

## Going beyond Work-First and Human Capital Approaches to Employability: the Added-Value of the Capability Approach<sup>1</sup>

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### 1 Introduction: activation and active labour market policies

In the last 15 years, several researches have investigated the impact of the shift towards a more active welfare state on the redefinition of labour market policies (Eichhorst, Kaufmann, & Konle-Seidl, 2008; Lodemel & Trickey, 2000).

Researches dealing with supply side ALMPs mainly adopted a dualistic typology: on the one hand the welfare-to-work or work-first (WF hereinafter) approach based on quick and cost-effective reintegration in the labour market (Bruttel & Sol, 2006; Nicaise, 2002; Peck & Theodore, 2000); on the other hand, a human capital (HC hereinafter) oriented approach known for its emphasis on education and training in developing people’s capacity to go back to work.

In both typologies the evaluation of employability policies is often done looking at quantitative objectives (Lodemel & Trickey, 2000). However, these evaluative methods cannot fully address the quality and the extent of individualisation claimed by employability policies. In particular, they account for individual heterogeneity and needs from a labour market perspective; thus they aim at modifying individual behaviours and individual differences in order to match labour market rules instead of answering to individual needs.

The process of individualisation of employability policies necessarily requires developing an idea of the “welfare subject” that informs institutional actions. If in the past social benefits were granted to an impersonal category of “deviant” people outside the system of production (the unemployed, the disabled...)(Gazier, 1999), in the active welfare state interventions bring the individual back at the heart of the social action (Franssen, 2003). The question of the « welfare subject » - i.e. the ideas, concepts, anthropological and social features at the foundation of the conception of the beneficiary of public policies - is of crucial importance in the design and implementation of policies. Again, the two well-known typologies of WF and HC approaches provide interesting perspectives, but mostly on the expected outcomes of policies: a prompt return to the labour market or developing skills and addressing individual barriers to work (Lindsay et al. 2007).

Moreover, when analysing labour market policies under these perspectives, the way in which institutions and recipients are actually making use of the instruments available, the normative and social construction of the welfare subject and their translation into the idea of employability are less investigated.

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These divergences in implementation are likely to be increased by two trends: the decentralisation of new social policies (Jean- Michel Bonvin & Conter, 2006; Evers, Forreiter, Kotlenga, & Schulz, 2007; Finn, 2000; Hamzaoui, 2003) and the introduction of managerial organisational approaches (Considine & Lewis, 2010).

Local actors have been increasingly involved in the delivery of employment programmes which gives them enlarged discretion (Finn, 2000). This trend mainly aims at bringing public action closer to target population in order to better respond to their (contextualised) needs and increase efficiency in service provisions. Efficiency and effectiveness of labour market programmes have been also targeted with the introduction of management techniques, namely management by objectives and performance targets as well as introducing private actors in employment and training service provision.

Hence, any analytical tool used to investigate the quality and the extent of individualisation embedded in employability policies should be suitable for analysing both the cognitive assumptions informing social problems and the implementation processes.

The CA (Nussbaum and Sen 1993) is introduced here with the aim of providing an analytical tool to highlight the (socially constructed) idea of employability informing policy choices. It is argued that the CA helps identify the quality and the extent to which existing opportunities are actually made available to “activated” welfare recipients.

The CA is believed to account for the relationship between individuals and the institutional, social and environmental structure they act in, thus taking into account that the relation between individuals and the welfare state has dramatically changed (Jean-Michel Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006).

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 shortly introduces the Capability Approach and elaborates the three ideal-types of employability; section 3 explains differences across the three typologies; finally, the conclusions take stock of the advantages of the analytical tool.

## **2 The Capability Approach as an analytical tool for investigating individualisation**

The CA stems from the dissatisfaction with conventional concepts and measurements of human well-being on the level of subjective states and command over resources as concepts of well-being or (in)equality (Gasper, 2007; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; A. K. Sen, 1979; K. A. Sen, 1999).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the CA is not an explanatory theory of equality and welfare, but rather an evaluative framework of different policies and institutional arrangements (Robeyns, 2005; Verd & López, 2011).

The CA argues that equality of (primary) resources is not enough to ensure that all people have the same opportunities to reach a certain level of effective well-being and agency freedom, which contributes to a general level of equality among the members of a community.

When used for assessing institutional arrangement or policy practices, the Capability Approach calls for a twofold analysis considering both the personal situation of the individual

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<sup>2</sup> For a short overview of the different fields of application of the CA see Bussi, M., & Dahmen, S. (2012). When ideas circulate. A walk across disciplines and different uses of the ‘capability approach’. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 18(1), 91-95.

regarding the issue at stake (for example achieving decent working conditions) and the surrounding opportunity structure (i.e. all the alternative choices and set of choices that people are actually able to achieve).

Thus, the CA pays particular attention both to outcomes (functionings) and the process favouring or hindering these achievements. In this sense, employability would not just equal labour market participation, but would also include individuals' capacity of achieving well-being and agency freedom. This calls for investigating the implementation phases of labour market policies that are supposed to support and foster employability. In fact, it is at the very moment of implementing policies at the street level that one can assess on what kind of normative idea of employability those policies are actually based and to what extent this idea is in line with a CA-friendly conception of employability.

### *The capability set and functionings*

It seems important to start introducing the idea of capability set and functionings that are central to the Capability Approach. The concept of capability can be conceived, according to de Muck, as developed around three fundamental dimensions: capability as choice, capability as human flourishing and capability as functionings (Munck 2008b).

De Munck explains that the idea of capability is strictly connected with the idea of choice and the freedom of the actor of making that choice and using her rationality in doing that. The freedom and the rationality of choice put the individual capability in the wider social context within which people act (A. Sen, 2010): both freedom and the use of individual rationality imply an opportunity structure and a process dimension. The first represents the range of possibilities the person can actually choose among, while the process dimension refers to actual freedom in making that choice (i.e. Was the person entitled and free to make that choice autonomously? and is the person's choice recognised?). The idea of capability as process of choice embraces the individual dimension as well as the relation between the individual and the society within which the person makes her choices. This idea of freedom can be situated in a work-related framework can be translated into the freedom to have decent employment, to choose if a part or full time job, or have access to training and opportunities of career development (Bonvin and Farvaque 2007b)

Capability conceived as human flourishing implies that the intrinsic freedom of choice should be geared towards, as an ultimate societal goal, to human development. Human flourishing is identified with "reaching valuable doings and beings" that refer to the concepts of wellbeing and agency. Freedom of wellbeing represents the capability set of a person related to alternative personal dimensions of wellbeing (personal wellbeing but also more complex dimensions of wellbeing referring to sympathy towards others' wellbeing), while freedom of agency relates to the capability to act and to pursuit one's goals which are not only for the personal sake (e.g.: demonstrating in favour of others' people freedom) (Robeyns, 2003). In a work-related perspective, an example of personal dimension of wellbeing would be job satisfaction (Lessmann and Bonvin 2011); another example would be the freedom of choosing to combine family care with paid employment. The importance of the scope of freedom of choice (capability as choice), and the aim of this freedom (capability as human flourishing) is completed by the dimension of real achievements: capability as functionings. In fact the extent of freedom of choice (process dimensions and entitlement) and opportunity of choice (the opportunity structure) should be analysed conjunctly with person's real achievements, or functionings. This means that the freedom of choice among valuable opportunities should be

translated into valuable functionings (real achievements) by the individual in order to achieve human flourishing (the ultimate aim). The importance of translating possible choices into real accomplishments is at the hearth of the capability approach to inequalities. Thus, it is crucial to evaluate whether institutional arrangements actually provide opportunity structures as well as conversion factors to individuals.

#### *Resources and factors of conversion*

Choices can be made only if alternatives are available. The set of alternatives is determined by resources available. Commodities - i.e. material and immaterial resources that the person has control over, such as economic resources, technologies, educational qualifications - play an important role as “instruments” for human freedom (Robeyns, 2005). Nonetheless, these instruments can become empty boxes if they cannot be exploited and they do not ensure people’s capability to achieve the life they value. The analysis of conversion factors usually makes reference to the personal, social or institutional/environmental features that facilitate (or impede) the use of one’s resources (Robeyns 2005). Robeyns provides some examples of conversion factors: personal conversion factors are the metabolism, sex, intelligence, etc; social conversion factors include public policies, power relations, gender roles, and discriminating practices, etc; while environmental conversion factors can be identified, for instance, with the geographical location or the infrastructure facilities (Robeyns, 2005).

Personal conversion factors in an ALMP-related context can be the knowledge of a foreign language that gives access to increased employment opportunities. A (lacking) social conversion factor can be discrimination against workers with an immigrant background, that hinders his/her hiring or her/his participation in training. For instance, if a young migrant has all the required skills to get the job but recruiting practising are discriminatory, then the potential choice s/he could make is no longer there: a social conversion factor represented by a hindering social behaviour hampers the realisation of having the job (realising an alternative set of valued capability) (An empirical example on training opportunities can be found in (Corteel & Zimmermann, 2007)

#### *Public action and the informational basis of judgement in justice in the capability approach*

From a capability perspective, public institutions are meant to increase the space of capabilities and eliminate or, at least, reduce those barriers to the achievements of freedoms (enabling/empowering State (Farvaque, 2002). This can be done for example via the creation of “instrumental freedoms” (that are freedoms which facilitate the conversion of material and immaterial resources (K. A. Sen, 1999), such as access to income support, accessible social services (e.g. school, health system) which aim at supporting a kind of economic growth which goes beyond a mere accumulation of wealth; but rather allows the achievement of individual valuable doings and beings (Farvaque, 2010).

Creating services or providing benefits and resources that are usually scarce imply regulations of access requirements (often facts or information as they are esteemed quantifiable) and possible acceptable scenarios. This process implies that a judgement is made upon the pieces of information collected takes place whenever a new request is introduced. Further, the definition of what kind of information is asked and used is embedded and shaped both in the social definition of the problem as well as by the institutional environment (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

In welfare programmes, welfare bureaucrats need to know what kind of information to collect in order to take a decision whether to grant a benefit or provide a service rather than another. The information gathered in order to judge is called informational basis of judgment in justice by Sen (Amartya Sen, 1990).

The role played by the informational basis of judgement in justice is particularly important as it defines the factual territory of justice, i.e. the selection, implicitly or explicitly, of certain types of information used to assess people Sen (quoted in (Jean-Michel Bonvin & Farvaque, 2005).

If we were to make an example with ALMPs we would expect that welfare programmes with a WF approach adopt an idea of employability including only the individual capacity of being employed regardless individual preferences, attitudes and capacities. The information used by public actors to judge whether this person is employable would be rather incomplete as it will be strictly limited to the identification of physical impediments to work. Similarly, in welfare services adopting a HC approach, the emphasis on the economic return from a specific training would take over the intrinsic value and individual motivation to learn (Saito, 2003). The informational basis has thus a crucial role to play: it significantly contributes to determining the scope of freedom of choice that is guaranteed to people as well as the way in which implementing actors will use these pieces of information (Jean-Michel Bonvin & Farvaque, 2005).

Building on the idea of opportunity structure, the capability approach informs an idea of employability that develops from a constant and effective interplay between individuals, and private, social and public partners, mediated by proper institutions and laws.

The analytical grid below is drawn on examples and theoretical developments found in the existing research on work-first and human capital employability active labour market programmes as well as the suggested operationalization of the CA for individualised active labour market policies by Sirovatka (2007).

The suggested dimensions take into account all useful elements identified by previous researches and the dimensions of analysis overlooked by the WF and HC approach, but that become relevant when applying the CA to active labour market policies – in this specific case – but to welfare policies in a broader sense. Further, these dimensions are considered crucial analytical components of the “informational basis of judgement in justice”, on which services are shaped and delivered to recipients.

Hence, these dimensions are meant to contribute to unveiling the underlying normative idea of employability in welfare programmes and the way in which this is implemented namely by looking at:

1. The *overall rationale* informing the programme/policy goal in order to identify which is the stated normative perspective adopted.
2. The *causes of unemployment* and *the conception of the individuals*, as well as to what extent are individuals born responsible. This helps understand how the target population is defined and what negative or positive reward is associated with it. As explained by Schneider and Ingram (Schneider & Ingram, 1993) the social

construction of target populations has an impact on policy implementers and on the actual design of the policy.

3. The *intervention model* and the *use of policy tools* and their (discretionary) use in relationship with individual situations. This stems from the acknowledgment that street-level bureaucrats tend to ‘play’ with rules either to conciliate request from claimants with formal requirements (e.g. personal situations of claimants that might not be considered as acceptable) either because they have to find a moral compromise between their professional aim and the externally imposed objectives (e.g. helping people vs reducing the number of welfare claimants) (Lipsky, 2010)
4. The *relationship with the labour market* and with other *relevant institutions* in order to shed light of the involvement of other (social) actors and on the opportunity structure created to deliver services. This draws from the idea that the opportunity structure from a beneficiary can benefit does not only lie on individual’s ability and resources but also on what the institutional environment is able to offer.
5. The *time perspective* is considered as fundamental from a capability perspective mainly for two reasons: 1) individuals might need time to be able to capitalise on their resources and skills 2) individuals might need to reverse their life and working choices (Anxo & Erhel, 2006).

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES			
	Work first	HC	CA
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Facilitating quick return in the labour market</p> <p>Lowering the number of benefits recipients (economic rationale)</p>	<p>Improving skills, health and personal development in order to contribute to increased economic return at individual and aggregate level and improve employability understood individual economic performance.</p> <p>Accumulation of economic and physical resources in the long run.</p>	<p>Improving personal, professional and social integration and promoting favourable and sustainable transition to the labour market considering needs and aspirations.</p> <p>Targeting social justice objectives (inter-individual perspective) and social cohesion (macro-objective) (social justice rationale of public action. Not merely accumulation of economic and physical resources but of real opportunities.</p>
<b>Conception of the welfare subject/ Locus of responsibility</b>	<p>Mainly lack of motivation, working ethics and meaningful working experience</p> <p>Tackling macroeconomic problem from an individual perspective</p> <p>Responsibility lays on individuals as they have to repair for the lack of competitiveness</p> <p>Individuals maximise utility in the short term (neoclassical perspective: work as a disutility) and thus likely victim of moral hazard and dependent on benefits</p> <p>Passive recipients of activation measure, expected to comply with what has been prescribed</p> <p>Culture of poverty</p>	<p>Mainly lack of skills needed in the market or lack of recognised qualification (skills-mismatch)</p> <p>Tackling macro-economic problems (skills-mismatch) with individual measures</p> <p>Responsibility shared among individuals, institutions and the society in a regime of mutual obligations and supposedly mutual control.</p> <p>Maximising utility in the longer term and reaping economic returns from increased skills</p> <p>S/he is expected to value education and training in a logic of life-long learning and in adaptation with the labour market needs</p> <p>Well-being freedom and no agency freedom.</p> <p>Informed actor</p> <p>Promoting lifelong learning</p>	<p>Multidimensionality of causes dealing with personal, social and institutional factors, lack of endowments, lack of real access to certain resources and conversion factors.</p> <p>Responsibility shared among individuals, institutions and the society. Responsibility is assessed not only considering resources (theoretically available) but also identifying individual/social/institutional and environmental barriers that are can hinder real agency and freedom in choice.</p> <p>Achieving what s/he values in terms of agency and being (<i>capability for work</i>)</p> <p>Considered as a person with “thick needs” which are needed if a person is to flourish in opposition to “thin” needs which are strictly linked with survival.</p> <p>Considered as a person capable of practical reasoning</p> <p>Intrinsic and instrumental role of work and of education.</p>
INSTRUMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION			
<b>Intervention model</b>	<p>Low cost intervention by unit: short-term training</p> <p>Intense job search</p> <p>Focus on immediate activity</p> <p>Standardised practices especially via computerisation and imposed guidelines (limited autonomy of front-line workers)</p> <p>Clear and strict objectives</p> <p>Strong conditionality of monetary benefits</p>	<p>Formal entitlement supporting long-term training</p> <p>Integrated with other social services (education and health) aiming at reaching economic integration</p> <p>Individual job-coaching (job search and personal working development plan)</p>	<p>Formal and actual entitlement supporting the enrolment on long-term and quality training</p> <p>Holistic approach to individual situation</p> <p>Attention to people’s needs of work and life balance and (career) aspirations as well as competences</p> <p>Adequate amount and duration of benefits throughout transitions period which shelter from poverty and social exclusion.</p> <p>Flexible arrangements and possibility of reshaping</p>

			project according to changing personal, social and environmental conditions
<b>Use of tools and relationship with individuals</b>	Extensive use of sanctions Sanctions used to incentive the taking up of available jobs Use of action plans not negotiable and with limited options Low discretion and strongly standardised procedures Positive views about ICT and computerisation of practices Paternalistic approach Lack of time for dealing with coaching due to huge workload of front-line workers	Encourages participation by demonstrating benefits of high quality opportunities Trust-related approach and more flexible use of training opportunities Recipients are considered as clients and able to pursuing their economic advantage Use of ITC tools to monitor “objectively” performance of training and skills acquisition	No actual use (or very limited) of sanctions Encourage participation by demonstrating benefits to the person (long-term) project. Trust-related approach/partnership Negotiated contracts between institutions and the recipient based mutual engagements that keep into account the power relationships between individuals and service delivers Action plans that set reversible objectives <i>capability for voice</i> Providing beneficiaries with all possible information
<b>Institutions involved</b>	Not long-term collaboration with other institutions providing other types of services. Might have collaboration with private companies/agencies/NGOs dealing with job search and short training activities. Strong top-down approach and objectives and performance-oriented management. No integrated policies with other services	Cooperation with other institutions usually locally based which provide different services  Trainings are usually shaped according to market needs	Possibility to easily create new partnerships so as to answer people’s training/social and personal needs  No constraints from top-down or internal performance targets. If they exist they have an monitoring and not sanctioning use
<b>Relationships with the demand side</b>	Financial top-ups to incentive job entry (make work pay) Focused on short-term skills needs in the market Regular market is preferred Macro perspective : strong accent on supply-side intervention for fostering employability without intervening directly on the demand side (with investments)	Financial incentive to companies guarantee on-the-job training or job coaching for people in training (collaboration for setting up training)  Preference for regular market	Providing sheltered employment opportunities if necessary  Employers are often involved in providing access to professional or training activities (“intern”/training)
<b>Time perspective</b>	Short time perspective both in terms of service provided and benefit duration	Medium to long time perspective both in terms of service provided and benefit duration	Time perspective depending on people’s needs and aspiration (forward looking) and on benefits duration
<b>EMPLOYABILITY</b>	<b>Market/functional employability</b>	<b>Fostering employability</b>	<b>Enabling employability</b>

Source: own elaboration based on examples and theoretical developments elaborated in (Becker, 2009; Dean, 2003; Dif-Pradalier, Rosenstein, & Bonvin, 2012; Farvaque & Oliveau, 2004; Lindsay, McQuaid, & Dutton, 2007; Pohl & Walther, 2007; Sirovátka, 2007)



### **3 Work-first, Human Capital and the Capability Approach: differences and similarities among ideal-types**

The grid above is composed of two parts: the first part identifies the objectives and the principles underpinning employability policies; the second part focuses on the instruments and implementation features.

The idea is to both identifying those elements that allow qualifying quality of the individualisation and the instruments that social policy actors would use when implementing a certain typology of employability policy.

The grid focuses on the institutional capacity of delivering employability policies and it highlights the relevant dimensions of the public policy action that distinguish the three approaches.

#### *The rationale*

The rationale of these ideal-types can be imagined as composed of two focuses: a macro and a micro goal, the first focusing on goals at the aggregate level, the latter setting aims that imply actions on individuals. Therefore, on the one hand, the macro goal of WF policies is based on an economic rationale aiming at coping with scarce human and financial resources available to social services (Theodore and Peck 2001). The micro economic focus, in line with the macro perspective, is to find the fastest way of bringing recipients back into the labour market (Theodore and Peck 2001).

On the other hand, the HC approach and the CA tend to extend their macro-economic objective and to take the personal perspective more into consideration.

From a macro-economic perspective the main objective of a human capital approach is reducing the mismatch between skills supplied and demanded, while, at the same time, ensuring better and long lasting employment opportunities (Theodore and Peck 2001).

HC is a step towards a more individual-centred conception of labour market outcomes because it includes an individual perspective on the economic and physical return (Becker 2009), although overlooking the freedom of wellbeing and agency that go beyond the simple satisfaction of needs. For instance, the HC approach to education and labour market is mainly concerned with “activities that increase resources in people” (Becker 2009: 11). Resources are only meant in terms of both economic and physical return.

Also the CA includes the development of skills as a central feature; however, at the individual level, skills acquired are not only useful for increasing job opportunities or accumulation of economic and physical resources (functional aspects)(Becker, 2009; Robeyns, 2006), but also per se (i.e. intrinsic value of education,(Saito, 2003).

The CA seems to add some crucial dimension to the human capital approach: 1. it considers the process leading the accumulation of these resources by paying particular attention to those potential – social, environmental, institutional - barriers or facilitating factors that influence the process. 2. It also widens the idea of resources and embraces the notion “agency” freedom (i.e. the freedom of individuals to make realise choice they value); thus evolving from a resourcist approach to a freedom and agency perspective. 3. It includes a social justice

perspective that takes into account the diversity of individual needs for reaching valued functionings (achievements) and advocates for the democratic active participation of individuals both in public debates and decisions.

At a macro perspective, the CA also extends its focus on social justice objectives which implies an inter-individual equality of real opportunities and aim at social cohesion (Farvaque & Oliveau, 2004).

### *The conception of the welfare subject*

WF policies assume that individuals maximise their utility and are victims of moral hazard as living on (generous) benefits can be more economically convenient than working (this is particularly the case for low-paid temporary and part-time jobs). Beneficiaries are mainly seen as “recipients” of a policy measure and not really as participants.

In contrast, the HC approach conceives individuals as interested in maximising their employment opportunities in the long term via sound investments in skills development and training, in spite of the fact that the rewarding might not be reaped immediately. A wider perspective on overall individual wellbeing is necessary as skills development can take place when the person is facing emotionally and socio-economic distressing situations. However, the person is still supposed to be informed on possible alternatives and to think rationally of what skills are needed in the labour market and which opportunities are more economically rewarding than others.

With the overarching aim of guaranteeing equality of real opportunity, the CA adopts a life-perspective that respects the diversity of biographical situations. On the one hand, it argues that public actions can only genuinely back individual biographies by taking into account empirical individuals (and not hypothetical), with (self)-interpretations, motives, aspirations, but also emotional, practical, and cognitive competences (Ziegler, 2011). On the other hand, it stresses the importance of providing social, institutional and environmental conversion factors that support individual’s biographies.

These different rationales and approaches to the welfare subject also differently shape the share of individual and public responsibility: from a WF perspective it is the individual who has to cater for their lack of competitiveness; from a HC and CA approach the responsibility is shared between the individual, public institutions and the society. Going beyond these positions, the CA stresses the importance to have recipients entitled to formal rights, equipped with enough resources and factor of conversion before considering them accountable for their choice (Salais, 2004).

### *Instruments and implementation*

Concerning the dimension of instruments and implementation, there are some main differences distinguishing a WF approach from a HC and CA.

The use of sanction is one of them: sanctions are expected to be more often used in the WF, namely due to stricter constraints and conditionality. The discretionary power of front-line agents is another fundamental element characterising these approaches: WF employability policies, due to their emphasis on economic performance, provide lower discretionary power to front-line agents who need to ensure a certain number of caseload treatment. Conversely,

the HC and CA approaches are expected to provide wider room for manoeuvre as they account for aspirations, competences and interests, personal and social resources which are meant to help the person towards a training, employment or life project. However, a distinction can be drawn between the HC and CA approach: the latter is expected to create a more flexible and balanced relationship between the public/private provider and the recipients, who are free to express their voice and to actively shape their life or professional project and contribute to the process (i.e. capability for voice (Jean-Michel Bonvin & Farvaque, 2005)).

The relationship with the labour market also marks other differences among approaches: the WF tends to promote a complete adaptation of the workforce to labour demand requirements; the HC approach privileges the focus on training even if the kind of training that is suggested shaped on market's needs. From a CA perspective, the public action and public institutions should not only act on the supply side but also on the demand side, for example mediating with employers (formally or informally) whose requirements are inappropriate thus contributing to a negative hiring practices (tendency to ask for overqualified young people so as to avoid people from migrant background). Moreover the CA would considers also involving employers, employee associations as well as the recipients themselves in the design and delivery of training since it is a shared social commitment that should be built.

Moreover, there are two dimensions of time to consider when analysing employability programmes: a first one deals with the reversibility of the actions taken, the second one refers to the time-frame within the action plan and its measures are scheduled. WF approach privileges a prompt integration in the labour market, this means that the time perspective adopted is necessarily short and limited and there is no time enough for revising medium/long term action plans. This is also imposed by granting short-time and strongly decreasing unemployment or social assistance benefits based on the idea that this increase job take-up and exits from welfare. The HC embraces a medium to long time perspective mainly in line with the time-frame needed for acquiring new skills and competences. The same goes for benefits duration which is decreasing but a slower pace than in WF policies. The CA promotes broader individual projects that might touch upon other aspects (health, education, socialization) that need different time horizons as well as the possibility of reversing the order of steps of the activation programmes. The reversibility of life and professional plans is particularly relevant when the social situation is instable. The possibility to change and modify plans goes with the 'capability for voice': the formal or informal actual opportunity that the person has to be "incorporated into the judgement that local actors operate" (Bonvin and Farvaque 2005). Similarly, rights to benefits cannot be lost easily and alternative safety nets exit to avoid entering the vicious cycle of economic and social exclusion.

Finally it can be said that the WF approach aims at reaching "*functional employability*": meaning an employability that is meant to ensure a return to the labour market – put it a bit bluntly - no matter in what way. Individual employability is thus functional either to respond to the market needs either to help public organisations to comply with their performance objectives.

The HC approach would instead promote a "*fostering employability*" meaning that it aims at providing people with basic resources (training, skills) that are meant to increase people chances to improve their job and employment positions.

The CA is targeting an “*enabling employability*”, this means that the public institutions involved in the delivery of employability policies will provide both resources and factors of conversion (thus create the social, personal – to the extent of possible – and environmental arrangements) that make the set of opportunities available to individuals valuable and possible. Individuals would then be able to make and being responsible for the choices they value.

#### 4 Conclusions

The evaluation of employability policies can be limited to quantitative outcomes; however this approach – mainly adopted by the HC and the WF approaches – is narrowly focused and overlooks the quality and the extent to which the implementation of individualisation is actually real and suitable for reaching individual’s wellbeing and agency.

The paper aimed at highlighting that the CA can provide an evaluative framework of individualisation in a two-fold way: firstly by unveiling what idea of employability is behind employability policies namely by using the Institutional Basis of Judgement in Justice and analysing it under its “objective and implementation” dimensions presented in the grid. Secondly, by using the CA as a benchmark for assessing the quality of individualisation of active labour market policies measured in terms of their compliance with the CA goals. This is done by elaborating an ideal-type CA-friendly employability policy based on the CA building blocks and previous theoretical implementations.

These two analytical steps lead to the analysis of the institutional capacity of social welfare institutions of building the opportunity structure needed for individuals to achieve increased capabilities in the field of work. This was done by spelling out the dimensions of public action towards individualisation should be assessed on.

Further, using the CA as a yardstick for evaluating employability policies helps underline the differences of “rationale and implementation” across approaches that might be overlooked in outcome-oriented evaluations.

Firstly, the quality of individualisation is studied by refocusing on individual’s needs, aspirations and functionings. It goes beyond the instrumental idea of individualisation of policies as an effective policy design to reach more and better results at the aggregate level (e.g. more people into employment) as sought by the WF and HC approaches.

Secondly, reflecting on how resources, instruments and relationships among relevant actors are implementing gives a wider evaluative perspective on how public action actually contributes to enhancing the opportunity structure.

These two dimensions - the quality and the scope of individualisation - are summarised in diverse approaches to employability with different rationales and divergent implementation processes. These approaches to employability were labelled: *functional*, *fostering* and *enabling employability*, associated respectively with Work-First, Human Capital and Capability Approach to policies.

Finally the grid is not only an evaluative tool that allows investigating the normative underpinning of employability process, but it might also serve as a policy developer tool or prospective instruments for the design of welfare to work policies based on individualisation

of welfare services aiming at human flourishing, equality of capabilities and aiming at enabling individuals to reach valued being and doing (Alkire, 2008).

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