UPLIFT – Urban PoLicy Innovation to address inequality with and for Future generaTions

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1   Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the research activity carried out in WP3 of the UPLIFT project[1] in Chemnitz, Germany. It refers also to the UPLIFT Urban Report on Chemnitz[2]. In general, UPLIFT aims to outline and understand the factors that impact on vulnerable young people's experiences of education, employment and housing. Furthermore, it aims to identify how young people manage their life in these fields of action, make choices and develop strategies within what is available to them. The *Chemnitz Urban Report (UP19, 2022)* is based on statistical data, knowledge gained in a desk-based research and expert interviews. In contrast, this report is the result of empirical research: it explored through interviews with as well two age cohorts of young people as relevant policy implementers the opportunities and strategies that young people employ across the fields of action addressed in UPLIFT. Doing so, the objective was to consider what might motivate young people to engage locally in a co-creation of a *Reflexive Policy Agenda* (RPA; a set of actions that are under the control of the local stakeholders which are planned, implemented and monitored with the involvement of young people).

Based on the *Urban Report* and additional desk-based research on housing/urban develop-ment, education and employment, we reviewed the data gained in the interviews and explored key themes and storylines. These were shared/discussed with both experts and young people in separate on-site *Story Telling Workshops*. Following these workshops, we further analysed our data and the feed-back gained in the *Story Telling Workshops*, in order to complete our understanding of the strategies employed by vulnerable young people to cope with the challenges they encountered and to identify change needed in local policy in the three fields of action. Identifying at this stage of the analysis a gap concerning gender difference in needs and behaviour of young people and gender sensitivity in policy implementation, we offered a workshop on gender sensitive participation to policy implementers in local public admini-stration and youth work/qualification projects. It had a training character and provided a more gender sensitive/comprehensive perspective on participation in urban development, education and housing.

Our findings are expressed in the storylines and policy discussion points for each field of action. Furthermore, we highlight three areas which we consider key conditions for the success of *Reflexive Policy Making* (RPM; a co-creation tool that includes vulnerable young people into policy design, implementation and monitoring):

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[1] More information on the project can be found at: uplift-youth.eu

[2] The report can be found at: https://uplift-youth.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/D2.2-Urban-report-Chemnitz_0.pdf

- Young people who experience today a vulnerable life situation have usually good pathways into the Chemnitz help systems and in part also to empowerment-oriented service. There are however three fields of action to be further developed with respect to RPAs aiming at equal social participation: First, we identified lacking communication on the permeability and diversity of the educational/qualification system, on the institutional as well as on the family side. Often, peer-to-peer communication/or communication with a single confidant at school, at a sports club or youth centre plays a more important role than institutional communication. Second, participation in neighbourhood development/living environment often end on the level of tokenism (cf. Arnstein, 1969). This neither motivates for further participation in this field nor for participation in RPA elaboration. Third, there is hardly any qualitative *external evaluation* or *formative evaluation* of the impact and suitability of policies to combat young vulnerable people's inequality. *Policy inherent* evaluation exists, but applies seldom qualitative methods. Also, the expert-interviews led to no policy example where the feed-back of the target groups formed a systematic part of internal evaluation, be it implemented by public administration or social carriers.

- The Covid19 pandemic had a severe impact on the outreach of youth work and youth vocational assistance. Outreach youth work and relation-building are more than ever before key tasks of youth work. Both tasks require time, competence and willingness of public administration and notably the organisation sand single actors in youth-and social work. Concerning their implementation, it is important to verify how far policy implementation in this field is "policy as written" or "policy as performed" (cf. Lipsky, 1980, p.3).

- Young people in vulnerable life situations are more likely to experience self-effectiveness in socio-cultural centres or at empowerment-oriented youth vocational assistance than in public participation processes, at school or in toxic work-environments. This limitation is a barrier to gain their interest in the co-creation of RPAs.

The report ends with recommendations regarding a future RPA in local education, access to employment and housing, based on our storylines. Both storylines and recommendations point to the importance of RPAs for robust and socially sustainable policy making, appropriate to the target group in general and NEET in particular.[3]

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[3] For the definition of the EU on NEET youth see: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets

2   Introduction

This case study report is the result of the research activities carried out in work package 3 (WP3) of the UPLIFT project in Chemnitz, Germany. It aims to understand which are the different factors in different levels (welfare system, intermediary institutions, family background, individual characteristics) that retain vulnerable young individuals to live the life they would like to live or they should be able to live considering the possibilities the locality offers for them? It explores which are the factors that can be changed by means of a *Reflexive Policy Making* process (RPM; a *policy co-creation tool* that includes vulnerable young people into policy design, implementation and monitoring).[4] Pursuing this objective, it analyses micro, mezzo and macro level factors influencing vulnerable young people's decisions in education, employment and housing, and how young people create their own strategies and make choices within the possibilities available in the given locality.

These two main questions rather serve as guidelines for the analysis, but are too broad to be answered fully. Thus, most partners have chosen those sub-topics in this framework that came out to be the most relevant in the local interview process. We aimed to focus on factors that cannot purely be explained by the deficiencies of the welfare systems, rather by the **interactions between vulnerable young individuals and institutions** as a response to the welfare framework.

In Chemnitz, we identified communication on and understanding of social participation (*gleichberechtigte gesellschaftliche Teilhabe*) and participative policy making in general as a challenge on the meta level, experienced by young people and experts cross-cutting issue in all fields of action addressed. As for the latter, we elaborated 3 storylines:

(1) Where physical or mental limitations, family violence and a lack of security shape everyday life, education and training are secondary.
(2) Where young people live in non-sustainable work environments, social agencies must provide compensation and empowerment.
(3) Access to housing is only one aspect of security: neighbourhood effects and the power of right-wing narratives in Chemnitz.

The methods of exploring the factors behind individual decisions are primarily based on guideline-based interviews with local policy experts and policy implementers and 42 vulnerable young people: 22 currently young people between the age of 16 and 25 and 20 interviews with people aged 30-43 years – who were between 15-29 at the time of the financial crisis of 2008. These interviews naturally revealed already well-studied deficiencies of the national and local legislations and the welfare systems (cf. UPLIFT *Urban Report Chemnitz*). Still, this case study

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[4] UPLIFT has developped policy co-creation pocesses in Amsterdam, Barakaldo, Sfântu Gheorghe and Tallin.

report does not have the primary goal to formulate criticism about the general welfare policies and other structurally given resources in Chemnitz and throughout Europe (this was already done in other work packages of UPLIFT[5]). It rather aims to understand how these structural resources, policies, programmes, and services are implemented and how they influence the life strategies of young individuals.

The final aim of this case study report and the analysis of the interactions of the behaviour of individuals and the institutions is to discover and suggest topics for a future *Reflexive Policy Agenda* for each of our eight localities of WP3 of UPLIFT, including Chemnitz.

Reflexive Policy Making lies in the centre of the UPLIFT project. It refers to a *policy co-creation*, refining process, which involves the target group of the policies (in our case vulnerable young people). This process aims to explore young people's narratives on their perceived reality about the locally available policies and services, and empower them to be part of the creation of knowledge on the policy framework. Moreover, this process takes young individuals' feedback on possible changes of policies seriously, and also invites them to monitor the implementation of these policies. By nature, it means a **power-balanced cooperation** between local decision makers and the target groups of local policies, which process relies **on both groups' interests and knowledge**. Thus, the current research deals less with fundamental systemic deficiencies of welfare policies, as it would exceed the competencies of local actors, but rather aims to discover those topics that can be handled locally.

In this report, we first introduce the framework of the analysis in Chapter 3, then we describe our methodology of the research and the analysis in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 first summarizes the main characteristics of the current life situation of vulnerable young people (42 interviewees) regarding their education, employment and housing conditions. Then we describe the main inequality traps we have discovered in our analysis, and the conversions that lead to the current outcomes (positions) of our interviewees. Finally, Chapter 6 contains the main suggestions for potential topics in education, employment and housing for a *Reflexive Policy Agenda*.

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[5] More details about the potentials and deficits of local welfare systems in supporting vulnerable youth and notably NEET in 16 urban areas of Europe can be found at: https://uplift-youth.eu/research-policy/

3 Framework of the analysis

This section contains the theoretical framework for the case study analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative research that has been accomplished in eight UPLIFT locations: Amadora, Amsterdam, Barakaldo, Chemnitz, Corby, Pécs, Sfântu Gheorghe and Tallinn.[6]

The framework of the analysis of this case study report is based on the **Capability Approach**, an attempt for better understanding and interpreting the nature of modern age poverty, social inequalities, human development and well-being, devised in the 1980s by the Nobel prize laureate economist-philosopher Amartya Sen. The Capability Approach understands certain life-pathways as results of a complex interplay of various factors: the nature of the system (e.g. economic, housing, education); individual perception of the system and other micro level, individually driven factors. Moreover, the main goal of the theory is to be able to comprehensively capture the factors that are constraining or enabling an individual to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Our analytical framework builds on the Capability Approach; however, it implies some adjustments and complements it with the life-course approach and the transgenerational approach.

The starting point for understanding the life strategies of vulnerable individuals is to define the **resource space,** which is a complex socio-economic environment around individuals, consisting of all formal rights (e.g. laws and legislations) and possibilities (e.g. subsidy schemes, programmes against social inequalities), which defines opportunities for all inhabitants in a given location. This environment might be enabling, e.g. providing work places, subsidies, networks, while it might be restricting as well, e.g. providing segregated school system, unaffordable housing. The resource space, as it is, largely depends on the socio-economic context in which people live: constitutional rights, economic development of the place, degree of inequalities, thus it varies from location to location. In addition to this, the accessibility of resources is conditionally determined. For instance, even if there is a subsidy scheme to buy a flat, it is only accessible in case of having savings (wealth), having a certain income level and under certain circumstances (e.g. having children). Based on individual characteristics, thus we define an **individualized resource space**, in which an individual can navigate. This individualized resource space is what we basically interpret as **real freedoms, real opportunities**.

However, young individuals have their own culturally and socially embedded perception of their possibilities that are not necessarily match with the so-called real opportunities: either by having unrealistic view or by not seeing those opportunities that theoretically would be achievable for them. This distinction is a new element compared to the original Capability Approach developed by Sen, as our analytical framework places great emphasis on the

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[6] This reserach fraemwork was collaboratively elborated. This chapter is thus and basic for all WP3 reports, it has been written by MRI Budapest.

distinction between **real and perceived opportunity spaces** to understand the origin and the consequence of the gaps between the space of available possible actions and the perceived possible actions. The mechanisms that cause the gaps between the two (e.g. blind spots, false perceptions or conditioned to illegal interventions) are those that make it difficult for an individual to choose those positions in life that best suits his or her abilities and remain in the widely accepted legal and socio-cultural environment.

Inside the individualised resource space, based on the perceived and real opportunities, one can take different positions: **functionings** (*See in Table 1*). In the original theory, functionings are defined as "various things a person may value being or doing". In empirical terms, this can mean two things: 1) the actual and current achievement/outcome of an individual and/or 2) a desired, valued outcome an individual would prefer doing instead of his or her current life choices. Thus, functionings are practically the achievements in a person's life, which he/she either achieved in reality, or may value doing or being.

Table 1 Potential functionings (either current or desired) by domains

Education	Employment	Housing
Qualification (completed and on-going education)	Working conditions (legal/illegal, full time/part time, one shift/three shifts)	Tenure type (public rental, private rental, owner occupation)
Quality of qualification (value of qualification depending on the specific school and dropout history)[7]	Salary level	Quality of housing (neighbourhood, affordability, density)

Source: MRI 2021

The main question of the case study analysis in UPLIFT is the **mechanism** with which these functionings (outcomes/positions/choices/desires) are chosen in the **local resource spaces** by vulnerable individuals.

According to the original **Capability Approach**, individuals ideally choose from real opportunities based on what they value or desire. However, it is not necessarily possible to interpret the decisions made by individuals in a vulnerable life situation as value-based decisions, as they could be based on their everyday life difficulties (compulsion), or also be a consequence of past decisions. Hence, two ideal types of decision chains can be identified: 1) value-based and 2) path dependent – which are not easy to distinguish, as values are born by internalising the circumstances. In case of value-based decisions, the individual can live a meaningful and fulfilling life, while under the notion of path-dependency we understand patterns of past outcomes which, in time, increase the likelihood of a limited number of future

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[7] The quality of education is interpreted in a wide sense, outside of education, having socialising effects on students (e.g. functions/dysfunctions developed in schools that enable/disable functionings in the labour market or the housing market).

choices that are not necessarily advantageous for the individual. Understanding the outcomes from the perspective of a life-course approach is essential to be able to evaluate the agency potential and the role of agency in the life-path of an individual. Thus, the **Life-course Approach** is an important additional component to the **Capability Approach**. Among the past life events and experiences, the behaviour of the family system and the childhood home environment play a key role, which provides a potential to understand what trajectories and possibilities an individual has. The theory of **Transgenerational Mobility** contributes and valuably complement the capability approach with emphasizing the role of socialization and the parental experiences and behaviour as conversion factors.

The routes (conversions) i) from formal resource space to real opportunities (CF1 on Fig.1), ii) from real opportunity space to perceived opportunities (CF2 on Fig.1), and iii) from perceived opportunity space to chosen or desired functioning (CF3 on Fig.1) are paved by **conversion factors**: the interference of institutional and individual conditions that lead to the creation of individual life-strategies. Conversion factors refer to the fact that different individuals have different capabilities to convert public policies and formal rights into valuable opportunities (Kimhur, 2020: 4, CF1 on Fig. 1). Certain conversion factors enable some elements of the opportunity space to be made visible and usable, while other factors have the ability to conceal the real opportunity space, resulting in a gap between the real and perceived opportunity space (CF2 on Fig.1), and a distorted decision about chosen functionings (CF3 on Fig.1). One may think that the perceived resource space is part of the real resource space, and the conversion from real to perceived necessarily results in the reduction of choices. According to our research however, vulnerable young individuals tend to see options for themselves also outside the social norms and sometimes even the legal framework (real opportunities), thus are able to widen their space of options even if it is not realistic from an external viewpoint or not valued positively by the society.

Figure 1: A modified concept of the Capability Approach
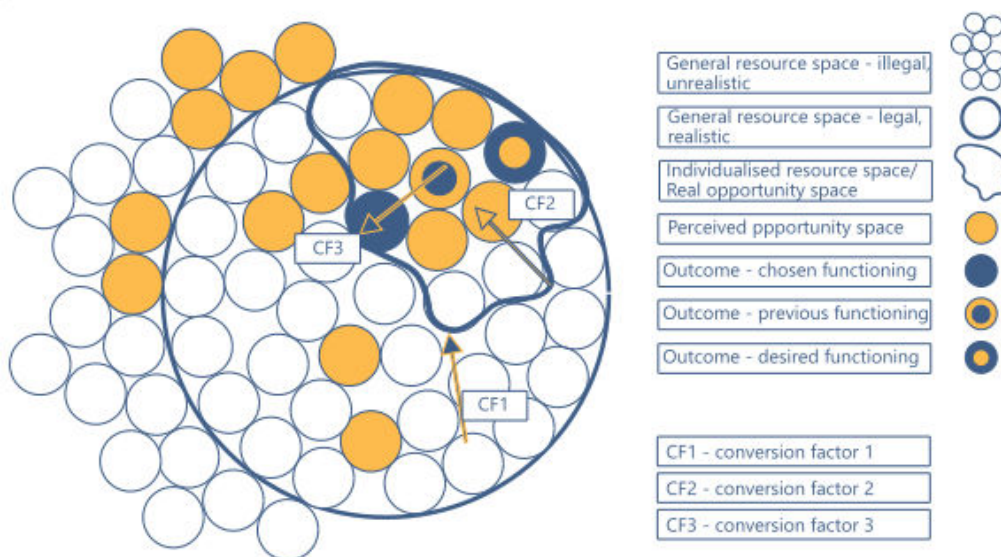
Source: Own elaboration MRI, 2022

Our analysis of the interviews was based on four sets of conversion factors:

- **Individual conversion factors** (micro level conversion factors) focus on a person's psycho-social set, domain-specific capabilities, individual character (e.g sex, intelligence, financial literacy, learning abilities, work ethics), things a person values (e.g. attitude towards education, certain professions) and his/her social network (including the secondary social group where an individual belongs to: neighbourhood, schoolmates, friends, etc.).
- **Family conversion factors** (micro level conversion factor as well) focus on the original family system[8], where he/she was brought up, family's educational/ employment background, values, believes and attitudes in the family, psychosocial environment.
- A special focus is given to institutions (meso-level conversion factors), where we are interested in how institutions narrow down, or rather correct, the perceived space of possibilities in their interactions with individuals. **Institutional conversion factors** focus on attitudes and behaviours of an institution.[9] Just as the individual conversion factors, institutional conversion factors work out differently for (different groups of) people (see exposure to institutional dysfunctions).
- Even being embedded in individual behaviour, institutional response or family event we consider **crucial life events** as independent conversion factors, some of which may have a decisive role in widening or narrowing down the choices one has in certain situations.

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[8] Family system includes the position of the individual in the original family dynamics. For instance, whether it's a supporting and functional or a negative, dysfunctional environment.

[9] Institutionalized norms in our interpretation are the ones that are followed by most members of an institution. One widely known example is institutionalized discrimination, when a large majority of the members of the institutions systematically behave differently (in a negative way) with people belonging to a certain social group e.g. ethnicity or gender.

4 Methodology

This chapter aims to provide information on the methodology followed throughout the research process. The overall objectives of the research were:

(1) To explore the resource space in Chemnitz, based on desk-based research and by interviewing local people and policy implementers about their experiences and knowledge of the local context.
(2) To understand the strategies employed by vulnerable young people to navigate the challenges they encountered.
(3) To identify change needed in policy.

To meet these objectives, we carried out interviews, using a semi structured interview guide, with policy implementers/experts and two age cohorts of young people in Chemnitz (see 5.1, *A portrait of the young people interviewed*). We then analysed the interviews and shared initial findings in two *Story Telling Workhsops* in Chemnitz. The following subchapters introduce more detailed to our methodology.

4.1 Interviews with policy implementers/experts

The interviews with local policy implementers and experts provided essential knowledge on the everyday reality of the local resource space. We discussed differences between the formal resource space and its accessibility/suitability for vulnerable young people, and thus gaps between real and perceived opportunity spaces in education, qualification and housing.

Due to the restrictions for meetings during the Covid19 pandemic, we included some questions for this work package already in the 12 (single and group-) interviews which we carried out for the *Chemnitz Urban Report*. Specifically, for this work package, we furthermore carried out 9 interviews with policy implementers. Eight of them took place face-to-face in Chemnitz, one took place with a digital conference tool.

Whereas the interview-partners for the *Chemnitz Urban Report* included a broader spectrum of public (public administration departments for urban development, youth, school/education, integration, social services and EU city partnerships and knowledge transfer, local job centre) and civil society actors (social carriers, neighbourhood managers, networks for culture and youth work/work with children, salvation army) we focused in the WP3 specific interviews on

- experts in public administration with responsibility for participation processes and inclusion,
- representatives of youth work carriers and social carriers, implementing youth vocational assistance (including vocational assistance for young people with physical handicaps and/or chronic diseases/mental illnesses) and supporting homeless young people and furthermore

- representatives from social carriers/projects promoting intercultural integration, democracy learning and empowerment of homosexual, a-, bisexual, trans- or intersex people.

Apart from the representatives of public administration, most of the professionals who were interviewed depend on public funding (municipal, state and EU) and are thus rather implementers than decision-makers. In contrast to all other UPLIFT case studies, housing actors were considered negligible for the case study, due to an extremely relaxed housing market. This assessment was a common thread running through all the expert interviews and was largely confirmed by the interviews with both age cohorts of young people.

4.2 Interviews with young people

The core data collection of this research work package constituted the interviews with 22 current youngsters (in our case aged 16-25) and 20 formerly youngsters (in our case aged 30-43). Due to the Covid19 pandemic, we had to carry out 5 interviews with video conference tools. For the target group of current youngsters, these turned out to be less purposefull than the interviews in person. 38 of the interviews were conducted in person, of them 3 in small groups (two persons each) and 32 with a single person. Whereas we needed the gate keepers for all interviews with current youngsters, at least some of the formerly youngsters could be recruited using the *snowball sampling method*.

The recruiting process confirmed that winning young people in vulnerable situations for qualitative interviews is a fundamental challenge and requires support from trusted persons of the (within itself diverse) target group. In this context, we first contacted social institutions offering support and counselling services for both target groups in various districts and urban structures. Doing so, we benefited from the support of the city's children and youth commissioner.[10] Educational institutions, providers of integration, inclusion and violence prevention services, children's and youth centres with social and recreational services, church organisations as well as providers of qualification services for the long-term unemployed and socio-pedagogically supported housing (especially for young mothers) were approached. A provider with services for people with disabilities was also selected as a multiplier for interviews in order to be able to address questions of inclusion, in the context of the prohibition of discrimination under EU law in the labour and housing market.

All interviewees were asked to act as multipliers and confidence-builders for the research topic and to communicate the interview topic specifically to people with a migration history and LGBTIQ persons. Decisive social variables for the selection of the interview partners were age, gender, origin, precarious income situation, difficult access to education, school or training dropouts, experience with unemployment and/or the need to make use of transfer payments and support from social institutions. Most of the social variables mentioned come into play intersectional.

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[10] *Kinder- und Jugendbeauftragte (youth representative)*. All representatives (children and youth, integration/inclusion, participation, gender equality) in Chemnitz are *elected* functions/persons

Some of the interviewees' enquiries were made directly by the trusted persons at the organisations. This was an important support to overcome barriers of access, not least due to the Covid19 pandemic, and especially aiming at people who live in financially or socially precarious circumstances. In order to avoid a bias of people who are currently benefitting from social/educational support structures, interviewed experts from the institutions as well as interview partners from the two age cohorts were asked to suggest further people, in the sense of the *snowball system*. Additionally, interview partners were recruited by an advert in a local daily newspaper, at a university and in an inner-city cinema. Only in the higher education sector, these approaches were not successful. An information sheet with the most important details about the project and the interview was provided for both the interviewees recruited by the local research partners and those recruited by the *snowball system*.

The interview guide was coordinated with 8 WP3 locations. In our case study, the interviews followed the *life course interview concept* insofar, as the introduction part of the interview addressed the family environment and the warm-up question was "How would your best friend describe you?" This question was the opening question for a short biographic narrative. The interviewees were informed about data protection and ethical standards of the research and also, why UPLIFT focuses on education, on labour market and on housing. Given that the interviews were limited to max. 90 minutes, but some interviewees couldn't concentrate more than 45-60 minutes, there was a need to structure the time available along the guide line. Nevertheless, the narratives varied concerning ability of self-reflection and also with regard to depth and detail, depending on the attitude of the interviewees. The risk of bias implied with app. 20% shorter interviews with today young persons was counterbalanced with the YTHM results, because this event allowed also an intense group discussion on the core questions of the interview.

4.3 Analysing the interviews

40 out of 42 interviews were recorded. The analysis is based on these audio files and their verbatim (technical) transcription. The analysis aimed at finding commonalities between the interviews, taking into account the different perspectives on the three topics addressed.

Analysing the interviews, we followed the content analysis concept of Ulrich Meuser and Peter Nagel (1991/2002/2009), further developed by Peter Ullrich (2006). Their approach is to widen the definition of „expert" in the sense that „being considered an expert is primarily dependent on the respective research interest", being an expert „is a relational status" and an expert is „someone who has privileged access to information about groups of people or decision-making processes" (Meuser/Nagel 1991, p. 443). As this definition is applicable to our expert interviews, but is still limited to functional/professional experts, we widened this perspective, considering our young/formerly young interviewees as experts of their everyday world.

The comparison of their interview texts with the intention of discovering the representative in the individual's knowledge and keeping the extraction of statements about it controllable for others is according to Meuser/Nagel a presuppositional enterprise, because „first of all, every interview text is the record of a particular interaction and communication, distinctive and unique in content and form." (ibid, p. 451).

Regarding the interpretation of the interviews Meuser/Nagel state that „in contrast to the interpretation interested in individual cases, the evaluation of expert interviews is oriented towards thematic units, passages that belong together in terms of content and are scattered throughout the texts – not towards the sequentiality of utterances per interview." (ibid, p. 435).

Though the individual capacity of the interviewees to provide an interview was very diverse, we followed Meuser/Nagels approach in terms of considering the interviews as shared knowledge, we neglected pauses, voice inflections as well as other non-verbal and para-linguistic elements in the interpretation.

Our overall interview content was during transcription condensed to thematically relevant areas within the domains of housing, education and employment. At the same time both researchers who conducted the interviews agreed on the choices, capability and conversion factors identified and on the coding of the interviews, and started paraphrasing the interviews. The coding led to topics for the storylines, our paraphrasing of the most important positions/ experiences focused on „effective" content for the elaboration of RPA development. All storylines were reviewed by both researchers who conducted the interviews.

The presentation of the results in this report and notably the storylines is supported by quotations in places where they formulate a fact in a very typical or particularly impressive way and leaving them out would rob a paraphrase of authenticity. Much of the information from subordinate clauses and small remarks was only significant when viewed in the sample as a whole. The relevance of topics/categories (or characteristics) can also be quantified very carefully. In the context of the given case number, only topics/views etc. that occur in most/many interviews, even with variance of other characteristics, can be assumed to be of decisive importance (cf. Peter 2006, p. 108).

4.4 Group events: Youth Town Hall Meeting, Storytelling Workshops

The interview process was framed by two types of group events: The *Youth Town Hall Meeting* (YTHM) as door opener and inventory of above all young peoples' perspectives and the *Story Telling Workshops*. These served as space to discuss the results with (in one event) experts and (in a second event) young and formerly young people. The event was also a place to show appreciation for the interviews and to offer transparency within the research and analytical process – both being essential aspects of an RPA.

The **Youth Town Hall Meeting** was – due to Covid19 public meeting restrictions – only organised after a first few interviews with young people had taken place. Also due to these restrictions, the event was separated in two phases with the same procedure: Each phase had 8 participants aged 16-30 years, and also the head of the youth centre where the YTHM took place and youth representative of the city participated – both important gate keepers for the Chemnitz case study. Both phases, with a duration of 90 min each, started with a mental

mapping of the city and the participants' places of residence and the discussion was guided along education, access to labour market and participation in urban development/housing.

The event was accompanied/documented by a graphic recording expert. We decided for this format in order to provide both cognitive and non-verbal, visual access to our discussion, and not least in order to elaborate a format of documentation that is likely to be used further on in the youth centres practice. Thus, the original posters remained with the city's children and youth commissioner and the head of the youth centre.

Figure 2/3 Clippings from the YTHM graphic recording results
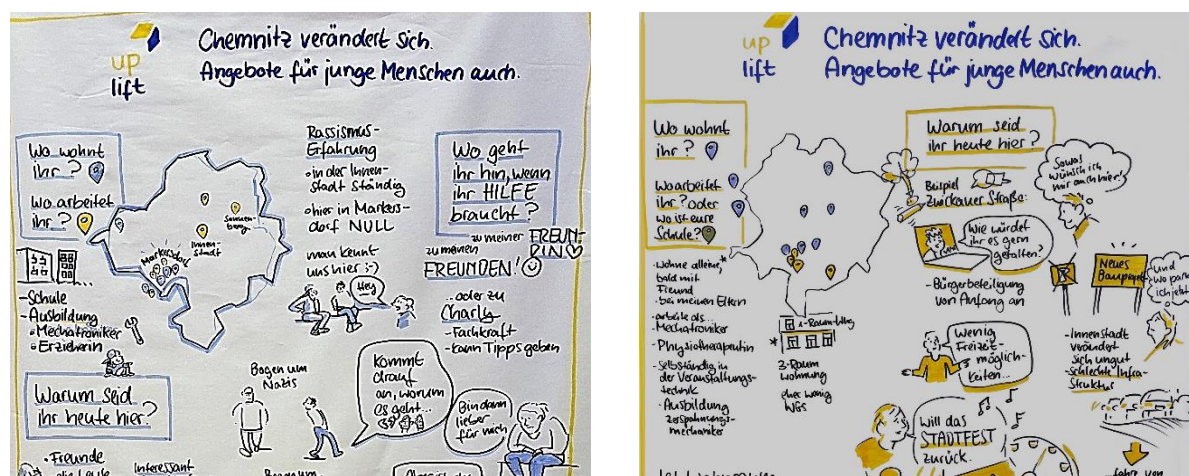
Source: UP19 © / graphic recording: Stephanie Brittnacher

The goal of the meeting was to understand more about young people's life situations, to ensure that their experiences were reflected properly in the interview guides and to motivate themselves for interviews or to be peer-to-peer multipliers for the research. The event took place on the 17 of December 2021, in the *Compact Youth- and Family centre* in the urban area *Fritz Heckert*.[11] The area's socio-cultural infrastructure includes two well renowned, empower-ment oriented family- and youth centres, shared flats for vulnerable youngsters (notably young women) and locates one of the youth vocational assistance carriers who cooperated with UPLIFT. It has been subject to the urban rehabilitation programme *Stadtumbau Ost* (Urban Regeneration East), and includes from two neighbourhood management target areas. The area saw an increased influx of population as a result of the asylum and refugee movements in 2015/2016 – a surprising stabilisation of the population, which was not even remotely foreseen by population forecasters and stopped further demolition in the area.

The **Storytelling Workshops** took place on June 15th (experts, *Stadtschaufenster* event space of the municipality) and on June, 16th 2022 (young persons/formerly young persons, *Roter Turm* event space of an inner-city shopping centre, well known for participatory events). The

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[11] For detailed information see FOG Institute, 2022 and https://www.chemnitz-in-zahlen.de/2022/02/28/das-fritz-heckert-gebiet-in-chemnitz-die-entwicklung-2017-bis-2021-in-den-stadtteilen-kappel-helbersdorf-markersdorf-morgenleite-und-hutholz/

aim of these workshops was to share and discuss preliminary findings from the WP3 interview process with young people and also with involved experts. The *Story Telling Workshop* for the latter was attended by nine people from public administration, neighbourhood management and youth vocational assistance. In terms of both motivation of the participants and dissemination, UP19 presented in addition to the current state of the interview analysis/the storylines developed and also the Barakaldo innovation project and the *Erasmus+ CAP - Coopération Active* et *Potentiel* à *Mulhouse* project, a good practice for young people's self-employment in a cooperative legal framework in Mulhouse. Participants reflected our results and notably concerning the role of the social infrastructure and quality of the public space for young people's equal participation in society, this workshop brought new incentives for policy co-creation. Also, the role/impact of ESF-Funded projects was highlighted. Participants shared also first suggestions for policy improvements and discussed potentials of and barriers to RPAs.

The *Story Telling Workshop* for young people was attended by 13 people, 5 formerly young people (three of them having been interviewed, two of them invited by these) and 8 young people (in part from the YTHM, in part interviewees and newly interested participants with a higher educational status).

UP19 again presented the storylines and the participants' comments were documented through graphic recording. We then invited them to visualize their pathways of education, their access to professional work and their perspectives on their current housing situation.

Figure 4 Pathways to/in education
Source: UP19 © / graphic recording: Stephanie Brittnacher
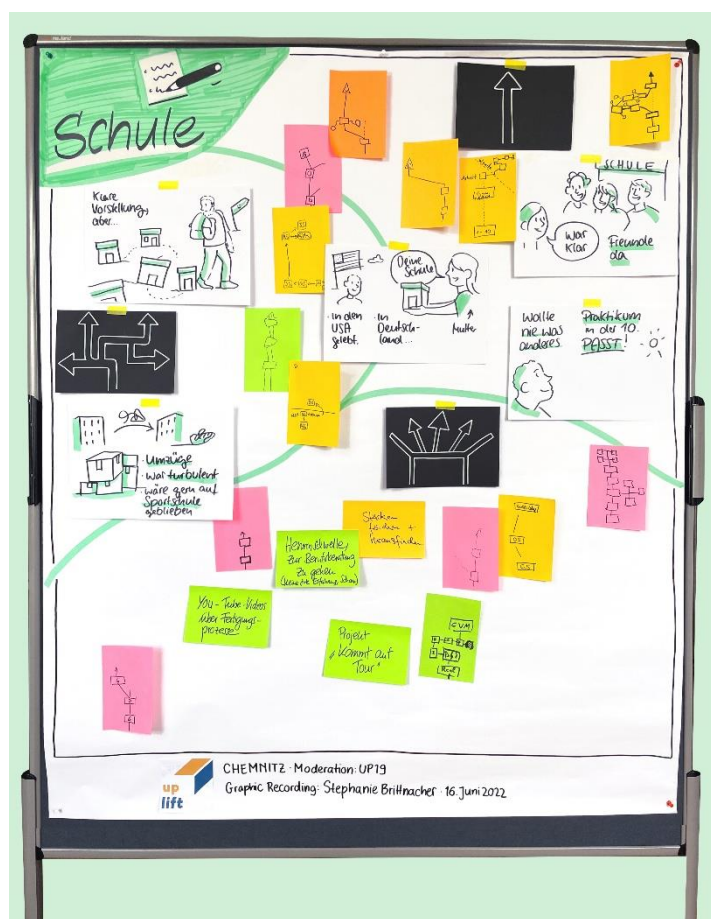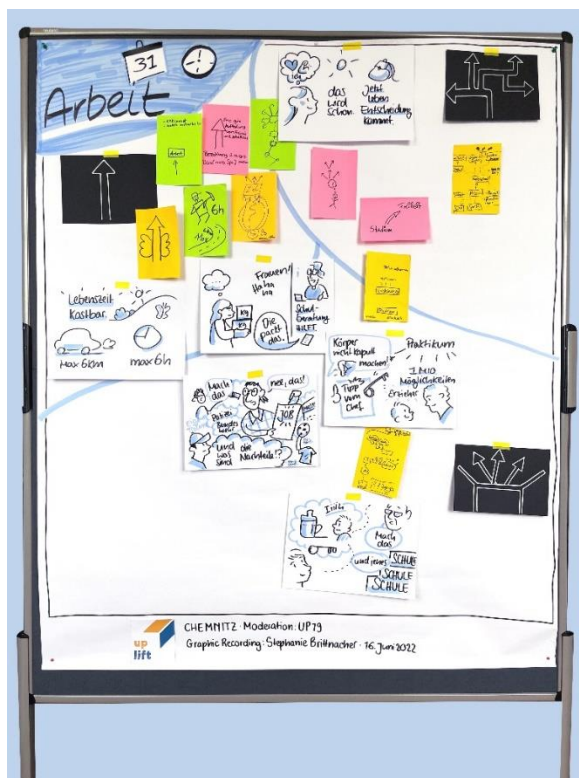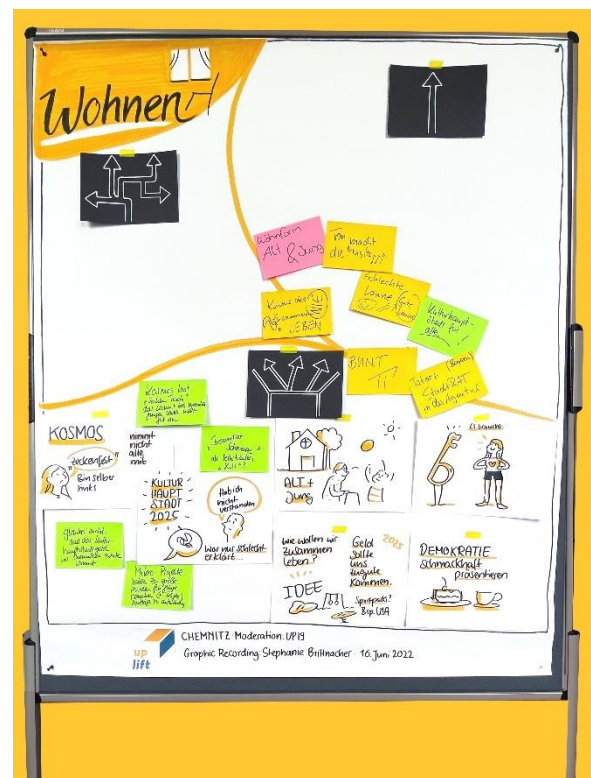
Figure 5 Pathways to professional work

Figure 6 Pathways to professional work

Source Fig 5/6: UP19 © / graphic recording: Stephanie Brittnacher

5 Findings

5.1 Outcomes: A Portrait of the young people we interviewed

A total of 42 people was interviewed. 22 persons belong to the first age group with an age range of 16 - 25 years, 20 persons belong to the second age group with an age range of 30 - 43 years.

As for the gender balance, in the younger group significantly more men accepted being interviewed than women. In the older age group, slightly more women could be motivated for an interview. One person had gone through a transition and one interviewee talked about his homosexuality.[12] The area where gender difference became most visible, was the division of care work for children: Nine people were single parents, all of them women. In three cases, where men stated to do care work for children, they do it together with the partner.

Table 2 Gender balance interviewees

	m	f	d
total	25	19	0
younger age group	14	8	0
older age group	9	11	0

Source: Own elaboration

One fifth of the interviewees stated a migration history.[13] Four of these eight people had migrated themselves; for the others it was their parents' generation. All but one person reported experiences of racism of varying severity. This is an alarming signal that Chemnitz, which has had to deal wth right-wing radicalism for many years and increasingly since the massive right-wing mobilisation from 2018, continues to face a central challenge here, especially with regard to vulnerable groups of young people (cf. Friese/Nolden/Schreiter, 2019). Nevertheless, UPLIFT focuses more on other aspects of vulnerability and disadvantage in access to housing, education/training and work.[14]

About half of the interviewees reported long-term illnesses or physical and mental impairments. Diagnosed learning deficits are the most widespread: nine people attended a

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[12] Except for the two people referred to in the text, all the people reached for an interview assigned themselves to the gender designations female or male. Young people from explicitly queer life worlds could not be reached despite the approach of two self-organisations.

[13] This neither represents the share of young adults (aged 19 – 29) amongst the population without German citizenship in the city of Chemnitz (27%) nor the share of young adults within the refugee immigrant population (aged 10-19: 20%, aged 20-29: 24%; no gender sensitive data provided); the share of young people with a migration history in the city is not statistically recorded, but is likely to be lower than in our sample and differs within the city districts. See https://www.chemnitz-in-zahlen.de/2022/01/22/die-ausl%C3%A4ndische-bev%C3%B6lkerung-in-chemnitz-und-seinen-stadtteilen-ein-%C3%BCberblick/;
https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/de/leben-in-chemnitz/auslaender-und-migranten/fluechtlinge-und-asyl/zahlen_fakten.html; https://www.chemnitz-in-zahlen.de/2022/01/22/die-ausl%C3%A4ndische-bev%C3%B6lkerung-in-chemnitz-und-seinen-stadtteilen-ein-%C3%BCberblick/)

[14] For the international context, it should be added that this development in Saxony and especially in Chemnitz has been widely discussed in the media since 2018. The municipality is reacting to this, among other things, in the context of the *Local Action Plan for the Development of a Diverse and Vibrant Culture of Togetherness in Chemnitz*, which is supported with funds from the federal programme *Democracy Live*.

special school, others changed school types several times in order to be able to achieve learning success. Depression in adolescence is conspicuous, mentioned by four persons. Two persons had physical impairments (back problems not yet diagnosed, metabolic disorder with severe overweight).

Only three interviewees have no school-leaving qualifications (i.e. didn't complete the 9th grade) nine people have completed their school career with the 9th grade of a special school. Eight people achieved a qualification on the level of *Hauptschulabschluss* (lowest secondary school diploma) and seven people the level of *Realschulabschluss (*higher secondary school diploma*)*, which do not give them direct access to university, but would still offer the possibility of starting academic training via *Fachabitur* (vocational baccalaureate). Six people achieved *Abitur* (baccalaureate) and *Fachabitur* and thus potentially have access to universities. Two are still studying, two of the interviewees have completed a university degree. In both cases access was gained with a specialised baccalaureate.

With regard to policy co-creation/the involvement of the target group in the elaboration of *Reflexive Policy Agendas,* it is worth mentioning that only two interviewees had any experience in public participation processes or political engagement. The main reason for this is that the other interviewees had to deal with the situations described in the storylines and had no experience with political participation, another reason the lack of an experience of being taken seriously by politics.

Table 3: Outcomes in education

	Before the first school leaving certificate	school aborted	9th grade leaving certificate (special school)	Secondary school leaving certificate	Middle school (Realschule) certificate	Vocational baccalaureate	Baccalaureate	Studies
total	4	3	9	8	9	2	4	2
younger age group	4	1	4	7	3	1	2	2
older age group		2	5	1	6	1	2	2

(n= 42, one person out of 42 gave no information on school-leaving qualification)

Source: Own elaboration UP19, 2023
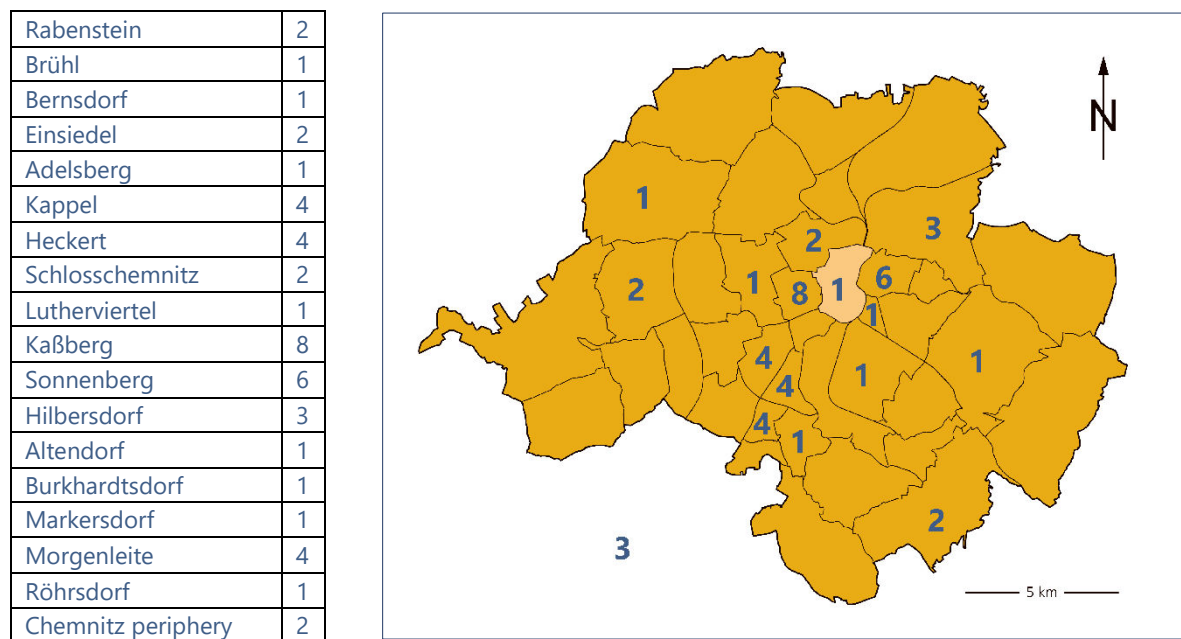
Only six people of the sample were in regular work; four people were still in school. At the time of the interview, the other interviewees were for the most part actively involved in vocational qualification processes or programmes to maintaining the labour force. Since these measures do not always directly follow each other, some people were not currently in measures, but only

in a transitional phase from one measure to another or into the world of work, since without participation in the offers arranged by the *Federal Employment Agency* or the *Job Centre*[15] and without cooperation with the offices, social benefits are reduced or even completely cancelled.

The persons who have a regular job did not give any income information, but all but one of them are employed in rather underpaid socio-educational jobs. There is no income information on the underage interviewees who still live in the parental home. The people of all age groups interviewed who were in support measures at the time of the interview live on youth welfare or state transfer income and are thus at risk of poverty.

Regardless of their age and their different vulnerabilities, the interviewees agreed that access to affordable housing in the desired social space was not a problem for them and that the transition from assisted living to independent living in Chemnitz was not a barrier to finding housing. Only one person stated that he or she had needed support from an agency in finding a place to live. However, the main landlords were the municipal housing company and cooperatives. The sample selection method supported that the socio-spatial distribution of the places of residence of the interviewees does not solely focus on areas that have a weak status in the city's socio-economic spatial ranking.[16]

Figure 7: Spatial distribution of interviewees.

Rabenstein	2
Brühl	1
Bernsdorf	1
Einsiedel	2
Adelsberg	1
Kappel	4
Heckert	4
Schlosschemnitz	2
Lutherviertel	1
Kaßberg	8
Sonnenberg	6
Hilbersdorf	3
Altendorf	1
Burkhardtsdorf	1
Markersdorf	1
Morgenleite	4
Röhrsdorf	1
Chemnitz periphery	2

Source; Own elaboration UP19, 2023

[15] The *Federal Employment Agency* is responsible for granting unemployment benefit I and provides services for the labour market, in particular job placement and job promotion. Job centres are institutions that look after recipients of the Citizen's Allowance, which replaced Unemployment Benefit II and Social Benefit on 1 January 2023. They are joint institutions of the Federal Employment Agency and a municipal agency or municipality. Their most important service is the financial security provided by the basic income support for jobseekers, the citizen's income (until 2022 unemployment benefit II, ALG II).

[16] See socio-spatial mapping FOG Institute, 2022, and Chemnitz district ranking, file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/Downloads/Stadtteil-Ranking%20Chemnitz_Ergebnisbericht.pdf

Approximately 75% of the interviewees live in their own rental home. Apart from the minors who live with their parents, only one person lives in their parents' household due to separation from their partner. Three persons were institutionally accommodated in residential homes at the time of the interview, one person did not name a place of residence.

Table 4 Housing forms of the interviewees

	In the household with parents	Own household, alone or with partner/children	Institutional accommodation
Total	9	30	3
younger age group	8	11	3
older age group	1	19	

Source: Own elaboration UP19, 2023

5.2 Resource space: formal freedom of choices for the individual

Chemnitz was in 2019 home to about 246.908 inhabitants (m/125 180, f/121.728). Whilst it saw a slight population growth since 2007, it is expected to continuously loose population in the near future, despite the influx of refugees in 2015/16, notably in the city's biggest large housing estate.[17] In demographic terms, Chemnitz is 'the oldest' of all east-German major cities with 28% of inhabitants above 65 years. The population aged 15-29 years decreased continuously since 2007, from 42.498 (m/21.996, f/20.502) to 35.507 (m/19.268, f/16.239) in 2019 and represented in 2020 only about 10% of the overall population.[18] 10% of the population have a migration background, which is appr. half of the German average of medium and larger cities. Only the migrant population is dominated by younger people and will likely grow through births and immigration.

The expected demographic development is unevenly spread over the city and indications are that the future will again bring drastic shrinkage across the city. According to an interviewee from city government, only a new wave of foreign immigration could curb the demographic losses. However, experts from city government and youth-work fear that this could again lead to conflicts with the sitting population, despite recent intercultural integration-oriented projects like amongst other *Identeco* (a project of the social carrier *Inpeos*) and Chemnitz untold or *Solidary City/Stadt für alle* (two of the microprojects preparing for Chemnitz European Capital of Culture 2025).

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[17] State of Saxony prognosis: over the next decade a minimal loss of 10% is the middle estimate for Chemnitz, see https://www.bevoelkerungsmonitor.sachsen.de/download/RBV%20Kreise/rbv-landkreisinfo_kreisfreie-stadt_chemnitz.pdf

[18] FOG Institute 2020, *Chemnitz in figures*, https://www.chemnitz-in-zahlen.de

The Gini index of Chemnitz is with continuously 0,25 since 2007 similar to the one of Saxony, but lower than on the national level (0,29). The poverty rate on the city level was 14% in 2016. The child poverty (younger 18) in Chemnitz was in 2019 the highest in Saxony, with 17,9%. The share of persons eligible for social benefit in Saxony aged 18-25 was 10,7% and is likely to be higher in Chemnitz. The same holds true for the at risk of poverty rate for persons aged 18-25 (which was in 2021 in Saxony at 34,9% (m/30,8%, f/39,4%)) and the at risk of poverty rate for single parents (which was in 2021 in Saxony at 44,4%).[19] The share of early leavers from education and training was at 11,2 % in 2019, with a slight increase of the share of young women compared to previous years (m/12,5%, f/10,0 %). Enrolment in upper secondary school decreased since 2007 by nearly 20%, with 16.309 pupils being enrolled in 2019.

The habitat of the city's population is a fractured pattern of neighbourhoods in an open green cityscape which was developed following massive bombing at the end of the Second World War. The city has 39 districts that are partly identical with incorporated former municipalities and are cores of historical local identity of importance for local civic associations and neighbourhoods.

The urban tissue is in part characterised by East German standard housing and industrial structures which were erected until 1990, followed by post-socialist market-oriented developments within an automobile-oriented road network. Around the urban core, a dense mixed inner periphery of former bourgeoise and 'working-class' tenement blocks from the 19th and 20th century today provide for quality middle-class housing and neighbourhoods at various stages of transition. In this contested zone, old and young, locals and migrants, established and vulnerable groups are living together in relative separation. Incomes vary on a neighbourhood level and alternate below or above the urban average. Along some roads disadvantaged youth have agglomerated, while in others, younger self-using and entrepreneurial milieus have established as gentrifiers. Throughout the city, now by large refurbished GDR type panel estates are dominated by varied groups of older and young Germans, migrants, and recent refugees. These estates, with a vacancy rate of app. 9%[20], remain an important housing offer for non-privileged residents and home-seekers.

As for the visibility and structures of housing for young people, the Technical University (TU) with about 10,000 students is the largest pool of young persons in the city. However, for them, mostly coming from other regions, the TU and the city of Chemnitz serve only as a biographical stopover, and with a few exception (Brühl, Kassberg, Bernsdorf), no especially vivid student-quarters have developed, which could have become a youth-cultural hot-spot with a pull capacity.[21]

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[19] Source: Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2023

[20] Notably the large housing estates have seen a population increase, in the context of refugee immigration and post Covid19 (cf. Chemnitz Housing report 2023, https://www.chemnitz-in-zahlen.de/wohnungsmarkt-daten/wohnungsmarkt-report-chemnitz/

[21] A blog exists, where mainly students share information about affordable housing: https://www.studis-online.de/Fragen-Brett/read.php?28,1036514

Formal freedom of choice in education

In 2021, when the Urban Report was elaborated, Chemnitz had 82 schools of different types well spread over the city. Primary schools are in the vicinity of the pupils' homes and secondary schools are either also located in the neighbourhood or within acceptable reach by public transport. However, as a response to demographic change, the number of schools was reduced through demolition and conversion after the mid-1990s by more than a dozen schools. By now, most older schools have been upgraded according to new tuition and ecological standards, and grosso modo the legacies of former neglect have been overcome.

Between 2018 and 2024, a new school building programme of €160 Million in Chemnitz, led to modern and energy efficient buildings which in part replaced older/demolished buildings, often of a high architectural and user quality, but neglecting the increasing demand for integrated school and neighbourhood centres and a multi-coding of spaces.

The state school system cares for vulnerable and 'learning inhibited' young persons in Chemnitz through a system of 'supportive schools' (*Förderschulen*), targeting specific disabilities, which in part is in contrast to aiming at widespread inclusivity. It was criticised that „at the borderline of physical disabilities and social inabilities, the goal of inclusion was not sufficiently' reached" (expert interview).

In 2021, the city has won an application for becoming European Capital 2025 with the motto „C the unseen". The term covers spaces and institutions as well as people, who should be made visible and empowered in a process that actively supports weaker groups and includes a wide variety of initiatives and civil society. It is still too early to consider the impact of the structures to be developed on the formal freedom of choice in the transition from education to employment or within employment, but as the objective is a decentralised long-term event „for all", it should provide an excellent laboratory situation for a RPA concerning the diversification of formal freedom of choice in areas where inequality shall be tackled. Preparations are organised as process-oriented and inclusive, deliberately addressing young and old to present approaches to what culture means for them. Schools and youth centres are included and taking an active role.

Formal freedom of choice in transition from education to employment

For young people in different vulnerable situations, specific youth vocational training turned out to be both a door opener in the transition to employment and an empowering exit offer in toxic/unsustainable work environments. The city supports various carriers of such assistance, aiming at different target groups, such as young people with learning problems, school-leavers, drug-addicted young and/or homeless people, single mothers and as intersectional characteristics of deprivation LGBTIQ persons and people with immigrant background/PoC. Integrated and integrating policies and practices across professional and departmental boundaries have thus become carrying elements in policy development in Chemnitz. To name only few, the innovative DELPHIN / Karree49 youth and community project to a new colla-borative school (*Kooperationsschule Chemnitz*), and the opening of an under-used church to young people (*Jugendkirche*), a wide range of projects has emerged and moved from

experiment to mainstream, often combining vocational assistance with ecological topics, democracy learning, identity building projects etc.

The city has taken an active role in initiating a network of community actors as supportive infrastructure across the city after 2010, these were also tasked with supporting youth initiatives. Young people who find access to the open networks and programmes are benefitting from these participatory structures. However, with the periodic societal closures through the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become apparent that notably groups of the most vulnerable were excluded and in consequence partially also self-excluding from assisting structures.

Governance related development that affects the formal freedom of choice

Building up robust actor networks to perform the various tasks of integrated urban development, namely in youth welfare service delivery, urban development, and housing, has taken time within the period investigated in UPLIFT, from 2007-2021. It needed professional persistence and continuous political backing on a basis of a political understanding of the interdependence of urban social matters. Flexible and reliable structures of work have emerged, which have proved sustainable and resilient in the eyes of the actors of public administration and of outsourced non-governmental and private welfare service providers.

Even though many individual actor-organisations may have hierarchical top-down structures, an understanding of the necessity of a balance between top-down regulation and bottom-up initiative has developed, which serves to improve the livelihoods of the clients. Also, cross-administrational collaboration and the inclusion of actors that generally are not seen as 'normal participants' of youth work or urban development, like young people at the edge of society gained acceptance and esteem. This may enlarge the formal freedom of choice in some fields, such as vocational training. Generally, robust actor networks can be seen as precondition to a diversification of the formal freedom of choice in all areas – we do thus consider them conversion factors at the meso level.

Another general (meso level) conversion factor is governance adaptation to change in fluid situations. In the UPLIFT project's action fields in Chemnitz, governance actors have turned out to be appropriately organised to react to changes in a self-aware way. The town planning department has reached out into social and youth welfare matters successfully on the basis of integrated project structures under umbrella regulations – and with partial funding by federal government and EU funds produced viable and sustainable results. Appointed representatives have built important bridges across the rifts between administration, social and youth work, housing actors and civil society and the clientele – and considerably contributed to building trust amongst different actors.

A further precondition to strengthening the formal freedom of choice and projects mitigating inequality is persistent political support to empower vulnerable youth – which has not been equally persistent in the current legislative periods. At the same time, the use of European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and European Social Funds (ESF), and other European

programmes related notably to youth work and urban rehabilitation are key factors for the widening of the formal freedom of choice of vulnerable young population.

5.3 The challenges young people face

In the Urban Report, we stated that for long time, overall welfare policies and their delivery through services in Germany have managed to keep inequality at a level that allows a large majority of people in material need to lead a life above the poverty level. However, current statistical reports and the interviews with both formerly and currently young people and professional experts verified that the rift between the life-worlds of the affluent middle classes and those dependent on welfare services has deepened. A main factor is the relative uncoupling of material (objective) and immaterial – subjective – inequality, which is of growing influence on the social cohesion. With regard to vulnerable groups of young population and thus throughout the research in Chemnitz, the growing groups of '*unreachables*' were cited as the most problematic target group of welfare provision.

In the following, we present in three storylines the real opportunities and conversion factors experienced by the two age groups which we interviewed in education, employment and housing. Professional experts' positions are being included where they are in contrast or explicitly strengthening the young people's positions. For each storyline, we elaborated according to our interpretation methodology thematically relevant areas (sub-headers). Differences between the two age groups are, due to minor differences, highlighted in the text flow but not presented in a separate chapter.

5.3.1 Storyline 1: Where physical or mental limitations, family violence and a lack of security shape everyday life, education and training loose importance

Two aspects influenced access to the labour market and the possibility to pursue self-set goals the most and are considered micro level conversion factors: health on a mental and physical level as well as being measured against what is perceived as "normal" and having a safe parental home.

Half of the interviewees have to deal with physical or mental limitations that make it so difficult for them to find a job or even to live their daily lives that they are excluded from parts of the primary labour market. The parental home has a similarly strong effect on educational attainment and occupational self-determination. Parental neglect and violence have led to particular challenges for the interviewees in coping psychologically, as well as in coping with school or other demands of everyday life.

In the following, examples from the interviews will show, where exclusions occur and what strategies/outcome the interviewees found for dealing with them.

Parents and school

For children who have to experience violence at home, are exposed to severe stress or have to take on a lot of responsibility for siblings at an early age due to the absence of their parents, coping with school tasks is of secondary importance.

"*I left when I was eleven, almost twelve. Then I came to the children's home alone with my bag and baggage. [...]. I didn't want to go to school, I didn't want to do anything, I was cheeky, I was loud, I threw things*" (CH_08).

Even if it doesn't get as far as described here in the interview: an insecure home creates emotional burdens that result in blockades for one's own life management/life shaping.

"*If there hadn't been the extreme stress at home and everything that led to the enormous separation [...], I probably wouldn't have had a blackout during the exams, I probably would have passed my exam without any problems and I would have had the qualifying secondary school diploma*" (CH_06).

School psychologists were able to intervene preventively in some cases, recognise personal/family problems and/or other conflicts of the interviewees and establish a dialogue with them at an early stage, before they missed lessons, missed class targets or dropped out of school. The school psychologists' work may thus be considered an important conversion factor.

Where the relationship with parents is good, they are one of the most important resources for the interviewees of the younger age cohort. Mothers are mentioned particularly often as an important reference person for questions about the future.

Career choice in vocational preparation counts

Almost all interviewees had – and this is compared to other UPLIFT case studies a rare situation – at a certain point in life experience with measures for orientation and qualification on the labour market. Although not unanimously, they described the following conversions factors as helpful and so did those involved in the *town hall meeting* and *storytelling workshop:*

- compulsory work placements in companies during the school years for the first practical contact with the world of work,
- education fairs at the end of the school years with information stands and a supra-regional overview that is rated as important,
- educational counsellors from the employment office who advise young people twice a year at school on career prospects and are also available for counselling afterwards,
- the vocational preparation year (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr,* BVJ) following school for pupils without an apprenticeship place or qualification, as well as
- vocational preparation measures (*Berufssvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahme*, BvB), which help to analyse strengths and weaknesses, close gaps in knowledge and provide participants with practical knowledge of the chosen occupational field at the respective educational institution.

In our perspective, the strength of this offer is the variety of instruments enabling to access the labour market in one way or another. Many of the interviewees feel that they are not sufficiently prepared for the world of work after school and are therefore happy about the possibility of specialisation. At the same time, for some, this structure limits the choices for the career path – in terms of a then institutional conversion factor.

"But especially in the direction of medicine, where I would like to go or animal welfare or really something like that, there is not really anything. The only thing you can do with a secondary school certificate is to become a nurse's aide" (CH_07).

This is particularly clear with regard to inclusion and the *resource space of* special needs pupils (just under a quarter of those we interviewed, 9 out of 42).

"Well, I didn't want to be a painter, nor did I want to work with wood or metal, those were not my professions, there was only home economics" (CH_28).

"If you are disabled, like us, you have no chance on the primary labour market. ... I never wanted to go to the workshop, I know that for sure" (CH_12).

The combination of these four occupations (painter/painter, carpentry, metalworking, house-keeping) in *BvB* measures is often offered to the interviewees as a choice. With regard to gender-specific discrimination in the house keeping occupations (cf. chapter 5.2), this means that women with a lower secondary school leaving certificate or a certificate from a special school very often have to resort to a measure in care work. In addition to few choices, the framework conditions for potentially forward-looking decisions are not always suitable:

"I had to decide on the same day [between training in home economics or as a warehouse clerk]. I had the appointment early and was supposed to call in the afternoon and have decided" (CH_33_a).

The following example shows that the reliance on aptitude tests and a more differentiated labour market for different ability levels has made inclusion more difficult:

"There was an IQ test at the employment office where I was below average, so they advised me not to continue my education, so I let myself get insecure and that sucked, and then the employment office talked me out of it" (CH_31).

The same interviewee, who was not advised here to continue his training as a painter because *"he would not make it"*, later obtained his diploma in social work. Against the background of an increasing number of children who are diagnosed with learning disabilities every year or who move from primary schools to special schools after a few years, the question of a more inclusive model of the labour market arises, in terms of both more formal choice and positive meso-level conversion factors. Where this increase comes from, is less the question here than how this fact is dealt with. Inclusion, the opening of the labour market for people with different talents and with and without impairments, especially in cooperation with private companies that find it more difficult to impose regulations on personnel policy, are central conversion factors if the choice of possible career paths is to multiply, especially for vulnerable young people.

Of course – and this is another meso level conversion factor – this presupposes that existing protection against discrimination in the education system and on the labour market is effectively implemented. An example for the necessity of reflection on this is the quote of an interviewee with a disability who was dismissed on the grounds of disability with flimsy arguments:

"Who screams for it when you complain? And you have to know about counselling centres and the law first" (CH_33b).

Orientation and accompaniment

Especially when it is not the family that can help with life experience and a strong relationship of trust in orientation and career choice, with applications to the authorities and even support in case of financial bottlenecks, it is particularly important for young adults to be able to use counselling and support services within the framework of municipal youth welfare. The offers mentioned were not so much those of the job centre, where the establishment of a relationship tends to be structurally avoided, but those of social institutions in the areas of vocational support, assisted living and youth recreational facilities. Only these can build trust through medium to long-term support and reliable help, get to know the individual life situation of the person and thus support social participation in various areas of life.

"Delphin helps me to find my position in life, because with a secondary school diploma it is quite difficult. They support me very well, even in crisis situations or when I have difficulties with my family, they are the interpreters, so to speak" (CH_02).

For some interviewees, the support provided by the social workers of the agencies was particularly helpful in gaining an overview of funding applications and their deadlines, in dealing with inner turmoil in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, and in distancing themselves from personal worries in protected spaces. Applications for support in caring, for example for one's own children, have proved to be particularly complicated for some interviewees. Here, professional support is very welcome.

Accompaniment (by social workers in the case of voluntary services) and support (by legal representatives) therefore play – in terms of a positive conversion factor – a key role in building relationships and are thus highly responsible for the use of formal resources by disadvantaged young people.

At best, a colleague should be involved in this relationship with regard to the continuity of care and support in the individual and formal framework: When in one case e. g. the caregiver was on holiday, *"the help fell away and then I really crashed"* (CH_24), which eventually led to the withdrawal of custody of two of her children.

Almost none of the interviewees had had a bad experience with one of the social agencies, which were often recommended to them by friends, i.e. their peer group. This form of information flow among friends makes it much easier for the interviewees to access counselling and support services compared to information brochures or professionals.

Therapy services are also particularly successful if they can be accessed quickly when needed.

"I've been hanging in the air for two years now until I can get therapy again and that's exhausting ... You're pretty much up in the air with your mental problems, especially when it's hard to build up trust" (CH_25).

Here, however, the therapy had to be discontinued or could not be continued because the health insurance companies only pay for a certain number of sessions per year.

Motivation and goal setting

Many obstacles were overcome by the interviewees through special motivation and determination, having an impact as micro-level conversion factors. One interviewee, for example, was able to coordinate a full-time internship, studies and a part-time job at the weekend, even though she was the only one caring for her child, because she wanted to achieve better living conditions for herself and her child than those in which she grew up.

"Of course, I do the school for me and my child so that we will eventually have it better than I had it as a child." (CH_08) Another single mother in a similar situation said: "*Time for me? I don't know that at all.*" (CH_32)

This single-mindedness and the unconditional focus on the envisaged educational goals were also necessary to fight prejudices:

[About the treatment at the employment office:] "That was impossible, I found it very humiliating. I'm not uneducated, I've always been determined, I've never been lazy, and yet as a young mother you were given the feeling that 'she's not going to make it anyway'. I often experienced that, but rather subtly." (CH_32)

For others, it was friends who convinced them to catch up on their previously unattainable school-leaving qualifications and to dare to do so.

"Then a friend from school approached me and said: 'I'm doing my 10th grade through night school. Will you join me?' Then I thought, man, that's perfect, I don't have to do temporary work anymore and I can become a curative education nurse someday" (CH_30).

Often it takes this very personal approach to actually see possible future paths which wouldn't be ones most obvious own choice, as realistic and feasible for oneself. The effectiveness of tutoring was very similar: for some students, tutoring works especially well when other students or friends give it. Peer-to-peer communication – to be considered a micro-level conversion factor – was described by many interviewees as the most effective way to really take a hint seriously.

5.3.2 Storyline 2: Where young people live in non-sustainable work environments, social agencies need to provide compensation and empowerment

Self-assertion in the labour market – being an important micro-level conversion factor – is not easy for many interviewees. Almost all participants from the older interview group have had several experiences of dismissal and problems in the world of work. Only some of these

experiences have to do with the fact that the interviewees had misjudged the occupational field or also realised on their own that the respective employer or the tasks to be done were not suitable for them. Often it was also working conditions that led to the demotivation of the interviewees, pushed them into self-doubt and sometimes caused major psychological problems for them. These working conditions, which in the medium- and long-term lead to the interviewees not being able to continue their work even if they are not directly dismissed, are what we call here *unsustainable working conditions* – to be considered a negative institutional conversion factor.

However, not all interviewees have had all the experiences mentioned. From the perspective of a potentially reflexive development of support instruments (policies) to make the world of work more attractive and sustainable, especially for vulnerable groups of young people, it is useful to look at the results described here. They provide indications of which conversion factors make the world of work power-deterring or at least particularly challenging for the interviewees.

Bullying and discrimination[22]

A very direct barrier to getting a job, which was reported to us several times and is considered as meso-level conversion factor that inclines with micro-level conversion factors, is open racial, class or handicap-based discrimination. In this case-study, this was reported to us particularly from the manual professions, which in some cases are still more characterised by patriarchal and racist patterns of behaviour than other professions:

"*There were some statements: Where I think to myself, we are in the 21st century, actually those times should be over*" (CH_02_a).

"*And they were always laughing at foreigners and they always got on with it*" (CH_29).

Health problems also sometimes led to derogatory comments in the workplace. Conflicts and disagreements in the workplace could not always be addressed openly. The woman quoted above (CH_02_a) was indirectly dismissed after the saying without the employer being guilty of discrimination under labour law.

"*Did they already know how to formulate it and not directly dismiss me, but put me on compulsory leave for the rest of the employment contract*" (CH_02_a)

The interviewees quickly became aware in some jobs that they were not equal and quickly developed immense self-doubt in this context:

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[22] Bullying and discrimination describe similar activities of exclusion and devaluation of certain persons (groups). Bullying is often broader, can have verbal as well as physical components and can use many aspects/characteristics as a reason for exclusion. Power is regularly and systematically used against weaker people. Discrimination is a term also legally defined in the German *General Equal Treatment Act* (AGG, 2006), which prohibits unequal treatment on the basis of certain *characteristics* (origin, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability/chronic illness) under threat of compensation for pain and suffering. The areas protected by the law also include human resources development and interaction in the workplace.

"Mr. X, do you really think this is something for you? Wouldn't you rather quit? Then I stood in the camp and called my sister in tears, that's my reference person, and I didn't know what to do now" (CH_03).

"I didn't feel welcome from the beginning either, then after 3 months it ended in mutual dismissal with tears" (CH_17).

"Have always been afraid of being judged because of my skin colour, because of my fullness, because of my homosexuality, because of my performance at school" (CH_29)

If such dismissals occurred, the interviewees faced specific micro-level conversion factors, such as often needing a longer period of psychological processing and subsequent support from a social institution to re-enter the labour market. One interviewee explained this very poor communication, critical and teamwork skills in some workplaces with the work experiences of the resident employees from GDR times:

[On work in two painting companies from which the interviewee was dismissed]: "The working atmosphere was simply shit, they were in a different mood than us young people, there was a strictness and many were still used to the GDR collective, that you just have to duck down and the one upstairs has the say" (CH_31).

A cultural change in the world of work is a strong meso-level conversion factor, also in craft professions, towards open communication, appreciation and critical faculties will not stop at these labour market sectors with the increasing shortage of skilled workers. A reorientation of the corporate culture and appreciation as an element of personnel development is increasingly demanded by employees of all social milieus and is becoming more and more important for the choice of a job in connection with the shortage of skilled workers.

Repeated failure

One aspect that was found equally in both age groups was their own disappointment at repeatedly failing to meet certain requirements and the associated lack of motivation. Here, the interviewees often referred to their school years, when prejudices about children as "*smart*" and "*stupid*" (CH_18_a) manifested themselves in the teachers' minds. The experience of failure in the face of challenges at school or in the world of work led some of them not to trust themselves in general, but especially in these two areas - even in situations that they could have mastered.

"The teacher thought I was bad. Then I tried very hard and still got a bad grade, then at some point the motivation was completely gone" (CH_02_b).

"My mum didn't want to help me anymore because I did it wrong and I didn't want to listen any more" (CH_11).

"The students who could do it were always rewarded 'You're doing great!', but the ones who had a really hard time, we were just stupid to the teachers." (CH_18_a).

The experiences with tasks that could be fulfilled well could in return also give great self-affirmation and compensate for negative experiences. Such experiences also occurred when

transferring to a special school, where the realisation was gained that they were not "problematic" or "different", but also had strengths and talents themselves. This experience was also made here when moving from school to training:

 "*At school I always had the feeling that I couldn't do anything, that it wouldn't work out. But then I had the feeling that I could stick wallpaper on the wall, and that gave me a boost*" (CH_31).

Or, as one interviewee, who was not kept on in previous jobs due to his disability, says about the atmosphere at a carrier:

"*Get along well with the staff, you are taken as you are here and if you can't, if it's no longer possible with the strength, you tell them in time and then it's like that and not a problem, in contrast to work before*". (CH_10).

[On the possibility of doing an apprenticeship as an office clerk with the executing agency] "*There I get [a] bit emotional, but then I can work here, under humane conditions!*" (CH_03)

This part of the storyline and also the following one are important examples of the often interdepending relation between meso- and micro-level conversion factors.

Meaning and appreciation

Another aspect that made employment relationships unsustainable in the long term for many interviewees was a feeling of futility in their own work. Sometimes it was also because the pay was very low and did not correspond to one's own performance. This felt discrepancy could be compensated by meaningful and personally motivating tasks.

"*It felt like shit to be the best and get 10 € per hour, then I got 11 € and others 14-15 € … I took [particularly challenging work] home with me, that was cool, that was fun, that was a world of its own in which you were then immersed*" (CH_29).

It is particularly evident here that the vocational preparation measures with providers were used by many as a way to recover from the stresses of the labour market and as an opportunity to build self-confidence.

"*Here [the provider of the vocational training measure] I had a task, but I can do what I feel like doing, what I feel confident doing. It's fun, the people are friendly*" (CH_03).

Especially for people with multiple problems, such as their own drug problems, no educational qualifications, experiences of discrimination and/or a lack of family support or experiences of violence at home, it can be particularly difficult for social workers to create a space in which the constant experience of failure can be broken. One interviewee, who refused or dropped out of many training offers out of fear and now disinterest, was able to break the vicious circle of diminished self-esteem and negative experiences with the outside world with the help of an internship abroad.

[3-month internship abroad in Spain as a cook with a sponsor from Chemnitz] "*It was a very good time, I made lots of new friends [...] They were really enthusiastic about me in the kitchen,*

they only ever talked positively about me. The farewell was very sad on both sides, they gave me a T-shirt, which was cool" (CH_11).

For him, this appreciation was a rare experience and encouraged him to stop stealing and to face his drug problems. This change of life was not entirely successful, but the appreciation he experienced was a ray of hope for him, on which many vocational measures could then be built. Especially when many problems come together and people have written themselves off, a change of location is sometimes a method to give a new perspective and the feeling of a new start.

End of forces

Often, a high pressure to perform, even beyond one's own limits, is seen by the interviewees as "normal" in the world of work. Talking about mistakes, fears and problems in the world of work is still a taboo or an admission of weakness for the interviewees and is associated with the risk of losing one's job because of it. Accordingly, stressful situations are often endured for (too) long. At the same time, not being able to withstand stress and pressure is often seen as a personal mistake. This leads to situations filled with shame:

"*I swallowed it all and went to work* and *then in August 2019 I went to the doctor because I couldn't take it any more*", *then a month later* "*I accepted a sick note, with a bad conscience, what do the bosses and colleagues think, but I had to do it for myself*" (CH_25).

"*In the second year of my apprenticeship I had a mental breakdown, so I was also sent to a psychiatric ward in Chemnitz*" *[after returning home after the holidays he was dismissed without notice because of his stay in a psychiatric ward]* (CH_03)

Such exhaustion of one's resilience – as micro-level conversion factor – often requires a particularly long recovery period, with many measures to prepare for the next application. This leads to one or more breaks in the CV, which makes further access to the labour market more difficult. If there would have been earlier intervention/prevention within the respective companies, with clear communication on the importance of one's own health and with a view to sustainable workforce engagement, these individuals could perhaps be reached earlier and would not have to be pushed to the edge of their resilience before seeking a way out, or withdrawing through illness.

5.3.3 Storyline 3: Access to housing is only one aspect of security: neighbourhood effects and the power of right-wing narratives in Chemnitz

In contrast to the general demographic forecast, most of the interviewees value Chemnitz as a place to live in the future, but less because of professional strategies than especially because of the ties to their families and peers (micro level conversion factors) and the easy access to the housing market and change in urban development/public space (institutional conversion factors). The influence of right-wing agitation on the city and negatively described encounters in everyday life nevertheless make some of the interviewees think about moving away. Our research did not especially focus on whether these narratives or in the worst case negative

experiences can become conversion factors for housing choice and biographies. Both interviewees from the formerly young people's group and professional experts pointed however on the persistence of negative narratives (i.e. perceived segregation) on urban areas, despite efforts of the city government and civil society actors and anti-racist self-organisation.

Also, there is a link between the impact of right wing/racist behaviour as an aspect of safety/well-being in semi-public and public space and the need for mutual public and civil society actors' action in Youth work: Especially under Covid-19, when accepted principles of action in the public realm were questioned and irrational demands were aired by political groups (*Corona Opponents*, right wing ideologists and parties, the *Monday Marchers*), 'firewalls of rational discourse' – like the debates in the *Youth-Welfare-Council* or the *League of Welfare Providers* can help secure the professionalism of welfare service delivery, not least where they were embedded in neighbourhood management structures.

Access to housing

There was a similarly large consensus on few points in the interviews as there was with regard to the assessment: finding housing in Chemnitz is relatively easy. This applies as well to the younger as to the older group of interviewees and also to people whose housing costs are covered by the *Social Welfare Office*, the *Youth Welfare Office* or the *Job Centre*, both on the private rental market and in municipal housing:

"*That's the advantage in Chemnitz, if you're looking for a flat, you'll find one and at a good fair price*" [person receives housing benefit through the youth welfare office] (CH_01)

For many, one of the first places to go was/is the municipal housing company *Grundstücks- und Gebäudewirtschafts-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* (GGG), which offers low-threshold housing, both in terms of the requirements for renting and the application process.

"*With the GGG, you have another chance to get a flat despite debts. It was rather the opposite with a private landlord*" (CH_08).

"*I went to the office [of the housing company] and got advice there*" (CH_23).

"*Just called*" (CH_16).

While in other cities the application for housing is becoming increasingly digitalised and thus – in terms of an institutional conversion factor – partially excludes vulnerable groups, in Chemnitz housing advertisements can often still be viewed in the customer office or enquired about by telephone: This provides a low-threshold way of obtaining information and applying. In addition to the relaxed housing market situation, this easy access to housing provides security in finding affordable housing quickly. It also provides the security of being able to stay in the same social space if a move is necessary, or to be able to change space if desired. The older group of interviewees had in part a more differentiated perspective on the different areas of the city and pros and cons of specific settlement structures.

For those interviewees who had not lived in Chemnitz since childhood, it was often the low rents that led them to move to Chemnitz when their financial means were low.

[Moving to Chemnitz with the family] "For financial reasons, because we couldn't pay for the old flat any more. And mum looked everywhere. So, my mother asked everywhere. She got rejections everywhere about flats. Except here in Chemnitz. And that's where we came. (CH_20).

In the area of housing, however, the effects of the Covid19 pandemic/crisis and the current energy crisis are noticeable in the interviews: The utility bills, which have to be approved by the social housing assistance for people receiving housing cost transfer[23], are a major challenge for (not only) vulnerable young households. A recent study by the German Institute of Economics concludes that the proportion of households at risk of energy poverty (excluding government assistance packages) has increased from 14.5% in 2021 to 25.2% in May 2022 (Henger/Stockhausen, 2022).[24] Although a large proportion of those with high energy expenditure do not necessarily come from low-income backgrounds, the rate increased from 7.2% in 2019 to 10.4% by May 2022, according to the study. In this context, the proportion of people from the low-income sector with energy expenditure above 10% increased sharply from 49% (2021) to 65% (May 2022). The rising utility costs are difficult to calculate, especially for vulnerable young households, and behavioural adjustments in the area of heating and electricity consumption are partly not implemented. Households receiving transfer payments are thus under additional financial pressure. As an additional factor of insecurity, this leads to further psychological stress. Energy poverty may thus for many vulnerable young people become an institutional conversion factor, coinciding with the micro-level conversion factor psychological stress, which impacts on other areas of real opportunities.

[The interviewee bathed more often during Corona and then had to write a justification and now hold back, due to increased heating costs] "because otherwise they wouldn't pay for it anymore" (CH_12)

Neighbourhood effects

Due to the good and low-threshold accessibility of housing in Chemnitz, the interviews focused more on social effects of the neighbourhood and the immediate residential environment than on exclusion mechanisms from the housing market. Generally, the term '*neighbourhood-effects*' has in urban sociology rather a negative connotation and is linked to spatial segregation. At the same time, there is the knowledge, that the in-side and out-side perception of neighbourhoods may be very different and that there are also '*positive*' neighbourhood effects – which holds true for many of the interviewees. One interviewee who lives in the Fritz-Heckert residential area, the third largest prefabricated housing estate in the GDR, which has been partially deconstructed and extensively redeveloped, reported how the immediate residential environment affects his attitude and activities:

"It's all too sterile for me, it's difficult to develop here [...] You don't have any opportunities, the [other young people] just drink here and that's just crap" (CH_29).

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23 The administrative regulation speaks of "reasonableness" of the costs actually incurred, cf. https://www.dresden.de/media/pdf/sozialamt/Merkblatt_KdU.pdf

24 Henger, Ralph / Stockhausen, Maximilian (03.07.2022). Danger of energy poverty grows. IW-Kurzbericht 55/2022. Online: file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/Downloads/IW-Kurzbericht_2022-Energiearmut.pdf

[The person has started going out more after keeping a very low profile due to homophobia, racism and fat-shaming] "I'm now making up for my childhood, I'm 30 and I'm starting to skateboard. Didn't dare before because I was laughed at a lot" (CH_29).

The person also attributes this change in behaviour to the redevelopment measures in the residential area:

"*The environment also does a lot to the psyche, when the houses are all newly renovated now, that also does something.*" (CH_29).

Other interviewees also describe that the redevelopment measures in the *Fritz-Heckert* large housing estate have contributed to a positive development. After the deconstruction process, there is now more space and the redesign of the façades in lively colours has a positive and identity-building effect.

Here, as in other residential areas, positive encounters in public space can also have an important bridging function in milieus and scenes that one may not know oneself. They can help to positively occupy spaces of fear and counter negative attitudes towards the city with positive offers of identification. Negative perspectives on Chemnitz were often expressed diffusely:

"*I generally don't like the city any more, everyone in Chemnitz is always so bad*" (CH_28)

In their own neighbourhoods, however, youth clubs could often offer the interviewees attractive activities and thus become an important point of reference/conversion factors in their lives, interestingly also for interviewees in their early thirties. In comparison, paid leisure activities played almost no role for the interviewees.

"*I saw people breakdancing there [at the youth club] and knew that you really wanted to learn that and then I went there regularly [...] That was a good support*" *[and was later also visited by the person to get support with job applications]* (CH_31).

"*Youth club was THE meeting place*" (CH_16).

"*I spent my free time in the youth club*" (CH_10).

"*When I think about it, which young person would have the money and could go bowling for 5-6€ with their friends, I can't afford that*" (YTM_02).

On the city level, the city festival was described at the *Youth Town Hall Meeting* as an important moment of identification with the city itself, beyond one's own neighbourhood. The feeling of togetherness suffered greatly when the festival was discontinued due to attacks by radical right-wing hooligans in 2018 and afterwards due to Covid19 restrictions.

"*I want the city festival back [...] People were looking forward to it and it was important for the solidarity of the city*", "*All the people of Chemnitz came together*" (YTM_02).

Even if the city festival does not take over this function for everyone, it is clear that this level of identification with the city and its inhabitants through shared experiences (across milieus and classes) and joint celebrations is important for vulnerable groups. Especially in the group

events, it became obvious that the fact, that the „new leftish, educated citizen-oriented *Cosmos City Festival* has been implemented without public/youth participation, led to frustration amongst young people of the in UPLIFT addressed target-groups.

Future in Chemnitz?

Many interviewees put the care work for their parents at the forefront of their reasons for wanting to stay in Chemnitz in the future. The desire to own a home in the outskirts of the city was often expressed – sometimes living at the green periphery was also explicitly mentioned as conversion factor from a critical life phase and environment to a socially improved one. The attractiveness of the outskirts of the city is particularly noticeable in its separation from the city centre, which will be discussed later.

Living in a detached house in the outskirts of the city "is very familiar, everyone looks out for each other, we are all very close to each other and get along super well" (CH_18_a)

However, it can also be observed that the desire to move away from Chemnitz or even Saxony increases with a higher level of education, often due to local political attitudes/positions. Especially here, a right-wing sphere of influence mentioned in some interviews and powerful right-wing narratives about Chemnitz gain again impact.

"Not at all", [Chemnitz not a place for the future], "will also leave Saxony immediately after graduating because there are too many things I don't feel like doing, these are political reasons and social problems that upset me" (CH_19_a)

Chemnitz in general, the city centre, around the central bus stop as a transit space, and *Sonnenberg* urban area in particular are a space of fear for people affected by racism, for some of the women interviewed or also gay people/couples. Not only their own experiences but also narratives about the city have a great influence on this feeling:

"In Chemnitz I don't know if I have the possibilities" [interviewee wants to move to Berlin] *"I don't have such bad experiences with racism myself, but you do notice it. I don't like it at all, I think it's really shit, also because of my siblings, that's why I want to leave Chemnitz and go to Berlin [...] I wouldn't walk alone through the city centre at night"* (CH_18_b).

"So I, like in the beginning, where I came from. I also thought Chemnitz was beautiful and such a nice city. But everyone said to me: Wait, how can you find Chemnitz beautiful? It's not beautiful at all. And then I heard about the right-wingers and the right-wing scene" (CH_20).

The interviewees' statements show that the quality of life in the neighbourhoods, as well as the narratives about the city in general, can be conversion factors/determine whether Chemnitz can attract and retain young people or not.

5.4 Real opportunities, intersectional effects conversion factors

The previous sections explored the formal resource space and living conditions of vulnerable young people in Chemnitz. This section provides a summary of the *capabilities* (the options vulnerable youngsters really see and consider, depending on conversion factors hindering or promoting them) and focuses on the gap between where people are and where they could or want to be.

The conversion factors elaborated in the three storylines summarise the social participation barriers (or potentials) mentioned in the interviews, with the aim of opening up perspectives for action in the three policy areas of education, employment and housing. For the interviewees, however, none of these factors – whether ethnic/cultural origin, gender, resources in the parental home, health, esteem and self-esteem or effects of the neighbourhood – presents itself individually. These conversion factors and the policy areas relevant to them overlap, have an intersectional effect, and thus always form very personal, specific experiences of inequality or privilege.

In *Storyline 1*, with the focus on very basic needs such as health and safety, it becomes clear that any form of strategy to improve or change one's own position depends on an individual as well as institutional starting point that is as safe as possible: a "safe space" that offers shelter as well as freedom from violence and that is sensitive to one's own possibilities or limitations.

Where one of these preconditions was not given, the interviewees made efforts to create such an environment: be it by running away from home, using special schools or taking advantage of measures at providers whose pedagogical concept basically enables/allows performance and social requirements to be oriented towards the participants' possibilities.

Storyline 2 deals with hurdles at the workplace or training place and how to overcome them. It describes which factors favour leaving education or training, or dismissal. Discrimination, especially on the basis of origin or gender, produces inequality and is an area that could hardly be addressed in the world of work. At this point, professional reorientation was the only strategy.

This contrasts with meaningful, appreciative work with positive reinforcement, which was more likely to be found in the offers of the providers of vocational assistance and which helped the interviewees to strengthen their psychological resilience in particular.

Storyline 3 deals with the topic of housing. In contrast to other UPLIFT case studies the interview outcomes on access to housing indicate little need for action in this field. Due to the good access to housing and the satisfactory supply of housing for almost all of them, the interviewees focused however on the immediate living environment, the neighbourhood and the city. For many, especially the young adults without a degree, Chemnitz was also set as the centre of life for the future – even if the stories about the city were not entirely positive. Attractive and free leisure facilities in the neighbourhood, family and youth centres as well as upgrading urban development measures, especially of the urban open spaces in large housing estates, were valued and formed part of desired life courses. This can also lead to a local

individual and community self-confidence to resist right-wing influence on the ground and prejudices from outside at the local level.

In the Chemnitz case, it was difficult to compare the experiences of currently young people and formerly young people – apart from three fields, within which the interviews with the latter group could at least to a certain extent serve as a "reality check" on how institutional behaviour has changed and whether certain institutional behaviours turn to be efficient or inefficient with time. These are the (1) implementation of the more individual oriented framework for vocational assistance, (2) more holistic programmes of urban development and – with impact in all three areas investigated in UPLIFT – (3) the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The latter was in Germany first implemented in 2009, but needed several years to produce real impact on the local level. Chemnitz published a participation oriented local action plan *Chemnitz Inclusive 2030* in 2020.

While one option for a "reality check" might have been the interviews, another option would have been the comparison of the interview results with (external, accessible) qualitative evaluation of the policies in the fields of action addressed. These however hardly exist – a gap that was harshly criticised by some professional experts. Also, some of the social carriers and carries of vocational assistance could imagine such (e.g. formative) evaluation as a potential for RPAs an a more effective use of public resources – provided the financial and time resource to implement it.

Topics that were discussed as potential conversion factors by professional experts, but hardly mentioned by the both groups of young people, were immaterial experiences of inequality, a digital gap observed with young people and lacking gender sensitivity. These conversion factors will nevertheless be incorporated in the discussion points for a potential *Reflexive Policy Agenda*.

6 Discussion points for Reflexive Policy Agendas in Chemnitz

A *Reflexive Policy Agenda* (RPA) is according to the interpretation of the UPLIFT project is the outcome of a Reflexive Policy Making process, which is a co-creation method in which welfare policies are planned, implemented, and evaluated with the active and intense involvement of those social groups to which policies are targeted. In the case of UPLIFT, this social group is vulnerable young people.

In this section, we bring together our findings and knowledge of gaps in the current relevant policy context in Chemnitz, to provide discussion points/suggestions on which positive conversion factors could be strengthened or improved with the help of RPAs.

Doing so, we recognise that barriers in access to employment and concerning the educational system depend in a systemic perspective on the national level (employment) and the Länder level (education), e.g. concerning access to and design of qualification measures/vocational training offers, the related funding structures and applied request for and forms of evaluation. An RPA on the national and Länder level would require a long-term strategy, embedded in both levels' funding structures and the institutional design of the employment agency and job-centres structures and support offers. However, with a realistic view to the quickest possible implementation and impact of RPAs, UPLIFT focuses on the *local/municipal* policy context.

Looking across the storylines elaborated in the previous sections reveals several institutional conversion factors that may become issues of RPAs. Their objective would be to provide young people with the means/empowerment to move forward in terms of equal social participation – that is to say to achieve better outcomes within the given and/or an improved formal and individual resource space.

In the sections below, we outline for the fields of action education, employment and housing some aspects that might be included in a local RPA, and also sum up aspects that we consider to be a prerequisite to reliably implementing RPAs, on the meta-level of policy (co-)creation. Generally, we consider outreach youth work and relation-building more than ever before and in each of the fields of action analysed key tasks of youth work. Both tasks require time, competence and willingness of public administration and notably the organisations and single actors in youth-and social work. Concerning the implementation of RPAs, it is important to verify how far policy implementation in these fields is more likely to be "policy as written" or "policy as performed" (cf. Lipsky, 1980, p.3).

6.1 Key issues for the co-creation of local *Reflexive Policy Agendas* in education, employment and housing

Our research reveals that vulnerable young people hardly have a voice in policy evaluation and policy design. From this perspective, participative re-thinking and co-creation of local RPAs with young people could reduce barriers young people face in the use of their formal freedom

of choice and improve their social participation, notably if participation achieves an inter-twining of the voices/needs of both privileged and vulnerable young people.

6.1.1 Education

Our research on the formal freedom of choice, the resource space and conversion factors in education identified the importance of an early assessment whether young people and their families understand the variety of formal choices within the educational system, and also, where this system might have a higher permeability than they might expect it. We recognise four key areas of policy in which policy co-creation with young people could improve the outcome both on the institutional level and on the individual level:

(1) Evaluation of policy impact and tailor-made approaches. This would require structures to motivate young people and their families to collaboratively and regularly evaluate the existing pathways and support instruments in education, considering them as experts for their own lives. It would help to adjust this system, its processes and communication accordingly to the evaluation results, as far as possible on the local level.

(2) An RPA that makes choices in education and in transition to vocational education transparent to parents, but also explicitly and within an appropriate timeframe to pupils, could accelerate an achievement of school inclusion in the Saxon education system. The objective is formulated as "the equal participation of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities in joint teaching in general and vocational schools."[25] This approach contrasts – despite the high quality of individual VET providers' work – still with the separation of educational pathways experienced by many interviewees A combination of both the necessary change in the educational system and an RPA in this field may be considered as success condition.

(3) Collaborative design of vocational orientation tools, such as compulsory work placements in companies during the school years, education fairs at the end of the school years and educational counselling.

(4) Building of a non-competitive network for early intervention, intertwining school social work, (where necessary) school psychologists, youth social work, social workers in assisted living and in youth recreational facilities; collaborating in terms of empowerment oriented case-management rather than in terms of care-oriented support.

6.1.2 Employment

Our research on the formal freedom of choice, the resource space and conversion factors concerning access to vocational education and professional employment led to two key areas, in which the development of an RPA might strengthen or improve existing promotion structures. Our suggestions in this field are solely based on the experience of the two age cohorts of young people interviewed, as experts of their work environment, and the VET carriers involved in this research, not on a structural analysis of the local or regional labour market.

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[25] See https://inklusion.bildung.sachsen.de/schulischeinklusioninsachsen-4017.html

Understanding each of these actors as "partners" for a socially sustainable development of the local labour market would be a prerequisite for an RPA for a better inclusion of vulnerable groups of young people in local employment.

(1) Strengthening of the instruments/measures to access VET and professional work, such as *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr (vocational preparation year)* and *Berufssvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahme (vocational preparation measures)*: Use of an RPA for the diversification of the professional fields to be accessed with these instruments/measures, based on a gender sensitive policy and policy impact evaluation.

(2) Systematic opening of the (especially) private labour market for people with different talents and with and without impairments, accompanied by company-specific anti-discrimination and anti-sexism concepts.

RPAs in both areas mentioned could promote a meaningful, appreciative work environment, with positive reinforcement, which helps all employees, but especially vulnerable young people to strengthen their psychological resilience and professional capacity.

6.1.3 Housing

As elaborated in the *Urban Report* and evidenced in our interviews, access to affordable housing is no problem for vulnerable young people/households in Chemnitz, and this holds also true for the choice to move to other parts of the city if one wants to separate from former peer groups/social networks. Three policy areas around housing that could however benefit from RPAs developed with young people are

(1) Attractive and free leisure facilities in the neighbourhood, family- and youth centres as well as upgrading urban development measures, especially of the urban open spaces in large housing estates. RPA development with young people should here contribute to an individual self-confidence, and local/socio-spatial individual and community local self-confidence.

(2) Changing the persistent negative narratives of the city, notably to resist right-wing influence on the ground and prejudices from outside at the local level. Apart from image campaigns included in the INSEK 2035 and the Cultural Capital 2025 (see 6.2.) and activities linked to the *Lokaler Aktionsplan für Demokratie, Toleranz und für ein weltoffenes Chemnitz (Local Action Plan for democracy, tolerance and a cosmopolitan Chemnitz)*[26] RPA development could here address a designation of "safe spaces/shelters" in case of right wing/racist attacks for all Chemnitz urban areas. Partners to be embedded in such an RPA development would be the *AG Radikalisierungsprävention* (*WG Prevention of Radicalisation,* cf. Stadt Chemnitz 2019), the various Chemnitz projects to promote democracy education/ promotion and *Mobile Beratung gegen Rechts (Mobile counselling against the right)*, e.g. by formulating house rules in such a way that youth clubs, libraries, sports clubs, specific

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[26] For the 2019 version see https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/media/unsere-stadt/ordnung-und-sicherheit/demokratiefoerderung/lap_fortschreibung2019.pdf

shops, cafés and bars are shelters and that this can also be enforced, intertwined with reporting and counselling structures for incidents.

(3) Development of collaborative (neighbourhood based) and individual (household based, personal) approaches to climate change and energy poverty, recognising the impact of energy poverty on individual psychological resilience and participation.

6.2 Prerequisites of policy co-creation/implementation of RPAs

Our research has revealed that young people in vulnerable life situations are more likely to experience self-effectiveness in socio-cultural centres or at empowerment-oriented youth vocational assistance than at school, in their work-environments or in public participation processes. This limits their opportunities to make use of their formal resource space, their personal capacity building and thus their individual outcome. Not least, this experience limits their intrinsic interest in co-creation of policies, in which field ever. Also, it reveals that external and gender sensitive target-group and actor-network oriented evaluation represent not only a controlling for policy implementation, but also an (e-)quality management tool – given qualitative evaluation methods, formative evaluation, possible action research are applied. This means neither particular innovation nor „re-inventing the wheel", but a very target group specific application of approved tools for integrative policy making and a recognition of user experience as valid criterium for success or failure of policy delivery. Also, RPAs may help to bridge/reduce the increasing *immaterial* gap between privileged and vulnerable young people – the latter is, how our interviews with young people and experts revealed, reflected in a some of the institutional conversion factors we identified.

Apart from collaboratively working on the described topics and challenges there is however a need to strengthen/develop other factors on the meta level, the level of institutions: generally, robust networks between public actors and civil society can be seen as precondition to a diversification of the formal freedom of choice in all areas. These are necessary for a governance adaptation to change in fluid social, demographic and political situations and notably in crisis. Also, they are a key instrument for a participative, inclusion-oriented elaboration of the key frameworks/policies for social participation of vulnerable young people in Chemnitz, the *Integrated Urban Development Concept 2035 (Integriertes Stadtentwicklungs-konzept 2035, INSEK,* to be delivered by autumn 2023), and the conceptualisation and (already ongoing) implementation of *Chemnitz Cultural Capital 2025.* Both have to recognise a general *Politikmüdigkeit (policy fatigue)* of many young people and the new formats of political self-organisation of those being politically engaged. The development of RPAs will require a formal acceptance of formats such as narrative participation formats, bar camps, open spaces, safe space discussion formats etc. – across different educational and political groups. Another challenge in this context is that notably young immigrants often understand the state mainly through its authorities (teachers and police) with whom the encounter is based on daily and not seldom racist conflicts. These young people can hardly imagine how to change/improve this system by democratic means.

Assuming the future financial capacity of the municipality for co-financing the use of *European Regional Development Funds* (ERDF), the *European Social Funds* (ESF), and other European

programmes related notably to youth work and urban rehabilitation, these remain key resources for cross-sectional cooperation within these frameworks – and a resource to improve the use of the formal freedom of choice of vulnerable young populations.

Building on the analyses results of this research work-package and the innovation oriented participative actions that were elaborated in another research work-package in Amsterdam, Baracaldo, Tallinn and Sfântu Gheorghe, UPLIFT provides in its final phase training concepts and a hand-book for policy co-creation, and notably implementation of RPAs.

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