

*Local Implementation of Employment Policy Activation Formulas:
L'Etat social actif¹ in Action
(Sociological section)*

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In the framework of the pluriannual Federal Science Policy Research Program (SPP) on current social cohesion problems, GIRSEF (UCL) has done a study on the local implementation of employment policy activation formulas. This study deals with the construction of active employment policies for unskilled youth.

We began from the following assumption: the construction of this "*Etat social actif*" can only be grasped by making a detour onto the "local" level, for it is on this level that the various conventions or laws, elaborated on different levels of power (European, federal, regional), comprising "active employment policies" are practically brought together; it is also the locus of a reconfiguration process for new and old organizations and of the creation or redefinition of various professions and professional identities, all linked to the implementation of the new orientations given to employment policies.

Concerning method, in parallel with an analysis of the institutional and organizational context, on a daily basis, we followed fifty integration professionals in the sub-regions of Liège and Arlon-Luxemburg from the Public Employment Service, multipartner structures, and associations. We specifically focused on the following profiles: FOREM professional coaches, Carrefour Formation training specialists (or pedagogical specialists), and Cooperative Vocational Training EFT social workers. We also met with thirty youth in the framework of interactions with these integration professionals.

At the end of our study, it seems that the active social state is not just a formula: it is truly a new point of reference for public action, the implementation of which has already produced numerous (not always expected) effects on institutional (complete reconfiguration of the field of integration), organizational,² professional, and individual (production of different use types of the measures) levels. We will only pinpoint one. We observed the emergence of a new professional sphere, cutting across different organizations in the field. The goal of this new integration profession, shared by the majority of professionals, aims less directly at putting youth to work (as was the case in the past with job placement professionals) than at working on their employability: their work consists in encouraging, motivating youth to get to work...to work on themselves. It is a question of getting them to work on their own employability. This task is complex and ambiguous: the professional has to coordinate relations of interest and relations of evaluation. This double-sidedness of integration work, aid and supervision, is linked to the nature of the public mandate, namely, the activation of individuals. This generates numerous daily tensions in integration work: identity or moral tensions, technical tensions, organizational tensions.

Another part of the study addressed the uses and representations of the "interconnected integration measures" and the practices of integration agents by youth. Three types of use were presented across the field: 1) a "cooperative" and "negotiative" use, 2) a "conformist" or "follower" use, and 3) an "anomic" use. It seems that integration professionals attempt to promote progression in youth by "shifting" them from one type to another. For example, they motivate "anomic" youth to develop a "conformist" type use of the measures and hope that, in the end, they will evolve into the "cooperative" type.

The conclusions of our study have allowed us to formulate certain recommendations with regard to the regulation of the field of integration in the Walloon Region, the professionalization of the sector, and the evaluation of integration work.

¹ The *Etat social actif* constitutes the "Belgian version" of the Third Way proposed by Giddens: it is the name given by the current federal minister of employment to the measures of activation of the social policies in Belgium. This term could be translated by active Welfare state or active Workfare state.

² We mainly retain the new orientation towards the "client" of the Public Employment Service and its shift from a logic of "placement" to a logic of "support" for job seekers, the creation and reframing of new partnership structure (Carrefour Emploi Formation), and the reconfiguration of the associative sector (EFT/OISP draft decree).

1) The regulation of integration in the Walloon Region

We now know that one of the principles of the *Etat social actif* is that it delegates more than it directs (Vandenbroucke, 1999). In the Walloon Region, the implementation of the *Parcours d'insertion*³ (in 1996) was largely carried out following a logic of "governance," calling upon initiative and creativity before proceeding to "ex post" rationalizations – leaving, as we have seen, the task of constructing new organizations and professions serving these political ends to local agents.

These "ex post" political rationalizations of the integration measures began following the evaluation of the *Parcours d'insertion* (in 2000) and are currently on-going: the high number of decrees we are presently seeing demonstrates a strong political will to confer legal status on the *Parcours d'insertion* (draft law on interconnected integration measures), to regulate the mixed management of the job market (draft law on "mixed management"), to restructure the intervention of the field's different operators on the level of missions, target-clients, organizational units,...(FOREM management contract 2001 – 2005), EFT/OISP draft law).

This logic of "governance" can produce perverse effects when political decision makers do not pay enough attention to the finer points of the coordination and cooperation that may have been put in place by local professionals or organizations: *a posteriori* rationalization measures thus destructure the forms of cooperation built up by local agents and lead to loss of motivation and withdrawal. We observed this kind of perverse effect in the context of the bringing together of Carrefours Formation and the Employment Resource Offices in the FOREM buildings; the FOREM PCs from the province of Luxemburg are feeling (or foresee) the same kind of perverse effect in the context of a recentralization project for the FOREM services in Arlon; the associative sector is also feeling the effects of these "ex post" rationalization measures (the ratios, the paradox of training not leading to qualification, the new Plan de Résorption du Chômage [Unemployment Absorption Plan],...), measures from which they feel excluded and the implementation of which threatens to deconstruct what has been built up locally.

On this level, we recommend a finer balancing of the state rationalization measures and the professional empowerment of agents and organizations in the field.

The regulation of integration in the Walloon Region also raises the question of the integration methods or procedures of the "interconnected integration measures": how does one interconnect such a hybrid structure?

With regard to this question, one must first take into account a paradox linked to the perceptions youth have of the integration measures and the political expectations with respect to their implication in the interconnected integration measures. Regardless of the type of use they develop of the integration measures (anomic, conformist, cooperative use), the youth we met do not conceive of the integration measures or course as an interconnected process, but rather as a succession of steps or coexistence of organizations. This observation seems worrisome to us in so far as the public authorities present the user as the connecting element of the integration measures. Many times, we observed that the user "holds the network in place," as the Walloon Government would have it.

The Walloon Government, in the restructuring of the *Parcours d'insertion* into interconnected integration measures, had at least three possibilities at its disposal for the "interconnecting of the measures": 1) an integration on a macro (structural) level bringing together education, training, and employment (the creation of the EFTs in 1995 comprised an attempt at integration on the macro level; the development of cooperative vocational training comprised another); 2) an integration on a meso (organizational) level bringing together different I.C. organizations (the creation of the CFs in 1998 comprised an attempt at integration on a meso level through organizational decompartmentalization; the creation of the CSRCs comprised another); 3) integration on a micro (individual) level where the user constitutes the main interconnecting element of the measures. It seems that the Walloon Government chose for this third way to the detriment of the other ways: suppression of the CFs (tied to

³ The *Parcours d'insertion* in the Walloon region does present itself as a global device of accompaniment of job-seekers towards the employment. It constitutes a "jobmarket integration measure" which comes under the first pillar of the European employment strategy.

FOREM), putting out of action of the CSRCs, restriction of the EFTs to training leading to pre-qualification. From the standpoint of our study, such a way seems fairly "disenchanted" as it overestimates the integration capacities of youth.

On this level, we thus recommend no longer counting solely on this micro-individual way, but also reinforcing a cross-sectional professionalization of the sector.

The issue of regulation for the field of integration in the Walloon Region finally raises questions for the methods of mixed management of the job market induced by the ratification of ILO convention 181, which authorizes private operators to offer job placement services.

On this level, the gradual transformation at FOREM from a logic of placement to a logic of support poses problems for us: by promoting support of the job seeker in the work he is carrying out on his own employability, the Public Employment Service is moving away from job placement. The recent suppression of the "integration agent" profile at FOREM (a professional responsible for coordinating beneficiaries at the end of their course with companies and job offers) confirms this idea. Which SPE professional profile currently remains responsible for finding jobs for and relaying job offers to job seekers? The integration professionals we followed, whether from SPE, multi-partner structures, or associations, do not provide jobs for individuals; they encourage work...work on self, on one's own employability.

Does the considerable growth of Interim in the private sector not reflect the progressive withdrawal of the SPE from job placement? To us, it seems unwise that the mixed management of the job market leaves the placement of job seekers only to private businesses, in as much as public services alone can guarantee the respect of fundamental principles like equal opportunity, or implement corrective measures for unequal job access and employment discrimination. Left to the law of the private market alone, the placement of job seekers would become a pressing concern.

2) The professionalization of the integration sector

As we have shown, institutional change-overs (complete reconfiguration of the field of integration in the Walloon Region) bring about organizational change-overs. In effect, this reconfiguration of the field coincides with deep changes in the organization of *Parcours d'insertion*: a new orientation toward the "client" by the Public Employment Service and a shift from a logic of placement to a logic of support for job seekers, the creation and reframing of new partnership structures (Carrefour Emploi Formation [Training and Employment Network]), reconfiguration of the associative sector (EFT/OISP). These organizational change-overs bring about deep transformations of professional profiles, skills, in situ work, professional identities,... The function of mediation is becoming very important on the job market: it is not simply a process of pairing off job offers and seekers but requires a human touch through jobs created and constructed on a day-to-day basis by new professionals.

Focusing on the local level allowed us to observe the emergence of new professions in new institutional and organizational contexts. As we have already emphasized, these new integration professions, beyond differences due to different organizational positions in the field or to different definitions of professional identity, present many common characteristics. We are truly seeing the emergence of a new professional sphere, in the field of integration, that seems to cut across the different organizations in this field. As we presented, this newly emerging professional sphere comes with new tensions with regard to the authority guiding the professionals implementing active employment policies.

On this level, it seems necessary to reinforce the professionalization of the sector, to encourage the identification of a professional segment cutting across the different organizations in the field, by means, for example, of common professional training in integration professions. An inter-organizational training dynamic could constitute an important way of integrating the interconnected integration measures that would not rest only on the beneficiaries of the measures.

3) The evaluation of integration work

Finally, we raise the question of evaluating integration work and its goals. Integration professionals seem to put up much resistance to tools of evaluation external to their work (resistance to

traceability, to ratios, to integration rates,...) which give a poor account of the scope of the work accomplished.

We demonstrated that the subjective goal of integration work (from the standpoint of professionals) is less directly putting people to work than working on employability: the meaning of integration work is putting the individual to work, *to work on himself*. To initiate this work on self, the professional develops interest relations: he creates a relation of trust, makes the individual responsible for himself, motivates the individual to act,... These interest relations invariably come into conflict with the evaluation relations: this double-sidedness of integration work (aid and supervision) is linked to the nature of the public mandate (to activate individuals).

On this level, we recommend avoiding two kinds of drifting. The first consists in completely disconnecting the subjective work goals of the professionals (to encourage work on employability) from the political expectations (putting people to work), in other words, disconnecting the link between the work on employability and putting people to work; in such a case, integration work would be reduced to a purely psychological assistance of people excluded from the job market and the interconnected integration measures would be nothing more than "directions for employability." The second consists in the evacuation of all forms of mediation implied by this very human integration work; all action or measures would then only be evaluated in terms of impact on employment, which would reduce the legitimacy of this emerging professional sphere to nothing.

*Local Implementation of Employment Policy Activation Formulas :
Upstream from Active Policies : the Polarization of Local Contexts Issue
(Economic section)*

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The economic section of our research aimed to evaluate the importance of the local socio-economic context in which youth and the agents responsible for carrying out integration/training policies operate and, specifically, to address the possibility of taking the state of this context into fuller account in the definition of these policies, especially through a broader targeting.

Reference to the socio-economic context is not in itself new. What is perhaps more so is the idea of grasping the socio-economic context in its most local manifestations. Reference to the "local," to be sure, includes the hypothesis of a strong variability in the more or less strategic "locations" where youth are to be found, specifically concerning the "resources" and the scope of opportunities really offered to them.

The subject is addressed in three moments: i) a review of the theoretical and/or foreign literature on the phenomenon of selective pairing and its underlying mechanisms (Chap. 1); ii) an analysis, from this standpoint, of the meager data available for Belgium and/or the French Community (Chap. 2); iii) a discussion of the implications of the context inequality hypothesis on the nature of the social policies to be put in place (Chap. 3).

Review of theoretical literature and foreign empirical evidence

This emphasis on the local in our thought reflects a two-tiered evolution: that of economic analysis and that of the socio-economic reality itself. On the theoretical level, an increasing number of works are beginning to broaden the notion of useful "resources," particularly concerning professional integration, to elements with no direct monetary expression such as social capital (Benabou, 1994), relational network density (Montgomery, 1991), degree of security, neighborly trust, etc. Correlatively, these same or other (Piketty, 1994) works suggest the existence of (so-called selective pairing) mechanisms that tend to distribute these resources very unequally in function of the multiple concrete locations in which individuals live. These are: the economic area, the sub-region, the urban agglomeration, the quarter, the company, the school, and the family (Kremer, 1994).

These theoretical works are reflected in more empirical works that emphasize: (i) the accentuation of certain intra-national inequalities, or infra-regional ones when a certain number of similarities show themselves in larger groups like nations (Overman & Puga, 2000); and (ii) the

accentuation of wage (income) differentials between individuals of "equal" age, schooling, and professional activity sector (Gibbons & Katz, 1992; Cohen, 1997).

This explains the phenomenon of couple "ranking." In both searching for a good job, members of couples with university degrees migrate towards cities and usually settle in well-to-do suburbs. In doing so, they contribute to the polarization of economic activity on the regional level. They also contribute to the city center/suburb polarization by setting in motion a migration of businesses and by pushing up the price of residential real-estate. Beyond the purely spatial dimension of the polarization phenomenon, several foreign studies suggest the phenomenon is at work in other "locations" where individuals live: schools, companies...

Analysis of Belgian data

On this level, we will address the height (level), the existence or non-existence of an increasing (dynamic) tendency towards the segregation of individuals.

There are numerous signs that *the level* of local context polarization in Belgium is relatively high. On the inter-regional level, differences between Wallonia and Flanders are considerable, as much in terms of economic indicators (income, economic growth,...), as in terms of social indicators (unemployment rate, average level of education,...). We have also seen that intra-provincial differences are great. In the Region of Brussels, the average unemployment rate in the city center is 13%, as opposed to 5% in the suburbs. Average income distribution follows the same tendency, to the advantage of the suburbs. In the education system, we can also see a strong polarization of individuals in function of their nationality and/or educational backwardness. And the population distribution according to diploma is far from homogeneous between municipalities.

At the same time – though the available data is very incomplete – *there does not seem to have been any accentuation of segregation/polarization* in the last 30 years. Selective pairing of the adult population according to education level (highest degree), researched on the basis of the 1961 and 1991 censuses, appears stable. The same goes for educational segregation. In fact, a more detailed analysis reveals a double tendency:

- a decrease in segregation of individuals with higher education;
- but an increase in segregation of lowly educated adults (less than upper secondary education), especially in the case of young women (20 – 30 years of age).

These results, however, are unreliable in that they were obtained on a territorial scale still too broad for the objective of this study. Our goal was to measure levels and evolution of population polarization at the quarter (neighborhood) scale. We were constrained to working on the – much larger – scale of municipalities.

Targeting vs. universality

We claimed above that the argument for targeting could be strengthened by verifying whether the differences between privileged and underprivileged zones have recently been growing. Our assessments concerning the situation in Wallonia and Brussels and its evolution over the last 30 years allow us to conclude that the levels of segregation are no higher today than in the past. In other words, we cannot claim that the phenomenon of polarization has increased.

This being said, we feel we have listed enough signs indicating a relatively segregated (by level) configuration of the Belgian socio-economic structure, and more particularly of the Walloon and Brussels regions.

Throughout our report we have presented several indicators suggesting Belgium and its regions, particularly Brussels and Wallonia, are the seat of social problems specifically concentrated in certain social *categories* or locations. We are here basing ourselves on signs of over-representation of the poor or the unemployed in certain age groups (specifically, the old and the young), according to gender (women), or according to certain specific characteristics (single-parent families, unskilled individuals,...). This observation is not new in itself, but in light of the discussion on targeting issues, one might raise the following question: why not increase policy targeting of certain groups of individuals, as they suffer from multiple disadvantages?

Even more striking, however, is the *spatial concentration* of individuals with privileged or underprivileged socio-economic profiles. This observation has received ample documentation in the literature. Taking as indicator the level of unemployment or income per capita, for example, we

observe very broad dispersal from zone to zone in Belgium, be it on an inter-regional, inter- and intra-provincial, or inner-city level, the latter specifically in Brussels, where "urban segregation" is greater.

On an inter-regional level, several indicators (Montfort & Alii, 2000), show considerable differences between Wallonia and Flanders, as much in terms of economic indicators (income, economic growth,...), as in terms of social indicators (unemployment rate, average level of education,...). Belgium finds itself close to a situation of so-called *economic duality*, as "the discrepancies between incomes and the unemployment rate are both important and significantly correlated." This fairly acute inter-regional segregation is high in many European countries.

Our research also shows important intra-provincial differences. Consider the example of unemployment rates: 6,1% in the Tielt district, as opposed to 27,4% in Charleroi. The analysis of data on municipal unemployment rates in Wallonia shows that these rates are determined both by "structural" variables (average level of education or size of a municipality, for example) and so-called "local" or "spatial" variables (the proximity or distance of the municipality from the employment areas of Wallonia and of surrounding regions). Data from NIS and ONEM/RVA research confirms *there are important socioeconomic differences between municipalities*.

For the Region of Brussels, NIS data exists calculated by statistical sector or quarter since 1971. But information like income and unemployment levels is only available on the municipal level, which is why empirical studies on the city of Brussels must take into account the municipality as unit of analysis. And these show that the average unemployment rate is 13% in the city center, as opposed to 5% in the suburbs. Distribution of average income follows the same tendency, to the advantage of the suburbs.

Because of the important spatial component of this segregation/polarization, targeting should rather be of a geographical type. Keeping in mind the usual debates on the advantages and disadvantages (risk of stigmatization) of this type of orientation for public action, we point out that the spheres of public action concerned with this kind of targeting are diverse. We are obviously referring to the integration aid policies at the heart of the present study. Everything suggests, however, that this targeting logic should be applied to policies related to integration aid policies: education and training policies, but also, in urban contexts, policies of degraded quarter regeneration, those promoting greater mobility for youth living in zones badly connected to the larger transport infrastructures (travel allowance...).