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ISSN 1396-3503
2001:1**

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*print: UNI.PRINT
Aalborg 2001*

**Institutionalised legitimate informational capital in the Welfare State.
Has policy failed? In: Sociology of Education: International perspectives for the New
Countries, third section: Critical Issues in Sociology of Education, 2002**

By Martin Munk

Have the opportunities enjoyed by different birth cohorts changed over the years? This question is to be answered not merely in relation to the level and composition of educational capital, but particularly also in relation to social position.

To what degree does social inequality between different birth cohorts in Danish society exist over time, especially in relation to key issues such as general education, adult education and work experience and unemployment? It is important to explain expected variations of inequality over time, as measured in terms of life chances and odds ratios for achieving different social positions. The socio-cultural analysis has been the primary focus in many studies over the last 10-20 years. Some of those studies have contributed to a greater understanding of contextual variations. However another type of analysis has been overlooked to some degree: the cohort-historical approach (Mannheim; Ryder; Elder; Dex). The interesting thing is the relationship between social change and life trajectory (life is not a linear phenomenon!). This is especially relevant when studying inequality related to education. The cohort perspective demonstrates that social structure is not unchangeable. It seems in a way that the methodology of cohort studies supports the idea of a changing society, not merely in terms of broad concepts such as globalisation and individualisation, but also in terms of concrete empirical results. The cohort study of inequality is based upon large registers from Statistics Denmark, especially the years of 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 regarding covariates and outcome variables. Particularly, birth cohorts born in 1954, 1959, 1964 are analysed at the age of 31 years. The variables included are social origin, gender, education, work (employment/unemployment), etc. I have applied regular descriptive cross tabulations and multivariate logistic regression analysis.

Key Words: Social Inequality, Education, Occupational Outcomes, Cohorts, Data Registers, Logistic Regression Analysis, Welfare State, Policy and Structural Homology.

Introduction

Why has the trend of durable educational and social reproduction continued over the years when comparing different birth cohorts at the same age, as seen in relation to the level and composition of *informational capital* and social position? This is measured in the period of 1980-1995, a period characterised by unemployment and political alterations. To what degree does inequality exist over time *between* members of different birth cohorts in Danish society in relation to key issues such as general education and adult education? It is important to explain variations of inequality over time, as measured by life chances and odds ratios for entering different educational and social positions. I use cohort studies of inequality based upon large registers from Statistics Denmark. The purpose is to illustrate variations and invariations.

One of the political goals that is inherent to the welfare state¹ is to promote equality and equal opportunities for all citizens. In a recent paper, John Roemer goes so far as to speak about equal outcomes (Roemer et al. 2000). One major aim has been to create possibilities for people to enter and complete different kinds of education, to strengthen the link between education and work, to formalize the process of qualification, to reduce poverty and inequality² as well as to promote educational and social mobility.

However, several new investigations in Europe show that inequality increases, or at least remains stable (Fritzell 1999; Gustafsson/Johansson 1999; Halleröd 1999). This trend is typically measured in terms of economic inequality, either as disposable income or market income, as the dependent variable. The welfare system in Denmark has played a part in reducing inequalities, as measured in terms of redistributed disposable income (Goul Andersen 1999; Taylor-Gooby 1999). Despite these tendencies, measured as market income (Ministry of Finance 1999, 2000), opportunity to gain access to education, and chances of attaining different levels of employment, inequality is increasing, albeit not as much as in other countries. The statistical ten-year review 2000 from Statistics Denmark even indicates a tendency towards an increase between 1990 and 1998 in inequality measured by the maximal equalisation percentage, which implies a greater gap between different income groups.

These changes are of a structural (unemployment, system of education etc.) and demographic nature: "Changes in birth rates and death rates ... affect the ratio between supply and demand for various kinds of positions" (Baron, Grusky and Treiman 1996, 346). Inequality, especially *inequality of opportunities*, considering the relationship between education and social position, seems to be persistent.

¹ synonymous with the 'Danish Model', a tradition of strong decommodifications as regulation of the market of commodities (cf. *Esping-Andersen*, 1990)

² Economists normally measure inequality related to market income and disposable income and possibly even gross income; economic inequality is perhaps the most important (cf. R. Erikson and J. H. Goldthorpe, 1992)..

The article outlines aspects of the links between the system of education in Denmark and social position (work) for different birth cohorts, as seen in light of an expanded educational system, focusing on inequality and policy. Education plays a role in this process by producing new possible social trajectories, thereby contributing to the reproduction of relations between classes. The analysis is based upon a theoretical framework in which the concept of social space is central (Bourdieu 1979/1986). The social space is differentiated by basic forms of capital and by other forms of capital such as work experience, as well as welfare systems and labour market trends (unemployment rates). These constraints are probably important for agents' strategies of reconversions², defined as practices by which every agent endeavours to maintain or even change its position in society, a means of keeping up with societal changes. These concepts are developed as reactions towards theories of social stratification and mobility. Firstly, by introducing the scheme of social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970/1977), which is not a mechanical theory, especially not after having supplemented the theory with the concept of *strategies of reconversions* (Bourdieu et al., 1973, 1978). Finally, by concluding with the concept of social space (Bourdieu 1979/1986).

New Policies in the Welfare State

Policy reform regarding the labour market, unemployment, and education in Denmark over the past seven years has been obvious. Nevertheless, it is important that analysis also includes the radical changes since the 1960s that have affected the economy, technology, workplaces, the educational system, and the welfare state.

Unemployment between 1974-2000

The employment situation in Denmark now seems relatively positive, as unemployment has decreased to 5 per cent in 2000. The unemployment rate is now the same as in 1974, roughly the same level as at the time of the oil crisis. The unemployment rate should be seen in light of new welfare policies, activation etc, especially in Denmark (Martin 2000). However, the period from 1975 to 1996 was characterised by relatively high rates of unemployment. From 2.5 per cent of the labour force in 1974 to 6.0 per cent in 1975, 7.0 per cent in 1980, 9.7 per cent in 1990, 10.4 per cent in 1995 and 5.4 per cent in 1999. This is rather low considering that 73 per cent of the women are active in the labour force. In 2000, the rate was 5.6 per cent, but 3 per cent was activated, meaning that 8.6 per cent is outside of the official labour force. It should be noted that the rates were especially high for younger generations, 14.8 per cent of those 25-34 years old in 1992, for

² Converting is sometimes used in connection with religious conversions, as from Protestant to Catholic. However, here I use the concept directly coupled to strategies related to reproduction and survival.

example, and there was some variation over the years, especially in the beginning of the period as well as from 1986 to 1987. Furthermore, official statistics indicate that men in particular are nowadays increasingly temporarily employed. This may imply increasing job insecurity for both unemployed and employed (see Sennett 1999).

For a long period Danish society could be characterised as a universalistic system that basically included de-commodification of social rights (Esping-Andersen 1990). In other words society is more-or-less regulated by the welfare state through 'arrangements' and laws providing social support for the unemployed, retired, etc. However, changes over the last seven years have limited the amount and duration of social benefits for unemployed, marginalized labour, and others from the most deprived parts of the population. Still, unemployment benefits are relatively high and long-term compared to other states. In the 1990s, new policy was introduced by the Social Democratic-Social Liberal government, which provided opportunities for leave and sabbaticals.

In recent years the transformation of the welfare state has been a major issue, as related to the topics of unemployment and marginalisation, opportunities, and education. This has resulted in new active labour market policy, with a new social policy of activation schemes signifying the 'rebirth' of societal duties.³ These changes occur in most welfare systems and regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999; Kautto et al. 1999), but the perspectives on new welfare state policies are different (Giddens 1998; Hay 1998; Taylor-Gooby 1997, 1999). This refers to new means of designing policies that perceptually focus on the problems of unemployment and globalisation, as well as being motivated by the prospect of public expenditure reductions. There is a shift in the way people are expected to cope with societal changes, not only in relation to the globalised economy and market, but in relation to a changed welfare system as well, in Denmark as elsewhere.

Reflections on Changes to the Danish Educational System

The new tendencies concerning the opportunities in the educational system and labour market, and the relationship between education and social position should be seen in light of changes to welfare systems. Besides focusing on general welfare programs and policies, increasing attention has been given to general education and adult education during the last 10-15 years. This has often been related to the activation of those outside the labour market as a means to deal with unemployment. However, this may be a contradiction to some degree, since a greater supply of education can correspondingly create greater inequality regarding opportunities in the labour market (Morris and Western 1999, 632ff.).

³ Since the 1980's, governments have put social rights and duties on the agenda (Dwyer 1998; Sjöberg, 1999), which

In recent years, there has been a progressively stronger focus upon the future role of education as a key factor in coping with changing labour markets in which competitiveness is - and becomes increasingly - more crucial. Governments have conducted a more regulated policy concerning education that is in line with the slogan of 'education, education and education', formulated by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as a means to solve problems of exclusion and unemployment. The trend of the re-institutionalisation (more students and changed systems) of the Educational System is notable. The policy change may be characterised as a shift from "culture" to market efficiency, a new rationality.

The Danish educational system is formally characterised by its uniformity. In principle, every citizen has free access to education. Admission to higher education (university) almost exclusively depends on grades in upper secondary school (*gymnasium*). Admission to vocational training normally depends on compulsory school exams (*folkeskole*). The sequence of vocational education consists of theory, theory and praxis, e.g. learning at a workplace. Until 1999, there were about 90 possible paths of study, but they have since been reduced to seven paths of entry. Additionally, adults (no age-limit) can achieve an entrance exam for higher education (Higher preparation exam, *HF*). It is possible to study selected subjects in a part-time fashion and complete the entire education in up to five years (the education usually requires two years of full-time study). Furthermore, a possibility exists to enter practice-orientated fields of education, (teacher, pedagogue, nurse etc.) if one has relevant work experience and a number of subjects from *HF*). In general, parallel to the ordinary system there is an alternative system of adult education in which both the employed and unemployed have opportunities to pursue relatively short training courses.

The educational system in Denmark was, at least until the 1980s, considered to be a decentralised system in which free-schools (private schools parallel to *folkeskole*), and folk high schools (*folkehøjskoler*) offered a broad range of opportunities in the educational system (Archer, 1979: 423-472). The development of universal elementary education in Denmark is illustrated by reappearing junctures of system reform over the last 200 years.⁴ Different levels of education can be perceived as social historical constructions, articulated as interests of certain social classes, as a reaction or an answer to changes in living conditions. With the rise of political parliamentarism about 1900, still more fields of education were constituted as public/mass education subsidised by the state and they were institutionally and economically legitimised (see Boli and Ramirez 1986; Wallerstein 1999 for a comprehensive argument).

mark a change of the welfare regimes.

⁴ E.g. 1814, 1899, 1903 laws and later the 1937 and 1958 laws etc. A further social historical analysis of the educational system ought to be written (cf. Mathiesen 1996, 46-68).

During the last 15-20 years the educational system has been changed and is now increasingly regulated and controlled by the state, and has perhaps turned less autonomous.⁵ This new institutionalisation, considered as a constraint, is probably important for the strategies by which every individual agent endeavours to maintain, or even change, its position in society. I am particularly thinking of two remarkable quasi-political constructions in the field of education (related to the new labour market policy of activation): On the one hand, an increasing use of adult educational systems, mostly by the skilled and semi-skilled. On the other hand, a homologizing of higher education (towards an Anglo-Saxon system with bachelors, masters and Ph.D. degrees). The first trend seems to be a way of relegating agents with less convertible capital to positions, or at least occupations, where they can be 'kept busy'! (See empirical findings). The second trend seems to act as a tool for more privileged groups to maintain or expand acquired capital. Previously it was possible to obtain many academic positions, also within the university system itself, merely with a masters degree (formally six years of study, but usually accomplished after eight years of study). Now, younger people are expected to get a Ph.D. degree just as in America, England, France and other countries. This implies that academics without a Ph.D. are less attractive in the academic institutions, not only in universities, but also in ministries and other bodies of public administration.

The second trend is partly due to an increasing number of students attending higher education, rising from 95.243 in 1980, to 117.153 in 1988 and to 167.291 in 1997. The difference corresponds to a 43% rise from 1980 to 1997, and subsequently more and more young people have obtained a masters degree at the university. This could in fact indicate that the new policies, legitimised by the state, are coherent with a *delayed social selection process* in the educational system and as well the step between education and social position; not every university education results in a post as an academic or manager.

While the Danish educational system has expanded during the last 20-30 years and a greater number of students whose parents do not have an academic education have been admitted into the university system, education continues to play a major function in the process of the social reproduction of the relative distance between classes.

However, cultural (educational) capital is only reproduced in a relative manner. In fact, it is correct, in terms of absolute figures, that there are many more students in the (higher) educational system (Goldthorpe 1996a, 487). This paradox is also notable in a European perspective. I would explain this paradox by referring to the logic of legitimised policymaking, to the logic of social differentiation, and what is termed conditionality, referring to policies forcing nearly everyone into the educational system. Thus, in the social process of differentiation, education contributes by

⁵ A Danish researcher has made an overview of the traditions of education, showing the differences between the 1960s and the 1980s (Bjerg 1995, 35).

producing new social trajectories, but not necessarily new durable social positions. Furthermore, it is important to stress that societal processes have led to a greater struggle in the field of education, as educational capital becomes more crucial for all. Take, for example, the children of firm owners who inherited economic capital and firms, who have typically changed their strategies towards the system of education. The MBA phenomenon also exemplifies this trend. Another feature is the internationalisation of university studies, where an increasing number of students go abroad in the course of their studies, a trend which has rapidly developed over the last 15 years (Broady, Börjesson and Palme 1998; Broady and de Saint Martin 1997).

This trend involves two social dynamics. On the one hand, *class habitus*, durable through a lifetime, and on the other hand, the *inflation of diplomas, titles and posts*. In other words a change of the “reproduction of social structures”, the point being that the upper class develops alternative strategies according to the “diploma-devaluation”, which accentuates the problem of education and labour market. It is relevant to stress what the *dynamics of supply/demand* is really about. The traditional formulation of this relationship is not adequate in the attempt to explain processes of mobility, as many researches of labour market have stated (Boje 1986). What essentially is more important, is the question about scarcity:

It is the symbolic scarcity of the title in the space of the names of professions that tends to govern the rewards of the occupation (and not the relationship between the supply of and demand for a particular form of labour) it is not the relative value of the work that determines the value of the name, but the institutionalized value of the title that can be used as a means of defending or maintaining the value of the work (Bourdieu, 1985: 733).

In other words, it is not possible to study individual careers unless the specific properties of the field is analysed, and thereby not only the market (Boltanski 1987, 228)

The Empirical Study. Opportunities concerning Social Trajectory

A point of departure for the present analysis is a study by Erik Jørgen Hansen (1995), of a 1953/1954 cohort, followed as a panel sample taken from school classes in 1968. He concludes that there are still unequal outcomes of (higher) education and positions in the labour market for different social origins. During the period from World War II until 1975, recruitment to higher education was more equally distributed. For some thirty years there was some evidence of declining inequality.³

Comparing several Danish studies of social recruitment and opportunities one finds a better chance for working class people to obtain further university education. However, it is still much

³ I investigate inequality as the gap between odds ratios (estimates), although I am aware of the criticism from *Hellevik, 1997* (with *Stein Ringen, 1997*). Discussions about measuring social inequality are seen in *Acta Sociologica* by *Hellevik, 1997; Marshall/Swift, 1999; Hellevik, 2000; Ringen, 2000; Marshall/Swift, 2000*.

lower than in privileged social groups (Hansen 1997, 12-13). Internationally there is a strong tradition for the study of the relationships between social origin, educational level and social position (Shavit and Müller 1998; Breen and Goldthorpe 1999; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993; Kerckhoff 1993). In some of those studies it has been shown that not only educational level, social origin and gender influence specific employment chances but also educational track and specific cohorts (Buchmann and Sacchi 1998, 419-421; Blossfeld 1986; Krahn and Lowe 1999).

Data, Design and Methods

The empirical data of this contribution includes official statistics and extracted data from Statistics Denmark, including 3.6 million people of the Danish population born between 1935 and 1980. Additionally, social data from 1980-1995 is being used, especially from 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 regarding covariates and outcome variables. The sources of the social data are the Statistical Register for Labour Market Research (IDA), Register of Education and Training Statistics, Separate Registers of Adult Education and Register of Population and Housing Censuses from Statistics Denmark. The analysis comprises birth cohorts born in 1954, 1959 and 1964 at the 31st years of age in 1985, 1990 and 1995. Categorical dummy variables included are social origin, sex, education and employment. In the case of Denmark it is reasonable to speak of cultural capital in terms of educational capital and work experience, since institutionalised capital in particular is a very important element in the structure of the social space, connoting the variation over time for different cohorts. Regular descriptive cross tabulations and multivariate logistic regression analysis with a binary response variable was applied with calculation of estimates, odds ratios and interaction effects. I tried to obtain the “best” model, not directly by using backward and forward selection, but by applying sociological handcraft.

The data seems to reveal social patterns that do not appear in normal questionnaire surveys, probably due to non-response problems; thus, even though the registers have some limitations, there are clear advantages. These include the ability to investigate successive total birth cohorts, as it is possible to make comparisons and to eradicate the non-response problems.

The Statistical Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Opportunities in the Educational and Occupational System

Does the importance of higher education increase or decrease for certain social groups? Can adult education compensate for a low level of general education, or act as a kind of extra capital? How does adult education act as a vehicle of qualification for different social groups?

In the following inequality primarily measured by life-chances in trajectories of different social origin change over time will be illustrated, especially for different birth cohorts (see table in the end of the text). A social trajectory is defined as the series of positions successively occupied by the same agent or group of agents in successive spaces (Bourdieu 1992/1996, 258). All trajectories could be understood as travels through society, and the many individual histories are equivalent with families of intragenerational trajectories.

Social Origin, Education and Job Positions

Cross-tabulations (not shown) show that younger generations, in a sense, are in a more competitive situation than was the case in the years after 1945. There are more competitors on the labour market with an academic degree or other kinds of education. At the same time, analyses show that the association between certain origins and education is decreasing. Individuals from privileged classes seem to avoid a demanding trajectory in academic fields (descending social mobility), or they have other converting strategies that allow them to enter new sectors compared to the culture of their social origin, including groups without further description. Perhaps some upper class children find manual positions (Ishida et al. 1995, 148) as well as positions as consultants. All in all, there seems to be a new trend of divisions within social classes and cohorts.⁴ Young people have increasingly obtained further education, possibly indicating a delayed *social selection process* regarding the transition from education to social position. Higher and longer education does not necessarily lead to academic or executive positions. This is also the case for women. But women in younger cohorts (1964 compared to 1954) have higher probabilities for success in academic institutions, which corresponds to a similar pattern in Norway, at least concerning colleges (Nordli Hansen 1999).

I made an analysis of outcomes using a socio-economic nominal scale going from the position out of labour market to academics and managers, but focusing on academics and skilled workers. In Table 1, where the outcome is social position, especially regarding the chance of becoming an academic or executive manager, shows that individuals born in 1959 are 31 per cent more likely to succeed than those born in 1964. The birth cohort of 1954 also had a better chance of entering academic and executive positions. However, university education still has a great impact upon one's chance of becoming an academic or executive manager (cf. table 1). The success of this type of trajectory increases with at least one year of work experience. The odds ratio is nearly doubled compared to the odds ratio of the reference group with less than one year in the labour force. In this trajectory, it is obviously not an advantage to complete different kinds of adult

⁴Furthermore a fairly good log-linear model shows that it was reasonable to analyse social origin, education, position, and cohort at the same time (see also Jonsson, 1993; Marshall et al., 1997).

education (see also Jensen and Jensen 1996). Trajectories, including social position of academics, are far from life trajectories with “less” education, suggesting that there is still a significant barrier between different sectors in society.

Social origin continues to play a major role in the process of obtaining a social position as an academic or executive manager. The odds ratio for social origin is 2.38 in the instance that one’s father is an academic or executive manager, which in fact is higher without controlling for the highest educational level as a variable. In other words, the effect of origin declines when the parameter of highest/longest education is active in the model. This is comparable with the situation in other countries (Erikson and Jonsson 1998a: 25, 1998b). But there are differences between elite and normal university education (Nordli Hansen 1999). Thus, the children of executive managers and academics have better opportunities to gain access to higher education than do the children of skilled or unskilled parents (even though the opportunities enjoyed by the latter have apparently increased between 1947 and 1976; Hansen 1997). After this period this trend has increased to some extent; not in the sense that fewer and fewer obtain a university degree - to the contrary. But seen in relation to social origin there is still an unequal distribution of both access to, and completion of, higher education. Meaning that the children of managers and academics are “closer” to the university system. In addition, younger generations still have a *smaller chance* of entering the social position of academics. I also controlled for the experience of unemployment between the age of 26 and 31, which in fact further indicates a difference in the odds ratio, implying that persons with less than one year of unemployment have a much higher chance of entering the position of academic.

When considering the position of the skilled worker, another picture emerges (see table 1). Work experience in particular seems to have an impact on whether or not a person enters the position of skilled worker. Not surprisingly, the older generations have a greater chance of entering this position, the reason being that in the past it was more common to follow a traditional vocational trajectory.⁶ The logistic regression analysis points out that both vocational and adult education have importance for entering the position of skilled worker. However, at the same time there also seems to be an association between skilled worker and unemployment between the ages of 26 and 31 (more than a year).

Adult Education and Workers

The selection process is, among others, divided into social trajectories, which can include graduated and non-graduated segments of adult education. This distinguishes two major trajectories,

⁶ New official statistics show that 44,598 young men (27,895 women) at the age of 20 to 24 years had completed a vocational education as their highest education compared to 83,497 men (61,036 women) between 45-49 years of age.

of which the latter seems to be more socially disadvantaged. However, logistic regression analysis shows that a combination of formal vocational training (four years) and adult education can be of help in some cases. A crucial problem related to adult education is that spending time in this system does not cancel out the risk of unemployment, despite some positive results for younger individuals during the recent years (Statistics Denmark, SE: 5 (U&K) 1999). This is also the case in my study of cohorts. If one divides the groups to be analysed into more homogeneous segments (e.g. skilled and unskilled together as one group), rather than heterogeneous segments, one finds some support for using adult education. But often unskilled and those outside the labour force with little or no formal education, seem to be somewhat hindered from opportunities to make progress in their working life.

This is true unless the employment conjunctures are very good as new studies indicate, measured by percentages, but the relative distance between non-educated and educated remains concerning the risk of becoming unemployed. In spite of some positive results for groups with little or no education, there are still many unemployed in those groups (Ministry of Finance 2000, 120; Statistics Denmark, SE: 5 (U&K) 1999).

In the last 5-10 years the vocational educational system has been changed towards a more academic curricula, partly as promoted by Danish Unions, with the aim of “keeping up” with new demands in the labour market (new technology, flexibility and adaptation). However, if the vocational system is merely redefined towards a more “academic” mixture, there is a risk of creating greater social selection in the educational system. The expansion and change of the educational system has: ‘led to the displacement of formally less qualified workers by formally higher qualified workers over the past decades ... this has clearly reduced the career opportunities of the man, who has “come up the ladder”’ (Blossfeld and Stockmann 1999, 12). The fact that some people in the 1964 generation experienced this trend (not shown in table 1) supports this statement. The unskilled and those outside the labour force, that is, with little or no formal education, seem to be cut off from possibilities to proceed in their working trajectory (Bourdieu et al.1999).

Educational (Informational) Capital contributes to Social Cleavage

The overall situation seems to be that more and more people obtain formal education and adult education throughout their life trajectory, implying that agents from different social classes attend and accomplish progressively higher (more) and further education. But at the same time, a number of children, especially those from the working class, still enter groups of unskilled workers and groups outside the work force. In fact, a growing number of children from different social classes, especially those from working class conditions (cf. the empirical study), enter groups of unskilled workers or groups outside the labour force. Additionally one can observe that younger

generations of university candidates still have a *smaller chance* of entering the social position as academics. This fact suggest that there is still a significant barrier between different sectors in society and that young people with less legitimate capital are facing a “vulnerable” life, indicating that it is difficult to change the direction of one’s life trajectory (Blossfeld and Stockmann 1999,13).

Speaking in general terms, investments in educational capital and other forms of capital can shape the conditions for converting social positions in order to make up new pathways (Buchmann/Sacchi 1998). Not in a straightforward way, however. The social selection trend comprises the effects of *class habitus* and of *inflation of titles*. The selection process is illustrated by trajectories including graduated and non-graduated segments of adult education.

The governmental policies striving for the possibility of making new formal entries, combining different tracks of education, including a redefinition of the vocational system, can produce more problems than solutions, which seems very crucial at a time when Europe faces questions related to social cohesion. This is also illustrated by investigations of social inequality in the Danish welfare state, which indicate that new cleavages in the population alter chances and opportunities in the life trajectory. To conclude, obtaining different levels of education and employment still depend on social origin and gender, as well as cohorts. Apparently, there is also an effect of cohorts regarding the chances for achieving specific educational and social positions (see also Elstad 2000). Measured in terms of the opportunity to get different jobs, including people with educational degrees, there still seems to be a tendency to social inequality. Several logistic regression analyses were modelled to elucidate these claims (see also Marshall, Swifts and Roberts 1997; more tables can be obtained by the author).

A Model of Social Space and Welfare Regime in Denmark

The tendencies concerning inequality could be seen in light of the following integrated system. The social and cultural reproduction which varies over time can be understood both in terms of a model of social space (which itself is changing) and as a specific welfare regime. The driving explanatory model is the model of social space. Peillon (1998) has outlined a combined social space model, which he terms a welfare field model. However, the model lacks a theory of reconversions (Munk 1998), and it does not consider the different types of welfare states⁷, nor the changed policies of unemployed etc. For example, Denmark has its own model with a high rate of women in the labour market and children in day-care institutions as a regulator in relation to the market of commodities, civil society, and decommodification (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996). It must be added that the state is organized in a very specific way, historically seen as dependent on a

⁷ The social democratic, the liberal and the conservative; but according to F. Castles and M. Ferrera, for example, there are several other typologies, cf. Esping-Andersen, 1999: chap. 5).

stable corporativism, a durable collaboration between the state and organisations. In general, the Nordic social democratic welfare state model is renowned for its extensive public sector (Rinne and Kivirauma 1999). But the 'Scandinavian Model' is changed in the perception of policy-regimes (Kautto et al. 1999). The change of welfare policy is perhaps more adequately described by the concept of recommodification, rather than decommodification (Bonoli, George and Taylor-Gooby 2000, 48-49). It means that the integrated system is also structured by the (new) welfare systems. As described earlier, welfare regimes have been restructured over the last 10-15 years, especially regarding active labour market policy and the new social policy of activation schemes signifying the 'rebirth' of societal duties (the concept of retrenchment is probably not entirely significant since the general public expenditure [% of GDP] in many European welfare states has increased over the course of the last 15 years).

We now turn to a summarisation of the model. The social space is differentiated by at least two forms of capital, cultural and economic (Bourdieu 1979/1986; Munk 1998), and presumably by forms of 'welfare state capital' attached in varying degree to different agents. Welfare capital refers to forms of social benefit opportunities. This means that social positions are simultaneously structured by symbolic, materialised and social benefit relationships. A social space therefore corresponds to the space of lifestyles, the space of social positions, to the space of the social trajectory, but also by forms of welfare capital. In the case of Denmark, it is reasonable to speak of cultural capital in terms of educational, informational, capital and work experience, since especially legitimate institutionalised capital is a very important element in the structure of the social space, connoting the variation over time for different cohorts.

The Danish distribution of capital, measured in terms of annual income per capita (and family) is quite egalitarian compared to other welfare states. We obtain a kind of social space, differentiated mainly by ordinary and adult informational capital, work experience, gender, employment, economic capital and by welfare capital. It means that informational capital is integrated with other kinds of capital. This way of looking at things has been supported by several social scientists arguing that it is necessary to combine both occupational and informational resources (Prandy 1998). This formulation follows the general definition of the social space, constituted by three dimensions: 'the volume of capital, composition of capital, and change in these two properties over time, manifested by past and potential trajectory in the social space'⁸ (Bourdieu 1979/1986, 114). The structure in the space is defined by the distribution of capital (forces work in the space and there is an ongoing struggle), that is the distribution of properties and characteristics.⁹

⁸ The theoretical space of habitus.

⁹ In Denmark concrete and practical investigations of the space of lifestyles have been carried out, but they do not really attempt to investigate and construct the social space. The Institute of Opinion and Marketing Analysis (AIM) has tried to investigate 'the correlating part' of the social space, in other words the space of lifestyles. Not surprisingly it goes

Bourdieu has lately (1994/1998) formulated this as the *two principles of differentiation*. Social agents are distributed, relationally, according to these principles. Corresponding to class we have habitus, a way of securing the secondary properties. This implies that class is not only defined by its position, but defined through criteria as profession, income, educational level and by secondary properties such as religion, race, a certain gender distribution, geographical distribution, ethnic belonging etc. Eventually class is defined by the structure of relations between all relevant properties:

"The model of social space ... is not only limited by the nature of data used (and usable), particularly by the practical impossibility of including in the analysis structural features such as the power which certain individuals or groups have over the economy, or even the innumerable associated hidden profits. If most of those who carry out empirical research are often led to accept, implicitly or explicitly, a theory which reduces the classes to simple ranked but non-antagonistic strata, this is above all because the very logic of their practice leads to them to ignore what is objectively inscribed in every distribution. A distribution, in the statistical but also the political-economy sense, is the balance-sheet, at a given moment, of what has been won in previous battles and can be invested in subsequent battles; it expresses a state of the power relation between the classes or, more precisely, of the struggle for possession of rare goods and for the specifically political power over the distribution or redistribution of profit" (Bourdieu, 1979/1986: 245).

And:

"It follows that the map of social space previously put forward can also be read as a strict table of the historically constituted and acquired categories which organize the idea of the social world in the minds of all the subjects belonging to that world and shaped by it" (Bourdieu, 1979/1986: 469).

The reproduction of families

Lately the position of families has been addressed as an important part of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1999; Goldthorpe 1996a), and I would like to add the social reproduction of families. The social space is a place for the struggles of families, i.e.- maintaining and improving their social positions. Strategies of reproduction depend on the composition and volume of capital and different means such as inheritance, customs, labour market, systems of education etc., which are mediated in relation to agents' expectations for the future. Agents are positioned according to a state of distribution of the specific capital, which has been accumulated in the consequence of previous struggles. Several social scientists are aware of this problem. They point out that a population with a generally higher educated will, under pressure, effect strong families to invest more in their children's education, as to defend their position (a "defensive expenditure"), investments which are necessary merely to maintain advantages (Goldthorpe 1996a, 494).

If the conditions of capital relations are changed it is necessary to adapt the strategies of reproduction through the reconversions of capital to other forms of capital, for example by converting economic to informational capital (Bourdieu 1979/1986, 136-137; Hansen 1995, 240-241). It is possible in certain circumstances to reconvert inherited cultural capital to educational capital (Bourdieu 1979/1986, 80-81, 125ff):

wrong by excluding central concepts such as capital. Instead they use a kind of model, a bit like a model by the Swede Karl-Erik Rosengren, which is not really like the constructions of Bourdieu, but rather like Mary Douglas' group/grid-model.

“reconversions correspond to movements in a social space which has nothing in common with the unreal and yet naively realistic space of so-called “social mobility” studies. The same positivistic naivety which sees “upward mobility” in the morphological transformations of different classes or fractions is also unaware that the reproduction of the social structure may, in certain conditions, demand very little “occupational heredity”. This is true whenever agents can only maintain their position in the social structure by means of a shift into a new condition (e.g., the shift from small landowner to junior civil servant, or from craftsman to office worker or commercial employee).” (Bourdieu 1979/1986, 131).

The relationship between education and the labour market: the problem of mobility

It is important to underscore that societal processes have led to a stronger struggle related to the field of education, since educational capital has become more crucial. Many agents have changed their strategies towards the system of education to be consecrated.

Sociologists and scholars have seen the study of mobility as the principal part of the efforts to show how social structures function and how one should explain individual movements in society (Featherman and Hauser 1978). However, principal problems in those studies are lacking recognition concerning that mobility is a process going on within the social space with distances, and that social mobility is identified as upward mobility even if we are talking about a shift from small landowner to administrator in the civil service. There are concrete problems in this context in terms of structural mobility, as empirical investigations of social structures indicate and support the argument that social mobility is essentially an expression of changing structures and not a picture of dynamic individuals who can possibly break with social boundaries. The problem with structural mobility could be solved by focusing upon ‘career trajectory’ (Blackburn and Prandy 1997, 500; Bourdieu 1974; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Strauss 1971; Sørensen 1986).

On the other hand, problems in the studies of social mobility are linked to the focus of individual mobility, as well as a poor understanding of mobility as a part of general societal processes. In a discussion about intragenerationality (Sørensen 1986, 77-79; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, 281) Sørensen points out that the standard table of mobility is problematic because it does not reveal when and where the movements begin and end. The tables provide aggregations of processes that have occurred during different historical periods. What Sørensen notices, and as Bourdieu considers from his position in the sociological field, is that social mobility is not always real mobility and that movements to new positions demand vacant positions. Two types of structures are described. With open-positions the market mechanisms will operate and individuals with the same qualifications or resources will at any moment be in the same positions in the structure of inequality. When closed-position structures emerge, which can alternatively be termed vacancy competition, identical people will end up in different positions reflecting historically and organisationally specific circumstances (Sørensen 1986, 79, 1983). At the same time the vacancy competition model is a critique of Human Capital Theory (Becker 1964), which lacks the dimension of demand mechanisms and the structure of

the labour market.¹⁰ Especially since the 1980s, researchers have emphasized a work-life-perspective when studying mobility (Sørensen 1986; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, chap. 8; Rosenfeld 1992). The last type is to some degree parallel to the way Bourdieu formulates an alternative theory. However, Sørensen is building upon a rational choice theory (Coleman 1988) where Bourdieu is relying on his theory of habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 72).

The studies of social mobility have not recognised that the social space provides at least two or three different movements (Bourdieu 1989/1996, 1992/1996). Firstly there are vertical movements, proceeding within the *same* field, for example from a teacher to a professor in the educational field, secondly there are horizontal movements between *different* fields, for example from a teacher to a shopkeeper. Thirdly there are crossing movements, for example from artisanal petite bourgeoisie to a writer. It means that vertical movements only require an increase in capital that is already valid and which dominates within the structure of profit in a specific field. Processes of mobility are not just movements between fathers and sons, they exist in different fields and these fields will be historically transformed, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the social space (Bourdieu 1989/1996, 136-139). It is not enough to study the shift of jobs. One must also investigate the shifts of fields and conversions of different kinds of capital. A shift from one trajectory to another depends on different collective events, such as wars or major crises, or by individual events such as 'random' meetings and business. They are often described as fortunate or unfortunate even if they, statistically seen, depend on present positions and dispositions, which make people capable of extending and maintaining different kinds of contacts and connections. There are *specific effects of social trajectories*.

This means that appointments to jobs are closely linked to social trajectory and reconversions:

"By obliging one to formulate the principle of the convertibility of different kinds of capital, which is the precondition for reducing the space to one dimension, the construction of a two-dimensional (really three) space makes it clear that the exchange rate is a stake in the struggle over the dominant principle of domination (economic capital, cultural capital or social capital), which goes on at all times between the different fractions of the dominant class" (Bourdieu 1979/1986, 125).

The universal equivalent of capital is labour-time in the broadest sense (cf. Bourdieu 1986, 253-254). The convertibility of different forms of capital is the basis for the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital and the position in the social space through the smallest number of conversions. The decisive moment is the ease with which the different forms of capital are converted and transmitted, and the incommensurability between different forms of capital causes great uncertainty for all holders of capital, as every one wants to lose as little as possible. This is also why the system of education plays a major role in contemporary society. More and more people turn to the system of education, particularly higher education, to obtain the right credentials to be consecrated. Exams and

¹⁰ Brüderl (1992) has criticised the model of Sørensen.

titles become more and more conclusive, crucial in the process of social differentiation (Young 1958; Collins 1979).¹¹

The Distribution of (informational) Capital

The distribution of capital is not just given: there is a more-or-less democratically regulated (Weber 1978) struggle for capital in the power field (a mixture of the cultural, political, economic and the bureaucratic field).

According to Hedström/Swedberg (1998) it is also necessary to analyse the *social mechanisms* of the structural tendencies, as for example the distribution of capital. In all societies there are struggles for scarce and attractive resources; people reconvert different kinds of capital into social positions in order to construct new pathways. This mechanism can be termed as a *structural homology*, which is a very particular relation of causal interdependence between specific areas in society, such as education and the labour market (Bourdieu 1989/1996, 263). This will imply a rather closed structure with an opposition between the 'old' and the 'new' individuals who enter and act in the labour market. It is thus difficult to enter a field and obtain a permanent position, not only because of personal and organisational structures, e.g. embeddedness, (Granovetter 1985; Tilly 1998), but because of symbolic barriers which correspond with a multitude of settings. So when, for example, a firm or an institution demands groups or a single individual, the social mechanism operates (the foundation of inequality), in spite of state policies. The point being that state policies, old as well as new, are in fact a part of the structural homology. This contributes to unequal distributions of legitimate capital, even if the disadvantaged classes and generations in the Danish welfare state, compared to other kinds of welfare states, have better living conditions and rights to social benefits from public institutions and possibilities for adult education (especially the skilled workers). "Since inequality in general, is strongly connected to class inequality, a successful social policy can be expected to decrease the inequality between classes" (Erikson 1990, 258).

But eventually the interdependence between the labour market and the educational field, mediated by the power field, is strongly connected to the establishment and reproduction of the welfare state. In sum, it seems that structural 'effects' are still operating, also within the welfare state with its very large and expanded social programs, even if those programs have been reformed. This means that the creation and construction of a particular welfare state has led to the support of groups with less capital, thereby modifying the distance and transforming the relations between social classes. However, there is still a relative gap between social classes, in spite of political,

¹¹ (Goldthorpe, 1996b) points out Young's satiric book about meritocracy as the one which started the basic study of how education functions in the social structure as credentials.

social and organisational structures of redistribution (see Taylor-Gooby 1999). As a matter of fact, the basic structure in society operates according to its own rules and laws; it reinforces hierarchies in places and fields, and it contributes to unequal distributions of legitimate capital. This is especially the case within the power field where two dominating groups continue to dominate the others, outside the power field (cf. Bourdieu 1989/1996). This is particularly the case in France, where institutions such as Grandes Ecoles are very significant, contributing to the reproduction of the corps, through the unequal distribution of titles in accordance with social origin. In other words, there is a strong relationship between the reproduction of the field of power, and the field of universities.

Conclusion

Empirical investigations show no tendency towards a society with less social inequality. One can conclude that social inequality, as related to education, still exists. Obtaining different levels of education and jobs still depends on social origin, gender, work experience and to some degree adult education.

However, studies of data from official registers at Statistics Denmark revealed that the strength of association/odds ratios vary over time, by birth cohorts. Danish generations born in the mid 1960s are less advantaged than generations born in the mid- and late 1950s, as measured by the time when the birth cohorts were 31 years old. Individuals from the 1960s experienced a period of unemployment (from the 1970's until 1996) while the size of the cohorts increased at the same time, culminating in 1966, e.g. number of students in the educational institutions. This invariance and variation combined with changed policies connected to institutions of education and labour markets probably explain much of the variation in the linkage between social origin, education and occupation.

The social mechanism of structural homology seems to be a means of providing a general answer regarding the persisting reproduction of social inequality, which can be interpreted as a reproduction of the relative distance between groups. But the situation might also be influenced by new ways of organising social life. In fact, new cleavages correspond to new forms of inequality (lack of effects), which means that levels of social mobility and educational inequality basically remain as earlier. New forms of capital, resources and admissions are now at stake.

In this sense, social inequality can increase over time, though further studies of younger cohorts might reveal other patterns. Competition in the labour market could well decline as a result of demographic changes and fewer young individuals. "Globalisation", may nevertheless abolish this trend, which is likely to take different directions, depending on areas and sectors. Further

studies will have to concentrate upon more detailed life trajectories, especially regarding younger cohorts. The point being that both the supply and demand sides should be taken into consideration.

To conclude, it is difficult to trace the effects of new "policy regimes", i.e. concepts with some resemblance to the "welfare regime" concept. Many countries have experienced various substantial changes in welfare policies relating to education. I do not find clear evidence that policy changes have reduced the problems of educational and social inequality. But good economic and employment conjunctures can be linked to less unemployment in several countries. This has partly, probably, to do with the trade-off between equality and employment (Esping-Andersen 1999, 180-184), the policy of equality and unemployment.

Acknowledgements: This project was supported by a grant from the Danish Research Council (No.: 9700145).

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Table 1. Logistic Regression of social origin, highest education, sex, unemployment, adult education, cohort and work experience on social position at the age of 31. "Best model". I checked for interaction between covariates. Logit is the link function. The distribution is binominal. $N(1954)=69,514$, $N(1959)=67,706$, $N(1964)=76,490$. 112.4 are totally missing. Standard Error, confidence interval (95 pct.), in parentheses.

	Academics/director		Skilled Worker	
	Parameter estimates	Odds ratios	Parameter estimates	Odds ratios
Intercept	-4.44 (0.06)	0.01 (0.01,0.01)	-1.38 (0.07)	0.25 (0.22, 0.29)
Basic Education/ Gymnasium	-0.09 (0.03)	0.92 (0.86,0.98)	-2.10 (0.02)	0.12 (0.12,0.13)
Vocational Education	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00(0.00)	1
Long/Academic Education	3.07 (0.03)	21.45(20.40,22.54)	-3.71 (0.08)	0.02 (0.02, 0.12)
Men	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00 (0.00)	1
Women	-1.12 (0.02)	0.33 (0.31,0.34)	-2.44 (0.02)	0.09 (0.06, 0.09)
Cohort=1954	0.06 (0.03)	1.06 (1.00,1.11)	0.84 (0.03)	2.31 (2.19, 2.43)
Cohort=1959	0.27 (0.02)	1.31 (1.25,1.37)	0.35 (0.02)	1.42 (1.37, 1.48)
Cohort=1964	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00 (0.00)	1
Father Academic	0.87 (0.04)	2.38 (2.22,2.56)	-0.51 (0.03)	0.60 (0.56, 0.64)
Father Employed	0.60 (0.04)	1.83 (1.70,1.97)	-0.30 (0.03)	0.74 (0.70, 0.78)
Father Artisan	0.40 (0.04)	1.49 (1.39,1.61)	-0.17 (0.02)	0.84 (0.80, 0.88)
Father Skilled	0.32 (0.04)	1.38 (1.26,1.50)	0.13 (0.03)	1.14 (1.09, 1.20)
Father Unskilled	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00 (0.00)	1
Father Out o LF	0.25 (0.04)	1.28 (1.18, 1.38)	-0.15 (0.03)	0.86 (0.82,0.90)
Work exp. 0 Years	-1.74 (0.15)	0.18 (0.13, 0.23)	-2.20 (0.21)	0.11 (0.07, 0.17)
Work exp. <1 Years	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00 (0.00)	1
Work exp. 1 Years	0.68 (0.18)	1.98 (1.39, 2.81)	-0.77 (0.33)	0.46 (0.24, 0.89)
Work exp. 1-5 Years	0.20 (0.05)	1.23 (1.11,1.35)	0.76 (0.07)	2.15 (1.87, 2.46)
Work exp. 5-10 Years	0.11 (0.05)	1.11 (1.01,1.22)	1.27 (0.07)	3.55 (3.09, 4.07)
Work exp. +10 Years	0.10 (0.05)	1.11 (0.99,1.23)	1.63 (0.07)	5.12 (4.45, 5.90)
Unemployed Yes	0.00 (0.00)	1	0.00 (0.00)	1
Unemployed No	0.42 (0.03)	1.52 (1.43,1.61)	-0.59 (0.02)	0.55 (0.53, 0.58)
Adult Education Yes	0.00(0.00)	1	0.00(0.00)	1
Adult Education No	0.38(0.02)	1.47 (1.41,1.53)	-0.47 (0.02)	0.63 (0.61,0.65)

Deviance (value/DF): 2.5/Pearson Chi-square: 5828.3

Deviance (value/DF): 2.0/Pearson Chi-square: 8991.4