

Working paper

A transnational typology of public services with respect to vulnerable people's experiences

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1. Introduction

This report contributes to the welfare typologies literature in three main ways. First, it proposes a typology of social policies and affiliated programmes across policy domains – ranging from education and employment policies to housing and health policies. Second, the proposed typology also spans across countries, or “worlds of welfare” (Esping-Andersen 1990), using data from eight European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland). Finally, its originality stems from its focus on the users’ experience rather than just on policy designs.

To develop this typology, we confront the normative principles that guide institutions’ workings to their effective outcomes in beneficiaries’ lived experience. To do so, we theoretically draw on the capability approach (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993), and empirically on dedicated field work conducted in the Involve project. Sen’s (2009) definition of capability as the different ways of being and doing available to an individual, invites us to question not only what an institution provides and how, but also how it considers its users. Following Bonvin and Laruffa’s (2018) refinement of the capability approach, we consider social beneficiaries not merely as receivers of social support (whether material, symbolic or relational) or doers (who contribute to shape their life and society through different contributions such as their work), but also as judges able to contribute to defining what is good for them and for society at large.

As a general framework for addressing vulnerability, we draw on Nussbaum (2006) who considers it as a common experience of human beings – think, for example, of vulnerability to death or illness. However, all human beings do not face the same kind of vulnerability, not at the same stage of their life and not in the same way. Therefore, it is heuristically helpful to refine this large definition of vulnerability by zooming into specific experiences of inequalities, injustice or discrimination that prevent individuals from accessing the resources necessary for autonomous action (Ferrarese, 2016).

To dig into different experiences of vulnerability and how social institutions deal with them, different populations have been targeted in the Involve project: young people with basic income in Germany; migrant women in France; homeless lone mothers in Ireland; people with mental health problems or substance addiction in Italy; care workers with precarious work contracts in Poland; young people part of ethnic minorities in Portugal; young people who are in or went through a work integration programme in Switzerland.

Despite the diversity of these categories, they present several points of intersection related to the kind of inequalities people are subject to: these inequalities concern gender, age, belonging to an ethnic minority, poor access to employment and low level of education. The overlaps also stem from the four public services areas under study (education, employment, housing, health), two of them being addressed in each country.

Empirically, the typology is based on eight case studies related to the aforementioned vulnerable publics across Europe. Each case study is grounded in policy document analysis and fifteen interviews with beneficiaries dedicated to exploring their experience with the institution. Altogether, NGOs and academic teams involved in all countries conducted 120 qualitative interviews. The interview grids were co-constructed through an iterative process involving all stakeholders in the project, and were structured around three main dimensions. First, the interviewee’s past experiences, current situation and, crucially, future aspirations related to education, training, work,

(health and housing. Secondly, a set of questions related to the individual's political concerns, values and participation under various forms (voting, protesting, etc.). Thirdly, the interview grid looked into the person's concrete experiences of specific institutions deemed particularly relevant to their life course and our research questions. Through the lens of the Receiver, Doer, Judge framework, this set of questions aimed to assess how participants' experience of these institutions concretely affected their sense of having been supported, empowered, recognised and listened to, and to what extent these experiences influenced their trust/distrust in institutions and politics.

Drawing on the capability approach and based on the experiences collected, we define three ideal-types of institutions based on how they primarily identify their beneficiaries – as receivers, doers, or judges – and on the interplay between these dimensions and how beneficiaries experience them: the Resource Providing Institution, the Activating Institution and the Voice Fostering Institution. These ideal-types are original in that they result from an iterative process between our theoretical framework and empirical investigations focusing on people's experiences. They give due consideration to individuals' lived experience of social services alongside the normative principles that frame institutions.

In a first part, we present an overview of existing welfare state typologies and suggest how a RDJ-based typology departs from them. In a second part, we specify the RDJ typological criteria we use, before presenting, in a third part, the three ideal-types with their variations, as well as empirical illustrations and deviations.

This document is a step forward in the process of co-construction and co-analysis between NGOs and research teams within the INVOLVE project. Drafted by researchers based on the empirical qualitative data produced by NGOs and research teams on the basis of shared and co-constructed tools of inquiry and analysis (see theoretical and methodological reports of the Involve project), the document has then been discussed with all the members of the consortium during a webinar on 7th October 2025. It was then amended according to the outcomes of the discussion and rediscussed during a second webinar.

(2. Existing typologies in the literature on the welfare state and social services

The literature on welfare typologies is incredibly vast – for reviews see, for example: Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011; Powell, Yörük and Bargu, 2020 – and thus extremely difficult to summarize. Already in the late 1990s, Peter Abrahamson argued that developing welfare typologies had become a whole academic industry – what he called the “welfare modelling business” (Abrahamson, 1999). Of course, a discussion on typology in the field of welfare state and social policies must necessarily start with Esping-Andersen’s pathbreaking work. While his typology is not the first classification of welfare states (Titmuss, for example, developed his own one in the early 1970s), Esping-Andersen’s “three worlds of welfare” was hugely influential, inspiring comparative social policy research for over thirty years (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In his book, Esping-Andersen identified three welfare regimes, classifying different countries into clusters on the basis of some key theoretical concepts and their empirical operationalisation. The concept of *decommodification* refers to the degree to which individuals and families can uphold a socially accepted standard of living independently of market participation. Decommodification was operationalised using several indicators (eligibility rules and levels of income-replacement cash benefits) with a view to mapping social policy generosity and the degree of protection against three key social risks: unemployment, sickness and old age. The concept of social stratification acknowledges that the welfare state itself actively structures the social order (and especially class inequalities). This dimension thus interrogates the extent to which welfare institutions reinforce or mitigate inequalities emerging in the market, e.g. to what extent they are oriented towards means-tested poverty relief, status-maintenance, or universal coverage and equality. According to these different criteria, it is possible to identify three main categories, which – connecting them to the underlying political ideologies – are called the liberal regime, the conservative-corporatist Christian democratic regime and the social democratic regime.

2.1. Critiques and extensions of Esping-Andersen’s approach

2.1.1. Methodological issues

Esping-Andersen’s typology was widely criticised from several angles and his approach has been refined and extended, e.g. applied to other countries or policy fields. A first set of critiques focused on methodological issues and on how Esping-Andersen grouped (or neglected) countries, which sometimes lead scholars to propose alternative classifications. For example, a Mediterranean

welfare model in Southern Europe has been proposed, in which the family assumes a key role in the provision of welfare and which is characterised by informality and – because of the presence of clientelism – by inequalities in accessing welfare (Ferrera, 1996). The former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have also been included in later analyses (Fenger, 2007). Moreover, scholars have extended the idea of welfare regimes to other countries beyond the Global North (Holliday, 2000; Gough, Wood and et al, 2004; Lee and Ku, 2007). However, this work is relevant also for theorising welfare states in Europe, especially as it sheds light on the role of informal welfare provision, which remains important also in industrialised countries. This insight is thus connected to works looking at the role of community in providing welfare – more or less effectively and more or less formally – and on the relationship between formal and informal welfare provision (Mumtaz, 2022, 2023; Mumtaz and Kühner, 2025).

From a methodological viewpoint, Esping-Andersen's approach can also be criticised for being based exclusively on legal entitlements and on the institutional design of welfare policies rather than on their outcomes. On this basis, scholars have looked at welfare typologies from the perspective of outcomes, using microdata on households' resources (Kammer, Niehues and Peichl, 2012). Others have examined variations across welfare regimes in terms of social inclusion/exclusion, poverty and economic vulnerability (Ogg, 2005; Whelan and Maître, 2010; Brown and Brik, 2024). From a different perspective, Bonoli has taken issue with the fact that Esping-Andersen's approach neglects whether welfare state is financed through insurance-based social contributions (as in the Bismarckian model) or through general taxation (as in the Beveridgean model) and he has proposed his own typology, based on two dimensions and four types (Bonoli, 1997). Another very influential classification is the one proposed by Korpi and Palme, in which they also put forward the famous "paradox of redistribution": the more social policies target resources exclusively at the poor, the less redistribution is achieved, i.e. the less income inequality and poverty are reduced (Korpi and Palme, 1998). Scholars have also proposed ways to improve the operationalisation of decommodification and the measurement of social policy generosity. In this context, particularly important appears the work by Lyle Scruggs on welfare state generosity, which entails a new decommodification index (Scruggs, 2006; Scruggs and Allan, 2006; Scruggs and Ramalho Tafoya, 2022).

A key critique concerns Esping-Andersen's narrow focus on cash benefits, which thus completely neglects the direct delivery of services – such as healthcare and education – that constitute a central component of the welfare state. Considering service delivery is also important in terms of welfare typologies, as the provision of services may not align with the distribution of cash benefits (Bambra, 2005). For example, while the UK can be considered characterised by a liberal welfare regime if one focuses on cash benefits, its state-dominated universal healthcare system clearly follows a different logic. Thus, welfare states differ not only in terms of the degree of decommodification involved in cash benefits but also in the degree of decommodification inherent to service provision – and it cannot be assumed that a country's approach to the dimension of welfare provision can be generalised to explain all others (Bambra, 2005). A number of scholars has filled this gap, proposing typologies of social welfare services (Alber, 1995; Anttonen and Sipilä, 1996; Stoy, 2014) and clustering countries taking into account both cash benefits and in kind benefits through service provision (Kautto, 2002; Jensen, 2008); developing typologies of welfare and education systems (Allmendinger and Leibfried, 2003; Willemse and de Beer, 2012; West and Nikolai, 2013) and of healthcare systems (Bambra, 2005; Wendt, 2009).

2.1.2. The feminist critique

One of the most important critiques to Esping-Andersen's typology has been developed by feminist scholars (Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993, 2009; O'Connor, 1993; Sainsbury, 1994, 1999; Daly and Lewis, 2000). According to this critique, Esping-Andersen's focus on decommodification – and thus on the work-welfare nexus and the state-market interaction – neglects the role of the family in providing welfare, and especially the role of women in providing care on an unpaid basis, thereby also overlooking other forms of inequalities beyond those linked to class. Indeed, the focus on the degree of protection of workers from market dependence obscures other types of dependences (such as personal dependence within the family) that may undermine personal autonomy.

In this perspective, it is acknowledged that the welfare state has not only an impact on class relations and class inequalities but that it also structures gender relations and inequalities. The analytical focus then is shifted towards the analysis of state-market-family relations (rather than only state-market relations), while considering the effects of the welfare state on gender, especially in terms of the treatment of paid and unpaid labour. The focus on decommodification is criticised for implicit assumptions about the sexual division of care work – sometimes labelled as the male breadwinner model – and for ignoring the different effects on men and women of welfare benefits. Scholars also criticize the absence of family policies in Esping-Andersen's account of the welfare state. This effort to gender the theory of welfare regime foregrounds care as an analytical category, interrogating for example how care responsibilities are distributed across institutions (state, market, family and community) and thus also giving more importance to the service dimension of the welfare state.

The feminist critique has opened an entire new field, with scholars developing typologies based on the notions of “varieties of familism” (Leitner, 2003; Saraceno, 2016); “care regimes” (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004); “intergenerational” regimes (Saraceno and Keck, 2010); “family care regimes” (Frericks, Jensen and Pfau-Effinger, 2014) – while trying to capture the interplay between class and gender inequalities across different welfare regimes (Korpi, 2000). Scholars have also looked at the interactions and tensions between family-supportive policies and women's employment (Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun, 2001; Ciccia and Sainsbury, 2018), whereby the distinction between “gender equalising” and “gender neutral” social policies appears especially important (Frericks, 2012). From the perspective of political theory, Nancy Fraser has identified four ideal-types: male breadwinner, caregiver parity, universal breadwinner, and universal caregiver (Fraser, 1997). On this basis, scholars have applied this typology empirically, for example using fuzzy-set methodologies (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012; Ciccia and Bleijenbergh, 2014).

In trying to address some of these critiques, Esping-Andersen proposed a new typology, which – perhaps most importantly – recognises more explicitly the role of the family in providing welfare and acknowledges as well the centrality of family policies in welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Thus, building on feminist scholarship, he added the concept of de-familialisation for describing policies that lessen individuals' reliance on the family, maximising individuals' command of economic resources independently of familial reciprocities. Defamilialisation also refers to the extent that families' caring responsibilities are relaxed by either state or market provision of services.

The concept of defamilialisation is widely used in comparative social policy (Bambra, 2007; Lohmann and Zagel, 2016). However, it has been increasingly criticised from different perspectives (Zagel and Lohmann, 2021). In particular, Saxonberg has criticised welfare typologies based on the concept of defamilialisation – and those including outcomes – calling for focusing only on

(policies aimed at “degenderisation”, i.e. those aimed at eliminating gender roles (Saxonberg, 2013). In response, Kurowska has argued that defamilialisation and degenderisation provide two complementary (rather than mutually exclusive) perspectives and that we need to focus both on policies and outcomes for studying and classifying welfare states (Kurowska, 2018). She proposes to use Sen’s capability approach to holistically articulate defamilialisation and degenderisation, while including both policies and outcomes into the analysis. The key question then becomes how social policies help (or hinder) both men and women to live lives they have reason to value – while insuring the realisation of children’s rights. In the same vein, a number of scholars has applied the capability approach to work/life balance policies and gender equality (Lewis and Giullari, 2005; Fahlén, 2013; Hobson, 2013), focusing for example on childcare services (Yerkes and Javornik, 2019) and parental leaves (Matysova, 2025).

One of the key contributions of the feminist literature is to show the relevance not only of policies but also of cultural norms – and of the interaction between norms and policies – in shaping policy outcomes. For example, social expectations on what it means to be a good mother may prevent women to use childcare services even if these are available. Thus, when it comes to explain international variation in welfare provision, it seems important to consider not only institutions and constellation of actors, but also the role played by culture and values (Pfau-Effinger, 2005a, 2005b). From a capability perspective, these norms can be theorised in terms of conversion factors that help (or hinder) the transformation of formal rights into real rights. In this context, the concept of “sense of entitlement” has also been put forward by scholars working on the topics of work/life balance and gender equality from a capability perspective (Hobson, Fahlén and Takács, 2011; Hobson, 2013, 2018). This concept is important for our project, as it is clearly related to the one of capability to aspire on which we focus.

2.1.3. Other applications and extensions

Since welfare regimes are not set in stone, scholars have also looked at how regimes (in terms of policies and/or outcomes) evolve over time (Danforth, 2014; Ferragina, Seeleib-Kaiser and Spreckelsen, 2015). There is also evidence of some convergence, with processes such as marketisation, re-commodification and welfare retrenchment involving all countries. But processes of “recalibration” are also important, as the rise of “new social risks” has driven the expansion of social policy in new fields (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2005; Hemerijck, 2013). The expansion of family policy is especially visible, even if this too possibly follows a re-commodification logic (Ferragina, 2019). Against the background of emerging new social risks and de-industrialisation, scholars have highlighted the crisis of the Bismarckian model (Palier, 2010), the deepening of “dualisation” dynamics (Emmenegger et al., 2012) and the rise of a “new welfare state” informed by the “social investment” approach for knowledge-based economies (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Morel, Palier and Palme, 2012; Hemerijck, 2013, 2018; Hemerijck, Ronchi and Plavgo, 2023). In this context, scholars have also developed typologies of activation policies, discussing for example work-first and more enabling, human capital oriented versions (Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2004; Levy, 2004; Dean, 2007; Lindsay, McQuaid and Dutton, 2007; Dinan, 2019).

Some scholars have also integrated welfare typologies with the “varieties of capitalism” perspective (Hall and Soskice, 2001) in order to get a more holistic picture of the national variation in social policies (Schröder, 2009; Buhr and Stoy, 2015). While Esping-Andersen’s approach is inscribed in the power resource tradition, whereby welfare state development is explained mainly with reference

(to the strength of the labour movement (trade unions and social democratic parties) – see also: Korpi, 1983; Esping-Andersen, 1985 – the varieties of capitalism perspective adopts a functionalist explanation. So, for example, generous unemployment benefits constitute a form of insurance for workers who are required to make investments in specific skills – which are useful in the specialised, high quality industries of manufactory-oriented coordinated market economies – whereas workers in service-oriented liberal economies who lose their job can more easily use their general skills with another employer. With the rise of the literature on “growth models” – which challenges the varieties of capitalism perspective, assigning a key role to the demand rather than the supply side (Baccaro and Pontusson, 2016; Baccaro, Blyth and Pontusson, 2022) – there have been also attempts to connect the growth regime and the welfare regime literatures (Hassel and Palier, 2023).

Many studies have also tried to understand whether welfare regime typologies can explain variations in public opinion and attitudes (such as public support of the welfare state and redistribution) across nations (Svallfors, 1997; Jæger, 2006, 2009; Jakobsen, 2011; Kudrnáč and Petrušek, 2022). This connects to the broader literature on policy feedback, whereby social policies and welfare reform are shown to have an impact on citizens’ political preferences (Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014). Moreover, some studies have also attempted to include the ecological dimension, exploring the existence of post-productivist (Goodin, 2001) and eco-social regimes (Koch and Fritz, 2014; Zimmermann and Graziano, 2020).

The theory of welfare regime has also been applied to specific populations, such as disabled people (O’Brien, 2015; Tschanz and Staub, 2017; Hadjar and Kotitschke, 2021; Gugushvili et al., 2023) and homeless people (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007; Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015). For example, scholars have shown that countries differ in how they accord social rights to young people and how they facilitate (or hinder) young people’s access to the labour market. Scholars have thus developed typologies of “youth unemployment regimes” (Cinalli and Giugni, 2013) and of “youth welfare citizenship” (Chevalier, 2016). In particular, young people’s access to social welfare can be “familialised” (as in Bismarckian welfare states), when young people are considered as children and therefore do not receive state benefits in their own name or social citizenship can be “individualised” (Beveridgean welfare states), in which case young people can be entitled to benefits in their own right, insofar as they are considered as adults (Chevalier, 2016, 2018). Importantly for the Involve project, these youth welfare citizenship regimes seem to have an impact on young people’s political trust (Chevalier, 2019).

Specific problems arise for migrants, who often lack access to welfare rights, especially those that are attached to citizenship. Welfare states are based on solidarity, which is often limited to people of the same nationality, excluding “outsiders”. In the literature on the welfare state the problem of “welfare chauvinism” has attracted a lot of attention (Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012; Careja and Harris, 2022). From this perspective, racial prejudices are one of the main explanations for the fact that the welfare state in multiracial United States is much less generous than in more homogenous European countries (Quadagno, 1996) – and the increasing ethnic diversity in Europe is possibly eroding support for generous social policies as well (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004).

2.2. What is the point of welfare typologies after all?

At a more fundamental level, Kasza (2002) has interrogated the soundness of the concept of welfare regimes itself. According to this argument, the notion of welfare regime is flawed because it is based on two wrong assumptions: 1) that all the most important social policy areas within a certain welfare regime reflect the same approach to public welfare and 2) that this coherence in policymaking is guaranteed by reference to a specific set of principles or values (Kasza, 2002). However, rather than policy coherence, welfare regimes are characterised by high degrees of internal heterogeneity, i.e. different areas of social policies respond to different logics and goals. Thus, the concept of welfare regime as a coherent package of social policies inspired by common principles should be rejected: governments implement isolated or even contradictory social policies across different areas of welfare provision. Hence, the problem is not only that each policy changes over time, but also that each policy has its own history, largely independent of other policies in different areas. This is because – among other reasons – each social policy area is characterised by different actors and by different policymaking processes. International exchanges also play a key role, as each country can borrow ideas and practices from abroad. One solution that Kasza advances to overcome these problems is to focus comparative research only on specific policies. Perhaps a further problem for comparative research across national regimes is the importance of the local level, especially as cities, regions and municipalities are in many countries responsible for implementing key social policies – and indeed some studies compare local welfare policies (Johansson and Panican, 2016).

Connected to this deeper scepticism on the existence of welfare regimes, there is a whole debate on whether Esping-Andersen worked with “ideal-types” or “real types” (Arts and Gelissen, 2002; Aspalter, 2011, 2019; Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011; Powell and Barrientos, 2011; Rice, 2013; van Kersbergen and Vis, 2015). However, in a recent contribution, it has been argued that this discussion is largely misleading, as both the concept of “ideal-type” and of “real-type” are ambiguous (Höppner, 2025). Following van Kersbergen and Vis (2015), an ideal-type is a theoretical construct to which empirical cases can more or less correspond. Thus, an ideal-typical analysis aims to assess the extent to which an empirical case fits the theoretical ideal. In contrast, a typology aims to classify empirical cases, whereby each empirical case either belongs to a type or not. According to Höppner (2025), in order to create a theoretically informed country classification it is not necessary to use an ideal-type analysis and a gradual assessment of cases: researchers do not need to call their analysis ideal-typical just for emphasising its theoretical foundations, as they run the risk of being accused of not doing “real” ideal-type analysis (Höppner, 2025, p. 5583). When developing new typologies researchers should ask themselves the following questions:

If I work deductively, should only the dimensions be based on theory or also the types? If the latter is the case, do I want to measure cases using the types as a reference or do I want to cluster cases? What is the character of the attributes and which methods can I use to create the typology? (Höppner, 2025, p. 5583).

Considering the huge literature on welfare typologies, one is sometimes left wondering about the final goal of all these efforts. What is then the purpose of developing welfare typologies after all? Perhaps a useful starting point is to recognise, as many scholars cited here have done, that – more than evaluating the empirical validity of existing typologies or debating whether a specific country better fits within one type or the other – we need to reflect in terms of welfare state theory and thus on the analytical concepts that we use to theorise welfare states. In other words, typologies are

(important to the extent that they encourage researchers to think about what is relevant in welfare states (and welfare state change) – and thus eventually to find ways of measuring these relevant dimensions.

Accordingly, we shift away from a conception of welfare regimes to elaborate a cross-country and cross-policy typology of social policy. Drawing on critics of Esping-Andersen's typology, our contribution takes into account various forms of social policies (related to health, employment, housing, etc.) while focusing on users' experience of institutional arrangements – and the outcomes of the latter – rather than on a sole comparison of policy designs. The following section presents the criteria we use to differentiate lived experiences of institutions.

(

3. Typological criteria

In order to compose this cross-policy domain, cross-country and users' experience-based typology, we draw on the capability approach-inspired receiver-doer-judge framework (Bonvin & Laruffa 2018). According to the latter, users of social policy should not merely be considered as passive receivers of material, symbolic or relational support, but also as doers, i.e. as actors who are willing and able to shape their environment and contribute to society, and as judges, i.e. as reflexive beings who have legitimate ideas and aspirations which should be taken into account when designing and delivering the policy. In order to truly develop users' actual freedom to live a life they value – i.e. their capabilities –, institutions should consider all three dimensions: the receiver, the doer and the judge.

Departing from users' speeches about their experiences of the various institutions they have been in contact with, we identify a set of criteria for each one, i.e. the receiver, the doer and the judge dimension, that indicates whether said institution either fosters (R+, D+, J+), hinders (R-, D-, J-) or simply does not take into account (Rø, Dø, Jø) each of the three dimensions. In complement to users' speeches, we also look at policies and programme formal design and characteristics to situate them as regards their treatment of the receiver, doer and judge dimensions. In the following, we go through the determining criteria for each dimension.

3.1. Receiver dimension

The capability approach posits that individuals should be considered as inherently vulnerable and, therefore, in need of some form of support at various stages of their life. This is most evident during the early and late stages of life, but it should also be acknowledged throughout the intervening years, when a wide range of risks — such as injury, unemployment, or illness — can materialise and affect anyone. In contemporary western societies, public and private institutions play a primary role in supplying this support.

Such support can be of various natures, all of which we consider when determining the degree to which an institution takes into account the receiver dimension. First, the support an institution provides can be material – either financial or in kind. This would typically be the case of means-tested financial benefits. Then, the support can be aimed at improving physical or psychological well-being. When it comes to an institution providing support in this sense, one would typically think of hospitals or other sanitary institutions. Psychosocial support related programmes also encompass, for example, school counselling services or more relational measures such as home visit programmes for seniors. Some programmes and measures can also foster psychosocial well-being simply by being welcoming and making users feel accepted and respected while in contact with them. We also take this more indirect kind of support into account. Finally, the support provided by institutions can also be of informational and practical nature. A professional orientation desk would for example offer such kind of relief. Note that some policies and programmes offer multiple kinds of support, this could be said of social services who provide a monetary rent while also accompanying and guiding users in different ways.

In our typology, to be deemed an “R+” institution, programmes should fulfil what was expected from them by their users in terms of material, psychosocial or practical support. Perception by users is here key: providing financial support is, for example, not sufficient to be deemed “material R+” if the amount and duration provided are considered by users as too scarce to meet their needs. In such a case, the programme is marked “material R-”, as the experience of the institution would be negative when confronted to prior expectations. Finally, if a programme does not provide material support while not being expected to – for example, a school counselling service –, the service is marked “material Rø”. The same goes for support of psychological or practical – rather than merely material – nature. To sum up, an institution, programme or scheme can either be marked “R+” if it provides the expected (material, psychological, relational, practical) support in sufficient quality and quantity, “R-” if it does not match users’ needs and expectations in this sense, and “Rø” if such support is, as expected, outside of its scope of activities. Note that programmes can combine various perceptions of the sub-dimensions related to the receiver. For example, the aforementioned service which does not provide enough financial support (“material R-”), might at the same time offer emotional support deemed satisfying by users, and thus be marked “psychosocial R+” as well. Also note that for all these kinds of relief, the issue of accessibility to the programme or service is crucial. Whether searching for material, psychosocial or practical support, the degree to which the person struggles to access and navigate the programme due to its relative complexity – potentially leading to situations of temporary or even permanent non-take-up (van Oorschot, 1995) – will affect their experience, and therefore whether we mark it with R+ or R-.

Hence, for each policy and programme under scrutiny, we assess, based on their users’ speech and the programme design, whether each sub-dimension (material, psychosocial, practical) is perceived as giving proper (R+), insufficient (R-), or no (while not being expected to) (Rø) consideration to the receiver dimension. To do so, on top of the matching between users’ needs and what the programme offers, we pay close attention to elements such as the level of conditionality and complexity to access the benefit; potential mechanisms of sanctions reducing the level of support; or discriminatory dynamics in the allocation of benefits. These elements are summed up in the table below.

RECEIVER								
Material			Psychosocial			Practical		
R+	R-	Rø	R+	R-	Rø	R+	R-	Rø
Material support fits needs	Material support does not fit needs	No material support expected	Psychosocial support fits needs	Psychosocial support does not fit needs	No psychosocial support expected	Practical support fits needs	Practical support does not fit needs	No practical support expected

3.2. Doer dimension

In addition to intrinsically being receivers, individuals also need, in order to flourish, to contribute to activities they have reason to value. This can materialise in salaried employment, but not

exclusively. Among other common meaningful ways to be a doer, one could mention taking care of one's family or participating in civic life. Some of the activities individuals aspire to require a certain set of skills and qualifications, and social policy can play a role in facilitating access to them. This would for example be the case of an activation programme designed to increase beneficiaries' human capital (Becker, 1964). Yet developing users' human capital is just halfway towards recognising their doer dimension, the other half being making options they value available when it comes to exerting their agency.

Hence, to be considered a "D+" institution in our typology, a programme should match its users' expectations in terms of agency development and deployment. This can be done through human capital enhancement – what we coin "individual-centred agency D+" –, through making activities valued by the user practicable, what we mark "environment-centred agency D+", or the combination of the two. To use a labour market analogy, one could say that the former, by enhancing users' skills and knowledge, acts on the supply side, while the latter, by rendering valuable options available, works on the demand side. Therefore, an "environment-centred agency D+" policy or programme can not only offer valued options within the programme, but also beyond – notably related to the labour market. On the other hand, a programme which does not match its users' expectations in terms of skills and knowledge development is considered "individual-centred agency D-", and a programme with few options as regards what is considered feasible and legitimate in terms of aspirations – and is at odds with users' preferences – is marked with "environment-centred agency D-". Finally, programmes which do not engage into agency development, whether in terms of human capital development or options available (and are not expected to) are coined respectively "individual-centred agency Dø" and "environment-centred agency Dø". Just like what we saw for the receiver dimension, sub-dimensions of the doer are not mutually exclusive and can theoretically combine in all ways possible. For example, a scheme could be "individual-centred agency D+" and "environment-centred agency D+" if it efficiently teaches valuable skills and offers a wider range of options to put them into practice; or a scheme could be "individual-centred agency D-" and "environment-centred agency D+" if it allows many options but does not put in the means to actually train users to perform them.

In order to determine whether the programme at hand effectively develops its users' doer dimension by allowing to become actors in fields they value, we therefore pay close attention to the kind of activity which is supported or not by the institution and to what degree. Does the policy/programme make possible to pursue non-productive activities? Is the doer mostly conceived as a matter of adapting individuals to the labour market (supply side) or is there also an action on the environment (demand side)? These elements are summarised in the table below.

DOER					
Individual-centred agency			Environment-centred agency		
D+	D-	Dø	D+	D-	Dø
Sufficient skills and knowledge development	Insufficient skills and knowledge development	No skills and knowledge development expected	Sufficient scope of opportunities	Insufficient conception of legitimate activities	No consideration for opportunities development expected

3.3. Judge dimension

Finally, a capability enhancing institution should also encourage its users' ability to choose among different options and allow them to take part in the formation and implementation of policies and programmes. Among existing social policies, this dimension is the most rarely considered among the three, as most programmes are designed and implemented in a top-down fashion.

In the construction of our typology, we take two sub-dimensions of the judge into account. First, we look at whether users have a say in the design, organisation, and content of the scheme ("voice within J+/J-/Jø"). A situation where targeted publics substantially contribute to the elaboration of the scheme is expected to be a rare case scenario; cases of merely formal – or tokenistic (Arnstein, 1969) –, or plainly non-existent participation at this level being the norm. More salient is the degree to which individuals get to freely choose, or not, key aspects of their participation in a programme. A "voice within J+" institution is for example an activation programme where the user freely chooses the domain in which to train, while a "voice within J-" is a case in which participants do not have a say about the content of the programme, or less than they had wished. Finally, a "voice within Jø" applies to cases where the issue of choice related to a scheme or programme is irrelevant and therefore does not apply (ex: means-tested cash benefits). The "voice within J+/J-/Jø" relates to the "environment centered D+/D-/Dø" seen above but differs in the sense that what is key for the latter is the number and value of options available, whereas, in the case of "voice within J+/J-/Jø", it is rather the degree of freedom to choose between these options.

Concerning this dimension, the elements that we take a close look at are whether people have a say on the (co-)establishment of the content of programmes and services and how: is their voices promoted at the level of the formulation/design and/or the level of implementation and evaluation of the policy? Is the role of participation merely informative/consultative or does it directly influence decisions? What is negotiable/disputable within public services and what is not? We also pay attention to how inclusive participation effectively is: who participates and who does not?

Secondly, as regards the judge dimension, we not only look at whether participants' ideas and preferences are taken into account within the programme, but also if the latter develops users' sensitivity and qualification related to civic and political matters beyond the programme; and therefore, tends to increase their political engagement. A programme that does so is coined "voice beyond J+", one that decreases users' trust in institutions and in those at the political level who designed them and tends to decrease political participation is marked with "voice beyond J-". One where no relevant observation in this sense could be made is coined "voice beyond Jø".

JUDGE					
Voice within programme			Voice beyond programme		
J+	J-	Jø	J+	J-	Jø

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Encourage participation within the programme	Top-down predefined content	Irrelevant to the case	Programme fosters trust in institutions and participation	Programme discourages trust in institutions and participation	Irrelevant to the case
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To sum up, in our assessment of each analysed institution, we ponder the seven dimensions seen in this chapter (three for the Receiver, two for the Doer and two for the Judge) and the way they relate to each other in order to classify programmes and schemes within clusters of institutions and formulate ideal-types related to it. In the next chapter, we show how the analysis of a wide scope of social policies across domains and countries using the criteria presented above to assess their conceptions of the receiver, doer and judge dimensions resulted in the identification of three main ideal-types: the resource providing institution, the activating institution and the voice fostering institution.

4. Three RDJ-based ideal-types

This chapter develops three institutional ideal-types based on the receiver / doer / judge framework: the resource-providing institution, the activating institution and the voice-fostering institution; and confronts them with interviewees' accounts of their lived experiences with public action. Ideal-type is understood here as a methodological tool to systematise some characteristics of social phenomenon through an abstract model. Each ideal-type is presented with two variations that illustrate different configurations within that type, but these two variations do not exhaust all possible configurations that could exist with respect to each ideal-type. Types with their variations are constructed with respect to the articulation of the criteria related to the Receiver, Doer and Judge dimensions as presented in chapter 3. While each type is characterised by either R, D, or J, this does not imply that the other two roles are not addressed. Rather, it means that the type is dominated by one particular role, the Receiver, Doer, or Judge, which then shapes how the other roles are conceived and operationalised. The two variations proposed for each type represent possible configurations of all three roles: they are differentiated on the basis of how they foster (R+, D+, J+), deter (R-, D-, J-) or do not take into account (RØ, DØ, JØ) the various facets of the Receiver, Doer and Judge dimensions we highlighted.

For each ideal-type, we present first the type itself, followed by some of its possible variations. Then, based on people's lived experiences with real institutions and their workings, we analyse how far these institutions and their programmes coincide with or deviate from the ideal-types. The experiences reported by individuals are embedded in institutions operating at various levels (national, regional, local), and taking different organisational forms (public institutions, NGOs, philanthropic organisations). These contexts shape the degree of bureaucratisation of public action, as well as the social control exercised through programmes, and more generally, may introduce more or less significant discrepancies between the ideal-type and its social effects.

Drawing on the concept of vulnerability defined as a universal condition of human beings (Nussbaum, 2006), we examine the extent to which the social programmes studied within the Involve project acknowledge the Receiver, Doer, and Judge dimensions — not as formalised in objective and statistical categories, but as appropriated by individuals through their lived experience. Rather than speaking of "risk" (as Esping-Andersen does in his typology of unemployment, illness, and old age, 1990), we speak of "need" as felt by individuals according to the structure of constraints and opportunities shaped by their social position. Moreover, as individuals are caught up in intersecting social inequalities relating to gender, class, race, age and administrative status, our approach allows to address how these intersecting inequalities shape experiences of institutions that most welfare typologies address through the prisms of class and social stratification (see chapter 2). More broadly, focusing on individuals' experience of the social programmes they are enrolled in allows us to capture the extent to which public action enables individuals to achieve what they have reason to value (i.e. their capabilities).

4.1. The Resource Providing Institution: Addressing vulnerability at the expense of agency and voice

The Resource Providing Institution corresponds to configurations where vulnerability is addressed by distributing various forms of resources, which are generally not convertible within the institution itself into capabilities — understood as the individual's real freedom to voice what they value and to act accordingly. The Resource Providing Institution occupies a central position within the redistributive systems, which can take the form of contributions/insurance, welfare/assistance, philanthropy or charity. Individuals mainly experience the receiver position through the types of support provided, such as material support (often financial, but also in-kind aid, such as food, clothing or shelter); psychological or physical support (promoting individual well-being, such as healthcare or sports activities); potentially symbolic or relational support; and practical assistance (e.g. guidance on navigating a complex welfare system or support with literacy and administrative procedures).

The Resource Providing Institution emphasises the vulnerable individual, primarily positioning them as receivers of support (R+) (material, psychosocial or practical support), without empowering them as doers (Dø or D-), nor recognising them as judges capable of assessing their own needs or how institutions should be shaped to best respond to these needs (Jø or J-). People are not invited to participate in defining the social categories recognised as deserving support, often under the assumption that their vulnerability makes them unable to contribute to such debates. While being denied agency both as doers and as judges in decisions affecting them, individuals may experience stigmatisation, which in certain cases leads to non-take-up of benefits.

4.1.1. Ideal-type variations

According to the distinction to be found in the literature on welfare states between a universalist approach and a categorial approach to vulnerability (Korpi and Palme, 1998), we distinguish at least two variations of the Resources-Providing-Institution according to its target population: universal and categorial. Needs can be assessed according to universalist principles or particular criteria. In the universalist variation, individuals do not have to meet specific social or identity-based criteria. In some cases, they simply have to request the support they need (for example for primary healthcare), in other cases, resources are distributed to the general population regardless of need. This applies to public services that do not discriminate on the basis of social status, such as public schools or subsidised public transport, especially when they are free. Individuals are not required to contribute to or participate in the programme designed for them. Their needs are met independently of their social position or efforts to benefit from the resources.

In the categorial institution, vulnerability is approached through the lens of categories that classify vulnerable populations according to various criteria such as income (means-tested institutions), life stage, gender, or family structure. In order to address issues related to discrimination against certain populations, identity-based criteria are gaining increased significance. While they may reflect greater sensitivity to the specific vulnerabilities created by intersectional inequalities, categorisation can be both enabling and constraining. On the one hand, it can generate agency by providing people with the resources they need to achieve what they have reason to value (D+: Individual Centred Agency). On the other hand, these criteria reflect socially constructed rules of

(distribution and can make beneficiaries dependent on the institutional recognition of their vulnerability without having a say in defining their actual needs (J-: No voice within the programme). Categorisation also sometimes imposes behavioural norms as conditions for accessing resources: for example, expectations about how to be a 'good' mother or father, how beneficiaries should present themselves (including their clothing), or how they should behave. In this context, wearing religious symbols frequently becomes a point of contention. When moral expectations are attached to resource distribution, access becomes so personalised that recipients risk being evaluated on the basis of perceived markers of deservingness or suffering. In these cases, the Resource-Providing-Institution tends to emphasise the 'doer' dimension according to established models of behaviour, rather than in an agentic way.

4.1.2. Empirical Illustrations and Deviations

In our study, an example of universal Resource-Providing-Institution is the primary healthcare service in Portugal. Like in other welfare states, this service is funded by taxes, and primary care is free of charge. However, the experience of migrants and members of the Roma community who were interviewed highlights important inequalities in access to this supposedly universal healthcare. The extent of these inequalities varies depending on the type of healthcare service (for example, maternity services are urgent in nature and cannot be provided by other means), how well it caters for vulnerable people, and how many additional resources it requires from individuals. People report significant difficulties in accessing care due to cumbersome procedures, excessive bureaucracy, long waiting times, and a lack of coordination between services. This example of a universal Resource-Providing-Institution can be described as R+ Dø Jø.

The Portuguese study also examines the Qualifica Programme that has been developed to provide a qualification to people aged 18 and over who do not have a secondary school qualification. This case can be considered as a categorial variation of the Resource-Providing-Institution. However empirical investigations show that the Qualifica Programme is not enough to guarantee the full integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants, because of the specific challenges these groups face in terms of education, but also housing, health and financial support, that not only hinder their access to the resource provided by the institution but also the conversion of this resource into achievements.

Another example of Resource-Providing-Institution is the social assistance in canton Geneva, Switzerland, that stands closer to a categorial variation. People must fulfil certain criteria to be deemed eligible to support and demonstrate that they have exhausted all other means of support, whether through employment, insurance-based benefits, or savings. This role of last safety net makes claiming social assistance cash benefits a symbol of personal failure for many people, fuelling welfare stigma (Rogers-Dillon, 1995; Baumberg-Geiger, 2016) and deterring benefit take-up accordingly.

The mechanisms of control and bureaucratic procedures established at the institution level to guarantee that only those deemed deserving receive support deter many who are formally eligible from requesting such assistance. One respondent, for example, explained how he signed off from social assistance even though still not being financially autonomous because he feared having to reimburse benefits in case of an inheritance. Others experienced temporary non-take-up out of fear that receiving social assistance benefits would affect their chances to have their residence permit renewed. Indeed, Swiss law states that benefiting from social welfare as a migrant with a temporary residence permit may adversely affect claims to citizenship or permit renewal.

(The receiver dimension is supposed to be stronger in the universal variation. However, fieldwork shows the obstacles some populations encounter in accessing the resources. In most interviews, whether universal or categorial variations are involved, people express the same material, practical, and symbolic obstacles in accessing the resources. Firstly, they denounce the stigmatisation they face because of their ethnicity and socio-economic status. Secondly, they describe certain Resource-Providing-Institutions as overly bureaucratic and opaque. Excessive formalisation can hinder access to essential resources and thus people's capacity to act not only as doers, but also as receivers, calling into question the very principle of the Resource-Providing-Institution. This deviation can be described as R-D-J-. Difficulties in accessing material resources and well-being reveal the importance of NGOs in providing practical resources and helping people navigate the system. NGOs and community safety nets are described positively by respondents as being more relational and responsive, thanks to more personalised distribution.

Moreover, the interviews show that people do not link their status as receivers with the experience of being a judge. In some rare cases, they are involved in the choice of what they receive, but they are never involved in debates about the distribution rules. Yet, without the capacity for self-determination at least with regard to their own lives, beneficiaries risk being reduced to passive recipients rather than active agents in defining their own well-being.

4.2. The Activating Institution: Compelling people to act without voice

The Activating Institution places a strong emphasis on the Doer dimension, but mainly without involving users as judges with respect to the activities in which they are expected to engage. Within the Activating Institution, the individual is called upon to act, less to evaluate, choose or discuss. Thereby, the institution deprives beneficiaries of two intrinsic dimensions of agency: the capability to express what one values and the capability to make it count, i.e. the capability for voice (Bonvin, 2012), and the capability to aspire (Zimmermann, 2024). Whether through human capital development (learning and acquiring skills) or through incentives for entrepreneurship, the goals are set from above and primarily designed to meet labour market needs, while individuals' aspirations, motivations and life projects are side-lined. The scope of the Activating Institution is not limited to employment; it also extends to other areas of social life, such as citizenship. Indeed, in recent years, an injunction to volunteering has emerged in several countries. For example, in France, recipients of social welfare benefits must carry out a few hours of volunteer work each week, while in Italy and Switzerland, asylum seekers are encouraged or pressured to participate in community service.

While all of them share the general features described above, contemporary welfare states use various models of activation (Eggers, Garges & Pfau-Effinger, 2019). These entail variations within the ideal-type, particularly in the extent to which they take programme users' preferences into account in their design so as to offer opportunities that users value.



4.2.1 Ideal-type variations

Variations within the Activating Institution mainly stem from the degree to which public action solely focuses on human capital development (**individual-centred agency**) or integrates a wider conception of human agency (**environment-centred agency**).

Most observed institutions lean towards the first variation, which gives prevalence to human capital development and little room for users' voice. Such a subtype of the Activating Institution mainly directs the doer towards its own predefined objectives; it prioritises labour market participation based on a prescriptive logic, while largely disregarding individuals' own aspirations. Even when the prescribed action – such as working or training – seems to align with individuals' aspirations, their content stems from a process of adapting individuals' preferences. This process is shaped by a constraining normative framework leaving little room for individuals' free expression. In cases of activation under the form of civic engagement such as those mentioned above, individuals are encouraged to participate in civic activities not as an expression of genuine democratic participation, but as a demonstration of their willingness to integrate a given programme or society at large. This is particularly true for migrants, who are called to pledge allegiance to the host society, and of welfare beneficiaries, who are required to perform volunteer work to maintain their benefits.

While less prevalent, instances where the Activating Institution does not limit itself to human capital development and strives to foster human agency development also occur. This subtype implies making activities which are valued by programme users available, hence acting on the demand side of the labour market in addition to the supply side (human capital). It is for example the case of State programmes or associations which offer sheltered workshops to people in a reintegration process who are deemed not competitive enough to find employment on the regular labour market.

4.2.2 Empirical illustrations and deviations

Concrete empirical illustrations of the Activating Institution reveal discrepancies from the ideal-type. Notably, some programmes support their users through a provision of resources (R+) and others minimise public provisions and push individuals to be self-reliant for financing and securing their own training and social protection (R-). In the first case, Activating Institutions provide resources (R+) to the individual as a support towards the completion of pre-defined objectives deemed morally legitimate; a normative orientation which echoes paternalistic arrangements historically central to the development of social welfare. However, it is worth noting that, among the people interviewed, this kind of arrangement is not always perceived negatively. Some reported that having close guidance or monitoring helps them to stay on track and re-engage with their life goals. An empirical example based on our interviews of this deviation from the ideal-type could be a work reintegration programme in Italy, which aims at developing participants' employability in partnership with the mental health institution. To do so, they offer work experience with subsidised employment in fields such as gardening or driving. Most participants interviewed felt supported psychologically and practically (R+), they stressed how the team is benevolent and concerned with their well-being. As for the Doer dimension, respondents recount that whether it is fulfilled or not depends on the type of activity (D- in terms of environment-centred agency). For example, an interviewee explained how she flourishes in doing something she feels useful thanks to the cooperative and how social workers encouraged her to register in creative writing courses – her passion; yet, she also mentioned how she felt forced to participate in collective counselling sessions and was somehow pushed towards

(moving into a retirement home. Other interviewees explained that they did not have a say as regards the training they got enrolled into (J-).

Another deviation from the ideal-type we identified is when programmes emphasise users' responsibility without providing support. It places expectations and imposes goals on people without offering them adequate resources, recognition, or supportive conditions to achieve these goals (R-). The result is a form of prescribed responsibility that lacks any meaningful framework for supporting individuals' agency. In such contexts, individuals are not approached as persons with needs or vulnerabilities that should be met by public action; they are only recognised for their expected contribution to society, to which they are urged to conform. This is often connected to a 'dependency trap' ideological construction (Fraser and Gordon, 1994).

An empirical example of this deviation is the Irish Social Welfare Services. Inspired by neoliberal politics, they place a strong emphasis on activation and individual responsibility. We examined more specifically their workings through the lens of single mothers' experiences in terms of access to childcare services. From the perspective of single mothers, there is not enough support in terms of childcare, with access being limited to women in low-income employment (R- in terms of material resources). Material support is further overshadowed by a lack of relational support (R- in terms of psychosocial resources): beneficiaries perceive their interactions with social workers as impersonal, asymmetrical and judgemental, creating an additional burden. As regards the Doer dimension, support is driven by an activation logic focused on labour market integration, through training and employment programmes. Yet, the actual range of possibilities available to single mothers is limited (D- in terms of environment-centred agency). Many feel trapped in low-skilled jobs or training schemes, without the opportunity to pursue higher education or more fulfilling careers. They complain about the lack of alternatives and the absence of choice.

With respect to the Environment-centred variation, the Paris Metropole provides a compelling example. Public policy programmes implemented by its Urban Revitalisation, Solidarity, and Citizenship and Participation Departments prioritise the territorial development of resources. To expand access to social services for the broader population, these programmes emphasise the accessibility, visibility, and readability of services in public spaces rather than focusing on individuals subject to eligibility conditions. In conclusion, by focusing on activating people, while restricting individuals' voice, the Activating Institution primary function is to adapt them in order to achieve goals defined from above without recognising or fostering their capability to choose, their capability to voice their concerns and what they value, and their capability to aspire. Some variations of the Activating Institution lean more towards the development of human agency by providing concrete ways to express their users' doer. Yet, these remain limited in scope.

4.3. The Voice-Fostering-Institution

The Voice-Fostering-Institution is primarily characterised by its emphasis on the judge dimension (J+). It enhances people's capability for voice and capability to aspire, in interaction with their personal, social, institutional and political environment — a key condition for effective participation in deliberations about social policy content and implementation (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2024).

The Voice-Fostering-Institution departs from tokenistic participative schemes where people are allowed to speak, but not to influence decisions or co-construct alternatives. It invites us to move

beyond formal voice and recognition by fostering a genuinely democratic process, whereby individuals are empowered to act and judge according to what they have reason to value. In this sense, the judge dimension is also instrumental for defining the content of the other two, i.e. the definition of the benefits and services that should be developed (the receiver dimension) and the kind of agency that should be supported (the doer dimension) – and this is why it is possible to distinguish “receivers-judges” and “doers-judges” (where people can co-determine the nature of the policies supporting and promoting the receiver and doer dimensions) from “receivers-non-judges” and “doers-non-judges” (where people are treated as “objects” because they cannot co-define the policies oriented towards the promotion of their receiver and doer dimensions).

4.3.1. Ideal-type variations

In instances where programmes support individuals’ freedom to choose or have a voice on key aspects of their participation **within the institution**, individuals may actively contribute to the co-construction of the programmes that concern them. This variation corresponds to an institution which integrates users’ participation in the elaboration and revision of its rules, objectives, and modes of operation. The experience and feedback of the beneficiaries then feed continuous institutional adaptation. A second variation of the Voice-Fostering-Institution, that remains mostly hypothetical, could provide the resources, opportunities, and recognition necessary for individuals to play an active role **beyond the institution**, in a democratic society. Such an ideal of democracy within and beyond the institution fosters the capability to both aspire and express oneself. Participation would become a concrete lever for expanding both individual and collective capabilities, enabling deliberative processes in which decisions could be questioned, discussed, and collectively transformed, thereby “modifying the terms of the debate” (Appadurai, 2004) and paving the way towards transforming society and social institutions.

4.3.2. Empirical illustrations and deviations

An empirical example of an institution that aims to foster participants’ voice within the institution is the French Social Centre: a local, non-profit organisation which aims to foster the social, cultural and economic vitality of neighbourhoods by responding to environmental considerations and residents’ aspirations. Our research focused more specifically on a vocational training programme for migrant women.

The Judge dimension is at the heart of the Centre’s mission through the promotion of vulnerable people’s participation. The Centre promotes participatory governance, allowing residents to take part in decision-making processes. Projects are often co-constructed through direct engagement with local inhabitants, based on needs identified through fieldwork by the coordinators. With respect to the receiver, the Social Centre offers a range of local resources, primarily of relational and symbolic nature, such as community events and cultural outings, as well as practical services, such as legal support and social information. Regarding the Doer dimension, the Centre fosters individuals’ capabilities through both “individual-centred” measures (such as language courses and access to legal and social rights) and “environment-centred” measures (D+), by contributing to the development of a local environment that is conducive to action, especially with regard to the relational and practical aspects of everyday life, and by shaping the local associative landscape

through partnerships. These activities support migrant women's autonomy in everyday life, facilitate their access to rights, and encourage their civic engagement through volunteering. Additionally, the training opportunities offered by the Centre aim to support professional integration by recognising and enhancing individuals' own valued skills for the labour market.

However, despite this voice fostering orientation, the Social Centre achieves limited results in terms of civic participation and access to employment, due to a lack of connection with other institutions. Although the Centre actively promotes participation at local and neighbourhood levels, and potentially voices beyond the local level, through legal counselling, advocacy work and rights-claiming activities, the outcome of these claims depends on other institutions. This situation reveals an important limitation of the Voice-Fostering-Institution that mainly promotes voice within. It creates a gap between an individual's participation within the institution and her role as a citizen outside. Local initiatives may foster voice in situated contexts but often struggle to foster broader political participation, and to expand the space of possibilities beyond the institutional programme.

A potential deviation of the Voice-Fostering-Institution is related to the fact that participation can be fragile and lead to formal consultation that does not take individuals' views seriously. As Bonvin and Laruffa (2024) observe, many public policies are shaped by managerial logics and imposed on both beneficiaries and street-level bureaucrats, thereby severely limiting vulnerable individuals' capability for voice and capability to aspire. When participation is framed by organisational performance-based expectations or activation schemes, only aligned aspirations are acknowledged, while divergent ones are disregarded. As Stephanus and Vero (2024) argue, such schemes may offer the capability to formulate aspirations, but not to experiment or realise them (D-). In such situations, even if formally recognised as judges, individuals have little room for manoeuvre as regards what they can aspire beyond the programme. Consequently, the choice is more formal than substantial, reducing the transformative dimension of the institution. This can have structural consequences: namely undermining trust in institutions, creating the impression that 'the game is rigged', and fuelling social cynicism leading to withdrawal.

To sum up, the Voice-Fostering-Institution aims to strengthen individuals' real freedoms – including their capability for voice and for aspiring – in connection with their environment. It does not limit itself to providing access to resources or human capital but also fosters conditions that enable people to engage in what they truly value by allowing to meaningfully participate in shaping the programmes they are in. Recognising individuals as judges, it moves beyond tokenistic participation toward genuine influence and co-construction. However, the empirical cases investigated show how the fostering of participants' voices mainly remain within programmes' boundaries.

Fostering participants' capability for voice beyond the programme – that is, developing their real opportunity to play an active role in democracy – entails multi-level comprehensive measures and coordination between institutions. Such an ideal of democracy not only within, but also beyond the institution, would foster the capability to both aspire and express oneself.

4.4. Conclusion: Towards Capability-Enhancing Institutions

Starting from the emphasis an institution places on either the receiver, the doer or the judge dimension, we have identified three ideal-types with their variations. Illustrating each of them with empirical examples, we also pointed how the latter can deviate from the ideal-type. Our typology

(highlights the contributions and limitations of each ideal-type when it comes to fostering their users' well-being in terms of capabilities.

While the Resource-Providing-Institution overall acknowledges the vulnerable dimension of the individual, it nonetheless conditions the Receiver dimension to a certain number of criteria – the latter being more less restrictive depending on the variation. Besides, the Resource-Providing-Institution barely considers the Doer and Judge dimensions. As regards the Activating Institution, it mainly sees the individual as a Doer, and more precisely as a worker who must be active on the labour market. While the main variation of the Activating Institution predominantly focuses on human capital development, a more marginal one leans towards human agency development, by acting on the supply side of the labour market and creating job opportunities (therefore giving relatively more weight to the Judge dimension). Empirical examples of the Activating Institution revealed how deviations from the ideal-type are mostly linked to the degree to which the Receiver dimension is considered: some programmes provide material, psychological or practical support while working on users' human capital, and others do not, as they emphasise users' own responsibility in providing for themselves. Thirdly, the Voice-Fostering-Institution is the only ideal-type which gives proper weight to the Judge dimension, allowing participants to co-construct the measures they are in and taking their aspirations seriously. Yet, we mentioned how there remains a gap between voice within such institutions, and voice beyond them, as other institutions prevent individuals' voice to truly impact politics and democracy outside the scheme.

Truly enhancing voice beyond programmes and political empowerment in the democratic sphere would require an institution, or rather a set of institutions, that acknowledges the Receiver and Doer dimensions on top of individuals' aspirations. Only this arrangement would constitute a truly capability enhancing and transformative institution (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2024). Rather than reproducing the existing order, it would offer the potential for reconfiguring institutional designs and workings and thus contributing to the elaboration of a different model of society.

All in all, this additional ideal-type which we could call the Capability-Enhancing institution would consist of three fundamental dimensions: (a) it would fully recognise the vulnerability of individuals and provide them with the needed resources to address it (Receiver dimension, R+); (b) it would support individuals' agency in all areas they have reason to value (Doer dimension, D+); (c) it would recognise them as judges both within institutions and beyond (Judge dimension, J+). An institution tending towards such an ideal-type might help strengthen trust in institutions by demonstrating through institutional practice that democracy is a tool for individual freedom, not just a rhetorical device that legitimises inequalities while reproducing them. It would call for a renewed conception of trust, not only in institutions, the economy or society as they are (a kind of adaptive trust), but in people's capability to transform institutions towards what they have reason to value.

(5. Conclusion

Synthetical table

Ideal-types	Resource Providing Institution (Focus on Receiver)		Activating Institution (Focus on Doer)		Voice Fostering Institution (Focus on Judge)	
Variations	Universal	Categorial	Individual-Centred	Environment-Centred	Voice Within	Voice Beyond
RDJ Configurations	R++ Dø Jø	R+ Dø Jø	R+ D+ J-	Rø D+ J-	R+ D+ J+	R+ D+ J++
Deviations	Bureaucratisation Control Welfare Stigma		Paternalism Responsibilisation		Tokenisation	
Empirical Examples	Public Healthcare	Social Assistance (Geneva)	Work Reintegration Programme (Italy) Social Welfare (Ireland)	Solidarity, Urban Revitalisation, Citizenship and Participation Departments of the Municipality of Paris	Social Centre (France)	

By focusing on people's experiences of institutions, this typology sheds light on the conditions that determine users' capability to actualise their receiver, doer and judge dimension within and beyond institutions. On a micro-local scale, these conditions may be based on trust and interpersonal recognition, but what might these conditions be at the scale of social protection systems in general?

While institutional recognition of individuals as receivers is based on the concept of vulnerability, the experiences shared with us by vulnerable people show that this concept often denies them the roles of doer and judge. When vulnerability is not conceived as a universal human condition, it tends to be linked with social categories that suggest passiveness. This risks confining people to the role of receiver, a situation that against them, especially when they cannot participate in defining these categories. This is but one among the many illustrations of the existing gap between official and institutional views on the one hand, lived experiences of beneficiaries on the other hand. It shows the need for moving beyond existing typologies and their limitations and designing renewed multi-level typologies of social institutions and services, taking full account of this gap and integrating both components in the typological effort (and including also the viewpoint of street-level bureaucrats and how they interpret their margin of manoeuvre in the implementation process of social policies (Bonvin et al. 2023).

Our bottom-up approach that examines individuals' experiences with institutions allows to seize the deviations from the pure ideal-types. Through the roles of receiver, doer, and judge, particular relational and social dynamics emerge, such as welfare stigma, responsibilisation, and tokenization. These relational dynamics offer an alternative lens on intersectional inequalities and

(complement the analysis of social policy effects on vulnerable populations. These uncovered dynamics can inform and complement knowledge about welfare state typologies, as Gosta Esping Andersen's.

Still regarding inequalities, focusing on individuals' experiences allows for consideration of a broader range of factors. Individual interviews and discussion groups enable us to envision constraints and resources that individuals face when confronting institutions —factors that are broader and more dynamic than the variables typically used to measure inequalities. Variables derived from an intersectional approach are thus complexified and concretised through data directly drawn from experience: varying degrees of language proficiency, health situations, family life that can take very different forms depending on circumstances, the role of community membership which, depending on the case, may constitute a resource for mutual aid, interpersonal recognition, and political engagement, but also a constraint through more or less pronounced stigmatisation of the community, through the intensity of cultural norms internal to the group, etc.

Examining institutions through individuals' experiences allows us to embrace the feminist critique without reducing the analysis to a socially situated perspective unable to account for divergent women's aspirations. We do not judge whether the welfare state should develop women's employment or support their family life. Our analysis rather aims to draw on what people have reason to value according to the resources and constraints.

While typological analyses have primarily relied on cash benefits as indicators (Bambra, 2005), we approach resources generated by social policies more broadly, taking into account the distribution of material (not only financial) and symbolic or psychosocial resources. These resources include microsociological forms of attention and listening provided by professionals and volunteers, as well as forms of recognition of the individual as a judge.

By examining four social policy sectors, we account for public services that are not usually included in welfare typologies, such as schools and public hospitals. Furthermore, our approach allows us to move away from reasoning that equates resources with public expenditure. By starting from participants and what they have reason to value, resources that might at first glance to be considered trivial turn to be analytically relevant.

As a conclusion, this leads us to formulate a new ideal-type in which institutions recognise and foster the development of their users' multidimensionality in terms of Receiver, Doer and Judge. We call this ideal-type the Capability Enhancing Institution. Such an institution would simultaneously acknowledge individuals' vulnerability by ensuring access to adequate resources and support (R+), actively supports their agency across the domains they have reason to value (D+), and recognise them as legitimate judges both within the considered institutional setting and in broader social arenas (J+). Such an institution could reinforce trust not only in social institutions, but more broadly in politics and democracy by fostering people's capability to shape institutions, together with their life course, in line with what they have reason to value.

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