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Analysing Subjectification in Lifelong Learning Policymaking: A Comparative Analysis from Portugal, Germany, and Croatia

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7.1   Introduction

As Dale and Parreira do Amaral have observed, young adults' educational trajectories evolve across and intertwine with biographical and institutional stages and transitions, which vary from site to site and from region to region (2015, p. 23f). These school-to-school and school-to-work transitions are embedded in complex sets of institutional settings,

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economic and labour market structures, educational landscapes, as well as socio-cultural contexts. All together, they compound living environments in which young adults develop and pursue their life projects and where they choose from various opportunities available. When lifelong learning (LLL) policymakers design and implement educational policies in these environments, they necessarily interpret the social problems they observe from a particular discursive perspective (Kitsuse & Spector, 1973). During this interpretation, processes of subjectification emerge, as the target groups of the policies need to be identified, selected, discursively constructed, and institutionally addressed. We explore these processes of subjectification in LLL policymaking by focusing on three unnamed policies located in functional regions (FRs) of Portugal, Germany, and Croatia, with the aim to establish an initial position for further research and analysis, since for now subjectification remains a blind spot in the debate on educational policymaking, regarding in particular its impact on and during transitions and life courses of young adults. To approach this research gap and address the processes of subjectification in LLL, we seek to understand how, based on what ideas, and according to what discursively produced categories young adults follow their life courses and participate in LLL programmes. In addition to structural and institutional opportunity structures, how does subjectification impact their decision-making? Especially with regard to young adults in vulnerable positions, how do processes of subjectification establish and contribute to their current situations?

In our study, we explore the discursive processes of subjectification in LLL as follows: first, we provide a brief conceptual overview of the terms and methods used in our analyses and present the policies studied; second, we provide independent analyses of the policies and develop initial local patterns of subjectification; third, we juxtapose and compare the cases studied, outlining the most prominent features of subjectification produced in the discourses on LLL policymaking, looking in particular for common signs and local effects.

7.2   Concept of the Study and Cases of Comparison

In this section, we define the concept of subjectification, present the two basic theoretical approaches, and introduce the policies studied.

Subjectification has become almost a buzzword in many recent studies and critical analyses. It refers to technologies of power that seek to shape the conduct of individuals and make them conform to certain ends (Foucault 1988, p. 18). Unlike the idea of subjectivity as a personal process of construing and responding to what individuals encounter in the world beyond them (Billet, 2010, p. 7), we assess subjectification as a discursive product and power technology through which subjected individuals are governed according to hegemonic discourses and understandings of the political (Mouffe, 2005). In our study, we focus on young adults as a specific group of individuals exposed to discursive processes of subjectification. The heuristic category of young adult describes the transitory stage between youth and adulthood (Stauber & Walther, 2016) and it is often used to frame the addressees of LLL policies, especially those in vulnerable positions. In their transitions to adulthood, young adults face difficult structural arrangements, especially given their housing transition (Beer et al., 2011; Forrest & Yip, 2013) or insecure employment opportunities (Stuth & Jahn, 2020), but they might also experience individual discomfort with regard to their ethnicity, migration status, religious beliefs, or gender (Reynolds, 2011; Hunner-Kreisel & Bohne, 2016; Leathwood & Francis, 2006). Besides structural and individual aspects that cross and shape these transitions, young adults are involved in discursive processes which take place in their everyday lives (Waldschmidt et al., 2007) and which need to be thoroughly revised in order to address the local and regional educational inequalities and inform the relevant stakeholders in LLL policymaking.

While addressing and critically examining the processes of subjectification in LLL, we have adopted two complementary theoretical perspectives. First, with the concept of subjectification, we refer to Michel Foucault's notion of power and subject (Foucault, 1978; Foucault, 1982). Within this perspective, subjects appear as mere effects of discursive

practices that produce desired expectations, ideals, ways of self-conduct, rationales, logics, and norms to be followed. In this regard, individuals can become subjects of discourse by a process called subjectification. It is important to mention, however, that individuals are not automatically subjects to any discourse that co-creates their social reality, such as the discourse on LLL. Nonetheless, they are exposed to numerous attempts to steer their self-conduct and submit to certain ends, be they educational, political, or economic. Therefore, the goal of our analysis is to explore and unveil the discursive processes of subjectification and show how they affect young adult's decision-making and shape their educational opportunity structures. In this case, however, we focus on the discursive construction of subjectification, rather than young adults' responses to these processes. By doing so we do not consider them as passive recipients or mere observers of LLL discourses but attempt to carefully describe the discursive landscapes they live in and interact with.

Second, we relate our study to the Critical Political Economy (CPE) approach, which acknowledges the role culture plays in the articulation between the economic and the political (Jessop 2010, p. 337) and places the triangle of economy, politics, and culture in a broader set of social relations (Sum & Jessop, 2013). CPE thus integrates the critical discursive analysis of cultural and societal influences, including the discursive dimension of LLL, with the dominant political and economic trends, and analyses their embeddedness in institutional arrangements, policy practices, and hegemonial powers. The CPE approach informs us that LLL policymaking develops in limited local environments and is reduced to a selective choice of interpretations, understandings, and explanations of educational problems and solutions needed. Thus, why and how a particular LLL policy emerges and becomes institutionalised depends on specific local contexts which include the economic condition of the particular region, the current labour market situation, and the dominant socio-cultural habits and norms. In this regard, we approach our policies as contingent, temporary phenomena, with local variations and specificities and examine them accordingly.

The combination of both approaches helps us create the theoretical foundation for our analysis. Foucault's notion of subjectification as a power technology, for example, has shifted our view on discursive

processes and sharpened our critical lenses to perceive the latter as a powerful means to steer young adults' self-conduct. The contingent nature of LLL policies, as perceived from a CPE perspective, has supported us in carefully examining the local meaning-making processes and understandings of how LLL policies and programmes emerge, and local policymakers perceive and address educational issues on site. In this way, both approaches complement each other and enable us to delve into the discursive practices of subjectification.

Against this theoretical background, we aim at providing a comparative analysis of three policies located in FRs of Portugal, Germany, and Croatia. In the following, we address these policies in the multiplicity of educational, cultural, political, and socio-economic actors, relations, and aspects involved in LLL policymaking and conceptualise them as interactive and relational cases, using for each of them a code letter for better distinction (A—Portugal, B—Germany, C—Croatia). Our three cases represent various socio-economic conditions, different education systems, and diverse political landscapes, thereby providing an excellent opportunity to observe and compare discursive processes of subjectification on site. With our cases we refer to previous studies (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2018), which have thoroughly examined their structural and institutional landscapes as well as individual experiences of young adults. These studies have mapped and reviewed our cases in their local contexts and sought to understand the construction of their underlying orientations, objectives, target groups, success criteria, and solutions proposed on the one hand, as much as the views, visions, wishes, expectations, and desires of young adults on the other hand, resulting in complex comparisons on living conditions of young adults (Scandurra et al., 2017; Rambla et al., 2018).

Before applying a fine-grained analysis, in which we decipher the most relevant information for the subsequent examination of the processes of subjectification, we briefly present our cases.

Case A, located in the FR of Vale do Ave (Portugal), consists of upper secondary vocational education provision, and is highly labour-market oriented. This provision is part of a set of measures directed at competitiveness, growth, and employment of young adults and seeks to fulfil its goals by adjusting the training offer to the priorities and needs of

different socio-economic sectors and regional/local labour markets, accentuating the permanent interaction between schools and companies. It is an educational policy aimed at preventing early school dropout and youth unemployment, targeting mostly young people above the ninth grade. As a state-run, long-term LLL policy measure it is executed by public and private secondary schools and private professional schools in association with companies, NGOs, and other private and public institutions. Regarding its funding, it receives direct support from the Portuguese government and the European Social Fund (ESF), as well as indirect funding by companies and other institutions where curricular internships take place (Alves et al., 2016; Rodrigues et al., 2018).

Case B is located in the FR of Bremen (Germany). It started in 2009 and it was co-funded by the ESF. Its main objective is to extend schooling by one year beyond the regular duration of secondary education for young adults with specific learning needs and disadvantages and to prepare them for entrance into the skilled craft sector of the vocational education and training (VET) system. Young adults can participate in this LLL policy after completing their secondary education and the policy offers them more practice-oriented curricula and internships. By doing so, it connects secondary education with VET and enables the students to regain basic skills for further education and/or job positioning. Thus, the policy seeks to prepare young adults for apprenticeships by teaching them how to set goals, structure their daily schedule and learn to be tidy and punctual. Since the policy is mainly practice-oriented, young adults have many opportunities to get practice and work with various professionals and teachers. Almost 85% of participants receive a school-leaving qualification, which strongly reduces the rate of dropouts in this FR. However, the policy depends heavily on support from the city of Bremen as well as of the ESF, which is why it cannot guarantee stable operation in the future (Bittlingmayer et al., 2016; Verlage et al., 2018).

Case C is located in the FR of Osijek-Baranja (Croatia) and is considered a labour market policy. The purpose of this LLL policy is to enhance users' competences, to increase competitiveness and restore the balance of skills supply and demand. It seeks to do so mostly by increasing the availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services to all Croatian citizens and by providing appropriate support to different target groups at

local and regional levels. The policy is a centralised measure that provides information on educational and employment opportunities, enables independent searching for recent job vacancies, and supports the use of different online tools. In cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, and using various forms of provision, including counselling, thematic workshops, lectures, presentations, seminars, and panel discussions, it provides necessary information on education, employment, lifelong career planning, and other self-development possibilities. The main challenge for career guidance counsellors is that of aligning personal ambitions and mobility possibilities of young adults with local labour market opportunities and getting them through limited or unattractive options. Its main funder is the Croatian Employment Service, and its work is financed by national as well as European funds (Bouillet & Domović, 2016; Bouillet et al., 2018).

All cases selected are supported by the ESF and are operated at the intersection of education and labour market. When applying the CPE approach, the short description of the cases shows that different settings can offer different possibilities of support and provide policymakers with various tools for LLL policymaking, depending on what is considered the main local/regional challenge. We now look at the discursive dimension of LLL policymaking and describe the discursive processes of subjectification in a more fine-grained analysis.

7.3 Case Analysis: Capturing Patterns of Subjectification

In this part, we provide an in-depth analysis of the cases and their underlying discursive processes. Capturing and describing local and regional discursive processes that accompany the design, regulation, and provision of LLL policymaking yields the information necessary for further analysis of the forms and patterns of subjectification. We explore these patterns according to their effects, logics, and rationalities that determine the self-conduct of young adults.

7.3.1   Case A

With regard to Case A in the FR of Vale do Ave, its core upper secondary education policy was first developed in the context of high rates of youth unemployment and lack of adequacy of young adults' qualifications, aiming at combating early school leaving in a socio-economic context of crisis. However, when analysing the policy's instruments, it appears that it mostly offers market-oriented (re)training with the objective of helping young adults to continue their studies and/or enter the labour market. While practising in various job positions, young adults are meant to experience how their knowledge, skills, and attitudes align with different training offers. A double certification programme grants students the opportunity to gain both academic and professional skills and allows them to continue their studies in higher education and/or to seek a job in their specialisation. The policy focuses on three kinds of students: (i) those who want a specific, practical training in a given area; (ii) low achievers; and (iii) school dropouts, or those at risk of dropping out of school. Besides promoting motivation, as well as professional and personal fulfilment, the policy attempts to qualify them for concrete skills demand. It has been designed to combat and prevent economic decline, high unemployment rates, and school dropouts and it does so by adjusting young adults' skills and abilities to the labour market needs, thereby producing adjustable subjects ready to account for the economic inconsistencies that occur over time. However, while it instrumentalises education as a means to obtain economic sustainability, it at the same time reduces its potential to promote social change and transformation (Desjardin, 2015).

   As mentioned, this LLL policy is directly funded by the Portuguese government and the ESF. In some cases, whenever public funding is not enough to cover the regional demands for qualifications, it is complemented by private funding. Indeed, companies can associate with schools, as well as other institutions and actors, and fund new courses or more classes in existing courses if needed. Consequently, some companies become part of the management and/or advisory boards of the schools and can validate and oversee their pedagogical work. This makes room for

structuring school curricula and navigating educational programmes by private funders. When interviewed in previous studies, some experts tended to acknowledge that without private funding, young adults would have to return to regular education, thereby experiencing frustration and losing their vocational guidance. As it could be observed, the national and European support of the policy is reinforced by indirect support of local/regional companies, which, by additionally subsidising selected courses, use the institutional infrastructure of the schools, their structural conditions, and young adults' precarious situations to create their own workforce, accounting both for the need for low unemployment rates (political objective) and the need for high-performing future workforce (economic objective). When critically assessed, while this case might appear as a good cooperation between private and public sectors, it runs the risk of suppressing more humanistic school curricula, infiltrating LLL with neo-managerial rationalities of accountability, flexibility, and productivity, and fabricating self-entrepreneurial subjects (Bröckling, 2015).

Further, this policy allows young adults to get professional qualifications, increase employability with respect to their actual interests, abilities, and skills, and enhance their motivation to study and work. However, it carries with it one strong handicap, especially in relation to young adults. Engaging in this LLL policy is very often associated with the notion that such educational pathways are offered to students who fail in attending regular education and have low academic abilities and achievements. This image, culturally nurtured in families and among friends, is generally widely accepted—even public-school teachers regard this policy as an alternative pathway for low achievers. At this point, social and cultural expectations enter the complex relationships between economy, education, and politics. Young adults are expected to follow traditional, standardised, and well-structured educational schemes to account for and sustain the image of successful and established life projects. In this sense, academic (under)achievements are deemed to relate directly to life (under)achievements, enabling the processes of subjectification to take place simultaneously in school-to-work transition and in the life projects of young adults.

7.3.2   Case B

The LLL policy of Case B focuses on young adults who had troubles continuing school education and grants them extra time during their transition, which is extended not only in terms of education, but also in terms of a more general construction of their life courses. As previous qualitative analyses have shown, many young adults enter this policy demotivated, disoriented, and disillusioned, with low self-esteem and no ideas about their own (career and family) future. After getting lost somewhere in the school-to-school and/or school-to-labour market transition, the policy becomes the last chance for them, while trying to compensate for inconsistencies in the formal education system. In that respect, its undeclared goal is to address young adults that would otherwise experience additional demands in their educational and career lives. Although they have become formally lost, since they are out of the standard educational path, and need special attention, the policy indicates that there is still a chance for them to restart.

While participating in the policy programmes, young adults are disciplined and trained to be punctual and well-structured. Out of the complex network of relationships that build and define the institutional and discursive opportunity structures, young adults are considered the most manageable part. They can be governed by direct orders, for example, by parents, teachers, peers and so on, but also indirectly, for example, by proposed school curricula, innovative teaching techniques, digital learning, and structured daily schedules. Young adults are thus channelled to the best choice they can make—to catch up with the others and continue a standard path—although it remains unclear whether they agree with this goal and are invited to debate over other possible ways of gaining competencies and skills.

The policy focuses particularly on young adults with disadvantages in terms of learning, but also on those with physical impairments, experiences of being bullied, migration background, missing language skills, difficult family situations, and so on. In this regard, a learning disadvantage (Ger. "Lernbenachteiligung") can easily be considered a person's state, rather than a discursive construction. Thus, while the policy seeks

to cover the gap in the educational trajectories of participating young adults, it risks presenting them as vulnerable individuals and not as individuals living under vulnerable conditions. Further, individuals who submit to such self-perception, that is, who start considering themselves as vulnerable, disadvantaged, and in need of assistance, indeed might become vulnerable; that is, they can delegate control over their educational and life trajectories to other authorities, whether parents, peers, or schools. This applies especially to those young adults who depend more heavily on other people and experience more friction and detours in their life courses. While their environment makes them appear vulnerable, the self-acceptance of this subjectivity indeed makes them behave like vulnerable.

7.3.3   Case C

LLL policies, including the core policy of Case C, entail a variety of stakeholders: public authorities, public employment services, career guidance providers, education and training institutions, youth support services, business, non-governmental sector, employers, trade unions, and so on. All the actors involved in regional LLL policy development, with an emphasis on content and type of skills, recognise the importance of more intensive and allied cooperation between educational institutions and the real economy. However, this case is characterised by the fragmentation of career guidance services (e.g., those in schools, universities, and non-governmental sector), the lack of a database about the youth labour market activity, and a lack of infrastructure which is responsive to different groups of young people and to their changing needs. Because of the policy's lack of a proper coordination between different educational stakeholders and governmental bodies, career information becomes quite fragmented and non-transparent, making it difficult for young adults to reach out for the data they need. This has implications for both their geographical and social mobility and their career opportunities. Sharing fragmented pieces of information on career options might respect existing administrative boundaries but remains worthless for making informed career decisions. Regarding the policy provision, its practitioners are

mostly detached from the decision-making processes and unfamiliar with other types of similar policies in their respective field. In addition, systematic evaluation of the policy is missing and regular statistics about its activities and users are also unavailable. Along with the lack of evaluation, databases about the labour market demands, their connection to the existing educational programmes as well as other data which could enable a more balanced view of the labour market situation and shed light on young adults' career options, are also missing. Against this background, the institutional rigidness and the lack of transparency creates elusive mechanisms of guidance and help, offering only limited, scarce information for further career decision-making.

The lack of structural cooperation between educational sector and businesses, in turn, leads to an insufficient offer of educational programmes which are receptive to labour market needs. Consequently, employers are unsatisfied with young adults' skills and competencies which they gain through their education and are not willing to employ them without practical experience. This missing link in the transition from school to the labour market creates further confusion among young adults, not knowing what to study and where to invest their energy and interest. Consequently, instead of building their life courses according to their wishes and desires, the randomness of the educational and labour market offers pushes them to look for the options they find more accurate to their current situation. In turn, demotivation and distrust that the proposed measures will lead them to a successful employment can be seen as an indirect effect of the lack of cooperation—something young adults would expect—between the government, educational institutions, LLL policies, and other actors involved in their school-to-work transition. In this way, young adults subordinate to the subjectivity of victims waiting for external forces to create and navigate their life courses. Paradoxically, the more offers and options they are provided with, the less they believe in their usefulness. Here, personal responsibility, agility, and willingness to pursue one's own life course cannot be applied to their full extent and are replaced by a rather pragmatic and utilitarian decision-making.

Each of the cases studied offers a slightly different perspective on the local and regional LLL landscapes young adults interact with. The dynamics of life courses vary according to specific sets of relationships that play

a central role in designing and conceptualising LLL policies. In this section, we have tried to bracket out the concurrence of various factors, paying attention to the discursive production of the processes of subjectification.

7.4   Case Comparison: Signs and Effects of Subjectification

In this last step, we juxtapose the cases and identify the main signs and effects of subjectification. By comparing the cases, we look at how different discursive processes shape the subjectification on site and impact the self-conduct of young adults. The previous analysis has shown that the processes of subjectification share several common signs while at the same time preserve their specificity. We start by showing their similar signs and continue by debating their various local/regional effects and peculiarities.

7.4.1   Common Signs

Regarding the common aspects between all three Cases, we can say that the discursive processes in LLL policymaking produced subjects that are able to learn. While targeting young adults with disabilities, NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), dropouts, underachievers, or disoriented youth, they have implicitly addressed them not only as subjects in need of assistance, but also as subjects capable of learning, re-training, and returning to standard educational and occupational paths. LLL, in that respect, generated a discursive regime of learning, absorbing, and making use of as much individual capabilities as possible, thereby attempting to change the individuals into self-organising learners (Tuschling & Engemann, 2013).

Moreover, the LLL policies, except for Case C, were keen on reducing subjects' biographical uncertainties and filling in the gaps in their educational and life trajectories. By offering various extra-curricular activities, re-training, and constantly feeding them with new information, the policies have tried to enhance their employability and activate their

self-development. In doing so, they have introduced a view on (educational and working) life as a continuous, sequenced, and logical set of phases and states. Seen from the neoliberal perspective that dominates the educational policymaking worldwide (Chitpin & Portelli, 2019), interruptions caused by turbulence in transition emerge as blind spots and weaknesses to be fixed. Penetrated by corporate practices of accountability and self-responsibility (Stahl, 2019), the educational discourse in LLL nudges young adults to make use of and document their transition, since only what is visible, known, and documented—via certificates, credentials, or job experiences—can be utilised and counts on the labour market. Thus, the pervasive, yet subtle demand of the neoliberal discourse to document educational trajectories, biographies, and life projects might indeed discourage young adults, especially those in vulnerable positions, who experience disruptions in their transition and miss educational or job opportunities.

The local discourses not only expect young adults to maximise their productivity and effectiveness and take part in a continuous race of optimisation (Ball, 2009), but they also support them in self-accountability by imposing an internal mechanism of reward and punishment, expressed in an urge to be active and committed on the one hand, and to feel depressed and frustrated, if things fail, on the other hand. Young adults are not only made responsible for seeking to catch up with the majority, but also accountable to themselves for not being active, involved, or passionate enough to reach their goals.

7.4.2   Local Effects

Juxtaposing and comparing the cases brings out local peculiarities and effects of subjectification.

When compared to other cases, Case A relies more strongly on private investments in school curricula and LLL programmes. In this way, businesses invest in skills and competencies of young adults, expecting to generate a future labour force trained to cope with unexpected developments in the labour market. This steady marketization of LLL policymaking leads to the "enactment of radical and innovative *solutions* to

policy problems" (Ball, 2010, p. 134, emphasis in orig.) and supports "*workforce versatility*, which enables high levels of job mobility, premised on a high level of general and technical training and a readiness to add new skills in order to make change possible" (Olssen, 2008, p. 39, emphasis in orig.). These productive rather than critical subjects are thus obtaining skills for further optimisation of their self-entrepreneurial engagements, but not skills and abilities necessary for understanding and thinking about the challenges, needs, and difficulties they and other people face. Fixed to their self-actualisation, they are not taught to question the very conditions that their local and national environment is built upon and, in the end, to recognise the cause of them being seen as unemployed, underachieving, or dependent subjects.

Taking Case B into consideration, its most discerning characteristic has been the care for subjects with learning disadvantages. On the one hand, this local LLL discourse potentially essentialises young adults' vulnerability as a personal trait and causes further stigmatisation and aggravation of their status (Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2021), turning a blind eye on the vulnerable conditions they live under (Burghardt et al., 2017). Additionally, it portrays vulnerability as a solely negative condition, disregarding its potential for productively transforming the individually experienced, undesirable social phenomena, including injustice, inequality, oppressing power structures, or gender biases (McLeod, 2012). It is therefore vital to distinguish between vulnerability to (negative condition) and vulnerability for (positive condition) something. The condition of vulnerability for something acknowledges young adults' positive role in shaping their own life courses and environments. Instead of being passively and helplessly exposed to the latter, their ability to perceive various kinds of injustice can encourage and empower them to actively participate in designing their educational pathways. At the individual level, their cognitive skills, emotions, interests, capabilities, physical abilities, and experiences can be either equipped with neoliberal practices of self-discipline, time management, self-accountability, optimisation, and so on, to be utilised in the labour market, or they can become part of a greater transformation of oneself and the society.

Compared to Cases A and B, Case C can be characterised by an elusive educational and labour market infrastructure which leads to overlaps,

mismatches, and redundancies among LLL policy programmes. From the point of view of local policymakers, young adults' transition from one stage to another is disturbed by poor cooperation but can be fixed once better connections between various governmental bodies, and also more transparency, are established. Critically seen, the argument of flawed conditions for a smooth school-to-work transition underpins the necessity and relevance of LLL policymaking. However, if the lack of cooperation is the cause for disruptions in the life trajectories of young adults, then the latter appear simply as governable subjects. In other words, this local LLL discourse subjectifies not only young adults, but also their life trajectories, their future, visions, and even challenges, which supports the idea of "neoliberal governmentality that steers the subjects indirectly or at a distance" (Ball, 2010, p. 135.).

After juxtaposing and comparing the cases to show common signs and local effects, we now conclude with a few overall remarks.

7.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, we have questioned how certain forms of self-conduct become central in the life trajectories of young adults, and how discursive processes impact their decision-making and steer their life projects. By separately analysing and subsequently comparing three distinct cases, we have shown that LLL represents a global discourse for the flexible preparation of subjects (Olssen, 2008, p. 38) and that it entails specific local variations, depending on what aspect becomes central. Further, we have seen that the observed LLL discourses fit into a general dispositive of activation (Kessl, 2006), which seeks to remedy structural inconsistencies and regularly emerging dysfunctionalities by enhancing individual skills and capabilities (Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2019). Finally, we have studied the discursive dimension of LLL policymaking, showing how processed of subjectification relate directly to young adults' life trajectories, visions and challenges, but also emotions, frictions, and vulnerabilities.

To conclude, subjectification presents a powerful technology through which LLL discourses create and justify their objects of governing and with which young adults must cope and interact. Whether young adults

accept or resist the attempts to steer and colonise their life projects remains a matter of extra investigation. In any case, this study has revealed three problematic findings worthy of further exploration.

First, subjectification touches on manifold aspects of young adults' lives, from their life projects, visions, and futures to their thinking, decision-making, and acting, and even to their cognitive skills, emotions, and bodies. Moreover, this process blurs the lines between private and school or work life and it is strengthened by other neoliberal discourses, such as those promoting preventive healthcare or job activation. In this way, the neoliberal practices of subjectification encompass the lives of young adults from multiple angles and, consequently, these multiple angles need to be taken into consideration when trying to vitalise and inform the local/regional policymaking.

Second, young adults' voices aren't seen as relevant features to include in the debates on further development of education. Instead of speaking about them, policy research and, in particular, policymaking should concentrate on listening to them, if for no other reason than that of educating them to actively change their lives and take the responsibility for their futures and the futures of the regions and countries they live in.

Third, according to issues presented, there are at least two actions that could be implemented to answer to the needs of young adults. LLL programmes, on the one hand, should resonate more profoundly with young adults' visions and expectations. On the other hand, their harmonisation with the labour market has to be addressed and conducted at the local and regional levels, taking into consideration how discursive processes create educational goals and expectations.

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