

Reinventing the governance of unemployment in Spain: The dim role of social action organisations¹

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Abstract

The activation policies, which are part of the current flexicurity strategy, constitute one of the branches of the social governance reforms that started in the 80's. Such is the case of administrative reforms related to new ways of struggle against unemployment that have been considered as a process of activation of employment services and that have usually been called "modernization". In this way, the activation of individuals/unemployed is necessarily preceded by the transformations of the composition of the 'employment actors' and the interrelations among them. As an example of this new circumstance, in the realm of social exclusion, the implementation of employment policies has been massively transferred to non-profits organisations.

This administrative reform has been based on theoretical tools such as New Public Management (NPM), Management by Objectives (MBO) or contractualism, which entail semantic and political changes that operate in the frameworks of action and civic relations between the different actors in charge of the governance of employment and the individual/citizen.

The activation of organisms in order to activate individuals represents an activating chain that implies important transformations in the relationship between employment advisor and unemployed/citizen. The different roles traditionally attributed to both are replaced by mobile positions, which are presumably more flexible and adjustable to the needs of both, worker and market, simultaneously and paradoxically.

Through a qualitative methodological approach, this paper focuses on the discourses on the implementation processes of activation policies by non-profit organisations in Spain. It aims to throw light on the new dynamics of negotiation and the redefinition of the roles of the participants in these processes.

Key words: activation, employment programs, unemployed, non-profits organisations, groups at risk of social exclusion.

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Introduction

In the frame of the modernization of employment services², delegating unemployment governance to associations and other private bodies in the form of “employment programmes” seems to be necessary for the efficiency of policies mainly focused in individualised actions and for the “compulsory” creation of engagements of unemployed with their situation and with managing bodies. A presumption exists that individualised and specific attention cannot be properly provided within the rigidity ascribed to the State Administration. This argument has been developed together with a trend to reduce costs and contain the expenses granted to social policies, which leads to the emergence of private or mixed management.

Theories about New Public Management and activation and flexicurity paradigms converge in the field of unemployment governance and lead to what we call in this paper “reinvention of the governance” of unemployment. Both trends appeared nearly simultaneously in the 70s and entered a period of maturity in the next decades. In Spain, this process is concentrated between the second half of the 80s and nowadays. Focused in the process (implementation) and the content (design) of policies respectively, these models of multi-level and activating governance in the field of employment share a significant amount of values and representations that confer them internal coherence. Nevertheless, they consist of governing technologies that unleash ambivalence and contradiction. The logics of contract and the logics of incentives are two defining elements for both the activation paradigm and New Public Management, and they are also the elements that invite us to revise the concepts of public domain, unemployment, unemployed and the employment services themselves, which are designed in the light of these new paradigms of the governance of social affairs.

With the aim of conducting the mentioned revision, the paper herein is focused in three specific case studies, which are representative of these *parallel* models of the governance of unemployment. The analysis of the discourse of coordinators, technicians and users of social action bodies (Caritas, AVAPE and Forja XXI) that hold agreements with the public administration for the implementation of activation policies, allows conducting a transversal approach to the production and construction process of these policies in practice. In this vein, it is our interest to get to know how the different participants in the implementation of policies negotiate their position with regard to the others, how they redefine their identity and develop arguments of legitimacy in the frame of a dim system of governance. Prior to this analysis, in the first section, some theoretical considerations are approached regarding new forms of mixed governance and the way in which they interact with the activating agenda. The first section finishes with an explicit reference to the process of decentralization and contractualism in Spain. The second section, exclusively devoted to the emergence and the evolution of the associative sector in Spain, and particularly, to its institutional participation, serves as

² For a detailed analysis of the meaning and sense of the modernization process of employment services in Spain, refer to: Martín Martín, P., Arteaga Leiras, A., Tovar Martínez, F.J. Fernández Rodríguez, C., “Cascada contractual y modernización pública en España. Planteamientos normativos de la flexicuridad”. Paper presented in the REPS’ Annual Conference. *Treinta años de Estado de Bienestar en España. Logros y retos para el futuro*. ESPANET-Spain and Universidad de Oviedo. Oviedo, 5-7 November 2009.

contextualisation for the case studies. Finally, some of the most relevant considerations emerged from the analysis will be presented as conclusion.

1. New actors, new governance in employment policy.

From the late 60s and throughout the 70s, a junction of factors of very different nature triggered the crisis of Keynesian-Fordist management models. Ideological arguments arriving both from the right and the left, agreed that Taylorist managerialism of the Welfare State of that time was insufficient and illegitimate (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Fernández Rodríguez, 2007). Despite their different origins, principles and aims, these trends toward reform that invaded the European landscape of welfare from the 80s, got to find points in common as evidenced in the theories of New Public Management.

The principles of New Public Management (NPM) affect three constitutive aspects of intervention in a complementary way: funding, implementation and implementation actors. Regarding funding, the trend is to adopt a government strategy that favours cost reduction and contention of social expenses along with the “cost-benefit” logics. The process of implementation, previously linked to the principles of order, planning and hierarchy that are common to Taylorist managerialism³, is replaced by “Management by Objectives”⁴ which is characterized by: the emphasis in efficiency, evaluation and achievement of aims and a special taste for quantification and measurement that leads to the establishment of action indicators, the preference of horizontal and independent organisational structures, the replacement of hierarchical relationships between different bodies by relationships that are regulated by agreements or semi-agreements, the development of markets or market mechanisms to provide public services, the emphasis on the quality of the services, the elimination of frontiers between public and private sectors and non-profits organisations as a consequence of contractual, externalization and association processes and the replacement of the values of universalism, equity and security by those of efficiency and individualism (Pollitt, 2003: 27-28). As a result, a clear transformation occurs from a “direction management” into a “dim management” (regarding the agency) obsessed by aim achievement and evaluation (regarding procedures); therefore, processes of implementation themselves and the inputs (needs expressed by citizens) remain invisibilized. Finally, the transformations conducted in these two components of intervention (financing and implementation process) result in a massive incorporation of new actors to the governance of social policies (private companies, associations, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, etc.) that provide services throughout contracts, agreements or negotiations with public authorities, and which are subject to an audit system. This contractual dynamic

³ Managerialism in ‘pure state’ appears at the end of the 19th century as the result of a concern for management and of a special interest for the systems of selection, control and remuneration of the labour force in the great industrialisation processes and programmes. These management systems, which are common to private firms, are transferred to public management so that they get to conform the patterns for the bureaucratic and procedural organisation of social administrations typical of most of the Keynesian Welfare States, regardless of the differences between countries. Managerialism has even been defined as “an ideology with concrete and immediate applications” (Pollitt, 1990:13).

⁴ Nevertheless, management by objectives is a technique that had already been used in North American entrepreneurial organisations from the late 50s, in great measure as a result of the influence Guru Peter Drucker’s theories (Drucker, 1957; refer to Fernández Rodríguez, 2008).

prevents/deprives the State of being the main provider of social welfare and therefore, poses an important risk of destruction of collective responsibility frames. Expressions such as “shared responsibilities” or “governance at multiple levels”, among others, could explain this new trend of dim governance.

In this new system, intervention is not based on socioeconomic engagements according to the patterns of solidarist rationality⁵ anymore. It is now based on a personal engagement (individual contract) with the beneficiary of the services, according to which the reception of the services is conditioned to his/her *attitude towards work*. Therefore, the new intervention favours the fragmentation of the collective conscience. This transfer of the responsibility previously ascribed to the system/context to the employee/individual is marked by a trend to a moral and intellectual disqualification of the citizen, that considers himself “unable to help himself”, “unadapted” to the new labour situation, or deliberately interested in taking advantage of public grants. Serrano Pascual (2007) has classified activation policies into two differentiated types that operate according to this diagnosis of the problem as a problem of the individual: policies aimed at adjusting offer and demand (training actions, for example) and policies with a therapeutic-moral character (more related to the logics of incentives/coactions).

The paradigm of activation highlights the concept of social exclusion conceived as a *deficit in socialisation* (Dubar, 1996). Social exclusion determines not only an unemployment situation but also a disintegration quality understood as the “lack of social links”. This must be faced with a “comprehensive aid” perspective (aid at working places, schools or/and within the family), but also with an *educative-therapeutic* strategy, able to transmit certain citizenship norms. If unemployment is a state, exclusion is a process.

In this vein, the aim of activation policies in this field is also, and mainly, to promote individuals’ moral and adaptation capacities to face the strokes of economy (Crespo Suárez & Serrano Pascual, 2007)⁶. The origin of the problem moves from the imperfections of the labour market to the individual. Employment agents that work in non-profits organisations have to undertake the task of fostering work and, at least, they have to face the dilemma that emerges from the nature of their intervention, which becomes more and more hybrid (less dependent on administrative institutions), and the particularities of the social groups to which they provide assistance. According to this *Copernican turn*, as called by Santos & Serrano (2006), in the emergence of the problem of unemployment, the concepts of institution and services, as mediator and protector bodies, have been replaced by the concepts of employment “agency”, “programme” or “advisor/mentor”, among others.

⁵ The main axe of the solidarist doctrine, whose spokesman was Leon Bourgeois, was the notion of “social debt” which results from a relational conception of poverty and whose most evolved version is a “diachronic debt” that extends the social responsibility of each individual to past and future generations. It is all about transforming the independence of the members of society into a mechanism to reduce uncertainty and to produce security including the replacement of the notion of “blame/responsibility” by the notion of “social risk”. In the frame of this doctrine, solidarity is defined as the “scientific law that organises society” (Donzelot, 1994:93; Béland & Zamorano Villarreal, 2000:9).

⁶ In the field of employment and social protection, from the paradigm of activation till the principles of flexicurity, the transformation of the concept of *security* in *self-insurance* is unleashed: the security guarantee is the rate of personal employability (Martín Martín, 2009:107)

This process of merging of associations and public administrations obviously provokes transformations in their traditional aims and nature. Non-profits associations have traditionally put forward the importance of their existence defending the benefits of self-management in opposition to the burden of being dependent on remote bureaucracies or their capacity to fill the voids of State social interventions. Nevertheless, as these bodies take part in new management logics with the aim of expanding their scope and their action capacity through the exchange of budgets and services with the State, they contribute to the process of questioning or even auto-disqualifying their initial action principles and their ideologies.

These kind of contractual relationships between actors are at the base of a triangle structure in welfare provision in which three elements take part: the main part in the Contract (the State or any other public body), the agent engaged (a private institution or regional administration) and the client (the citizen). In the heart of this new relational network, power relationships are revised and new and diverse rupture possibilities appear. At the same time, new symbolic spaces emerge where the negotiation of the position of the different actors is conducted and the possibility of a new versatility being installed in the relationship between implementer and citizen appears, as there are no rigid regulations for intervention. In view of this situation of flexible management, employment advisers must frequently undertake the task of legitimizing their work and creating their own professional regulations (Demazière, 2009)⁷.

Even if its creation is more recent, New Public Management is associated to the concept of governance. Even if its definition is vague and controversial, this concept is linked to the pluralisation of actors that takes part in the provision of welfare. The following are some of its characteristics: inter-organisational cooperation, the culture of contracts, a dynamic of awarding and public subsidies, and non-governmental and non-jurisdictional ways of implementation. (Henman y Fenger, 2006: 9).

The most recent and “evolved” dimension of discursive production on the new employment governance and social protection is found in papers, declarations and official documents published by the OECD and the EU. These institutions have produced a compact and unanimous discourse, even if not free of ambiguity or indecision, on a new political strategy called flexicurity that copes with some of the values and logics that have left their print on Welfare States since the beginning of the questioning of their principles and operating ways (70s and 80s). Beyond these homogenising discourses, each of the European States has faced crisis with their own resources and taking into account their own impasse and dilemmas.

In Spain, the transition to democracy favoured the increase of State interventions in social and employment policies. However, important criticisms emerged on the efficiency of this social intervention in facing the crisis of the labour market, which was particularly serious in our country. In addition to this situation, Spain had to withstand the pressure of supranational bodies, such as the EU, the IMF, the OECD or the ILO, which contributed to rethink public management. Therefore, the reform of intervention

⁷ For further information on the rearticulation of the “sense of engagement” in new labour organisations that provide services to citizens, read also: Serrano Pascual, A., Martín Martín, P. & Crespo Suárez, E. (in the press) “La regulación paradójica del trabajo y el gobierno de las voluntades” Tejerina, B. & Cavia, B. *Lo que la precariedad nos enseña de la sociedad. Diálogos franco-españoles*. Madrid: Modus Laborandis.

means and techniques (technologies) in the field of employment has its origin in these initial conditions.

The modernisation process of public employment services in Spain has initially followed two parallel routes: regional decentralisation (that originates internal *quasi-contracts* between two different administrative levels⁸) on one hand, and legal acknowledgement and regulation of private agents as described in the Law 10/1994 (which makes the legal contract regime available between private agents and public administrations through authorisation and tender procedures) on the other hand. Nevertheless, the real *contractual cascade* appeared when the transfer of powers to the regions was completed, as regions became a potential ‘main part’ in the contracts established with suppliers such as local corporations and private bodies and, at the same time, ‘the counterpart’ with regard to the ‘main part’ in the contract, the central government, with which a dynamics of cooperation agreements started.

It can be said that, in our country, a clear progression towards decentralised management took place from the 90s, which responded to the parameters of *Management by Objectives*. However, it is presented as a clearly unfinished reform that took place in a context presided by confusion. That is the reason of the continuous appeal to “modernisation” as an ideal process and the aim of the reform⁹. Nowadays, intervention actors and actions conform a tangle of management that cannot be untangled through the current regulatory dispersion and anachronism.

Non-profits associations have enhanced this kind of dim governance as they have gained importance as cooperators of the administration. The following section, presents an approach to their origins and role evolution in the governance of social affairs in Spain.

2. The associative sector: main actor in new ways of governance.

Advanced capitalism and its effects on exclusion, the “loss of weight” of the State and the expansion of social actors born during post-franquism, have favoured the increase of the private offer of solidarity and its consolidation in the field of complementarities with the public sector (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2003).

⁸ Mosley & Sol (2006: 8) identify three main kinds of contract for the provision of public employment services in the context of new management systems:

- a) Internal government agreements. These are those established within public administrations (State-Regional Authorities- local institutions- university employment agencies). These have also been called “quasi-contracts”.
- b) Agreements between public administrations and private bodies (associations, trade unions, training centres...). These are the so-called “market-based contracts”. These are established through public offer procedures (tenders or awards) and cope with agreements on results and funding. Agencies remuneration regimes are usually based on outputs.
- c) Agreements between implementation actors and beneficiaries (individual contracts). This kind of contract refers to concepts such as “activity commitment” or conditional access to protection. It is the so-called “contract with the client/individual”.

⁹ Valdés Dal-Ré (2006:3) condemns the lack of a global view in the organisation of employment services and their functions and the “*profound dissociation between the principles that regulate labour intermediation and the tools and techniques used for their concretion*”.

In Spain, this process re-emerged during the last decades with such an impulse that it seemed to be a new phenomenon. However, from the last years of franquism already, doors were opened to the existence and intervention of NGOs in the public field due to the establishment of regulations that promoted their participation in institutional domains.

During franquism, the kind of predominant associations had a clearly catholic turn while political-oriented associationism opposed to the regime was pursued and controlled by the State through dictatorial repression and regulations such as the Decree of 1941, which controlled the right of association, or in a more moderate way, the Law 191/1964 on Associations (Casado, 2003: 291). However, the forms of association that served as instruments to Franco's regime were promoted. This is the case of *La Sección Femenina de la Falange Española* (the Falange party's Feminine Section) or the *J.O.N.S.* party, which served as important resources, such as did other bodies that fostered social aid, chorus, dances or sports (Casado, 2003: 291).

After Franco's regime, institutional means are implemented for the intervention of social and volunteer bodies, and the participation of diverse non-profits organisations starts to be regulated. At this aim, regulations that amplify associationism's field of action are passed. However, the legal reform is meant to extend the regulations to those associations that share the new political views, and promotes their funding as well.

It was in the 80s when a new mixed welfare system grows stronger. A system in which States become the key element for regulation, production and funding but despite this point, a system in which volunteer organisations and private companies enjoy an increasing rate of participation and in which part of the social welfare production and management is increasingly socialised and privatised (Rodríguez Cabrero y Ortí, 1996). Within this process of institutional construction, laws are passed that guarantee and promote the institutionalisation of citizenship organisation. This is the case of Royal Decree 825/1988, which regulates the so-called 0.5% subsidies for "cooperation and social volunteer programmes". In 1998, the creation of a NGOs Commission in the social domain is proposed to the aim of fostering relationships between the government and social actors, so that consultative working groups are established to closely cooperate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as it was called at that time. The bodies participating in this round tables, gained high power quotas in the field of intervention and were supported by public funding (Cruz Roja, Caritas, ONCE, CERMI, etc.). After this work, a "report for the prime minister" was written, in order to propose certain objectives that have later been accomplished, such as the creation of the Royal Decree 1910/1999 of the State Council for Non Governmental Social Action Organisations, which claims to be a consultative body for public policies on social action. The publication of the White Book entitled "The third sector of social action in Spain" was also carried out (Casado, 2003:114-121). Another way of fostering associationism with public support was subsidies, grants, exemptions, bonus and all other fiscal measures that commonly increase the financial assets of the associative network.

In a moment in which the welfare state ruptures starts taking place, NGOs become the bodies that allow saving funds, reducing public expenses and *distributing responsibilities*. This is how decentralisation in public governance, as a result of the inefficient and bureaucratic character of the Public Administrations, becomes a

modernising mechanism endorsed by the discourse that legitimizes the reform of public affairs.

From the beginning, the relationship between the State and the social network was established on the base of subsidies allocation (that occasionally provoked nocive effects due to the dependence generated) and further on, on the base of compromises and other kind of agreements that implied economic cooperation. In occasions, this situation came out into the emergence of a kind of mercantile management in NGOs and also in the creation of NGOs and companies interested in “sharing the cake”.

The scenery conformed was complicated and it run the risk of concentrating power in many associations that could become monolithic social management bodies. At the same time, social organizations had to coexist with private competence through the “price” variable, which resulted in a hybrid field in the domain of intervention that fed the debate between *state responsibility*, *social solidarity* and *private profitability* (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2003: 30-31). This metamorphosis of the service also happened in the field of employment and fight against unemployment, in which it was unleashed by the “transfer of ownership” of the service. Not only trade unions but also many social organisations (associations) that fight against exclusion took part in the management of activation policies for unemployed and in promoting their integration in the labour market.

The amplification of the presence of associations and their leeway in the “insertion market”, according to the paradigm of activation, is a good example of the transformations that can be originated by the new governance also in terms of change in the representation of the implementation action and its participants. In the following section, throughout an analysis of three case studies on the discourse of coordinators, technicians/advisors and users of three different associations that are interrelated in the framework of activation policies implementation, the following questions are approached: Which are the new interaction dynamics established between actors? What kind of redefinition of the role of participants in the implementation process is generated by these new interaction dynamics?

3. Reinventing the governance of unemployment: three case studies

Case studies offer very relevant and detailed information on specific organisations. They give access to evidence given by workers-technicians, coordinators and users that interact in these organisations. However, these case studies do not allow establishing interorganisational comparisons that are usually very clarifying as they permit to identify recurrences and common standards.

In this research study, it has been decided to analyse results according to a different methodology, which has however a long tradition in social sciences in general, and in Spanish sociology specifically: discourse analysis on the base of 10 in depth interviews conducted among coordinators, technicians and users of the three organisations targeted. The three organisations are shortly described in this paragraph. The organisations studied are Caritas, Forja XXI and AVAPE. Regarding the first one, Caritas is a confederation of bodies founded in 1947 and linked to the Catholic Church. Its main

objectives are providing aid to human promotion and to the integral development of the dignity of all persons living in precarious situations. Forja XXI is defined as a non-profits public private partnership (PPP) that acts as a charitable foundation created in Seville after the Universal Exposition in 1992. Andalucía Orienta (whose technicians and users have been interviewed) is the foundation's department for the promotion of employment. This task is conducted through training and advice programs aimed at the social and labour insertion of the individuals that appeal to the organisation for aid. Finally, AVAPE is an association from Valencia that assists persons that suffer exclusion, and mainly ex drug addicts. In the case of this association, the field work was conducted within the job search service, called *Centro de Promoción de Empleo "INTEGRA-T"*. The aim of this service is to achieve labour and social integration for persons at risk of exclusion through individual and group actions that look at increasing their employability.

The following subsections contain a presentation of three of the axes that are considered essential when describing and explaining the concept of *reinvention of the governance of unemployment* based on the *reorganised* action of the associations in charge of the activation of unemployed or excluded workers. One of the pillars of this *reinvention of the governance of unemployment* is the modernisation of public intervention, that is to say, the process of decentralisation and contractualisation that can provoke a change in the nature and in the framework of the associations' intervention. These bodies are created as hybrid organisations, at mid-way between *outside* and *inside* the *official* intervention mechanisms, with all the rethinking, advantages and obstacles that their new situation as "State cooperators" entails (1). Affected by this situation, technicians and advisers that work within these bodies face very diverse demands without an *official catalogue* of pre-established procedures to cope with them. As a consequence, these employees find themselves *obliged* to reinvent their procedures in their everyday's life, spontaneously creating norms and legitimacy arguments for the fulfilment of their work and developing high personal engagements (2). In this context, interaction between technicians and users does not consist of a *simple attention-resolution* dynamics when facing unemployment problems, but of a much more complicated process in which each individual's agency capacity and his/her abilities to assume or reject the recipes against unemployment take part (3).

3.1 No one's land: the public-private continuum

To a great extent, modernisation of public employment services is being identified through a process of decentralisation of public domain governance. One of the arguments behind this decentralization aim is that the State apparatus is considered an inefficient body, too bureaucratic to respond to new demands that are assumed, such as the need to bring policies closer to citizens or to cope with specific and diverse situations.

In this context of reformulation of public intervention, NGOs such as Caritas claim their role in the field of social protection and labour insertion. They adopt the "discourse of an expert" in the domain of integration of excluded groups and consider that, due to the specificities of the groups assisted within their organisation, the problem is unlikely to be reachable by public employment services. They claim that state policies do not take into account the diversity and complexity of the situations that they cope with. Such a

discourse raises the need of work specialisation and division within mediators in the labour market.

Working with persons at risks of social exclusion. This is the social group that we assist; this is our target and also, to think about the most comprehensive assistance possible. (...) No other way is possible as we are dealing with individuals with lots of problems (...) This is to say that we understand that we are working in the direction of socio-labour insertion, and we take social facts into account, (...) And I think that this is what makes the difference of our services; this and the social group that we work with (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

(...) they came from the State, and therefore entailed lots of drawbacks, as they proposed very restrained offers, always similar for every social group... (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

In many cases, the participation of non-profits organizations in new institutional mechanisms entails an increase in the legitimacy of their intervention and their material means of action. Nevertheless, it also entails a loss of independence and a subordination of their principles of providing “the best assistance to people in need” to the Administration procedures and to audit instructions.

(...) one thing is to have an advice system open to everybody, no matter in which way and no matter how many hours... and another is to target specific social groups that are supposed to suffer more need. Therefore, when the group Menta exists, all the people that are not part of that group cannot be assisted and there is no specific reason for that, it is not because you do not want to assist them, but because the service collapses (Coordinator at Forja XXI).

It might be easier or harder for different associations to find a balance between their own objectives and those imposed by the main part in the contract, the Administration. Nevertheless, Forja XXI has accepted the logics of current neo entrepreneurial public action without much questioning and has adopted a discourse in which the arguments concerning its role as *cooperator agent that is part of a network* remain common sense and correctness principles: “is as it ought to be”.

We agree because is as it ought to be, because if it was differently it would be chaotic. In fact what we do is referring cases to other bodies, as we know that there are other organisations; so when a case goes beyond our capacities, as we are meant to work as part of a network, what we do is referring the case to others. We inform them on the places where they can be better assisted because they are specialised, which is very important (Coordinator at Forja XXI).

In this way, this association becomes a “hostage” of the new administrative system, apparently without many symbolic costs involved. “Referring” is mentioned in this extract as the representative process of “making part of”, of being a link in the politic administrative chain instead of an organisation that fills gaps in the governmental action or that fills its administrative shortcomings, as originally did these associations.

However, governance at multiple levels, which implies the participation of multiple actors, also entails many problems. Coping with them would mean improving the efficiency of coordination mechanisms so that a real coordination exists making teamwork easier. This means creating an efficient partnership and providing the users with comprehensive and multiple response guarantees. In short, coping with them would mean developing a new culture of approach to specific situations.

*Of course, I think that **complexity increases together with decentralisation**. This is to say that, if formerly we were all an unique representative that established guidelines followed by everybody, now there is a new representative, the Andalusian Employment Service (SAE) and there are **multiple agents that implement its policies, and therefore everything becomes more complicated, doesn't it?** It is hard to put all this subjects together and coordinate them as each of us is doing (Representative of Unidad Orienta and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).*

When we compare zones, then I realize that there are important comparative torts between the two zones. I see that it is a sign of the engagement or the duties assumed by each regional or local government, and of the importance that they confer to the way they plan activities and potential offers (Representative of Unidad Orienta and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

Other than the paradox of this public-private hybrid intervention entails is the one that concerns funding: some associations, such as AVAPE, acknowledge that they need private funds as a complement to public funding, that they consider scarce but more exigent.

*In such an unequal situation we need to develop strategies that allow filling those gaps in some way... And therefore, keep providing advice on insertion to the people that we assist in one way or another. **Here is where we have to recur to other kind of subsidies from private bodies: saving banks, and so on... to fill this gap** (Coordinator at AVAPE).*

Associations undertake the search of companies and organisations willing to finance the different programmes they organise. Once the Administration disappears, the employees of the association become commercial agents that have to go door to door selling their projects to companies for subsidies and fiscal discounts.

What we usually do is to search for job offers. When we find an offer, we get in touch with the employer and we invite him to join our job agency. This is the most efficient way that we have found, mainly because we do not have enough technicians so as to have them on the street conducting research (Technician at AVAPE).

All of this evokes models where the parameter of the definition of non-profits association changes. Some associations believe that it is necessary to yield profits in order to have material and human resources that allow the organization achieving its objectives.

*In the USA this has been working for long. Most of the organisations... Look at us, till some years ago, we were a non-profits organisation, an organisation that did not yield profit. We started from zero and ended up in zero. **This concept has changed. If not we***

would always depend on... we would have to apply for subsidies every year. What has changed is that now, non-profits organizations, if they are properly managed, they have to yield profit. They have to be able to produce benefits. The difference with regard to companies is that profit is not distributed but it benefits the own organisation. Therefore, there is no distribution of benefits, even if producing benefits is one of the objectives. Which kind of organisation can produce benefits if we are limited to work with the Administration, which means that all funds you get are to be spent and that you have to justify how they are spent? It could never yield its own funds (Coordinator at AVAPE).

This is how this new limitation appears because of the cooperation of associations with public administrations, which demand an increasingly high effort (“fighting for the subsidies every year”), and a thorough work of justifying expenses. In addition, this effort is not compensated with high subsidies paid in time.

Another fact questioned by technicians and coordinators working in these associations, is the inadequacy of the criteria used by public administrations for policies assessment and monitoring. These criteria are considered as rigid and far away from reality, and are questioned on the reason that they do not incorporate the particularities and specificities demanded when assisting social groups at risk of exclusion. Therefore, assessment techniques seem to be oriented at reinforcing the quantitative dimensions of assistance more than reinforcing its quality. Associations consider that this enthusiasm towards objectives, figures and report writing also settle obstacles to the accomplishment of tasks and makes communication processes more complicated, since statistics cannot collect all kind of information.

If you need five hours to assist someone it doesn't count as an objective achieved. It is a ridiculous perversion. There are people that need more than four hours and other for which two hours are enough as they only need information on employment. This is the kind of flexibility that I think is needed... to work with this kind of persons (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

Figures on insertion are deceptive, as you can say that you have inserted 200 people and you might have got three days' contracts for them. So I think that we abuse of quantification and give little importance to qualitative facts. In fact, which are the improvements for the people that we work with in the field of employment? (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

Of course, reports are always quantitative. But to understand them you have to know the day-by-day reality. Usually, numbers do not show what is really happening (...) (Coordinator at Forja XXI).

At the same time, these actors denounce the State's lack of a leadership that could allow establishing minimal criteria or firm monitoring thresholds. Nevertheless, this demand has an ambivalent nature: associations invoke the State's responsibilities as referee and, at the same time, demand a lax State intervention, and certain flexibility and independence that allow them becoming key agents in the distribution of responsibilities.

*I do support firmer employment policies at State level. Decentralisation is positive but minimal criteria should be established and more serious monitoring thresholds should exist regarding which actions are implemented and why. And also, **sharing good practices between different communities** could let the people know when someone is working efficiently so that this information does not stay within the sector. (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).*

In any case, what is at stake is their own legitimacy as organisations that take part in the intervention against unemployment, a legitimacy that grows, partially, in opposition to the intervention of other actors and, especially in opposition to the intervention of the State Public Employment Service. Associations acknowledge that a greater presence of the State is needed, but they claim for a change in the form in which it is present. They unlegitimise and question the role of the public administration as judge and legislator, but they claim that a referee is needed in the process.

At the same time, in spite of a situation that seems to have mechanised the tasks of associations as simple executors in the political course, associations consider their participation essential in formulating policies and condemn the absence of their voice. They understand the absence of their participation in the development of programmes and actions as a deficiency in politics.

*(...) of course, we think **they are not consultative and I think this is a very big mistake** as, at the end, things are done without taking into account specific situations. **This might be one of the most important criticisms.** Whether the result is better or worse, I think that consultation is positive and **people would get more engaged in the development of all these things, if they had really taken part in it and if they feel that they are part of it and not that it is something imposed that they have to rethink.** (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).*

Once more, this considerations regarding comprehensive participation in developing policies raise the question of the displacement of the official and formally recognised intervention from the “outside” towards the “inside” (*feeling as part of*).

Little by little, associations would find their place in this land of no one, as they swing between public, and at the same time, private directions. Even if it could be considered that public directions are at the base of their *principles*, it is private directions that allow putting these *principles* into practice as it is private funding and flexibility that make their actions possible.

3.2. Administrative acrobats: the disoriented adviser.

In view of this new approach to the mission and the identities of associations, as they have become part of the administrative chain, technicians present a position that swings between the principles emerging from the rigidity that surrounds associations, to the freedom and personal satisfaction produced by the flexible customised and personalised assistance they provide. In short, technicians are divided between the demands of the

institution that hires them, the figures that represent the fulfilment of aims and the demands of giving a customised and specific attention to each user.

Some of the symptomatic interpretations of the disadvantages of this hybrid position concern the fugacity of programmes and the “lack of continuity” that hinders the correct accomplishment of tasks with a minimum level of quality. These features that characterise programmes are part of a general trend to instability that affects the life and work organisation in our society.

*The **lack of continuity** of programmes sometimes provokes a loss in the quality of the service... (...) in fact, we haven't had many **halts**, but we had some and... The thing is that we **lose quality**. Of course that when assisting users, **this lack of continuity of the own advisers disturbs...** and of course there's an **important loss in quality** (Technicians at Forja XXI).*

In this sense, they consider that they have to do real acrobatics to achieve their objectives, specifically, when the conditions (resources) are marked by the scarcity of means: insufficient funds, reduced offer of courses, lack of stuff, etc. It is difficult to attain certain levels of quality when technicians are so limited by dates and labour contracts signed for the short term.

***Programmes have a fixed beginning and ending date.** After that we have to wait for the new call for applications, apply again and gain the grant. **This is also the reason why my contract is not a stable contract as those of my colleagues in the day assistance centre.** They really have an item in the budget assigned to them. They have signed 5 or 10 years' compromises for which you know that there is already a closed budget apart from new things that can arise. **Our programs, however, do not even last from January to December, but from May to June, from June to December, it depends...** (Technician at AVAPE).*

*Another person that arrives and has to get to know the users... this really **affects the quality, labour precarity** (Technicians Forja XXI).*

Due to the lack of stuff, referring cases to other services that have more resources becomes unavoidable even if they are not adapted to the needs of the users. This is how quality decreases.

*Yes, but as we do not have enough technicians and resources, when a participant comes to OPEA or to PIEs¹⁰, **we refer him to the settlement programme**, and the intervention is conducted according to that programme, the case enters that programme's database, but in fact we do not assist immigrants in such a large scale. (Technician at AVAPE)*

The objective of quality is intrinsic to the task and it is developed on the base of technicians' personal engagement attitude towards work. Therefore, daily production of the sense of work is linked to personal engagement, which is itself linked to therapeutic and tutorial activity.

¹⁰ Translator's note: OPEA stands for *Orientación Profesional para el Empleo y Asistencia para el Autoempleo* which means “Professional advice for employment and assistance to self employment” while PIE stands for *Plan integral de empleo* which means “Comprehensive employment programme”.

In some way, maybe. We feel so... far away from training, and so on... Personally, in this sense, I am really touched when I see that there has been some progress, and that people have a different attitude towards problems and think that there are solutions for those who are loss in some way (Technicians at Forja XXI).

Therefore, designing “solutions” for those who are “loss” is something that “touches” technicians, and gives them personal satisfaction.

In a situation that is not predetermined, the diversity of cases or the great dimension of problems that arise with a personal approach (unemployment as a lack of adaptation capacity) continuously appeal to creativity, to the invention of new means and modes and to improvisation. This kind of creative work is also assumed as a responsibility by technicians: “we are going to beat our brains out together”.

*Then, innovation is also important. That means that it is important to maintain what we have, which is good, but **we are going to beat our brains out together** to keep finding new resources (Technicians at Forja XXI).*

Personal abilities to create and invent solutions to face complicated, unpredictable, and ambiguous demands play an essential role. In addition, the absence of clear action patterns fosters the need to resort to creativity and improvisation.

***Each one might have some kind of instrument** to collect different kinds of information, to make diagnostics or to... there are many people that work with agendas, I think... I mean search agendas. I am now starting to use them (Advice technicians at Caritas-Seville).*

*In any case, **depending of the person he has in front, the adviser himself, might have to approach the process in one way or another** (Advice technicians at Caritas-Seville).*

*(...) we also try to make sure that they have an external aid, since an hour that they spend with me is not enough. **We have an IT room available, but now, works are being conducted in it since part of the ceiling has fallen down**, so we cannot use it either. We don't have enough stuff either to stay with them in the IT room the whole day, but from time to time, when I have a small group, I introduce them to new technologies, although this is something sporadic. **When they come to me for the second time I also try to get them the library card, I take photos of them, I do photocopies, and therefore, they can use Internet resources for free in public libraries** (Technician at AVAPE).*

***Regarding clothing, we have a kind of wardrobe available for them and when they have an interview, we provide shirts or some kind of more prepared clothing for the interview, even if all of this is something we cope with during the interview... but sometimes they have no means... they also come to have their hair cut, as we refer them to social hairdressers, which are available for them** (Technician at AVAPE).*

Mediators' production of professional regulations, which is based on the culture of engagement, in many cases responds to a strong identification with the task. The personal effort that technicians invest on their tasks moves them to reflect on their own experience, which becomes an instrument to interpret and justify the advice and

“instructions” they give to unemployed people. This is how they construct a self-referential system of problem’s generation-solution, a closed cycle that gets mobility/precariousness to generate adaptation and adaptation, in turn, to generate mobility.

There is also an influence of the model that each of us uses or the experience or... the background, which has a lot of influence... (Advice technicians, Caritas-Seville).

D: We are used to think that we can become unemployed and that is why we undertake new training continuously and also (...) this is something that we have to transmit to these people that come to us after maybe 20 or 30 years working at the same job and for the same firm. Then, their hearts sick into their boots (...) they have to know that we must open our minds and do not focus on something limited and... we have to show them how the labour market is (Technicians at Forja XXI).

When people have to cope with these tasks generated by confronted logics, advisers’ labour routine can become a daily hustle and bustle. On one hand, they cope with customised, specialised, creative and individualised work, the one meant by the coordinator when she mentions the *tool* that each one designs in an individual way. On the other hand, there is administrative and mechanic work, which is referred to as the tasks of *filling* and *filing* data, tasks that *condition them*.

They have to share experiences, as not all of them are doing the same in the same situations, and exchanging practices can be useful. What is difficult is that when someone designs a new tool, the other has already invented another (...). Then, what I am trying is to share the resources that people design, so that the others can enjoy them as well, etc, but it is not easy (...). Because there isn’t much time (...) because we always work against the clock. After receiving people, filing applications, filling whatever they have to fill, making controls (...) In short, they have lots of facts that condition them... (Coordinator at Forja XXI).

Obscurely defined tasks and shortly formalised missions explain the important role played by the reinvention of work by professionals at their workplace. The constant uncertainty in the definition of the service they provide explains why the content of their professional activity does not depend on codified knowledge (Demazière, 2009).

Some associations face an additional difficulty: technicians and advisers have to deal with a *special task* when their public suffers special difficulties to enter the labour market. This situation gets even more serious due to the deterioration of the labour market in the latest months, which weakens their position even more. The imprecision of the tasks undertaken by these advisers gets even higher as a consequence of the pressure generated between the aims of these associations as providers of labour insertion and a context in which there is a very reduced number of vacancies available, specially, for the social group targeted by them.

And I think that basically, what we achieve is to place these people in better positions so that they can find a job. There are new questions as maybe... to get them to know how to search for a job, how to find it in a shorter period of time, how to get an interview. In short, I think that we achieve certain objectives, whether they are more or less useful, but this is difficult to determine in some occasions. It is true that the fact

of getting an interview for a job, when they had never got one, and the fact that at the end, in the long term, they can get a job or enter a training programme, are good indicators that show that our work is useful (Representative of *Unidad Orienta* and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

Therefore, professionals have to face serious difficulties to attain the objectives assigned to them, which would ideally and by definition consist of achieving that socially excluded people get a job and subscribe labour regulations. Their work is tinged with ambiguity and diversity, and their tasks are marked by the constant readjustment of their expectations. Even if ideally a clear and priority aim is to help these people find a job, in practice, advisers and technicians have to continuously redefine their objectives since they become unattainable. Some mediators do not get to “understand” the positive side of advice activities and disseminating offers indirectly if they do not provide a direct job offer to the people that are looking for it. They have not assumed that the aim of their work is not exactly intermediation/hiring.

I cannot understand it. I cannot understand labour advice without labour insertion. I cannot understand training without labour insertion. I cannot understand it. I cannot... (Coordinator at AVAPE-Valencia).

*(...) in Orienta **intermediation is forbidden to us**, and then we cannot do anything. We can disseminate offers, we have noticeboards, we have..., but that's all. We cannot send curricula when we find a job offer. We are obliged to tell the company that we cannot do that. If someone is looking for intermediation we have to refer him/her to the SAE* (Technician at Forja XXI).

Intermediation, of course. I do miss it (Technician at Forja XXI).

Technicians-mediators' professional activity ranges from giving professional advice to providing information on potential job opportunities and psychological support, with a trend to reinforce the latest. In this field, technicians and professionals' required skills are not those acquired along their professional training, but mainly, those linked to their own emotional experience, their private knowledge based to a great extent on their existential practice, or what is the same, on personal resources acquired throughout their personal and not only professional experience. Then, some important elements in professionals' construction of the sense of their tasks are their distancing of uncustomised and routine interventions common to the administration and the mobilization and development of a relational dimension: their empathic capacity in order to gain the confidence of people and their personal flexibility. This demands personal engagement, or in other words, a subjective mobilisation in their work (Demazière 2009).

3.3 The adviser-unemployed interaction: customization, therapy and exchange.

The imperative of personalised action combined with the imperative of regulation flexibility can get to transform advice/mentoring in the search of a job into a therapeutic activity, with a unidirectional character. Nevertheless, theoretically, more customised interactions could open the doors to solutions negotiated between technicians and beneficiaries of the policies, specially at the aim of fostering the *autonomy* of

unemployed, which means giving an opportunity to deliberation and to the apparition of new rupture lines regarding the “must be” of politics.

The technicians’ therapeutic tasks in employment services, as we have mentioned in previous publications, entail the assumption of two key skills for their daily work: listening and motivating.

Advisers are likely to be understood as a kind of “guide-illuminator” who *open doors and hopes* and at the same time becomes someone close, to whom we can refer at any time, in other words, a friend (“*el Julio*”¹¹).

(...) when I need an appointment I have to talk to “el Julio”, then I call him and I get my appointment nearly immediately (User at Forja XXI).

*The best. What can I say...? Everything, all the support they have given to me, **all the advice I have received, and all the things I have learnt and the affection they have given to me...*** (Users of Caritas-Seville).

*“It is a good curriculum”. And I said: “it is because I go to Andalucía Orienta”. And that was everything; **each time that I had a problem, I came here and they gave me advice. I never had a problem, they never say no to anything and they have always given good assistance to me*** (Users at Caritas-Seville).

In the context of this therapeutic task, to a great extent, the professionals’ work consists of conducting a psychological exercise with the individuals that ask for advice. This demands customised monitoring, for which emotions (listening, comprehension, relief) play an important role and for which moral and emotional elements must be “trained”.

(...)personally, more than labour tasks, to which I devote 20 minutes maybe, during about 40 minutes I do motivation tasks, we look for other resources, I try to look for a place where they can eat that day, to call to the shelter to book a meal for them, then it is very different (Technician at AVAPE).

*But I think that it is secondary, as **the most important is to maintain motivation and to cheer them up to keep searching; most of all in this situation, as we never know if it is going to be tomorrow or in a couple of months.** Because, until a couple of days ago, people used to find something here or there, and they didn’t have the need. **But to keep searching, willingly, without despair, this is not that easy*** (Representative of Unidad Orienta and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

*I think that **one of the most important things, but not so valued, is to create the sense of self-esteem in the person that comes to us. I think this is one of the transversal questions that we always try to coordinate as they are people who have suffered a lot*** (Representative of Unidad Orienta and Head of Employment Programmes, Caritas-Seville).

¹¹ Translator’s note: in Spanish, *el* or *la* are used before proper names only in very colloquial language register.

*An educator, a social worker, a psychologist that works in this field, maybe. **I always claim the need of a psychologist in our centre, as nearly everybody need a prod*** (Advice technicians at Caritas-Seville).

The work of the adviser is focused “on the person” more than “for the person”. It is about encouraging and sensibilising them. Sometimes, it is about persuading them of the need to undertake some training and in occasions, it is about working on attitudes and feelings towards work directly.

*(...) they have lifted my spirit, they told me “no, if you can study, you get good marks, **you are not excluded, and you do that, you are equal to anybody else**”* (User at Forja XXI).

*Then, there is a second stage of assessment, of diagnosis, whatever you want to call it, where **the adviser more or less perceives which are the skills that each person has to develop the most, which are the weak points, strengths...*** (Advice technicians at Caritas-Seville).

*Yes, and in this way, they also have **the feeling that they are not completely unemployed, that they are doing something that can be useful and productive*** (Technician at AVAPE).

For mediators, advice becomes sensible because of the attitude towards work, the willingness to work which is not ascribed to those that have not had the opportunity of working for long.

*Then, currently, Andalucía Orienta has much more sense than before, when this was also necessary but **people did not want that kind of support as there were more subsidies** and they did not want to search for a job directly, but to live on aids* (Technician at Forja XXI).

However, the aim/task of new contractual services is not to “search for a job” for unemployed people but to “provide them with the tools” that they need to be able to do it themselves. In some cases, a high degree of interiorisation is observed of this new version of security in the field of employment/unemployment as self-insurance or security activation, which consist of “providing the necessary tools...”¹². This means fostering individual potential and action capacities to reinforce the autonomy of the individual, or in other words, *conceiving individuals* able to manage their integration conditions and their participation in society in an autonomous way (Franssen, 2003).

¹² The European Commission discourse highlights the redefinition of “security” according to these parameters, especially in the document titled “Towards common principles of flexicurity” (27.06.07): “Security, (...) is more than just the security to maintain one’s job: it is about **equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment. It is also about adequate unemployment benefits to facilitate transitions. Finally, it encompasses training opportunities for all workers, especially the low skilled and older workers.**” (COM(2007)359 final, p.5). For further information on the discourse of European institutions concerning employment and social protection, refer to: Martín Martín, M.P., (2009) *Questioning the employment system: the European flexicurity approach* (2009). The journal of Industrial Relations and Human Resources. October 2009. Vol,11 N°5 pp. 95-114. www.isguc.org.

As long as security is understood as self-assurance, some users consider individual action as an essential factor in the process of job seeking. They believe that finding an employment depends on their responsibility and personal effort.

*Then, they are not going to provide me with a job, but with **the necessary tools** to look for a job myself, and I am finding them here (User of Forja XXI).*

*(...) I think that the idea is not to come here to look for a job... Here, you come to look for new means... but **it is you who must look for the job**, they are not going to give it to you. *Orienta* does not give you a job, *Orienta* gives you **the tools** so that you can look for the job. Then, **the job is something you have to look for, tramping around, yourself** (...) **The rest depends on you**, if you have already been to three places and for any reason they have not hired you, it is not the fault of *Orienta*, it is because of the situation, isn't it? (User at Forja XXI).*

However, contradictions and cognitive dissonance are frequent in the discourse of users on “the responsibility/cause” of their unemployment situation, and therefore also on their discourse on possible solutions. As it has been observed in previous extracts, “the situation”, their efforts (“tramping around”), “the government” or even themselves are presented as the obvious responsible parts in their incoherent discourse. In this way, users show that their cognitive approach to the problem of unemployment ascribes collective responsibility to blurred bodies and to the uncertain government’s leeway.

*But I keep saying the same, I think that **it doesn't depend on Orienta; it depends on the government**, because what they do is orientation, as its name says (User of Forja XXI).*

In this extract, the government appears as responsible of unemployment, instead of “Orienta”. However, in this discourse “Orienta” is not understood as the kind of version of that *government*, as *tinged with its mark* or, what is the same, as a body that exists thanks to a certain form of governing, according to decentralising and contractual procedures.

Regarding responsibilities, people in the association insists that “decision making belongs to the individual”. Theoretically, the insistence in holding the beneficiary responsible for it or ascribing to the beneficiary of the programmes active skills in the interaction user-adviser would promote the creation of a place for dialog and negotiation where the kind of attention that the users would benefit of could be decided. This could foster the introduction of a deliberative element in the new customised intervention mentioned at the beginning of this section.

*Completely. If not, that makes no sense. This is also why I mention **autonomy**, that's to say, **decision making on the part of the individuals that come to the centre** (...) we avoid the people that try to blame you. What happens or not depends on your decision. I try to give you the **tools** but you make the decisions. I cannot make them for you (...). The result can be positive or negative, but **the consequences of the acts are yours** (Technician at Forja XXI).*

In fact, it is observed that technicians try to establish dialog, to exchange impressions and to offer the services available to the user/client so that they choose “what they desire”, “the employment that they want in principle”.

You define the professional aim with each person on the base of a diagnosis of his/her skills and needs according to what she/he feels like and then you plan a programme of training, advice or any other thing. You show her/him the tools available, the resources, how to look for a job, so that she/he can find the employment that she/he wants in principle (Technician at Forja XXI).

Nevertheless, all kinds of negotiation are still far from being horizontal. Users show that they are conscious of the difference that exists between their position and the adviser’s, mainly due to the status of professionalism and to the fact that advisers are the experts. Technicians are “professionals”; therefore, they hold authority arguments on what is convenient and what is *the best* for the user. Professionals have the authority.

The only thing that he does is showing you the resources available and then you are free. Of course, he is supposed to be an expert. He is a professional adviser (...). Apart from the decisions you take and your own criteria... there is a person that advises you in a professional way (User at Forja XXI).

In opposition to this discourse on dialog and decision making, there is the explicit discourse on the “exigencies of engagement”. This argument reveals the wicked relation of complementarity incentive/coaction entailed by activation technologies.

It is a way of demanding an engagement in exchange. To get them to participate in certain activities, to receive training, to look for advice, to update themselves in some way, not only for the aid and the payment. In exchange, they have to follow a stipulated itinerary designed by the advisers and the individual himself, according to whatever is necessary (Technician at Forja XXI).

Therapeutic actions and forced engagement enormously limit a real exchange in customised intervention. As a result, the possibility of negotiation between advisers and technicians remains highly reduced, limited to the exchange of emotional processes: user’s “relief” for the technician’s sense of “fulfilment”, since he makes relief possible.

Here, we can devote more time to them, they get relief, and we can reorient them to some extent, even if this is not our main task. But, in some way... Even if it is out of the spite of our professional, in some way we have to cooperate in these tasks when people demand it (Technician at Forja XXI).

B: Yes, we come here to tell things, decisions that are obvious. And when you say “good”, well you know that the same happens to all of us, don’t you? But in fact you come here with a decision, which is clear, but you tell it here and they tell it to you and they realise that you agree with them on their decision even if they had made it before talking to you, but...

E: You reaffirm them

B y D: Yes

D: And it is a form of feeling yourself fulfilled also (Technicians at Forja XXI).

Discourses that deny or find deficiencies in advice and training actions are also frequent. These kind of discourses could even be qualified as counter-discourses regarding this socialiser intervention.

In my opinion, there is a lack of efficiency. We are not achieving our aims with the resources that they give us (User at Forja XXI).

Ok, but it seems that there is a great investment on the person and... little efforts from the other part (User at Forja XXI).

In some cases, users consider employment as a guarantee or as a right. They argue that their labour insertion should be collectively guaranteed and they do not accept the discourse that supports that unemployment is due to a personal deficiency.

*Of course, they can tell me: "There are social canteens". Yes, I know but there is a bureaucracy that you have to respect. They also give you clothes, but I am not begging for charity. What I want is to **dignify my life**. Is it that difficult to understand? I don't know. I think that it is said very clearly in the Constitution. **Everybody has the right to a job, to a decent job**. But I don't want to enter that debate; I simply want a job* (Users at AVAPE-Valencia).

*I also have the right to... I think... And apart from that, no matter what the Constitution says, I have the **right to live a decent life, to have a job**. I don't care what kind of job, but a job. But the labour market has been conformed in such a way that everybody takes advantage of it and then blames the crisis* (Users at AVAPE-Valencia).

They highlight exogenous facts and needs that are not satisfied by *insisting only on personal responsibility* (it is also about luck and about the number of vacancies available and people need to eat everyday).

*It is not only about retraining yourself, **luck** is also important. If you are not lucky what do you want to retrain yourself for?* (User at Forja XXI)

***There's no employment**. That is something you realise when you come to employment agencies in which three years ago the noticeboard was full to the bottom and it has progressively been reduced* (User at Forja XXI).

What is really needed and hoped, in order to earn a living, is a job.

*In my case, I lost everything and, as now I have the strange habit of eating every day, I **need to search for a job*** (User at Forja XXI).

The labour market has become a "jungle" and being well trained or having a good attitude is not enough to get a job. There are facts that are external to individuals and which are beyond their capacities. In this discourses, the image of the "job seeker" as a "fighter in hostile lands" has consolidated. People must fight to eat.

To fight... And eating is something we have to do every day. It is a strange habit that we have here in Andalusia... (User at Forja XXI).

In view of this, the attitude of technicians stands *firm*: to find a job it is necessary to be aware of the need of preparation, and preparation does not necessarily mean *training*. It is important to know how the labour market works *currently*, and understand that *finding a job* is a process that implies working itself. This preparation has become an essential stage and even an “open window” in a situation of unemployment in which “doors do not open”.

*“I’ve been looking for a job for six months, and there is nothing. So I am going to undertake a course, maybe...”. Then, since they realise that there is nothing... They face such a negative situation that they decide to do whatever, at least they change, and they try to **open another window** (...) which is also the aim of these programmes, isn’t it? (Technician at Forja XXI).*

According to contractual and individualised dynamics of the activation paradigm, far away from enhancing the autonomy of unemployed and the development of negotiation processes, the interaction between adviser and unemployed is strongly influenced by unidirectional dynamics common to therapeutic activities in which the adviser’s professional authority reorients the user’s aims and intentions. However, it is not an unquestioned activity, as the discourse of a number of unemployed that recur to this kind of attention, has shown their disagreement and disapproval towards the new intervention model and, specially, towards its unconnected conception (not bound to the problem) considering the *true* conditions of the possibility (luck and the number of vacancies available) of finding an employment, which is necessary to earn a life such as it has been recognized by Constitutional Law.

4. As a conclusion. Redefining the relationship between the employment service and the unemployed.

All along this paper, new dynamics and representations of the *government (administration and services)*, such as *unemployment*, which are activated by decentralising and contractualising processes in the framework of policy implementation, have been referred to as the process of reinventing governance of unemployment. In order to analyse these new representations and conceptions of *public action* (public domain), *unemployed worker* and *employment services* in depth, this paper has focused in the discourse of the different actors (users, mediators and coordinators) that are part of this implementation process in the context of non-profits organisations. In this sense, the paradigmatic case of NGO’s in the governing of social affairs and their role in the new contractual cascade as a link of the chain that exists between administrations (state and regional governments) and unemployed have been highlighted.

Throughout delegation and agreements, New Public Management has left its mark on different actors’ interaction domains all along the implementation process that is conducted by these associations. This is how a new relationship is established between the administration and associations. This relationship provokes a change on the aims and procedures of these organisations that affects their own identities as associations, which originally were bodies alien to the established governmental mechanisms (from the state) and have become collaborators of the state. Even if it presents new obstacles to the activities of these bodies, the result of all of this, is a system of hybrid

intervention that also provides new arguments to legitimize the intervention of these organisations from the “inside”. At the same time, associations become “hostages” of the state and administrations’ allies. They reinvent themselves according to the parameters established by a third party, or what is the same, according to the funds granted by administrations and private bodies, even if private bodies’ action parameters do not fully meet the organisation’s values or principles. In this public-private continuum, the state adopts the role of the referee and controller more than the role of guarantor and protector. In this context, the adviser is also a hybrid figure, an employee which is *halfway* between the mechanised civil servant and the creative and engaged therapist. In addition, both advisers and coordinators acknowledge the difficulties entailed by the fact of dealing (*acrobatics*) with the gap existing between the proposed aims and the resources available, which provokes a confluence of resources to meet objectives that are uneven in many occasions and ephemeral targets (as they are included in the frame of limited duration programmes). Finally, the dimension of the work conducted by these technicians, which consist of providing customised assistance to individuals, could unleash the possibility of dialog and negotiation between adviser and user through the prescription of psychological work and the establishment of an engaged relationship/agreement with the unemployed. However, this *opportunity* is frustrated by the main role ascribed to unidirectional and monological discourses and the activity of sensitisation conducted from the authority position of the technician. These are obstacles to all possibilities of real dialog or negotiation on *job seeking procedures*. As a consequence, the *opinion*, expectations/desires/needs of unemployed only seem to be taken into account in a superficial, *performative* way.

In short, the ambivalence and contradiction regarding new ways of action (government’s technologies) and the content of the actions (activation through advice and mentoring) is a constant that is transversal to the discourse of coordinators, technicians and users. However, in a more specific level, discourses can be classified according to the different degrees of discursive homogeneity, which, to a certain extent, could show the position that each actor holds in the new unemployment governing dynamics. First of all, the discourse of coordinators is more oriented to monolithism as it constantly refers to what comes “from the top”, the “immovable” facts of the situation and the need of making quantitative objectives clear, as they are indicators of the future of their organisation based on the classic criteria of objective-oriented management: quality, assessment and coordination, among other. Regarding technicians, they show certain abilities to find a dialectical balance between their acceptance of new ways of public intervention that might be against the principles of the organisation to which they belong, the most administrative of their skills to conduct tasks that have nothing to do with their training, and finally, their most moralizing tasks towards unemployed. As a consequence, the discourse of technicians seems to be much more controversial. Finally, the discourse of users seems to be the most polyhedronic, as it ranges from the assumption/interiorisation of moral premises and fatalist discourses on a labour market situation that is imposed to them and individualising discourses on activation, to the criticism, questioning and rejection of this kind of intervention, and other intermediate positions.

Whether they are sceptical on the *real* efficiency of this kind of customised service, or whether they feel *devotion* towards advisers as they cheer them up and listen to them, unemployed take part in these new organisational or intervention techniques. Nevertheless, all of them seem to be confused and resigned when they have to appoint

the responsible of their unemployment: *the situation, the government, themselves, etc.* The destruction of the collective responsibility mechanisms that is conducted through a (multi-level) dim governance, namely, the reinvention of public domains, provokes confusion in the insight capacities of disoriented workers that are at halfway from the wage employment regime and this new entrepreneurial regime¹³ called flexicurity.

¹³ The terms *wage employment regulations* and *entrepreneurial employment regulations* are references to employment regimes which are almost completely opposed, namely, those developed before the 70s that found their maximal representation in continental Keynesian-Fordist welfare states mainly, and those that started to appear in Europe from the 70s, which are still currently a reference. We owe these terms to Prieto, C. (2003), "Teoría Social del Trabajo". In: Giner, S. (edit.), *Teoría Social Moderna*. Barcelona: Ariel.

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