysis, which allows for a biased choice of specific documents (Bowen, 2009) and different interpretations of their actual impact (Fejes & Olesen, 2016), while the meanings of ALE policies are not necessarily determining future ALE practices (Taylor, 2013). Although we tried to be as objective as possible, the determined predominant models of the policies in line with each of the four analytical categories are still based on our interpretation. Therefore, different argumentations and choices might also be possible in certain parts of the analysis, as there is an interplay of different analytical models' elements in each of the analysed policies. Furthermore, we formulated findings for only two selected ALE institutions—although well-established and highly recognised providers in both countries—which cannot be generalised to other (types of) ALE institutions.

Conclusion

The findings of the study should be seen as an addition to the previous studies researching the marketisation of ALE policies and practices. By analysing national (regional) ALE policies and practices in two continental European countries with conservative welfare regimes, we were able to clearly identify the effects of marketisation shaping ALE policies and practices, although the extent of those effects also varies to a certain degree as emphasised, while signs of resistance to the marketisation of ALE were identified as well. Therefore, future research should keep track of the effects of ALE marketisation, especially by uncovering capitalistic forces shaping ALE into an instrument of the economy, as well as the possibilities of resistance towards greater ALE marketisation.

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Capitalism, migration, and adult education: Toward a critical project in the second language learning class

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Abstract

Migration has become both a consequence of and support structure for global racialised capitalism. A presumed source of support for the people who migrate is adult education, especially the second language learning class. However, as a state organized institution, the policies and practices that govern second-language courses serve to inculcate the ideologies and values that support a racialised capitalist system. We draw on two case examples – the U.S. and Germany – to demonstrate these entanglements. We engage Freire's critical pedagogy wherein learning contexts encourage students to question the realities of their lives, and Foucault's ideas regarding heterotopian places where the hegemonic norm is suspended and different approaches of pedagogical work can be implemented. We conclude with the suggestion of different pedagogical paths – a 'pedagogy of dreaming' and a 'pedagogy of courage.'

Keywords: Adult education, capitalism, critical pedagogy, migration, second-language learning

Introduction

A critical project for educators is developing a social conscience to improve the living conditions of refugee and other precarious migrant communities. With the global COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear once more that these peoples remain outside of the dominant consciousness.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the number of international migrants globally is on an upward trajectory that reached 272 million in

2019. Refugees accounted globally to 70.8 million human beings at the end of 2018, and every second refugee was younger than 18 years old (UNO, 2020). However, the atrocities that affect people in other countries are too often perceived as distant realities. Narratives of inevitability or deficit theorising about non-western peoples (the theory that poverty and other social ills are a result of peoples' intellectual or cultural deficits, rather than systemic conditions) allow people to ignore their complicity as humans who actively shape this world.

We will argue in this article that adult education is especially important to the maintenance of a racialised capitalism because the majority of those who enter adult education programs are those who have been "failed" by the opportunity structures that is supposed to support social mobility within the basic school education system. Adult education is supposed to ameliorate these students by offering an alternative path to improving their lives. Adult second-language learning programs are meant for migrants who do not speak the dominant language of the host countries and who often face oppressive conditions. We start from the assumption that the institutionalized state funded adult second-language learning class is a social space partly set up to reproduce oppressive structures and will argue this through later in this text.

However, spaces of reproduction are also spaces of production. Adult second language learning classes can potentially be spaces where students become critically conscious of their social conditions and oppressive structures and where new ideas and new, more just, and more human, social relations can be produced. While a critical consciousness does not, in itself, challenge oppression, it does provide the impetus for collective resistance. Raya Dunayevskaya (2000), following Marx, argued that one of the many contradictions within capitalist social relations is that the most exploited persons are typically brought together in workplaces, creating the opportunities for mass mobilization and resistance. Adult second language learning programs bring migrant and refugee communities together and therefore offer similar opportunities.

Both of us, authors, are cis Woman of Colour have experienced aspects of the oppression we write about. However, we understand that living in two of the richest nations of the world – the U.S. and Germany – and working as university professors, we have significant privilege to speak and be heard. We seek to spotlight the voices of people in our societies who *do* speak and resist but are rarely heard (cf. Spivak, 1994). Even when they are heard, their concerns often get ignored or muted by the hegemonic noise shouting 'America first' or 'Wir sind das Volk'[2] (We are the people), drawing clear lines between those who have the rights of a citizen and those who are merely tolerated (at most) within national borders. Although we run the risk of falling into the trap of claiming to speak 'for' the Other, we believe we have a responsibility as academics to bring these questions to the academy.

Our focus of analysis is on migrants who are forced to seek refuge in foreign lands for survival or to live with dignity and to have opportunities for their children. Drawing on a Marxist-humanist perspective (Dunayevskaya, 2000), we position forced migration as the outcome of a racialised capitalist system that feeds off of the exploitation of non-western peoples. We also draw on critical pedagogy to argue for the potential within adult second language programs to challenge systems of oppression. While adult education trends suggest systemic complicity with capitalist interests (Mayo, 1999), we also found examples that attempt to use the second language learning class, as heterotopian spaces to implement different and powerful critical pedagogical work. Foucault (2019) describes heterotopian places, as spaces within society where the hegemonic norm is suspended. Although we recognize the philosophical differences between Marx and Foucault's work (Crotty, 1998), we find their work complementary in regards to the production of

knowledge and the existing possibilities for transformation. Bob Jessop shows that there is a deep theoretical connection between Foucault's work and Marx, as there is 'a continued, if often unstated, adoption of key Marxian insights and his concern with the state as a (if not *the*) crucial site for the 'institutional integration' of power relations' (Jessop, 2010, p. 56).

We base our arguments on the existing empirical literature of two cases, Germany and the United States of America, wherein we live and work and, thus, also have a deeper experiential understanding. We begin by discussing the entanglement of migration and racialised capitalism. We follow with a brief description of the systems of adult second language learning in these two countries and the pedagogical practices therein. Challenging the normative professional work done in these classes, we end by considering critical approaches in education and propose the further development of a 'pedagogy of dreaming' and a 'pedagogy of courage' as an alternative approach for teachers and policy makers who want to create contexts that may empower their students and potentially begin to transform the prevailing migration regime.

The entanglement of migration and global capitalism

Although the practice of migration can be traced as far back as human life, the nature of migration that is evidenced today is significantly different. The migration that was part and parcel of a life contingent on respect for the Earth and its changing conditions came to a halt as capitalist fervour turned land into property and nations into "imagined communities". These communities were ideologically led to believe that the protection and development of "their" country should take priority over any sense of moral compass in the treatment of the Other, especially if that Other came from a perceived 'inferior' culture or race (Monzó, 2020). Here, Monzó connects migration, imperialism, and nationalism to capitalist processes. Crucial to our argument is Marx's (1977) important recognition that the 'so called primitive accumulation' (p. 874), which in large part derived from colonisation (the appropriation of lands and resources and exploitation of peoples), was not a one-time grab to spur on capitalist growth but a continuously necessary central aspect of the capitalist economy.

A Marxist-humanist perspective on capitalism

Capitalism is a racialised global system of value production with a capitalist class that owns the means of production and an exploited and alienated working class. That across the world the most exploited peoples are Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) is not an accident. From inception, capitalism thrived off the theft of labour and resources from the non-western world and the genocides that resulted were justified through notions of human hierarchies, wherein western man was deemed superior (Mignolo, 2009). This ideology, later termed racism, has served to justify exploitation by blaming the peoples constructed as 'Other' for lacking the personal or cultural strengths to gain social mobility (Monzó, 2020).

At the heart of capitalist relations is the fundamental need for capital accumulation, a labour process that seeks to exploit the greatest possible surplus value from workers, and an alienation that distorts our humanity (Marx, 1977). Although Marx argued that there is an internal crisis built into capitalism – a tendency toward a falling rate of profit. Different responses across time and countries have been developed to further increase profit, maintaining the necessary increase in accumulation of capital, and or to address

other social conditions threatening the system and thereby salvaging the system. Consider, as examples, the welfare state and neoliberalism. Both of these responded at different times to specific crises.

The welfare state is represented by public social services, including financial assistance for the unemployed or under-employed, for single mothers with dependent children, and for students. Its fundamental philosophy is that the state should intervene to increase equitable distribution of resources and take responsibility to ensure the livelihood of its citizens (Abramovitz, 2011). It first appeared in the U.S. as a response to the devastation of the Great Depression and became a feature of many industrialized nations, including Germany, which still retains important aspects. In the U.S., however, an economic downturn paralleled with a racist backlash to the Civil Rights era became a campaign against the welfare state, and ushered in a new era of neoliberal reforms that have become entrenched within all major institutions. Neoliberalism posits that the market is the best equaliser and that privatisation and competition enhances efficiency and creates innovation (Abramovitz & Zelmick, 2014). This neoliberal order has moved across the world. The German welfare state has been increasingly changing to an 'activating welfare state,' with slogans like 'Fördern and Fordern' (Promoting and Demanding), which makes clear that a person can only get unemployment benefits, for example, if they can show that they have been actively searching for waged work. Disregarding the state's responsibility to support persons who need to survive, people are pressured to fit into neoliberal ideologies of performing to suit the labour market.

We draw on Marx in our work because it is more than an economic theory but a philosophy of revolution that recognizes this process of production, exploitation, and alienation as a distortion of our humanity, turning us into things that relate to each other and ourselves antagonistically (Dunayevskaya, 2000; Marx, 1961). We would argue that this distortion undermines our human need for love and interdependence and allows us to be complacent in the face of the horrors that humanity engages, including the human suffering of migrant peoples.

Migration: An aspect of global exploitation

The increase of migration as a global phenomenon is related to the global capitalist structure that has from inception been a racist enterprise, developed in the west to enrich itself of the land, resources, and labour of the non-western world. The ability of the dominant group to practice a historical amnesia, the sanctioned ignorance (Spivak, 1999), that denies the responsibility of the west in stealing from and creating dependency among the non-western world feeds into the ideologies that allow people to exploit immigrants and reap the benefits.

In the US and in Germany there is a strong myth that immigrants are taking American/German jobs and resources. However, the ACLU (2020) reports that immigrants in the US contribute greatly to the economy by creating jobs, creating demands for goods and services, utilizing their purchasing power, and paying taxes. Indeed, this report estimates that immigrants in the US pay $90 billion yearly in taxes, while receiving only $5 billion in welfare. Similar findings were reported by the ZEW - Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research for the German situation:

> If all social transfers, including expenditure on education and educational support, which the 6.6 million foreigners living in Germany received in 2012 are set off against the taxes and contributions that this group remitted to the state in the same year, the state is left with a net profit of 3,300 euros per capita'. 'Foreigners', meaning Germans who don't hold the German passport, contributed a total of 22 billion euros in 2012. (Bonin, 2014, p. 1)

Immigration is a necessary form of providing cheap labour for the developed world that allows the general population to achieve a greater standard of living than the rest of the world, securing the ideologies of 'greatness', that ensures that immigrants continue to come and further enrich the west (Monzó, 2019).

Increasingly researchers are studying the feminisation of migration. Currently women around the world make up 47% of all migrants. In the US, a greater number of immigrants are women (58%) (Migration data portal, 2020). While women migrate for similar reasons to men –survival and opportunity, the pull for women from the developed world is to resolve a 'crisis of care' that exist in 'developed' countries, including for domestic labour and child and elderly care (Tittensor & Mansouri, 2017). This also supports pushing out countries because women send back a larger share of their incomes than men (International Organization for Migration, 2020). This immigrant women's labour market not only exploits but also channels them into traditional female roles, which has allowed middle-class women to enter professional fields and assume greater gender equality. In this sense, the immigrant women's labour market also serves the ideological function of making middle-class women feel that the capitalist system works in their favour (cf. Dinkelaker, 2017; Meded, 2020; Mies, 1992). Of grave concern should be the fact that while these immigrant women are filling these caring roles for more affluent, usually white, women, they are having to leave their own children to care for themselves (cf. Arruzua, Bhattacharya & Fraser 2019), which continues to reproduce a stratified raced and classed next generation.

How migrant communities are treated within racialised capitalist states can be observed currently more than ever. While writing this article the whole world is in an emergency state - Curfews are imposed, schools, restaurants and shops are closed, social contact is being legally restricted, and persons are being asked to keep a significant distance from each other and to wear face masks in public. This is a challenge for most of us and actually impossible for those whose living and/or working conditions require them to share limited space, like refugees, home-less people and low-waged workers. For example, in Germany and in the US, the working conditions of the meat-packing industry, heavily filled by immigrants and other Communities of Color, has received much media attention and revealed that the inhuman working conditions make protection from COVID-19 outbreaks almost impossible (cf. Savage, 2020; Stegemann & Wernicke 2020).

In times like these, let's call them times of 'emergency', it becomes even more obvious whose lives are grievable (Butler, 2016) and whose lives are 'wasted' and therefore not even countable (Bauman, 2003). Following, we focus on the entanglement of the second language learning classrooms with the capitalist racial state (Goldberg, 2002).

The second language learning class

Persons who do not speak the host language are generally excluded in the receiving society through ideologies that common language and culture are founding elements for building community. Second language classes are set up and legitimised with the argument that newcomers have to or should learn the dominant language and culture of the receiving society and that they can and should learn this in a classroom (Heinemann, 2018b; Kloubert, 2020). This assimilation narrative asserts that after a successful learning process, for which migrants are responsible themselves, they have a right to belong. Scholars and activists have described the impossibility of this demand (Chow, 2014;

Heinemann, 2018b; Ives, 2004). Nevertheless, the ideal of the fully assimilated immigrant is still used to divide between 'good' = integrated, assimilated, working, inconspicuous migrants and 'bad' = living on welfare, living in their own communities, threatening, criminal strangers. Hence the Second Language Learning classroom is not an innocent space but serves to promote racist discourse and hegemonic migration regime. For educators in the U.S and in Germany the effects on the institutions are very similar. We will elaborate on these processes of 'second language learning' as they take shape in both countries. Our goal is not comparative. Rather we want to use the examples of our respective home countries to show the different ways migration regimes instrumentalize adult education for their purposes and then discuss how critical pedagogues might respond.

The hidden curriculum of teaching and hegemonic language in a settler colonial state

The US is a settler-colonial state that has a long history of genocide, slavery and exploitation. Justification for the settler colonial state and the creation of an historical amnesia that accounts for the hypocritical assumptions that the US was made by and for the white man and has developed through what Evenlyn Nakano Glenn (2015) calls erasure of the Indian – first through genocide and later through acculturation to the colonial capitalist ethos. The erasure of Natives meant that a new class of peoples would be needed to support the slave labour that would spur the US to industrialisation and to become the capitalist empire it is today. The African slaves served this purpose, giving their blood and tears, to create a country and system that continues to feed off their exploitation (Baptist, 2014). Between 1846-48, 'manifest destiny' and the continual need for capital accumulation led to the U.S. westward expansion that claimed a large portion of Northern Mexico and created yet another set of 'second-class' racialized citizens targeted for exploitation (Greenberg, 2012). Numerous guestworker programs, notorious for their civil rights abuses, have since been implemented to bring the Mexican worker and others from around the world to fill U.S. jobs, including the infamous Bracero Program (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013). As wave upon wave of immigrants entered the US with their distinct cultures and languages, the U.S. implemented a project of Americanisation, placing natives in boarding schools, teaching a Eurocentric curriculum, and making English the primary language of instruction (Hartman, 1948).

This history is critical to the large influx of immigrants to the U.S. People whose native language is not English or 'English Language Learners' comprise the majority of people taking adult education classes[3], with 46% of students in adult education in the year 2006-07 taking ESL classes (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2010). In 2014-15, Latinx peoples comprised 64% of all adult education enrolment in these state programmes, about 40% of these are taking ESL classes (US Department of Education, 2016). Typically, it is first-generation migrant communities in the US who arrived as teenagers or later who would need adult ESL. Although there are many immigrants to the US who have varying levels of wealth and education and are even professionals, for many their lives take an economic downturn following migration, since foreign degrees are not always accepted and an excellent command of English is typically expected for professional jobs. As a result, the vast majority of adult ESL students are employed in jobs with poor working conditions, earning minimum wages (undocumented workers earn much less than minimum wages) that are often not enough to live on, and lack health care benefits (Capps et al., 2005).

Undocumented immigrants are especially in need of ESL courses that can support both learning English and knowledge of labour laws and their human rights. Bauer and Ramírez (2010) have reported that employers often target undocumented workers, especially women, for abuse, including wage theft, rape, and harassment, and that they get away with this by threatening to report their status to the authorities. Increases in ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids (aided through surveillance technologies) during the Trump administration has created fear of being picked up and thrown into detention centres where human rights abuses abound (López, 2019). As Larrotta (2019) points out, the pressure exerted by conservative politicians to make teachers mandated reporters of undocumented students is enough to make students fear for their safety in attending school, which has impacted their willingness to enrol.

Since the US is highly segregated by a combination of class, race, and ethnicity, immigrants' enclaves have developed that allow non-English speakers to live and work without English. While these enclaves may provide a sense of community, they may also confine them to menial labour and limit social mobility.

Larrotta (2019) points out that learning English in the US *does* translate to better or greater choice in jobs, securing better health services, allows for greater access to social activities and lessens isolation, and supports intergenerational communication between parents and children. Larrotta also discusses that the anti-immigrant sentiments and policies that have been seen in the last decade have made ESL teachers respond in varying ways. Teachers who are critical of anti-immigrant policies have taken it upon themselves to provide information about immigration policies and resources to their classes so they can better understand their rights.

In the context of the adult ESL classes, migrants who share significant experiences of economic precarity, alienation, and psychological distress may create social spaces to find human connection and safety. Although migrants in the US speak many different languages and come from around the world, the segregated nature of US society and the existence of separate enclaves from almost every part of the world result in classes where students share a common first language. Raya Dunayevskaya (1985, 2000) has written extensively of the contradictions that capitalism creates by both separating people through its alienating production processes but also bringing peoples together in highly oppressive work contexts that can develop into bonds of support and humanity, which can lead to collective organizing and resistance. While certainly different than work spaces, adult education classes can be said to share some of these dynamics that Dunayevskaya discusses, especially if the ESL class can become a ground that enables personal and collective reflection about current social conditions and can provide opportunities for students to share resources and support each other. Such a humanizing space could potentially lead to building solidarity and greater awareness of shared conditions of exploitation.

Examples of such spaces can be found in alternative types of political programs around the US. One example is an education program that was developed as part of the Immigrant Women's Alliance, a non-profit organization that described itself as "a community-based organization working with low income women employed in the garment, hotel, restaurant, nursing home, and electronics industries." (Katz, 2012, p. 141). According to Katz, who researched this project via a two-year ethnographic project, the content of instruction was said to come explicitly from the participants' lives. This content included not just learning English to gain better jobs but discussion of the low-wage employment choices available to them and its connection to the global labour market. Researchers' found that the staff's familiarity to the social, cultural, and political realities of the women who participated was crucial in supporting a curriculum that was highly

attentive to gender issues while offering classes at convenient hours and providing childcare. An important finding that Katz articulated was that while the program organizers seemed to define the notion of taking greater control of their own lives through political action such as getting involved in protests, for some of the women taking control of their lives rested in more personal forms of social interaction and language use. This is an important finding that challenges us to consider the significance of honouring the trajectory by which diverse individuals seek to transform their own lives and how these individual processes connect to broader goals of social liberation.

Bringing this kind of critical pedagogy into the public ESL classroom can be a significant contribution to the work of social justice given the much greater reach to the population that public programs have. Yet, as noted earlier, capitalism creates contradictions in every context, such that any social product automatically also involves a contradictory effect. In this case, the broadening of critical pedagogy to the public schools and development of curriculum based on mandated and highly controlled teaching is likely to be watered down to mere teaching strategies instead of a philosophy of liberation and curtailing the critique of structures of oppression to reform efforts that attempt to "close the achievement gap." Similar restraints can be found in the German context.

Forming the 'economic subject' after a history of 'revolution'

The history of institutionalised adult education in Germany can be described as one of *revolution* (cf. Olbrich, 2001; Tiegtens, 2010). Even though the following narrative of the 'history of adult education' is necessarily superficial and shortened, it shows some of the central ideas still discussed in the field of adult education, especially in relation to democracy (cf. Seitter, 2003). Starting during the period of Enlightenment with the reading revolution (Tietgens, 2010, p. 28), with the middle and upper classes forming reading societies (excluding women), in the first half of the 19th century new impulses for the education of adults were noticeable. There are two driving forces to be mentioned. On the one hand it was the economic, technical development, with which the advent of industrialization brought new demands, and on the other hand, it was fuelled by a growing resistance against the Restoration after the Congress of Vienna 1815 - a time of restrictions on freedom of expression, press and assembly. The concept of 'education' was increasingly replaced by the more philosophical term 'Bildung', referring to a process of both personal and cultural maturation and to the Humboldtian model of higher education. Soon social issues ('die soziale Frage') were also connected with it (cf. Tietgens, 2010, p. 30). In 1927, the 'Reichsverband der Volkshochschulen', a union of the adult education centres called 'Volkshochschule', was founded and special pedagogical didactical approaches for the adult education were developed (Tietgens, 2010, p. 39). Following all these interesting developments was a shameful phase followed during the Nazi-Regime. After the horrors of the Shoah, again actors in the field of adult education were driven by the idea of 'changing' and *re-democratising* the society. This change was imposed on them by the victorious powers after the war, documented by Control Council Directive No. 56 of October 28, 1947 (Note 1). In the "Basic Guidelines for Adult Education in Germany" the objectives were specified. The main goal of adult education - as stated therein - "should be to train active helpers for Germany's democratic education by making the latest social, political and scientific findings generally accessible to the adult population" (Wilson, 1997, p.19, quoted from: Hufer, 2015, transl. A.H.).

Until today the role of adult education in developing and sustaining a democratic society is an important one. As Henry Giroux states:

> No democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way' (2017, p. 3).

Later, the field of adult education played an active role in the *emancipation* processes of the 1970s offering affordable learning spaces for the self-empowerment of dis/abled, women, migrants and Queers (cf. Theile, 2010). Currently, unfortunately, it has become more and more an arm of the neo-liberal labour market and state interests. The historical power of the field of adult education, rooted in the possibilities to work independently of, and even against, governmental interests, still exists but withers away with the continued reduction of subsidies and also as a result of changes in society, which continuously push for greater and greater self-optimizstion while losing touch with questions of solidarity and community. Business consultants or economists are selected as managers for the bigger institutes of adult education. They feel responsible for the financial survival of the institution, but very rarely are prioritising the social development of human beings or, in other words, 'Bildung' before financial profit. It is not just a question of moralities; on the backdrop of the current financial situation, it is also a question of survival – still these developments greatly change the nature of the institutions in Germany. On this background, the 'Zuwanderungsgesetz' (Immigration Act) of 2005 brought some tangible changes. With the new law, state-subsidised German as a Second Language (GSL) courses – so-called "integration courses" – had to be provided for adult second-language learners in every state of the federal republic of Germany, which came with a great deal of unexpected money for programs that had previously been struggling to survive financially. It also provided many new staff to support these programs. The target group to be served in these courses are not only newcomers but all migrants who do not have a B1 language competence level. Some people in this category have been living over forty years in Germany without ever previously having the opportunity to enrol in state-subsidised courses. A B1 competence level is described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as:

> I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. [...] I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events). (European Center for the DVT, 2020)

Understanding clear standard speech and entering conversations on familiar topics obviously describes a very basic level of language use - a level likely sufficient for workplaces where people are expected to understand basic orders and to achieve basic daily tasks. The whole learning objective of the courses does not focus on 'integration' and 'participation' as promoted but on forming an 'economic subject' which responds aptly to the needs of a national neoliberal labour market (Heinemann, 2018b, p. 178).

Today it is mainly the newly immigrated and those long-term migrants, who receive social welfare, who attend integration courses. They - unlike those long-term migrants who do not need financial aid from the state - are *required* to take the courses or they will be heavily sanctioned. The atmosphere in the courses has changed greatly in the last 15 years. Initially, there was much euphoria, especially among long-term migrants who were happy to finally get a chance to learn German in classes, which one of the authors experienced while working for three years in an Institute of adult education that offered German classes after the immigration act of 2005. The teachers were also very motivated due to better salaries and greater job security. Today the atmosphere has changed to one

of disillusioned resignation (cf. Heinemann, 2018a). The teachers' role in the 'integration courses' today is to offer a fixed curriculum which is determined by the government and to record the attendance of participants. Students who arrive 15 minutes late or need to leave the classroom 15 minutes early must be marked in the attendance list, which is sent to the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees). The BAMF can decide to sanction the 'culprit' (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2019). Teachers are not educators any longer but are forced to become like police officers in the name of the state, a role, critical teachers hate and, in many ways, often courageously resist (cf. Heinemann, 2018a).

Critical pedagogy and heterotopian spaces - Pedagogy of dreaming and pedagogy of courage

Courageous resistance against a hegemonic oppressive system inside the educational system is not a new phenomenon. Critical pedagogy, rooted in the work of Paulo Freire (2000) and further developed by such scholars as Antonia Darder (2016), Donaldo Macedo (2006), Henry Giroux (2017), Peter McLaren (2016), and others, is a philosophy of praxis with a long tradition. It may be especially fruitful for transforming the ESL/GSL classroom and the field of adult education, more generally. Freire developed his ideas while teaching literacy to adult peasants in Brazil, wherein peasants were led to develop a critical literacy that interrogated their social conditions and constructed a critical consciousness regarding their lived experiences of oppression. This philosophy of liberation is founded on praxis and dialogue. Rather than the banking method of depositing information, a dialogic approach was created wherein adult students connected important social texts to their own social experiences and learned to question existing social structures and relations of domination and production. Dialogue was not simply communication but rather 'epistemological encounters '– meaning that teacher and students together recognized their diverse but equally important perspectives. Freire (2000) argued that the oppressed must lead the way to liberation, in the same way that Marx urged workers to unite against capital, because it is the oppressed who have the greatest impetus and insights that may build a path to liberation. Freire argued that it was through action and reflection that the oppressed learn to see themselves as fully human with human capacities to understand, name, and transform the world. Spaces where liberating pedagogy can be performed are heterotopian spaces.

Heterotopian spaces

Even though practitioners are highly restricted, we still see the important potential of creating critical spaces inside the institutes of adult education, one of few spaces in society where adults from the margins of a society enter a hegemonic educational institution and meet together in a room of possibilities. Although Foucault's post-structuralism is seen in contradiction to the realism within critical pedagogical by scholars (Hill, et al., 2002), we believe that there are areas in which opposing theories can be complementary. Foucault's concept of heterotopian spaces adds an important dimension to critical pedagogy in that, it points us toward the type of spaces where critical approaches are most likely to develop. Heterotopian spaces, as Foucault describes them are counter-spaces inside a society which brings together people who deviate from the 'norm' in some way:

> But among all these places that are different from each other, there are some that are in some way absolutely different: places that are opposed to all the others, that are in some

way destined to erase, compensate, neutralise or purify them. They are in a way counter-spaces (Foucault, 2019, p. 40, trans. A.H.) [4]

Examples Foucault refers to are psychiatric clinics, graveyards, prisons, gardens (2019, p. 11) but heterotopia can also be found on the stage of a theatre, inside an alternative project of living in community or - as we would like to state - inside a second-language learning classroom, where people come together who all deviate from the standard 'norm' of a German/ U.S. citizen. The GSL classroom in Germany as well as the ESL classroom in the U.S. brings together adults from the margins where they meet a teacher who usually belongs to the dominant group in society and can potentially be an ally that creates learning spaces that build up resistance against the oppressive structures wherein they are trapped. Even though the scope of action is not very high (the limited time within each class makes it difficult to learn all the relevant vocabulary and structures to pass the required tests and move to the next level, which again is the pre-condition to opening other doors for the participants).

Another aspect Foucault brings up to define heterotopian spaces is that heterotopia brings together spaces which are incompatible (2019). Spaces which are usually thought of as being to different from each other or seem to be 'out of place'. This is especially interesting when looking at the problem, that the spaces of the GSL and ESL classes are usually inside an institution of adult education which offer much more spaces than only dominant language classes. In the 'Volkshochschule,' for example, there are many other offers, like health and art education, political and physical education or even possibilities to do vocational training. This is true in the U.S. adult education programs as well. However, in Germany, the experience of the last 15 years since the integration courses started is that the transition from 'integration courses' into "regular" adult education courses of the institution is very low and that the integration courses exist, more or less, in a 'parallel world' to the rest of the institution (cf. Palicha & Weiß, 2020, p. 42). This tendency also occurs in the U.S. by default, since adult ESL courses are often interrupted and/or repeated at the beginning levels because of the various demands that working class conditions place on students, making it difficult for them to move into the other types of adult education courses which are usually taught in English.

The last interesting aspect we want to refer to in respect to the concept of heterotopia is Foucault's idea that heterotopian spaces always have an opening and closing system that isolates them from the environment (Foucault, 2019, p. 18). In the context of the courses we find a very differentiated selection system. Only if participants have an authorisation, which is issued by ministerial authorities, do they have the opportunity to legitimately participate in an integration course. Without the right 'passport' participating in this heterotopian space is not possible - only if you have a teacher or pedagogic professional inside the institute, who will find ways to get you in - past the locking mechanisms. In both countries the locking mechanisms are for example the restrictions to access services for undocumented peoples, the increasing demand to have teachers become reporters, and the possibility of ICE raids, which negatively impact access.

Despite all the restrictions this heterotopian place of second language courses is confronted with, critical educators have the chance to use this special space of 'deviation from the hegemonic norm' for inspiring exchanges among participants. Exchanges and debates that do not narrow their focus on a mechanical learning of predetermined contents but also strengthen participants' awareness and engagement with the society they live in. Teachers and participants themselves can involve in and encourage reflection regarding their social conditions and the possibilities to resist the impositions made on them – impositions denying their Subject position as fully respected human beings in the society

and reducing them to an economic subject in the neoliberal market (Heinemann, 2018b). Following, drawing on critical pedagogy as a philosophy of praxis, we want to conclude with two important ideas from the work of Paulo Freire and other critical pedagogues, which can be inspiring in this context.

Conclusion: A pedagogy of dreaming and a pedagogy of courage

A pedagogy of dreaming (Freire, 2007; Monzó, 2019) is a crucial component of any political project. As the personal is political (de Beauvoir, 1988 [1960]), we must also learn to dream as part of our development. Capitalism's foundation on the exploitation of the worker has led to the rejection of and/or the disillusionment with dreaming. Too often we have been told to 'stop dreaming,' that this is 'a waste of time.' However, dreaming recognizes 'history as possibility' and thus incorporates agency and the role that we play as active Subjects of history. Rather than perceiving history as what has happened in the past, history can be perceived as a much broader construct involving a less linear approach to time, wherein the future also informs the present and the past. Dreaming allows us to reflect on the present and to recognize aspects of and or limits to our present. The notion of dreaming and envisioning what liberation can look like for migrants can be a powerful way of developing instruction. It would demand honesty regarding current conditions, comparisons across class, race, gender, and other identities, and encourage students to stay present and active in current social, economic, and political contexts. Dreaming is certainly something that migrants are familiar with - they often have had to risk everything to get to safety, and dreaming of a better life must have been part of that impetus. However, dreaming is not a practice of creating pie in the sky but of constructing new possibilities out of a critical understanding of existing present and past. For historically oppressed communities, dreaming is a crucial aspect of building hope and courage because it allows us to see possibilities that have not been available to us previously.

A Pedagogy of Courage is also necessary in the critical adult ESL/GSL classroom. It builds on the idea of a pedagogy of dreaming so that students will follow their dreams even though circumstances suggest inevitability. A pedagogy of courage requires easing the pressure put on students to conform to the status quo and conformity even though it may mean negative consequences from state directives. Teachers must also be courageous and recognize that their own positioning as a teacher is relatively safe and use their privilege to open spaces for learners, where they can develop their own ways of resistance and self-confidence. Of course, being able to dream and being courageous has different limitations, always depending on one's own circumstances and possibilities. We emphasise this aspect of courage because we realise that many teachers/educators don not push the boundaries of resistance as far as they could. Many of them fall back into resignation or do not even think about the possibility that things could be different or that they could be an active part of making that change (cf. Heinemann & Sarabi, 2020). This again leaves the few who are still struggling for a humanist space in adult education often alone and very lonely, but the more educators/teachers choose the dialogic path of dreaming and courage and use the heterotopian space with all its possibilities, the more solidarity is possible and the more likely that adult education can offer spaces that contribute to the emancipation and liberation of its students.

Notes

1 Both authors worked on this paper equally

2 'Wir sind das Volk' was originally used during the Monday demonstrations in the former GDR. Since about 2014, however, the slogan has been appropriated by neo-right nationalist movements like PEGIDA.

3 In the US state administered adult education programs are comprised of English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ASB), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE).

4 Original: Or, parmi tous ces lieux qui se distinguent les uns des autres, il y en a qui sont en quelque sorte absolument différents: des lieux qui s'opposent à tous les autres, qui son destinés en quelque sorte à les effacer, à les compenser, à les neutraliser ou à les purifier. Ce sont quelque sorte des contre-espaces.

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Biographicity as 'mental grammar' of postmodern life

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Abstract

'Biographicity' is a concept that has been discussed in international adult education for more than 30 years. It has stimulated research concepts and has become a metaphor for the resilience potential of biographical learning processes in modernised modern societies. A basic theoretical foundation has so far been lacking. This article attempts to provide such a foundation. The stimulating influence of modern neurobiology will be discussed in the first section (1). Afterwards, innovations and restrictions of a system-theoretically reformulated biography theory will be the issue (2). Its self-referentiality blockades can be illustrated clearly by the problem of the social construction of 'gender', in which we also reach the limits of the interactionist concept of construction (3). This theoretical discourse creates a concept of its own: the idea of a 'biographical habitus' as the 'mental grammar' of life in postmodern societies (4).

Introduction

In the sociological discourse, the concept of 'biographicity' connects to constructivist considerations. We find a first hint in an overview article by the Swiss sociologist Martin Kohli, in which he defines biographicity as a "code of personal development and emergence" (Kohli, 1988, p. 37). This very preliminary characterisation must be specified and related to the constructivist discourse.

In biography research itself, constructivist approaches have been *en vogue* since the 1980s. In an interesting essay, Uwe Schimank (1988), following Luhmann's autopoiesis concept, made the provocative thesis that "the relationship between the social communications to which a person is exposed and their biographical consciousness ... must be understood as strictly constructivist" (Schimank, 1988, p. 58). "The construction of one's own biography by one person takes place autonomously," says Schimank, "in

the radical sense of the word. All influences from the social environment, whether targeted or unintentional, are processed in accordance with the internal structures of the personal system, intercepted and escorted by withinputs, and can only gain biographical meaning in this way."(ibid.)

This idea can plausibly fall back on a number of empirically observable phenomena - such as the trivial fact that certain social influences in one biography can have almost the opposite effects as the same inputs in another biography. Therefore, it makes sense to consistently perceive 'sociality' from a biographical perspective - not to deny the 'objective' character of structural external influences, but to understand the semantics with which 'psychic systems' tend to code social issues. So it seems convincing that "social communication", as Schimank puts it, has to be understood as self-referential intakes rather than as inputs that produce expected outputs. How the unique 'code' of the biographical processing of experience comes about, how it has to be thought from a temporal perspective as 'constituted' by social influences, how structure and emergence, social constitution and individual construction in a lived life build a specific melange, Schimank's intelligent treatise still leaves us in the 'dark'.

The following considerations make the cautious claim to get to the bottom of this difficult epistemological problem. The stimulating influence of modern neurobiology will be discussed first (1). Afterwards, innovations and restrictions of a system-theoretically reformulated biography theory will be the issue (2). Its self-referentiality blockades can be illustrated clearly by the problem of the social construction of "gender", in which we also reach the limits of the interactionist concept of construction (3). This theoretical discourse creates a concept of its own, which at least implicitly follows on from the previously developed concept of *biographicity* (4).

Inspirations and open questions of neurobiological constructivism

The criticism of the autobiographical reconstruction of social reality recently articulated in sociology, the accusation that it is a simple 'illusion' (Bourdieu, 1990), repeats a classic debate in modern epistemology: the perception of reality from the point of view of the biographical narrator is attached to something subjective and particular; and it seems questionable whether it can be used to gain general insights into social reality. This position, which is at least implicitly based on the epistemological standpoint of critical rationalism and which has also influenced everyday behaviour in modern societies, appears to be at least in need of addition from the perspective of recent research in neurobiology. Despite all distrust of the accuracy of subjective perception - especially when there are considerable periods between event and recapitulation - the fact that memory (more generally: the brain as a synthetic 'organ of perception') has direct access to reality remains usually completely hidden.

This skepticism is necessary, however, if one looks at processes of perception with the younger neurobiology from the perspective of the brain.[1] Then the information from the various sensory organs does not appear as direct impressions of the eyes and ears, sense of smell or touch, but as principally unspecific neuronal information, which the brain itself transforms into clear "sensory impressions". "For the brain there are [...] only the neuronal messages that come from the sensory organs, but not the sensory organs themselves, just as little as there is a recording camera for the viewer of a television picture." (Roth, 1987a, p. 234)

The possibility of the brain to make 'correct' assignments of meaning results solely from a relatively early spatial differentiation of neuronally transmitted states of excitation.

For example, all neuronal impulses that are processed on the occipital cortex are interpreted as visual impressions. They would also be 'perceived' as information from the sense of sight, for example as a red colour, if the neuronal stimulus of this part of the brain had not been transmitted through the eye, but had resulted from the manipulation of the occipital cortex by an artificially inserted electrode. "All of this leads to the strange observation that the brain, instead of being open to the world, is a cognitively self-contained system that interprets and evaluates neuronal signals based on self-developed criteria, whose true origin and meaning is not really known." (Roth, 1987a, p. 235)

Since the brain moves in a self-referential manner in a radical sense and does not depict reality but rather constructs it, it also creates criteria for checking its construction results. Because in order to survive, the brain not only needs a cognitive world, but three 'worlds', as it were: a world around us, which could be called a 'thing world', a kind of 'body world' that relates to sensory and motor experiences with our body, and the 'non-physical world' of our thoughts and feelings (cf. ibid., pp. 236ff). These worlds are related to each other, form inner and outer dimensions for each other and correct each other to a certain extent, although each is strictly a cognitive construct, meaning that it has no direct connection with the real material 'outside'.

Gerhard Roth compared our brain to a person who travels through a foreign country whose language they do not understand and who therefore needs an interpreter (cf. ibid., pp. 242ff). The person has several strategies available to assess the reliability of the translator: have had excellent experiences with the interpreter in previous situations, which guarantee the reliability of the cultural mediator. The organisation of our brain also points to a long past and obviously extremely successful phylogenetic legacy. The 'interpreting services' therefore deserve an advance of trust. The person could also engage several interpreters to check. Our brain is also familiar with this strategy if several sensory areas are activated to ratify the same state. Finally, that traveller has the opportunity to compare any information added by the translator with existing information and to check its consistency. This function is taken over by memory.

However, this means: strict self-referentiality in no way leads to a fundamental isolation of the brain from external influences. Such "perturbations", as Maturana and Varela call them, have to be processed constantly and change the overall processing system. But they do not influence it according to the laws of the "intruder", but only according to the internal rules of the system developed until then (Maturana & Varela, 1987, pp. 108f). In increasingly complex environments, this disposition seems to guarantee much more successful chances of survival than the basic openness of the perceptual apparatus (cf. detailed Roth, 1985, 1987a; Maturana & Varela, 1987).

What is challenging about this neurobiological concept of cognition is the idea that any processing of reality, including, of course, the recapitulation of biographical experience, should be viewed as a self-referential achievement of the cognitive system. However, it is shown sympathetically that there is still some dissent among the representatives of this appealing thesis about how closely this process can be linked and explained phylogenetically and ontogenetically with the principle of autopoiesis. While Maturana, the real discoverer of the conceptual idea, puts life and cognition in one and claims the principle of circular self-production and self-preservation (autopoiesis) for both (cf. the Maturana quote in Roth, 1987b, p. 262), Roth's research group emphasises the only relatively autopoietic character of all organisms, which are always defined by their environment as well (An der Heiden, Roth & Schwegler, 1986), and also insists on evolutionary structural differentiation between the self-preservation principles of the whole organism and the self-referential, but by no means autopoietic functions of higher nervous systems (Roth, 1987b, pp. 266ff).

To put it more pointedly, cognition is, from a neurobiological point of view, the more efficient for the autopoiesis of the organism, the more clearly it remains free from the constraints of circular self-production and self-preservation of its components. This property makes learning processes possible, which every cognitive system has to develop 'self-explicatively'. "The fact that the cognitive system is not autopoietic thus constitutes on the one hand [...] the possibility of self-referential development, but at the same time the need to always start again from scratch." (ibid., p. 281) This 'starting over and over again' is basically identical to the uniqueness of the respective biographical process. These conceptually important affinities of the critical insights of the recent neurobiological discussion with sociological and educational biography research will be explicitly discussed later.

The discovery that cognitive reality processing, i.e. the synthetic coding performance of our brain, is structured in a self-referential way is of high relevance to the theory of biographical learning. However, according to Gerhard Roth and his working group, this process does not seem to be 'autopoietic', but depends on the relative autopoiesis of a surrounding system structure (organism), the survival of which in turn benefits from the brain's self-referential performance. In a way, we would be dealing with the relative (inner) autonomy of a principle dependency structure - a sociologically undoubtedly highly interesting model.

Conceptual aporias of system-theoretical biography concepts

The constructivism debate is experiencing a certain sociological radicalisation in recent systems theory. It should be of less interest here that Luhmann's 'theory of self-referential systems' (Luhmann, 1984, p. 24) drastically modifies the relationship between system and environment that he had previously developed conceptually. The internal differentiation of the system is no longer interpreted as the result of environmental pressure due to complexity, but only as an effect of self-referential operations (ibid., 25). The connection to Maturana's autopoiesis concept relativises the dynamics of contingency and selectivity in favour of a "running self-reference", as Luhmann puts it.[2] Rather, for our purposes only those aspects of the theoretical development that are directly related to questions of biographical theory are of interest.

In addition, it makes sense to briefly reconsider the crucial point of Luhmann's modernity diagnosis. The primary vertical differentiation of pre-modern societies, social actors, apart from exceptional cases, assigned their clear place in a subsystem of society (cf. Luhmann, 1980, p. 30), has given way to a functional differentiation in which social subsystems such as economy, family, politics, law, religion or upbringing coexist and require individuals to integrate into several subsystems at the same time (more detailed Nassehi, 1994a). The self-understanding of social actors is no longer determined by their clear placement in a hierarchically structured social field, but in a way by individual self-description. "So the identity of the person is not based on the principle of social differentiation; rather, it is almost the opposite of it."(Nassehi & Weber, 1990, p. 164)

This "multi-inclusiveness" (Nassehi/Weber), which makes it impossible to gain identity from the simple belonging to a subsystem of modern society, forces the individual to permanent self-observation and self-description, i.e. for self-referential processing of social experience. And what is described in classic socialisation theories as a 'balance' between social and personal identity (cf. Goffman, 1963), shows itself from a system-theoretical perspective as a simple reflex to the fact that modern social actors are forced "into multiple selves, multiple identities, to break down several personalities in order to

be able to do justice to the majority of social environments and the differences in requirements " (Luhmann, 1989, p. 223). In truth, the split into social and personal identity components is a result of "self-referential self-observation of the psychic system" (Nassehi & Weber, 1990, p. 165).

However, the question remains how the "social" can become the subject of self-description at all. The idea, modeled on the neurobiological concept of cognition, that the "reflexive self-awareness" (Schimank) of social actors is not "self-referential environmental observation - the construction of an inner world from materials of the outside world -, but a self-referential self-observation, that is, the construction of one special inner world made of materials of the inner world" (Schimank, 1988, p. 61) does not solve the problem of the origin of that *'material of the inner world'*.

In fact, Luhmann and his successors resort to a hierarchisation of the phenomena of consciousness[3]: "The primary phenomenon is the huge number of externally or internally induced experiences and actions, which, although contained in a continuity of consciousness and in this respect relatable to each other, do not form a context, because it is impossible to coordinate everything with everyone." (Luhmann & Schorr, 1982, p. 237) A kind of "basic self-confidence" (Schimank) has to be 'tamed' by reflexivity. The fact that this process does not run without contradiction, but is drastically influenced by 'environmental conditions', can easily be demonstrated by Schimank's aid construct of "biographical incrementalism" (Schimank, 1988, pp. 67f). Because the "evolutionary dynamics of biographical transitory at the level of basal self-confidence" (ibid., 67) – Schimank's surprisingly unspecific reformulation for the influence of social change in modernised modern societies -, describes the biographical disposition of "muddling through" (Schimank) in the face of risky external conditions. Here the 'social' breaks into the self-referential self-description of the psychic system, as it were, without being conceptually integrated.

A crucial reason for this blind spot of system-theoretical biography concepts is the uncritical hypostasis of the autopoiesis of consciousness in Luhmann's thinking. In systems theory, consciousness processes - starting with the basal operations up to the higher-level self-descriptions and self-observations - are produced as circular and conceived of themselves. In a way, Luhmann reproduces a weakness here on a sociological level that Maturana's emphatic autopoiesis idea had already limited neurobiological models: the blockade to understand that the brain is more functional for the autopoiesis of the whole organism when it is itself 'exempt' from autopoiesis and not forced to self-manufacture and self-reproduce its components (cf. again Roth, 1987b). This objection does not deny the self-referential nature of the operations of the brain, but it allows the thought of a systematic opening for a certain 'outer world' - a semantics, as it were, that balances 'perturbation from the outside' and 'inner coping' in such a way that external influences can be processed in a self-referential manner, but their character can still be decoded semantically even after processing.

A conceptual parallel could be constructed between biography and social environment. Biographies have the structure of an open self-referentiality (cf. Alheit, 2009; already Alheit et al., 1992). This opening to 'society' requires a common semantics that make the 'social' biographically codable and the 'biographical' socially transposable. The example of the gender category shows how clearly 'social issues' break into the personal system and make it necessary to assume an interactive semantics between the individual and society; and that means: to overcome the self-referentiality blockade of systems theory.

'Doing Gender' as a touchstone of sociological constructivism

At this point, the feminist discussion is directly relevant to an empirical critique of system-theoretical biography conceptions. Gildemeister and Wetterer (1992) e.g. propose a research perspective that is interested in a 'de-construction' of essential gender concepts, but initially see this approach as a scientific re-construction.[4] They call for an analysis of the "gender classification as a generative pattern for the creation of social order" (ibid., p. 229). The focus is on the mode of construction itself. However, it is not regarded as a cognitive act of individual consciousness, nor as an 'effect' of a discourse without subjects, but as a *social practice* with which individuals continue to produce and reproduce the gender category (in the form of bisexuality) in their everyday actions (see also Wetterer, 1995a). The analysis of social gender is to a certain extent empirically "situated" with the concept of doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

In this approach, which explicitly follows the action-theoretical tradition of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, interaction processes and not individuals (closed "personal systems") are made the "basic unit" of the (empirical) analysis. Studies e.g. on the "crisis experiment" transsexuality (Garfinkel, 1967; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Hirschauer, 1993b; Lindemann, 1993b) reveal the subtle rules with which individuals "represent" their affiliation to one of the two sexes in a wide variety of fields of activity and everyday situations and thus passively ratify, but also vary in certain margins. These everyday practices and rules are only accessible to a limited extent in the consciousness of the actors. They act more like routines that are only available where "disruptions" occur, where unexpected or unknown interaction patterns force the participants to reflect on their actions, e.g. when a person with a 'male' body history and a 'female' identity learns the flexible handling of the rules that 'he' needs in order to be able to successfully interact with others in social situations as a 'woman'. This 'tacit knowledge' of the rules of doing gender is so sustainable precisely because it usually remains largely precognitive, as experience knowledge from countless interaction situations and becomes effective to a certain extent in the background of a new action situation and is therefore given to the acting subject as 'unquestionably' , appears as 'natural' (cf. Schütz & Luckmann, 1979).

As Erving Goffman shows in his still up-to-date study from 1977, the rules of doing gender also affect those supposedly simple characteristics that appear to be 'purely organic', such as body size. The relation 'bigger man - smaller woman', which seems 'natural' to everyday consciousness, is only the result of a subtle social regulation system that is created interactively in the process of pair formation, which works 'behind the back' of the participants (Goffman, 1994, pp. 141ff) and leads to the fact that selective social situations are sought out or staged "in which women and men can effectively pre-exercise each other's supposedly different 'nature'" (ibid., p. 143)[5]. The example shows that on the one hand, social construction processes rely heavily on the flexible self-organisation of individuals, who have to reconstruct themselves again and again as women or men in changing everyday situations with the most varied functional and personal references and scope for action. On the other hand, it has also become clear that this process is to a certain extent localised in the interaction 'between' the actors.

Up to this point, the findings on gender construction can be read as a clear and convincing confirmation of the suggested model of an open self-referentiality. But now the example takes us one step further. If we accept the thesis of the interactive construction of gender, then the question arises about the rules of this construction. Obviously, these are not rigid patterns that are 'put on' individuals. On the other hand, they cannot be changed arbitrarily from situation to situation. Goffman points out that the

actors involved in their interactive actions are integrated into higher-level social frameworks, which set certain sets of rules depending on the situation. For example, in a situation defined as an erotic 'game', different rules sometimes apply than in an application situation on the job market.[6]

However, another generative structure also seems to be hidden behind this cross-situation framework. Goffman gives convincing examples of how society members repeatedly create the same hierarchical gender ratio in a wide variety of everyday situations: in work, family or marriage, during sport and leisure, when using public spaces, when visiting bars or toilets, when flirting, when entering classrooms, in situations of need and assistance, etc. (see Goffman, 1994). The social construction must obviously be interpreted as a reflexive process between the interactive actions of individuals in contingent situations and the extremely stable 'institution' of gender. Goffman (1994) uses the term "institutional reflexivity" (ibid., p. 107) and describes the corresponding social practice as *genderism* (ibid., p. 113).[7]

At this point, however, it becomes clear that the strength of the interactionist access to expose those subtle microsocial manufacturing practices in everyday situations also determines its limits. If the time horizon of the situation is exceeded, there remains only the assumption of an abstractly effective "genderism". The historical origin of the classification system itself then hardly seems relevant. Now the *binary gender code* in modern societies has undoubtedly become an institution *sui generis* (cf. Gildemeister & Wetterer 1992, pp. 237ff). Feminist research provides a wealth of evidence that the patriarchal structure of gender relations remains constant across a variety of 'social frameworks'. But they also show that these frameworks are subject to specific historical, economic and cultural change processes. The interactionist concept of doing gender lacks this historical 'depth dimension' to a certain extent. This requires the inclusion of historical analysis[8], but it needs - conceptually - another level: the perspective of lifelong process structures.

Already the considerations so far in the context of system-theoretical biography concepts prove clearly that the construction processes on the part of the subjects are 'more' than fixed reactions to historical-social framework conditions on the one hand or interactions of "free floating designers" (Lindemann, 1993a; 1993b, pp. 22ff) in contingent situations on the other. It is important to grasp the relative autonomy of the acting subjects, who - under concrete historical-social framework conditions - construct through changing situations and in interaction with others their individual 'history' of becoming a woman or a man. In this sense, 'doing gender' can be interpreted as a biographical structure that lends that interactive mode of 'producing' gender a temporal depth dimension and a connecting design principle.

This idea is not satisfied with the mere hint that this interactive gender-doing process "has to be seen as the basis for the identity of the person" (Gildemeister & Wetterer, 1992, p. 245). It goes beyond conventional approaches to 'gender-specific socialisation'.[9] The process of becoming sex is not limited to the ontogenetic adoption of interactive rules for the representation of gender. It can be understood as a biographical process of stratification and construction of experience (cf. Dausien, 1994, 1996a).

This perspective follows the individual 'paths'[10] through the historically changing 'action environments', which in turn are always gender-coded and provide specific areas and boundaries of experience. For example, the possibilities of living a biography as a homosexual, depending on historical-cultural framework conditions, on the concrete social milieu, on family constellations, on possible relationships in close social areas, on the accessibility of 'gay' subcultures etc. (cf. Scheuermann, 1996). The chances of realising a 'normal' life plan as a woman, in which work and family can be linked

according to your own ideas (cf. Dausien, 1996a), are no less limited than the possibility of living a life that 'drops out' of traditional roles. Without reflecting on the specific biographical conditions, the step towards generalisation and thus the reification of social constructs is not far.

However, the analysis of the biographical construction of gender (cf. Dausien, 1996a) does not stop at reconstructing the individual 'route' that female or male travelers travel in a gender-coded world in order to take up Roth's metaphor again (see above). It is primarily about the reconstruction of the individual biographical stratification of experience that an individual has developed as a woman or man in this way and which in turn has a say in the next steps. Empirical reconstructions of biographical narratives show that the story of 'becoming gender' is inextricably interwoven with the unique biographical form of experience (Dausien, 1996a). In this way, the social construction of gender is reconstructed through all individual and historical processes of change. Therefore, de-construction cannot mean the abolition of the gender category, but at most its transformation.

The approaches to the social construction of gender undoubtedly convince through their consistent rejection of essentialist theories of femininity and masculinity. They also plausibly show that the idea of strict autopoiesis of 'personal systems', as represented by the recent systems theory, deviates significantly from social reality. But they do not yet provide a consistent overall concept for how the 'construction of gender' should be theorised and how the social actors contribute biographically to this process. That would be precisely the task of a social (and by the way also an educational) science biography theory. On the one hand, it would have to reconstruct the influence of social constructions on individual life, the way in which social structures nestle in the terrain of 'subjectivity'. On the other hand, it would have to make transparent how individuals react most stubbornly to those external influences. This self-referentiality of biographical processing 'open to the outside world' will now be exemplarily developed in the following section.

Biographicity as a unique 'grammar of the social'

The fact that gender cannot be 'deconstructed' by intellectual means is not due to its inevitability as an alleged biological fact, but to the fact that in the course of a biography of concrete women and men, also of people who move intersexually, it is socially and temporally acquired and always 'manufactured' anew. To use a metaphor from language theory: the *'semantics'* of the gender code may be hidden in the historically changing institutionalised order of interaction (classic: Goffman, 1977) or in the routines of social practices (classic: Garfinkel, 1967), their *'grammar'* lies in the biographical action resources of the individuals, in their *biographicity*, themselves. And this grammar creates performances that do not want to fit the concept of deconstruction because other semantics affect them as well: for example the semantic code of social inequality (*'class'*), which has long been the focus of classical sociological discussion, but also the semantics of ethnicity (*'race'*), which is becoming increasingly important in the course of post-industrial and post-colonial modernism with its global colonisation processes and migration movements. The world region in which we are born or the historical time that shapes us can also be semantic codes. These semantics work together in the affected individuals. And the 'mental grammar' that every individual has to develop, that becomes the basis of his/her lifestyle and determines the performance of his/her everyday activities, namely biographicity, is not just a simple addition of those semantic codes; it is a unique

productive resource for dealing with oneself and the world - a kind of 'generative principle' of the temporally layered performances of a concrete biography.

However, the wider theoretical context associated with this metaphor is by no means as clear as it seems. Neither the relationship between semantics and grammar nor the multidimensionality of the grammar term itself has been clarified. Noam Chomsky, whose important studies on a "generative transformation grammar" are directly affected here (Chomsky, 1965, 1969, 1977), has remained ambiguous - as far as his 'grammar idea' is concerned. However, what makes his provocative concept interesting for the following considerations remains the idea that 'grammar' represents a mental depth structure, a generative principle that creates a (in Chomsky's case: *linguistic*) performance level through certain transformation rules.

It appears conceptually essential that this deep structure is designed syntactically, as a system of rules for signs, and not - as with George Lakoff, his prominent opponent (representative Lakoff, 1971) - *semantically*, as a relationship of meanings. If the narrow area of linguistics is left, if the question of a generative principle is raised not only by language, but also by behavioural dispositions, routines, practices, taste preferences, implicit knowledge and experience resources, Chomsky's model is more convincing than Lakoff's "generative semantics": It explains why a concrete individual reacts to very different "social semantics"[11] - the gender problem, social inequality, ethnic and religious differences - in a "very own" structural mode, why one obviously uses an "experiential code" for processing the different social semantics whose transformation rules remain relatively stable.

What distinguishes this transfer of the linguistic model to the more complex area of *biographical experience* from Chomsky's grammar theory is the critique of the tendency to assume a kind of 'nativistic competence', which is, a basic ability that is already available at birth. *Biographicity* as a unique social grammar of the individual, however, only arises in the biographical process of experience. Through self-referential processing of external impulses, through dealing with the different semantics of the concrete social environment, an *'inner logic'* grows, which can also change again and again through new external impulses. But it does not change according to a principle of determination inherent in the impulses, rather within the framework of this inner logic itself.[12]

Perhaps this is why another theoretical reference is useful as a supplement: the concept of *"habitus"* in Bourdieu's theory (cf. Bourdieu, 1979, pp. 139ff; 1987, pp. 277ff, 1983). This concept also benefits from Chomsky's grammar idea (Bourdieu, 1987; Krais & Gebauer, 2002), but in the distinction between *opus operatum*, as an incorporated form of generative schemes, as a "structured structure", and *modus operandi*, as a "structuring structure" (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 282f), the dialectical idea of an active production principle emerges, which refers to a previous 'social syntax'. This depth structure is incorporated through practice. It is not a "natural" competence (as in Chomsky), but a *"coagulated life story"* (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 57f).

Interestingly, Bourdieu's idea of a "history turned into nature" (1979, p. 171) refers to a classic script of educational sociology, to Emile Durkheim's *L'évolution pédagogique en France* (1938):

> In each of us, according to changing proportions, there is the person of yesterday; it is even he who, through the power of things, prevails in us, the present is only a minor compared to that long past in the course of which we took shape and from which we come. However, we do not feel this person of the past, because he has taken root deep within us; he forms the unconscious part of ourselves. Because of this, one is tempted to give no more account of him and of his legitimate claims. On the other hand, we have a keen sense of the most recent acquisitions of civilisation, which, because of their

recent nature, have not had the time to organise themselves in the unconscious. (ibid., p. 16)

Bourdieu is only interested in the "forgetting of genesis" (1979, p. 171), the unconscious willingness to understand one's own (life) 'story' as a *fait accompli* and thus to prove the obstinate resistance and inertia of the habitus. Bourdieu's consequences from this interpretation are extremely radical and are reminiscent of the statements made in his polemical essay on *The Biographical Illusion* (1990):

> By viewing the habitus as a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, as a pattern of perception, thinking and acting that is common to all members of the same group or class and that is the prerequisite for every objectification and apperception, this becomes objective agreement of the practice forms and the uniqueness of the worldview based on the complete impersonality and interchangeability of the singular practice forms and worldviews. However, this boils down to considering all ideas and forms of practice created according to identical schemes to be impersonal and interchangeable - in the manner of the singular views of space, which, if you believe Kant, do not reflect any particularity of the empirical ego. [...] Since the history of the individual never reproduces anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class, structural variants of the group or class habitus can be seen in the systems of individual dispositions, which are systematically organised precisely in the differences that separate them and in which the differences in careers and positions within and outside the class are expressed: the 'personal' style, this special characteristic that all products of one and the same habitus, all actions and works, are never more than a self-regulated and sometimes even codified deviation from the style peculiar to an epoch or a class, so that it refers not only because of conformity [...] but also because of the difference that the manner makes, to the common style. (Bourdieu 1979, p. 187-189)

But is this really just about "personal style"? What about the "changing proportions" that Durkheim also mentions? What does the generative power of an individual experience system stacked up in time mean, whose self-referentiality develops relative autonomy in the course of a life story? In view of the importance of social-constructivist insights developed in previous considerations, can such a 'de-individualised' perspective on the habitus still be justified?

Let's take up again the dynamic relationship between 'semantics' and 'grammar', which was metaphorically addressed above. Semantics are objectified horizons of meaning, such as the *class* position of individuals. The *gender* dimension is also such a semantics (see above). It can hardly be argued empirically that the formative power of these *'meta-semantics'* can vary historically. If one takes the US society, for example, the class question already marks second place to the gender and race question in the early 20th century. That has hardly changed. Rather, phenomena of *"intersectionality"* (representative Butler, 1991) emerge, the mixing of objectified semantics, which also produce new dimensions of grammars, that is, of forms of habitus. Bourdieu's certainty about the class dimension may be a historical syndrome, and perhaps also a European one (cf Bourdieu, 1978). After all, his fascinating work on "Masculine Domination" (2001) has given gender semantics a central place.

However, it is indisputable that the function of grammars of the social, i.e. the principle of creation of certain behavioural dispositions, world interpretations and lifestyles of the subjects, has shifted from collective basic orientations to the individual him/herself. The "individualisation thesis" (representative Beck, 1986, 205ff; Reckwitz 2017[13]), which is not without reason discussed critically, is a superficial indication of this. Findings from recent neurosciences (see above) may be more sustainable. This can mean - and here Bourdieu's early works may sharpen the sensitivity (cf. 1978) - that especially

in Europe the 'class semantics' still have an unmistakable influence on the configuration of habitus. At the same time, however, it means that the 'grammar of the social' arises in the biographical process of experience of each and every individual: as a "structured structure" and as a "structuring structure" – however, that the process of "structuring" has become more complex. It is no longer dominant semantics alone that determine structure; it is about a mixture of external semantics, possibly about changing hegemons in the mixed situation. What then develops as the 'grammar of the social' is unique and linked to the individual's biographical process of experience. It is the *biographicity* of each and every individual - if you will: his/her 'biographical habitus'.

In late or 'postmodern' societal formations we are thus dealing with new constellations in terms of figuration sociology (Elias, 1977): from the positional fixation of class existence in pre-modern societies to certain movements in social space with the relative stability of social habitualisations in modernity, the trend in current societies is now in direction of erosion of social-structural bonds and security and the concentration of life risks on the individual him/herself (see also Reckwitz, 2006, 2017; Alheit & Schömer, 2009). This in no way means that social relationships would become superfluous. However, it means that they are not, of course, available as 'natural' resources, but have to be recreated again and again. And the active basic competence for this process is the *biographicity* of the individuals (cf. in detail Alheit, 2019, 120-128; Alheit & Dausien, 2000).

Notes

1   I am mainly referring to the work of Humberto R. Maturana and his colleagues (Maturana, 1970, 1978, 1987a, 1987b; Maturana & Varela, 1975, 1987; Varela, 1979, 1981, 1987; Varela, Maturana & Uribe, 1974) and the congenial and partial modification of follow-up studies by Gerhard Roth's research group (e.g. Roth, 1985, 1987a, 1987b; Roth & Schwegler (eds.), 1981; an der Heiden, Roth & Schwegler, 1986).

2   Ibid., p. 605. Incidentally, it also appears secondary to the present outline of the theory whether Luhmann is thereby unwittingly approaching the classical philosophy of consciousness, as Wagner and Zipprian (1992) demonstrate in an interesting analysis.

3   The hint that such a gradation naturally belongs to the inventory of the classical philosophy of consciousness is relatively irrelevant; Schimank's reference to Tugendhat (1988, p. 69, note 11) or Nassehi's and Weber's scholarly recourse to Husserl and Bergson (1990, pp. 156ff) also demonstrate the connection to the philosophy of consciousness and reinforce the skepticism about an apriority of the autopoiesis of psychic systems (cf. also the cautious criticism of Luhmann in Nassehi & Weber, 1990, p. 166).

4   See Hirschauer's position (1993a), who, like Gildemeister and Wetterer, regards the question of de-construction primarily as an empirically based *re*construction and contributes to this with his own study on transsexuality (1993b).

5   With regard to body size, which is not itself an environmentally independent factor, there are only differences in the average values between the two sex groups, which are significantly smaller than the variances within the groups. Pair formations in which the woman is taller than the man would therefore practically be possible in large numbers. Social norms and subtle strategies for action guarantee that they remain the 'exception'.

6   This observation corresponds to Luhmann's 'functional differentiation' (see above).

7   "So right from the start of an interaction there is a tendency to formulate things in gender terms; in this way the gender class provides an overall profile or a container to which the different features can be traced or into which they can be emptied."(Goffman, 1994, p. 138) Gender thus becomes the prototype of social classification at all (cf. ibid., p. 108).

8   Becker-Schmidt (1996) particularly points out the necessity of a historical-social differentiation of the gender category. The historicity of the gender relationship can be seen above all from the changing forms of the division of labour and the associated variations in social gender role scripts and scope for action. A vivid empirical example of such processes is the "gender change of professions", which can

be used to analyse the production and de-construction of gender at the institutional level (cf. Wetterer 1992, 1995a, b; Knapp, 1995).

9   Concepts of socialisation theory (cf. Nunner-Winkler 1994) are affected by (de-)constructivist criticism. Regardless of whether they are oriented towards learning theory or psychoanalysis, they are particularly subject to the danger of an essentialist interpretation of gender (see again the example of "female work ability" or "female morality"). They share the strengths and weaknesses of their theories of origin and tend either to overemphasise social characteristics or to adopt a biologically anchored, internal drive dynamics.

10   According to the above considerations, it no longer needs to be justified that these should not be considered as closed autopoietic structures, but always as interaction stories.

11   I am really conscious about the fact that I am reinterpreting Lakoff's approach and that I am not adopting his generative 'sense metaphor'. However, a syntactic deep structure, i.e. a creative system of rules, as Chomsky constructs it, seems to me to be more suitable than a deep structure consisting of 'meanings' that always rest on socio-historical process structures.

12   For the kind of comparable change, Maturana and Varela proposed the convincing metaphor of 'drifting' (cf. 1987, pp. 14f, 86f, 119ff), a movement that does not change direction abruptly, but allows very gradual shifts in the tolerance level of a previously existing dominant basic impulse.

13   I am extremely aware of the fact that I did not adequately appreciate time-diagnostic sociological studies in this essay. In addition to Reckwitz, Rosa (2016), Sennet (2012), Boltanski & Esquerre (2017), Eribon (2013) and a few others should also have been mentioned. In Reckwitz's case, a reference to his habilitation thesis *'The Hybrid Subject`*(2006) would be particularly important, the theoretical outcomes of which coincide with the results of a major historical project that a research group under my leadership carried out at the same time (cf. Alheit & Brandt, 2006; Alheit & Schömer, 2009). However, this essay is a strictly theoretical contribution – in a way 'timeless' and without the urgent claim to be up to date.

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Confronting myself: Using auto/biography to explore the impact of class and education on the formation of self and identity

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Abstract

In this paper I illustrate how auto/biography, drawing on feminist research methodology, enabled me to chronicle and theorise the lived experience of class relations in the academy. I explain how auto-diegetic auto/biographical doctoral research has provided me with 'both a mode of representation and a mode of reasoning' (Richardson, 1997, p. 28) which was therapeutic, reflexive, as well as agentic to help me understand the sense of displacement in the academy and how I used my doctorate to redress that.

Introduction

I am an academic; a 'supreme classifier amongst classifiers' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi). I have travelled so far from the life in which my habitus was formed it could even 'be described as miraculous' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 117). In this article, I present the lived experience of a presumed 'other', une miraculée an educationally highly successful member of a disadvantaged group, who has survived and thrived in the education system despite the unjust distribution of symbolic capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), via an auto/biographical exploration. The auto-diegetic nature of the research in which; the author, the narrator and the protagonist is identical (Lejeune, 1989) was a unique feature of my thesis. It is a story – my story - of class transition, from extreme poverty and illegitimacy to working in an elite occupation in a university, and the ensuing paradoxes and dilemmas of my experience as lived.

I argue that my analysis of my own class transition reaches beyond my personal experience to present a 'collective story' 'a story which tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger socio-cultural and historical forces' (Richardson, 1997, p. 14); in this instance academics from the working-class. Sadly, this is not a position I face in isolation; over the past four decades, working-class academics have been writing about the 'cruel duality' (Law, 1995, p. 1) of being a working-class academic in higher education. Collections of stories edited Ryan and Sackrey (1984), Dews and Law (1995), Mitchell, Wilson and Archer (2015), and Binns (2019) have all illuminated the enduring middle class myopia that persists in higher education institutions, and the sense of displacement and marginalisation that many academics from working-class backgrounds suffer when entering academia.

It would be obtuse to deny that it is the combination of all my identities; gender, class, race, age, and physical ability that have had an impact on my life at one time or another; the intersection of realities co-exist, overlap, and conflict. As Crenshaw (1989) argued, belonging to multiple social groups means that all humans have the potential to be targeted by multiple forms of oppression simultaneously. Whilst occupying a privileged white group, both gender and class have yielded different and often separate influences over the course of my life at different times, and despite living and working in highly gendered environments (both masculine and feminine), over the course of my lifetime, gender oppression has been completely subsumed by oppressive incidents based on my social class.   I am not suggesting that I abandon completely any notions that there is intersectionality between gender, race and class at a macro level, but it is the dimension of class based on a lack of capital at a micro or individual level that has had most impact on my 'self'. Of course, focusing on class will almost inevitably obscure the discussion around gender inequality in academia, but I feel I am justified in maintaining this position as the voice of the working-class academic is rarely heard.

As I chronicled my life in my doctoral study; I theorised my assumptions using a layered account (Ronai, 1995) in which I layer my memories with a critical commentary, and reference to the main theoretical frameworks. theoretical frameworks. As part of this endeavour, two phases of the research emerged naturally and organically from the research activity itself. In the first phase of the research, using a chronological account of my childhood, adolescence and my early career, I scrutinised the formation of the primary habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) fashioned on economic, social and cultural deprivation and illegitimacy. In phase two of the research data, I examined my current context as an educated working-class woman, working and studying within the academy simultaneously. Whilst I offer a short summary of my biography growing up, the main focus of this paper is how I used my doctoral study to explore the self and the way I was positioned within the academy.

Bourdieu, argued that potential human agency against structural determinism is dependent on our capacity for reflecting on what has made us who we are (Grenfell, 2008). Surrounded by people with established and inherited social and cultural capital in academia, feelings illegitimacy resurfaced. I had to do something to assuage the feelings of imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978). So I decided to embark on a PhD to attempt earn my legitimate place in the academy. At the inception of my research study in 2011, I decided, as a teacher educator, that I wanted to examine the agentic power of post-graduate education on in-service teachers. However, early in the research process I was confronted with my own research bias.   I was forced to acknowledge that concealed behind the research question was an attempt to identify and explore my own subjective experiences of class and education. Thus, my auto/biographical research emerged out of the iterative process of doing research whilst also engaging in the process of living my

life (Muncey, 2010). As I wrote about my own educational history, I realised that feelings of illegitimacy and inauthenticity were not merely idiosyncratic character traits, but were also influenced by systemic practices within the socio-political context within which I lived and worked.

On difference and the 'self'

From a feminist ontology, like many feminist academics, I have become receptive to arguments about the self, because in order to understand my self it is important to think about how I see myself in relation to a different interpretation of the world founded on profoundly different material and experiential positions (Stanley, 1995) .

To this end I turned to Mead's (1934) theory of mind, self and society. Mead (1934) contended that the self is not there from birth, but the self, though stable, is a continuous concept which emerges from social interactions, such as observing and interacting with others, responding to others' opinions about oneself, and internalising external opinions and internal feelings about oneself. Mead's model provides a useful framework for the narrative constructions of self; it allows for human agency, eschews any notion of a fixed self, and acknowledges the reality of past events and experiences (Jackson, 2010) offering a psychosocial concept in which the self is perceived as an experiencing subject that has a coherence but also a sense of flexibility.   Mead (1934) also believed that knowledge of the self and others develops simultaneously and neither can exist without the other; 'the process of becoming is always in motion' (Muncey, 2010, p. 23).

However, 'self' has recently become of more interest to contemporary sociologists, particularly in relation to education. Nias (1989), draws on the work of Mead (1934) to describe the concept of self as simultaneously socially constructed (the 'me'); a multiple or 'situational self' which 'may alter as we interact with different people in varying contexts' (1989, p.203), and an autonomous self (the 'I) a 'substantial self' which is more entrenched as it relates to 'a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes' (Ibid.).

Like Nias (1989) I argue that my of self is simultaneously socially constructed with the more entrenched 'substantial self' which I argue aligns closely with Bourdieu's conception of the habitus; 'a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action' (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 43); and a self that I have developed as I have seen myself through the eyes of a set of common expectations that others have about actions and thoughts within a particular society (Mead, 1934). As I impart later, this has been particularly problematic as I have entered the academy, because despite professional and academic achievement I lacked the internal acknowledgement of my accomplishments.

Introducing my theoretical friends

Initially, I turned to Bourdieu as a preliminary sensitising framework to analyse the structural forces that had impacted on my life. Alongside Bourdieu's ideas about habitus, field and capital, which helped me to identify how the structural and objective forces of growing up in economic, cultural and social disadvantage had shaped the 'habitus de classe' (Bourdieu, 1984), the conceptions of symbolic violence and misrecognition became significant as I began to analyse my everyday classed experiences growing up and significant, more recently, within the academy.

While higher education is now actively welcoming students from diverse educational, social, and economic backgrounds, it still predominantly employs middle-class academics. As my narrative goes on to demonstrate, even today within academe, some groups or individuals are often misrecognised by the dominant majority who offer demeaning, confining or inaccurate readings of the value of the 'other' (Bourdieu, 2000). Furthermore, symbolic violence which is often 'unrecognisable and unacknowledged' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 216-17) towards those of us who are seen as the ' other' is still enacted on a daily basis.

However, describing the nature of 'being' of a working-class teacher educator was not as straightforward as I anticipated. Bourdieu's theory, whilst offering an explanation for the substantial self, did not sufficiently address the subjective experience of people like me, les miraculés (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), who achieve despite the odds in the education system. Thus, I sought a framework that could help explore not only how structural forces had positioned me as working-class, but also what had motivated me to overcome these societal barriers. This meant looking at how social interactions, especially how I had internalised external opinions about myself and responded.

Like, Bourdieu, Honneth argues that disrespect 'mißachtung', arises from cultural and symbolic exclusion (2007) anchored in social structures that systematically deny the members of denigrated groups equal opportunities for participation in social life which can result in a loss of self-respect and self-esteem for the individual (Honneth, 1995). Honneth adds that disrespect is accomplished through institutional individualisation in which processes are intended to hinder or prevent individuals and groups from sharing their experiences of injustice (Honneth, 2007).

Like Bourdieu, Honneth (2003, in Fraser & Honneth, 2003) criticised theories of class struggle which assume an objective standard of morality based purely on economic difference, but he goes on to argue that Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory fails to address the complexity of individual and intersubjective experiences. Instead Honneth (1995) unites a theory of psychic development with a theory of social change to conceive recognition as the overarching moral need. In this way Honneth's theory of recognition, provides a conduit between structure and agency (Fleming & Gonzalez-Monteagudo, 2014). But Honneth's conception of recognition has been criticised, most notably by Nancy Fraser (2003, in Fraser & Honneth, 2003) for ignoring consequences of inequalities in income and wealth. Fraser (2003) contends that although these two types of deprivation; recognition and distribution of economic wealth, are often interwoven, they should be theoretically separated. However, Honneth (2003 in Fraser and Honneth) asserts that even questions of distributional justice can be better understood in terms of normative categories that come from a sufficiently differentiated theory of recognition. Favoring a 'moral theoretical monism' (Ibid., p. 157) in which 'recognition' acknowledges both the cultural and the material, Honneth continues to assert that they should be examined together.

Like Hegel and Mead, Honneth stressed the importance of social relationships to the development and maintenance of a person's identity (Anderson, 1995 in Honneth, 1995). Honneth's (1995) theory starts from the Hegelian idea that identity (what I am presenting here as the situational self) is constructed intersubjectively, through a process of mutual recognition. Honneth (1995) maintained that citizens morally require recognition from others, and people must be recognised for their identities to be fulfilled (Anderson, 1995 in Honneth, 1995). Honneth (1995) suggested that through three different types of social interaction: loving concern, mutual respect and societal solidarity individuals develop three differentiated forms of relation-to-self: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, respectively.

Honneth (1995) drew on the object relations theory of early childhood experience developed by Winnicott (1965) to claim that the first, and most basic form of relation to self, self-confidence, is based on the right to exist and is gained in primary affective relations of love and friendship. Honneth (1995) suggests that the next form of positive self-relation, self-respect, derives from our awareness of being a morally accountable subject through the mutual respect and recognition of the other as a moral agent, in the context of civil society. And the final level of relation to self relates to self-esteem or self-worth. This, claimed Honneth (1995), is dependent on an awareness of having capabilities that are good or valuable to a concrete community. Like Mead's (1934) theory of self, Honneth's theory of recognition fully acknowledges the embodied, affective and normative nature of social practice assuming that to develop their identity, people depend on the feedback of other subjects, and of society (Honneth, 1995). In this respect, who we are depends on our relationships and sense of belonging; recognition is visceral; it is something that is embodied and shapes the self.

Auto/biography as enquiry - bringing a private life into public knowledge

My research project was founded on my own feelings of illegitimacy as a senior lecturer within the academy. So, to tell the story of 'who I was' to 'who I am now', in a bid to address issues around misrepresentation and exclusion, I embarked on an auto/biographical journey into myself, whilst engaging a 'sociological imagination' (Mills,1959/2000). From the position of the other, I drew on a feminist epistemology, arguing that if we are to address issues around misrepresentation and exclusion it is important to build knowledge of the other from their actual life experiences (Brooks, 2007) which for me was shaped by poverty and illegitimacy.

All too often, educational research appears to be disembodied and to have no vitality, but the efficacy of biographical research is that it enables people to construct and reconstruct themselves in particular contexts and in processes of social interaction (Bron, 2007) through an exploration of how individual accounts of life experience can be understood within the contemporary cultural and structural settings (Ibid.). And despite criticism of reverence and solipsism, I assert that the 'personal and the everyday are both important and interesting, and ought to be the subject of enquiry' (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 118). As my experience, as an academic from the working-class constitutes a different way of viewing reality, I maintain that it requires an entirely different methodology. Situated in the tradition of biographical research, my auto/biographical research provides an empirically grounded critique of the life of an individual in a particular life context (Merrill & West, 2009) and 'a rigorously inductive route' (Alheit, 1994, p. 20) to explore complex individual life stories within social contexts (Merrill & West, 2009). Stanley and Wise (1993) assert that feminist research challenges the binary ways of understanding the relationship between the body, the mind and the emotions. They argue that feminist research should be concerned with emotional vulnerability because emotion is a legitimate source of knowledge, and go on to assert that any epistemology that fails to recognise that is flawed.

Stanley (1995) asks her readers to consider if there is a feminist auto/biography. Her response is that there is a distinction between feminist authored research and feminist subject in research. Feminist authored research, she argues, can offer a distinctly feminist approach for writing auto/biography which can attend to both process and product, self and other ideological representations and its construction (Ibid.). The use of the slashed term 'auto/biography' from a feminist epistemology proffers a theoretically informed

research approach which draws on Stanley's (1993) assertion that our understandings of our own lives will impact on how we interpret others' lives. Stanley's conception of auto/biography encapsulates feminist approaches to research which attempts to raise the consciousness of the position of women (Ibid.).

Stanley (1995) suggests that a crucial element of feminist auto/biography includes an 'a priori insistence that auto/biography should be treated as composed by textually-located ideological practices [...] and analytically engaged with as such' (1995, p. 253). For me auto/biography offered a genre of autobiographical research that exhibits multiple levels of consciousness focusing on the inter-relationship between the constructions of one's own life and the lives of others, connecting the personal with the social and enabling an understanding of sociocultural and psychosocial dynamics in people's lives (Merrill & West, 2009). It allows for an exploration of key factors such as the interplay of structure/agency, of gender/class/ethnicity and a particular habitus, and the development of identity/selfhood, grounded in the narratives of lived experience (West, 2014).

Auto/biography enters that contested space between the socio-cultural and the psychosocial (Stanley, 1995) so challenges the conventional boundaries of tradition autobiography. So, rather than seeing auto/biography as a way of retreating into personal inner subjectivity, I saw it as a means to explore intersubjective relations (West, 2014). Auto/biography 'refuses any easy distinction between biography and autobiography instead recognising their symbiosis' (1995, p. 127). acknowledging that the biographical self and autobiographical self can overlap, and when writing about the self it cannot be written without acknowledging the variety of social network of others that a life moves between (Stanley, 1993). Auto/biographical research is thus an interactive process shaped by the researcher's 'own history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 9).

Using auto/biography, I wanted to advance the boundaries of autobiographical research to show that auto-diegetic auto/biographical research can be written by the self, about the self and still be valid and robust. Thus, auto/biography, as I have applied it, challenges the idea of a single, stable or essential self (Stanley, 1995) and instead draws on the intersubjective nature of a life as lived. Writing auto/biographically enabled me to question the established distinctions between the self and other; public and private; and, the personal and political (Stanley, 1993) as I tried to name and reclaim my experiences as an academic from the working-class.

Although auto/biographical research appears to convey lots of academic freedom, it also carries significant responsibilities. I feel obliged to concede that writing auto/biographically was immensely emotional and the temptation to hide from the data was, on occasion, almost irresistible. While there is a wealth of ethical guidance for researchers who are writing biographies, or collecting autobiographical narratives of others, there seemed to be a distinct lack of guidance for researchers who, like me, are writing an auto-diegetic narrative, I found that I have had to make my own way through the issues, as they arose, which proved to be an invaluable but challenging experience for a new researcher. Despite the urge to present myself as a competent, controlled, knowledgeable and confident doctoral researcher, I chose to write a rich, open and full representation of my experience that includes the self-doubts, the mistakes and the paradox in thoughts and feelings. In this way, the data ceased being abstract and theoretical, and instead became a series of more passionate, critical ideas that grew from personal incidents, relationships and episodes from which later theorizing emerged. My intention was to write evocatively and provocatively, to tell a story from the position of the 'other' that offers a new perspective on social life and social processes (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I aimed for a self-conscious approach to writing, acknowledging the

relationship between the research process, the writing process and the self, which has emphasised the emotional and personal dimensions of the research (Coffey, 1999).

To conclude, auto/biographical research, and the life history in particular, was aligned well with the conceptual framework for this study, which attempted to understand how I had made class transition within social structures and contexts through enaction.

I have not always been who I am now

I was born out of wedlock to a young unmarried mother in 1960s England, at a time when single mothers were considered immoral and were often consigned to homes for unmarried mothers, or even mental institutions. Discourses surrounding single mothers was and sadly is still denigrating

> …lone mothers have been regarded as members of an underclass, spawning anti-social children and corroding the nation (Edwards & Caballero, 2011, p. 531)

It was, and still is, a fact that one's life chances are strongly affected by a person's natal class and the inequalities that follow (Sayer, 2005). I grew up knowing that my family was abnormal; being the child of a single mother in the U.K. in the 1960s not only invited stigmatisation, it also meant I was raised in poverty. Thus, my primary habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) was formed in the context of low economic, social and cultural capital.

In households like mine existential threat was a daily occurrence. Furthermore, I am certain that my mum was acutely aware of how she was positioned within the 1960s discourse of the traditional family. At that time, the notion of the good mother was framed by class relations in which working-class women sought to prove themselves as adequate to the standards of the middle-class 'other' (Skeggs, 1997). Our place in society is defined by other people who impose on us definitions and values relating to class, gender, race, so as children, we learnt our place in the social order from our immediate environment. Being the child of a single mother in the 1960s invited stigmatisation and I grew up knowing I occupied the associated social position of female and working-class with the associated ways of knowing.

Success at school mattered, 'I had a moral obligation to be intelligent' (Trilling, in Hoggart, 2009, p. xvii), because my mum, was keen to surmount the stigma of being an unmarried mother and instead show the world that she was respectable (Skeggs, 1997), and was able to make a valid contribution to society (Honneth, 1995). Thus began my desire for academic achievement. But despite academic success, at the age of 16 years, I did what many educated working-class young women did when they left school at that time, I went to work in a bank. Many of my co-workers were graduates and I *found myself in a position where* I was amongst the middle-class. I was good at my job, but the social divide between some of us was unmistakable. I felt everything about me typified coming from low-socio status; my clothes, my accent, my lack of education, my appreciation, or lack of it, of high culture and fine dining. Over the course of ten years I tried to dis-identify and dissimulate (Skeggs, 1997) from my original social position in a bid to blend in and assume the symbolic codes of the middle-class environment, but still lacked academic capital.

After ten years of corporate life in which I never felt that I was making a worthwhile contribution to society, I made a full-time return to higher education. And after four years of self-funded study, during which period I held down as many as four precarious jobs at the same time, I qualified as a primary school teacher. For the first time in my working life, I felt a sense of purpose and a sense of recognition (Honneth, 1995). Using Honneth's

theory of recognition I can now understand that loving concern came from the pupils I taught, and their parents, which brought with it a greater sense of self-confidence. Furthermore, the mutual respect of my colleagues enabled self-respect, and I was able to recognise for myself that my teaching was enabling children to learn which contributed to feelings of self-worth (Honneth, 1995).

Now, as a Senior Lecturer in Education, my role as a teacher educator affords me some feelings of self-confidence, self-esteem and, self-worth (Honneth, 1995). The 'loving' relationships I have with my students are very important to me and I know that I am esteemed (Honneth, 1995) by my students. I recognise and value their autonomy and agency, and encourage them to have a strong sense of the ethical and moral responsibility to their own students when they are teaching. This aspect of my work holds meaning for me, because I feel like I am making a worthwhile contribution to the teaching community, and society, enabling the students to fulfil their potential for educational experiences, as indeed I have, that engenders an improved sense of self-worth (Ibid.).

Illegitimacy and integration fatigue

However, despite professional recognition, I feel I am never free of the judgements of 'generalised other' (Mead, 1934) that positions me, not just as different but, as inferior or inadequate in the academy (Skeggs, 1997). Entering the academy illegitimately, through the service entrance, with professional qualifications rather than an academic profile has compounded feelings of not belonging, especially since the institutional habitus, the set of dispositions of an institution, of the university, conveys a character deeply rooted in middle-class values (Reay, 1998). Even in a modern post-1992 university, like my own, in which more of my colleagues come from non-traditional academic backgrounds, class is still a complex marker of the 'other' (Lynch & O'Neill, 1994). I have had to acculturate to the middle-class institutional and intersubjective norms, tastes, jargon, body postures, ways of knowing, and values, just to fit in and get on. But despite this, the culturally marginal like me, and others like me, who have a strong sense of social justice, are often misrecognised through cultural and symbolic exclusion (Honneth, 1995). Our voices are silenced by those in authority rendering us invisible, as the diary entry below shows.

> I have developed a strong sense of my identity as a teacher educator; in what I think is important. But how do I hold on to that in my own beliefs about what I think is important in the face of the drive for school-based initial teacher training and so much technical rationalism. I speak out but it is clear that this has become a constant source of conflict with the expectations of colleagues, especially senior management. (RD: July 2013).

Despite my efforts to assimilate a middle-class habitus (Bourdieu, 2002) I was constantly reminded through intersubjective relations that I couldn't 'do middle-class right' (Skeggs, 1997, p. 82). It seems that despite my best efforts, I do not have 'the set of distinctive features; bearing, posture, presence, diction, and pronunciation, manners and usages' …... 'without which…. all scholastic knowledge is worth little or nothing' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 91). As feelings of illegitimacy and imposterism endured, my habitus began to operate at a conscious level; I started to theorise the events that were causing me to question my position in the institution and society as a whole. Through a Bourdieusian lens the feelings of illegitimacy could be conceived as part of the hysteresis effect (Bourdieu, 1984) in which people who share dispositions that are disconsonant with the

field experience negative internal sanctions (Bourdieu, 2000); the 'emotional residue' (Friedman & Laurison, 2019) of a working-class upbringing.

My position in the academy requires a considerable amount of emotional and psychological effort to navigate spaces that continue to be shaped by and for the institution of the middle-class, white man. It was the symbolic violence wielded through the lack of respect 'mißachtung' (Honneth, 1995) in which I am made to feel that my contributions are not valid because they do not fit in the normative values of the faculty that had the biggest impact on my self. Middle-class values were used to create a barrier to ward off dissent within academe, silencing those of us whose ideas go against the dominant view. This expression of symbolic violence, based on a dominant yet implicit understanding of what can and can't be said and done (Bourdieu, 1991), has only served to reinforce feelings of being an imposter. So, despite being more than qualified, I subconsciously internalised feelings of the middle-class hegemonic practices that led me to see myself as less worthy than my colleagues. My interactions were often fraught with anxiety and tension, as I struggled with feelings of being an imposter.

Furthermore, over the years, being silenced continually has led to crippling self-doubt which has led me to commit acts of self-elimination (Bourdieu, 1977) including promotion and leadership posts through either rejecting opportunities or not seeking them out. This is borne out of self-protection, either because I feel that I do not possess the qualities, skills and attributes or the necessary social and cultural capital to undertake the task. This latent effect of imposterism legitimates the 'class ceiling' as it appears that those from working-class origins lack the drive, ambition and resilience to reach the top (Friedman & Laurison, 2019). In the process of being silenced I had stopped even bothering to raise questions about the hegemonic practices in initial teacher education and how these were reinforcing social inequalities. The contradictions, ambivalences and paradoxes between my working-class beliefs and values and this middle-class milieu has led to integration fatigue (Anderson, 2009) and has continued to endorse feelings of inauthenticity and illegitimacy.

Despite assimilating myself into the institution to some degree, in a bid to gain legitimacy and banish the sense of displacement, I, like many people, especially women who suffer from imposter phenomenon, felt I must prove to myself that I am as good as or better than the 'other'. So, at great risk to my self-esteem I embarked on a Doctorate.

The PhD and me: Making the road by walking

In this section I share the emotional politics of embarking on doctoral research, from the perspective of someone who feels that she has entered the academy illegitimately. I hope to illustrate some of the mundane, but highly charged, everyday occurrences that underpin doctoral work using illustrations from the reflective diary I kept as I struggled with notions of self and identity during the endeavour.

> I am struggling emotionally. Undertaking a doctorate is complex, emotionally difficult and messy. It has positioned me in a liminal space; a space where I am moving between teacher educator and academic; I no longer feel like a teacher of teachers but have not yet acquired the full legitimate recognition of an academic. (RD: December, 2016).

Revealed in this quote, and the one below, is the feeling of uncertainty about entering a new space that is outside of my professional identity as a teacher educator – in which I know I am recognised (Honneth, 1995). Here, I am acknowledging becoming a Doctor of Philosophy is more than merely the acquisition of knowledge, or even being able to

demonstrate research skills and critical thinking; it is a lived experience which has the potential to change who I am not only professionally, but also personally.

> It is no surprise that assuming an academic identity is proving to be problematic; my working-class background has ill-prepared me for thinking of myself as an academic (Someone who spends time engaged in the doing of the academic reading, writing, thinking, discussing). It seems beyond reach; its achievement frustrated by the demands of numerous tasks which make up my job as a teacher of teachers which do not 'make up' the academic. (RD: July, 2016)

The first thing that happened was that engagement with doctoral research nourished and re-energised me epistemologically, as this quote from my diary shows.

> The act of researching for this thesis has propelled me out of my ontological and epistemological inertia. It has given me a sense of purpose when all seems to be lost in initial teacher education. I have read a vast amount, much of which has not even made it into the thesis, but which has had a huge impact on who I am as a teacher educator and as a researcher. Attending conferences and networks has introduced me to an intellectual community of like-minded scholars. Mercifully, I have learned that there are academics everywhere questioning boundaries of our discipline (RD: July, 2016).

The doctorate has been an important source of intellectual and emotional growth*; it* has enabled me to gain a sense of self-respect, and self-worth (Honneth, 1995) as I acknowledge that despite my social, cultural and economic disadvantage, through my own academic effort and attainment. I am still able to enter an elite profession, which is usually mostly only accessible to the middle-class.

> Despite the challenges to find time to write, and the moments of fear, inadequacy and failure, undertaking the research is part of the care of the self. It has provided a space where I have crystalised my values and beliefs; understood my desires to be a scholar; learnt to feel less guilty (about everything) and just be me. The PhD is about a process of becoming. As I look at my notes and reflections it reflects a changing identity. As I have read I have changed. As I write I change. My doctorate is providing me with a space to confront my self and provide a sense of personal and intellectual agency. (RD: June, 2016).

However, feelings of being an imposter thrived in the public arena of conferences, not because of my gender but always because of my class. As I began to share my research with other academics at conferences internalised feelings of oppression, vulnerability, humility and inferiority resurfaced; as these diary extracts about a European conference reveal

> I always feel vulnerable in these settings. Not because of my gender but always because of my class…... despite working within a university for 10 years I always feel illegitimate, like I am here under false pretences. I feel people can sense the lack of social, cultural and educational capital. Rather than feel proud that I am here by my own virtue, I tell myself that is good for me. …. (RD: March, 2016).

The anticipated shame of being seen as over-reaching and failing highlighted a sense of class inferiority in my relations with my middle-class peers who I perceived as holding the 'right' social and cultural capital valued by institution, served only to emphasise the fragility of my new identity. Rather than feel proud that I had earned my place by my own virtue and hard work, I felt other academics could detect my lack of social, cultural and educational capital; as this entry from my diary shows

> I read an extract from my doctoral research as it existed at that point. The auto/biographical content would make anyone feel slightly exposed. At this point the 'Reader' as I will call her detected a hole in my research – her challenge was relentless. Thankfully some experienced academics in the room came to my rescue – I was truly grateful for their support. Later, I cried a lot! For the first time I feel like giving up! I feel so unintelligent, so vulnerable, so exposed but mostly so inferior. (RD: March, 2016).

I had anticipated, and even welcomed, a critique but not a personal attack. I felt this this woman had used her position of power and privilege to expose me as an imposter in a public forum. This serves as another illustration of Bourdieu's (1994) concept of symbolic violence. This brought with it a loss of self-confidence in my ability to ever be able to reside in the academic field legitimately.

Writing to reclaim the self - assuaging feelings of illegitimacy

Writing an auto-diegetic thesis was a deeply embodied act - where the mind, body and soul worked together to scrutinise both the past and present. It became a means of challenging formerly accepted notions of structural positioning and prompted a set of new narratives about who I am. As I wrote and re-wrote I began to recognise and understand myself in a different light; I saw a human experience – a woman, filled with fear, anxiety, denial and ambivalences, struggling with notions of self. My auto/biographical exploration enabled me to enter a third space which provided a 'terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular and communal – that initiate[d] new signs of identity' (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). And while I wrote tentatively at first, the relationship between the research process, the writing process, and the 'self' became stronger, particularly as I found my voice and gained the courage to write about the emotional and personal dimensions of my life, and how this was intrinsically connected to the research process.

Writing auto/biographically for my doctorate took me into the unknown at times; it provided a rare opportunity to raise questions about my assumptions, values and beliefs, and to examine the structural conditions that bestow discomfort and disbelief in my self as an academic. Towards the end, there was a huge sense of working-class honour bound up with gaining the doctorate. My anxieties and fears about completing it increased; there was always a sense that I might get it wrong, and that it will never be good enough to meet the expectations of the intellectual field. But, researching and writing auto/biographically, especially for an academic recognition, proved to be a dynamic, creative process of discovery (Richardson, 1994); it has made visible the structural, intersubjective, and individual processes that have formed my self - it has become a way of identifying and challenging feelings of imposter syndrome, inferiority and illegitimacy, enabling me to re-form my self legitimately. The award has shown me that I can contribute to the academic community that is valuable and worthwhile, providing some antidote to the misrecognition and disrespect (Honneth, 1995, 2007) shown to me as a teacher educator.

Feelings of imposter still lurk in the margins, I still 'inhabit a psychic economy of class defined by fear, anxiety and unease, where failure looms large' (Reay, 2005, p. 917), but I can now safely acknowledge that I have created a 'self' in which I experience the pleasure, as well as pain, in the borderlands of the working-class and middle-class habitus. Traditional research methods easily neglect the moral character of life and experience, but my auto/biographical doctoral study provided me with 'both a mode of representation and a mode of reasoning' (Richardson, 1997, p. 28). Whilst this may be true for all doctoral students, the auto-diegetic nature of my research became a part of me;

a means of enabling me to identify and confront feelings of inferiority and illegitimacy. My auto/biography revealed that class transition, for me, was associated with pain, estrangement and feelings of illegitimacy; and in particular how the lived relations of class within the academy had contributed to enduring internalised feelings of stigma attached to being working-class and illegitimate. Writing about my life in my thesis became a healing endeavour strengthening the connections between body, mind and soul, providing a foundation for hope and a source of agency thus proving to be a dynamic and creative method of discovery (Richardson, 1994). It may be risky to acknowledge the emotional dimension of the doctoral education but it is emotion that has been the driving force behind the risks that I have taken; it is the vulnerability and the suffering that is felt in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge that has had the biggest impact on my cognition and allowed for a renegotiation of the 'self' (Winnicott, 1965).

To conclude

Every story told is charged with a special emotional resonance that leaves both the author and the reader enriched, and my story, although a story of one woman from the working-class, could also be representative a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger socio-cultural and historical forces' (Richardson, 1997, p. 14); working-class academics who have made class transition.

Often the working-class are studied by the middle-class, in which 'we' as the 'they' are treated as a separate species to be observed and studied. Rarely are the people from the working-class allowed to speak for ourselves. Auto/biography offered me a distinct approach to study my human experience and offered important insights in to the complexities of a life lived that would have otherwise be missed or neglected in more objective studies. Being both the researcher and the researched; the subject and the object; the narrator and the protagonist has afforded me a double consciousness; a unique 'mode of seeing' (Brooks, 2007) enabling me to dispute the conventional distinctions between self and other, public and private, and personal and political, and to challenge the idea of a single, stable or essential self (Stanley, 1993). Becoming an academic has provided this platform. And now as my story is told 'it ceases to be a story; it becomes a piece of history' (Steedman, 1986, p. 143).

For me, auto/biographical writing for doctoral study has served as a powerful 'space of resistance' and a 'site of radical possibility' (hooks, 2003, p. 156) and has become a source of social action which has the potential to link knowledge production with healing and reconstruction (Walsh, 1997). It has also brought with it some of the desired recognition that Honneth (1995) argues is essential for human flourishing.

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The paradox of utilitarian recognition of prior learning: the cases of Portugal and Slovenia

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the vertical influence of the European Union (EU) policy on recognition of prior learning (RPL) in one Southern European country (Portugal) and in a Central European one (Slovenia). We stress the influence of the EU policy on adult education (AE) policies and the development of RPL granting professional qualification. Although not widely acknowledged in adult education theoretical discussions, we use the RPL models introduced by Judy Harris to debate the main aims of core official RPL national policy documents from 2000 to 2018 using documentary analysis. Comparative analysis of the two countries is made, and similarities and differences between the RPL provisions are debated. Our findings indicate the relevance of the utilitarian approach to RPL within national policies. Furthermore, these findings allow us to question why employers give little attention to adult learners' qualification acquired through RPL.

Keywords: Adult education, European Union, Portugal, recognition of prior learning, Slovenia

Introduction

Recently, RPL has become a relevant factor in AE policies in the EU countries and beyond. In this paper, we use the concept of RPL—i.e. the idea of recognising prior learning wherever and whenever it took place—although other concepts and conceptions are known under the acronyms of APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning), PLAR (prior learning assessment and recognition), VPL (validation of prior learning) and RVC (recognition and validation of competences), which were developed in different

locations (see Andersson, Fejes, & Sandberg, 2013, p. 405).From a conceptual point of view, several authors have stressed the transformative dimension of RPL, which refers to the knowledge and skills developed throughout adult learners' lives through experiences (see, for example, Guimarães, 2012; Harris, 1999; Lodigiani & Sarli, 2017). However, in European, as well as national AE policies, the utilitarian dimension (stressing employability, mobility and competitiveness) has been emphasised. Within the EU guidelines for lifelong learning (LLL) and the establishment of the European and national qualifications frameworks (NQF), RPL is foreseen as a 'salvation narrative' (Andersson, 2008) for the individual and society, as it is part of social and economic policies and a way of workforce development (Mikulec, 2018).

The aim of this article is to analyse the vertical influence of the EU policy on RPL in one South European country (Portugal) and one Central European one (Slovenia) in the period from 2000 to 2018. It also explores the horizontal effects in two different European contexts based on a tension between reinforcing individual empowerment of adult learners (within aims of social justice and social change) and attracting and keeping workers in the labour market (following economic development and competitiveness). This article explores the following research questions: How are the EU RPL policies situated between the goals of social justice and individual transformation on one side and employability and competitiveness on the other? How are the EU RPL policies interpreted and translated in two different national contexts, the Portuguese and the Slovenian one?

In what follows, we first briefly introduce the analytical models of RPL by Harris (1999) and the EU RPL policies, outline our methodological approach and then analyse Portuguese and Slovene RPL policies in line with the main aim of the article. In the final section, we discuss the identified similarities and differences. We argue that both countries' policies emphasise the utilitarian approach of RPL and, lastly, conclude that there seems to emerge a paradox within national policies on RPL— namely, why have employers given little attention to adult learners' qualification acquired through RPL and how this relates to AE policy.

Analytical models of policy discourses on RPL

Several authors have stressed the shift from education to learning, which has occurred in public policies over the last decades (Milana, 2012, among others). This shift has involved a dominant use of the LLL expression in discourses as well as an emphasis on individual learners and on the rational thinking adults use when building their knowledge in order to develop an education framework that has utility for professional spheres. Within this frame, it is not only knowledge that adults can obtain in traditional education and training systems that is at stake but also knowledge that is developed in different contexts, especially non-formal and informal ones. According to Andersson, Fejes and Ahn (2004, p. 58), 'The important thing is to identify what you know, rather than what courses you have studied, and learning from experience might not give exactly the same learning as learning from studying'. In fact, different forms of knowledge acquired from experience have become more visible. Therefore, public forms of provision have included ways of recognising and validating such non-formal and informal knowledge, following RPL guidelines from transnational organisations like the EU (Council of the European Union [CEU], 2012).

RPL as a form of provision can be traced back to the United States (US) and to the end of the Second World War, when the learning developed by soldiers was recognised as important for entering the labour market. Later, in the early 1970s, RPL was further

developed to broaden access to specific jobs according to the French experience in validation. Recent Slovenian AE policies follow similar aims. Additionally, RPL has also been used to assess knowledge gained through informal and non-formal education—what has been learnt at work and at home in different contexts and countries—which facilitates the validation of vocational competences when adults are immigrants (Andersson & Fejes, 2005; Lodigiani & Sarli, 2017). RPL provisions also aim at widening access to higher education, especially in English-speaking countries (such as the US and UK). Other RPL provisions allow the certification basic and upper-secondary education, such as in Portugal, which values knowledge developed throughout life in both formal and informal contexts (Barros, 2013; Guimarães, 2012).

Many RPL provisions aim at giving value to the knowledge and vocational competences adults possess, in particular those relevant for professional contexts. It has been a way for adults to transfer the learning and knowledge they have. The qualifications acquired from this recognition gives a formal character to (non-formal and informal) learning and can facilitate a change of jobs or the move from one work context to another (Andersson, Fejes & Ahn, 2004). RPL provisions have been used as social justice tools, which have been seen as a way of rewarding adults with a formal certificate recognising their knowledge and competences. This makes higher education more available for people who did not attend university (Guimarães, 2012). Finally, RPL provisions have been used to empower people: it can raise individuals' self-esteem and can also make people aware of the need to change society. This is more relevant when adults have no expectations to enter the educational system, and RPL provides this possibility as well as the chance to value a different kind of knowledge acquired throughout life and to influence the development of society (Andersson, Fejes & Ahn, 2004; Harris, 1999).

Considering the RPL experiences as well as the AE policies found in several countries, Harris (1999) proposes 'ways of seeing RPL', and other authors have specified aims that the RPL provisions may include (Andersson, Fejes & Ahn, 2004; Fejes & Andersson, 2009).

RPL models: The state of RPL practices and its theoretical underpinnings

Harris (1999) presents four models that include different perspectives focusing on how prior learning performs in social functions. According to Harris, it is possible to identify a *utilitarian approach to RPL* (Harris, 1999) in activities involving further education and vocational training for adults to achieve qualifications, according to specific standards and frameworks. Based on human capital principles as well as functional and technical reasoning, this utilitarian perspective is 'underpinned by a market-led philosophy in which education is consumer-oriented and utilitarian mainly in terms of its usefulness to the labour market' (p. 3). No critical thinking is involved. Similarly, Fejes and Andersson (2009) identify the aims directed at economic development, which make use of adults' knowledge and competences more effectively in the labour market. Within this approach, knowledge is measured based on its usefulness: 'Its extrinsic use-value is brought to the fore; its social value pushed to the rear' (Harris, 1999, p. 127).

Another approach is *learning and development RPL* (Harris, 1999), which is based on humanist and progressive discourses stressing individual advancement and the democratisation of education in terms of access to higher education. Within this approach, valuing learning from experience is central as well as turning it into academic disciplinary knowledge according to dominant academic discourses. Therefore, RPL is considered 'a translation device, a one-way bridge-building process between different cultures of knowledge' (Harris, 1999, p. 131) and a way of developing new capacities that may be

equivalent to explicit or implicit academic standards. Similarly, Fejes and Andersson (2009) refer to social justice aims in relation to individual opportunities that can broader access to different levels of education.

A third approach to RPL is related to a *radical and critical tradition of RPL within AE* based on emancipatory discourses linked to critical, feminist and post-colonial theories. Learning from experience is considered a collective rather than an individualised process as well as a way of acquiring knowledge in order to change the world (Harris, 1999). Therefore, 'experience is seen as a social product and as a foundation for the development of authentic and oppositional forms of knowledge' (Harris, 1999, p. 133). According to Fejes and Andersson (2009), these RPL aims are directed at social change in an attempt to enhance adults' knowledge change society.

Harris (1999) also refers to a fourth model, which is the *Trojan-horse* way of seeing RPL, concerned with change and characterised by curriculum flexibility, emphasising application and practice-based learning programmes to recognise the non-formal and experiential learning to be found in higher education especially. With this model, there is a stronger valorisation of prior learning, avoiding the stress of matching between developed knowledge and existing standards, the curricula or cognitive capacities demanded by many higher education institutions.

In recent research, other theoretical trends can open important possibilities for (re)conceptualisation of RPL research and practices. Some of these studies draw on theories related to constructivism, postmodernism, recognition, socio-materialism and social realism (cf. Andersson, Fejes & Sandberg, 2013; Andersson & Harris, 2006; Harris, Wihak, & Kleef, 2014). In spite of the relevance of such theoretical approaches, this article's discussion relies on the models or 'ways of seeing RPL' proposed by Harris (1999). These models were developed after RPL practices in South Africa, including each model dimensions translated in keywords to policy discourses on this form of provision. Several theoretical contributions, from social critical theory, socio-cultural theory and the constructivist theory allowed several analytical models that serve us as a framework for the debate of existing RPL policy discourses in both countries.

EU policies on RPL

At the EU level, AE policies, to which RPL is closely connected, have been developed relatively late. The adoption of the *Lisbon Strategy* in the 2000 may be understood as the starting point in establishing an European education policy defined by common goals, implementation tools and financial resources, although EU formal competences in the field of education are limited due to the subsidiarity rule (Mikulec, 2018). Furthermore, with the adoption of the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, LLL became the Commission's main policy concept and instrument for achieving a knowledge-based economy and society, in which employability and economic growth gained central attention (Andersson, Fejes & Sandberg, 2013). To support the goal of achieving the knowledge-based society, the EU adopted several guidelines on RPL—or 'validation of non-formal and informal learning' as officially conceptualised in the EU policies—in coming years. In 2004, the Council adopted the *Common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning* (CEU, 2004). The same year, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP) prepared the first update on the *European inventory on validation*—followed by updates in 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016 and 2018 (CEDEFOP, 2020) and published the *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*

(CEDEFOP, 2009, 2015). In 2011, the Council adopted a renewed *European agenda for adult learning* (CEU, 2011), which endeavoured to 'encourage the development of effective lifelong guidance systems, as well as integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning' (p. 3). A year later, the Council adopted special *Recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (CEU, 2012), which stipulated that member states should establish appropriate arrangements for RPL no later than 2018.

These recommendations set clear procedures to be followed in RPL—identification, documentation, assessment and certification—and such principles as the following: arrangements linked to NQF; guidance and counselling; 'skills audit' for the unemployed; quality assurance measures; (partial) qualifications gained through RPL based on the same standards as qualifications in formal education; and European transparency tools used for the documentation of learning outcomes (cf. Cavaco, Lafont & Pariat, 2014). Furthermore, the main motivation for developing RPL systems in member states is better 'employability and mobility', increased 'motivation for lifelong learning' and enhanced 'competiveness and economic growth' (CEU, 2012, p. 1). For these reasons, several scholars have emphasised that the EU RPL policies focus on economic development (towards the labour market) on utilitarian goals (Andersson, Fejes & Sandberg, 2013), as well as towards the 'credential/credit-exchange' model (Cameron, 2012) - that is, RPL is used for credit or qualifications.

Methodology

For the comparative empirical analysis of RPL, we have chosen Portugal and Slovenia, both of which are EU member states. These are semiperipheral countries (Sousa Santos, 1993) in the EU, which have different histories, welfare regimes and AE systems (Desjardins, 2017). Furthermore, they are both subject to EU political and economic pressures—for example, imposed structural adjustment and austerity measures after the 2008 economic crisis, which severely affected public funding and let to the privatisation of higher education and AE (Antunes, 2016; Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016). Moreover, in the fields of AE and LLL, both countries depend on the funding provided by the European Social Found (ESF), as national funds declined or never were that relevant, such as in Portugal. Therefore, in line with our research questions, we would like to stress the vertical relationships between the EU RPL policies and the RPL policies of two selected member states. We also would like to emphasise the horizontal relationships between the EU RPL policies and national policies by selecting specific data for analysis that stress the similarities between countries. Additionally, specific countries may be able to influence transnational guidelines. Even if this bottom-up trend is more difficult to observe due to the role of international organisations in the diffusion of LLL (Jakobi, 2012), it is important to stress that the Portuguese RPL is a relevant case concerning the access to this form of provision (Werquin, 2014) and can be used in international settings to provide a model of provision, that could be transferable to other countries.

As regards the selection of sources, we chose core official national AE policy documents (National Assembly, 2004, 2013), official policy documents and RPL reports (ANQEP, 2018; SIAE, 2011), regulations (Portaria n.º 232/2016, 29.08; Uradni list RS, 2009, 2015), policy documents from international organisations and reports (Eurostat, 2019a, 2019b; OECD, 2018a, 2018b), official data from websites on education and qualifications (INE, 2019; NRP, 2019) as well as scientific journal articles on RPL in

Portugal and Slovenia in order to improve the reliability and objectivity of the comparisons made. Moreover, as natives of Portugal and Slovenia, we could interpret the sources available in the national languages, and we are knowledgeable about the political context and AE in the two countries (cf. Milana & Rasmussen, 2018).

In the comparative analysis, we juxtaposed two national cases in line with Egetenmeyer's (2012, p. 80) proposal. First, we did 'descriptive juxtaposition', which involved data collection on RPL and background country information, followed by 'analytical juxtaposition', which included searching for common RPL features in both countries. Second, we did 'descriptive comparison', through which we identified main similarities and differences between countries, followed by 'analytical comparison', which served as a way to interpret similarities and differences. We also used the method of documentary analysis—a content analytical approach used to analyse policy documents (Field & Schemmann, 2017).

AE and RPL policies in Portugal and Slovenia

AE and RPL policies in Portugal

Portugal is a Southern European country with a population of 10.3 million. It became a member of the European Community (EU) in 1986. It is considered a developed country having economic patterns found in other EU countries: services represent more than 70% of its economy, whereas industry, construction, energy and water production correspond to 23%. In 2017, the GDP per capita was 76.7% of the EU average. The unemployment rate has fallen in recent years, dropping to 7% in 2018. Since Portugal was severely hit by the 2008 economic crisis, its GDP is still lower than the pre-crisis level (European Commission [EC], 2019a).

In Portugal, the (new) AE policy was adopted after 1999 (Alves et al., 2016; Barros, 2013) and was strongly influenced by EU LLL guidelines and European Social Fund (ESF) funding. Several discontinuities in national strategies have followed, including the adoption and failure of certain programmes, the establishment and re-establishment of national agencies and local learning centres. Despite policies intermittences, two new forms of certified provision, such as RPL and AE training courses, have been under development since 2000. These are directed at widening access to education and training and at raising school education attainment directed at promoting the reconversion of the workmanship within globalisation; and these initiatives will help tackle the low educational levels of the Portuguese population. In 2017, only 33.5% of adults had completed upper secondary and tertiary education, and the participation rate in LLL was 10.3% (Eurostat, 2019a, 2019b). In the last two decades, these provisions have been the object of increasing formalisation procedures, including laws, regulations, guidelines, standards of competences and online system of monitoring of work achieved in local AE centres.

Despite a dramatic increase in funding from 2007 to 2011 from mainly the EU structural funds (85%) and more participants in LLL during this period (up to 11.5% in 2011, according to Eurostat, 2019a), a change in government and strong funding cuts from 2012 to 2016 (when the programme Qualifica started) resulted in the abandonment of the AE policy. Such cuts also caused lower levels of participation in LLL and around half of the population aged between 15 and 64 holding less than upper secondary education. Also, the generational gap between the younger generations (holding higher education qualifications) and the older ones (holding lower qualifications or even being

illiterate) became clearer. Additionally, the mismatch referring to existing low professional skills of the population and needs of highly qualified workers in specific economic sectors was highlighted during the period under discussion (Canário, Vieira & Capucha, 2019).

In Portugal, RPL is based on a comprehensive set of procedures—namely, standards of key competences that are also the ones used in AE and training courses—which facilitates the forms of provision that are based on the same aims and procedures favouring the establishment of a system (Barros, 2013). Up to 2011, RPL only allowed adults to get a formal school certification. However, after 2011, policymakers promoted a strong link between education and training and established different routes to get a professional qualification combined with a school certification or just a professional qualification. Therefore, RPL kept the aim of increasing school education levels among the Portuguese population and increasing the number of adult learners who have completed upper secondary education and decide to access higher education. Furthermore, RPL has emphasised the utilitarian approach (Harris, 1999), directed specifically at those adults older than 23 years and having at least three years of professional experience (ANQEP, 2018).

The possibility of getting a professional qualification through RPL was established through several steps, including the support of representatives from the labour market sectors with the work of whom the qualifications were set. The first one was the creation of a National Qualification System (NQS), which was directed at strengthening the link between general education and professional training in all vocational education and training (VET) pathways and designing arrangements for VET qualifications to better match labour market needs. Within the NQS, the National Council for Vocational Training was created as well as the Sector Councils for Qualification, which were in charge of establishing qualifications required for each job. Additionally, the National Catalogue of Qualifications, the NQF and the Individual Skills Handbook were also created. In 2018, 156 standards for professional RPL could be found, 76 for the NQF level two and 80 for the NQF level four. Being equivalent to the training standards used in formal VET, the learning outcomes have been set as the main aims (ANQEP, 2018).

Different from the RPL allowing school certification, the one directed at professional qualification has involved fewer adults being certified. Data from 2017 show that from the 9.290 adults certified by RPL in terms of education, only 3.188 were certified in terms of professional qualifications (1.920 for NQF level two and 1.268 for NQF level four). From those adults who received full professional qualification at level two, most were certified as geriatric social workers (51%) and electricians (12%), whereas those with professional qualifications at level four were mostly certified as technicians in the educational area (26%), technician in construction (11%) and family support workers (11%) (ANQEP, 2018, pp. 23-24).

AE and RPL policies in Slovenia

Slovenia is a country located in Central Europe with a population of 2.07 million. It became a member of the EU in 2004. Today, it is considered a developed country: two-thirds of its economy is based on services and one-third on industry and construction. The GDP per capita is below the EU average, reaching 85% of the average in 2017. The unemployment rate has fallen in recent years, dropping to 5.6% in 2018. Similar to Portugal, Slovenia was severely hurt by the economic crisis, and its GDP is still lower than the pre-crisis level (EC, 2019b).

After independence in 1991, the Slovenian government introduced an array of systemic measures that gave a new impetus to the development of AE policy and infrastructure, among others, special laws (in 1996 and 2018) regulating non-formal AE and public interest in AE as well a law on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) establishing RPL procedures were adopted, and the government adopted national programmes for AE. Furthermore, with the formal accession into the EU, the Slovenian AE policy became significantly influenced by the EU due to the organisation's extensive financial support (see Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016).

AE policy in Slovenia strives to balance personal, social and economic goals through the following: non-formal education (programmes for literacy skills, active citizenship, social cohesion, information and communication technologies [ICT]), formal education (programmes for improving formal education attainment of adults) and AE for the labour market (programmes of active labour market policy and RPL provision leading to NVQs) (National Assembly, 2004, 2013). However, in practice, more than 50% of all funds are dedicated to AE for labour market needs (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016).

Despite these measures and the data concerning the EU average of adults who have completed upper secondary and tertiary education (42.7%) (Eurostat, 2019b), the AE policy still faces many obstacles. Participation in AE and learning activities has fallen over the last few years, from 14.5% in 2014 to 11.4% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019a). Moreover, the gap between vulnerable adults not willing to participate in AE and those with higher socio-economic status participating in AE has increased. The majority of adult population have low levels of literacy and numeracy according to the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results: 62.6% of adults did not achieve the required level of literacy, and 60.1% lacked numeracy skills. Public funding is decreasing, and the development of AE is based only on ESF. Finally, the governance of AE policy also lacks efficiency (OECD, 2018b; SIAE, 2019).

In Slovenia, no comprehensive policy on RPL exists, as different sectoral legislation regulates RPL in the formal education system and in the labour market. Nevertheless, three major routes of RPL connected to different aims can be identified: (1) RPL can be used for stimulating participation in formal (vocational and tertiary) education through partial recognition of some mandatory parts of the educational programme (e.g., continuation of unfinished education or the changing the direction of education), but it provides no access to higher education for example; (2) RPL can be used to acquire NVQs trough professional certification; and (3) recently, RPL can also be used to identify and assess an individual's knowledge and competences for better employability, career development and personal growth (SIAE, 2011, p. 36). In what follows, we will focus mainly on the second route—professional certification leading to NVQ—as this represents the most developed system of RPL in the country and is aimed at adults.

During the integration process of Slovenia into the EU, it was included in the EU's *Phare programmes*, which aimed to reform VET systems, including developing a certification system for professional education (NVQ) (Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016). One of the outcomes of this process was that the government adopted a law on NVQs in 2000, which established the system of RPL based on the formal certification of working experiences of adults (18 or over)—including voluntary work, free-time activities, non-formal education and training—leading to a state-recognised NVQ (Uradni list RS, 2009). The introduced system was inspired (borrowed and adjusted) from the NVQ approach developed in UK, which is strongly output oriented and performance based (Bjørnåvold, 2000, p. 18).

The principles and procedures of RPL are based on prescribed procedures set out in the 'Rules on the method and procedure for assessment and certification of NVQs'

(Uradni list RS, 2015). The NVQ is defined as an occupational qualification required for the pursuit of a profession or individual assignments within the profession at a certain level of complexity (Uradni list RS, 2009, article 2). It represents the formally recognized competences required for practising the occupation on the basis of the national occupational standard. The same standards, where employers take a leading role in standard-setting processes, are used in educational programmes and RPL. NVQ can be acquired by completing (modules of) formal vocational programmes or through RPL (assessment and certification) process. When acquired through RPL, this is based on *Catalogues of standards of professional knowledge and skills*, which clearly defines the necessary knowledge and skills (learning outcomes), assessment criteria and certification procedures. The candidate for NVQ can demonstrate his/her previously acquired knowledge either by performing tasks set out in the catalogue or on the basis of a portfolio showing evidence (documents) of the knowledge acquired. The assessment and certification procedures are performed by certified institutions (providers), whereas the examination is carried out by an appointed three-member commission. The commission first evaluates the candidate's portfolio and then either certifies the candidate's qualifications or sends the candidate to a direct examination in front of the commission, if specific conditions set by the catalogue are not met. A successful candidate is issued a certificate proving his/her professional qualification (NVQ) but not an education degree (SIAE, 2011; Uradni list RS, 2009).

NVQs have been included in the NQF and placed in levels from two to six. From 2000 to 2018, 490 NVQs catalogues have been prepared, of which 350 are currently valid: three on the second level of the NQF, 35 on the third, 113 on the fourth, 106 on the fifth and 93 on the sixth. In this period, 94.711 certificates were granted, of which the majority were awarded on the fourth (65%) and third (17%) NQF levels. The most often awarded certificates in last six years are as follows: 'operator in the transport of dangerous goods', 'security guard', 'social care provider' and 'forestry cutter' (NRP, 2019).

Similarities and differences between Portugal and Slovenia

Similarities

Portugal and Slovenia are semiperipheral countries in the context of the EU. Both are small economies that have opened up in recent decades due to globalisation processes. Additionally, these countries seem to be constrained by the vertical influence of the EU, not only in terms of economic issues but also in LLL matters, supporting through these guidelines AE national policies. This influence seems very much related to the impact of the ESF. Following similar sets of guidelines and rules, the ESF norms have forced the adoption of different AE strategies, compelling the formulation and development of policies aimed at adapting adults to the needs of the labour market (Canário, Vieira & Capucha, 2019; Guimarães, 2012; Mikulec & Jelenc Krašovec, 2016) and supporting the development of RPL as an important provision.

The influence of the EU is clear too in the work achieved in local education and training centres in both countries. Following the EU guidelines concerning RPL, Portugal has become a relevant example in RPL implementation (Cavaco, Lafont & Pariat, 2014; Werquin, 2014) for those countries in which RPL is in an early stage. Similarly, in Slovenia, the development in RPL policies have led to the formalisation as well as the establishment of a dominant utilitarian approach to RPL (Fejes & Andersson, 2009; Harris, 1999), as this provision leads to qualifications and widening participation in secondary education. These policies include the set of RPL procedures and principles

established by the EU that may be found in official national documents. RPL is linked to the NQF, learning outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms; it is based on the same standards as formal education, which leads to qualifications based on established standards and frameworks.

Furthermore, in both countries, professional RPL has been used to help adults have their competences recognised and to re-enter the labour market. As an indirect outcome, in the policy documents of both countries under analysis, it is claimed that knowledge and skills visibility could enhance participation in formal (vocational) education through partial recognition of some mandatory parts of the educational programme (e.g., the continuation of unfinished education or changing the direction of education) or participation in higher (vocational) education and training programmes.

This claim, included in the policy documents of the two countries, is interesting if we consider that these countries present different rates concerning the educations levels of their citizens (in 2018, 33.1% of Portuguese adults completed upper secondary and/or post-secondary education, whereas it was 49.4% for Slovenian adults, according to Eurostat, 2019b). This is despite the fact that both countries have low participation rates in LLL when compared to the benchmark established by the EU (15%) and rates from other countries, such as Sweden (29.2% in 2018) (Eurostat, 2019a). Despite all of these policy claims concerning this form of provision, there can be seen a strong formalisation of professional RPL leading to credentials (Cameron, 2012), but not a significant increase in access. In fact, we can still observe a low number of adults who have qualified from this form of provision in both countries.

Moreover, in both countries, validation procedures are closely connected to training arrangements. In policy discourses, thus, it is stated that this form of provision is aimed at the identification and assessment of individual's knowledge and competences for better employability, career development and personal growth. This situation can involve an increase in the social recognition of RPL. However, existing procedures of professional RPL in these two countries apply to qualifications of levels two to four (and five in Slovenia) of the European qualifications framework (EQF). Also, it is worth noting that in these countries, qualifications that can be obtained by adults through RPL are mainly for professions that are regulated and/or require low (or some medium) skilled workers. Accessibility and the quality of RPL, especially for low-skilled adults, remain a serious concern. The low awareness of the benefits of a professional qualification and of learning is an important motivational barrier for both adult learners and employers. Concerning the Portuguese situation, then, a stronger alignment of existing provisions with labour market needs is stressed in order to boost effectiveness, according to an OECD (2018a) evaluation.

Following this line of reasoning, it is important to question the reasons why so few adult learners are certified by this provision. These low numbers may express a paradox concerning RPL as a public provision in countries under analysis. If employers have a leading role in standard-setting processes for RPL and they represent key stakeholders for formulating RPL-based qualifications, it begs the question as to why social recognition of RPL remains low in the labour markets in both counties (cf. Young, 2006, p. 322). Again, if these forms of provision seem to share a utilitarian approach (Harris, 1999), which could be understood as an important point when it comes to employers expectations, RPL only seems to serve specific labour market sectors, namely the most regulated ones.

Differences

We can identify two major differences between these countries under analysis. First, in Portuguese policy discourses, RPL represents one of the main provisions of AE in the country. In terms of policy agenda, AE has received some attention in specific periods and as well as funding, even if most of it has been from the ESF; such funding improved access, especially from 2007 to 2011 and after 2016 (ANQEP, 2018). In Slovenia, however, the AE system is mainly based on formal and non-formal (general, vocational) educational programmes, whereas the RPL represents a more marginal form of provision.

Second, in Portugal, the RPL has a clear double purpose: through the formal school certification, it allows adults to raise their educational level to an upper secondary one as well as to gain professional qualification. School certification and professional qualifications obtained through RPL and education programmes have a different status in society and labour markets, as adult learners value school certificates but not so much professional qualifications, which is why the OECD (2018a) claims that pressuring employers to recognise professional qualifications is a relevant policy concern. On the contrary, RPL (leading to NVQ) has just one purpose in Slovenia: it allows adults to get professional qualifications. This has far reaching consequences in the Slovene case (SIAE, 2011): (a) qualifications obtained through the RPL and education programmes have different status in society and labour market; (b) the NVQs are disregarded in the wage system and poorly integrated into the system of collective agreements (cf. Lodigiani & Sarli, 2017, p. 140); (c) catalogues used in RPL are narrowly structured (performance based) and lack a representation of general knowledge (cf. Cameron, 2012, p. 88-89; Harris, 1999, p. 127-130); finally, (d) the NVQs are raising social segregation and inequalities, as the RPL system is used mainly by less educated adults, and the most acquired NVQs are for occupations requiring a lower skillset.

Therefore, our discussion shows that RPL for the professional certification of qualifications in Portugal and Slovenia—unlike the RPL directed at school certification or for access to (higher) education—does not involve clear educational aims or the development of new learning. Moreover, it does not necessarily bring clear benefits for adults and can, in fact, increase social segregation (Young, 2006, p. 325).

Conclusion

This paper compared RPL in Portugal and Slovenia. In both countries, this provision has been stressed in policy discourses, and the validation of experiential learning has been seen as an unproblematic and apolitical process of knowledge transferability. Learning is, therefore, considered an individual commodity, relevant for work and the labour market (Andersson, Fejes & Ahn, 2004; Harris, 1999).

Knowledge is measured according to normative terms, as the RPL in both countries is based on a wide range of formalised procedures, according to measurable performance and extrinsic value. In fact, claims for a stronger alignment between provisions and labour-market needs have increased, namely by promoting technical knowledge and skills. Thus, this situation raises doubts about the relevance of RPL that is prescribed by outcomes and standards as an AE provision as well as how it fits the learning developed in professional contexts.

The main influence of the guidelines and funding of the EU was also emphasized in this article. We have tried to show the following: (a) the employability agenda predominant in the EU RPL policy can be identified as main driving force of RPL in both national contexts; (b) the RPL utilitarian model, based on a common set of aims,

procedures and principles coming from EU RPL policy, is important in both countries; and (c) the idea of using RPL for adults with work experience to gain professional qualifications is important and noble one, but it can in practice lead to social segregation and greater inequalities in the labour market. Following the analytical models of Harris (1999) and Andersson, Fejes and Ahn (2004), this discussion has shown the importance of the RPL utilitarian approach, whereas other approaches to RPL seem to be less evident in both countries.

These conclusions allow us to reflect further on the utilitarian character of RPL and the blind spots, which should be discussed in-depth in further research and analysis. Among these, we can raise the question of the existence of a paradox related to the fact that employers in both countries have played a leading role in identifying and designing of qualifications that are to be recognised and certified—especially in strongly regulated professions and/or in the ones in which workers do not need to have extensive knowledge and skills while working—but RPL-based qualifications is not much valued in the labour market. In fact, when it comes to new jobs, such as the ones in more dynamic economic sectors (tourism, ICT), employers seem to prefer to hire other workers, such as the ones holding higher school education certificates (Canário, Vieira & Capucha, 2019). Therefore, it seems that the provision of RPL-based qualifications (lacking an education as well as training component) is directed mostly at low qualified adults and does not support them in getting the most relevant knowledge for the labour market and to get a more rewarding job. Following this line of reasoning, in countries in which RPL includes a path supporting the certification of school knowledge and skills, such as in Portugal, it remains a strong form of provision, as it promotes self-esteem and personal motivation for adults to reaching for higher levels of school education. From this point of view, it might be important to debate if the stronger dimension of RPL in both countries, i.e. its vocational and professional character, seems also to be its most striking weakness from the (adults' and) employer's points of view when the professional RPL is at stake.

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Aims & Scope

The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. The journal thus attempts to be linguistically 'open access'. Whilst creating a forum for international and transnational debate, contributions are particularly welcome from authors in Europe and other locations where English is not the first language.

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