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Title: Flexicurity and New Governance in Spain: Assumptions around the Public Employment Services Modernization.

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Abstract: The transformations in the organisational and institutional model of the Public Administration, which have taken place in a large number of European welfare states since the 1980s, have been among those responses to reach the greatest consensus in tackling the so-called social crisis at the heart of the European Union. This administrative reform, supported by tools of theoretical definition such as New Public Management, Management by Objectives and Contractualism, entails not only semantic transformations (“distribution of responsibilities”, “cost-effectiveness” and a shift towards the notion of a citizen as a client rather than being managed), but also in policies (the predominance of the diffusion of power and the individualisation of responsibilities), operating within the frameworks of civic action and the relationship between the State and the individual. Activation and flexicurity paradigms accommodate this project of modernising implementation/administration, and the commitment towards the new governance of the social system will have far-reaching consequences in the political and moral principles of social cohesion. With respect to the Spanish employment system, as in many throughout Europe, this reform encompasses the “modernisation” of the public employment service.

This paper aims to look in more detail at the representations of “modernisation” arising from debates on restructuring employment services and new methods of implementation by looking back at the path the administrative reform process of public employment services has taken from the 1980s until the present day.

Keywords: employment services, modernisation, contractualism, flexicurity, governance.

1. Introduction: the advent of new governance models* .

A body of academic research has recently highlighted the transformations undergone by social employment policies in the majority of Western countries over the last two decades (for instance Sol & Westerweld, 2005; Serrano Pascual and Magnusson, 2007; Kallenberg, 2009; Landa Zapirain, 2009). New strategies in this area of the European Union are one example as they currently highlight an active and individualised focus on the problem of unemployment and have enabled new paradigms in current social employment policies to be consolidated – on a national and European level – owing to the fact that they are based on activation and flexicurity; they have become focal points of European employment strategies (Wilthagen & Tros, 2004; Keune & Jepsen, 2007; Serrano Pascual, 2009a).

The current hegemony of these paradigms cannot be understood without considering other processes of administrative reform that have been developing in the Western world for over three decades. These are in response to the crisis in the Welfare State, which is commonly rooted in the demand for solutions to challenges stemming from a more complex scenario existing within the classical framework of the Nation State. While the social policies in the Keynesian period were considered from an institutional and bureaucratic national framework, and predominantly defined by the negotiation of social actors with opposing interests, today they are characterised by a globalised economy –a new knowledge economy based on new technologies and flexible production, the emergence of a society of networks, the fiscal crisis of the State and the fragmentation of collective identities (Alonso, 2007 and 2009; Jessop, 2008). This increase in complexity and the growth of interdependent relations between different social actors (with the resulting dispersal of power) has given rise to a new way of understanding the Administration; what is known as *governance*. This will generate new ways for the Public Administration to intervene in management practices (Pollitt, 1993), characterised by “modernity” and “efficiency” rather than inefficiency and the bureaucracy of traditional public management (du Gay, 2000 and 2007; Peters, 2005).

This paper aims to look in more detail at the social representations of “modernisation” arising from debates on restructuring employment services in Spain by paying heed to the path the process of administrative reform of public employment service has taken from its emergence in the 1980s to the present day. The empirical material used for analysis will be qualitative data taken from a set of interviews with different social actors¹ that have participated in the implementation of active employment policies. The interviews were carried out within the context of two case studies in the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia and the Community of Valencia. Discourse analysis techniques will be applied (in line with Fairclough, 1995; Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

* This paper has been carried out with the help of a set of conclusions drawn from a piece of research forming part of the research project framework: “A qualitative evaluation of activation policies: the boundaries of active and passive” (SEJ2007-64604), financed by the Ministry of Science and Education as well as “Labour instability and the perception of citizens” (CSO2008-02886), financed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation.

¹ Nineteen interviews were carried out during this research. The interviewees include in both a national and regional level trade union representatives; representatives of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces and active policy managers. A representative from the NGO Cáritas and another one from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies were also interviewed.

Our contribution will be divided into three sections: the first highlights the relationship between the principles of the flexicurity process and those of the new Public Administration, subsequently offering an approach to administrative employment reforms in Spain. The second will be dedicated to a discourse analysis of different actors participating in the implementation of policies, and aims to reach a better understanding of the process/proposal of “modernisation” exactly as it is formed, politically, from different perspectives. This section will then lead onto a discussion about the main results from our research.

2. Flexicurity and the modernization of public employment services in Spain.

The widely-acknowledged concept (and political strategy) of flexicurity – that deals with harmoniously combining two traditionally opposed notions such as the flexibility and security of the labour market – constitutes a “summary category” of a new interpretative framework of intervention concerning the type of (im)balance between social protection/social justice and economic development. Flexicurity propagated from European institutions incorporates in one unique and compact, yet slightly ambiguous, discourse the reforms that the Social State and labour market have undergone since the 1980s. Therefore, based on a Keynesian-Fordist approach, it attempts to form a new management model where active policies harmoniously co-exist with management practices based on the “distribution of responsibilities, collaboration, cooperation, bargaining, social dialogue, and partnerships between social actors and different levels of government”. It is in accordance with New Public Management (Martín Martín, 2009a), individualised intervention, specific policies and the reduction in public spending (“cost-effectiveness”), among other principles. Consequently, not only does flexicurity encompass a description of the problems and the resulting proposed solutions, but, at the same time, also recommends suitable tools and processes for achieving these goals.

Flexicurity is considered a key part of the new methods of management and governance (tools, processes, actors), which are a benchmark for action in the present climate of the different European Welfare States (Bonvin, 2004; Serrano Pascual, 2009a and 2009b). Therefore, it has been identified with a kind of “modernisation” vis-à-vis the development and improvement of services. In recent decades, modernisation has been associated with the implementation of the precepts of the New Public Management approach - its principles affect three constituent, and complimentary, aspects of administrative intervention: funding, the implementation process and the actors participating in it. Funding tends to adopt a government strategy favouring cuts and containing social expenditure, which is tied to the idea of “cost benefit”. The implementation process, previously encompassing principles of order, planning and hierarchy archetypal in bureaucratic managerialism, will be displaced by the new Management By Objectives (MBO), which has a strong emphasis on the standard criteria of business management i.e. efficiency, evaluation and reaching goals with courses of action geared towards objectives and results, the preference for horizontal and independent organisational structures governed by contracts or quasi-contracts, the proliferation of contractual processes, externalisation and association, and a more individualistic focus (Pollitt, 2003: 27-28). Finally, it engenders the incorporation of new actors in the implementation and management of social policies (private enterprises, associations, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, etc.). They

provide services through contracts, agreements and negotiations with public authorities, and are subjected to an audit of their activities. A triangular structure is set up to provide welfare, with three related figures contractually involved: the main part (the State or another public organism), the agent hired (a private entity or independent administration) and the client (the citizen). The overriding effect of this contractual dynamic is a blurring of the State's responsibility as the provider of social welfare, which engenders an important risk to collective responsibility frameworks being dismantled as new symbolic negotiation spaces surface from the positions of the actors. Nevertheless, by nurturing this trend a more personalised intervention tailored to the needs of the individual opens up the possibility of a new kind of versatility being established in the relationship between the implementer of policy practices and the citizen as rigid intervention regulations cease to exist. Expressions such as the “diffusion of power” or “multi-level governments” will refer to a new trend of “dim management”. The gradual immersion of States in these new social management logics generates a process of individualised responsibility, previously considered social, involving the weakening of the public sphere and the reinvention of the role of the State.

In terms of Spain, the modernisation of public employment services is seen as being strongly linked to the reform and improvement of intermediation in a broader sense (guidance, information, training, activation and intermediation) and in accordance with the principles of the activation paradigm. Therefore, there has been talk of “measures to modernise public employment services and support for labour intermediation” and the need to modernise these services “with the aim of bolstering efficiency and enhancing the implementation of a preventive approach...”². Although there has been visible progress since the nineties in decentralised management geared towards the framework of Management by Objectives, the reform is noticeably incomplete and exists in a context of confusion³: Hence the continual call for “modernisation” as an ideal process and goal of reform. Nowadays, actors and actions comprise a tangle of management that neither dispersion nor certain regulatory anachronisms are able to resolve.

In order to understand the development of institutional restructuring and new government logics within the sphere of Spanish employment, we must refer to the factors rooted in the implementation of the welfare system, along with their regulations and institutions, in the aftermath of Franco's regime. As far as the management of social policy is concerned, institutionalisation was both minimalist and late due to the absence of a solid tradition and the precedence given to the economic convergence of Spain with Europe over the social economy (Navarro, 2006). Consequently, Spain was characterised by the construction of a Welfare State model that began around a time of a crisis in the European model (anachronism). Furthermore, the defence of post-Fordist modernisation in the labour market was present right from the transition, with its model representing the development of the Spanish system of protection and creating serious contradictions in its institutionalisation. This can be seen in the diverse legislative measures undertaken in the democratic period concerning employment policies, which we will briefly refer to below.

² *Document for the committee of social dialogue on the labour market*. 18 October 2005, p. 16.

³ Valdés Dal-Ré (2006:3) bemoans the general lack of perspective in the organisation of employment services and their functions with “*a profound lack of coherency between the principles governing labour intermediation and the techniques and tools used for its implementation*”.

Therefore, the first period of the democracy upheld a Keynesian approach to the regulation of the labour market in particularly tough circumstances brought about by an economic crisis that had exposed the weaknesses of late capitalism in Spain (Toharia, 1986; Koch, 2006; Alonso, 2007). The Basic Employment Act (51/1980) established the inception of the INEM (the National Institute of Employment), set up within a framework of State-run employment policies. The INEM constituted a “monolithic” intervention model as it brought together the management of employment benefits, job centres and the management of non-regulated subsidies of hiring and training. The law did, however, also include a timid gesture with which to overcome this rigidity; it opened up the possibilities of the INEM collaborating with institutions and bodies specialised in guidance, training and jobs for groups with specific employment difficulties (article 14.2) as well as establishing agreements between private and public enterprises geared towards jobs for unemployed workers (article 15).

Subsequently, steps were soon taken towards a perspective more akin to post-Fordist reorganisation (Alonso and Martínez Lucio, 2006). From the mid-1980s to the present day – with the PSOE and PP governments – there has been the trend towards the flexibilization of labour regulations in nearly all aspects, with gradual restrictions in the access to unemployment benefits and the reinforcement of the drive towards active policies through various legislative labour reforms. Equally, progressive decentralizing of public employment services in the Autonomous Communities has occurred as a result of the transfer of active policies, self-employment programmes, help for people with disabilities (assistance) and professional occupational training. The modifications of the employment system are included in the pivotal Law 10/1994: the legalisation and authorisation of non-profit making private employment agencies, the creation of an integrated employment system (SIPes, regulated in the RD. 75/1995), the legalisation of Temporary Employment Agencies (known as ETTs), and the establishment of direct hiring by the employer. This process has given rise to the assumption by certain authors of the interventionist model (within the spirit of the 1943 Law governing the systems of labour relations in the Franco era) being replaced with a liberal one with minimum public regulations⁴. These changes, however, do not only come from an awareness of the benefits by political actors and social agents, but are also construed as being favoured, encouraged and conditioned by the influence of international institutions, such as the recommendations and guidelines of the European Union (for instance the European Commission in 2007) and the ILO Agreements.

The process of territorial decentralization (which came to a conclusion in 2000 and did not include the Basque Country, Ceuta or Melilla) culminates in the Employment Act 56/2003. This act establishes and acknowledges a new National Employment System, incorporating the renamed State Public Employment Service and different Autonomous Community Public Employment Services (OL 9/1992). The previous functions of the INEM will be transferred over to them under the protection of basic State legislation; therefore, they will undertake the management of unemployment benefits, intermediation, the management of hiring subsidies, non-regulated professional training, the delineation of employment policy strategies most suited to the needs of a particular Community as well as the implementation of Agreements with employment agencies and collaboration practices with social bodies. Moreover, under this Law the potential

⁴ It is important to point out that other authors believed the system was never interventionist as it was too bureaucratic and contained too many legal vacuums, making its action capacity more mechanic and leaving broad activity margin for private recruitment agencies (Sobrino González, 2007).

agents participating in labour intermediation are defined i.e. Public Employment Services, non-profit making employment agencies, ETTs and “bodies collaborating in public employment services” (Pérez Domínguez, 2007).

The modernising process of public employment services in Spain, therefore, follows two parallel routes: one, autonomous community decentralisation giving rise to internal quasi-contracts between different levels of administration⁵, and the other, legal acknowledgement and the regulation of other, private agents as stipulated in the 10/1994 Law (which opens up the legal regime of contracts between private agents and Public Administrations through authorisation and tender procedures). Yet, the completion of these transfers will trigger a genuine “contractual cascade” leading to the Autonomous Communities potentially playing a “leading role” in the contracts established with the providers (local corporations and private bodies) while at same time becoming the “counterpart” of the “leading role” of the State, which would in turn set up a dynamic prescribing to collaboration agreements. Some authors are dubious about the operation of this framework and doubt its status as “managerialism”, suspecting that it is closer to a traditional bureaucratic model in complete disarray (or perhaps disintegration)⁶.

Thus we are faced with both a management model of employment policies characterised by vast contractual complexity, and an adaptation to the notions of New Public Management that has allowed diverse actors to play a key role in managing services. The following section will attempt to describe the social representations present in discourses regarding the implications of modernising the management of employment policies.

3. The discourse of social actors in the modernisation of employment services.

Undoubtedly, one of the most salient, and equally striking, characteristics of the discourse of social actors is the unanimous agreement in determining the situation of public employment services – all seem to concur that they *do not work*. All the actors interviewed are fully against a centralized intervention model (where decision-making is organised hierarchically in a top-down model), managed directly by Public Administrations and run by the central powers responsible for designing uniform

⁵ Mosley and Sol (2006: 8) identify three main types of contracts for the provision of public employment services within the framework of new management systems:

- a) Internal Government Agreements, or “quasi-contracts”: these are established among Public Administrations (AAPPs) (State – Autonomous Communities – local institutions – university employment agencies).
- b) Agreements between Autonomous Communities and private organisations (associations, trade unions, training centres...). These are termed “market-based contracts” and are set up as the result of a public offering process (tenders and awards) and are made up of input-based agreements and funding. The agencies remuneration schemes are generally performance-based.
- c) Agreements between implementation actors and users (individual contracts). This type of contract refers to “activity commitment” or conditional access to protection; it has also been called an “individual or client contract”.

⁶ Concerning this act, Valdés Dal-Ré (2006) bemoans the general lack of perspective in the organisation of employment services and their functions with “a profound lack of coherency between the principles running labour intermediation and the techniques and tools used for its implementation”.

policies rooted in principles of equal opportunities and managed bureaucratically. Modernisation, on the other hand, reflects the implementation of an alternative and more dynamic model based on *multi-level governance*, which demands the voice and participation of a multitude of actors in diverse stages of the intervention process – design, implementation and evaluation. It is praised by actors who see it as the right path to take, claiming it involves greater participation and coordination. They do, however, criticise certain flaws in its design that lead to it being inconclusive and pose obstacles to quality management. Nevertheless, this new governance model based on the logics of contracts and incentives, in equal measure, is a useful tool for implementing activation policies; for instance, contract logic – where the user takes responsibility for the situation, and incentive logic – of work through personalized and socialized intervention. The semantic resources these discourses are based on, and which justify and *project* modernisation, will be analysed below.

We have set out four discursive aspects: the criticism of the previous bureaucratic model (1), the definition of the new model based on the “equal” participation of all actors according to the dynamics of consensus and collaboration (2), the arguments of hegemonic legitimacy, in favour of modernisation within the framework of Europe and the European Union, as *initiatives* defined as “truth” (3), the content and goals of employment intervention (individual attention) facilitated through decentralised and contractual *methods* (4) Therefore, we are attempting to deconstruct certain terms that, on the one hand, obscure certain issues and naturalize others, while on the other, express hegemonic interpretations concerning the operation of what should be called *modern institutions* by revising the most disputed proposals on the acclaimed *spirit of modernity*.

3.1. From bureaucracy to efficiency.

To get a better understanding of this dynamic approach, we must set out from the actors' definition of the problems in the current intervention model, reflected in these discourses as a set of problems inherited from certain Public Administration intervention methods which are not adapted to *modern times*. Consequently, there are numerous references to the gap between the model and the current, and changing, reality that demands much more agile and flexible intervention.

“The current regulatory framework of active employment policies is a far cry from the needs of the people”. (Representative from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces).

*“We need a public employment service that works, that is **modern**”*. (National representative from UGT).

The Public Employment Service has been criticised for its lack of efficiency, caused by various problems – lack of human resources and equipment, centralised activities and subsequent *rigidity*, being far-removed from the reality of unemployment which denotes limited efficiency in intervention and an excess of bureaucracy. In opposition to this rigid and bureaucratic image, the actors' discourse emphasises intervention in a social reality defined by swift and constant changes that demand other qualities, such as adaptability and flexibility:

*“The PES needs to **effectively** monitor the labour market and must undergo a process of **professionalisation and specialisation**. The same employment managers have to deal with every kind of offer, which makes a **dialogue of real understanding** between the job seeker and the guidance counsellor impossible, not to mention the **obsolete and rigid nature of the service**; it's easy to detect ankylosis in professional categories”.* (National Representative from the UGT).

“The situation is not the same in Valencia or Catalonia, nor in the Basque Country; because of that, we have always wanted to join employment policies with policies of innovation and growth in the production system”. (CCOO representative from the Community of Andalusia).

These discourses reflect a discernible preference for more decentralised interventions, incorporating local dimensions (closeness), and technical specialisation (otherwise, rigidity is formed and gets in the way of unemployed people's *real* problems being solved. Bureaucratic intervention is considered a structure that imposes homogenous models upon diverse situations; therefore, there is a commitment towards decentralization, including policy designs (“our strategies”) that feature as a sign of local prosperity (“my city has moved forward”), as outlined below:

*“The role of the municipalities must be one of **intermediate decentralisation**, similar to that of the Autonomous Communities, **enabling us to design our own strategies** in each Federation. And when it comes to this design we should be made to rely on all agents so that the needs of the people are met, with the resulting political outcome as **“my city has moved forward**. There is a consensus in the FEMP regarding this issue”.* (Representative from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces).

In contrast, the rigidity of centralised bureaucracy manifests ankylosis and, with an anti-bureaucratic discourse akin to that of business gurus, engenders inertia, constraints, the absence of any kind of reaction to problems and a lack of a quality service. (Fernández Rodríguez, 2007):

*“Not even the training available caters to **needs of the market**. Practices demonstrate how courses are set up in the Autonomous Communities involving the same schools (...) and, despite the fact that office workers are not required, they **continue to offer the same administration course as 10 years ago...**”* (National representative from Cáritas).

In this sense, there is the opportunity for the ETTs to develop a legitimate discourse of intervention that could have a bearing on the lack of quality in the public sphere by offering the virtues of services facilitated from the market by expert companies. The illegitimate discourse of the public sphere supports more technical, rather than ideological, arguments leading to possibilities of well managed public services being nullified, using expressions that almost completely cut off the necessary technical resources and conditions such as “they can't”, “they don't have”.

*“Of course, and especially now. Before they used to ask us if we didn't look for them, now you have to go out and look for them yourself, put on your shoes and get out there. We go to industrial estate after industrial estate, something the public employment service doesn't do, not because they don't want to, but because **they are totally blocked from every kind of responsibility** (...), they're doing a great job but the thing is **they can't because they don't have the means to do it, it's because you need...** (...) with decentralised active policies **we have a section of the market that the public employment services don't have** (...). (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).*

The discourse of the ETTs (fully supported by the employment service managers) leads us towards a new paradigm, where inflexibility, centralisation and poor quality public services are challenged in another discourse – the *quality of the service*. This supports a new method of management and involves new forms of governance based on the *virtues of the market* as opposed to the *flaws of the State*. The discourse of public employment services lies in the same practice of providing a quality service. This approach favours the provision of “close” and “adequate” services at *any cost*, subsequently making citizens mere consumers:

“Our goal is to bring citizens closer to services by offering them all and providing them with the most appropriate one”. (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service).

In terms of trade union actors, while they agree with the poor running of the public sphere, they also point to discrepancies giving rise to this lack of quality. They do not see the public sphere as essentially incompetent in providing services, but believe it is stricken with specific and resolvable problems, plus a lack of funding and staff:

“... more employees are required as only 2% of hiring is officially processed, it normally only works by word of mouth and other channels (UGT representative from Andalusia).

“...At the moment, many potential beneficiaries of the MEMTA plan (Extraordinary measures to improve employability in Andalusia) have yet to receive help or participate in any kind of action due to scant human resources in the SAE (Andalusian Public Employment Agency). It's moving at a snail's pace”. (UGT representative from Andalusia)

“Public employment services haven't been well utilized, particularly in offices, which are understaffed and made up of temporary workers...” (CCOO representative from Andalusia)

In the eyes of the trade unions, modernisation can only be implemented in the public sphere by shutting out re-commercialised options regarding the participation of private bodies. The privatisation of employment services gives rise to the marginality of public services and, in turn, a more fragmented labour market. They reiterate that this is a line that must not be crossed.

“Let's see how it's regulated... they are very powerful pressure lobbies... we feel that there must be more requirements and more selectivity” (National representative from CCOO).

“... we have mentioned to the Ministry that this was a cause for demonstrating – the inclusion of private agents in intermediation means we're talking about black lists, about American trade unions”. (CCOO representative from Andalusia).

Therefore, public spheres are defended as “legitimate” places where unemployment can be combated as long as the criteria for this legitimacy is based on three commercial terms: efficiency, profitability and adequate human resources. Trade unions do not have a problem with the Public-Private dilemma, they are more concerned about the dilemma between modernism and what has ceased to work; through this dichotomy the inadequacies of this type of intervention bring to mind the dysfunctions of stereotypical bureaucracy - excessive paperwork, inertia, distance from managers, etc.):

*“We provide the unemployed with tools they cannot use to find employment. There is a lack of staff and resources to **adapt to the real market and employment policies** that adapt to the needs of the workers. For example, guidance should involve more than just showing workers how to write a CV or present themselves to a company, this can be found on the internet quite easily”* (National representative from UGT).

*“All this **bureaucracy** that must be carried out on a regional level doesn't correspond to the volume of adequate human resources. At the moment there is more work because everything has to be resolved on a regional level so there is a lack of resources to make the SAE work as it should; in other words, as a tool that joins supply and demand, resolves programmes swiftly and ensures **labour intermediation works properly**, even more so in the current recession”.* (UGT representative from Andalusia).

As the classical intervention methods are considered by all the actors as completely defunct, there is a commitment towards a greater use of technology (versus “bureaucracy”) to tackle the disparity between the “policies/actions” and “reality”:

*“If we are able to enter into the debate on what the actual employment policies are and how they should be geared towards very different circumstances from a few years ago, then it must be to **make more use of technology and less of bureaucracy**”.* (Representative from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces).

The use of new ICTs by users in the Administration would be a good example of the fight against bureaucracy as it would facilitate communication between participants in governance structures and managers, in the process filtering their demands, doubts and suggestions, and allowing, once again, to increase this required efficiency while at the same time being closer to citizens.

*“... guidance is becoming increasingly more important. Integrating new ICTs, not only in terms of guidance, but also in employment office networks, for instance the SERVEF ATMs (...) **We would reduce the physical presence in the office and free up resources to be able to do more worthwhile things...** This ATM allows the training programme to be altered as **it has given citizens a choice that opens up many possibilities**”.* (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service).

In general, social actors will come together to call for diverse and flexible methods of government or intervention strategies rather than universally criticised “bureaucratic, centralized and universal” intervention benchmarks. They will, thus, be committed to a new modern and complex model that will give rise to complex interrelations among them and will rely on the balance of powers between all actors and generate a determined diffusion of responsibilities. All actors wishing to have a '*slice of the modernisation pie*' will have the possibility of procuring greater power and representation through bargaining, coordination, etc. and will, therefore, praise the virtues of participation, as we shall see below.

3.2. Participation and Partnership.

The participation of diverse actors in government practices is one of most salient characteristics of new models of governance as it involves the establishment of contracts in employer-employee relationships. Nevertheless, the consensus on the model does not mean its definition is beyond dispute; many actors put forward a notion of

modernisation with very different connotations. In part, this is due to their particular position in the intervention process, but it is also because, besides giving meaning to the process, they are also building their identity as an entity and are negotiating its symbolic space in the “insertion market”. It is, however, agreed that the solution to the problem of unemployment involves negotiations between different social actors following the principles of *partnership* (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2005). Furthermore, there is a clear reference to the search for consensus and coordination in intervention spaces to work towards acquiring management skills alongside the premise of *united efforts*:

*“Last year the 6^h Social Consensus Agreement came to an end. The content of the seventh is currently being negotiated... This framework has resulted in a qualitative asset as the regional government, in determined economic issues and, more importantly, active employment policies, has agreed to collaborate with economic and social agents. Firstly, that has given them an advantage because it has been positive for the Autonomous Community as a whole... in recent years there has been significant economic growth to which the consensus agreements have contributed. Equally, those unions that have maintained practices of bargaining and pressure (not just pressure), when it comes to guaranteeing certain employment strategies have also contributed to this **climate of consensus...**”* (CCOO representative from Andalusia).

Hence, the idea put forward by the representative from CCOO is to coordinate, from a collaborative perspective, with other actors in order to be more successful in combating unemployment. In view of the proliferation of actors and the lack of any clear leadership, the social actors condemn the scant efficiency of interventions in public services, which, rather than uniting efforts to adequately respond to this complex situation, impels them towards a difficult situation characterised by competition between bodies. Consequently, the actors complain that fragmentation, instead of contributing towards the development of mechanisms for adequate insertion, appears to hinder it, subsequently exacerbating unemployment:

*“Coordination tools have not been developed. These enable the **unemployed person** to receive a multiple and organised offer geared towards their insertion into the labour market”.* (National representative from CCOO).

*“There is poor **coordination** between the State and Regional Administrations (...). The first thing would be to work in coordination with the participation of all agents”.* (National representative from Cáritas).

“Neither active policies nor employment promotion cannot be developed if there is a lack of coordination between the three Administrations”. (Representative from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces).

These extracts demonstrate how a partnership model appears to demand the coordination between actors: in order to provide a quality service to the unemployed person, their role must be as “collaborators”, not as “opposites” or “antagonists”). This brings forth a rhetoric of consensus, a pact, maintained by all the actors and in conjunction with an acknowledgement of the need for the participation of diverse actors representing the civil society as an example of responsible and modern actions. This raises the issue of who these so-called *coordinated actions* will be aimed at, which group will receive these policies and serve as a reference point? Workers or persons at risk of social exclusion? This unclear definition creates competition for resources; intervention spaces have become a struggle between the diverse social actors undertaking work they consider suitable. In terms of the above, actors demand not only

participation in implementing policies, but also in their design, participating in the different stages of policy production – in defining the organisational categories of the problem as well as the recognition of the political authority of its representatives:

*“There is absolutely no participation in **decision making** (...) when communication between the different local bodies is nonexistent they end up being perceived as **subsidy recipients** and not as entities **proposing social policies** (...) not only do we have to consider the “classics” - employers and trade unions - but also NGOs involved in social action, since it is these that **receive cases that the main employment services either want nothing to do with or are beyond their control**”. (National representative from Cáritas).*

*“These kind of bodies **reach sectors of the population that, predominantly, neither institutions or trade unions reach**”. (National representative from Cáritas).*

For instance, the NGOs represent the *natural environment* from which to tackle the problem of exclusion. By and large, they criticise an intervention system based on subsidies and seem to be more in favour of *top down negotiation* rather than *subscribing to contracts of implementation services with the Administration* (proposing social policies and detecting subsidies that reflect opposing dynamics). The trade unions, on the other hand, attempt to legitimize their intervention from what they consider to be their competition – they mention their specialised knowledge and experience, self-proclaiming in some of their discourse how they “understand employment”:

*“For me, it's when the Red Cross, Cáritas and other organisations suggest alternatives, changes in social models, guidelines, culture, how to improve production systems, how to improve work... this is what the trade unions do, but the Red Cross, Cáritas, etc. do what they do – **in the world of work there will be people who understand, but it isn't their speciality (...)** every forum needs its groups e.g. in citizen participation, and there will be people from every kind of organisation, foundation, etc. (...) but when we are **dealing with employment, it has to be those that truly understand it**”. (CCOO Representative from Valencia).*

Knowledge, technical skills and experience denote efficient and quality intervention. The actors always attempt to mention their capacity for programme management within a perspective of *partnership* and a consensus between actors. This, however, is not just a culture of consensus, efficiency and participation, there are certain clear boundaries that must not be crossed and involves placing certain externalizing activities in private hands. This is the trade union's stance, and one we have touched on in the previous section.

*“... we don't participate in redeployment plans. **The problem is they should never even exist, they force people to relinquish part of their benefits and then place them in a job they are over qualified for. This was part of the PP government's externalization strategy, which I don't believe SERVEF uses much better**”. (UGT representative from Valencia).*

As regards this discourse, the ETTs maintain both legitimacy in their activities as “experts in the labour market” and also cite the problem of legal rigidity as a hindrance to the freedom of choice. They complain about the marginalisation suffered, particularly in Spain, that is considered illegitimate by international institutions such as the Council of Europe. As a means of overcoming this marginality, they propose contract relationships between employment agencies based on the “freedom of choice”.

“We are restricted by the Basic Employment Act (...) all we are asking for is that each regional service to has the freedom to choose now responsibilities have been transferred...”
(National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).

Therefore, if the NGOs are more in favour of top-down participation, from decision making and policy design, then the ETTs earnestly support the idea of a commercial system of relationships being implemented between actors that is based on the basic provision of services and which gives the Administration the freedom to choose.

Despite appearances, in these circumstances, where participation and the struggle for intervention between actors play a leading role, the State is not fully displaced in its capacity as an actor. All actors stand firm on the idea that the State must not disappear, but should lead in its arbitration of the conglomerate of actors and actions.

“NGOs wish to build and participate, but each part must pull its own weight, in other words, the Administration must take responsibility”. (Representative from Cáritas Spain)

“Unemployed people don't just belong to us, but also to the Regional and State Government. We are collaborating in insertion and are fighting against unemployment but it's not our responsibility, ours is the workers.... We do participate in the Territorial Pacts and in training and guidance activities”. (UGT representative from Valencia).

To summarise, we can once again stress the apparent support of public spheres as “legitimate” places from which to combat unemployment. However, the means of combating this come from commercial areas. This colonisation of discourses and arguments comes from the private sphere, which explains why there is support for a hybrid vision of the public sphere, where social justice and technical efficiency appear indiscriminate. This is one of the cornerstones of the argument of modernisation - the image of a Europe capable of conciliating efficiency in the fight against unemployment, while at the same time promoting social justice, plays a leading role, as we will see below.

3.3. Europe as a locus of modernity.

In the discourses of different actors, Europe and modernity form a perfect symbiosis. The reference point of authority justifying the rationality of all the required measures to be adopted in order to improve public services will be located in a *locus* that appears to integrate, in Spain's case, all the positive connotations of modernity - the European Union. It will play a similar role to what Victor Turner (1997) defined as the “master symbol”, and will come to represent, in semiotic terms, “civilisation” and “modernisation”. This modernisation is fundamental, and, of course, stems from Europe:

“On a State level, there is more recognition because of the demands of the EU (employment policies) and the MAC demands the participation of all agents”. (National representative from Cáritas).

“The Public Administration must guarantee the right to employment and, therefore, rely on all the actors, which is what is stressed in European policies. Clearly, these actors are not only employers and trade unions, but also NGOs. Cáritas deals with 70,000 people year after year”.
(National representative from Cáritas).

These extracts demonstrate how “guaranteeing the right to work” and “relying on all the actors” are indiscernible aspects of a *good employment policy* corroborating “European policies”, and are referred to here as a powerful legitimacy initiatives. Nevertheless, this example of Europe will disqualify Spain for its “anti-modernity” - in opposition to Europe, Spain will be synonymous with prejudice, injustice, inflexible ankylosis (“restrictions”) and obtuse, rather than flexible and reasonable, approaches. Europe itself is a significant rhetorical repertoire used by the majority of actors to legitimize their *raison d’etre* and disqualify the current situation in Spain.

*“... a tripartite table is established which will talk about the modernisation of public employment services and their collaboration with private employment bodies and other entities, won't it? This table will never get off the ground (...) we're in all the programmes of the political parties, from which **Europe is asking us to remove all restrictions**; in other words, in terms of arguments I can give you as many as you want, we've got a list of documents that are involved in this collaboration, but when the moment of truth comes they aren't carried out”.* (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).

*“As in other **European countries, the INEM welcomes the arrival of profit-making employment agencies**. Their inclusion as labour intermediation agents is zealously backed by employers and **vehemently opposed by the trade unions**, who believe their **incorporation should happen in the near future**, but should be **subject to regulations** (to regulate the labour market) **to protect unemployed people from potential mistreatment”.** (Active policy manager - INEM).*

What happens in “other European countries” must be used as a template for Spain in the right path to take. The approval of the European Union (“Europe”) is a recurrent resource, a legitimate initiative of intervention, with every actor trying to seize the opportunity to justify the need for modernisation as well as their own active inclusion in the process. The EU is represented as a promoter of, and even the definitive reason for, changing trends; an external agent with a huge influence over the development of reforms. This indicates the necessity to gear ourselves to Europe, although *we are a little delayed*. Being oriented towards Europe means to advance, to overcome the mistakes present in our current failed process of modernisation. As we will see below, all actors refer to this issue.

*“... employment action in the early years was to “**fulfil**” **European requirements but without changing any of the internal dynamics**...yet, in recent years, it has been to develop the implementation of policies, should they arise...”.* (National representative from Cáritas).

*“**We have the ETT guidelines, flexicurity agreements and the Council of Europe's statement stressing how we are a channel for fighting against the submerged economy. Despite this leading role in Europe, here were are exactly the same, absolutely nothing has changed”.** (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).*

*“**Europe is looking towards attenuating the crisis, to fight against unemployment and to maximise this collaboration. Here it is not even considered** (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).*

Thus the activated European narrative deals with flexicurity management that calls for a “diffusion of responsibilities”, which is, indeed, explicitly found in these

recommendations. Once more, agents are attempting to legitimize their recommendations and demands in terms of *partnership*:

*“Our sector is one of the most restricted in its activities because we cannot work in either the sectors at risk or the Public Administration, we can only work in temporary employment, which makes it inconceivable, and makes **Europe** inconceivable...”* (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).

To ignore Europe means to turn your back on reality, making it “inconceivable” and, as a result, unacceptable. Nevertheless, it is practically impossible to resist, as beyond the European sphere of influence there are other forces steering us towards modernization. The circumstances presenting these processes of modernisation are especially relevant as they are required, yet suffered, processes of change and are unavoidable and, therefore, irrevocable. Although institutional reorganisation is a condition of modernisation and, thus, a desired goal, it is also, at the same instance, a process that unquestionably forces itself upon us, and once started has *no way back*.

*“In my view it would be ideal if every PES managed all the employment policies, **but this is impossible, right?** Or rather, we're not returning to the idea of the INEM, which only carried out who knows how many training courses directly in its own schools, and nothing else. This doesn't work anymore, chiefly because society is much more open and has a multitude of entities, and because it isn't going to return to circumstances of centralisation where the PESs manage every programme”.* (National Representative from CCOO).

*“It's clear that employment policies are going to still be managed by collaborating bodies because it's **impossible to go back to the beginning**. But the SPEs should at least carry out a quality evaluation of the job seeker, authorise the IPI (Personalised Insertion Itinerary) and establish objectives with the collaborating bodies so that they do the same and are in accordance... Today, people go to the PES goes to claim their benefits, no one believes they are going to find them a job. And what's more, **they are not proactive** on the uptake of offers...”* (National Representative from CCOO).

The complex nature of the current world prevents a return to past models of centralisation and bureaucracy, what we must do is adapt to policies emanating from modern Europe that are moving in a new direction characterised by flexicurity policies and new models of governance. Nevertheless, it is not just about changing institutional organisation, modernising services and procedures goes hand in hand with modifying the content of unemployment policies. Modernisation and activation are two complementary trends that set out from the same foundations – the logic of incentives and contracts, which support similar arguments as they adapt to new changing and imposed realities stemming from elsewhere. Europe is everything Spain is yet to become, and constitutes a benchmark to strive towards.

3. 4. Guidance and individual therapies as realistic strategies.

The discourses of social actors concur that, currently, new frameworks require that traditional methods of intervention, based on the so-called passive policies and involving the transfer financial assistance (unemployment insurance), become a thing of the past (as outlined above). The different actors have expressed their opposition to passive policies through an active rhetoric based on three core ideas: individualised interventions, contractualization (which has an emphasis on the participation and

responsibilities of unemployed people) and the revaluation of work as a resource for citizens (Serrano, 2007).

*“To agree on a **Personalised Insertion Itinerary (IPI)** with the **responsibilities and obligations for both parties** – for the unemployed person that has to follow the itinerary, and for the PES, that must provide this kind of action and ensure they are up to date with the itinerary”.* (National Representative from CCOO).

Modernity will involve fostering active policies based on the idea of individual attention and acknowledgement. Therefore, it is necessary to have a specialised manager to support the “passive” life of the unemployed person in order for them to independently motivate themselves and be able to enter into the labour market. The role of guidance counsellors and mediators is very similar to a psychologist and their patient, the feelings experienced by those in search of legitimate participation in the employment market are essentially moral, such as the appeal to human dignity, a synonym of labour market participation. Thus human dignity plays a role in employment activity:

*“There are people that are never going to be able to work in the normal market because of their personal situation, but in a protected working environment they can contribute to society in a **much more worthwhile manner** than if they were with a determined and passive income, or no income at all (...) **they are people with dignity**, and society must provide them with a **dignified working environment**”.* (National representative from Cáritas).

Thereby guidance becomes a springboard for employment policies as it plays the role of a therapeutic public intervention that formulates individual actions to tackle the employment crisis:

*“One issue that makes up part of the **active employment policies** that we are beginning, and beginning to believe in and develop, is **professional guidance**. People here are already starting to ask us for guidance. Before it was a concept unemployed people and workers weren't aware of (...) it's useful for discovering your professional potential (...) maybe you have other aptitudes you were aware, or unaware, of, and in terms of work or technology it can help **someone discover other skills as long as they are always guided, let's say, by an itinerary of training, education and job searching...**”* (Representative from CCOO in Valencia).

The role of the public powers under this “guidance” perspective will involve ensuring the discovery of anything concealed, encourage the subject to help themselves, and ensure they are aware of, and can develop, their “untapped” potential. The key issue for the ETTs, who believe they can contribute so much more than public employment services, is greater participation and involvement. They believe that the lack of job offers in the public employment services – who only have unemployed people that “register to draw benefits” - is not only due to the lack of trust of the employers, but also their scant knowledge of the real labour market. The ETTs also feel that they possess greater skills and are better equipped to implement employment guidance:

*“For instance, we have **far greater knowledge of the market** than the public employment services. Why? Because our job is to create employment, so if there aren't job vacancies you have to get out there and look for them. This is where **guidance and employment** comes in, not only for workers, but also companies. What you have to decide as a business is how your human resources are organised, and how, from a professional perspective, to reorganise them i.e. part-time, create other employment niches, etc. etc. this is an outline of guidance and employment counselling* (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).

Different actors attempt to make up for the deficiencies in the Public Administration with their own contributions, strongly tied to a particular way of understanding active policies and brimming with references to the virtues of guidance, flexibility and participation:

*“If the market is given the importance it deserves, it will work as it is supposed to. **Guidance is not only a tool for unemployed people, it also enables a worker to find another job or gain access to another profession. A guidance counsellor is a professional that can advise you and help guide your career**”.* (Representative from UGT in Valencia)

EU discourses uphold this vision of employability as a blueprint for every case, every worker and every unemployed person. Furthermore, concepts such as employability, activation and flexicurity do not only condemn unemployment, they also criticise the lack of mobility and adaptability apparent when holding a stable position as they force workers into a constant “assert yourself” and “know how to sell yourself”, rather than making them ready for change and seeing risk as a challenge (Martín Martín, 2009b). Therefore, certain ways of combating unemployment based on passive policies have come to an end, with “reality” imposing a new working order where only active policies can uphold approaches to tackling unemployment. Modernisation has been naturalized and represented as an unstoppable change in the direction of today's societies and even personification is used to demonstrate that it is the *current labour market* that *demand*s change in the paradigm. Moreover, allusions to the permanent crisis or the state of shock in the Spanish labour market reflect people's responsibility and *effort* in guaranteeing this new model comes to the fore:

“This change of paradigm is justified in the current labour market as it demands that unemployed people make an effort to adapt to continuously changing employment contexts, where permanent training tailored to the requirements of the market and active job searching are key”. (Active policy manager - INEM).

Even trade union organisations have adopted this *economic realism*, which allows them to resolve the situation, if only partially. This metalanguage, linked to efficiency and profitability, is useful for moving away from this method of public intervention and also allows them to demonstrate the services to be implemented by the union organisation - where efficiency is determined more by levels of insertion and figure-based objectives, rather than how it is acquired:

*“...They've provided a pretty good Guidance service that has met its objectives. Aside from quality guidance, the insertion levels have also been high – **it's not a job for life, but it certainly has a high insertion level**”.* (Representative from UGT in Andalusia).

Furthermore, Public Employment Services repeatedly allude to the need for a commitment towards active policies - the only “moral” ones - instead of conformity and a lack of commitment inherent in passive policies:

*“The increasing influence of active employment policies over passive ones... these form the basis of all employment policies and mean we're making headway. **The preparation enabling unemployed people to be self-sufficient and to cope in the market is beyond question... Passive policies have been overcome, and are no longer up for debate. Both agents have criticised the implementation of determined programmes involving covert subsidies; by***

*definition, **employment policies must be motivational and long-term***” (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service).

This extract demonstrates the firm establishment and support, in the sphere of social protection in public services, of a new type of activating security enabling “self-sufficiency” and an ability “to cope in the market”. As a result, it gives rise to a *key dichotomy between the active and the passive*. The drive towards activation will go hand in hand with a decline in the efforts previously geared toward strengthening “passive” social protection and focused on financial assistance for the unemployed. This asserts that we have to leave the “*I'll give you policies and courses, I'll keep on giving you...*” to “*you have to search for your own professional development...*” (Guidance and Counselling Service, SAE). There are no constraints when it comes to recognising there must be a clear commitment towards unemployed people taking on their own responsibilities, working towards “motivation”.

“The INEM has no reservations about a change of model, moving from employment policies focused on measures of social protection and intermediation towards a greater emphasis on unemployed people facing their situation with more individual responsibility”. (Active policy manager – INEM).

“...Although incentives do run the risk of the unemployed person accepting financial assistance without showing much interest in effectively joining the labour market...” (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service).

Financial assistance does not actually mean compensation for mistreatment, or power relationships among workers in the labour market. It is solely to help make the transition from one job to another in a positive context of external labour market flexibility. As a result, any fraudulent conduct is being carefully watched - “*they send you people that have no desire to work...*” (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service). *For a start, we think everyone is good, right? Everyone wants to work...*” (Active policy manager – Andalusian Employment Agency). Therefore, it is felt that in these situations the right to unemployment benefits must be restricted with the corresponding sanction. Unemployed people are considered in charge of their own situation, and benefits are not granted straight away as the principal right of those facing a disadvantaged situation in the labour market and company conditions. Unemployment insurance is now considered as *another* tool only offered to those conducting themselves in the proper manner, demonstrating they are *willing to collaborate* in any way to find employment. Income not procured through the employment relationships is also considered a liability and is represented as *assistance that discourages efforts to improve employability and the commitment towards activating unemployed people*; a commitment that manifests greater responsibility for oneself in areas of training and employment. Moreover, the majority of actors feel that active policies should only be geared towards truly motivated people, if not it is a waste of time and resources:

“...Other programmes that are clearly short-term and demotivating, such as those that pay unemployed people for taking part in an IPI, don't solve the situation of unemployment; financially rewarding participation in actions of 'employability per se' just because they subscribe to a commitment towards employment when in actual fact they are an obligation... These ruin our efforts and are ineffective...” (Active policy manager - Valencian Employment and Training Service).

This new discourse encompassing personalised intervention and therapeutic work with unemployed people is rooted in a logic of incentives and coercion, where the coercive elements are disguised as “commitment” and “bargaining”, with an interest in providing unemployed people with a participatory role in employment programmes (“collaboration”). This type of logic essentially promotes a new scheme of discipline that encourages self-discipline – the individuals themselves must embrace a process of individual self-help, which demands the subjects bring their subjectivity and resolve to the table in the insertion process. Therefore, these new demands involve the social construction of new *non-dependent* subject-workers that must operate with independence and significant levels of responsibility (Crespo Suárez and Serrano Pascual, 2007). First and foremost, they must recognise the changing nature of the labour force, now workers must be always ready for continual change that demands constant training and adaptability to contexts typified by uncertainty, greater risk-taking and new opportunities. (Fernández Rodríguez, 2007). The discourse of the ETTs adequately sums this up:

“What workers have to be aware of is that education doesn't finish at university, it carries on throughout life and has to be constantly recycled, it's not only about keeping a job, but also about progressing in it. Much of the time people are afraid of changing jobs, which is not good because it is actually enriching, which is what it should be, and something that allows us to develop. What we mustn't do is stagnate in our current position because then we protect a segment of the population – if someone stays in their job, doesn't want to move and is scared of losing their position then the rest just move around the outside without being able to join the circle; we are then talking about labour segmentation, in Spain. This is very important because I feel that all policies must be geared towards getting rid of the fear of losing employment and changing jobs; it's not just about keeping your job, but also about developing (...)” (National representative from the Association of Large Temporary Work Agencies).

Decisively, the discourse of the ETTs steers the movement towards “change” becoming “development” and “enrichment” whilst stability is perceived as “stagnating”. The employment values undertaken by the ETTs particularly counter those predominating the social imaginary in the wage-based society model. They talk of the need to “get rid of the fear of losing employment”, and it is this “fear” that has been one of the cornerstones of the established social order regarding the field of employment for decades⁷.

4. Discussion and conclusions. “Coordinating ourselves”: power and responsibility in a context of change.

The analysis of the internal logic of representations of modernisation brings to light different perceptions on how it must be understood in relation to public employment services, the concept of how it “must be”. In all instances, references to modernisation entail the transformation of the Administration's political and ideological principles, partly constructed in opposition to the previous model in force. The process of “reinventing the government” (Osborne and Gaebler 1992) strives towards two fundamental discursive frameworks bearing diverse social actors: the neo-public and neo-managerial approaches (Ramió Matas, 2001; Fernández Santos *et al.*, 2008). The

⁷ Despite everything, certain studies on work values have stressed how highly qualified workers find themselves in close proximity to this labour paradigm and embrace adventure, challenges and versatility. (Crespo Suárez, 2009; Martín Martín, 2009b)

neo-public approach deals with a categorical principle based on reinforcing public values with *ethical language*, involving core principles of universality and equity, and questions what can be externalised. To a large extent this discourse refers to trade union actors, who recognise the difficulty in resisting the influx of contractualism and decentralisation (“it's impossible to go back to the beginning”) and acknowledge partnership and coordination as the *lesser of two evils* in this new imposed reality. Together with the trade unions, certain non-profit making organisations rescue the State from its new position of complete illegitimacy, making it a body of arbitration in this climate of coordination. At the same time, the discourse between actors, such as ETT representatives and those from public employment services, is considerably more imbued with language of privatisation oriented towards underpinning effectiveness and efficiency and one which widely adopts concepts from the new managerial culture (the “neo-managerialism” discourse). Legitimising discourses supporting these positions are based on a socio-moral model, and are therefore linked to, firstly, regulatory approaches and, secondly, economic rationality.

Both discourses respond to the legitimacy crisis observed in the State over the last three decades. However, each discourse underpins different concepts: the first supports redistributive ethics while the second engenders a rational action model, advocating, as a behaviour principle, the quantifiable calculation of costs and benefits. In the first, the subject is a citizen, whereas in the second it is a client-consumer confronted with a “market of insertion” and concerned over the efficient allocation of resources and the maximisation of client satisfaction. The last case gives rise to the necessary reform of market mechanisms (and arguments) in the sphere of public management. Many management techniques applied to the business world, for instance the demand for flexibility, decentralisation, assessment, etc., are integrated into the discourse of the actors and, therefore, participate in a new “culture of intervention”.

Different actors have vehemently criticised public bureaucracy because: it is incapable of adapting to the new complexities of social situations, centralism has clear limitations, there are insufficient human resources, and because the market regulates employment better than public intervention. This discourse acknowledges the characterisation of obsolescence, rigidity and ankylosis, which have been regularly described in the public sphere from humanist and liberal perspectives for a number of decades (du Gay, 2000). When tackling the problem of unemployment, references are no longer made to social conflict or structural circumstances defined by injustice or collective misfortune, rather technical solutions based on technocratic processes (professionalisation and specialisation) and the necessity for “real dialogue between the job seeker and the guidance counsellor” as something facilitating *partnership* – a closer and more personalised service that the State, due to its inherent rigidity, cannot offer. Thus the premise of a technical response to problems identifies de-politicised professionalisation and modernity in managing public employment services. Consequently, the legitimacy of the intervention of active policies will be upheld by arguments based on rationality and pragmatism with “*far greater knowledge of the market*” than public employment services, as maintained by the representative from the AGETT - “because our job is to create employment”.

Another significant argument justifying the global reform of intervention in the employment sector is founded on the call for international recommendations and guidelines, particularly with the EU as a point of reference and premise of authority.

This authority is based on pragmatism over a domineering reality and over that which cannot put up any resistance. The impossibility of facing up to reality, which acts as that termed by Alvin Toffler and other visionaries of change (Alonso and Fernández Rodríguez, 2006) as “shock” and the “third wave”, characterises this prescriptive discourse. An appropriate modernising strategy, univocal and without alternatives, is considered to symbolically link European convergence with the change in public management models and the implementation of a new way of understanding security i.e. self-insurance or *degree of employability*; heterogeneous *preparation* to tackle the market in moral and attitudinal capacities. It deals with a concept of security in the relationship between employment/unemployment, where incentive and contractual logics are present in new forms of multi-level governance. All actors, including trade unions, have demonstrated this premise and have emphasised their stance in the new labour environment, despite occasional discrepancies in the form of struggles for resources or intervention areas (symbolic power) and maintaining certain ideological positions (the trade unions regarding the privatisation of certain services).

To sum up, decentralisation and multiple participation are represented, in one way or another, in the discourse of social actors as an inexorable reality and an irrevocable situation of governance, where finally the State is faced with a completely illegitimate role. Coordination encompasses the guarantee of adequate services for citizens in which “coordination tools” allow “the unemployed person to receive an organised and multiple offer geared towards their insertion into the labour market” (as indicated by a confederate representative from CCOO). Coordination will be an effective legitimising benchmark for multiple and multi-level management – this confers the ideal of *good management* due to the fact that it provides coherence to interventions for/with unemployed people and creates an alliance between all actors, in the process neutralising conflicts of interest. It seems that hope of the successful running of the new system, where the mere mention of coordination as a policy resource is both *de rigueur* and adequate, is inherent in coordination; therefore, in concordance with the actors' discourses, the development of these modern active policies must fundamentally lie in coordinated participation, where the government must act under a philosophy of a *laissez-fair, laissez- passer* (with its role reduced to non-interference). To a certain extent, the message sent out from the different participants in the process is “don't worry, we'll coordinate ourselves”, calling on the more-than-adequate ability of the different actors to tackle the the situation of unemployment without irksome filters and bureaucratic processes.

We conclude this paper by highlighting how the demand for the modernisation of employment services by European institutions, and the goal of adapting them to the new paradigm of activation and flexicurity, has not fallen on deaf ears in Spain, as we have illustrated. This has intensified over the last two decades through a set of reforms striving towards the adaptation of the Spanish employment system to a framework rooted in active policies, despite the wave of legislative changes and reforms that have produced an unstable and confusing model characterised by contradictions and anachronisms. The final result is a long way from satisfying the main actors involved in the development of the above; essentially, the current model is characterised by confusion, where the government vacuum is present and strongly illegitimizes the model of institutional intervention without the main actors assuming full responsibility for confronting a transforming situation. Furthermore, modernisation is identified with the rejection of public bureaucracy, individual intervention and consensus strategies

that, chiefly, imply the abandonment of the social framework in Spanish employment relationships and which merit detailed ethic, political and sociological analysis as they involve eradicating certain collective and social elements, which form the basis of our status as citizens.

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