

Alienation, neoliberalism and education

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1 Part One: Alienation and abolition of alienation

This part presents selected excerpts from Marx and later Marxist thinkers on alienation.

Marx emphasized in his writings that to abolish alienation would equate re-creating a unity of man and practice. This is the focal point of Axelos in his broad analysis of alienation (1976). Inspired by Axelos the point of departure is Marx' own writings.

In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx notes how “the extension of products and needs falls into contriving and ever-calculating *subservience* to inhuman, unnatural and imaginary appetites ... This estrangement ... produces sophistication of needs on the one hand and a bestial barbarization, a complete, unrefined, abstract simplicity of need, on the other” (1964, p. 147-8).

The essence here is to show how consumerism compensates alienated labour. This follows from endless capital accumulation resting on the endless production and reproduction of new wants, needs and desires, depending on the ability to pay.

However, capitalism entails the contradictory character of the alienation, and capitalism is not merely destructive. Along the destructive part, capitalism is a constructive and creative force that transforms the world. In the *Grundrisse* we read how Marx acknowledges “the great civilizing influence of capital; its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere *local developments* of humanity and as *nature idolatry* ... capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices, as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life. It is destructive to all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces” (1973, p. 409-10).

This passage points to some kind of individual and collective alienations as necessary to the achievement of a higher order social system in which improved material conditions can realize the promise of an unalienated life. From Marx's perspective, the instrumental relation is at the centre of alienation. This relation develops under conditions of alienation and becomes inhuman. In other words, there must be an end that is not itself in turn a means.

The way out, thus, seems to be an acceptance of losses, necessary in order to achieve a greater end. Of course, this is an outcome of class struggle as shown in the following quote.

In volume three of *Capital*, Marx writes:

"In fact, the realm of freedom begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With this development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite" (Marx, 1981, p. 820).

Marx turns towards economics and emphasizes that to become a real human being means to enfold a productive appropriation of world and self. The point is that in alienated labor we are unable to appropriate our own activity, its products as well as the conditions of production.

Early socialists were convinced that a social revolution waited around the next corner. Therefore, they imagined a future without the burdens of capitalism, among other things the transition from the reign of necessity to the reign of freedom.

Will socialism or communism be able to overcome necessity? Will another future show up? According to Marx it will achieve the reign of freedom. Farther on he talks about something lying "beyond the sphere of actual material production". In general, he is declaring the essence of human history to lie in material production. That is why we could ask whether this "beyond" may be beyond material production.

Certainly, his vision about abolition between what is material and what is spiritual for the sake of basic, practical activity, raises the problem of what will become of freedom. His answer is given above: it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Farther on he notes that men shall "be brought into practical connection with the material (as well as intellectual) production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man)". The basic condition regarding this emancipative struggle is condensed in the following quote. It is important to maintain, that in capitalism, according to Marx, the labor process "posits the real objective conditions of living labor ... as alien, independent existences or as the mode of existence of an *alien person*, as self-sufficient values for themselves, and hence as values which form wealth alien to an isolated and subjective labor capacity" (Marx 1973, p. 461).

However, alienation is a concept that is often misunderstood. Mészáros demonstrates in his study (1970) that alienation is prominent in the early works of Marx such as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: "For Marxthe question of "transcendence" was ... inseparable from the programme of achieving the "unity of theory and practice". ...The introduction of the concept of "alienated labour" into Marx's thought has fundamentally changed all this. As we shall see later, as soon as the problem of transcendence has been concretized ...as the negation and supersession of "labour's self-alienation", Marx's system was born" (Mészáros, 1970, p. 18).

The concept is further elaborated in *Grundrisse* which is “fundamentally different from his past use of the humanist alienation concept; the labour alienation in the *1844 Manuscript* was a humanist value postulate; the idealized essence that it formed was at odds with reality. This was a contradiction between imaginary and real ... The self-alienation of labour was a logical reflection, established in ideas.... The labour alienation in *Grundrisse*, on the other hand, was fundamentally Marx’s reflection on real history. The objectified results of workers’ past labour actually became the rulers and exploiters of today’s workers. The ‘past’ created by workers becomes the ruler of the ‘present’ ... Hired labour necessarily created a ruling power transformed out of itself: capital. This is the actual alienation of capital and labour relation that Marx describes” (Zhang, 2014, p. 481). The important difference is as follows: “In the *Grundrisse* the universality of alienation arises out of the historical tendency within capital to create the world market, to establish its social (class) and metabolic relations everywhere and to inscribe certain identifiable laws of motion into human history under the rule of the coercive laws of competition” (Harvey, 2018, p. 426).

The conclusion regarding alienation is that the concept in a narrow sense relates to exploitation of labour and tends to exclude the former, broader understanding.

Returning to the above question of socialism or communism as solutions related to a total abolition of alienation Mészáros shows his doubts (pp. 241ff.). For example, he points to institutionalization: “Totally and definitively to abolish alienation in this respect would imply the total abolition of human institutions, while we do not need to abolish desks to remove their alienated institutional functioning. But what the total abolition of human institutions would amount, to is, paradoxically, not the abolition of alienation but its *maximization* in the form of total anarchy, and thus the abolition of *humanness*. “Humaneness” implies the opposite of anarchy: *order* which, in human society, is inseparable from some *organization*. Even “conscious association” – no matter how conscious it might be – is inconceivable without having some specific form, and this form, for human beings, cannot be other than some kind of institution set up on the basis of some guiding principles. And even if we take the ideal case – when the underlying guiding principle is conscious guarding against any possible petrification or “reification” – the fact still remains that the specific form of association has to deal with specific tasks which will also determine the character of the institution in question. But this last – inescapable – fact means that the given new form of institution which has not superseded a reified structure contains an element of reification, insofar as it is *necessarily biased* against the tasks it is *incapable* of fulfilling” (pp. 245-46). Mészáros continues: “To do away completely with this difficulty one would have to postulate either the absolute finality of certain tasks (i.e. “ideal tasks” – that is, the end of history or a utopian “golden age”) or the absolute finality of an institution (i.e. the “ideal institution” which could ideally solve all possible tasks – such an ideal institution would not and could not have any specific form and, of course, it could not solve any specific task whatsoever). For such postulates, however, one would also have to invent a being to fit in them: a being whose needs, tasks, functions, etc., never change, or a being who has no needs, tasks, functions, etc. at all” (p. 246).

It is not possible to eliminate all possible contradictions between the individual and the given form of society. This challenge is also part of Polanyi’s argument: The sacrifice of individual freedoms is essential to the development of collective freedoms – e.g. the development of a welfare state (Polanyi, 1957, p. 256-58).

Mészáros maintains the central points of Marx' theory, and as we shall see Harvey represents a similar viewpoint.

1.1 David Harvey on alienation

David Harvey, in his analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, argues: "The issue is not, therefore, that capital cannot survive its contradictions but that the cost of it so doing becomes unacceptable to the mass of the population" (2014, p. 264). This optimistic prophecy is to some extent influenced by Bertolt Brecht's dictum 'hope is latent in contradictions' (p. 265). In addition, Harvey presents his visions. As capitalism forms an organic whole it is necessary to develop a catalytic conception to ground and animate political action: "A collective political subjectivity has to coalesce around some foundational concepts such as how to constitute an alternative economic engine if the powers of capital are to be confronted and overcome. Without that, capital can neither be dispossessed nor displaced. The concept I here find most appropriate is that of *alienation*." (p. 267).

Harvey understands alienation as a diversity of meanings, enlarging the scope of the narrower version. For example, he mentions alienation as a social relation where it refers to the possible alienation of affections and trust. This alienation is very damaging to the social fabric, because it involves loss of trust in persons or institutions. As a psychological term alienation is to do with isolation - here understood as a passive term, whilst as an active term it means to be angry and hostile at being or feeling oppressed, deprived or dispossessed and to act out that anger and hostility. "Alienated behaviours can arise...because people feel frustrated at the lack of life chances or because their quest for freedom ended up in domination" (p. 267). These examples point out a crucial issue - that of social reproduction which Harvey discusses under the heading "Contradiction 13: Social Reproduction". In the realm of social reproduction, education plays a central role since an educated and trained workforce becomes a necessity for capital; this coincides with a political project "on the part of a reformist bourgeoisie to create a 'respectable' working class that would refrain from riot and revolution and succumb to the blandishments that capital could offer" (p. 183). Thereby, Harvey emphasizes the close link between capitalism and public education: "While public education has done much to meet capital's demand for ideological conformity combined with the production of skill sets appropriate to the state of the division of labour, it has not eradicated the underlying conflict. And this is so in part because state interests also enter in to attempt to forge a sense of cross-class national identity and solidarity that is at war with capital's penchant for some form of rootless cosmopolitan individualism, to be emulated by both capitalist and worker alike. None of these contradictions of the content for public education can easily be settled, but this does not detract from the simple fact that investment in education and training is a sine qua non for capital's competitiveness" (p. 184). Further, education becomes a 'big business' unto itself by means of privatization and fee paying as a substitute to free and public education. Looking deeper into the interest of capital and the capitalist state related to aspects of social reproduction theories of 'human capital' are often misleading. Skilled and highly trained labour might expect a higher rate of remuneration than unskilled labour. This does not change the basic constellation: the worker can only realize the higher value of those skills by working under conditions of exploitation; this means that capital and not the worker reaps the benefit (cf. Marx 1981, pp. 503-5).

While this interest in increasing productivity did not encompass all of the worker's cultural and affective life, and social reproduction (e.g. raising of children or caring for the sick and elderly) continued to be very much the individual worker's affair and placed outside of market

considerations, industrialization and urbanization necessitated the regulation and provision of public health, education, social control and cultivation of habits aiming at self-discipline and citizenship. Furthermore, unpaid household labour has been and still is absorbed in social reproduction. Social reproduction therefore works so that real costs are externalized on to the households. Today, these costs are partly changed into market-transactions (frozen meals, fast food, childcare, etc.) and are augmented by the increasing capital intensity of household technology.

When considering how education has been encompassing the whole lifespan it becomes obvious that education of the workforce therefore has to begin early in life and this puts the educational system in "the cross-hairs of capital's concerns" (p. 187). I am not going to dwell in any length here but use these analyses to emphasize how the meaning of education has changed from 'Bildung' to a mere reproduction of skills oriented at the needs of the labour market. Harvey finishes his reflections by drawing on Henri Lefebvre who sets out "to provide a critique of individuality (the 'private' consciousness and individualism); a critique of money (which he understood in terms of fetishism and economic alienation); a critique of needs (psychological and moral alienation from consumerism though not, of course, from necessary consumption); a critique of work (alienation of the worker); and, last but not least, a critique of the concept and ideology of freedom (the power over nature and over human nature). This points us towards a political form of anti-capitalist responses to what has happened to daily life under capitalism and what has so transformed social reproduction. The negation of multiple alienations must be the cutting edge in any collective political response to the degradations of daily life and the loss of autonomy in social reproduction at the hands of capital and the capitalist state" (p. 197-198).

As we have seen above the broader understanding or "universal alienation" entails a considerable explanation regarding daily life. In the following, Hartmut Rosa includes new features of alienation, in particular time.

1.2 Hartmut Rosa on alienation

Hartmut Rosa emphasizes in his essay (2010) five forms of alienation: from Space, from Things, from (our) Actions, from Time and from Self and Others (p. 83-97). He links this to acceleration and he further claims "social acceleration has become a totalitarian force in and of modern society". Rosa defines totalitarian power under certain conditions, namely "when a) it exerts pressure on the wills and actions of subjects, when b) it is inescapable, i.e. all subjects are affected by it, when c) it is all-pervasive, i.e. its influence is not limited to one or the other area of social life, but to all aspects of it, and d) when it is hard or almost impossible to criticize and fight it" (p. 61). Social acceleration is not possible to resist as it regulates every aspect of social life. The "progression of social acceleration transforms our time-space regime", and that people fear that they can no longer keep the pace and moreover are at risk to be left behind and as such become excluded (e.g. enter the precariat). Rosa's "central point of my critical approach is the fact that these dictates are hardly recognized and perceived as socially constructed....Time is still experienced as a brute, natural given, and people tend to blame themselves for bad time-management when they feel that they are running out of it. Time, so far, is essentially beyond the realm of politics" (p. 62). Rosa also provides three forms of critique, namely a functionalist, a normative and a moral one. The space does not allow us to go into any detail here. Yet, some hints might be of interest. Functionalist critique points to de-synchronization due to inherent contradictions of capitalism, in principle leading to a breakdown in social reproduction whereas the normative critique is to do with hidden

social norms of temporality and as such also an issue of ideology, e.g. whether the social formation and its practices are justifiable or not. Eventually, while moral critique as a subform of normative critique relies on a conception of justice, the second subform ethical critique is based on a concept of the good life. The two dimensions are crucial: the first one entails, what Rosa calls the broken promise of modernity, meaning that autonomy is under siege or worse, and the second one entails alienation. The latter is presented above and will not be further referred to or quoted except for the use of the forms of alienation regarding the empirical material. This viewpoint is to some extent supported by James Williams who has been researching what he calls 'attention economy' (Williams, 2018).

Eventually, the focus turns to education. Collins has for a long time pointed to educational inflation as a source of alienation while De Lissovoy has developed an interesting analysis of the education system by drawing on Marx' theory of 'primitive accumulation'.

1.3 Randall Collins on alienation

Another source of alienation stems from educational credential inflation (Collins, 2013). His claim is that "educational degrees are a currency of social respectability, traded for access to jobs; like any currency, it inflates prices (or reduces purchasing power) when autonomously driven increases in monetary supply chase a limited stock of goods, in this case chasing an ever more contested pool of upper-middle-class jobs. Educational inflation builds on itself; from the point of view of the individual degree-seeker, the best response to its declining value is to get even more education. The more persons who hold advanced degrees, the more competition among them for jobs, and the higher the educational requirements that can be demanded by employers. This leads to renewed seeking of more education, more competition, and more credential inflation" (p.52).

Collins adds: "The mass inflationary school system tells its students that it is providing a pathway to elite jobs, but spills most of them into an economy where menial jobs is all that is available unless one has outcompeted 80% of one's school peers. No wonder they are alienated" (p. 53).

Collins' point is of great importance at the top of the education system, the universities. The graduates risk a future in precarious, academic jobs. At the bottom an increasing number of students are performing at a low level. This might lead to exclusion from participation at the labour market. Does the term 'industrial reserve army' cover, e.g. the surplus population that is always present as a reserve to be absorbed into the workforce as capitalism expands, and at the same time is a useful pressure to keep wages down for the employed? In neoliberalism, it is a real imperative.

A red tread may be the many faces of oppression that these tendencies entail. Public schools are attacked for not delivering what politicians have promised, and the movement for privatization has taken hold. The teaching and curriculum are reorganized only within an instrumentalist framework. The process of learning is rewritten as a simple game of success or failure, and the meaning of educational authority is rearticulated in terms of the discourses of the criminal justice system - paraphrasing De Lissovoy (2008).

1.4 De Lissovoy on alienation

Of course, the educational trends and tendencies are part of a larger political and economic context marked by an increasing aggressive capitalism related to the public sphere combined with a stronger disciplinary logic. In other words, we talk about a reorganization of social life

as a project of neoliberalism. "Neoliberalism demands the subordination of public needs to the needs of capital and opposes forms of regulation and protection that lower the rate of exploitation of workers and hinder the appropriation of natural resources by private firms", De Lissovoy emphasizes (2008, p. 81). Put otherwise, neoliberalism represents a systematic accumulation by dispossession. Is this a novelty in the development of capitalism, or is it a reprise of an older chapter in the history of capitalism?

Once again turning to Marx, he describes how capitalism "is founded on a grand theft beginning at the end of the fifteenth century, as landed proprietors broke free from the constraints of law and custom of the feudal era and sought to appropriate for themselves the property that had previously belonged to the state or directly to the people" (De Lissovoy, 2008, p. 82). Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' seems useful when aiming at understanding current educational trends. Marx points out 'enclosure' in which the communal land of the village, also called 'the commons', were made private property. The peasant population was cleared off from the land and at the same time forced to join the growing ranks of the proletariat in the towns. In brief, this is a process of dispossession, and this process established the foundational social relationships that constitute capitalism. It separated "the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labor", i.e. "divorcing the producer from the means of production" (Marx 1867/1976, p. 874-75). This original separation of producers from means of production allowed capitalism, as the relation of exploitation between capital and labour took shape. The essential description of the historical passage is given in "So-Called Primitive Accumulation" (Marx, 1976, p. 871-940). The parallel with that period is obvious in "the case of teachers, who become truly proletarianized as the wage-laborers of the new educational plantations.." while students "are remade not as workers, but as the perfect consumers, compelled to "choose" a private firm ...to develop their capacities as pure human capital" (De Lissovoy, 2008, p. 97).

De Lissovoy's analytical approach has been to place developments in education in the context of transformations in capitalist society and culture and by doing this making links to the process of enclosure as mentioned in Marx's thought.

Against this backdrop of violence of the dawn of capitalism exemplified by Marx (England) we need to remember that a large part of the wealth was an outcome of the plunder of the rest of the world by European powers. Marx shows how the capitalist system, at its very birth, is a product of the murder, enslavement, and robbery of non-European peoples.

Eventually, Jaeggi developed an approach towards alienation. She points, in chapter three (2014), to problems like loss of meaning, powerlessness, relation of dominance (p. 22). Farther on, Jaeggi in terms of an emancipatory critique views alienation as a form of unfreedom. Consequently, the hypothesis used further on is the loss of control over one's own life. In our further line of argumentation, we will draw on Jaeggi's emphasis on the role of social practices in order to overcome alienation to self (p. 217).

1.5 Concluding the first part

How can we use this analysis? We can analyze current trends in schooling in light of Marx's own analysis of this early period. Marx called the historical stage primitive accumulation that made possible the birth of capitalism and its development on a grand scale. However, other elements of an analysis as presented in this part are necessary supplementary modes of understanding alienation to day.

Though the concept of alienation is very diverse, we boil it down aiming at using just a few of the possible meanings. Related to education and socialization it is a basic assumption that human beings have to accept a submission to given social conditions, since these conditions frame how we become individuals. This does not imply a simple merging into the community. On the contrary, we can individuate ourselves only in society, because even as individuals we are determined and shaped by the social character of our existence. Humans are associated meaning that we can control our own life only under certain conditions: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of alle the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living” (Marx, 1970, 67).

Many of the elaborations and approaches derived from Marx’s original work are valuable and useable. The societal conditions create several forms of alienation, ranging from commodification, commercialization and capitalization to institutionalization and acceleration.

In the next part, we will follow how these basic concepts are useful tools of interpretation as regards Danish education policy.

2 Part Two: Analytical description as regards Danish education policy

2.1 From ‘philanthropy’ to political economy

The importance of education is widely acknowledged at least since Becker claimed education to be the third element of wealth (Becker 1964). We return to the Becker’s take on human capital.

The Bologna Process heralded an Europeanisation of education policy of the Member States. Primarily, the influence was ‘indirect’ and it was exercised by means of interventions which consist partly of the construction of categories of thought, of organization of language and proposing solutions (which become dominant schemes for approaching educational problems), partly of acting in a variety of other areas (work, vocational training, professional qualifications, etc.), which involve reconfigurations of the educational system (Nóvoa, 2000). Nóvoa's point is that one should not just describe contexts and contents, but also interpret the organizing rationalities embedded in the discursive practices that support these policies (ibid., p. 28). Important rationalities are marketization and globalization. This makes the first point of attention related to alienation since these rationalities seemed unfamiliar regarding education. Hitherto, common goods such as education was tax financed and regulated according to national standards.

2.2 A market for higher education

On the one hand, the process points out to establishing a higher education market and on the other a pedagogical labor market. The first market seems still to be a dream, in spite of many efforts. The second might be a reality due to the Directive of Social Services in the EU. This may lead to the conclusion that we have to find a common model fit for the European process of integration. A former Danish Minister of Education – Ritt Bjerregaard – wrote 1978 that “uddannelsesplanlægning ikke er en virksomhed, som finder sted i national isolation” (Bjerregaard, 1978, p. 15) [“educational planning is not a business taking place in national isolation”, my translation]. She continues her argument to emphasize the national planning in those days as welcomed by OECD as an example of trying to combine equality and market.

The reason why is not that complicated to find: educational planning in Denmark followed the recommendation of the experts of OECD. This is an early example of getting examined by experts and later presenting their views as 'homegrown'. Still, in those days very few politicians gave Europe or the World any thought in domestic affairs like education or social policy.

The recommendations of OECD, however, are well known – classic neoliberal ideas such as investments in education, active labor market policy etc. The member states of OECD received recommendations targeting to get control over their finances during the oil crisis. Education just seemed to be one of many means of promoting a better and more competitive labor force. Therefore, a guiding principle was to find the formula for how education could contribute to the labor market. In later statements, neoliberal arguments are even more striking (The Danish Government, 2006). The basic idea then was to prepare a breakdown of the usual correspondence of education and labor market by adjusting educational qualifications to needs of the labour market. The concept 'usual correspondence' meant that universities independently used to decide their bachelor or master programs and what they thereby offered society, inclusive the labour market. A breakdown implied that universities no longer decide independently but are expected to deliver tailor-made useable educations. Originally such educations were not entirely oriented at the labour market, but on family, leisure time and citizenship and democratic participation as well. During the last 35 years, this has changed. Political decisions are by Parliament in the era of neo-liberalism transmitted to for example important companies or promising branches of industry and taken away from university sovereignty. The political intentions equate the conditions of the labour market to the conditions of the university. Particularly the latter intention point to an alienation of faculty members and students. This makes the second point of attention related to alienation as universities are losing autonomy, and become subject to academic capitalism.

2.3 The Learning Society or Information Age

The Danish educational tradition shows a clear path dependence. Education served enlightenment and not profit. However, the 'PISA-chock' opened a window of opportunity for the government around the year 2000. This situation triggered off a wave of education reforms, inspired by EU and OECD. Referring to Novóa, the government imported the terms of OECD and EU to explain the novelty of the policy.

For the Danish Government in 2006 internationalization as well as globalization connected closely with notions like The Learning Society, The Global Society, and The Information Society. Such notions are of course not just 'rhetoric', 'ideology' or the like. They are tools to understand the changes in different social spaces: say school reform, cultural changes, social work, social pedagogy and economic reconstruction. This means that the hero of today is an individual who travels as a lifelong learner in the global, informational society. An individual committed to rational planning and community - to problem solve, collaborate, and live a flexible life in which there are continual innovations and choice. The only thing not a choice is choice itself.

The flow of ideas across international borders shape educational systems. The global diffusion of ideas is not a recent phenomenon, but rather an ongoing process that has caught the attention of researchers, educational and social workers and pedagogues for quite a while. However, the implementation of new ideas or 'educational transfer' must work on a national scale. We are now enfolding this idea.

A sort of 'mild' consensus exists upon the fact, that the work of international agencies like UNESCO, World Bank, OECD and EU, i.e. the circulation of knowledge about education, represents new patterns of educational transfer. The intention is not to show or demonstrate the 'old stile' comparison, but simply to jump to the new patterns. To understand better the point the argument sounds: Former you would find two positions: a position that suggested that educational transfer was possible and desirable; another position that in contrasting the first stressed that educational transfer was neither possible nor desirable. Since the foundation of UNESCO and the OECD researchers have been convinced that "what began with philanthropy has ended with professionalism" (Noah and Eckstein, 1969, p. 82), meaning that the international agencies made the process of selection and adaptation 'scientific'. Such agencies were in an advanced position in the fictional scale created by the belief in a linear progression towards a scientifically legitimated educational transfer.

2.4 International agencies

The introduction of a universal model raised a number of critical objections. The existence of a universal model is a fact. Nowadays, educational transfer does not take place from one educational system to another, but from international agencies to specific educational systems. Here we are drawing heavily on Beech (Beech, 2006). The international agencies do not react upon a particular educational context; they abstract from practice, and this has significant consequences. International agencies do not seek to solve context-specific educational problems. They seek to identify universal educational principles that could be applied in most educational systems to 'improve' education. What does this imply? It implies that universal principles implicitly are based on the assumption that education can be seen as an independent aspect of social reality, and that, consequently, universal principles in education can be designed. The conclusion seems to be as follows: when launching developmental and technocratic views, international agencies were not trying to solve a context-specific educational problem; rather they were promoting a number of abstract universal social technologies (as e.g. educational planning) in order to improve education in most contexts – without asking what constitutes good education for all. This is the first challenge of creating more alienation.

The second challenge relates to the sequencing of the process and as such to other forms of alienation. The standard procedure due to old school comparison identified a problem at home, then a solution was found abroad, and finally a 'tested' social technology was transferred. Today international agencies simultaneously define the problems of an educational context and offer the solutions to these problems. This is twofold: on the one side, a spatial shift and on the other a shift in the timing of the process. Both shifts consolidated in the 1990'es when for example UNESCO or OECD promoted a Universal Model of Education for the Information Age. The proposals of the model presented in their prognosis the existence of a future of a rapidly changing world. If this was reliable, then it had effect for education, of course. Thereby, the tasks of the international organizations were not only to look for solutions to existing educational problems, but also to identify (or better predict) the problems that will arise in the future. What the outcome is? OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank have positioned themselves not only as the 'scientific experts' that are able to predict the future, but also as those who are able to design universal solutions that adapt to this ('imagined') future.

2.5 The Universal Model

The universal model was based on

- decentralization (school autonomy)
- lifelong learning
- centralized curriculum based on competencies
- communication skills
- creativity
- flexibility
- learning to learn
- ability to work in groups
- problem solving
- central evaluation systems
- professionalization of teachers
- reflection on practice (Beech 2006, p. 191-192).

In Denmark, the intention has for a longer period been to implement a complete reform of the educational system, meaning not only to change aspects or find solutions to known problems but rather to implement an all-embracing reform. The justification or rationale focused on the need to adapt to globalization and the information age – primarily based on the outcomes of PISA. In brief, the reforms followed the principles promoted by the international agencies in their universal model of education. Not surprisingly, there has been a strong critique regarding that policy, in particular concerning the disrespect of national history, culture and education tradition. As early as in the year 1900, Sir Michael Sadler, the famous English comparativist, made the following much-quoted statement: “A national system of education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties and of ‘battles long ago’. It has in it some of the secret workings of national life” (Sadler 1900, here quoted from Winther-Jensen, 2011, p. 52).

Though we may understand current times as cosmopolitan or global, we cannot exclude the close relationship of education and nation. For example, Phillips and Ochs (2003) elaborate the concept of transfer in a more detailed manner. First: the contextual framework matters as a reflection of internal dissatisfaction, negative external evaluation or economic resp. political change. Second: Decisions have to be made, ranging from theoretical types via realistic or practical ones to ‘quick fixes’ or even ‘phony’ Third: The ways of implementation depend on the conditions of the borrower country. Fourth: internalization or indigenization (sometimes called domestication of policy) pointing to the fact that if policy is contextualized and as such becoming part of the education system of the borrower country, and if it is possible to assess its effects on the pre-existing arrangements in education. This crucial point

emphasizes the obstacles that a universal model might meet. However, this does not mean that a universal model cannot gain foothold. Phillips and Ochs refer to a continuum of educational transfer including transfer introduced through influence. The universal model fits into the category of general influence of educational ideas (Winther-Jensen, 2011, p. 54-59). This general influence resembled a foreign power conquering a national education system and implementing ideas of endless accumulation, commodification, and educational degradation.

To return to Sadler's statement it is of importance to recognize the fundamental change on a global level. Education policy is a living part of a nation's life. However, looking back at the two or three last decades, the trend is evident: Europeanisation has taken place, referring to the domestic impacts of Europe, or in other words, the ways in which institutions, processes and policies emanating from the European level, influence policies, politics and polities at the domestic level (Börzel and Risse, 2006). The state economic systems were aiming at a certain convergence. The EU has launched strategies such as the Lisbon Strategy (2000) or Europe 2020 (2010) intending to implement a homogenous economic model on a European level in a globalized world. Among other things, these strategies introduced series of liberalization reforms with respect to privatizing and deregulating the economy; in particular, the European Single Market in 1992 intensified the liberalization. The establishment of the EMU fixed the so-called convergence conditions (deficit, public debt, interest rate, etc.) which in turn entailed measures in favor of the private initiative, a higher flexibility in the labour framework and a higher flexibility of the individual worker. Although not a direct part of the educational context, these changes paved the way for basic and dramatic changes of education.

2.6 Entrepreneurial activation

As an example, the next paragraph analyses the *entrepreneurial activation idea*. At the start of the last two decades, the EU introduced the figure of the entrepreneur. In the strategy Europe 2020 which looks for an intelligent and integrating economy, the idea of the entrepreneurship is cross-sectional. The entrepreneur figure seems to extend its influence with an extraordinary speed. It is associated with the name of an economic actor, with a way to work, with an active employment policy, with an aptitude toward the knowledge, technology and even life. The entrepreneur is characterized by qualities like passion, vision, and spirit. Everyone has to create his/her own job. Being a self-entrepreneur has become the personal response to unemployment and precariousness. In countries like France, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Spain exists a strong preference of independent over dependent work, primarily among young workers. Education in entrepreneurial values has reached even primary school textbooks in Spain. Thereby, entrepreneurship becomes a normal way of life. The EU promotes this ideal and places it in their programs – for example the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (EAP) and all actions and funding that it contains. The promises of the entrepreneurial regime are far from being a response to precariousness, and they cannot lead to a competitive society based on knowledge, talent and social cohesion. In reality, many self-employed, freelancers and so on are replacing a dependent precarious employment by an independent precarious entrepreneur – not by wish, but by necessity (paraphrasing Ortega and Munoz-Rodriguez, 2017).

Extending this line of argumentation, academic debates on capitalist domination show a plethora of criticism. Moutsios, in his interesting analysis of society and education, devotes a full chapter with the headline “total capitalism” (Moutsios, 2018, Chapter 4). His analysis leads to a statement on the decline of the project of autonomy in education (pp. 119f.).

Though universal primary and secondary education, massive tertiary and higher education are common, nevertheless autonomy of education is in decline. “This can be observed, indicatively, in the fading or collapse of pedagogic spaces and relations, the waning of the signification of childhood, the extensive technologisation and bureaucratization of learning, the ‘vocationalisation’ of curricula, the proliferation of surveillance techniques and the making of education policy under goals and mechanisms related with transnational capitalism” (p. 119). The crucial question is that education more and more is defined in economic terms, which means that education has one purpose, that of economy: consumerism, global competition on market shares, etc.

2.7 Human capital

Becker argued based on a rational choice-model. The criticism of his economic axiom raised more doubts. Do individuals calculate in a rational way? Do economic incentives motivate individuals? In other words, we approach a contested terrain. People may act in terms of altruism. In brief, education is just one of a number of qualifications. Becker claims the value of education in production and its importance for economic growth. In fact, we are not able to evidence this assumption. Wages do not necessarily correspond to educational level, as there are many other conditions to take into account (Tan, 2014). The Danish Model is an example of other conditions – tradition, conflicts, collective bargaining, embedded into the historical compromise of capital and labour. At least until date, we are not capable of pointing to a systemic empirical causality of education investment and economic growth. In contrast, Hansen (2011) refers to Margaret Archer to explain the growth in educational systems and emphasizes (perhaps forgotten, cf. Sadler) political struggles of values and interests. In the Danish case, decisions make an interplay of the educational system, external stakeholders, and political decision makers.

2.8 New arrangements in Denmark

The influence of the transnational education policy shaped new arrangements in Denmark. We can point out three levels: (1) school governance, (2) content and objectives of the policies taken into account the discourse of emphasizing dominant ideas of competence development aimed at a globalized knowledge society, and (3) a targeted research policy aiming at provide a scientific base for political initiatives (Dorf, 2018).

Over a few decades, a crucial change turned up regarding the general purpose of education and the managing techniques. In the 1970es, the overarching purpose emphasized (national) community and critical judgment of pupils, while in the New Millennium, the purpose related to globalization, entailing comparison (PISA) and (national) coherence. In brief, the universal idea of education to democracy shifted paradigmatically to education to the labour market (Pedersen, 2011). The first impact of transnational policymaking addressed the problem of capitalist competition on market shares.

The second impact dealt with immigration. Immigration seemed to be a treat to the Danish nation rather than a global condition or even a good opportunity to develop a more multicultural society (Hermann, 2007, 131). Instead of embracing the new conditions, the political majority sought to reframe ‘Danishness’ by means of canonical textbooks on history, culture and literature launched by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education linked to a public discourse on ‘welfare tourism’ and based on ‘welfare chauvinism’. This cultural theme played a major role from 2001 and onwards combined with strong regulations with respect to refugees and migrants, particularly after 9/11.

The third impact emphasized performance of students and teachers, ranking school outcomes due to PISA and national tests. The political majority argued that performance as a measure of the accountability of the public school necessitated due to the global comparisons and competitions.

Though economic considerations (the risk of losing competitive advantages) played an important role, national and cultural considerations were at stake, too. Thus, we can identify two tracks in Danish education policy. On the one hand, what may be labelled an adaptive track as regards 'the necessary policy' oriented towards the new global or transnational conditions and the national power of competition, including education and labor market reforms for the future, and on the other a conservative (re)orientation aiming at the survival of the nation emphasizing national culture, religion and history. This other hand relates to the past. Even critical voices regarding transnational interference in national education policy seem to accept the premise that globalization processes require a derived 'necessary' education policy. However, research does not evidence the assumptions of OECD and the EU-Commission. OECD seeks to measure certain qualities claimed to be crucial as regards individual or national financial success. The evidence does not exist. Further, there is no strong link between education outcomes measured by means of the PISA-score and economic growth, assumed by the Commission (Commission of the European Communities, 2007).

A gradual transition has taken place. The point of departure was 'child-centered' while the point of destination is 'system-centered'. During a long gradual move the former focus of school (education adjusted to the child's entire development by equalizing cognitive, social, personal sides of the student) to a focus on measurable competences, contractual obligations and comparisons of student performance. The transition includes moving governance from the professionals to the top management. The latter introduced considerably detailed frames, objectives and measurements without participation from side of practitioners or researchers. The logic of governance is homogeneous from day care to university level, irrespective of the differences. The logic, further, underlines what is labelled a 'receiver's perspective', e.g. putting weight on the learner and her parents. This led to marketization. The logic replaced education in the old sense of the concept (teaching in a variety of subjects) by generic learning. Within a few years, the comprehensive school (folkeskolen) had to train students to achieve around 3600 learning objectives during their 9 years as students. The change entailed new forms of social practice in schools as well as families.

Something rather unusual turned up in the processes of implementation caused by the renewal of the collective bargaining in 2013. As the National Union of Teachers and Local Government (the common representation of the 98 municipalities) could not find common ground, a lockout took place concerning all teachers of comprehensive school. The Danish government, then, proposed a legislation forcing teachers to accept the conditions put forward by Local Government. A majority of members of Parliament passed the law that implied that teachers should teach more lessons and that their employer (the municipality) dictated new working conditions. A growing number of teachers left their jobs, as they felt a loss of control over their working life. We will return to this case a bit later.

2.9 Six examples of impacts

Eventually, we can follow the steps done to change the whole system or implement an all-embracing reform as stated above as shown in the second part of the description. The all-embracing reform is depicted in five steps:

An important initial step focused on the *curriculum*. The traditional 'freedom of method' of the teachers was questioned leading to formulation of exact purposes and goals in all subject matters in primary and lower secondary school and farther on the gymnasium. The reform on the curriculum originated in the Ministry of Education, initiated by the then Minister of Education, Christine Antorini, 2011-2015. The international inspiration is American reports and policy making like *A Nation at Risk* or *No Child Left Behind*. These reports blamed the failure of the educational system for a decline in the global competitiveness of the United States and entailed what became an explosion of test-based 'accountability' initiatives and gathered steam by 'standards-based' education reforms. The outcome is a reduction of instruction to a 'teacher-proof' and instrumental process. Related to the term alienation, this is an impressive example of the separation of the producers from the means of production. Teachers and students are separated from ownership of the means and conditions of teaching, learning and knowledge production. In particular, this was seen as a threat to experience-based and project-oriented work in schools and a threat to local engagement in schools (cf. De Lissovoy).

Due to difficulties regarding the expectations of the first reform, the second one further emphasized a stronger *strict discipline*. Children and youth were to learn to behave better and perform better. Parents had to take more responsibility for their children, and "law and order" had to be reestablished in school. This trend increased over the years. A representative example makes the testing of students' performance. Testing has become moral examination. It determines which schools are 'bad' respectively 'good' by means of a ranking available to the public. It further determines which schools middle-class parents choose for their children. Testing is also determining which students are 'good' and 'bad' performers. In addition, the lower performing students, the 'bad' ones, experienced that their outcomes did not match the requirements for getting entry into further education. In turn, they were at risk of suffering of long-term unemployment, or, at best, precarious part-time, low-paid jobs. Referring to Mészáros and Jaeggi, social practices of the education institution cannot meet all children, and teachers are inclined to perceive their students according to their performance. The label 'learning society' does not cover what we see in the education system; a better label is the 'performance society'. The price paid by young people is a considerable increase of psychosocial problems, diagnoses like ADHD, etc.

The third step involved a novelty in the Danish education landscape, that of *gentrification*. This has no direct connection with education but, rather, with effects of the real estate market and with policies - probably unintended? - entailing gentrification. Gentrification means stratification in a certain sense: at the bottom disadvantaged residential areas and at the top compounds for a rich minority. In turn, this means that schools homogenizes by means of recruiting the children of the local community. The outcome is schools for children of the elite versus schools for children of the disadvantaged - and not only migrants, but the lower social classes, too. This is rooted in deep transformations in the economy. The current global economy needs to stratify workers into managerial and service positions, and influencing urban gentrification to displace the poor and attract wealthier residents to neighborhoods and schools. Class and ethnicity still matter as important dimensions of global processes of exploitation and marginalization. This point links to De Lissovoy's argument and deserve a further elaboration in future.

The fourth step is that *privatization* has taken hold in Denmark, emphasizing the effect of the third step. While more education programs are characterized by increasing tuition fees in countries like the US and UK this is not the case in traditional Social Democrat Welfare

States like Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. Public taxation finances education. However, many private schools exist and expand due to favorable financial support from side of the state and the municipalities. Today, private schools enroll around 16% of the children. The tradition of private or free schools is part of the Grundtvigian legacy. However, at least one other recent phenomenon has to be taken into consideration as regards privatization. School has become ‘big business’; private enterprises have succeeded in playing a major role with respect to the development of the political and pedagogical values of the public schools. Several companies are involved: Clio Online (digital learning devices), MeeBook (virtual learning platform), Mentor-Danmark and Edulab (help to students in doing homework and supplementary subject matters). In 2017, an estimate of the market value of products and services purchased by comprehensive, public schools stated the sum of 150 billion Danish crowns (20 billion Euro). This explosive growth was not incidental, but planned, as we know from Latin “nihil ex nihilo fuit”. The initial step made the introducing of the free choice of school and further expanding the parents’ choices; the second step included mainstreaming on a European basis of learning targets. In brief, the policies regarding school departed from the assumption that government and management of schools, choices of school and the daily life in school (primarily lessons) were implemented in the shape of economic investments for the individual family and the individual student. Learning had to be visible and measurable, differences between schools to be transparent, and potential advantages evident for all. Harvey puts forward similar considerations.

Who is to blame? The number of children in private schools increased by 28% since 2007. Due to a failure of the public schools? The explanation is quite the opposite: The outcome stems from a political strategy adopted by a majority in Parliament (Folketinget). However, this trend carries its costs. Though some politicians wish privatization at nearly all costs, possible risks are obvious. In the Danish context, four problems appear to be the most crucial: First. The free choice of school and an increased parental influence depend on parental prerequisites that in turn are unevenly distributed. This entails that the slogan “the citizen first” ignores the differences related to economic and cultural capital. Low-income families would usually not be able to use the opportunities provided by the entry of privatization in schools and homes. Second. The current crisis of the comprehensive school is supposed to be better off by means of the private sector. A broad range of foundations and private companies promises to solve the crisis via iPads, consultants, better educated teachers, etc. The more promises aiming at saving the school system, the easier phoney solutions overshadow the need for long-term structural changes. Third. The use of private resources and services to meet public objectives is problematic. For example, learning platforms have conquered an important role in structuring the daily life of schools. Their purpose is to control that teachers are working in agreement with the common learning objectives. The crucial point here is that learning becomes visible, measurable and digital. Why is this problematic? Because nobody asks about whether the algorithms of the selected platform are consistent with local experience-based practices. Who would attempt to make LEGO accountable when a municipality intends to develop the future public school in the spirit of the learning philosophy of LEGO Education? The problem consists of a contradiction of long-term planning on one hand and new technologies and fast turnovers on the other. Fourth. There is a strong belief in the idea that economic incentives are capable of motivating students, teachers, parents and schools to perform better. For example, government launched so called School Funds aiming at rewarding those schools that within a school year were able to better the performances in Danish and Math of the lowest performing students. The interesting point

was that more schools hired private companies to support these efforts by means of promising the companies a piece of the cake.

The fifth step is *acceleration*. Education must accomplish faster and faster. Pupils have to appropriate lessons and lectures with in due time; the laggards are either excluded though still in school (potentially Early School Leavers) or forced to participate in learning camps or similar arrangements to speed up their performance. At university level, shifting governments have tightened the studies by requiring students to pass 60 ECTS per year. Students are not expected to do any in-depth study of their subjects that are often their passions, but rather get faster through their education. The outcomes are obviously undermining academic studies and leaving less space for creative or exploring thinking. As Collins stated, this leads to more education, more competition, and more credential inflation. A reform adopted 2013 aimed at reducing the time of study by about 5 months until 2020. The reform included a sharpened focus on market orientation and standardization of university studies. The rationale seemed to be a 1:1-relation between studies and current demands of the labour market. University studies had a broader purpose before, including appropriation of knowledge, democratic participation and personal development on the same standing as employment. This acceleration entailed increasing symptoms of stress, postponement of exams, anxiety regarding the future, etc. (Sarauw and Madsen, 2016).

The sixth step is *enclosing or enclosure*. In the context of this article, enclosure means seizure of public resources and their conversion into the property of national and transnational firms. David Harvey has called this an example of 'accumulation by dispossession'. In the field of education, this entails that firms aim to open public schools to privatization by means of the free choice of school for parents, tear down barriers to commercialization and commodification of knowledge and research and reorient the understanding of learning directly to the requirements of financial elites which in turn correspond to the program of OECD and other international agencies.

3 A brief conclusion

We have revisited Marxist critical thinking about alienation in society and education. Compared to mainstream analyses, Marxist analyses points to a different understanding of trends in education, primarily commodification, capitalization, acceleration and new forms of social practices. Those trends enlarge Marxist thinking on education and enrich non-Marxist thinking.

While most Marxist thinkers have drawn on 'The German Ideology', focusing at ideological and cognitive issues à la Gramsci (ideology, hegemony), our analysis includes the spatial dimension as well. The basic source of the latter is Marx' 'primitive accumulation' that is a valuable tool to understand trends like strict discipline, gentrification and enclosure. The two types of analyses complement each other.

As mentioned right from the start, the intention was not to develop a full and final or total analysis. Rather, the founding idea was to examine whether or not the theoretical platform did demonstrate an explanatory power regarding current trends in education. To the author of this article, Marxist thought points to hidden or forgotten sides of modern education that in turn implies the useful theoretical power.

Though the analyses show the strength of Marxist analyses, you may risk to looking on the dark side only. Are the impacts here inevitable? They are not a physical necessity, rather they

express the current relative strength between labour and capital. Resistance exists among students, teachers, researchers and politicians. Movements of parents walk hand in hand with other groups of resistance. However, a collective political subjectivity has to coalesce around some foundational concepts such as how to constitute an alternative economic engine if the powers of capital are to be confronted and overcome (Harvey). An alternative economic regime would include another education policy, primarily developed and organized from below. My article leaved that theme out.

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