Governing the Poor –

Comparative Aspects of Means-Tested Benefits for Long-term-Unemployed in the UK and Austria

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Dr Bettina Leibetseder
Johannes Kepler University
Department for Social Policy
Altenbergerstrasse 69
4040 Linz
Austria
bettina.leibetseder@jku.at
Tel.: +43-732-2468-7167
www.gespol.jku.at

Abstract

The proposed paper compares the system of support for long-term-unemployed without access to social insurance benefits in the UK and Austria. In the first part, a short description of both social assistance systems will give an outline for the research. Then, the theoretical debate about street-level bureaucracy in comparative perspective in case of activation policy is discussed. In the third part, the results of the research will be presented focusing on the practices at the street-level in both countries (three cities, two in Austria and one in the UK). Thus, one can find three distinctive forms of governing the able-bodied recipients each displaying a distinctive idea of welfare at the street-level.

The key contribution of this paper is the development of an argument taking into account the overall policy and the street level. A critical analysis of any form of practice in the area of social policy should evolve around an integration of a view focusing on the everyday situation at the local offices. Nevertheless, the policy changes are an area of specific concern too. Thus, one can argue that a critical approach evolves around a combination of an analysis of the formal level and the implementation level taking into account governance and governmentality.

[1] First draft – please do not quote.

1 Introduction

Critical analysis in social policy often starts from a top-down approach discussing a shift in policy aims. However, critical analysis should always take into account the experience of clients and the institutional setting in any comparative research. In this paper, an outline towards a critical analysis of the clients and caseworkers experience is presented taking the example of three welfare offices (two in Austria and one in the UK). One has to ask the question, how the persons are treated on street-level, whether there exists choice and freedom steered by empowerment and service or whether the governing enforces discipline and coercion to combat welfare dependency.

A short introduction towards the two specific social security systems will be given to enfold the distinctiveness of the support for long-term unemployed in each country. Theoretically, the idea of street-level and the everday-experience base on the critical reflections of Fancis Fox Piven & Richard A. Cloward, Lewis A. Coser and Michel Lipsky. However, the Foucauldian aspect of governmentality and power allows scrutinizing the encounter at the welfare office in depth. Then, the analysis of street-level will be presented focussing on the issue of what technologies are operated to produce a desired citizen. To ease the comparability and reduce the explanatory about social policy upfront, I will focus only on clients classified as fit to work. Thus, I do not engage in the formation of different administrative categories and their specific experience at the welfare office. Finally, I will discuss points of interests for critical governance research and relevant issues for social policy research.

The comparative aspect helps us to enlighten the distinction between a minor system for social assistance recipients and a system supporting all unemployed categorised as fit for work. The choice of the comparative aspect between the UK and Austria lies in the ongoing reforms of the Austrian social assistance scheme. The Austrian social assistance system functions at the community and provincial level. In international comparisons, Austrian social assistance is classified as '*localized, discretionary relief, linked to social work and with wider kin obligations*' (Gough et al 1997). Up to now, the Austrian welfare state rests on a strictly institutionally and legally separated two-tier system of social insurance and social assistance benefits. Hence, poverty and social insurance policy are segregated on a formal and operational level, the former subject to regional legislation and local administration and the latter as a matter of national concern and employment services as administrative institutions. Social assistance provides general support without taking causes into account. One thing on which Austrian experts agree is that the Austrian social assistance scheme is not very generous and does not fit present requirements, as it does not provide sufficient support for the poor (Biffl 2007, Dimmel 2003, Stelzer-Orthofer 2003, Tálos 2003, Pfeil 2001, 2008). The impact of the overall societal change and transformation of welfare states also enforces new restraints on social assistance in Austria. New groups are in need of financial support and their demands change the social assistance regime. In addition, governmental targets towards re-integration in the labour market and reduction of poverty enforce a certain degree of re-commodification and re-calibration. Social insurance benefits cover a larger part of the population concerned with the redistribution of wealth and do not provide a minimum security. The access to benefits is established via employment or marriage. Social insurance covers old age, illness, industrial injury and unemployment. The contributions reflect

the benefits, which are equivalent to the level and the years of contribution. As a result, social insurance secures the status of the individual (Tálos 2006).[2] Low unemployment and full employment form the basis of social citizenship. Social assistance establishes a highly individualistic and stigmatising system of social support as second tier. Nevertheless, an increased influx of recipients puts pressure on the regime; those new recipients do not conform to traditional groups accessing social assistance benefits. Moreover, specific newer risks like childcare and elderly care involve new social policies despite the traditional social insurance benefits.

Nowadays, the overall political consensus is a national regulation reforming the provincial system and establishing a firmer contact to the unemployment regime for able-bodied people of working age, a so-called Means-Tested Guaranteed Minimum Income, which should serve as a national guideline in all provinces by 2011. It should equalise the current nine provincial social assistance regulations, promoting the '*combating and avoidance of poverty and social exclusion*' and *'(re-)integration of its recipients in the labour market*' in Austria (Art. 1 of the agreement between federal state and provinces, translated by the author). The major changes are twofold: Firstly, a national minimum income threshold will replace the nine current rates of the provinces, and secondly, the job centres will serve as entry point and activation agency for social assistance recipients categorised as fit for work. In general, the task of social assistance is to enable those in need of help to live while maintaining their human dignity. An attainment or re-attainment of the needy person's ability to support themselves is considered the ideal aim. Essentially, social assistance differs from other state security benefits and is meant to reduce and eradicate situations of social distress for people without support from other institutions and/or people reverting to the principle of subsidiarity, a principle that stems from the social teachings of the Catholic Church. This principle dictates that a person is in genuine need and thus requiring support only in cases where he or is incapable of working, has no claims on third parties and cannot be assisted through family ties. As a sub-principle of subsidiarity, the claimant must voluntarily make use of his or her means and abilities (Einsatz der eigenen Mittel und Kräfte) as a pre-requisite for eligibility (Bacher et al 1993, Pfeil 2001, Stelzer-Orthofer 1997).

Since the 1970s, all nine provinces have established their own regulations (Melinz 1989) and only standard rates are defined. In some cases, the welfare office might make an exception and grant a higher amount, but it usually gives at or below the standard rate (Dimmel 2003, Pfeil 2001). For 2010, an adult in a single household can obtain up to 461.00 Euros in Vienna and up to 755.50 in Upper Austria, depending on family members, rent subsidies and other special payments. Each regional or local social assistance office can apply specific regulations and might enforce a different scheme. In some provinces, a claimant and close relatives might be liable to pay the benefit back. Each province or even local community also requires different conditions concerning job search for persons classified as fit for work.

Unlike the British system, the Austrian system still distinguishes between social insurance benefits and social assistance benefits, the former paid by the relevant social insurance institutions and the latter

[2] This principle is only neglected in the pension insurance including a guaranteed minimum income: the so-called equalisation supplement for the elderly. The equalisation supplement rate increases the pensions that are below the threshold.

by the provinces and local administrations based on a differentiation established since the beginning of social legislation in the 19th century. For this reason, the research focuses on a highly integrated system providing social assistance benefits as a social right in Beveridge's tradition (Digby 1989). The British social assistance system illustrates a 'one-desk-principle' nowadays, as all people of working age obtain their benefits from the Jobcentre Plus, where they turn in case of need due to unemployment, sickness, incapacity and lack of financial resources. In 2002, one essential step was the formation of one central agency dealing with people between 15 and 65 years old receiving benefits: The Jobcentre Plus incorporated the former Benefits Agency and the Employment Agency (Stafford 2003, Larsen et al 2006, Wiggan 2007). Now, people of working age have one government agency, which they have to turn to in case of unemployment, incapacity, sickness or caring responsibilities. Jobcentre Plus turns to the access point for all benefits working under the headline '*The work you want, the help you need'*. The new advice and benefit service is responsible for persons, who have and do not have to actively seek employment. Jobcentre Plus has to deliver services and benefits for persons entitled to social insurance or income-tested benefits: It has to get people into work a job, assist them with the benefits and provide help and support (Bryson 2003). Thus, the UK established a system, where all 15 to 65 years old have to fulfil conditions to be entitled to a benefit, nobody can obtain a payment without some kind of appointment, contact and regular visits nowadays (Dwyer 2008, Finn 2009, Wright 2009).

The bureaucratic procedure evolves distinct tasks for the administration and allows for a fast processing of all clients disregarding the individual case but emphasizing a bureaucratic processing. The British system establishes itself as social security in the tradition of William Beveridge. The envisaged universal protection has not been realised, as the changes in employment and family pattern need other support as the male fulltime employed and two parent families (Webb 1994, Rowlingson 2003). In addition, numerous alterations of the National Insurance and National Assistance Act lead to another system as imagined by William Beveridge. The political ideas of the Conservative Party heading the country since the 1980s reduced the impact of the national insurance system (Rowlingson 2003). The introduction of the so-called restart programme also lead to a merger of the unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres creating an employment service called 'Next Steps' executive agency. The employment service gradually extended its responsibility; they had to implement stronger incentives towards employment take up and stricter monitoring of the recipients' behaviour. In addition, the workfare programmes evolved from long-term programmes towards low-cost measures to foster a real commitment to look for a job. In 1996, another change occurred with the jobseeker's act. The employment service had learned from the administrative reforms in the past and could implement the reforms briefly. The number of unemployed plumbed due to tighter eligibility regulations and a shorter benefit period: The receipt of contributory based Jobseeker's Allowance was reduced to the first six months of unemployment, after that period all benefits for unemployed are strictly means-tested. Furthermore, the jobseeker's agreement defined a new way of dealing with the client. The regime should increase the pressure on recipients, who were not genuinely seeking employment (Finn 2003). The British social security system does not distinguish between contributory

and income-based benefits on the ground of responsibilities after six months of receipt.[3] As stated above, security as a leading principle is replaced by support defined as assistance to employment.

> *'(A) balance of rights and responsibilities: many people who can work need help in looking for work and overcoming barriers. They also need financial support while they are out of work. In return we should expect people receiving benefit to do all they can to help themselves get into work.' (Department for Work and Pensions 2007, 9)*

Jobcentre Plus provides help 'in looking for work and overcoming barriers'. Currently, a strict regime determines rights and responsibilities of a recipient based on age, family status and benefits' spell. Therefore, working-age benefits are based on the principle of condition. The recipient is not granted an '*unconditional'* benefit, but has to meet the requirements. In return, the welfare has the liability to provide '*opportunities for self-advancement'* and '*deliver services of (…) high quality*' (Department for Social Security 1998, 31).

Both nations established a distinct role for social assistance system during their historic development. Out of the poor relief, each welfare state constituted different other support system covering for a diversity of risks either as universal or social insurance benefits. The research generally focuses on the distinct view of administration and claimants. Therefore, qualitative research method assists with the assessment of each city. In addition, interviews with representatives of NGOs were conducted to round up a distinct regime. In total 91 interviews give a thorough idea of the administrative procedures in each city.

Table 1 Interviews in Three Cities

	Linz	Vienna	City in Britain
Administration	8 (#LA 1-8)	7 (# VA 1-7)	11 (# UKA 1-11)
Claimants	32 (#L 1-32	12 (# V 1-12)	8 (# UK 1-8)
NGO	5 (# UANGO and VNGO 1-5)		8 (# UKNGO 1-8)

In Austria, the qualitative research was conducted in two waves in May up to July 2004 and January and February 2008 and in February 2007 in the UK as a matter of resources. The type of interview with administration and claimants are best described as problem focused one, which allows for the focus on the procedure and still enables to capture additional information (Witzel 2000, Lamnek 2005). The interviews were taped and transcribed. First, each case of recipient was shortly summarised. During the fieldwork research, a considerable amount of qualitative data has been collected; therefore, an interpretative-reductive manner of analysis is used to reduce the length of the transcribed interviews down to a manageable size (Lamnek 1995). Nevertheless, distinct passages have been examined in depth to extract a thorough understanding of the administration using the information provided in the interviews and new categories and codes were generated during an analysis of the material. Now, the theoretical aspects from regulation towards governing the poor are part of this paper.

[3] The distinction is only given in the calculation of entitlement, whether their own income or the partner's income and assets are taken into account and lead to a refusal of the claim, when one switches from the contributory based to income based benefit. However, one can look for jobs in the former field of employment for the first 13 weeks, when one had some qualified job for a certain period.

2 From Regulating the Poor to Governing the Poor

> *'As for relief programs themselves, the historical pattern is clearly not one of progressive liberalization; it is rather a record of periodically expanding and contracting relief rolls as the system performs its two main functions: maintaining civil order and enforcing work.' (Piven & Cloward, 1972, xv)*

'Regulating the Poor' by Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward marked a turning point in the critical analysis of relief programmes in the early 1970s. It manifests a neo-Marxist critique based on the everyday experience of the poor in the welfare offices. Poor relief does not meet the people's need and does not reflect an overall distribution of wealth in advancing societies. Poor relief, as the second safety net, always tries to balance between civil order satisfying the poor's demand and enforcing work as societal norm supplying the labour market. Such critique connects to the general neo-Marxist analysis about the welfare state, as welfare state does not transform the class structure; it establishes the foundation for a capitalist system. *'The contradiction is that while capitalism cannot coexist with, neither can it exist without the welfare state'* (Offe 1984, 153, original emphasis). This aspect of social control on the macro level is reflected in the everyday interactions at the social assistance office. The social control enacted by the administration aims to keep other eligible persons from claiming a benefit, because the public does not want to spend too much on 'dependents'.

> *'To fend off public attack, relief administrators design policies and procedures which prevent many of the very poor who apparently qualify from getting on the rolls; they also prevent those who do get aid from obtaining all of the benefits to which they might be entitled, and they punish and degrade recipients as befits their socially defined station.' (Piven & Cloward 1972, 148)*

Thus, social control is closely connected to the stigmatizing effect of welfare programmes. Means-tested programmes always incorporate social control. Claimants have to convince the administrative personal of their genuine need. Such need enforces an intrusion in the private life of the claimant. The poor are not protected:

> *'At least in principle, facets of his [the poor's] behavior which ordinarily are not public are in their case under public control and or open to scrutiny by social workers or other investigators. In order to be socially recognized as poor a person is obligated to make his private life open to public inspections. The protective veil which is available to other members of society is explicitly denied to them.' (Coser 1965, 145)*

Such an example[4] allows us to engage in a discussion about policy. Government decisions can be policy restricting the analysis to political aims. Nevertheless, one can broaden the view and include to the political intention, the status quo and past practice in a field as well as the institutional practice and the experience by bureaucrats and citizens. Thus, it goes beyond the formal and takes into account the discursive practice, actions and practices constructing social policy (Henman 2006). Critical research in governance[5] should combine a focus on overall transformation of social policy (formal level) and on transformations of governance. Therefore, it takes into account social policy and public policy – administration and management. Henceforward, it should integrate the aspect of policy formulation and policy implementation (Berkel & Valkenburg 2007, Fenger & Henman 2006). Or as Maynard-Moody (2010) puts it as 'materialising policy', as only at street-level the abstract level of

[4] The so-called 'Starnberger Studien' fostered the discussion about social control in German speaking countries (Guldimann 1978).

[5] Governance defined by Newman (2004) and Newman /Clarke (2009) terms the shift from direct control through government to a more diversive form involving multiple agents and agencies in different forms of cooperation.

policy transforms to action for citizens. To expand a critical analysis of the governance of social policy, governmentality offers an analytic of social administration; it offers a subversive project on power relations (Henman 2006). Power in a Foucauldian sense is not something negative (Foucault 1979, 1981, 1999). Power in all its distinctive forms, in which it exists, allows us to scrutinize governing: sovereign power, bio-power, disciplinary power or pastoral power (Dean 1999, 2009, Lemke 2001). For Dean (2009), liberal government enables power to be preventative and facilitative and to a lesser degree directive and redistributive always targeting at the economical optimization.

Michel Foucault and his concept of 'governmentality' and the specific 'technologies' within the 'political rationalities' of government allow for a far more controversial debate about social policy (Miller & Rose 1990, 1, Dean 1999, 11). Contemporary governmentality goes back to the regime that defines the 'population' as its governing object. In that period, the governing of a state '*mean(s) to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of family over his household and his goods*' (Foucault 1991, 92).

Government, population and economy transform the old notion of sovereignty and introduce the population as a field, which has to be formed by governing. In addition, the economy develops as a sector of its own and political economy defines the field of intervention in that sector. Governmentality as a term describes those set of new techniques, institutions, knowledge, analysis established to exercise this new form of power concentrating on the population with the political economy supported by administrative systems of security, so called *apparatuses of security* (Foucault 1991, 102). Foucault defines governmentality as the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon 1991, 2, Cruikshank 1994, 32). Mitchell Dean (1999, 11) notes following general explanation of government in Foucault's sense:

> *'Government is any more less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs; for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.'*

To analyse a government various aspects are important: the administrative system and their techniques, the knowledge established to collect information like statistics to evaluate, to analyse and to propose certain solutions for beforehand identified problems (Miller & Rose 1990). Diverse authorities and agencies set in play an activity via different means and technologies of government that targets towards a certain governed entity to form the conduct looking for a certain end, which has to be tested for the consequences and outcome. The aim is to regulate human conduct fitting to a certain rational of how to govern and how things ought to be. Such rationality is not one, but there are varieties of rationality. The 'conduct of conduct' emphasises a specific form of governmentality, as it '*presupposes the primary freedom of those who are governed entailed in the capacities of acting and thinking. It also, furthermore, presupposes this freedom and these capacities on the part of those who govern*' (Dean 1999, 15). The capacity of acting and thinking means that someone can govern him-/herself and can govern others by thinking. In such a way, the reflexivity is part of governmentality that *'we govern others and ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are, what aspects of our existence should be worked upon, how, with what means and to what ends. We thus govern others and ourselves according to various truths about our existence and nature as human beings*'

(Dean 1999, 18). Governing and conducting themselves and others produces and introduces other forms of truth. Four questions are important: First of all, who is treated as a poor, who has to rely on such benefits and comply with the regulations of the means-tested benefit. In other words – what is to be governed by this programme and what is not to part of the governed – what is the governed substance? Secondly, how does the governing work – what means, what techniques are used, what rationalities and forms are used to govern at street-level and institutional level? Fourthly, why does the govern work regarding the subject, why are the poor governed in such a way concerning rules and norm? Finally, who does the government want the subjects to become, as the telos of government (Dean 1998, 1999)?

In social welfare, the notion of empowerment and casework[6] serves as an example for such techniques of government. Empowerment focuses on the distinct form of self-governing and the power establishes on one-self, as one political rationality formed by liberal governmental technologies.

> *'This mode of government links the subjectivity of individuals to their subjection, by transforming political subjectivity into an instrument of government. Technologies of citizenship are the means by which government works through rather than simply against the subjectivities of the poor. The poor are governed, so to speak, but not strictly by the government or the state.' (Cruikshank 1994, 32-33)*

The process of empowerment rests upon a positive image of transforming the poor and marginalised into active citizens. Instead of being a passive 'recipient', the poor actively seek to participate in a transformative process and to become an 'active citizen'. Diverse kinds of strategies enable the implementation of this '*technology of citizenship*': One has to establish the consciousness of powerlessness for specific groups. A specific expertise forms the core ideas and the rationality of the government. In case of empowerment, one has to define the knowledge of the poor's powerlessness and of the disempowering and within that process one has to form a group of 'marginalised' and 'powerless' out of lone parents, homeless, unemployment, etc. dichotomising against 'powerful'. Empowerment needs a structural change. Within this discussion, governmental institutions create the structure necessary for the poor's participation on the local level and create the concept of 'community'. Finally, a range of actions is required to change the 'powerlessness'. This process forms the 'subjectivity' of individuals. Governmental interventions build the conditions that the 'poor' can become 'active citizens'. The governmental regulation requires the 'subjection' of the poor in order to obtain subjectivity and agency: '*They involve both a voluntary and coercive exercise of power upon the subjectivity of the empowered*' (Cruikshank 1994, 35). Such subjectivity is essential for formerly marginalised to obtain the capacity exercising kinds of freedom. Barbara Cruikshank's analysis of empowerment in the American '*War against Poverty*' in the 1960s exemplifies the interwoven power relations termed by Foucault as governmentality, how governmental institutions work upon the poor. Within this process the category of the '*poor*' is established and the '*conduct of conduct*' is implemented in the context of *self-rule*.[7] The excluded, the disadvantaged, the marginalized are not capable of self-government, specialists have to activate them and lead them to inclusion (Rose 1999).

[6] See McDonald & Marston (2005) and Dean (1995) for unemployed and case managers as new form of governmentality on the micro level.

[7] In Germany Pieper et al (2003) introduced governmentality studies in social policy. The essays of Christoph Sachße and Florian Tennstedt and Stefan Breuer summarised social discipline in poor relief in the Foucauldian tradition in 1986.

In social policy, a governmental approach in analysis allows to re-examine the normative principles, which might lead to questions about the inevitability of certain policies or regimes. Such an analysis also allows for a re-focusing on street-level policy going beyond the institutional approach prevailing for a long time in social policy and re-focusing on the actual practices in the administrations. Such a focus enables us to challenge the narrative of social policy's advancement (Marston & McDonald 2009), already questioned by Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward.

Street level bureaucracy serves as an intermediary institution between welfare recipient and social policy legislation emphasizing the power issue:

> *'The impact may be of several kinds. They socialize citizens to expectations of government services and a place in the political community. They determine the eligibility of citizens for government benefits and sanctions. They oversee the treatment (the service) citizens receive in those programs. Thus, in a sense street-level bureaucrats implicitly mediate aspects of the constitutional relationship of citizens to the state. In short, they hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship.' (Lipsky 1980, 4)*

Social assistance policy depends on the implementation at the local level. The legislation itself cannot define each case. The access to social assistance, the level of control and the barriers attached to it are established in the reality of the social assistance office. The reality of the social assistance might portray a different result or more nuanced everyday lived experience then the legal aim. Street level policy is defined as the daily interaction between citizens as clients and social administrators in a governmental bureaucracy, whereas the street-level bureaucrats interact with the clients, have a certain degree of autonomy and can impose sanctions (Lipsky 1980). Specific in poor relief is that the clients have limited choice, as their financial situation leads them to engage with the welfare office. Consequently, the welfare office constitutes a field in Pierre Bourdieu's sense. A field where social distinctions are constructed and constituted and issues of power evolve (Bourdieu 1998). As such, the aim of such a focus is to scrutinize the procedures enacting and re-enacting differences and distinctions.

In a governmental analysis, the focus on street-level policy in the area of social policy can provide us insight into the responses of the welfare state towards citizens, who cannot act in a responsible self-governing way. Therefore, one can take a look at the paternalistic side of welfare state described by responsibility or obligation of the individual receiving support. As such it allows us to gain obtain answers towards the 'ethos of welfare', which in general enforces the security of population and the independency of the members.

> *'The ethos of welfare is a potent admixture of rights and obligations, freedom and coercion, liberty and life. It is formed through practices of freedom by which citizens are formed and form themselves, on one side. Yet these are located within a web of sovereign powers by which subjects are bound to do certain things.' (Dean 2009, 32)*

The normative frame re-establishes work or training as obligation for someone receiving benefits, as the members have to regain independency. Thus, it widens the sovereign power and allows for the pastoral care to define the obligation of the claimant. Thus, one only has the right to a benefit, when one obeys the conditions imposed. Activation policies in a narrow sense define the (re)integration of individuals into the labour market (Barbier & Ludwig-Wagnerhofer 2004). Activation policies differ according to their degree on coercion and choice. Nevertheless, such workfare or activation programmes are an integral part of all modernised social assistance policies (Hanesch et al 2001,

Lødemel & Trickey 2000, Gilbert 2004). The functional change of social policy also implies a structural and organisational change on the level of administration. Nowadays, the street-level bureaucracy still has to check eligibility check and distribute benefit. In addition, the caseworkers have to bring the client back into work increasing the discretionary power of officers (Peck 2001, Handler 2003/2006, Valkenburg 2007). Consequently, caseworkers obtain power as their position increases their tasks due to the emphasis on activation (Korteweg 2009).[8]

Active social assistance policy is active labour market policy. Social assistance recipients are not active citizens, they are defined as 'passive', 'dependent' welfare recipients, who have to be transformed into or activated to 'active' worker citizens. Therefore, workfare, work-oriented and activation policies place their emphasis on the individual level, because they want to change the behaviour and motivation of the clients through mainly mandatory interventions (Peck 2001). Activation policy is part of the strategy to include all citizens: Activation policy can also include a new policy of citizen's 'self-governance'. An active citizen has to be a 'responsible' welfare user and worker citizens, who masters self-management, self-regulation and internalises the given norms of society. The traditional bureaucratic mode of governance resides on a legal basis and a strong hierarchy, but uses monitoring and other forms of management techniques to standardise the service. Persons in need of a service are still clients, who have rights but can face sanctions, when they do not comply. In contrast, a managerial type of governance would base itself on contracts, goals, performance, outcome and market and the governance is conducted by a range of actors of for-profit and not-for profit organisation. The individual user would turn into a consumer, facing the carrot instead of the stick and signing contracts (Newman 2007). [9] Challenging here is the question, how the persons are activated, whether there exists choice and freedom steered by empowerment and service or whether the governing enforces discipline and coercion to combat welfare dependency. Nevertheless, the governed subjects should be integrated in the social order (Dean 2009).

[8] Nevertheless, claimants have certain power too that is far more restricted compared to the caseworker (Dubois 2010).

[9] Another effect of the 'activation policy' is to increase the percentage of working-age persons participating in the labour market. The 'active' welfare state aims at the persistent exposure to employment of the non-working dependent population, as the functional orientation of the welfare state reversed from protection and exclusion towards contact to and enforcement of a flexible labour market (Peck 2001). Commodification instead of de-commodification is the mantra of workfare. However, commodification does not imply a stable job with one employer for a lifetime; instead it enforces the sale of one's labour in a flexible labour market (Handler 2003). Social policy also re-categorises persons, who might be able to support themselves selling their 'labour' on the market. (Re-)commodification or (de-)commodification depends on the treatment of 'able-bodied' by the welfare office. The concept of commodification also defines social equality. The modern welfare state de-commodifies and re-commodifies immanently and has to juggle between those. Therefore, it also enforces a specific regime of domination on persons relying on benefits. Nevertheless, first of all legislation has to define, which groups have to 'actively look for employment' and which are not required to 'sell' their labour. The distinction is drawn due to age, care responsibilities, family status, age and sickness and disability. Those distinctions can be (re)drawn and changed and introduce formerly exempted persons to the task of 'actively looking for employment' and exempt new categories from those activities. Provocatively expressed the welfare state's reforms aim to exclude nobody from the labour market per se, but include everyone despite his or her gender, age, disability, care responsibilities and family status. Another paper could handle the different categories of poor in each system comparing transformations especially concerning citizenship, gender, age and household type in regard to care responsibilities, work responsibility and benefit eligibility or towards the classification of unemployed at risk of long-term receipt (see Caswell et al 2010 and Leibetseder 2008, 2009a, 2009b for details).

Comparative research on social policy often regards either the macro-level or the micro-level, missing the specific of a mid-range approach or combing different levels.10 In case of activation, two types of shift exist on the meso-level – one exemplifies a coherent strategy and transformation of the welfare system towards activation. In contrast, certain welfare systems embody a more ambiguous and less coherent transformation due to resistance, as various institutional arrangements lead to a national trajectory and indicate a path dependency. Such administrative restructuring consists of different measures – Daniel Clegg (2007) elaborates that such a transformation can be a tighter policy coordination between the two tiers, a tighter coordination of public employment offices and social assistance offices and a single gateway for all claimants of working age – a one-stop shop. One can take into account the overall unemployment benefit homogenisation regarding eligibility and entitlement for benefits and services (Clasen & Clegg 2006)[11]. Despite the formal changes in the two-tier system, one might have to search for tighter policy-co-ordination closely related to those schemes on the institutional level (Clasen & Clegg 2006). On the micro-level, one wants to obtain information, how the governing works. Examples of such a research are about Danish and Australian case management in employment services (Marston et al 2005), women and activation programmes in the United States and Netherlands, and about United States, Germany and Sweden and their support for the poor (Jewell 2007), co and comparative edited volumes on activation policies (Berkel & Valkenburg 2007) or on welfare governance (Henman & Fenger 2006) taking into account the micro-level. Nevertheless, most of the studies just regard one nation or compare the distinction within a nation or system (Lipsky 1980, Schram et al 2009, Dubois 2010, Maeder & Nadai 2004).

As a result, one has to combine an analysis of public management and social policy. As Berkel (2010) and Carmel and Papadopolous (2003, 2009) argued, two types of reform exist in an activation policy. Firstly, formal policy reform changes the content of social policy. The aims are transformed and activation policy is introduced as the highest priority. Secondly, activation policy also implies a modification on the operational level that requires a restructuring of the service provision. An institutional change imposes a new form of governance on the unemployed. Such reform can be analysed from both an organisational and street-level perspective (Berkel & Borghi 2008). One cannot understand a transformation fully without looking to this arena. An analysis should take place on the formal and operational level, and should focus on the meso-level and the micro-level; thus, one scrutinises the institutional level improving the comparative understanding (Clasen & Clegg 2006).

[10] The view on the micro-level might indicate less divergence and more convergence, whereas the macro-level can overemphasize differences (Clasen & Clegg 2006, Marston et al 2005).
[11] For recent research on those issues see: Renate Minas (2009) describing the transformation of the schemes towards one tier system in different countries.

3 Street-level Bureaucracy in UK and Austria on Activation

The street-level implementation for working-age able-bodied recipients changed and modernised structures draw on a set of new means of governance. In this chapter, one scrutinises the everyday procedure of the social assistance offices enforcing job search activity on clients. However, one has to acknowledge the distinction: In Austria, an employment services supports persons entitled to contributory based social insurance benefits in case of unemployment. Those social insurance benefits enforce a means test after six months, but do not allow for a minimum benefit. Thus, persons have to rely on social assistance benefits, when they receive a low benefit or are not entitled to any support at all. In contrast, the UK merged social assistance and unemployment insurance benefits towards a single system. Claimants can receive for the first six months contributory benefits without means test, but then all have to rely on the means-tested (income based) Jobseeker's Allowance. Institutionally in Austria, social assistance recipients still attend their regular appointments at the social assistance offices and employment services. Conversely, the system allows for a single entry point at the local Jobcentre Plus for all up to 65 years old applying for benefits.

3.1.1 Social Work in Vienna

Within the reform of the system, a main concept is also the change of the job searching process and assisting long-term claimants to exit social assistance and enter employment; however, the high unemployment rate – especially in the area of low qualifications – delays the transformation. As a result, only the public employment service controls the willingness to work and not the caseworkers in the social centres.

> *'Yes, the good thing about the new system is that it is simple, well, that is good, yes it is. – There are hundreds of new applicants, and it is one thing we do not consider; he shows the control card and that does not have any further consequences, except he has to go there, if he – he just has to be searching for a job. And if they have appointments twice a year, we accept that they go twice a year to the public employment service. I think that is useful, in case there is no job. Why should of all the people who have poor qualifications or none at all, then have such big chances in the labour market?' (# VA-6)*

All respondents fit to work confirm the statement of the social worker. Their job is to keep the appointments at the public employment service and get a new appointment on the public employment service's appointment card that they have to present at their next appointment at the social centre (# V-1, V-2, V-3, V-4, V-6). In addition, one of the recipients has to participate regularly in training courses provided by the public employment service (# V-6) and another one is offered employment in the secondary labour market by the public employment service (# V-3). The willingness to work is not controlled by the social centre, only by the public employment service. Therefore, the social assistance has stopped being more restrictive than the social insurance regime in this respect in Vienna. Another modification is that reasonableness is also the same as in the social insurance

regime. In addition, the public employment service decides, which job is reasonable for whom (# VA-5, 4-1).

Before the reform, the control of willingness to work was an essential part of the daily interaction process with the clients.

> *'In the past, there was a time, when social assistance definitely handed out a form and the people had to confirm ten applications on it, which was top-notch, because it was clear that it was a form from social assistance, and if you presented it to an employer, what does that mean? That was a work inhibiting sheet that does not exist any more.' (# VNGO-3)*

Therefore, the system was very restrictive demanding ten applications a month. The recipients had to admit that they were social assistance beneficiaries, as the social department issued a paper, where the potential employer had to confirm the application. The social worker confirms the statement of the NGO representative that the aim is not to check whether the claimant has illicit employment:

> *'No that is – I also think that those big companies do things that are not all aboveboard and then that is not all right either. And then for the ordinary people one sifts through and investigates all that is questionable. … Well, I can only tell you from hearsay from what the clients told me, well, they were given sheets where they had to be given confirmation about where they had to go to companies to apply. … They have been pressured hard.' (# VA-6)*

For the head of the social centre, the aspect of support and incentive is the main one. Pressure is only a last resort. As a result, sanctions have not been imposed for the last three years (# VA-5). Another strictly regulated case is the unfortunate event of a ban from unemployment benefit by the public employment service in a case where the unemployment (assistance) benefit is cancelled, because the client missed an appointment. The social assistance benefit is stopped and the client has to re-apply for benefit at the public employment service first. The second possibility is the case of a ban because the claimant did not accept a job offer or a course offer, etc. In such a case, the social centre pays the expenses for the rent, so that the claimant does not loose his flat.

> *'Our interest is that the persons can fulfil their social responsibilities and duties. We try to ensure that the flat is secured during this period. We have also the possibility of reducing our benefit if the public employment service is reduced. However, more often than not, that is not possible, because then they do not have any money. We see that the flat is maintained. We do not have any interest in the claimant becoming homeless too in the course of the proceedings at the public employment service. That is our vital interest. (…) The co-workers with direct contact know the person best, and they decide what is the reality of the situation, if the public employment service states that jobs were refused three times. We look then, which work was it, how is the condition of the client in reality? Did the public employment service make this decision due to a general rule – not an individual regulation? How is the person? We look at how the person's condition is.' (# VA-5)*

The main aim of the reform is the integration of longer-term recipients of social assistance. For the former head of the social assistance department, the old system did not serve this purpose. This type of recipient got their benefit and stayed in social assistance for a long period. That group was focused. The reform integrated social work and casework again separated 25 years ago (# VA-2, VA-3).

> *'The idea was, yes that with assistance from the social work, those people who come in, who are fit to work - that is the lion's share of those clientele - are brought back into the primary labour market in the best way or perhaps in the secondary. But that did not work, not because it was a bad concept, but because the organisational implementation and the tight labour market situation did coincide. And the number of entitled people increased enormously. And we had to put all resources and work capacities, which we got through the implementation, to cope with the quantities and not in quality.' (# VA-2)*

Social assistance recipients, who are fit for work, should be integrated into the labour market with assistance from case management. The claimant receives the monetary benefit from the caseworker

and integration support from the social worker. This activation support can take place when the claimant is secure and in a stable social situation. The case management process is the task of the social worker and not the caseworker. However, both work together in a so-called small team (# VA-5). The ideal of shortening the period of social assistance and integrating persons in the labour market permanently is not possible at the moment, due to the high number of new applicants entering the system. One caseworker comments that if he thinks that support from the social worker is necessary and wants to work together with the social worker and talk about the next steps, it is simply not possible, because no one has time and the work in small teams regularly is hindered by the lack of resources. Nowadays, social assistance provides reintegration for two target groups: persons, who are employable, get support from a specialised placement agency with a work first approach and persons, who are not employable, can enter an intermediary labour market providing low threshold opportunities. The first appointment for clearing is mandatory; however, the clients can voluntarily decide, whether they would like to participate in one of the programmes. In addition, the administration distinguishes between persons, who are likely to find employment and persons unlikely to get a job. Nevertheless, such activation schemes are discretionary and the caseworker can decide, who can attend.

3.1.2 'They have time – they have to look, it is their job' in Linz

'Vienna is different'. That is not only the slogan of the Viennese tourism association, but also the harsh reality for recipients of social assistance in Linz. Since 2005, all claimants receive benefit up to the standard reference rate from the beginning. Short-time claimants just have to register at the employment service and follow up the demands there. Long-term recipients are treated differently (# LA-8). The recipients have to go to the public employment service, so that they are registered as job seekers. Persons receiving additional unemployment (assistance) benefits have to attend different courses, if the public employment service demands it from the recipients. As a rule, the recipients have to fulfil all the same requirements as a beneficiary receiving only unemployment benefits. Furthermore, they have to prove that they are willing to work according to the requirements of the welfare office.

One claimant says that the administration provides the clients with a distinct document, which has to be filled out. The recipients are asked to provide it every month stating in detail their jobsearch activity. The companies have to stamp it, fill in the date and the name. The clients have to commit that the social assistance office sends them. One recipient has her own small booklet, where she fills in the name and the contact details and asks for a stamp (# L-24). She just goes to ten companies a month, as '*that they really see that I do something for that, that I really do want an employment*' and hands in her application in person, for other applications, she sends an e-mail or via postal service. In contrast, another person was very frustrated. She had to apply for ten applications in person too. Normally, she

handed in her applications in person, she took the yellow pages and looked up, where she would eventually like to work and then

> *'I went there and I've told them that I come quasi from the employment service and respectively obtain unemployment assistance, respectively social assistance from the social assistance office and I am looking for a job and whether they have any vacancies or I just can hand in my application. And then it was not complicated at all. And one has the ten papers soon. Well, I do think that it is a huge effort. Well, totally.' (# L-25)*

The recipient conceals the reason for the personal applications at the companies, as she fears stigmatisation like the other woman, who takes her own book with her for the stamps. Regularly, recipients obtain a form from the social assistance office, which can mark them as social assistance recipients in the application process. The task of ten applications should enforce pressure on recipients to seriously look for employment. One has to ask, whether such measures lead to an improvement of employment rate for long-term recipients. When a recipient does not reach the ten applications a month, the caseworker might impose sanctions.

> *'Maybe, that I had too few applications once and then, it was not enough for them and then, they turned very unpleasant. And "You have to bring them". And "That doesn't work that way" and "When it happens once more, then the benefit will be cut." Well, when one does not fulfil their requirements. It can happen that they turn angry. Well, I brought ten applications then. Well, it did not turn out to be that nasty, well I can recall. Well, I have talked with them and told them that it is sometimes very tricky to bring applications. That it is a lot. And that I could not do it in some way, well my schedule, I have daughter and then it was finished quick. But it is that they require some tasks, so, "Well that goes, now you do something".' (# L-25)*

The willingness to work is mainly checked by forcing the client to bring documents of his or her application effort. This effort is one of the main preconditions for receiving benefit for a longer period. It is not important that the client finds employment, it is only important that the client proves his or her effort to look for a job (# LA-5). The social assistance act does not state the exact details defining when a person is unwilling to work. There are no legal requirements concerning the amount of applications a person has to make every month. '*That is not stated anywhere, so that is only the obligation to make an effort and that does not say, that is ten or twenty or fifteen*.' (# LA-6)The documentation is not that easy. Two other caseworkers state that they always explain to the recipients that they cannot follow them and check what they are doing all day long. As a result, the caseworkers demand proofs: documentation on a sheet of paper stating the company's name and date, a sheet of paper with the company stamp on it (# LA-4, LA-6).

> *'That you can never build, I am not talking about trust, but about facts. I really talk about facts. I do take the issue personally, but that is not easy, if he wants social assistance. I need proof, if he tells me that he is looking for a job, he is really looking a lot. Then I do not believe him, I do not believe him, until I have it in black and white. Because I always tell them that I cannot follow you all day long, wherever you go. I have to sit here. I really believe him, because I think he is the type of person that he does it. But there are the same things and then it is not that way.' (# LA-4)*

One factor was definitely the employment record. The caseworkers always explained that they could look up the social insurance periods of a person.

> *'And then you see the social insurance statement and there you look back one or two years and then you see a week there, two weeks then, sick leave, unemployment benefit, then you see again an uncovered period. Then you call (the public employment service), there was a ban from the unemployment benefit, because he did not go there or something like that.' (# LA-6)*

Furthermore, the caseworker stated how important the usage of the database was in looking up the social insurance details. Two of the interviewed recipients had a long employment history with no

interruptions (#L-1, L-15); the two received the assistance immediately and did not have to look for jobs first. In contrast, two recipients experienced an interrupted employment life and both of them had serious problems in obtaining social assistance in the beginning (# L-2, L-13). However, the caseworker does not trust the clients at all. In certain cases, they call the company and ask if the recipient has applied for a job. Sometimes the employees of the company can recall that the person has asked for a job (# LA-6). For the caseworker, the substantial part is to draw a line, to find a definition, which is not always an easy job in individual cases. However, he insists that you can distinguish the recipients trying hard and the recipients, who do not put any effort into finding a job (# LA-6). Another caseworker states it more drastically:

> *'It is the discretion of the individual; it strongly depends on the cooperation of the client, well. Because if I see today, he has, I don't know how to say, if it is only due to idleness and reluctance in connection with impudence – that happens more often – then I do not see any reasons to involve myself strongly, yes, perhaps if he even insults me too. Then I will point out to him that it does not work that way. That he has to bring proofs of searching for a job and that otherwise there is a danger that social assistance will be abandoned. It does not happen without advance notice and sometimes you talk for months. Yes, it is not so restrictive that we stop it overnight.' (# LA-5)*

The caseworkers threaten to cut the client's benefit, if they do not apply for enough jobs; the client has to comply in any case, has to cooperate. If he demands something and resists the caseworker, that might be interpreted as impudence. Their job is to force them to look for a job actively and that is done with sticks and not with carrots. While analysing the interviews with caseworkers, another question arises as to whether caseworkers are the right people to help someone become employed, if you keep in mind that some of these clients are not employable. One of the principles of the social assistance act is professional assistance. The pure pressure from a caseworker on clients to find a job is not in accordance with that ideal. The caseworker always fears being misled by a claimant. Asking one caseworker if she tries to build a foundation of trust with the client, she answers:

> *'… And the danger really exists at our place. That we are conned. The people have – I am not talking about all of them, really, I am not talking about all of them. It is really simple, as long as I do not have something black in white, I am not allowed to believe anything, I do not believe anything. And I need everything, everything that is possible, in written form or something like that.' (# LA-4).*

In case of a ban of the unemployment benefit, the social department will not provide assistance in the case of a single person receiving unemployment benefits above the standard reference rate. In the case of a family, the caseworkers are obliged to pay at least the standard reference rate for the other household members. In such a case, the caseworker controls the willingness of the recipient strictly. Another case might be that the claimant receives 400 € from the public employment service and 200 € from the social department.

> *'Then one could start to think, if he had started to work in this job that the public employment service offered him, then – logically – he would not need any more social assistance. Well, I can think about that; I could stop the benefit altogether, because I say that you would not have needed anything afterwards. He just missed the chance, because he did not keep the controlling appointment. One can tell the effort is relatively low.' (# LA-6)*

In this example, the caseworker emphasizes that each case is different, there are so many different factors to be considered: How often did it happen before? Is it a woman who has to care for a child? In reality, the sanctions a caseworker can impose are up to his or her discretionary decision. One caseworker states that, in general, he does not cut benefit for as long as the public employment service does, six weeks would be too long. In addition, the sanctions do not have to be co-ordinated

with the head of the department (# LA-6). There is no control of the individual discretional power of the caseworker within the social department in Linz. However, the caseworker is aware that due to the financial situation of the recipients, it is not possible to ban them for six weeks from the social assistance benefits too (# LA-6). One respondent has such troubles; the public employment service banned him from his benefits for six weeks, because he did not fulfil the requested three independent applications. Then the bank stopped all the payments due to over-indebtedness and he has to live solely from the social assistance benefit (# L-16).

The workfare policy demands participation in the intermediary sector, which (re-)integrates the social assistance recipients in the social insurance system, who cannot enter the primary labour market easily. As a result, social assistance can lower its costs. The city saves health benefits in the short run and a recipient is entitled to unemployment and pension insurance in the long-term. Despite the cost-containment aspects, another aim is the integration in the labour market and attainment of social interaction with their co-workers targeting long-term benefit receipt leading to a human capital approach for this distinct group of social assistance recipients. However, not all long-term unemployed claimants can enter this programme, it is up to the caseworker and discretionary.

3.2 'I would apply for any position I am capable of doing' - United Kingdom

Tightening eligibility is one of the main attempts to reinforce commodification in the United Kingdom. In addition, administrative reforms aim at a more focused one-to-one support for long-term recipients of benefits. Thus, the efficiency programme only allows for superficial intervention at the beginning of a claim. However, all claimants are aware of their status as 'actively seeking' employment from the first work focused interview onwards. Any customer of the Jobcentre Plus, who applies for contributory or income based Jobseeker's Allowance, has to take part in a work-focused interview and sign a jobseeker's agreement before the claim is valid. The personal adviser has to go through many questions and has to bring the jobseeker's agreement to an end within 40 minutes. The first work-focused interview enforces the claimant's compliance with the regulation. Firstly, the personal adviser asks about, which jobs claimants would like to apply for. Regularly, the claimant's details are in the database and the personal adviser can rely on the information on the computer system. She checks the CV and recommends improvements. Furthermore, he/she reminds the claimant to write three types of CV, for each occupational area a different one. The personal adviser and the claimant have to agree about three occupational areas, which the claimant has to include in his job search (# UKA-2). In case, someone worked in an office as a clerk. The personal advisers ask the claimant, whether he/she would apply for any jobs offered in the public service including the Jobcentre Plus (# UKA-4). Such question constitutes a regular test, whether the person actively looks and is available for any type of job or which kind of occupations they would like too. The occupation codes are typed in the job search-system and the clerk can look up any vacancies in the local job market. However, the claimants can bargain and do not have to accept three occupational codes the personal advisers choose. The scope for negotiations for claimants is rather limited (Wright 2003, 241) and, regularly,

they accept the classification of the work-focused personal adviser. The supervisor states that in certain cases, the personal adviser has the discretion to limit the area someone has to be available for jobs. Nevertheless, from time to time the personal adviser also persuades the claimant not to search for a job in certain areas:

> *'But we match the job to the client's capability - ah, and we have to make sure we know what their capabilities are so that we don't send somebody like that young man we met this morning. He was, he brought along jobs like barperson and kitchen work. He wasn't very clean and obviously to be in a kitchen food hygiene is very important. Bar work - ah, because of the restriction where he is staying they close the doors at half past ten. So like I said to him these are not for you. But has there been jobs the ability he provides or outside cutting the grass working in a park. Than that was more in line for him.' (# UKA-4)*

The next step in a jobseeker's agreement is to define the approaches one has to take every week to find a job. Generally, a recipient of jobseeker's benefit has to take at least two steps towards employment: Depending on the personal situation and experience, one has to apply for a job in person, writing or by phone at least three times a week. Another option is to register with an agency. The personal adviser asks the client, which agencies he/she is registered already with and demands to renew the contact or to register with another company. Of course, the recipient has to look in local newspapers for an appropriate job.

> *'But then it is also - the agreed action that they have to do. So, they have to contact the jobcentre three times a week. They need to buy certain newspapers to help them look for work on a weekly basis. They should be doing job search via the internet. We expect them to hand out their CVs to at least three perspective employers and literally do aim for applying for three jobs. So if the - it is all about approaching companies. It has been proven that 40% of the employers never advertise a vacancy. They rely on people contacting them. Ah, so it is - all the responsibility lies with the customer - it is their responsibility to go and look and find work and to be able to apply for work.' (# UKA-4)*

The claimants regularly have to contact the jobcentre respectively stay in contact with the employment agency, either by looking online, by coming by and searching at the job points or calling 'jobseeker's direct' and asking for job vacancies. As the personal adviser stresses it is the responsibility of the claimant. They cannot rely on the offers of the Jobcentre Plus, but they have to '*actively seek an employment*'. Therefore, they have to pursue different strategies. However, the jobseeker's agreement is not voluntarily. The customer has to sign and, therefore, *'it is compulsory, as much as they got to agree to that, because if they don't agree to it, they may not get any money. They must agree their jobseeker's agreement*' (# UKA-2).

Signing On

Once more, all 'fit for work' recipients have to sign on every fortnight and present their three attempts towards employment, which is stated as a condition in their jobseeker's agreement. The claimants wait on a seat in front of the table of the employment officer. Two job search points are situated left and right of the bench. It is expected that the recipients access the database and look up some offers while they wait for the appointment. The employment officer asks the recipient to take a seat in front of the desk and for the jobseeker's diary. He/she looks at the steps towards work noted and controls, whether the notes reflect the demands of the jobseeker's agreement. The employment officer looks up the database for available vacancies in the three categories of jobs and prints them out. The recipient has to apply for them.

'Ah, well, pretty much we leave in their - it is their responsibility to look for work. Very often ah, it equalizes that they, they are not long-time signing. They usually find something pretty quick. We tend to look at the people who have been signing long period' (# UKA-5)

Within the first period, the level of control and pressure is not existent and the employment officer just rushes through the notes of the recipient and signs the diary of the jobseeker each fortnight. One claimant (# UK-1) states that he does not look just for any three types of employment. He stresses that he does not want to work in a warehouse anymore and, therefore, *'[y]eah, you tell them that, you know, it may be, when you are a little bit younger, you look at that. I don't just want any odd job now, so I am gonna be a little bit more selective, shall we say'*. He knows that he has a certain leeway within the first 13 weeks of unemployment and that the employment officers do not check thoroughly*: 'Not for the first 13 weeks, I am not looking to be unemployed for 13 weeks, or I am not gonna say them. I tell them I have been to the moon you know.'* Not all recipients are satisfied with the kind of treatment, they experience. One young claimant, a university drop out, states that she has not experienced any help within the first six months of employment. She comes and has to sign the on:

'No, you get a three month review, which they check to what sort of jobs I like to pick me up a sort of three but generally signing every two weeks, you don't get any help at all. You sign a piece of paper, you go home. So that's all.' (# UK-7)

Long-term unemployed also have to endure a stronger control process during the signing on. The employment officer takes more time and checks the job search diary thoroughly. '*Yeah, it is about. It depends on how long they have been unemployment. It is either five minutes or ten minutes or a quarter*' (# UKA-2). Each time, the employment officer prints available job offers and the recipient has to apply for those offers. The jobseeker's agreement also constitutes a contract, which can enforce sanctions, when a recipient does not comply with the activities in the agreement. Regularly, the employment officer does not have the leeway to check on claimants. It might be that after some time, a recipient arouses suspicion and an employment officers checks on him/her. '*No, we don't do anything. Well, unless we found a job, if we found them a job and we submit - than we would call the employer to ask if they had applie*d' (# UKA-5). The employment officer cannot stop the benefit on her/his own. The final decision is up to an adjunction officer, who can decide, whether to suspend the benefit. In addition, one can suspend the benefit, when someone is often late for an appointment or misses an appointment without good cause.

Rights and Responsibilities

Part of the jobcentre is the approach of rights and responsibility. The recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance have to do something in return for their benefits, as it puts an end to the '*something for nothing culture'*. The district manager argues that after a certain period the system of rights switches to a system of responsibilities and the number of choices becomes limited.

'But I think again it is the rights and responsibilities and some customers do not understand that if everybody's taxes are paying for that persons' jobseekers' allowance, they should do something to get back into work. They don't understand and they are quite happy on benefit. "thank you very much." Yeah, you have met some of them, so again, it is a very much pressure, it is a pressure approach to get them to take the job. (…) My personal view is that they have had 26 weeks to have that choice, they had six months and they haven't moved into work.' (# UKA-1)

After six months, the clients are beyond choice. One of the respondents reacted very harsh to the requirements of New Deal, he stayed on the benefit for six months and fortnightly 'just show all the job stuff we have done. I just pretend that' (# UK-2). Then, he had to attend the first two-week course of New Deal and travel every morning. During his option period, he could not get a work placement that he liked, but he had no option.

> *'No – I mean they have areas of preference that they are looking for but basically – By the time they get to us they have been out of work for quite some time, they can't afford to be fuzzy as far as the government is concerned, so we aim to find them a job where they want to work. But fair enough – any job.' (# UKNGO-3)*

The clients have to apply for any job, which the New Deal personal adviser or trainer from the option period advises them about. The listing of three areas, which they prefer to work, is no longer relevant. The New Deal personal adviser gives all clients during their gateway period vacancies and they have to go for them, as they might be controlled by the personal adviser and can face a sanction (# UKA-7). During the first interview, the personal adviser confronts the recipient with the New Deal programme and tries to get to know the claimant. He/she talks about job experience, job opportunities, interests, etc. The initial interview takes an hour. The New Deal personal adviser explains the New Deal to the clients and informs them about the consequences, when they do not follow the procedure:

> *'We have got some flyer about New Deal, one is very friendly with all the nice things we can do. And the other one – it is not so friendly. It has no picture on it. There are lot of pictures on the nice on. But – if you don't this – this is what will happen. So people can never say, I wasn't told, I wasn't. Well, we have an hour interview – and we are very honest what is going to happen if you don't. And it happens, we have to stop money because for some people it is the only way that they gonna get on and take control.' (# UKA-8)*

Nevertheless, the first interview should give the claimants all the details about the procedure of New Deal and the rights and responsibilities someone has. One young interviewee, a university drop out, finds the interaction very positive and she has missed the personal interaction and was repellent by the procedure of signing on.

> *'Yeah, fine, it was fine. Yeah, it is nice if you have a little bit more contact with people - usually you just come and sign on every two weeks and you don't have a lot of contact with anyone that can help you, sort of find a job. Ah, but this is a one weekly thing now and we get a lot more around to talk about where you want to go, what you want to do. So it is a lot of going on.' (# UK-7)*

She used to work part-time in the retail sector and wants to look at it again. However, the personal adviser addressed the need to some further training, as the requirements changed. However, the client is dissatisfied with the course offered after six month of job search. '*To be honest, I don't really know why I have to go on a two-week course where they are going to check my CV. And when they want to send me on a course that is fine. But yeah, it does seem a bit pointless.' (# UK-7*). For the New Deal adviser the initial course is essential:

> *'Ah, what we have to decide in that time what is stopping them getting a job. Why? Can we fix them - what we do have is a lot provision to you, if you have confidence issue, is it, they haven't a CV and they can't fulfil on. If they have got six months unemployment, it is a bit worrying because - They should have fixed that time. That is not a lot of help we can give them then.' (# UKA-7)*

After the gateway period, New Deal allows for specific longer programmes. An organisation specialised in training and development of clients to place them into work provides different courses for the district. The New Deal personal adviser refers the claimants to the organisation. The tasked is defined for the trainer to bring the clients back into work.

The New Deal wants to foster a long time experience for clients, when the clients. The clients receive wages and the employer subsidies. '*Because if they do really well in their placement - and they are reliable and you know they work as part of the team.'* (# UKA-7) The New Deal personal adviser calls the clients, when they do their placement to request any difficulties. Nevertheless, only certain New Deal clients can go on a work experience placement, because the provider wants to make sure that such clients are reliable and can actually work.

> *'We try and make sure that they are going to be reliable before we sent them out. The employer always has the opportunity to meet them first.'(# UKNGO-3)*

Generally, work experience placements do not lead to any employment, as the employers do not have the resources to employ another person. Only seldom, a client can get a job at the company. The trainer of the provider agrees with the New Deal personal adviser that clients can obtain a reference, when '*they have done well'*. The New Deal advisers are not satisfied with the options and intensive activity programme (# UKA-7). The choice is rather restricted and there is not another provider in the city. All participants have to travel a lot and that does not increase the motivation of them. The clients in general do not feel supported well at all.

> *'One building, and a lot of people go in, there is a trainer and an adviser, about 20 to 30 people. Ah, if you need help, you ask them. They are happy to help, but not really do anything.' (# UK-8)*

In addition, the local colleges do not provide any training and courses for New Deal. The last tender to contract resulted in a period of two months without any options and intensive activity period and therefore, the New Deal participants had to wait for their course and did not know, which type was available at all (# UKA-8). In addition, the New Deal programme changed a lot since 1998.

> *'New Deal is not that good now as what it used to be. When it first started, there was so much money that different training, college courses, so much in the area of training. And now not as much - because probably of the budget and cut backs. (…).' (# UKA-4)*

During the follow through period, the New Deal client regularly attends interviews with the New Deal personal advisers, who still prints out certain offers for the client and checks his/her emphasises to look for a job. An interesting aspect is that when a claimant completes his/her New Deal and stays on Jobseeker's Allowance that '*the marker will come up again'* (# UKA-7) after 26 weeks. As a result, half a year after the first New Deal programme ended for a client, he/she has to re-enter the programme once more. The trainer of the provider of option programme for the district stresses that some clients attend their courses on a regular basis:

> *'They go through, six, eight months later, they are back again, six, eight months later, they are back again. Some people have been through three, four, five times.' (# UKNGO-3)*

The district manager emphasises that it is the task of the Jobcentre Plus to help people into work, while they are on New Deal. When someone goes through New Deal more than once, the jobcentre has failed its task:

> *'I think we have failed that customer. If people have gone through the New Deal and the New Deal follow through. We have failed that customer and we need to work harder on an individual level with that customer, because we have got lots of intermediaries, who are funded separately from us, who can help in individual cases. My personal view for those customers is that the system has failed them, not the ethos that work is best form of welfare. Even if it is part time work, confidence building etc.' (# UKA-1)*

In case of regular, recurrent New Deal participants, the district manager expects that the local managers should consider those cases and decide in a team, what is best for the client in a case conference with psychologists. Nevertheless, she argues that '*sometimes it is because of the customers not wanting to help themselves and we need then to work with the customer to want them to work to go to work.*' The trainer of the local provider of options for New Deal clients describes the circumstances slightly different.

> *'For a lot of them – then yes, I think it is a good option and they should be at work. There are some who probably shouldn't be, but then they shouldn't be on that scheme. They should be on something else, but obviously getting them on something else is difficult.' (# UKNGO-3)*

Gordon Brown stated in his first budget speech in 1997 that *'[t]here will be no fifth option – to stay at home on full benefit. So when they sign on for benefit they will be signing up for work.*' Nevertheless, there seams to be an alternative available. One is the alternative implicated by the district manager that one can hold a case conference, when a recipient has been through New Deal and could not find an employment. In such a case, the New Deal personal adviser can decide that the recipient on Jobseeker's Allowance can switch to the disability employment adviser instead of going through New Deal once more.

> *'If, I mean they should get the support they need, if we feel that they need more support. Then I do get the disability employment adviser involved (…) If – they do really well with [disability employment adviser] and they attend all the appointment that she makes them with the support. Then there is a way of actually taking them off New Deal, we are excluding them. But they do have to attend the interviews.' (# UKA-7)*

The district manager also acknowledges the strategy that clients with a disability that stops them from employment are channelled to the disability employment adviser (# UKA-1). As each client has only a few days off the programme, otherwise they might face sanctions. The system is designed that someone can go through New Deal a few times without facing any consequences; they just have to follow the regulations and fulfil the demands of the trainers and New Deal personal advisers in the programme.

> *'As long as they attend and they turn up, as long as they are doing what they should be doing – when they get to the end of their time, they have completed what they were asked to do. The money just continues for another six month or so – before they are asked to start again. And go through the system again.' (# UKNGO-3)*

4 Three Ways of 'Conduct of Conduct'

All three administrations display a distinct form of treatment, the poor have to go through a certain procedure and demand their benefit in person. The two Austrian cities exemplify the highly segregated social assistance regime in this country. The Austrian social assistance regime was always treated as 'policy of last resort', as it was not placed only at the margin of society but at the margin of social policy too. In contrast to social insurance related benefits, the claimants had to cope with a distinct administrative procedure. As a benefit of last resort, social assistance has to cope with issues and risks, which are not covered by other social security systems or family and close relatives. The overall societal change also leads to the introduction of workfare or activation regulations. However, all legal regulations still display an individualistic principle enabling a high administrative discretion.

In Britain, the means-tested support system covers a larger part of the population and has reached highly standardised bureaucratic procedures. The customer has a social right and the state provides an 'integrated safety net'. Nevertheless, the welfare reforms of the last decades reduce the principle of an unconditional universalistic support for everyone at one minimum level and the social assistance system is entirely integrated in the Jobcentre Plus. *Bureaucratic assistance* shape the street-level bureaucracy driven by a tight structure. The caseworkers have a certain script, which they follow to determine the claimant's conditions and impose *a culture of 'responsibility'*. The caseworkers stuck to their regulations and go through the workload, discretion is restricted. The 'customers' have a leeway of six months, within this period a 'contract' serves as basis and they are treated as self-responsible citizens. Then, he New Deal introduces compulsory programmes and tighter control for able-bodied long-term unemployed, who will be sanctioned, when they do not attain the programme, and enforces discipline. Planned as an individualistic support, the programme is much standardised and all entrants are treated in a regime with only minor options, they are in a stage 'beyond rights' and with responsibilities. The administration in the Jobcentre Plus is confronted with a client group, who is not employable and attends a New Deal every half a year for half a year. They can exit via the option of a disability employment adviser. Thus, a bureaucratic and restricted system allows for individualised support.

In Linz, the aim of the administration is financial efficiency for the city: *cost containment and individualistic procedure with a paternalistic notch.* The administration focuses on strict work first policy. Long-term recipients enter a harsher regime, as they have to bring ten stamps from companies; otherwise, a benefit payment might be refused until 'cooperation'. Compulsory participation in an employment can be enforced as discretionary mean by the caseworker.

The employment service is responsible for the re-integration of social assistance recipients in Vienna. At the social centre, the recipients have to hand in the registry card with the next appointment at the employment service, when they want to obtain a benefit payment. The social assistance office withdrew from any further compulsion towards job searches. Regularly, claimants are not sanctioned, when they keep their appointments at the employment service. The ideal would be that social assistance takes care of persons, who have severe health conditions and difficult personal

circumstances and re-integrates them slowly into the labour market. Nevertheless, the aim is not an entry quota, which has to be fulfilled, but the sustainability of assistance and social work. Thus, Vienna wants a support system via *social work and income maintenance*.

The rather descriptive part allows us to conduct further analysis. It enables to form a critique on all three forms of street-level practices. In the case of Britain, the nationalised, standardised and equalized system evolves a form of pastoral care within the sovereignty power, which is part of the discourse at the welfare office at least at managerial level. Those clients have to do that, have to obey and have to face rights and responsibilities. In contrast, the street-level bureaucrats allow for slightly different view, the everyday contact with clients bears a lot of work. Certain strategies to ease work are to control less and just go through each case along the script conducting the same sentences again and again. The first phase at the jobcentre is based on low control and low budget, the clients just hand in their booklet every 14 days. The 'contract' with the benefit recipient (called customer) ends with the New Deal, then a more personalised service starts; however, the caseworkers deal with a heavy workload and low resources just serving standardised services and low choices consequently. To work around the strict concept of New Deal, the street-level bureaucrats enable hard to place customers an exit option: the New Deal caseworker for disabled clients. Such options suits both: the caseworkers do not have to deal with hardly employable group of clients and the clients can escape the system of New Deal after years of running in circles. The welfare state is established as a sovereign in that case – with political-juridical regulations on all levels; nevertheless, those rules cannot be obeyed on street level and that level works different. Pastoral care is restricted to a minimum with low resources and low chances. However, the first period of benefit receipt allows the client to self-govern, only those, who cannot enter employment in time, are bound to help of advisers and have to enter training programmes. Regularly, the aspect of control and discipline are reduced to a minimum, only those not capable of becoming economic citizens by themselves will be restricted in their freedom. Nevertheless, the system should be changed towards one taking into account the risk of each claimant to become long-term recipient right at entry of the system.[12]

In contrast, Linz has a well-established system of surveillance and disciplining the clients. The caseworkers know their job description and take on the aim of social assistance and management: cost-containment and deterrent of 'undeserving' clients, only someone really looking for an employment should obtain a benefit. The pastoral care goes beyond the enforcement of a tight and humiliating job search regime. It also enforces work on clients hard to place in a regular employment. Finally, Vienna allows for another form of pastoral care and allows for social work intervention. On one hand, social assistance provides for an unconditional benefit, on the other, it offers options. Thus, the high influx of clients does not allow for the transition of administrative aims on the street-level, restricted by budgetary constraints, only some clients experience good support. Most of them just stick with the benefit. The social assistance office restrains from the enforcement of a stricter conditionality, as it defines itself as office for financial support and social work. The pastoral power should be on voluntary empowerment of the clients and financial security. Job search conditionality is expected as task of the employment service. It is the only example, where the ethos of welfare is established more

[12] Department for Work and Pensions 2008

on rights and freedom and less on obligations and coercion for unemployed.[13] The distinction between Linz and Vienna is not on the legal basis, as both social assistance legislations only slightly differ on some issues, but in practice, social policy is formed on administrative level and street-level more than on formal level. However, the managerial level and street level enhance the same perspective on the issues raised.

Nevertheless, the comparative aspect enables us to focus on the distinction between a traditional two-tier system and a unified system. On one hand it is an individualistic system, whereas the other describes a formalistic, bureaucratic scheme. Individualistic systems do not leave a protective veil on the recipients, but want to display and scrutinize all different personal circumstances of the clients. The bureaucratic scheme just goes with the basic information, as it wants to proceed with the clients according to distinct schemes. Conversely, the unified system in the UK and Linz in Austria are concerned with the work ethic and want to enforce employment on the clients, whereas the Viennese system just wants to maintain social order. Thus, I described how the governing works, why are the clients treated in such way and who they should become on the street-level.

Therefore, I only can conclude that comparative critical studies concerning activation policies should

1) include the street-level perspective – bureaucrats and citizen

2) reconnect that perspective with institutional arrangement and social policy

3) combine governance and governmentality

As one can obtain from the three descriptive accounts of three cities, a critical view of on social policy, on administration has to include the street-level perspective. Which administrations are involved, which categories of clients are established, which categories deal with which administrations and have to face certain conditions and are eligible for what kind of benefits? What is going on that level is essential for the clients – the distinctive form of technologies evolved, the distinctive way of dealing and handling clients might differ a lot. That can be distinct in a country and can be distinct from formal level. Thus, one has to re-connect the results on the implementation level with the perspective on the formal level and the overall social policy. Only then, one can obtain a broader view on the political economy, which is of interest in activation policy, and can tell us more about the ethos of welfare in general.

[13] In addition, the Viennese employment services just enforced minimum conditionality on social assistance recipients, as they were labelled as ‘hardly employable’ and did not receive any benefit of the social insurance scheme.

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