



How Decision Competent Consumers May Mostly be Incapable of Taking Responsibility for Public Health



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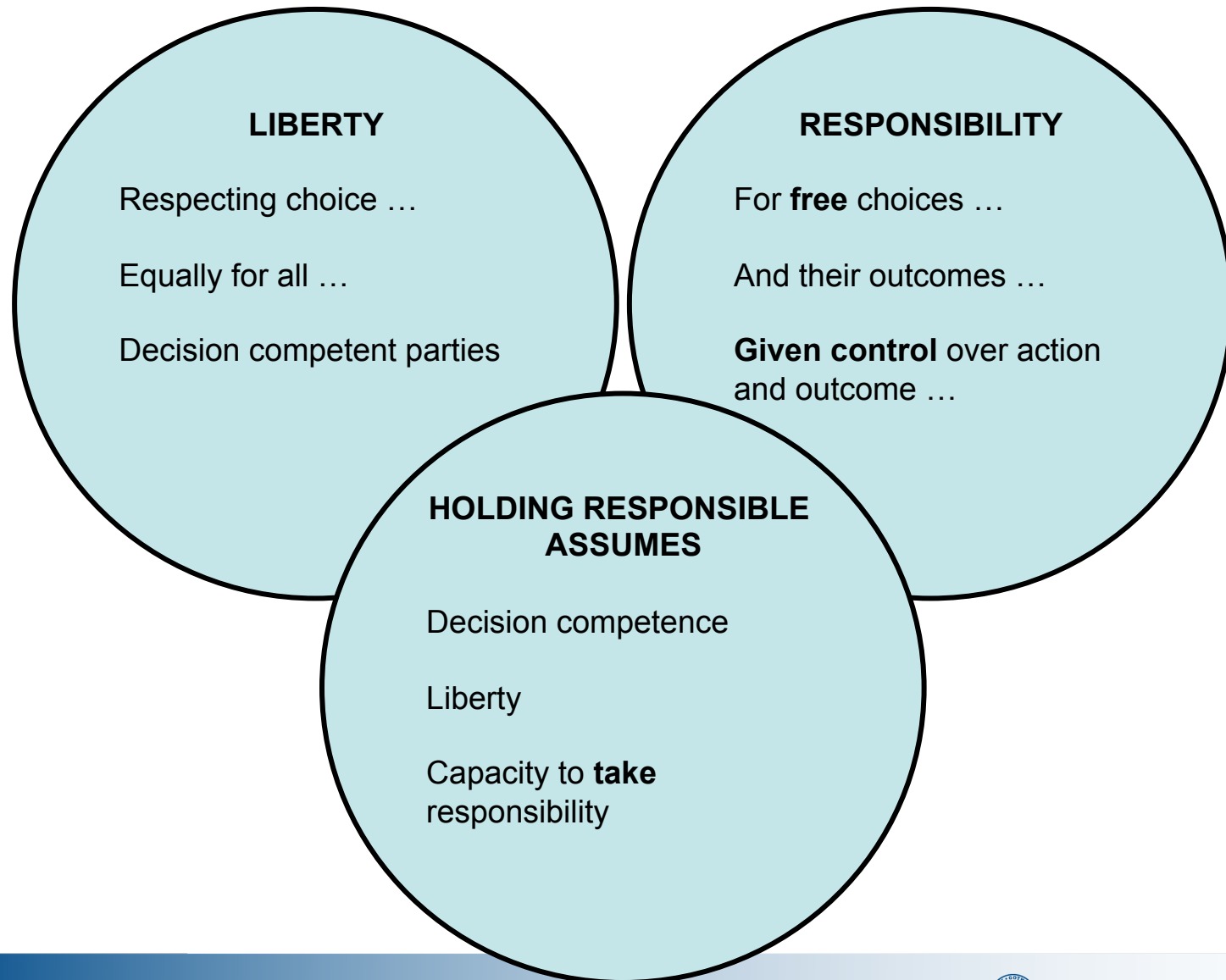
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Public Health Policy and Responsibility re. Food

- The aggregated outcome of our **eating patterns** has a huge **PH impact**
- Eating and food choice is normally politically framed as **"individual issue"** within wide societal frames re. safety, pricing, etc.
- **Tempting to assume that further PH policy re food needs to involve "holding people responsible"** for their eating and food choices within said frames
- Classic way of preserving liberty in the face of necessary policy: less of a political challenge; division of labour btw state and citizen
- **BUT: Assumes that people are capable of taking the responsibility** which they are to be held accountable in the name of ...

Liberty and Responsibility



Capacity to Take Responsibility for Food and Eating is Almost Entirely Dependent on Structural Conditions out of Consumer Control

- Pricing patterns rel. to financial resources of consumers
- Product supply on the market
- Availability patterns re. said product supply rel. to consumers
- Information available about products and pathways for said info to consumers (incl consumer education and "literacy")
- Regulatory frames set by authorities or through negotiated agreements
- Existing "cultures of food" framing and nudging consumers and the market
- Marketing framing and nudging of consumers

Decision Competence and Freedom of Consumers Does not Produce Food Choices For Which They Can Properly Be Held Responsible

- Holding people responsible for their food choices means rewarding or punishing them for something outside of their control (structural conditions determining their capacity to take responsibility)
- **THUS:** Policy built on such ideas (\approx incentives) cannot be justified within a typical liberal framework of thought
- If consumers are DC, neither can policies which infringe their freedom to choose within set frames
- ...except for "harm to others" or "common good" reasons. These **may support holding people accountable for choices and outcomes, but not for reasons of responsibility.**
- **THAT IS:** public health food policy must go outside the individual liberty-responsibility frame to find support