

Title: Responsibility and Employment Policies: a 'Conventionalist' View

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Abstract

Responsibility is a key notion when dealing with employment policies, both from a positive and a normative economic viewpoint. A *collective responsibility* is of course implied by the action of the state. More precisely, the action of the state develops a normative model of public intervention and a definition of the respective roles of the actors. Thus, this public action also delimitates a sphere of *individual responsibility*, by defining the rights and duties of (potential) recipients.

Our analysis is 'conventionalist' in the sense that, following previous works of this French heterodox school (see for instance Boltanski and Thévenot, 1983 or Desrosières, 1998), it postulates that people know the society they live in. They therefore know what they can expect from the state – and reciprocally, what the state can legitimately expect from them. In particular, the normative model defined above is made public through continuous public action and social interactions. A plurality of forms of coordination, or 'convention of the state' can therefore be identified (Storper and Salais, 1997).

Focusing on two concrete schemes of public action – the European Employment Strategy and the French Youth Reception Network –, we will assess the responsibilities they define, and the normative model of 'public action' associated to them. But in order to do so, one needs normative criteria, and many are on offer (see Fleurbaey, 1995, Cohen, 1990 and Arneson, 1989). Here, we use the criterion of effective freedom of choice and capabilities development, as proposed by Sen (see for example Sen, 1985).

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