Policy brief

Undertaking a Receiver-Doer-Judge critical policy analysis framework for public and social services: participation, empowerment and capacity to aspire

Due date
March 2024

Lead Beneficiary
Nuim

Submission date
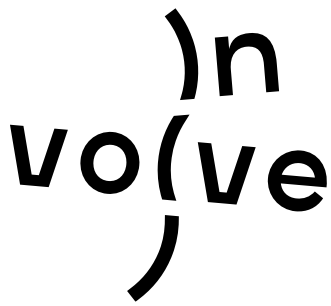September 2024

Authors
Rory Hearne, Lorraine Grimes
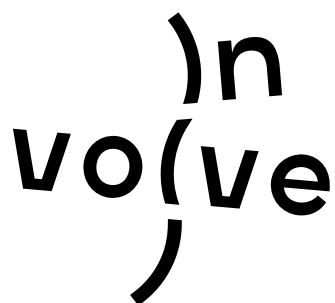
Table of contents

1. Executive Summary

INVOLVE is an EU-funded project focused on the relationship between democracy and inequalities. It focuses on social policies and public services for vulnerable groups in health, education, employment and housing, across eight European countries.

This policy brief outlines the co-produced Receiver Doer Judge (RDJ) critical policy analysis framework for the project. Using the RDJ framework, it analyse the inclusiveness of different disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in public and social services. It investigates how states and institutions enable vulnerable people to be included in policymaking, policy analysis and evaluation. The framework encourages co-production, participation and empowerment of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in policy analysis, policy development and policy implementation.

The RDJ Critical Policy Analysis methodology aims to involve people directly affected by the research, allowing them to participate and to empower them to understand and challenge the structures that cause their marginalisation and oppression in a process of co-production of knowledge and action. We include this co-production of knowledge and action as central to our critical policy analysis framework.

For our definition of policy we have collated a broad range of policy types including policy, legislation, regulations, institutional structures, and policy proposals. We also include policy discourse which includes media statements, press releases from politicians or departments, policy proposals from NGOs etc.

(2.   Receiver, Doer and Judge

Receiver

The Receiver dimension of the framework applies the concept of the problematization of a social issue. It asks, what "problem" is the policy aiming to solve? And how is this problem represented by the policy? Policy discourse and the trajectory of the policy is important here.

Our framework is informed by a feminist intersectionality approach where gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other systems of inequality are considered. The RDJ framework questions how marginalised groups are conceptualised in the policy. Are there voices excluded from the policy? While silencing may not be deliberate, it could be the case that voices on the margins are not involved in the decision-making process and therefore, are impacted disproportionally. The RDJ framework outlines the difference between the policy rhetoric versus reality, and how the policy specifically relates to intersectional inequalities.
Our approach is also informed by trauma-informed frameworks which understand that marginalization and discrimination can lead to experiences of trauma, and all policies should be developed with understanding, knowledge and an empathic approach for the populations it affects.

Doer

Under the Doer dimension, our framework asks how policy treats the issue of conditionality. These are the conditions set out in a policy in order to qualify for welfare or a public service. It asks what the rules and limitations are to receiving a public service or state support. This also helps us to understand how marginalised groups are represented and often "problematized" by government or other institutional powers.

With regard to the Doer dimension, its focus is to assess if policy considers marginalised groups capacity to aspire, either collectively or as individuals. The framework is also informed by a human rights approach which considers vulnerable groups, collectively and individually, advocating for their rights. It questions if individuals are empowered to become active in advocacy themselves, and questions the capacity to empower individuals from vulnerable groups.

Judge

The question of voice and power is central to the Judge dimension of the framework. It includes analysis of who has power and voice in the policy process? Who is missing? Was there inclusion of vulnerable or marginalised groups at any step in the development of the policy? What was the level of participation (if any)? It also asks if there is access to justice and a real and effective complaints mechanism in the provision of public services.

Under the Judge dimension we assess evidence of alternative policies and policy resistance. It asks if there is advocacy for policy change? And if there are alternative policies suggested by civil society groups, NGOs or others. Through the policy co-production processes we aim to co-construct alternative policy responses and solutions specifically aimed at social and structural change that reduce inequities and promote social justice.

3. RDJ Critical Policy Analysis Framework

Our framework is represented in the form of a grid or toolkit, with key questions across the three dimensions (Receiver, Doer, Judge) and across seven key themes or areas of focus. These are represented as follows:

- Receiver: Problematisation; intersectional inequalities/silences; conditionality
- Doer: Capacity to aspire
- Judge: Participation/voice/power; empowerment; alternatives.

These are represented in the figure below.

		Policy design	*Policy content*	*Policy implementation*	*Policy monitoring/ Evaluation*
Critical *Intersectional* *Human rights* *Trauma-informed* *Co-production*	*Receiver*	Problematisation	Inequality Silences		
	Doer		Capacity to aspire Conditionality		
	Judge	Participation Empowerment (capability for voice) Alternatives			

Table 1 The RDJ Critical Policy Analysis Framework

4. The co-production (between academic partners and civil society partners) of the RDJ critical policy analysis framework, grid and methodology.

Undertaking a co-produced country specific policy analysis (applying the RDJ critical policy analysis framework) of one or two specific areas of policies affecting the project's vulnerable group is key to our project.

Policy analysis co-produced with the vulnerable group.

The findings of the initial co-produced desk based research is presented to the participants from marginalised/vulnerable groups. They are asked if this reflects their reality and understanding of policy. We gather their experiences and opinions and consider this in our analysis

The final step is policy action. This can take multiple forms, from cross talks, to policy proposals and public advocacy.
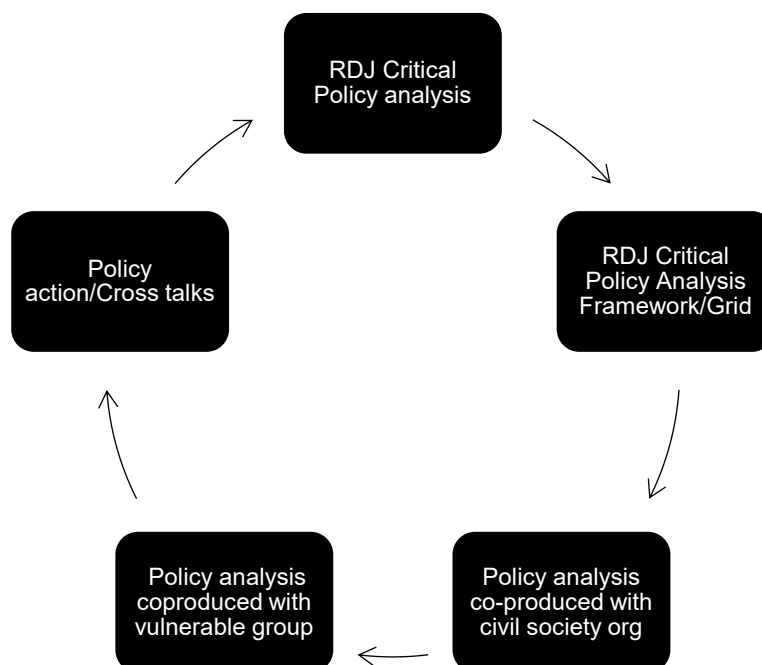

Figure 1 RDJ Critical Policy Analysis Methodology

The Receiver Doer Judge Critical Policy Analysis Toolkit/Grid is outlined below.

Table 2

Policy	Policy name	Identify 1-2 specific policies in the thematic domain under consideration
	Policy content and context/policy privileges	• Policy type/detail overview/scale /aims/history/policy actors • The policy's roots and how they emerged • Policy privileges: Who/how made/makes the policy?
Receiver	**Problematisation**	• Policy content/discourse: Definition of the 'problem'/'social issue' (framing/narratives/discourse)- how does policy define the 'problem' (issues) - what issue did/does policy 'intend' to solve? (Identify how the issue is presented/discussed in media/political debate -parliament (discourse analysis) • Values (ideologies) in policy (narratives, discourses) – what interests are reflected? • Policy silences • Policy definition of 'solutions' (responses)
	Intersectional inequalities	• Does the policy aim to address specific needs of your vulnerable group(s)? How? • Does it seek to address intersectional inequalities • Does it take a trauma informed approach, if so, how? • Does it use a human rights approach – if so, how?
	Policy adoption and implementation	• Difference between the rhetoric of the policy and the reality of policy in practice • Policy responses (compliance and non-compliance)
	Conditionality	• What are rules and limits to receive service/support (conditionality) (policy rationale)
Doer	**Capacity to aspire**	• What kinds of agency/activities supported • Evidence of promotion of individual 'capacity to aspire' (promotion of individual's goals)

Judge	**Participation in policy (voice/power/individual & collective)**	• Inclusion/Participation of vulnerable group (s)-
		  - in policy making (formation, design and development)
		  - in policy implementation/outcome (delivery)
		  - in evaluation (monitoring/checking public services))
		• Evidence of co-production
		• Evidence of participation leading to policy change? (policy influence)
		• What is the stated policy rationale for participation

	Voice (individual capability for voice) Empowerment/action	• Are there real and effective complaints mechanisms in the provision of public services
		• Access to justice and rights mechanisms (claiming rights?)
		• Is there resourcing and support of participation – to overcome barriers and inequalities
		• Any aim/reference to the role of the policy in:
		  - Civic empowerment /democracy (involvement in civic/political activity/trust/active citizenship)
		  - Agency and advocacy

	Collective capability to aspire and voice	• Policy alternatives (alternative definitions of the problem and solutions)

Table 2 Receiver Doer Judge Critical Policy Analysis Toolkit/Grid

involve

info-involve@beweging.net

www.involve-democracy.eu