BUILDING ACTIVE WELFARE STATES

HOW POLICY SHAPES CASEWORKER PRACTICE

DEBORAH RICE

Building active welfare states:
How policy shapes caseworker practice

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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

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ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. F.A. van der Duyn Schouten,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
op woensdag 25 februari 2015 om 13.45 uur
in de aula van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

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geboren te Stuttgart, Duitsland

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AA	Assistant Adviser
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
COV	Co-Variational Analysis
CPT	Causal Process-Tracing
DA	Disability Adviser
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESF	European Social Fund
EVS	European Values Study
FA	Financial Assessor
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LAB	*Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats* (Act on an Active Employment Policy)
LAS	*Lov om aktiv socialpolitik* (Act on an Active Social Policy)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLP	Neuro-Linguistic Programming
NPM	New Public Management
NUTS	Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Personal Adviser
PES	Public Employment Service
PhD	Philosophiae Doctor
SLB	Street-Level Bureaucracy
SUWI	*Wet structuur uitvoeringsorganisatie werk en inkomen* (Work and Income Implementation Structure Act)

UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
UWV	*Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen* (Employee Insurances Institute)
VNG	*Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten* (Association of Dutch Municipalities)
WIJ	*Wet investeren in jongeren* (Act Investing in Young People)
WIW	*Wet inschakeling werkzoekenden* (Act on the Insertion of Jobseekers)
WSW	*Wet sociale werkvoorziening* (Sheltered Employment Act)
WWB	*Wet werk en bijstand* (Work and Social Assistance Act)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As most PhD students will recognize, the greatest challenge in any PhD project is the formulation of a 'good' research question. When I started my PhD trajectory at VU University Amsterdam in 2009, I naively thought that I could skip this part of the scientific process because I became part of a larger research project that already assigned a specific sub-topic to me. However, as time went by and I started to delve deeper into the literature on active labour market policies (ALMPs), I began to realize that things would not be as easy as I had thought and that I had to modify my research topic in order to find a good fit, as my colleague Hidde Rinze Koornstra would put it, between my own personality, curiosity and academic interest, the limited timeframe available to me, the topics that promised to be of interest to a wider academic and practitioner community, and the formal agreements made with our funding agency.

Instead of beginning this introduction by way of presenting my research question as if it had always been set in stone or as if it had been borne exclusively from theoretical considerations (two harmless lies that we academics have become all too used to telling each other), I will introduce my research topic and question by outlining the bumpy road that lead up to it. Being a reflective post-modern individual, I realize that it may be risky to provide the readers of this work with a manual to detecting the weak points in my research design all the more quickly. However, being also an idealist, I trust that honestly and openly outlining my initial struggle with my own topic of research will make this dissertation a less artificial and more living document in the end, and the findings of my research more weather-proof and robust.[1]

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1   See Appendix 1 for some serious and humorous support for my approach to scientific honesty.

1.1 The rocky path towards a 'good' research question

The initial idea behind my research project was to study local networks among public and private actors providing job insertion services to unemployed citizens in three countries: the Netherlands, Denmark, and Great Britain. However, after one year of reading and thinking about the various elements of this topic, I reached two conclusions that caused me to go in a different direction. Most importantly perhaps, I realized that the case selection has grave implications for the analytical level on which one expects to find the answers to one's scientific puzzle, as well as for the methodologies one can or cannot apply in solving that puzzle. To elaborate, if one decides to study hybrid activation governance arrangements across three countries representing different "welfare regimes" (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999), this already presupposes that supra-national welfare-regime logics are expected to shape local activation governance to a very significant degree (with each of the country cases shedding more light on the exact nature of that relationship) or conversely, that welfare-regime logics have no influence whatsoever on local activation governance (with all three country cases displaying similar hybrid governance arrangements). Neither of those two 'radical' presuppositions seemed realistic to me and besides, I felt that many intermediate factors are potentially of influence on local governance structures that could impossibly be accommodated and controlled for within a cross-country qualitative research design – yet that I wanted to do qualitative research was certain to me. The first rite of passage in my initiation process as a scientist therefore consisted in the following insight: The sample selection automatically has repercussions on the research questions that one can or cannot answer, as well as for the methodologies that one can or cannot apply in answering the answerable ones of those research questions. Therefore, one cannot formulate a good research question without first gaining a thorough understanding of methodological issues – something that most PhD students probably underestimate at the beginning of their projects, and I certainly did.

The second rite of passage I had to undergo consisted in the realization that in qualitative research at least, one cannot formulate a good research question without first having caught a glimpse of 'how things really work' in practice. I learned this lesson the hard way when after having read piles of academic literature on activation, welfare regimes and welfare governance, I finally visited a number of Dutch reintegration companies in early 2010. During those visits, the activation governance story that unfolded before my scientific eye was one in which both public and private actors were investing much time and monetary resources into learning about each other's 'ways of doing things', eliminating cognitive barriers and building open and trust-based communication channels while simultaneously improving formal cooperation procedures, e.g. via relational contracting or the design of activation modules that municipalities can purchase separately and

combine freely (cf. Bertelli and Smith 2010; Bovaird 2006; Plantinga, De Ridder and Corra 2011; for a purely conceptual discussion of the relationship between identity, trust and collaboration, see Rice 2014). It therefore seemed to me that the most salient issue to study about public-private activation arrangements was not the comparative question of how such arrangements vary across countries or even supra-national welfare regimes, but rather the anthropological question of how public and private actors learn to cooperate with each other while continuously adapting their identities, strategies and organizational procedures in that process. Such a research question would have called for a single-country rather than cross-country research design, not only because I would have had to spend much time at each research site to grasp the subtleties of the relevant interactive processes but also because adding country or even supra-national welfare-regime differences to my observations would have created too much noise in the collected data. However, since I had deliberately applied for my PhD position because I wanted to do comparative research, switching to a single-country research design was not an option for me. So here I was, a second-year PhD student, having just learned that I had waited too long with exposing my theoretical notions about 'activation governance' and 'hybridity' to the scrutiny of daily reality. How was I to go forward?

Knowing that I had limited time to finish my project, for which reason I had to start preparing my empirical data collection without much further delay, I took a pragmatic decision – the third important step in my scientific initiation process. Laying out before me the literature strands that I already knew reasonably well, the elements of my original research question that I definitely wanted to keep due to my personal research ambitions and interests, the position of my research within our larger research project, and the little personal experience I had already gained in the 'real' world of activation, I decided (a) to eliminate the public-private element from the research question but to retain a focus on the micro-level of policy implementation and especially the role of caseworkers in the policy-implementation process; and (b) to keep a cross-country focus but turn the (welfare) regime factor into a question rather than an underlying assumption in my research design. This led me to the following 'working' research question (version of September 2010):

> *RQ′. How are unemployed clients activated by municipal caseworkers in different welfare settings (welfare states/welfare organizations), and how can the observed differences or similarities in activation patterns be explained?*

Based on this working research question, I selected my cases and research sites (jobcentres) and began my empirical research in December 2010. In the course of the following 18 months, I learned a fourth lesson that was decisive for the current form of this dissertation: Due to great difficulties with gaining access to British

Jobcentre offices, I had to split my initial sample of three countries into two primary cases (the Netherlands and Denmark) and one exploratory 'litmus test case' (Great Britain). Also the sampling logic underlying this dissertation had to be adjusted accordingly, as will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3. Based on this experience, I would therefore aim to establish relations with actors in the field much earlier in any future research project, so as to allow time to either switch to other cases if field access proves difficult, or to adjust the explanatory ambitions of the research to practical feasibilities at an early stage of the research process.

Another insight I gained during the research process is that not only one's research sample but also one's research question may have to be adapted in the course of doing the research (see also Van Thiel 2014: 12). This insight came to me gradually as I sat down to transcribe and code the interviews I had conducted with jobcentre caseworkers and managers. While preliminary patterns (and potential explanations) of micro-level activation discourses and practices were emerging before my inner eye, I realized that contrary to my initial expectations, country-specific policy and welfare-state regime logics stood out more starkly in case-workers' policy-implementation patterns than local and individual idiosyncrasies, even in decentralized policy contexts such as the Netherlands and Denmark.[2] By implication, although local differences in activation discourses and practices were observable not only between countries but also within countries, I saw that my research pointed towards the existence of country-specific ALMP implementation regimes that are closely related to, but not always a direct mirror image of, national activation-policy regimes and welfare-state regimes. For this reason, I deemed it advisable to fine-tune the formulation of my working research question more specifically to the findings emerging from my data, so that the final research question I will answer in this dissertation reads as follows:

> *RQ. How are active labour market policies translated into street-level discourses and practices in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, and what is the role of policy design and the wider welfare-state context in shaping caseworker agency?*

This research question will be answered by the empirical analysis in Chapters 4-8 in three consecutive steps (alias sub-questions):

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2   In this dissertation, I use the term 'welfare-state regime' to denote the cultural, institutional, and socio-economic characteristics of singular welfare states, as offset both against Esping-Andersen's typological and supra-national 'welfare regime' concept as well as more specific national policy-regimes. Note that Esping-Andersen himself used the term 'welfare-state regime' in his initial work, but in a meaning that corresponds to the now commonly-used 'welfare regime'. Esping-Andersen abandoned the term 'welfare-state regime' in favour of the term 'welfare regime' from 1996 onwards.

SQ1. Which street-level ALMP discourses and practices can be expected in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, based on key characteristics of the respective welfare-state/activation-policy regimes? (Chapter 4)

SQ2. Which real-world discursive and practice patterns can be observed in Dutch and Danish jobcentres, and how do those patterns relate to the wider welfare-state and activation-policy context? (Chapters 5-7)

SQ3. Which systematic relations between context structures and caseworker agency emerge from the findings of Chapters 4-7, and are these relations confirmed, qualified, or contradicted by the British case? (Chapter 8)

To summarize the fifth and final core lesson I have learned about designing a qualitative research project, it can be necessary and even advisable (at least for inexperienced researchers) to distinguish between a working research question on whose basis the empirical data collection is planned, and a refined research question that is formulated only after the data collection is completed and that accommodates any additional lessons learned in the course of the research process. To my mind, adapting one's research question to the (possibly unexpected) reality that emerges from the field is not by any means bad science but, quite on the contrary, diligent science – and, let us be honest, common practice anyhow, although this is rarely acknowledged in research reports and scientific publications.

Having hereby unburdened my mind and confessed about the both intriguing and torturous process that lead up to my final research question, I will now turn to a more established and matter-of-factly style of scientific reporting. In the remainder of this chapter, I introduce the topic of this dissertation and explain why I deem that topic important both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. The introductory chapter ends with an overview of the structure of this dissertation.

1.2   Research on activation: Old and new

Although most readers of this dissertation will presumably be familiar with the policy agenda of activation, let us begin by a brief introduction of what activation is. The activation principle as it is presently understood became prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, although its origins can be traced back to the concept of manpower policy devised by the Swedish economists Gøsta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner in the late 1940s (Sihto 2001). Focusing originally on the promotion of full employment through demand-side labour policies, the concept underwent a shift towards supply side-oriented policies in later years and especially since the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted "active manpower policies" as its flagship employment strategy in 1964 (ibid.). Nowadays,

the activation principle has been stripped almost entirely of its original structural agenda due to a vanishing trust in the state's ability to control the labour market; in its current meaning, activation implies mainly that individuals who rely on public support are offered strong incentives to no longer do so, either in the form of "carrots" (e.g. personal re-education budgets) or "sticks" (e.g. benefit cuts) (Lødemel and Trickey 2000: 14; see also Dingeldey 2007; Eichhorst et al. 2008; Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008). Although the activation principle is most prominently applied in the area of unemployment policy, it also plays an increasing role in the area of disability benefits and early retirement (Carmel, Hamblin and Papadopulous 2007; Van Oorschot and Boos 2000).

Because the toolbox of activation is so very large, scholars have early on asked the question whether different activation trends can be observed across welfare states or even supra-national welfare-regime clusters. By drawing on the theoretical repertoire of historical institutionalism (Pierson 1996; Thelen 1999), such comparative research on activation has usually departed from the null hypothesis that distinct policy goals, policy instruments, actor networks, and stratification effects are prevalent in different "worlds of activation" (Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2004; see also Clasen and Clegg 2006; Dingeldey 2007; Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008; Genova 2008; Lødemel and Trickey 2000; Serrano Pascual and Magnusson 2007). For example, Angela Genova (2008: 381) observes that the Anglo-Saxon welfare regime displays the "greatest stress on compulsory activation and conditionality" whereas the Nordic "regime fosters more empowering policies", the Continental European regime "balances obligation and empowerment" and the "familialistic" Southern European regime "reproduces past arrangements". Also Jørgen E. Larsen (2005: 137) claims: "The two polar examples in Europe are the UK, representing the most pure form of workfare, and Denmark, representing the most pure form of activation [as] social investment" (see also Sol and Westerveld 2005: 401).

While there is thus evidence to support the claim that "formal" national activation-policy regimes correspond with more or less established, supra-national welfare-regime clusters, a smaller but growing literature on the "operational" street-level implementation of activation policies argues that macro-level policy differences never translate 1:1 to the policy implementation level because they have to be appropriated to local circumstances and specific client cases by individual policy-implementers who follow not only formal regulations and procedures, but also their own (strategic and psycho-emotional) utility functions (cf. Van Berkel 2010). This "street-level bureaucracy" phenomenon, which was first described by Michael Lipsky (1978, 1980, 1991) based on sociological and rational choice-institutional premises and in the context of the American welfare state of the 1970s, can be expected to be even amplified in the era of activation because activation implies a strengthened focus on individualized services (such as job-search advice, employment measures and 'flanking' social services but also job-search monitoring and

sanctions), alongside a governance shift towards decentralization and multi-actor networks, thereby potentially leading to increased variation in the local and individual application of activation directives (see Durose 2011; Ellis 2011; Henman and Fenger 2006; Rice 2013c; Van Berkel and Borghi 2008; see also Martin 2004).

When it comes to activation, the welfare-regime literature and the street-level bureaucracy (SLB) literature thus make partly competing claims about the correspondence between abstract policy-regimes and practice-based implementation regimes – a gap which has always existed but that is likely to have even widened in the era of activation. However, when looking from a slightly different angle, one might also see the two perspectives as complementary because while the former postulates the superiority of policy-regime structures over the agency of individual policy-implementers whereas the latter emphasizes agentic capacity within structurally determined policy-regime contexts, both approaches coincide on the key institutionalist premise of (structurally) embedded agency. The complementary qualities of the welfare-regime approach and the SLB approach furthermore suggest that it may be possible to construct a multi-level regime framework that is applicable to both (agency-dominated) implementation regimes and (structure-dominated) policy or even welfare (state) regimes, thereby providing a conceptual tool for unearthing systematic mechanisms that translate formal policy into operational discourses and practices. Such is a key goal of this dissertation, which presents a multi-level regime framework in Chapter 2 and subsequently applies that framework not only in a macro-level analysis of statistical and legal data but also in an analysis of micro-level data collected in Dutch, Danish and British jobcentres.

The research presented in this dissertation contributes to existing research on activation and more specifically, ALMPs because although the implementation literature on ALMPs is already fairly small, cross-country research on activation at the local and individual level is even more scant. Among the earliest exploratory exceptions is Theodore and Peck's (1999) case study of local responses to unemployment and social exclusion in the UK and the US, which concluded that "the effectiveness of such programmes … is strongly dependent upon the state of the local labour market" (pp. 502-3). Also Finn's (2000) study on decentralized welfare-to-work programmes in Great Britain, the US and the Netherlands diagnosed "very different" ALMP governance arrangements at the local level, while voicing the overarching concern that "without effective ways of continuing to ensure core entitlements, significant variations in services and quality are likely to emerge between different localities, with corresponding differences in the opportunities offered to eligible clients" (p. 54). A third early example of local-level research on activation is Schridde's (2002) study on "local welfare regimes", which observed fragmented local employment measures for young people in Germany and the United Kingdom, but remained somewhat inconclusive on the influence of national policies on local ALMP governance: "While in the UK the conceptualization of a

transition policy took place mostly via a national state agenda and resulted in a plethora of overlapping partnerships on the local level, in Germany it is not clear where the impulses for transitional policy come from" (p. 133).

After these first beginnings of comparative research on activation at the local level, a second strand of research emerged in the second half of the 2000s that took not so much the 'national-local' differentiation but rather the 'formal versus operational policy' aspect as its main departure point. For instance, in 2008, Koning and Polstra presented a short vignette analysis of activation practices in Dutch, Belgian and German municipal jobcentres, stating that German caseworkers follow a bureaucratic equal-rights approach whereas Belgian caseworkers adopt a counselling approach, while Dutch caseworkers are somewhere in the middle. More recently and conversely, Van Berkel (2010) published a review of street-level activation governance in the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK and Germany, pointing towards cross-country institutional learning and the emergence of similar governance arrangements such as one-stop agencies, centralized decentralization, quasi-markets, and new public management (NPM) techniques in spite of evident policy-regime differences. These findings were further substantiated and expanded in a comprehensive volume on the governance of nine "active welfare states in Europe" edited by Van Berkel, De Graaf and Sirovátka (2011), which culminates in the overarching conclusion that "governance reforms are not neutral in terms of their impact on social policy practices and, thus, on social policy outcomes" (p. 261). This conclusion reiterates the key argument of Henman and Fenger's edited volume from 2006 that "the work in the public administration discipline that examines transformations in state operations – in particular, research into NPM (or new managerialism) and the use of markets and partnerships in state governance – can be usefully joined with welfare policy research to understand the 'underside' of public policy" (p. 268), as well as the key message of Brodkin and Marston's (2013) edited volume on the U.S., Australia and some European countries that "governance and managerial reforms appear to be quietly shifting street-level practices away from social support and investment and toward greater social regulation" (p. 280).

Among the few explicitly theory-building comparative studies on ALMP implementation that I know of is Jewell (2007), whose ethnographic study on employment policy approaches in Malmö (Sweden), Bremen (Germany) and California (US) culminates in a list of four factors that might lead to differences between national policy and local policy implementation (namely, legal mandates and resources, labour market environments, actor networks, and inner-organizational processes), although Jewell also observed supra-national welfare regime logics as well as processes of cross-country convergence to be at work in local implementation processes. More recently, Goerne (2012) applied the capability approach in qualitative research on activation in Great Britain and Germany (cf. Dean et al. 2007; Nussbaum 2011; Sen 1999), concluding that activation services are more diverse

in Germany than in Britain because activation includes tools for the social integration of non-work-ready persons in Germany whereas in Britain, a work-first (and only) approach predominates. Finally, Künzel (2012) studied activation governance in French and German municipalities, reaching the conclusion that different implementation-regime orientations of a universal, bureaucratic, market-oriented and participatory kind can be observed not only between but also within countries, although national and even supra-national policy regimes (such as the EU) clearly matter too for shaping local implementation processes.

As has become clear from this short review of existing comparative research on the implementation of ALMPs, the relationship between street-level activation regimes,[3] activation-policy regimes, and national welfare-state regimes or even supra-national welfare regimes seems to be an intricate one, with local variations and clearly identifiable country or country-cluster approaches to activation co-existing. However, of the above-mentioned studies, only Jewell (2007) and Künzel (2012) have made attempts to explain the observed patterns of similarities and differences between regime-levels and countries in theoretical terms, either by constructing a heuristic of influential factors (in the case of Jewell) or by resorting to an institutionalist argument of an interplay between (supra) national regime structures and local political legacies (in the case of Künzel). Based on the multi-level regime framework and implementation-regime heuristic developed in Chapter 2, this dissertation seeks to develop Jewell's and Künzel's introductory theoretical arguments further, besides contributing to the empirical literature on the implementation of ALMPs across countries. This will be done by approaching the implementation of activation policies from a micro-level perspective, researching how caseworkers' ALMP discourses, institution-building practices and client treatments are influenced by the wider activation-policy or even welfare-state regime context. If this analytical endeavour is successful, a major theoretical achievement of this dissertation lies in building a conceptual bridge between the historical-institutionalist and essentially structuralist welfare-regime approach on the one hand and the more agency-centred, sociological and rational-choice institutional street-level bureaucracy approach on the other hand. A second goal that this dissertation seeks to achieve is to provide policy-makers and practitioners with more systematic insights into the practical implications of formal policy design for caseworker discourses and practices, allowing them to reap the fruits of the creative agency of individual policy-implementers in local jobcentres while also safeguarding a smooth and fair functioning of complex implementation systems.

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3   The terms 'ALMP implementation regime' and 'street-level activation (or: ALMP) regime' are used interchangeably in this dissertation. Both refer to local policy-implementers' coherently structured and empirically observable activation discourses/practices, as offset against formal policy mandates or 'activation-policy regimes'.

Since I have already begun this introductory chapter by way of a scientific confession, I would like to end with a final confession too: When I started my micro-level research after struggling with methodological and practical issues for more than a year as indicated above, I felt sure that something as abstract as 'welfare (state) regimes' would surely have to be deconstructed after talking to real managers and caseworkers who rarely think in terms of social scientific theory, but simply do their best to assist unemployed persons in finding work or advancing towards more autonomy and responsibility in their personal lives. This expectation was further strengthened not only by Lipsky's assertion that street-level bureaucrats 'make' policy in the literal sense of the term, but also by recent research which convincingly demonstrates that caseworkers' room for discretion and hence agency has increased in the activation age due to activation-induced processes of policy individualization, decentralization, and multi-actor collaboration (for example Durose 2011; Ellis 2011). In other words, when I started my research, I had no doubt in my mind that I would find 'agency' to trump 'structure' and that especially welfare regimes were a scientific construct that could only be observed in aggregate statistics, not in the real lives of normal people. The scientific activist in me already saw before her inner eye how she would be telling the wider scientific community that they had got it wrong all along – only to find, to her great displeasure and disappointment, that not only national legal frameworks but also wider welfare cultures/institutions and even supra-national and ephemeral welfare-regime logics shine through in the actions of individual agents at the micro-level of social policy – albeit tinted by local and individual idiosyncrasies, as will be outlined in more detail in the chapters that follow. Hence, a core finding of the pragmatic research agenda underlying this dissertation is the maybe not so revolutionizing insight that cultural and institutional contexts (still) matter for social policy, yet I will attempt to illustrate and discuss below through which specific mechanisms the cultural and institutional prerequisites of different welfare (state) and activation-policy regimes are perpetuated in or through individual minds and actions. More-over, since social realities are never monolithic, I will also pay special attention to the question where local idiosyncrasies and individual agency have the potential to steer the perpetuation of macro-level regime structures in new directions, leading to an analytically differentiated picture of multi-level regime interconnections and the interactive mechanisms moderating between them across time-space.

1.3   Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured in nine chapters. *Chapter 2* lays the theoretical founda-tion for the empirical comparison of formal activation-policy regimes with opera-tional street-level activation regimes. The main goal of Chapter 2 is to develop an

analytical framework that can be used in analysing ALMPs from a multi-level perspective, linking the macro-level of social policy ('structure') with the micro-level 'agency' of individual policy-implementers (caseworkers in particular). This is achieved by building a conceptual bridge between an ideal-typical variant of the welfare-regime approach introduced by Esping-Andersen and the street-level bureaucracy approach originally developed by Lipsky. Since I have already elaborated elsewhere how Esping-Andersen's welfare-regime typology can be transformed into an ideal-typical model that is applicable not only to supra-national welfare regimes but also to national or local welfare units as well as to more specific policy areas such as activation (Rice 2013a), the step from welfare-regime typology to ideal-typical regime framework is only briefly recapitulated here. In the current work, the focus lies instead on adapting an ideal-typical welfare-regime framework to the specific policy area of activation or more precisely ALMPs, making it possible to compare activation-policy regimes and welfare-state regimes with street-level activation regimes both within and across countries on three regime dimensions: activation culture, activation institutions, and the stratification effects of ALMPs.

In addition to developing a multi-level regime framework, Chapter 2 presents an implementation-regime heuristic that visualizes rather than explains how macro-level (activation-policy and welfare-state) regime structures may shape the street-level discursive, institutional and societal agency of individual policy-implementers and particularly caseworkers. This heuristic illustration of micro-level implementation processes is based on an earlier review of the SLB literature in Rice (2013c) and has been used as a guideline for preparing the topic guides for the interviews with managers and caseworkers in local jobcentres, as well as for designing the two vignettes discussed in Chapter 7. With an eye to the analytical endeavour undertaken in this study, the dynamic implementation-regime heuristic presented in Chapter 2 provides the basis for identifying some systematic macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms between the abstract policy (or even welfare-state) level, the micro-level of policy implementation where caseworkers dwell, and street-level implementation regimes as they arise out of aggregated caseworker actions.

Chapter 3 describes in more detail which ontological and epistemological considerations have informed the research design and data collection for this study, which case study approach is followed in this dissertation, how the sample of three countries relates to the research question, and which methods were used in the data gathering and analysis. Although the methodology chapter of a dissertation is often regarded as a compulsory exercise rather than a genuine intellectual achievement, sections 3.1 and 3.2 are a key part of this dissertation because they describe and defend an epistemological orientation that is seldom openly embraced in the social sciences: a pragmatic research approach that not only combines deductive and inductive reasoning, but also draws from several methodological toolkits typically associated with either positivist or interpretive research. As will

be further argued in Chapter 8, only a pragmatic research design is able to capture the intricacies of structured activation discourses and practices at the street-level, as they unfold in the interstices between formal active labour market policies on the one hand and the operational (and at least partly) autonomous actions of individual policy-implementers and particularly caseworkers on the other hand.

Chapter 4 opens the empirical part of this dissertation by describing and comparing the welfare-state and activation-policy regimes of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain on three dimensions: culture, institutions, and stratification effects. Those three dimensions are operationalized by means of indicators drawn from the European Values Study (EVS), other aggregated statistics, and relevant legal texts. As appears from Chapter 4, the three countries under study fall into the ideal-typical regime categories to which one would typically assign them, although their relative positions on the two regime axes of conservatism-liberalism and solidarism-residualism may vary between the cultural, institutional and stratification dimensions. Moreover, a few surprising elements emerge from the macro-policy analysis of Chapter 4, such as a strong familialistic cultural undercurrent in Great Britain. Chapter 4 closes with some expectations[4] for street-level activation discourses and practices in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, based on an extrapolation of the activation-policy regime characteristics identified in that chapter. Attention is also paid to policy features or structural ambiguities and tensions that may create a space for autonomous caseworker agency at the micro-level.

Against the background of the fourth chapter, *Chapters 5 to 7* are dedicated to a bottom-up reconstruction of the street-level activation regimes of the Netherlands and Denmark as they emerge from the interview, observation and vignette data gathered in the period December 2010 – October 2012. (Because I was only able to visit two Jobcentre offices in Great Britain, which makes the British findings not directly comparable with the Dutch and Danish findings, the British case reappears in Chapter 8 as a litmus-test case for checking the wider applicability of the Dutch and Danish results). On the cultural dimension that manifests itself at the micro-level in the form of activation-related discourses, it appears that caseworkers both in the Netherlands and Denmark exercise discursive agency not only to construct verbal (and in principle solvable) representations of the problem of unemployment, but also to change clients' self-perceptions and worldviews in such a way that institutionally-prescribed problem solutions become applicable (*Chapter 5*). On the institutional dimension whose micro-level manifestation lies in the institution-building practices of caseworkers, five forms of institutional agency

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4   I deliberately avoid the term 'hypothesis' here because this study aims at providing mechanism-based explanations for the emergence of street-level activation regimes rather than testing a theory or comparing the explanatory power of contradicting theories.

can be identified that together account for the emergence of varied and volatile street-level activation institutions in the Netherlands but more uniform and stable street-level activation institutions in Denmark: devising procedures, procuring/ devising instruments, management tasks, trainer tasks, and networking (*Chapter 6*). Finally, on the dimension of stratification effects that materialize at the micro-level in the societal agency of caseworkers who form the last link in the policy-making and policy-implementation chain, the results of a vignette study involving two vignettes – an immigrant single mother and an elderly native male with mental health issues – are discussed to visualize how the societal agency of caseworkers affects, in an aggregated manner, macro-level structures of socio-economic (in-) equality in Denmark and the Netherlands (*Chapter 7*).

Chapter 8 concludes the empirical analysis by referring the micro-level findings from the Dutch and Danish cases back to the macro-level welfare-state and activation-policy analysis in Chapter 4. Furthermore, Chapter 8 presents the exploratory British findings in order to test whether the macro-micro-macro regime-translation mechanisms identified in the preceding chapters hold also in a centralized policy-context (and liberal-residualistic welfare-state regime) as the British one. The five core findings of this study are summed up in section 8.3, with all five findings (including a finding F2′) indicating that both the scope (or 'quantity') and direction (or 'quality') of caseworker agency is strongly related to the wider regime context. This refutes arguments in the literature that welfare provision has become an 'individual' affair in the era of activation, and shifts scientific attention to the mechanisms through which ALMP systems intentionally or unintentionally – but nevertheless systematically – shape agency dynamics at the micro-level. Thus, findings F1-F3 indicate that street-level agency patterns depend first and foremost on the institutional design of ALMP systems and especially on central/de-central *regulations* as well as ample/scarce *resources*, both of which lie in the hands of national policy-makers. Furthermore, findings F4 and F5 show that policy reforms (especially if they are frequent), ambiguous or contradictory policy formulations, and minimalistic service standards systematically increase the discretionary space of policy-implementers in the daily application of ALMPs. Overall, section 8.3 affirms that the synthesized theoretical framework developed in this dissertation is a useful tool for comparing activation-policy and street-level activation regimes across countries – the main theoretical or even methodological achievement of this dissertation. Chapter 8 is rounded off by some reflections on the theory-building potential of pragmatic research as fostering cross-fertilization between the structuralist welfare regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach.

Finally, the epilogue to this dissertation (*Chapter 9*) outlines some practical implications of the study at hand for policy-makers and practitioners in the field of activation.

Street-level bureaucrats as regime-builders: A theoretical synthesis

The research question answered in this dissertation contains two elements. As a first research goal, this dissertation seeks to systematically describe street-level ALMP regimes in the Netherlands, Denmark and to a lesser extent Great Britain as they emerge from the micro-level discourses and practices of individual policy-implementers and especially caseworkers. This undertaking is scientifically relevant because based on the street-level bureaucracy literature, one might expect that the individuals implementing social policy follow their own intrinsic utility functions as much as formal regulations and procedures, with the result that street-level implementation regimes need not always correspond with formal policy regimes. By describing how activation is 'practised' at the implementation level in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain based on original interview, vignette and observation data, this dissertation therefore provides a basis for assessing whether the claim of the street-level bureaucracy literature can be substantiated in the era of activation, or whether activation-policy regimes and welfare-state regimes are dominant in shaping the street-level face of the welfare state.

The second goal of the current study is to develop theory-based insights into the mechanisms by which individual policy-implementing agents, in their respective national and local contexts, translate abstract policy directives into real-world activation discourses and practices and subsequently societal effects. If that latter goal can be achieved in Chapter 8 of this dissertation, this would mean that a conceptual bridge can successfully be built between the hitherto separate analytical universes of the structuralist welfare-regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach.

To describe and compare activation-policy regimes and ALMP implementation regimes across countries, two theoretical tools are required. On the one hand, a regime framework is needed that applies not only to welfare-state or activation-policy regimes but also to ALMP implementation regimes as they emerge from the daily interactions between caseworkers and clients in local welfare organizations. This chapter argues based on Rice (2013a) that an ideal-typical welfare-regime model can fulfil that purpose, especially when it is tailored specifically to ALMPs.

On the other hand, since I follow an inductive research approach in the micro-level part of this dissertation, which implies that the implementation-regime descriptions offered in Chapters 5-7 are constructed in an open and bottom-up fashion from the personal accounts of caseworkers and managers rather than being based on similar pre-defined indicators as used in the macro-level country comparison of Chapter 4, a translation tool is needed for making the qualitative micro-level data analysed in Chapters 5-7 speak a similar language or even dialect as the macro-level data presented in Chapter 4. To that end, the three basic dimensions of the ideal-typical welfare-state and activation-policy regime framework developed in sections 2.1 and 2.2, namely culture, institutions, and stratification effects, re-emerge in section 2.3 as three types of micro-level agency (discursive, institutional and societal) that policy-implementers and especially caseworkers exercise in building 'real-world' ALMP implementation regimes. The resulting multi-level implementation-regime heuristic not only served as a basis for designing the interview topic guides and vignettes employed in this dissertation research, but also provides the analytical tool for comparing activation-policy regimes with ALMP implementation regimes across countries, regime levels and regime dimensions in Chapter 8.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. Section 2.1 briefly sketches how Esping-Andersen's empirical welfare-regime typology can be turned into an ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework (described more extensively in Rice 2013a) that, when tailored specifically to activation (in section 2.2), can serve as a blueprint for analysing and comparing activation-policy regimes across countries. Section 2.3 complements the structuralist regime framework developed in sections 2.1 and 2.2 by a dynamic micro-model of policy implementation that draws substantially on the SLB literature but is here customized to the inner mechanisms by which welfare-state and activation-policy regimes are brought to life in the day-to-day process of policy implementation (see also Cooney 2007; Rice 2013c).

2.1   Constructing an ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework

It is no accident that more than twenty years after the publication of Esping-Andersen's seminal work *The three worlds of welfare capitalism* (1990), the welfare-regime approach is still widely used in comparative social policy. In spite of its many empirical and conceptual weaknesses (for an overview, see Arts and Gelissen 2002; Kasza 2002; Scruggs and Allan 2006), the basic idea that welfare states decommodify social risks to varying degrees, in different ways and with different societal effects due to different underlying cultural and institutional logics seems to be as valid today as ever. One possible remedy to the empirical sketchiness of the numerous welfare-regime classifications in circulation is to abandon the idea of an empirical welfare-regime typology in favour of a purely ideal-typical approach (Aspalter

2011; Bambra 2007; Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011; Powell and Barrientos 2011; Rice 2013a). A crucial advantage of an ideal-typical regime framework is that it can be applied not only to welfare states but also to regions, municipalities, or singular policies such as ALMPs, thereby doing away with the limiting assumption that welfare states are internally monolithic and/or temporally static in terms of regime affiliation (cf. Bannink and Hoogenboom 2007; Bazant and Schubert 2009; Bolderson and Mabbett 1995; Castles 2008; Clasen and Siegel 2007; Hudson 2012; Künzel 2012; Pierson 1995). The following subsections briefly describe how the key concepts underlying the original welfare-regime typology (namely, welfare culture, welfare institutions and socio-economic stratification) can be transformed into an ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework that in turn provides a viable blueprint for the construction of an ideal-typical activation-policy framework which can be used as an analytical device in comparative research on activation. The ideal-typical regime framework proposed here has two axes: a conservatism-liberalism axis that is derived from the religious roots of modern-day welfare regime clusters, and a solidarism-residualism axis that reflects different political traditions pertaining to the legitimacy of the state in redistributing wealth.

2.1.1   From Catholicism vs. Protestantism to a conservatism-liberalism axis

Esping-Andersen's original welfare-regime typology was modelled on the empirical observation that welfare states employ different "mechanism[s]" of "interven[ing] in, and possibly correct[ing]," structures of societal inequality (Esping-Andersen 1990: 23). In order to explain the emergence of such different "system[s] of stratification" (ibid.) in different welfare states, the welfare-regime literature generally refers to institutional differences that have their historical roots in religious and state-building traditions. In a nutshell and very crudely put, one could summarize the historical-institutionalist argument undergirding Esping-Andersen's welfare-regime conception as follows:

$$\text{Welfare culture} \longrightarrow \text{Welfare institutions} \longrightarrow \text{Stratification effects}$$

According to Esping-Andersen and others, religion and especially the Catholicism-Protestantism divide lies at the heart of cultural differences among welfare states to the present day. In this argumentation, welfare cultures that emerged against the background of a Catholic religious tradition see the family as the basic unit of society and regard status differentials both within the (patriarchal) family and the wider family of the nation as natural. By contrast, welfare cultures that have their roots in Protestant ideas of the individual standing alone before his or her God tend to be more individualistic and egalitarian in outlook. In a nutshell, welfare

cultures in Catholic regions can be described as familialistic and morally partisan whereas welfare cultures associated with Protestant values can be described as more individualistic and morally neutral (Kahl 2005; Manow 2002; Opielka 2008; Van Kersbergen 1995).

As a result of such different religious underpinnings, the argument of Esping-Andersen and other historical-institutionalist scholars proceeds, different types of welfare institutions have emerged in Catholic and Protestant areas (Castles 1998; Clasen and Van Oorschot 2002; Obinger and Wagschal 2001; Pfau-Effinger 2005; Van Oorschot, Opielka and Pfau-Effinger 2008; Wilensky and Lebeaux 1965).[1] Due to the familialistic and morally-differentiating underpinnings of the Catholic faith, Catholic welfare cultures institutionally have tended to favour two-tier systems of social protection, protecting the incomes of (typically male) bread-winners and their families via social-insurance arrangements while non-married citizens without standard employment relations are relegated to minimalist social assistance schemes (Jepsen and Meulders 2002). In addition, Catholic welfare cultures have been associated with corporatist systems of welfare provision, based on the notion that all branches of society must work organically together towards the achievement of a common good, just as the body of Christ forms a whole yet is comprised of many different parts[2] (cf. Korpi 2006: 175-6). This stands in stark contrast to Protestant welfare cultures, which have generally brought forth universally accessible and state-funded social protection systems that provide benefits and services based on individual needs rather than sectoral affiliation or family ties (Castles 1998: 52-4; Lin 2005: 733; Siaroff 1994: 95-6).

In conjunction, the culture-institutions nexus in Catholic as opposed to Protestant regions has been linked with very different societal effects in terms of social stratification. Due to their individualistic focus, welfare systems with a Protestant cultural background have a tendency to free individual citizens from the constraints of primordial social identities – most crucially gender and ethnicity but also sexual orientation, age or physical ability, for instance (cf. Calloni 2005; O'Connor 1993). Welfare systems with Catholic roots, by contrast, take social status differentials as 'naturally' given and therefore have a tendency to either passively maintain or even actively reproduce social differences, for instance by offering married mothers financial incentives for staying at home, thereby fostering skewed earning patterns among men and women and thus cementing social-status differentials between

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1   In line with the historical-institutionalist origins of the welfare-regime approach, institutions are defined in this dissertation as "the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall and Taylor 1996: 6). As Bonoli (1997) remarks, institutions related to unemployment protection pertain mainly to the "how much" and the "how" dimension of welfare provision.

2   See 1 Corinthians 12 of the Bible.

the sexes (Trifiletti 1999; Van Kersbergen and Kremer 2008; see also Jepsen and Meulders 2002: 108).

In order to arrive at an ideal-typical welfare-regime framework that is freed from any empirical connotations and can therefore be applied not only to supranational welfare regimes but also to singular welfare states, welfare regions and different policy areas such as retirement pensions, healthcare, education or unemployment, I suggest here based on Rice (2013a) to redefine the Catholic and Protestant images of the human being that lie at the core of empirical welfare-state differences in more abstract and secular terms. Thus, all welfare systems and subsystems with ingrained notions of 'natural' differences among people – such that women and men are expected to fulfil different roles in the family, the economy or the army, for example – are to be labelled "conservative" in ideal-typical terminology. By contrast, welfare systems and sub-systems that assign an equal social status to all members of the collective irrespective of cultural markers such as gender, age, ethnicity or physical ability should be labelled "liberal". Finally, in terms of the achieved stratification effects, one might say that the conservatism-liberalism axis pertains mainly to social-status differences or what Fraser (2000) calls "recognition". Thus, conservative welfare systems or sub-systems tend to reinforce or even produce social-status differentials among their respective populations, for which reason their stratification effects can be termed "socially conservative" (from the Latin *conservare*, to preserve). Liberal welfare systems and subsystems can be termed "socially transformative", by contrast, because they tend to water down and transcend pre-existing differentials in social status (cf. Bulpett 2002).

2.1.2 From state-church relations to a solidarism-residualism axis

Next to religious legacies on which the ideal-typical conservatism-liberalism axis is based, a second source of differences among present-day welfare cultures lies in the historical relationship between organized religion and the state in the era of state-formation. Where state and religion became entrenched due to the establishment of state churches or because the state gained legitimacy by uniting confessionally-riven nations, more state-centric political cultures have tended to emerge than in areas where state-averse religious traditions continued to exert a strong influence on society, thereby curtailing the legitimacy of the state as the political representative of the national collective (Flora and Alber 1981; Grimm 1986; Kahl 2005; Lin 2005; Luhmann 1990; cf. also Stephens 1979). Stripping the empirical distinction between 'strong-state' political cultures and 'weak-state' political cultures of its historical roots while retaining the basic insight that different political cultures ascribe different roles to the state, one might say that in ideal-typical terms, "solidaristic" welfare cultures accredit the state with high legitimacy whereas "residualistic"

welfare cultures remain wary of any state intervention in society (Rice 2013a; see also Elias 1991; Kaufmann 1986). Thus, all welfare systems and subsystems that are built around welfare provision as a legitimate preoccupation of the state can be called solidaristic, whereas any welfare systems or subsystems that depict welfare provision primarily as a matter of private charity can be called residualistic.

With an eye to the emergence of welfare institutions, ideal-typical solidaristic welfare cultures can be said to provide a fertile ground for large public sectors that not only supply employment opportunities to large segments of the population and especially women, but also administer a large variety of monetary and in-kind services such as free education, childcare facilities, healthcare provisions, and comparatively generous benefits. Contrariwise, the small public sectors of ideal-typically residualistic welfare systems provide only a limited palette of basic services and benefits to those without a regular source of income, leaving more sophisticated forms of welfare provision to the private sector and thereby establishing a welfare dualism between the poorer and more affluent strata of society (Castles and Obinger 2007; Esping-Andersen 1990: 25-6; Ferrera 1996; Gelissen 2001: 87).

The stratification effects of the solidarism-residualism axis unfold primarily on the second level of social justice, namely economic distribution or economic inequality (Fraser 2000). Thus, solidaristic welfare systems and sub-systems put a strong emphasis on the equalization of life chances through monetary redistribution, grounded in the logic that society as a whole will benefit from a structural resolution of class conflicts (cf. Donzelot 1991; Korpi 1983; Stjernø 2008). Hence, the stratification effects of solidaristic welfare systems can be termed "economically transformative". Residualistic welfare systems and sub-systems, contrariwise, leave existing class structures more or less intact, which is why their stratification effects can be termed "economically conservative" (compare for example Nolan, Hauser and Zoyem 2000).

Figure 2.1 depicts the ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework that serves as the theoretical starting point for the comparison of formal activation-policy regimes with operational ALMP implementation regimes across three countries in this dissertation. An ideal-typical regime framework is more suitable for this endeavour than the empirical welfare-regime typologies of Esping-Andersen (1990), Leibfried (1992), Ferrera (1996), Castles (1998) and others because it is based on abstract concepts and indicators and therefore applicable to welfare states, singular welfare policies, and street-level implementation systems alike. Another advantage of the current framework is that it frames the conservatism-liberalism distinction and the solidarism-residualism distinction as two juxtaposed axes that play out on three regime dimensions (culture, institutions and stratification effects), with the result that the relative position of welfare-state regimes, activation-policy

regimes, and ALMP implementation regimes can be described with much nuance based on this framework.

Culture-Institutions-Nexus	*Solidarism:* ■ *Strong welfare state/ Welfare monopoly* ■ *Welfare as solidarity/ High redistribution*	*Residualism:* ■ *Weak welfare state/ Welfare dualism* ■ *Welfare as charity/ Low redistribution*	
Liberalism: ■ *Focus on individual/ Universal protection* ■ *Neutral state/ Public-private separation*	**Socio-liberal welfare regime**	**Liberal welfare regime**	**Socially transformative** (reduction of social inequality)
Conservatism: ■ *Focus on family/ Selective protection* ■ *Partisan state/ Public-private concertation*	**Socio-conservative welfare regime**	**Conservative welfare regime**	**Socially conservative** (preservation of social inequality)
	Economically transformative (reduction of economic inequality)	**Economically conservative** (preservation of economic inequality)	**STRATIFICATION EFFECTS**

Fig. 2.1: *An ideal-typical welfare-regime framework (first published in Rice 2013a).*

As Figure 2.1 shows, the ideal-typical conservatism-liberalism and solidarism-residualism axes together enclose four main regime types: a conservative and a liberal pure type alongside a socio-conservative and a socio-liberal variant.[3] Ideal-typically speaking, socio-conservative welfare systems favour a strong state that promotes a morally-differentiated social order and redistributes resources in order to enable each and every citizen to play his or her designated part in society (well), whereas 'purely' conservative welfare systems anchor responsibility for the protection of the social order primarily in families, religious institutions and/or the

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3 Readers familiar with the welfare-regime literature will observe the proximity of the socio-liberal ideal type to Esping-Andersen's (Scandinavian) social-democratic type, of the socio-conservative ideal type to Esping-Andersen's (Continental European) conservative-corporatist type, of the liberal ideal type to Esping-Andersen's (Anglo-Saxon) liberal type, and of the conservative ideal type to the (Mediterranean) "Latin rim," "Southern model", "Periphery" or "Familialistic welfare system" identified by Leibfried (1992), Ferrera (1996), Castles (1998), Kazepov (2010) and others as a fourth world of welfare capitalism. However, because this chapter aims at building an ideal-typical, multi-level regime framework rather than classifying welfare states, those empirical analogies are deliberately disregarded here.

market. Analogously, socio-liberal welfare systems legitimize the state to redistribute resources in order to provide each and every individual with an equal pole-position in life, whereas 'purely' liberal welfare systems oppose any state interventions that are not absolutely required for maintaining peace and security, thereby leaving individuals free to be the architects of their own fortunes (and misfortunes).

2.2   Deriving an ideal-typical activation-policy regime framework

As was mentioned above, a major advantage of an ideal-typical vis-à-vis typological regime framework is that it can be applied not only to welfare states but also to sub-state systems such as regions, municipalities, welfare programmes or single policies like ALMPs. Thus, although the two analytical axes of conservatism-liberalism and solidarism-residualism have been derived from a stylized historiography of welfare states, they can also be applied more narrowly to activation cultures, activation institutions, and the socio-economic effects of activation. This will be done in the following two subsections, with the goal of building an ideal-typical activation regime framework that can be used to compare formal activation-policy regimes with wider welfare-state regimes on the one hand and operational implementation regimes on the other hand in the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

2.2.1   The cultural dimension

When translating the above-developed ideal-typical welfare-regime vocabulary into activation language, what could be inferred about the ideal-typical characteristics of activation-policy regimes? With regard to the conservatism-liberalism axis, liberal activation cultures are likely to interpret the activation principle as geared primarily towards the reintegration of unemployed citizens into the labour market. This has to do with the liberal image of 'man' as an autonomous and self-responsible individual who, once able to provide for him or herself, is to be left to her or his own devices. Conservatism, in contrast, espouses a much more organic and morally-partisan view of society. Therefore, it is not enough that citizens are economically self-sufficient from a conservative viewpoint. Rather, in order for the societal body to stay 'healthy' and societal relations to be harmonious and in balance, it is required that every citizen lives up to her or his place in society. Thus, activation is likely to be interpreted more holistically in conservative than in liberal activation cultures, with volunteer work, care work or even child-rearing being regarded as equal to paid labour in terms of legitimate preoccupations, and benefits being regarded as "participation income" more than wage-replacement income (Goodin 2001: 38).

As concerns the solidarism-residualism axis, solidaristic welfare cultures are much more likely to embrace the activation principle than residualistic welfare cultures because the very concept of activation presupposes a legitimate and proactive state. Furthermore, also the different images of the human being underlying solidaristic versus residualistic welfare cultures have important implications for how the causes and cures of unemployment are framed in solidaristic versus residualistic activation terms. As Lødemel and Trickey (2000: 15) write, solidaristic activation cultures tend to see unemployment primarily as a problem of "social exclusion" whereas residualistic activation cultures frame unemployment primarily as a problem of "dependency" on the state. Consequently, solidaristic-"enabling" activation cultures see the ideal cure for unemployment in "additional support in terms of training and employment services" whereas residualistic-"coercive" activation cultures deem labour-market reintegration an individual choice that – if anything – can be incentivized through stricter benefit regimes (Aurich 2011).

To summarize, the four welfare-cultural ideal types identified above are logically associated with different ideal-typical activation cultures. On the one hand, cultural notions about the basic unit of society and the causes and cures of unemployment have important ramifications for the target groups and goals of activation. On the other hand, the role and legitimacy of the state have strong repercussions for the feasibility of implementing activation on a large scale, just as different images of the human being give rise to different framings of (un-)employment and associated cultural activation logics.

2.2.2 The institutional dimension

Applied more narrowly to the institutional design of activation systems, the above-said implies that universalistic liberal activation institutions tend to activate not only all unemployed citizens ("in the sense that the obligation to participate" in activation "is designed to relate to every member of the target population"), but also all unemployed citizens under the single objective of labour-market reintegration, although some functional variation may be observed in the activation instruments used to reach that goal due to differences in clients' skill-level or distance from the labour market (Trickey 2000: 263). Conversely, conservative activation systems tend to activate only "a proportion of the 'in scope' target group" (ibid.) – often those citizens whose primary societal duty is seen as lying in wage-labour (e.g. family heads), with care-takers etc. being exempted from the duty to work on the grounds of fulfilling other 'useful' societal tasks. Another characteristic that distinguishes conservative from liberal activation systems is a considerable local variation in activation approaches in conservative systems, in contrast to nationally standardized activation templates in liberal ALMP systems arising out of the welfare-cultural mandate of equal citizen-treatment. Finally, conservative activation

institutions are likely to provide activation services through relational and partially informal steering mechanisms, both with respect to providers and clients, whereas the liberal approach to activation favours top-down steering mechanisms that rely on clearly-defined performance targets (cf. Sol and Westerveld 2007: 304-5).

Moving on to the ideal-typical features of solidaristic versus residualistic activation institutions, activation can be expected to be geared primarily towards skill formation and human investment under the solidaristic paradigm whereas residualistic institutions will lean more towards a 'work first' approach encompassing a strong deterrence element besides the usual work-focus of activation. Trickey (2000: 255) has called this an "integrative" versus "preventive" approach to activation, while Clasen and Clegg (2006: 532) talk of the "high" versus "low road" of activation, with the former entailing "periods of training that better equip the unemployed for competition for jobs matching their aspirations and expectations" and the latter implying a tightening of benefits "to force the unemployed with few or obsolete skills to adjust their aspirations and expectations to match opportunities and salaries available at the 'low end' of the labour market" (see also Dingeldey 2007: 827). Finally, residualistic activation governance is likely to go hand in hand with outsourcing activation services to private providers due to the weakness and relatively limited outreach capacity of residualistic institutions, whereas state actors will play a key role in activating benefit recipients in solidaristic activation systems.

To conclude, conservative versus liberal welfare institutions and solidaristic versus residualistic welfare institutions are associated with very different ideal types of activation. Whereas liberal ALMP institutions put a strong emphasis on the equal treatment of all citizens and therefore seek to activate all benefit recipients in a universal manner, conservative institutions embrace societal differentiation as 'natural' and are therefore more likely to use different activation strategies for different groups of citizens. For the same reason, liberal ALMP institutions tend to coordinate and monitor the provision of activation services at the central level whereas conservative institutions welcome rather than reject local nuances in activation practices caused not least by a variety of formal and informal local cooperation agreements. Finally, activation services tend to be social investment-oriented and publicly implemented in solidaristic activation systems (Van Kersbergen and Hemerijck 2012; see also Martin 2004) whereas residualistic systems tend to rely to a large degree on the deterrence effect of activation while outsourcing any existing human capital-oriented forms of activation to private players.

2.2.3 The stratification dimension

As was illustrated on page 17, the culturalist and institutionalist logic underlying Esping-Andersen's welfare-regime typology culminates in certain regime-specific

patterns of socio-economic stratification as the third dimension of welfare regimes. From this viewpoint, the culture-institutions nexus leads to varied patterns of stratification because different types of welfare cultures and welfare institutions mitigate social risks in different ways and to different degrees.

With regard to activation-policy regimes, one can deduct from the above-sketched three-dimensional welfare-state regime framework that the stratification effects of different ALMP approaches will be very different as well. Depending on the cultural underpinnings and institutional design of activation systems, societal effects can be anything from economically conservative to economically transformative (i.e. helping individuals to overcome "dependency") and from socially conservative to socially transformative (i.e. transcending patterns of "social exclusion" rooted in primordial identity markers) (Lødemel and Trickey 2000: 15). However, it is important to keep in mind that the causal relationship between institutions and stratification is more complex with regard to activation than with regard to passive income-replacement. For instance, with more and more women taking up low-paid, part-time employment in the service sector (Bonoli 2006; Häusermann and Palier 2008), uniform activation procedures in the sense of activating everyone back into their former occupations can imply that existing gender inequalities on the labour market are – socially conservatively – reproduced. Hence, if activation is to be socially-transformative, the liberal tenet of equal citizen-treatment must be stretched to include selective human-capital and/or 'quality employment'-promoting measures for structurally disadvantaged groups (Betzelt 2008: 14). Moreover, as O'Connor and Robinson (2008: 39) point out, tailor-made ALMP measures must be complemented with solidaristic policies such as affordable childcare or social-security provisions for part-time workers if activation is really to empower women, disabled people and other outsider groups on the labour market.

Figure 2.2 integrates the three dimensions of the ideal-typical activation-policy regimes outlined in the subsections above: cultural ideas about who should be activated how (and why), the steering mechanisms and actor constellations employed in the governance of activation, and the stratification effects of different ALMP approaches. This ideal-typical activation-policy regime framework will form the basis for comparing active labour market regulations in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain in Chapter 4. Moreover, the ideal-typical activation-policy framework developed here can also serve as a basis for deriving an implementation heuristic specifying further how formal policies translate into the operational discourses and practices of individual agents (here: mainly caseworkers) and back into aggregated street-level ALMP regime patterns at the macro-level.

CULTURE-INSTITUTIONS-NEXUS	Solidarism: ■ Activation-prone (proactive state) ■ Activation as human-capital investment ■ Public provision	Residualism: ■ Activation-averse (passive state) ■ Activation as 'workfare' ■ Outsourcing	
Liberalism: ■ Activation as integration into the labour market ■ Universal activation ■ Hierarchical steering	**Socio-liberal activation regime**	**Liberal activation regime**	**Socially transformative** (reduction of social inequality)
Conservatism: ■ Activation as integration into society ■ Selective activation ■ Network steering	**Socio-conservative activation regime**	**Conservative activation regime**	**Socially conservative** (preservation of social inequality)
	Economically transformative (reduction of economic inequality)	**Economically conservative** (preservation of economic inequality)	**STRATIFICATION EFFECTS**

Fig. 2.2: *An ideal-typical activation-policy regime framework.*

Before turning to the development of an implementation-regime heuristic that makes visible the 'inner life' of activation-policy regimes in street-level practice, a final mention should be made here of the conceptual relationship between welfare-state regimes and activation-policy regimes. As has been remarked in the academic literature, the individualizing tendencies of activation policies can lead to structural tensions between welfare-state traditions and ALMPs, which eventually may shift welfare-state orientations in new directions (see Clegg 2007; Vis 2007, 2008). For instance, because activation "tips the balance in favour of a more […] inclusive rather than […] exclusive approach", the activation paradigm has the potential to induce regime shifts in a more liberal (i.e. inclusive) direction when adopted by conservative welfare states (Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008: 7). Another way in which ALMPs can cause conservative welfare states to shift in a more liberal direction is by levelling out differences between the two tiers of social protection as well as by reinterpreting citizens' duties from 'participating in society' towards 'participating in the labour market (Eichhorst et al. 2008: 14; Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008). However, a move in the opposite direction from liberalism to conservatism has also been observed empirically, not only because activation often involves specific policy approaches to selected target groups such as young people – thus blurring the boundary between liberal-universal equality of treatment and conservative-selective treatment – but also because "steps towards co-ordinated decentralization" are rather universally associated with activation in the institutional domain

(Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008: 16). Hence, only empirical research can show how activation affects existing welfare-state regime structures empirically.

Also with regard to the solidarism-residualism axis, the effects of possible tensions between welfare-state traditions and ALMPs are far from conclusive. As Taylor-Gooby (2005) contends, activation increases the individual's rather than the state's responsibility for welfare and may thus introduce residualistic elements into solidaristic welfare systems (see also Cox 1998; Eichhorst et al. 2008: 14; Stjernø 2008: 62). Also the strong work-focus of activation could lead to a reinterpretation of the solidaristic redistribution principle into a non-redistributive 'equal opportunity to work' principle, and of the welfare state into an "enabling state" (Gilbert 2005; see also Bulpett 2002: 141; Machado and Vilrokx 2001; Serrano Pascual 2007a: 17). Finally, providing tailor-made services to unemployed citizens has often gone hand in hand with outsourcing activation services to private providers, a strategy that is conceptually at home in the residualism spectrum (cf. Bredgaard and Larsen 2008; Plantinga, De Ridder and Corra 2011). On the other hand, the rise of residualistic workfare has empirically led to an off-flow of many unemployed claimants into disability, sickness-related or early retirement schemes in some solidaristic welfare states, which might considerably neutralize residualistic trends in solidaristic welfare systems (Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008: 12). In addition, policy-diffusion processes can strengthen the human-capital investment and training component of residualistic welfare systems, thereby inducing a relative shift in a more solidaristic direction.

As a final remark and moving beyond traditional regime categorizations, the activation paradigm has the potential to break up established lines of inclusion and exclusion altogether. The reason for this is that through tailor-made and individual employment services, rights are *de facto* becoming "more discursive" and "determined by [a] process of dialogue and contest among competing claimants, rather than by appeal to fixed principles" (Cox 1998: 10). By implication, this means that new lines of inclusion and exclusion might emerge between clients that are perceived as intrinsically motivated and client groups "whose behaviour is difficult" rather than between the traditional affluent and poorer strata of society (Bulpett 2002: 147). On an even wider plane, activation might thereby fundamentally alter the political-cultural underpinnings of the welfare state, "promoting a depoliticisation of the management of social conflict" and "eliminating any suggestion of a causal link between" social exclusion and "power and oppression" (Serrano Pascual 2007a: 17-8).

Taken together, the above-said implies that the interrelation of formal activation-policy regimes with higher-level welfare-state regimes on the one hand and operational street-level ALMP regimes on the other hand is a complex issue that requires more empirical research than is currently available, especially at the level of policy implementation (cf. Eichhorst et al. 2008; Borghi and Van Berkel 2007: 421). In order

to contribute to a better understanding of the interrelation between welfare-state traditions, ALMPs, and street-level activation discourses and practices, this chapter set out to develop a multi-level regime framework that connects and compares the cultural, institutional and stratification dimensions of social policy across all three regime levels. With sections 2.1 and 2.2 having developed the first two elements of such a multi-level regime framework, the next section now addresses the third and last missing element, namely the question how caseworkers as the "agents of the welfare state" (Jewell 2007) create, appropriate, and possibly change activation-policy and wider welfare-state structures in their daily interactions with unemployed clients. The dynamic implementation-regime heuristic that will draw all three regime levels together at the end of this chapter will then serve as the backdrop against which both macro-level regime characteristics and the micro-level discourses and practices of Dutch, Danish and British jobcentre caseworkers can be assessed and compared in Chapters 4-8.

2.3   Developing an implementation-regime heuristic

As we saw above, the analytical essence of Esping-Andersen's welfare-regime approach, which provided the theoretical starting point for the construction of a purely ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework, is that different cultural orientations tend to go hand in hand with different types of welfare institutions, which in turn influence societal structures of social and economic inequality in different ways and to different degrees. However, as much as the welfare (state) regime approach captures important aspects of social-policy-making and welfare governance across a variety of welfare systems, it suffers from two theoretical shortcomings. On the one hand, the approach is essentially a-temporal, not explicating how changes in the cultural, institutional or socio-economic domain will affect the other regime dimensions over time. On the other hand, the rationale behind the welfare (state) regime approach is in essence a systemic one, failing to account for the interplay between structure and (individual or collective) agency in the day-to-day enactment of welfare policies in general, and activation policies in particular.

In the area of activation, those shortcomings of the welfare-regime approach become especially virulent, not only because activation has the potential to induce regime shifts on all three regime dimensions as was discussed above, but also because ALMPs foster intra-national policy variation (see Newman 2007; Trickey 2000). The reasons for such variation lie firstly in the "provision of individualised services through case management", which opens the door for unequal but also creative policy adaptations as well as the creaming and parking of clients (Eichhorst et al. 2008: 6), and secondly in the locally contingent interplay between local labour markets, local politics, local provider networks, and locally varied client popula-

tions. As Betzelt (2008: 23) writes, "the concrete conditions of funding, governance structures and operating principles often make the difference between more 'enabling' or more 'work first' policies" (see also Van Berkel and Borghi 2008).

In order to grasp how activation-policy regimes are implemented on a day-to-day basis at the micro-level of social policy, giving rise to – in an aggregated manner – street-level implementation regimes that variously either mirror, enhance, or deviate from formal policy regimes, it is therefore necessary to amend the systemic regime approach with a dynamic, agency-centred and multi-level perspective (see also Brodkin 2013). In the following subsections, this goal is pursued by combining the ideal-typical regime approach outlined above with the street-level bureaucracy approach introduced by Lipsky (1971, 1980, 1991) and others.

2.3.1 The multi-layeredness of welfare institutions

The SLB approach adds three important insights to the a-temporal and structuralist regime perspective, whose core argument was graphically summarized on page 17. Firstly and largely remaining within the systemic regime logic, Lipsky and collaborators make an implicit distinction between the policy-making and the policy-implementing institutions of the welfare state, stressing that irrespective of formal policy, the 'real' content of welfare policies is decided at the implementation level. In other words, according to SLB thinking, implementing organizations as distinguished from political institutions serve as the transmission belt between welfare/activation policies and societal stratification (Berman 1978; Hasenfeld and Brock 1991; Sabatier 1986; Winter 2003; Yanow 1996, esp. pp. 17-22; see also Bressers 2007; Henman and Fenger 2006). Thus, the multi-layeredness of welfare or ALMP institutions is the first conceptual nuance that the SLB approach adds to the ideal-typical regime approach presented above.

Welfare/ALMP culture $\longrightarrow$ Welfare/ALMP **institutions** $\cdots\cdots\blacktriangleright$ Stratification effects

Implementing **organizations** $\longrightarrow$
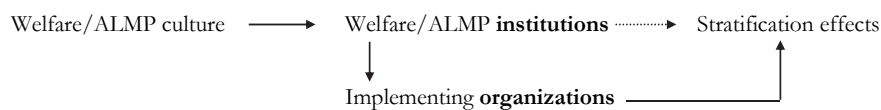
2.3.2 Policy implementation as a dynamic process

The second addition that the SLB approach brings to the a-temporal regime approach is that it conceptualizes the link between implementing organizations and the stratification effects of welfare/activation systems as a dynamic process of embedded agency. In this process, managers and professionals in local jobcentres or private provider organizations employ multiple forms of "institutional work"

(Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca 2009) not only to rationalize discursively what activation means, but also to translate formal policy requirements into concrete organizational rules and practices (Cooney 2007; Dubois 2010; Meyers, Riccucci and Lurie 2001). Because the policy-implementation process is thus doubly removed from the structural context according to the SLB approach, i.e. not only by a matter of regime-level or 'space' but also by a matter of dynamic interaction or 'time', local policy-implementation systems are characterized by multiple degrees of freedom that can lead to creative innovations in the adaptation of formal policy regulations by local welfare organizations and consequently – in an aggregated manner – to structural change at the societal level. Even more specifically, the Lipsky school outlines three main structural time-space conditions under which the degrees of freedom of local policy implementation increase: Firstly, policy regulations may be so "voluminous and contradictory" (i.e. complex) that selective enforcement or the prioritizing of some policy measures over others may be necessary to keep workloads manageable, with the result that actual policy-implementation patterns come to deviate from formal policy (Lipsky 1980: 14, 41-2; Prottas 1978: 295-6). Secondly, frequent policy change may impede the standardization of implementation practices, fostering a combination of homogeneous minimum standards and heterogeneous other services at the implementation level (Lipsky 1980: 14). And thirdly, limited resources for administration and services may elicit coping mechanisms from policy-implementers such as the creaming of promising clients in terms of counselling time (if staff resources are limited) or service provision (if service budgets are limited; see Lipsky 1980: 89-90, 107-8).

Welfare/ALMP culture ⟶ Welfare/ALMP **institutions** ⤑ Stratification effects

⇅ ⇅ ↑

Organizational discourses ⟵ Implementing **organizations** ⟶ Organizational practices
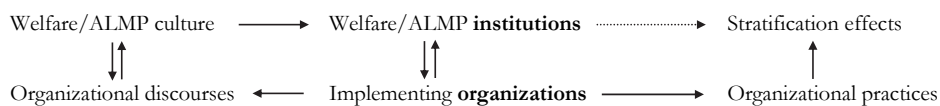
In terms of the bottom-up construction of street-level activation regimes as juxtaposed with formal activation-policy regimes, the above-said has two major ramifications. Firstly, the content of activation policy or what activation 'is' in a particular context can never be fully determined before that policy is put into practice by the individual agents of the welfare state (Jewell 2007). In that sense, managers and caseworkers in local jobcentres not only implement activation policy but also "make" and construct activation policy in the literal sense of the term (Lipsky 1978: 397, 1980: 13, 1991: 213). Secondly, because the organizational practices of policy-implementing organizations are doubly removed from formal policy-making in multi-level governance systems, the factual stratification effects of activation policy can diverge from the goals of activation as stated in formal policy. In a nutshell,

when investigating the relationship between formal policy regimes and actual implementation regimes in the area of activation, one must look deeper into the ways in which the degrees of freedom of local policy implementation structure the embedded agency of policy-implementers.

2.3.3 The role of individual agency in the implementation process

Above, the SLB approach was paraphrased as adding to the welfare-state and activation-policy regime approach the insight that institutional structures influence societal structures not in an unmediated manner but rather through the embedded institutional work of managers and caseworkers in local welfare organizations. However, the story does not yet end here because in addition to seeing policy-implementers as embedded agents working only (albeit flexibly) with the structural 'stuff' surrounding them in their organizational and higher-level regime environments, SLB theorizing also stresses the partial intrinsic autonomy from systemic imperatives of the individuals putting policy into practice (cf. Brodkin 2011; Cooney 2007; Duffy and Collins 2010; Jacob and Genard 2011; Olesen and Eskelinen 2011; see also Cho et al. 2005; Oliver 1991). This partial autarky at the individual level stems from at least three sources according to Lipsky. To begin with, individual policy-implementers may hold personal opinions or worldviews that deviate from formal policy goals, including ideas about who does or does not deserve assistance from the welfare state (Lipsky 1980: 16, 23; see also Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). Another possible source of dissonances between policy goals and individual implementation practices lies in the psycho-emotional utility functions of individual policy-implementers who not only have an innate desire to interact with clients "free from real and psychological threats" while maximizing "income and personal gratification", but who also seek to "maintain and expand" their "autonomy" in order to enhance feelings of professionalism and self-worth (Lipsky 1980: 15, 18-9). Finally, a last individual-level source of the partial agentic autonomy of policy-implementers originates from the human dimension of street-level bureaucratic work, with abstract policies never being able to fully capture all intricacies and peculiarities of individual client cases. Hence, it lies in the very nature of policy implementation from the viewpoint of SLB theory that individual street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion and thereby 'make' the real-world outcomes of welfare policies in an aggregated manner.

To summarize how the agency-centred SLB approach amends and substantiates the structuralist regime approach presented in the former two sections, we have seen above that not only structurally embedded welfare organizations but also individual policy-implementers have the capacity to build, maintain, or even change higher-level regime structures through their aggregated discourses and practices. Even the individual clients of the welfare state must be seen as having that capacity

to some degree due to their active role in the policy-implementation process, for instance by suggesting alternative reintegration trajectories to caseworkers or refusing to cooperate with standard procedures, thereby potentially prompting caseworkers to devise more creative problem-solutions (Jonsson 1998; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). A graphical summary of the 'Lipsky goes to Regime-wood' theoretical merger proposed here is given below.

Welfare/ALMP culture	→	Welfare/ALMP **institutions**	⟶	Stratification effects
Organizational discourses	←	Implementing **organizations**	→	Organizational practices
Individual discourses	←	Individual **agents**	⟶	Individual practices
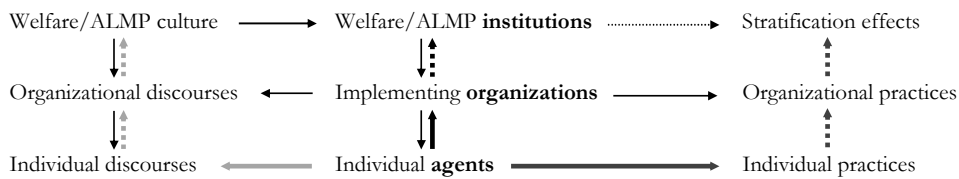
As the above illustration shows, a multi-level regime perspective that combines the insights of the welfare-regime and SLB approaches postulates a fundamental distinction between formal (top line) and operational (middle/bottom line) welfare and ALMP institutions, with only the latter having a direct influence on societal stratification via the transmission belt of individual ALMP practices. These practices, in turn, are shaped not only by the organizational and higher-level structures in which the agents of the welfare state are embedded, but also and very importantly by the autonomous agency of individual managers, caseworkers and clients in local welfare organizations (in the context of this dissertation: jobcentres).

When specifying the proposed amalgamation of an ideal-typical regime approach with the SLB approach even further, the above illustration shows that three specific types of street-level regime-building agency can be identified at the micro-level of ALMP implementation. Each agency-type is represented by a set of bold arrows above, pointing outward from "individual agents" under the institutional regime dimension, indicating that the institutional embedment of caseworkers is the navel point where institutionally-defined tasks and resources come together with intrinsic action preferences to trigger regime-building agency in three directions. The first micro-level area where caseworkers exert regime-building agency is the domain of organizational structures, with caseworkers participating in building and (re-) modelling their own jobcentres in terms of organizational routines, activation instruments, and possibly external network connections. This so-called **institutional agency** of caseworkers is depicted by the bold upward arrow in the above illustration. The bold left arrow stands for the **discursive agency** of caseworkers, manifesting itself in "internal [activation] dialogues" that seek to "make sense" of how ALMP measures can help to solve the problem of unemployment (Archer 2003, Weick 1995; cf. also Marshall and Rollinson 2004). Another aspect of discursive agency lies in the application of discursive techniques in the 'external' communica-

tion between caseworkers and clients or caseworkers and managers, grounded in the expectation that by communicating new ideas and thereby affecting the mind-sets or cognitions of one's communication partners, new action-patterns can emerge that are more in accordance with the discursively-defined goals of activation than the perceived status quo. Lastly, a third type of micro-level agency characterizing ALMP implementation regimes is captured by the concept of **societal agency**, meaning that caseworkers' decisions of whom to activate how have aggregate effects for socio-economic stratification patterns at the macro-level (bold right arrow). Together, the three types of caseworker agency can be seen as the micro-level transmission belts through which formal activation-policy regimes are translated into operational or "street-level" activation regimes.

The dynamic implementation-regime heuristic in Figure 2.3 visualizes in a more elaborate manner how the macro-level concepts of "welfare-state" and "activation-policy regimes", each composed of a cultural, institutional and stratification dimension and manifesting itself in the partly embedded and partly autonomous "discursive", "institutional" and "societal" agency of individual policy-implementers at the micro-level, re-emerge at the macro-level in the form of a parallel street-level ALMP universe. The outline of the implementation-regime heuristic in Figure 2.3 has been adapted from Hedström and Swedberg's (1998: 21-2) interpretation of Coleman's boat (cf. Coleman 1990), which asks "how macro-level events or conditions affect the individual (Step 1), how the individual assimilates the impact of these macro-level events (Step 2), and how a number of individuals, through their actions and interactions, generate macro-level outcomes (Step 3)". In Chapters 5-7, the mechanism-based implementation-regime heuristic depicted in Figure 2.3 will be used as a template for the visualization of the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes in different regime contexts. For the time being, however, the main message of the implementation-regime heuristic developed in this chapter is that the three agency types exercised by street-level policy implementers not only reproduce activation-policy regimes as they are, but also construct a street-level, operational face of the activating state that is related to, but empirically and conceptually different from, the formal or 'paper' side of activation. Another conceptual refinement that Figure 2.3 adds to the graphical illustration on page 32 is that welfare-state regimes and activation-policy/implementation regimes are situated on different analytical levels in the implementation-regime heuristic, although all three belong to the 'macro' domain.

MACRO   WELFARE-STATE REGIME
              [Culture, institutions, stratification]

              ACTIVATION-POLICY REGIME   - - - - - - - - - - - - ▶   ALMP IMPLEMENTATION REGIME
              [Culture, institutions, stratification]   *[Culture, institutions, stratification]*

MESO   Welfare organizations provide the platform where   Welfare organizations serve as transmission
                  policy structures and implementing agents 'meet'   belts for regime (re-)production and change

MICRO   Agents both enact and 'make' policy via embedded and
                                       autonomous agency (discursive, institutional, societal)

Fig. 2.3: *A dynamic implementation-regime heuristic as a tool for operationalizing the regime-building agency of caseworkers in street-level activation research.*

In the next chapter, it will now be explained how the above-developed implementation-regime heuristic has been used in a pragmatic research project whose aim was to provide mechanism-based explanations for the emergence of street-level activation regimes in three different activation-policy and welfare-state regime contexts.

Doing the research: Methodological considerations

Comparing formal, top-down activation-policy regimes with operational, bottom-up ALMP implementation regimes raises a number of methodological issues. For instance, comparative social-policy research usually relies on quantitative indicators or the analysis of legal texts and other policy documents, as does the macro-level comparison in Chapter 4 of this study. By contrast, the study of real-world implementation processes (as presented in Chapters 5-7 and 8) requires the use of qualitative techniques such as interviews and observations that allow the researcher to delve deeper into the 'inner life' of policy regimes in the area of activation. Mixing both approaches in a single research is not only difficult to do methodologically, but also raises questions of validity and reliability that must be addressed with care by the research design (cf. Creswell and Miller 2000; Morse et al. 2002). These and other issues are explored in more detail in this chapter. Section 3.1 begins with some introductory remarks on the ontological and epistemological orientation of this study because a pragmatic research approach is seldom encountered in the field of comparative social policy and thus requires justification. Section 3.2 introduces the case study design and section 3.3 goes deeper into the case selection. Section 3.4 concludes the chapter by describing the methods used in the gathering and analysis of empirical data on the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain.

3.1   Epistemological and ontological orientation of the study

Because the study at hand is a dissertation, let me begin this chapter by stating and defending the ontological and epistemological orientation from which my research departs.[1] The beginning of this undertaking is easy and straightforward

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1   Crudely put, ontology refers to the question *what* the nature of the world is and what we can know about it, whereas epistemology refers to the question *how* we can gain knowledge about the world.

– ontologically, I count myself a **critical realist**, meaning that I deem "an external reality" to exist "independent[ly] of our belief and understanding", although I am also convinced that that "reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings" (Snape and Spencer 2003: 16). In this sense, I regard both the multi-level regime framework developed in Chapter 2, the macro-level operationalization of that framework in Chapter 4, the analytical descriptions of micro-level regime-building processes in Chapters 5-7, and the theoretical synthesis of Chapter 8 as scientific constructs or even artefacts while at the same time contending that since all knowledge is a mere cognitive approximation of the 'real' world, my own scientific story about the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes is as good (read: valid) as any other, as long as the storyline is constructed with methodological diligence and care.

In epistemological terms, it is more difficult to point out to the reader how I would frame my quest for a better understanding of the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes. After all, I am juxtaposing a top-down, macro-level perspective (Chapter 4) with a bottom-up and mechanism-oriented micro-level perspective (Chapters 5-7) in order to arrive at some "analytic generalization[s]" (Yin 2009) on the translation of formal macro-level policy/welfare-state regimes into micro-level actions and then – in a second step – back to an aggregated operational macro-level where country-specific ALMP implementation regimes can be identified. In more methodological language, one might thus state that this dissertation contains elements of both a **positivist** viewpoint from which social phenomena can be operationalized by theory-derived variables and indicators, and an **interpretive** stance that "is concerned to explore and understand the social world using both the participant's and the researcher's understanding" (Snape and Spencer 2003: 17). Furthermore, what makes my epistemological standpoint even more complex is the fact that I combine not only positivist and interpretive epistemological tenets but also **deductive** and **inductive** reasoning, with Chapter 4 sketching a theory-based image of how abstract activation-policy and welfare-state regime contexts in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain might potentially influence the micro-level actions of caseworkers in municipal jobcentres whereas Chapters 5-7 and 8 let my respondents tell their own story of how they discursively frame the problem of unemployment and the 'cure' provided by activation, how they co-build jobcentre organizations together with managers, and how (or whether) they affect structures of socio-economic inequality at the societal level by deciding whom to activate how. However, from my point of view, the fact that a macro-micro-macro study that strives to reach a meso-theoretical "middle ground between [interpretive] description and [positivist] social laws" (Mayntz 2004: 239) almost inevitably runs into epistemological problems does not mean that the aspiration to construct explanatory macro-micro-macro mechanisms is methodologically flawed, but rather that a strict separation between positivist and interpretive, deductive and inductive

research is outdated in a world where scientists are learning to 'talk' to each other in mutually understood terms across academic communities and disciplines (for a much more elaborate view, see Hay 2004; for an opposing view, see Haverland and Yanow 2012). For this reason, I have decided to resolve the epistemological complexity inherent in my research design by adopting a **pragmatic** epistemological stance in this dissertation (Snape and Spencer 2003: 18). As Snape and Spencer explain, the core feature of a pragmatic position lies in exploiting the methodological possibilities of positivist/interpretive research while disregarding the philosophical disputes between adherents of the two epistemological paradigms: "It is said that combining both approaches in a single study poses particular difficulties unless the researcher neglects the epistemological bases of the different methods and adopts a largely pragmatic stance focusing on research methods as techniques divorced from their philosophical foundations". Below, it will be explained what the adoption of a pragmatic epistemological position means for designing case-study research.

3.2   Case-study design

The case-study approach is best suited for researching the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes out of abstract policy and/or welfare-state regime contexts because a sample of two or more carefully-selected cases allows one to determine which multi-level translation mechanisms are context-specific (i.e. different between all cases) and which ones may be more widely applicable (due to being identical between two or more cases). Besides offering the possibility to draw cross-case inferences that will be addressed in more detail in section 3.3, another reason why the case-study approach lends itself perfectly to mechanism-based research is that cross-fertilizations between social theory and empirical observations lie at the heart of the case-study method. Aside from these advantages, however, doing case-study research is also challenging because as was mentioned in Chapter 1, one must be very careful to tailor the case-study design and case selection to one's research question in order to achieve valid results. In the following, I briefly explain how the current research is positioned among the wide array of existing case-study approaches.

Broadly speaking, case-study approaches can be aligned on a spectrum between an emphasis on theory-development (induction) and an emphasis on theory-testing or refinement (deduction). At the inductive pole of the spectrum, one finds the grounded-theory approach in which single cases are selected and studied in-depth not because they are deemed theoretically relevant but because they are deemed empirically 'interesting' and promising in terms of yielding new understandings of social realities. Hence, the grounded-theory approach does not venture out to

'explain' empirical phenomena, but rather to achieve a (better) understanding of social realities as the basis for original theory-building (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). At the other, deductive pole of the spectrum, cases are selected not out of their own right but because they are seen as representing theoretically-defined classes of phenomena, with the goal of either substantiating or refuting claims made by existing theories about the phenomena in question. At this second pole, case selection proceeds not intuitively but based on quasi-statistical considerations, with the case(s) featuring the 'dependent variable' and potential 'independent variables' in such a way that valid causal inferences can be drawn while also controlling for as many diluting factors or data 'noise' as possible (see Blatter and Haverland 2012, ch. 2; Gerring 2007; Lieberson 1992; Lijphart 1971). Finally, in between the two poles, a large variety of hybrid case-study approaches can be found that lean more towards either side, such as Mintzberg's (1979), Eisenhardt's (1989) or Yin's (2009) inductive case-study approaches that start with a pre-defined research question but remain open to new theoretical insights and developments in the course of doing the research, or mechanism-based case-study approaches that investigate complex empirical interdependencies and/or interactions within the context of existing theoretical frameworks (Blatter and Haverland 2012, ch. 3; George and Bennett 2005; Pettigrew 1997).

The research at hand is to be positioned in the theory-testing/refining half of the above-sketched spectrum because its country-cases were selected on the basis of a given theoretical framework (namely, the ideal-typical activation-policy regime framework outlined in Chapter 2) which suggested that the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain would represent different activation-policy ideal types (for more details on the case selection, see the next section). However, at the same time, the current research is also quite far removed from the quasi-statistical, deductive pole not only because it seeks to unearth mechanism-based explanations for the emergence of ALMP implementation regimes but also because the micro-level analysis of Chapters 5-7 and 8 proceeds inductively, constructing original implementation-regime descriptions from interviews with policy-implementers rather than defining theory-based implementation-regime characteristics *a priori* and then testing their occurrence in the 'real' world. Furthermore, the micro-level research carried out for this dissertation borrows substantially from the methodological toolsets developed by Yin on the one hand and Strauss and collaborators on the other hand, with multiple rounds of "open", "axial" and "selective" coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990, chs. 5, 7 and 8) as well as "pattern matching", "explanation building" and "cross-case synthesis" (Yin 2009, ch. 5) having been carried out to distil adequate street-level ALMP regime descriptions and translation mechanisms from the empirical data.

As this brief discussion of the positioning of my pragmatic research among existing case-study approaches shows, a pragmatic stance makes it virtually imposs-

ible to remain within one single case-study approach because all established case-study approaches are aligned with specific epistemological tenets, whereas a pragmatic position implies mixing epistemological logics and associated case-study approaches (or at least elements thereof). Thus, one might say that the overall case-study design chosen for this research resembles a "causal process-tracing" or CPT approach that seeks to provide mechanism-based explanations for the emergence of street-level ALMP systems, supplemented by a pinch of the causality-testing sampling logic of the "co-variational analysis" or COV approach because due to the cross-country outlook of this dissertation, attention will be paid to mechanisms that seem either country-specific or more universal (cf. Blatter and Haverland 2012). Furthermore, as was already indicated above, the micro-level and synthesizing parts of this dissertation borrow heavily from methodological tools associated with grounded theory and Yin's iterative case-study approach, with Chapters 5-7 and 8 using grounded-theory methods to organize my interview, vignette and observation data into internally coherent stories of the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes from jobcentre caseworkers' discourses and practices, and Chapter 8 applying heuristic devices developed by Yin (2009) when reflecting the micro-level findings back on the macro-level welfare-state/activation-policy regime story of Chapter 4, arriving at some "analytic generalizations" about multi-level regime-dynamics in the activation domain. In section 3.3, it will now be explained what such an interlaced case-study design implies for the case selection underlying this study.

3.3 Case selection

3.3.1 Country cases: The Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain

If one wishes to investigate how activation-policy (and welfare-state) regimes translate into street-level practice – mediated by the embedded or autonomous agency of individual policy-implementers – it is essential to study more than one country because not only the degree of correspondence between 'structure' and 'agency', but also the nature or strength of the underlying translation mechanisms might differ between countries or more generally, regime contexts. Only a comparative research design allows one to determine which of the identified macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms are regime-specific and which ones are more universal, thereby making it possible to establish a conceptual hierarchy among mechanisms and hence to offer a systematic account of the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes across countries.

For the present study, three country cases were selected to be investigated in depth: The Netherlands, Denmark, and Great Britain. The reasons behind this case selection are twofold. To begin with, all three countries were forerunners of the second wave of activation that started in the early 1990s, developing novel activation instruments and governance procedures that were later turned into policy templates for other countries by international organizations such as the OECD and the European Union (compare Carstensen and Møller Pedersen 2008; Lindsay and McQuaid 2009; Tergeist and Grubb 2006). In case-study language, one might therefore say that all three counties have a "positive outcome" on the 'dependent variable' (namely, full-grown ALMP implementation regimes), meaning that it is possible to go searching for the mechanisms that effectuated the outcome in question (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 100-1). At the same time, the social policy literature in general and the activation literature in particular suggest that the three countries display differences in the cultural underpinnings, institutional designs, and stratification effects of their unemployment security systems (see for example Aurich 2011; Etherington and Ingold 2012; Van Berkel, De Graaf and Sirovátka 2011; Verhoeven and Tonkens 2013) so that studying the relationship between formal policy regimes and practical implementation regimes in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain could yield interesting insights into the universal mechanisms translating policy into practice.

More specifically, the Dutch, Danish and British cases could be regarded as "most different" cases on both the ideal-typical solidarism-residualism axis and the conservatism-liberalism axis according to the ideal-typical activation regime framework depicted in Figure 2.2. Thus, the three systems mark a spectrum from high devolution (Netherlands) via centralized decentralization (Denmark until 2014) to high centralization (Great Britain) what the formal structure of ALMP governance is concerned (cf. Van Berkel, De Graaf and Sirovátka 2011). This goes hand in hand with a varying focus on local network steering (especially in the Netherlands) or hierarchical central steering (especially in Great Britain; see Wright 2006). Also the legally prescribed ideal of activation differs between a holistic notion of activation (especially in the Netherlands) and a purely labour market-focused notion of activation (especially in Great Britain), as will be shown in Chapter 4 (cf. also the respective chapters in Clasen and Clegg 2011; Serrano Pascual and Magnusson 2007). In solidaristic versus residualistic terms, the two poles of the spectrum are marked by the most solidaristic Danish ALMP system where activation budgets are highest and where a comparably strong focus on education and training is observable, and the most residualistic British ALMP system that is characterized by scarce resources for activation and a workfarist emphasis on duties and sanctions for the unemployed (see Chapter 4). Only what the public versus private provision of activation measures is concerned, the ideal-typical pole of mainly public provision is not represented in the sample, with the Netherlands and Denmark display-

ing a public-private mix whereas Great Britain relies to a strong degree on contracted private providers, particularly for the long-term unemployed under the Work Programme. Overall, however, the three activation-policy regimes stretch widely across the ideal-typical activation regime matrix depicted in Figure 2.2, for which reason any macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms emerging from all three country cases can be reasonably argued to be analytically generalizable beyond the three empirical cases under study (cf. Yin 2009).

As a final point on the case selection, it must also be mentioned that the case selection suffers from two shortcomings that could unfortunately not be remedied within the limited timeframe of this dissertation research. To begin with, only three countries were selected for this study whereas the ideal-typical policy-regime framework developed in Chapter 2 includes four activation ideal types. Although it would have been highly interesting and desirable to add a fourth case to the country sample, for instance a Mediterranean welfare state where the implementation of activation can be expected to be residualistically funded and conservatively devolved/fragmented (cf. Champion and Bonoli 2011; Ferrera 1996; Genova 2008; Graziano and Raué 2011), this was unfeasible due to time and language constraints in the context of this dissertation project. However, extending the current case study design to a Southern European welfare state like Italy or Spain, possibly in cooperation with a native researcher, seems a promising route for follow-up research. The second limitation of the present study is that only very limited qualitative data could be gathered on the British case, since the British Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) did not concede to more than two Jobcentre offices participating in my non-commissioned research project. For this reason, it was decided to base the analytical part of this dissertation primarily on the Dutch and Danish cases (Chapters 5-7), with the British case serving as a litmus test to reflect on the wider applicability of the earlier findings (in Chapter 8).

3.3.2   Research sites:[2] (Municipal) jobcentres

In order to study the bottom-up emergence and construction of ALMP implementation regimes through street-level discourses and practices, a decision was made early on in my research to focus on uninsured recipients of unemployment benefits only. The reason for this lies in the institutional setup of the three welfare states under study: Both the Netherlands and Denmark have split benefit systems for insured and uninsured unemployed, although reintegration services for all clients are provided by joint municipal jobcentres in Denmark. In the Netherlands, a separate agency is responsible for reintegrating the insured unemployed into the

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2   What I call 'research sites' here approximates Yin's "embedded units of analysis" and Gerring's "observations".

labour market (the UWV),[3] although some municipalities have also opted for joint service provision. Finally and in juxtaposition with both systems, unemployment insurance plays a negligible role in Great Britain while activation services are provided predominantly by private providers under the auspices of the DWP's "Work Programme" after the first year of unemployment. In light of those differences, it seemed reasonable to focus on that part of the unemployment security system which is similar and therefore relatively easy to compare across countries: the 'uninsured' branch. Moreover, although activation encompasses both benefit-related and work-related policy elements as was pointed out in the introduction, this study focuses exclusively on the work-related aspects of activation.

Regarding within-case variation, i.e. structural differences among the municipalities that were selected for the study of ALMP implementation regimes in the three countries, I followed what Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) call a "qualitative" or "purposive" sampling logic. More specifically, I compiled samples of "heterogeneous" research sites consisting of municipalities that vary in terms of size, central versus peripheral geographical location, and industry structure (cf. Pollitt, Birchall and Putman 1998: 170-8; Rice 2013b, 2013c). By doing so, I sought to be able to "identify central themes which cut across the variety of cases or people" and hence detect implementation-regime characteristics and translation mechanisms between policy and practice that hold across municipalities and/or countries (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003: 79). Thus, the municipalities chosen for my research should be regarded as 'symbolically' rather than statistically representative. With an eye to the empirical and theoretical generalizability of my qualitative data, this implies that not all of my findings are *per se* representative of the respective country as a whole. On the flipside, however, I can reasonably assume that the implementation-regime characteristics and policy-practice translation mechanisms prevalent in the three countries *will* surface in my municipality sample. High scrutiny in the processing of my data, a high level of transparency with regard to my case selection and data gathering, and additional data for instance in the form of other literature and research reports are therefore required to determine whether my own conclusions can reasonably be generalized to a larger, i.e. country or even theoretical level.

3.3.3   Respondents

Tables 3.1 to 3.3 provide an overview of the jobcentres I visited and the respondents I interviewed. With regard to caseworker functions, three caseworker specializations are distinguished in the Dutch and Danish cases that are prevalent more or less

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3   The *Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen* (UWV) is the autonomous agency commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to administer unemployment insurance and collect labour-market statistics.

explicitly in most (but not all) visited municipalities: caseworkers focusing on 'job-ready' clients in the Netherlands (corresponding to the official category 'match one' in Denmark), 'reintegration' clients requiring some assistance in re-entering the labour market in the Netherlands ('match two' in Denmark) and vulnerable clients who are far removed from the labour market in the Netherlands (the former 'match three' in Denmark).[4] Note that two of the jobcentres I visited in the Netherlands (C and G) were inter-municipal social services, meaning that two or more municipalities have outsourced reintegration services and benefit administration to a semi-autonomous joint jobcentre organization. In Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, I anonymized all jobcentres and respondents by way of assigning them letters and numbers. The same letters and numbers will be used in the micro-level Chapters 5-7 and 8 to give the readers some chance to detect, if they so wish, from what kind of structural setting the respective comments emanated. If politically sensitive quotes are used in the empirical analysis, for instance when a respondent voices discontent with an official policy, I decided to omit even the letter-and-number reference, however, referring only to "a manager" or "a caseworker" in order to protect my respondents from any possible negative consequences of participating in my research.

Out of the seven municipal jobcentres I visited in the Netherlands, five were recruited via a formal letter to the jobcentre director, followed up in some cases by a telephone call or e-mail. The remaining two jobcentres were recruited via professional acquaintances and hence provided instances of "opportunistic sampling" (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003: 81-2). Three more jobcentres were contacted but declined to participate in my research, two due to limited staff resources and one because it was scheduled to be closed down. It can therefore not be ruled out that my small sample of Dutch municipal jobcentres is afflicted by a certain selection bias, meaning that jobcentres experiencing difficulties with implementing activation may be somewhat underrepresented in my research.

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4   Note that also in Great Britain, clients are categorized as 'red', 'amber' and 'green' – indicating increasing proximity to the labour market. However, I did not encounter any personal advisers specialized accordingly (apart from the fact that unequivocally 'green' clients are seen only by assistant advisers in jobcentre N3, according to caseworker N3).

Tab. 3.1: Municipal jobcentres visited in the Netherlands in the period December 2010 – July 2011.

Municipality	Date(s) of interviews	Respondents	Population (2011)[5]	Region (NUTS2)[6]
A	30 Dec. 2010	- A1: Caseworker - A2: Caseworker (young/vulnerable clients) - A3: Director	150,000	Utrecht *(Centre)*
B	14 Jan. 2011	- B: Department head/caseworker	<10,000	Utrecht *(Centre)*
C	27 Jan. & 4 Apr. 2011	- C1: Caseworker (job-ready clients) - C2: Purchaser & controller	30,000	South Holland *(Centre-West)*
D	14 Feb. 2011	- D1: Caseworker (reintegration clients) - D2: Caseworker (job-ready clients) - D3: Department head	110,000	Drenthe *(North-East)*
E	18 May & 14 June & 1 July & 5 July & 11 July 2011	- E1: Caseworker (intake) - E2: Caseworker (job-ready clients) - E3: Caseworker (reintegration clients) - E4: Department head (vulnerable clients) - E5/6: Senior managers	> 500,000	South Holland *(Centre-West)*
F	20 May 2011	- F1: Caseworker - F2: Caseworker - F3: Director	20,000	Groningen *(North)*
G	10 June 2011	- G1: Caseworker - G2: Caseworker (young clients) - G3: Line manager	90,000	Friesland *(North-West)*

Within jobcentres, the caseworker respondents were usually selected by the director or manager who served as my initial contact. (Only in the Dutch municipalities E and F was I free to make my own appointments, and in two cases the second caseworker respondent was recruited by the first caseworker respondent). This might have resulted in an additional selection-bias, since management can be expected to appoint mainly conversation partners whose views on activation mirror their own and whom they consequently trust to represent the organization favourably vis-à-vis a curious outsider. However, as the same selection mechanism was presumably at play in all jobcentres I visited, one might also argue that my non-

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5   Rounded figures. Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2011): *Demografische kerncijfers per gemeente 2011*. The Hague etc.: CBS.

6   The second level of the 'Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistic' (NUTS2) refers to provinces in the Netherlands, regions in Denmark, and (groups of) counties in the UK.

representative sample of respondents is at least congruent in this regard, allowing for cross-jobcentre comparisons of the interview data.

As a final caveat with regard to the seven Dutch municipal jobcentres I visited to study the bottom-up construction of ALMP implementation regimes, it should be pointed out that the new Liberal coalition government of the Netherlands announced iterative budget cuts for unemployment benefits and services from 2010 onwards,[7] affecting municipality E most severely in my municipality sample. Therefore, municipality E is not in all aspects comparable with the other Dutch municipalities discussed here, although it can serve as an interesting example of how budgetary changes and particularly budget cuts affect the implementation of ALMPs.

In Denmark, access to jobcentres proved somewhat more difficult than in the Netherlands because I had to identify potential contact persons via the Danish web-portal for unemployed clients (https://job.jobnet.dk) as well as through a Google search. As in the Dutch context, I identified potential research sites in Denmark with an eye to variation in geographic location, municipality size, and industry structure. Initially, I sent letters to six Danish jobcentres asking for cooperation in my research, receiving two positive replies and one referral to a neighbouring jobcentre (a fourth jobcentre declined due to a lack of staff resources, the remaining two jobcentres did not reply). Having learned from my empirical research in the Netherlands that a certain "saturation" point where "one receives [almost] only already known statements" can be reached after visiting about five jobcentres (Seldén 2005: 124), I sought to increase my Danish sample to six jobcentres (more jobcentre visits would also not have been feasible due to time constraints). Over the course of seven months, I sent out a second wave of 11 e-mails to jobcentre directors in Denmark, receiving three positive replies, three negative replies and five non-replies. Given that only six out of the total 17 Danish jobcentres contacted participated in my research, a certain self-selection bias cannot be ruled out also in the Danish case. However, it is possible that the seven non-replies were elicited by wrong or outdated e-mail addresses, implying that the presence or strength of a potential self-selection bias is hard to gauge. Apart from these considerations, it is hoped that because this research seeks to answer a 'how'-question rather than a 'why'-question, the rich data provided by the Danish sample will suffice for unearthing macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms that characterize the Danish case in general, irrespective of any potential noise in the Danish interview and vignette data.

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7   Between 2010 and 2013, municipal funds for activation services (the so-called *participatiebudget/BUIG-budget*) were reduced from € 1.9 billion to € 861 million in total. Source: "Divosa-monitor", various issues.

Tab. 3.2: *Municipal jobcentres visited in Denmark in the period December 2011 – October 2012.*

Municipality	Date(s) of interviews	Respondents	Population (2011)[8]	Region (NUTS2)
H	5 Dec. 2011	- H1: Caseworker (match 1, low-skilled clients) - H2: Caseworker (match 1, young clients) - H3: Department head	200,000	North Denmark *(North)*
I	7 Dec. 2011	- I1/2: Caseworkers (match 1/match 2&3) - I3: Director	50,000	Southern Denmark *(South-West)*
J	1 Mar. 2012	- J1: Caseworker (match 1, >25 years) - J2: Department head (match 2&3) - J3/4/5: Senior managers	310,000	Central Denmark *(Centre)*
K	2 Mar. 2012	- K1: Caseworker (match 2&3, <30 years) - K1: Caseworker (match 1, >30 years) - K3: Director	80,000	Zealand *(South-East)*
L	10 May & 11 May 2012	- L1: Caseworker (match 2&3, >30 years) - L2: Employer relations officer - L3: Quality coordinator - L4: Senior manager	>500,000	Capital region *(East)*
M	30 Oct. 2012	- M1/2: Caseworkers (match 2&3/match 1) - M3: Director	30,000	Southern Denmark *(Centre-South)*

Table 3.2 gives an overview of the Danish respondents. As before, the Table lists whether caseworkers had special target groups, most particularly so-called match-one clients (deemed ready to enter the labour market immediately), match-two clients (deemed ready for an active measure with the prospect of becoming fully work-ready within three months) or match-three clients (deemed temporarily unavailable for employment – a category that was officially removed in January 2014).[9] As will become apparent in Chapters 5 and 7, the match-group differentiation plays an important role for activation discourses and practices in Denmark because different standard trajectories are prescribed for each match group. Another

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8   Rounded figures. Source: Danmarks Statistik (http://www.statistikbanken.dk), Table *FOLK1: Folketal den 1. i kvartalet efter kommune, køn, alder, civilstand, herkomst, oprindelsesland og statsborgerskab* [Rev. 2013-07-09].

9   Legal source: *Bekendtgørelse om matchvurdering*, URL: https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id= 131452 [Rev. 2013-07-24].

reason why the match groups feature prominently in the discourses and practices of Danish policy-implementers emerging from the interviews may lie in the fact that the threefold match-group categorization entered into force in April 2010 (only about half a year before my first interviews in Denmark), replacing a previous categorization of five match groups.[10]

The last Table in this chapter shows the respondents interviewed in the British context. As before, it is indicated whether the caseworker respondents had special functions or target groups (with "PA" meaning "personal adviser", "AA" referring to "assistant advisers" mainly responsible for signing on and administrative tasks, "FA" standing for "financial assessor", and "DA" meaning "disability adviser). The recruitment of respondents proved somewhat more difficult in Great Britain than in the other two countries because I did not know anybody who could provide me with a contact person at the Department for Work and Pensions and also because five of the six Jobcentre offices I initially contacted via letter referred me to the DWP. However, the sixth jobcentre channelled my request on to an International Relationships officer at DWP who then contacted me. In this way, a first jobcentre visit was organized in municipality N, which proved to be much more extensive than my jobcentre visits in the Netherlands and Denmark (lasting for one and a half days). Although DWP informed me that "the resources to host a second visit could be difficult", a second visit for another full day was organized after I had again contacted five more district managers – admittedly without first letting the International Relations office know about my renewed attempts to gain access to JCPs. A third JCP visit that presented itself as an option after my second round of e-mails was eventually declined by DWP, however.

Due to the limited number of research sites in the British context, I can claim even less than in the other two country-cases that my qualitative research results are indicative of the British ALMP implementation regime as a whole. For this reason, as was already mentioned before, the British case will only be used as a litmus test case in Chapter 8 to reflect on and contextualize the more extensive findings from the other two cases. Another factor that makes the British research results special is that I was unexpectedly offered observations of (and short talks with) caseworkers in jobcentre O rather than more extensive caseworker interviews. As will be elaborated further in subsection 3.4.3, I accepted this offer although observations were not foreseen in my original research design because I expected to gain a more thorough understanding of street-level activation processes in Great Britain through these observations. I have found this to be true, although some readers may disagree with such an aberration from a previously-defined research

10 See Caswell, Marston and Larsen (2010) for more information on the old classification scheme; Bredgaard (2011: 766, 769) for a discussion of the transition; and Larsen and Jonsson (2011) and Andersen and Svarer (2012) for more details on the new match-group classification.

path and although my spontaneous decision to agree with observations added a third method to my methodology parcel. In the next section, all three methods used in the empirical research will be addressed more elaborately (interviews, vignettes and observations), also explaining how the respective methods fit in the pragmatic research design underlying this macro-micro-macro study on the emergence of street-level activation regimes.

Tab. 3.3: Local jobcentres visited in Great Britain in the period November 2011 – March 2012.

Municipality	Date(s) of interviews	Respondents	Population (2011)[11]	Region (NUTS2)
N	17-18 Nov. 2011	- N1: Caseworker (PA/>25, 18-24 years) - N2: Caseworker (PA/lone parents, 18-24 years) - N3: Caseworker (PA) - N4: Caseworker (DA) - N5: Line manager - N6: Manager - N7: Deputy Director - N8: District manager - N9: Compliance department staff member - N10: Fraud department staff member - N11: Manager, Work Programme prime provider - N12: Adviser, private provider	100,000	Hampshire and Isle of Wight *(South)*
O	16 March 2012	- O1: Caseworker (PA) - O2: Caseworker (PA) - O3: Caseworker (FA) - O4: Caseworker (AA) - O5: Caseworker (AA) - O6: Director	20,000	Scotland *(North)*

3.4   Methods

The final section of this chapter gives a detailed overview of the three qualitative methods used in the empirical research for this study: interviews (subsection 3.4.1), vignettes (subsection 3.4.2) and observations (subsection 3.4.3). In addition, subsection 3.4.4 describes how the collected data were processed and analysed in order to lay the basis for the street-level ALMP regime descriptions in Chapters 5-7 and 8. Because the macro-level analysis in Chapter 4 is relatively self-explaining, being

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11   Rounded figures. Source: Wikipedia (URL: http://www.wikipedia.org).

based mainly on descriptive statistics and a document analysis, the analytical methodology underlying Chapter 4 is not addressed in more detail in the current chapter.

3.4.1   Interviews

For the micro-level analysis of implementation discourses and practices carried out in Chapters 5-7 and 8, interviews were conducted with managers and case-workers in Dutch, Danish and British jobcentres, as was explained above. The interviews in the Netherlands were conducted in the Dutch language while the interviews in Denmark and Great Britain were conducted in English. In the case of Denmark, I had indicated in my contact letters that I required English-speaking respondents, which might have caused a certain self-selection among the respondents, albeit with unknown implications. All interviews were conducted in the personal office space of the respondent or in a meeting room in the jobcentre building.

In terms of interview methodology, my main interest was to understand how individual policy implementers carry out their daily work, how they rationalize their actions, and how that relates to the wider policy, economic and geographic environment in which the respective policy-implementers operate. For that reason, I opted for what I would call a 'semi-open' interview strategy, loosely following a topic guide with items related to the cultural, institutional and stratification dimensions of policy implementation derived from the activation and SLB literature (see Appendix 2 and Rice 2013c; cf. also Arthur and Nazroo 2003) but otherwise exploring the issues deemed important by the respondents themselves. The reason for this approach lay in the exploratory nature of my research, which made it advisable to focus on a limited "number of very broad questions, encouraging the participants to take the lead and to shape their own narrative" (Arthur and Nazroo 2003: 110). In this manner, I not only hoped to be able to reconstruct how individual policy implementers make sense of policy directives and apply them to concrete client cases, but also to leave room for unexpected facts or insights surfacing during the interviews.

Using a semi-open interview style allowed me to conduct the interviews largely in the form of conversations, although I tried to keep my own interventions to a minimum. The rationale behind such a conversational interview approach as opposed to a 'mechanistic' interview style is that respondents are more likely to open up and show the interviewer their world (of activation) through their own eyes when they feel at ease. As Hermanowicz remarks: "Great conversations, like great interviews, are rare. But when they happen, you come away having learned something beneath the surface of the person with whom you are talking. There is an absence of superficiality; there is flow" (2002: 482). Thanks to my inspiring

respondents, I have been lucky to have had not a few but many inspiring conversations in the course of my research.

Although I tried to let my respondents talk most of the time and to interfere as little as possible, there were instances when I would not only pose a question or develop a question while talking but even make a personal remark or voice an opinion because I felt that remaining silent and scientifically 'neutral' (to the degree that this is at all possible in a conversation between people) would have kept the interview at a too formal, superficial and eventually inconclusive level. For instance, in one of my pilot interviews with a psychological counsellor in the Netherlands, I disclosed that I recognized what he said based on a personal experience in my own family. This helped to lift the conversation to a more open, trustful and less 'politically correct' plateau. However, I did my best to keep any personal statements to a minimum, so as to not fall prey to artificial data construction or even manipulation.

Unless the schedule of my respondents did not allow this, I generally tried to interview first managers and then caseworkers in each jobcentre so that I would have to spend less time with the caseworkers on clarifying purely informational issues. All interviews, both with managers and caseworkers, began with a short introduction in which I explained that the goal of my research was to understand how local jobcentres translate policy objectives into concrete procedures and policy instruments. I also assured the respondents anonymity, promised to disseminate an informal summary of my most practically-relevant findings, informed the respondents that the duration of the interviews would be approximately one hour, and – in the case of the caseworkers – that I would like to conclude the interview by hearing their reflections on two hypothetical client cases.

After the introduction, I usually began the interviews with a few warming-up questions, unless the small-talk preceding the interviews allowed us to delve immediately into the subject matter. These warming-up questions included inquiries about the task description of the respondent, the respondent's employment history and educational background, and the main tasks of the respondent within the jobcentre organization. From this point onwards, I tried to "move from the general to the specific," using the topic guide as a rough guideline and otherwise following up on or probing whichever topics the respondents themselves brought up (Arthur and Nazroo 2003: 112).

With the manager respondents, I generally sought to explore the influence of formal policy directives on organizational policy, issues pertaining to the local labour market, the organizational structure of the jobcentre, network arrangements with private providers of activation services, performance management strategies, and budgetary resources. With the caseworkers, I sought to focus more specifically on their daily routines, their caseloads, their views of clients, other tasks they had besides their casework, and some more 'philosophical' questions about the aims

and implications of activation. In general, I did my best to talk as little as possible and find out quickly which topics were 'close to the heart' of the caseworker respondents. After some interview appointments, I found out that questions such as *'Have you recently had a client who left a mark on your memory and if so, could you tell me a little bit about that case?'* or *'What do you like most about your work'* and *'What are the biggest challenges you encounter in your work'* worked best to achieve that.

Once a point of saturation was reached where neither the respondent nor I could immediately think of anything else to tell or ask, or after the scheduled interview time came to a close, I took a last glance at my topic guide to make sure that no essential topics or questions had been forgotten. In spite of the semi-open structure of the interviews, I thereby sought to ensure that all interviews would cover a similar terrain of issues. To end the interviews with the caseworkers (and some managers in Denmark because more managers than caseworkers were assigned as respondents to me in some Danish jobcentres), I presented my two vignettes to the respondents in the form of a short text and a photograph printed on paper. For each vignette, I asked the respondents to read the text and then tell me 'what they would do with that client'. I only answered comprehension questions but otherwise did not interrupt the respondent's account. This not only allowed me to get an approximation of the real client-processing techniques used by my respondents and their implications for real clients, but also provided an elegant opening for asking some last "cool[ing] down" questions, for instance about the future of activation (Hermanowicz 2002: 488). Before ending the interview, I also asked the respondents whether there was anything else that was of importance in their work but which we had not discussed so far.

Besides the interviews with managers and caseworkers summarized in Tables 3.1 to 3.3, I also conducted a number of expert and pilot interviews in order to prepare and contextualize my empirical research. In the Dutch context, I arranged six pilot interviews with private reintegration providers as well as five expert interviews. More concretely, I interviewed the following professionals in **Dutch** reintegration companies:

- Manager, Permar WS, Ede (16 February 2010)
- One project leader and one coach, Welvada Stadsatelier, Ede (23 February 2010)
- Managing coordinator, Werkcenter Ede (24 February 2010)
- Trainer coach, Transitie Instituut, Wageningen (14 March 2010)
- Medical adviser, Markantis, Elst (3 May 2010)
- Manager, Nieuwland Opleidingen en Reintegratie, Wageningen (4 May 2010)

The policy experts I interviewed in the Netherlands were the following:
- – Consultant, Meccano, Utrecht (23 February 2010)
- – Two policy advisers, Wageningen municipality (17 March 2010)
- – Process manager, Divosa, Utrecht (29 May 2010)
- – Vice director & project manager, Divosa, Utrecht (19 January 2011)
- – Policy adviser, Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) (11 May 2011)

In **Denmark**, I interviewed eight academic experts prior to commencing my empirical research. These were:
- – Professor, Aalborg University (21 June 2010)
- – Doctoral researcher, University of Copenhagen (22 June 2010)
- – Doctoral researcher, University of Copenhagen (22 June 2010)
- – Associate professor, University of Copenhagen (22 June 2010)
- – Professor, University of Copenhagen (22 June 2010)
- – Senior researcher, Danish National Centre for Social Research (23 June 2010)
- – Research professor, Danish National Centre for Social Research (23 June 2010)
- – Professor, University of Southern Denmark (23 June 2010)

Finally, due to the limited scope of my research in **Great Britain**, I only interviewed one director of a Netherlands-based prime provider of Work Programme in order to prepare myself for the British interviews:
- – Director, Fourstar, Rijen (7 June 2011)

In the following two subsections, I discuss supplementary methods applied in this dissertation research, namely vignettes (used to make better visible the societal agency of caseworkers in Chapters 7 and 8) and observations (conducted only in one British jobcentre and used in the analysis of British caseworkers' discursive agency in Chapter 8).

3.4.2 Vignettes

Vignettes are "short descriptions of a person or social situation which contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making processes of respondents" (Alexander and Becker 1978: 94). As Arthur and Nazroo (2003: 129) point out, vignettes can be usefully combined with interviews in order to "introduce an element of consistency", allow "comparisons between the reactions of different participants to the same hypothetical example" and "explain how general principles or views ... expressed [by the respondents] might be modified in different circumstances". More generally, vignettes can be used as a triangulation tool for cross-examining interview data and making interviews and/or observations conducted across countries better comparable (Soydan and Stål 1994; Soydan 1996). In the current dissertation, two vignettes were used not only to countercheck what caseworkers' discourses and

organizational procedures mean for the processing of client cases, but also as a means to operationalize caseworkers' capacity to affect societal structures (captured by the term "societal agency"). The vignette results are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

The vignettes were presented to the caseworker respondents at the end of each interview to wind the interview down (Barter and Renold 1999, 2010). Asking the caseworkers to read the first vignette text carefully and then tell me 'what they would do with such a client', I subsequently kept quiet until the caseworkers gave a clear verbal indication that they had told me all they had meant to say about the vignette, unless I received a question of clarification from the respondent. In a few cases, the vignettes triggered a prolongation of the interviews, in which previously addressed or unaddressed issues were discussed; this information, as far as it no longer concerned the vignettes proper, was treated as regular interview data during the analysis.

The two vignettes were not constructed to "specify causal connections" concerning the manifestation of macro-level activation-policy or welfare-state regimes at the micro-level of ALMP implementation (Finch 1987: 112). Rather, it was attempted to work a variety of features into the vignettes that may or may not influence caseworker decisions about reintegration according to the welfare-regime and SLB literatures. By identifying *a posteriori* which personality features, skills etc. were picked out or left unaddressed by caseworkers in their responses to the vignettes, it was then attempted to reconstruct inductively which regime characteristics materialize how at the micro-level of ALMP implementation, and through which mechanisms. The personal features worked into the vignettes for this purpose were:
- Gender (female/male)
- Age (late 30s/approaching pension age)
- Family status (single parent/single person with care responsibilities)
- Nationality (refugee/native)
- Language skills (proficient speaking but basic writing/fluent)
- Education (tertiary education/vocational training plus adult education)

Based on these varied features, two vignettes were constructed – more vignettes were not deemed feasible based on the limited timeframe available for the vignette study as being embedded in a mainly interview-based research design (cf. Soydan 1996: 126). These vignettes concerned a single immigrant mother of two young children and an older native male with a history of depression. The first vignette was called Emina Mujačić in all three countries, the second vignette was called Bart Boonstra in the Netherlands, Jørgen Andersen in Denmark, and Michael Davis in Great Britain. Another detail that was adapted for Denmark after the first interviews in municipality H was the amount Emina Mujačić earned from her part-time job (€ 400 in the Netherlands and £ 300 in Great Britain), with that amount changing to a workload of four hours per week in the Danish vignette because

my first Danish caseworker-interviewees were uncertain whether Emina would at all be eligible for activation in Denmark due to her earnings. The full description of both vignettes, as they were presented to the caseworker respondents, is given below (for Emina Mujačić: in the Danish version).

> **Emina Mujačić** is a 38-year-old Bosnian woman from [municipality]. In 1995, she and her husband fled the war in Bosnia and came to [country] as asylum seekers. Emina speaks very decent [native language] but does not have very good writing skills. Her son of eight years and her daughter of five years go to elementary school in [municipality]. Emina works four hours per week as a seamstress at a tailor's shop in her neighbourhood (she holds a B.A. diploma in fashion design from Bosnia). However, even with the [amount in national currency] in alimony which Emina receives from her ex-husband since she got a divorce, she is not able to make ends meet. Emina therefore approaches the Jobcenter [municipality] to explore other opportunities she might have. With a radiant smile, Emina comes towards you…

> **Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen/Michael Davis** is a 56-year-old man from [municipality]. Between 1990 and 2008, Bart/Jørgen/Michael worked as a purchasing agent for a middle-size advertising company in [municipality or neighbouring municipality]. During that period, he also completed an adult education course in Business Studies. In May 2008, Bart/Jørgen/Michael had a nervous collapse and was admitted to a mental hospital. He was treated successfully but continues to suffer from a mild depression. Immediately after his recovery, Bart/Jørgen/Michael began looking for a new office job. Due to the economic crisis and his age, however, he has not succeeded in finding one so far. Moving elsewhere is not an option for Bart/Jørgen/Michael, as he lives with his disabled 50-year-old sister. Discouraged, Bart/Jørgen/Michael sits down at your desk…

In order to hold any visual stimuli that might elicit subjective personality-assessments from caseworkers as constant as possible across interview contexts, each vignette was accompanied by a small photo.

As a last remark on the vignettes before turning to the spontaneous observations I conducted in the British municipality O, let me state here that vignettes provide only an approximation of real caseworker behaviour, not empirical data on caseworker behaviour as such. However, since those artificial conditions were constant across all three regime contexts, it can be argued that the vignette analysis in Chapter 7 (and 8) nevertheless has "great hermeneutic power in its capacity to enhance our understanding of [caseworkers' discourses and] behaviour" (Wilks 2004: 83).

3.4.3   Observations

The final method used in this dissertation research – observations – was limited to jobcentre O in Great Britain because the jobcentre director unexpectedly offered

the possibility of participant observations to me. This chance to gain a deeper-level understanding of real-world activation discourses and practices I did not want to let pass, in spite of knowing that this would partly jeopardize the comparability of my research results on the British case. However, because I knew already that two British research sites would not be enough to make the British data comparable with the results from the other two countries, I spontaneously decided to aim for depth of understanding rather than direct data comparability.

Since I did not have time to prepare the observations, I did not go into the observations with a predefined "procedure for linking [my] research questions to … observations [I] might be able to make in the 'field'" (Mason 2002: 90). However, since I did have my interview guide at hand and had already completed all my interviews in the Netherlands and most of my interviews in Denmark at the time of visiting jobcentre O, I tried to pay special attention to any occurrences during the observed caseworker-client interactions that caught my attention as 'interesting', 'surprising' or 'confirmative' based on my previous interview experience. Generally, the observations began by the caseworker respondents introducing me as 'Deborah who is sitting in on us today to see how we do our work' and asking their clients whether they would feel comfortable with me attending the consultation. All of the clients agreed. After that, I did my best to keep my facial expressions and bodily movements as inconspicuous as possible, so as to keep my own influence on the observed interaction processes to a minimum. This applied especially to my writing down personal impressions and verbatim accounts of what was being said as quickly as possible, which was necessary because I had not asked whether I could record the caseworker consultations on tape, expecting first of all that this would be declined for reasons of data security and second of all because I did not want to put the unemployed clients at unease by recording their personal details and other information surfacing during the consultations. In order to make sure that my quickly scribbled noted would still be readable later, I rewrote some of my notes immediately after the observations and added some further remarks and observations from my memory where applicable. In Chapter 8 where the exploratory results from the British case are presented and analysed, I will use the observation data as equal in expressiveness and significance to the interview data, giving exact quotes where I have them and otherwise describing as meticulously and value-free as possible what I observed and how I interpreted it.

3.4.4 Data analysis

As was discussed in section 3.1, the micro-level part of this dissertation is based on an inductive research design. This means that although the research at hand is based on theoretical, the concrete indicators by which the theoretical expectations of the welfare-regime and SLB approaches are operationalized at the micro-level

of ALMP implementation in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain were not defined *a priori* in this study. Instead, the indicators that are used to illustrate whether and how macro-level regime structures materialize at the micro-level were derived *a posteriori* from the collected empirical material. For this reason, the analysis of the interviews, observations and vignette study conducted in Dutch, Danish and British jobcentres did not follow a fixed, theory-derived coding scheme but rather resembled a grounded-theory approach in which the codes used to organize interview data into a meaningful theoretical story are distilled from the data themselves in consecutive coding rounds (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The main difference between my approach and the grounded-theory approach is epistemological in nature, with grounded theory belonging to the interpretive research tradition whereas I appropriate the grounded-theory methodology for a pragmatic research endeavour. More particularly, I appropriated the grounded-theory method as follows for this dissertation research:

To begin with, the interviews conducted in the Dutch and Danish context were recorded and later transcribed using the transcription software "F4". Since I was requested not to make recordings of the interviews in the British jobcentre N and since I did not even ask to record the observations made in the British jobcentre O, only written notes were available as the data basis for the British case. With the transcribed interviews (including the vignette study) and written notes, I then began a round of open coding on printed versions of the data material, geared towards identifying key concepts emerging again and again in the interviews. My intention was to organize the unearthed key concepts into a clear hierarchy of general and specific concepts during a second, so-called "axial" coding round (conducted in Excel) (Strauss and Corbin 1990, ch. 7); however, as I found out in the course of the coding exercise, organizing the many codes or concepts I found in the interviews into a stringent storyline (or rather: three stringent storylines) fitting the three regime dimensions I meant to study at the micro-level proved much more difficult than I had initially thought. In fact, not only had I to conduct several rounds of open coding alternated with several rounds of axial coding, but also had I to write and rewrite parts of my empirical chapters before I had identified a fixed number of codes for each chapter that could be used for distilling relevant quotes from the vast interview material gathered. Eventually, I reached the conclusion that at the level of activation discourses (to be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 8), a structural versus individual framing of the problem of unemployment formed the watershed between activation discourses in the three countries, associated with the qualifying concepts of willingness and ability that caseworkers use to further anatomize the perceived individual-level causes of unemployment. Concerning the institution-building practices of Dutch, Danish and British caseworkers (Chapters 6 and 8), the coding phase yielded six overarching types of institutional agency: devising activation trajectories, devising procedures, devising

instruments, management tasks, trainer tasks, and networking. Finally, what the societal agency of caseworkers is concerned (Chapters 7 and 8), four types of activation trajectories emerged from the vignette study whose micro-level application varies between the three countries: job search and job-placement trajectories, work-experience trajectories, skill-related trajectories (in terms of education, training, and personal development), and a miscellaneous category. After the key concepts enumerated here had been identified for each regime-dimension, they were translated into codes and associated sub-codes that could be used in a final round of coding, which provided the basis for the written account of caseworkers' discursive, institutional and societal agency in the micro-level part of this dissertation.

Having hereby presented the methodological aspects underlying this study, let us now turn to the first part of the empirical analysis: a macro-level comparison of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state and activation-policy regimes that will provide the background for the micro-level analysis of the discursive, institutional and societal agency of jobcentre caseworkers in Chapters 5-7 and 8.

Setting the stage: Country approaches to activation compared

As was discussed earlier, two theoretical logics can be applied in researching the implementation of ALMPs at the micro-level. On the one hand, the structuralist 'welfare regime' logic would lead one to expect that the micro-level implementation of ALMPs relatively homogeneously reflects not only macro-level activation-policy regimes but also wider welfare-state regimes. On the other hand, as the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach emphasizes, local and individual policy implementation is influenced by a myriad of factors that are idiosyncratic and outside the reach of central policy-making. For this reason, the discursive, institutional and societal agency of caseworkers can be expected to creatively appropriate or even diverge from formal, macro-level regime structures. In order to investigate how "formal" activation policy translates into "operational" policy at the micro-level, and how the structuralist regime logic and the agency-centred SLB logic can contribute to understanding such macro-micro-macro translation processes better (Van Berkel 2010; see also Carmel, Hamblin and Papadopoulos 2007), one must in a first step identify the macro-level regime structures that set the stage for micro-level implementation discourses and practices. In the current chapter, this is done by describing and comparing the national structural contexts in which activation is embedded in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain. Section 4.1 starts out by giving a brief overview of the most important (un)employment-related features of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes. A specialty of the regime approach taken in section 4.1 is that the three countries' welfare-state regime affiliations are not automatically taken for granted based on long-standing traditions in the academic literature, but are rather constructed on the basis of original data, differentiated by the three ideal-typical regime dimensions (culture, institutions and stratification) and two ideal-typical regime axes (solidarism-residualism and conservatism-liberalism) identified in Chapter 2. Section 4.2 then turns to ALMPs proper, discussing in more detail the three countries' activation-policy regimes based on a close reading of the respective ALMP legislation, once again differentiated by regime dimensions and axes. Finally, section 4.3 concludes by comparing the three welfare-state and activation-policy regimes not only across countries but also

across regime dimensions and axes. From that final comparison, regime-specific activation blueprints are derived that can be used as a structuralist template for contextualizing the embedded agency of individual policy-implementers more systematically (in Chapter 8). Moreover, by identifying not only differences and similarities between the Dutch, Danish and British activation approaches but also structural ambiguities and tensions within the respective structural contexts, some expectations will be formulated about the policy areas where caseworkers and managers might face the greatest challenges in translating policy into practice, forcing them to find idiosyncratic local or individual solutions, which in turn might increase the space for creative rather than structure-reinforcing agency even from a structuralist perspective (cf. Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum 2009; Dorado 2005; Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

4.1 Welfare-state regimes: The backbone of activation

Although the focus of this dissertation lies on active labour market policies and their translation from the macro to the micro-level and back to the aggregated country-street-level, it is useful to begin this chapter with a short overview of the wider welfare-state contexts in which ALMPs are embedded in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain. In accordance with the three ideal-typical regime dimensions identified in Chapter 2, I first address the welfare-cultural characteristics of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes, followed by a discussion of the institutional and stratification dimensions.

4.1.1 Welfare-state regimes: The cultural dimension

As we saw in Chapter 2, different types of welfare institutions and the stratification effects they produce are undergirded by different welfare cultures or more specifically, ideas about the relationship between citizens and the state. Ideal-typically, solidaristic welfare cultures tend to favour strong state-interventions into societal structures of economic inequality whereas residualistic welfare cultures tend to be wary of any state intervention into private matters that is not absolutely necessary for maintaining peace and security. Furthermore, conservative welfare cultures tend to espouse a differentiated view of society in which 'equal but different' citizen roles (most crucially with regard to gender and ethnicity) serve to uphold a morally justified societal order, in juxtaposition with liberal welfare cultures that have a much more individualistic outlook and strive to eliminate socio-cultural differences among citizens. In the remainder of this subsection, I first discuss how the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes fare on the solidarism-residualism axis of welfare culture, followed by a discussion of the conservatism-liberalism axis.

Both parts of this subsection are based on primary data from the European Values Study (EVS).[1]

Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 show some items from the EVS that pertain to the **solidarism-residualism axis** of welfare culture.[2] Figure 4.1 gives a graphic illustration of EVS item *e190: Reasons for living in need.* As is shown in the Figure, Danish respondents are most likely to ascribe precarious living conditions to systemic causes (*injustice in society* and *part of progress*) whereas systemic and individual-level causes are relatively in balance in the Netherlands and Great Britain. Moreover, among the two variable categories capturing systemic reasons for living in need, a positive framing (in terms of societal progress) predominates in Denmark whereas a negative framing (in terms of societal injustice) predominates in the Netherlands and Great Britain. Finally, what concerns individual-level causes of poverty (*lazy or unwilling* and *unlucky*), Britons are most inclined to frame those causes negatively *(lazy or unwilling)* whereas the Dutch and Danish are more likely to frame individual causes in fatalistic terms *(unlucky)*. Based on item *e190* of the EVS, one might thus insinuate preliminarily that the Danish welfare culture coincides with the solidaristic welfare-cultural paradigm that sees poverty as a result of systemic influences beyond the control of individuals. In contrast, the Dutch and British welfare cultures seem to be located 'somewhere in between' the solidaristic and residualistic poles of the spectrum, with both fatalistic individual-level and negative systemic explanations of poverty featuring strongly in the Netherlands, and with a systemic framing of personal failure going hand in hand with a comparably strong distrust against the willingness of individuals to overcome poverty out of their own efforts in Great Britain.

Table 4.1 shows four more EVS items associated with the role of the state in structuring the life chances of citizens. For each item, the figures in the top row correspond ideal-typically with solidaristic attitudes whereas the bottom row refers ideal-typically to residualistic attitudes. As a look at item *e037: Individual vs. state responsibility for providing for oneself* reveals, citizens in all three countries see primarily the state as responsible for providing welfare, although that trend is most pronounced in Great Britain. On the other hand and with an eye to item *e035: Equalize incomes vs. incentives for individual efforts*, a majority of the Dutch and especially

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1   The EVS is a representative longitudinal survey of basic human values. Four waves have hitherto been made available: 1981-83 (wave 1), 1991-93 (wave 2), 1999-2001 (wave 3) and 2008-10 (wave 4). If not indicated otherwise, the findings presented here refer to the latest wave because that wave corresponds best to the research period (see Appendix 3 for descriptive sample statistics).

2   Note that the Figure and Tables in this section contain three additional European welfare states that are often associated with similar geographic clusters as the countries under study: Italy, Sweden, and Ireland. Adding those countries makes it possible to put similarities or differences between the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes into some more perspective, as will be illustrated below.

Fig. 4.1: EVS item e190: Reasons for living in need, 2008-10.
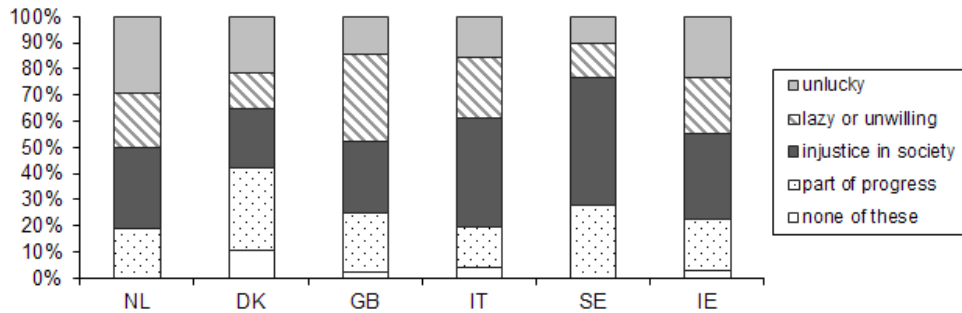
Danish citizens seem to welcome incentives for individual efforts whereas Britons are equally divided on this issue. Taken together, items *e037* and *e035* tell a story of strong support for a solidaristic welfare state in all three countries, yet with the citizens of the relatively more egalitarian Danish and Dutch societies being more in favour of meritocratic and hence residualistic elements being infused into the welfare system than citizens of the residualistic British welfare state where residualism seems to elicit a cultural (although not – yet? – institutionalized) solidaristic backlash (see Arts and Gelissen 2001 for a similar argument). Another potential explanation for the puzzling ambiguity especially of the British welfare culture may lie in a long-standing socio-liberal legacy in Great Britain that argues for both "inequality on economic incentive grounds" and "a lessening of the consequences of inequality" (O'Connor and Robinson 2008: 35).

The last two items in Table 4.1 are directly work-related and may serve as a litmus test for the relevance of the above-identified normative attitudes for unemployment policy and more narrowly, activation. Item *c039*, which captures the notion of an intrinsically-felt duty to work, shows that a large majority of respondents in all three countries perceive work as a duty towards society, yet with values being significantly higher for Denmark (78.9%) than for the Netherlands (72.8%) and Great Britain (67.5%). However, when it comes to an extrinsic duty to accept any job when being unemployed (item *e038*), the reverse pattern appears: values are highest for Great Britain (47%), followed at some distance by the Netherlands (35.1%) and Denmark (33.8%). Thus, one might hypothesize that precisely because the Danish regard work as an intrinsic duty (and will hence expect their unemployed fellow citizens to be willing to work), workfarist tendencies should be weakest in the Danish activation approach yet strongest in the British approach, for the opposite reason.

Tab. 4.1: EVS items connected with the solidarism-residualism axis (mean values, in %), 2008-10.

		NL	DK	GB	IT	SE	IE
e035	**Equalize incomes vs. incentives for individual efforts**						
	(1=incomes more equal + 2 + 3)	17.1	10.5	24.6	23.5	31.8	30.8
	(8 + 9 + 10=incentives individual efforts)	24.4	46.6	24.9	33.6	15.8	22.4
e037	**Individual vs. state responsibility for providing for oneself**						
	(8 + 9 + 10=state)	31.0	30.3	52.6	21.8	42.0	12.6
	(1=individual + 2 + 3)	10.8	11.1	9.1	27.2	10.2	43.3
e038	**Take any job vs. right to refuse a job**						
	(8 + 9 + 10=right to refuse a job)	9.2	19.0	12.2	8.5	15.3	17.3
	(1=take any job + 2 + 3)	35.1	33.8	47.0	54.6	41.5	32.6
c039	**Work is a duty towards society**						
	(1=strongly agree + 2=agree)	72.8	78.9	67.5	66.5	57.2	64.6

As the above discussion of the solidaristic versus residualistic welfare-cultural attributes of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes has shown, neither welfare culture seems to be internally monolithic. This can be visualized by attaching – separately for each EVS item – the labels of high/medium solidarism (sol++/sol+), a solidaristic-residualistic mix (sol-res) or medium/high residualism (res+/res++) to the distribution of solidaristic versus residualistic attitudes among the EVS respondents.[3] This leads to the following labels for the internal composition of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare cultures as it emerged from the EVS items discussed so far:

Netherlands:	sol-res (*e190*);	sol++ (*e037*);	res+ (*e035*);	res++ (*e038*)
Denmark:	sol+ (*e190*);	sol++ (*e037*);	res++ (*e035*);	res+ (*e038*)
Great Britain:	sol-res (*e190*);	sol++ (*e037*);	sol-res (*e035*);	res++ (*e038*)

3 If solidarism and residualism are associated with equal values (within a 10%-range from the higher value), the label "sol-res" was given; if values diverge between 11-50% from the higher value, the labels "sol+"/"res+" were given; if values diverge by a range of more than 50% from the higher value, the labels "sol++"/"res++" were awarded. The respective percentage thresholds were chosen by me as a rough but 'common-sensible' representation of ideal-typical regime affiliation.

In order to arrive at a unified indicator for each country, let us now attach the value 0 to the label "sol-res", the values -1/1 to the labels "res+"/"sol+", the values -2/2 to the labels "res++"/"sol++", and then calculate a mean value for each welfare culture. The resulting mean can be placed on a spectrum of five equal parts between -2 and 2, with the lowest quintile corresponding to the ideal-typical category "res++", the middle quintile corresponding to the ideal-typical category "sol-res" and the highest quintile corresponding to the ideal-typical category "sol++".[4] This yields the somewhat surprising result in the light of traditional welfare-regime theory that both the Dutch welfare culture (-0.25) and the Danish and British welfare cultures (0) display a solidaristic-residualistic mix. However, it should also be noted that in spite of the mixed finding for Denmark, the above discussion of item *e190: Reasons for living in need* showed that especially Danish but also Dutch citizens tend to frame the residualistic-personal causes of unemployment more benevolently (*unlucky*) than the British respondents (*unwilling/lazy*), a qualification that has not entered into the mean values. As a final remark, one should also not forget that the above means were calculated based on a very small number of survey items and countries; therefore, it is quite probable that a larger number of countries and survey items related to the solidarism-residualism axis would affect the ideal-typical classification. Hence, the mean values given here should be taken with a grain of salt, although the basic finding remains that all three welfare cultures under study are internally diverse in terms of solidaristic and residualistic regime attributes.

Before turning to the conservatism-liberalism axis of welfare culture, one might wish to check how the three welfare cultures fare on the solidarism-residualism axis in 'absolute' comparative terms. This is possible to do because all indicators discussed for the cultural dimension are measured identically (in percentage points), which is not the case for the other two regime dimensions discussed below. For an 'absolute' comparison, all values associated ideal-typically with residualism are added up for each country, as are the corresponding EVS item values associated with solidarism. In a second step, the aggregated residualism-value (attached with a negative sign) is subtracted from the solidarism-value (attached with a positive sign). In this way, a hypothetical residualism-value of -35 and a hypothetical solidarism-value of 50 resulting from two altogether solidaristic EVS items and two altogether residualistic EVS items would leave a solidaristic 'residue' of 15, whereas in the quasi-Boolean method applied earlier, two 'solidaristic' EVS items and two 'residualistic' EVS items would have levelled each other out. When proceeding in this way for all countries in Table 4.1 (including Italy, Sweden and Ireland), one can again place the resulting 'residues' on a spectrum from the lowest

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4   The resulting spectrum (along with the relative positions of the six welfare cultures on it) is depicted in Appendix 4.1.

to the highest value, with the negative side of the spectrum representing welfare-cultural residualism and the positive side of the spectrum representing welfare-cultural solidarism. Each side can then be divided into two and a half parts so that a highly residualistic/solidaristic category, a medium residualistic/solidaristic category and a neutral "sol-res" category consisting of two half parts emerge that can be used as welfare-cultural measurement yardsticks. Note that in such an empirically-derived spectrum, the two spectrum-sides and associated regime categories will usually be of different sizes, which may initially confuse some readers but which is deliberate and deemed insightful from a pragmatic perspective that uses theory-derived concepts heuristically rather than as pre-defined and 'set in stone' yardsticks of measurement.

Appendix 4.1 shows that also from such an 'absolute' perspective, Great Britain is in the middle category "sol-res" (10.2) whereas the Netherlands (-13.7) and Denmark (-13.1) now end up in the "res+" category although they were formerly in the middle category.[5] Together, both analyses of the solidaristic versus residualistic characteristics of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare cultures lead to the overall conclusion that the welfare culture of Great-Britain is mixed (sol-res) whereas the Dutch and Danish welfare cultures swing between solidaristic-residualistic neutrality and a medium residualism. As before, however, it must be emphasized again that these results are rough indications, due to the small number of EVS items and countries underlying the exploratory, differentiated regime-analysis in this chapter.

Let us now turn to the **conservatism-liberalism axis** of welfare culture that relates not to the state-citizen relation in general, but rather to perceived differences in the citizen-roles of primordial groups, most importantly men/women and natives/immigrants. Table 4.2 shows five indicators from the EVS that shed some light on the welfare-cultural attributes of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes on the conservatism-liberalism axis. For every item, the top row is ideal-typically associated with conservatism whereas the bottom line is ideal-typically associated with liberalism. The first two items, *c001 (Jobs are scarce: giving men priority)* and *d058 (Husband and wife contribute to income)* reflect attitudes towards female employment among the Dutch, Danish and British population. Surprisingly, item *c001* shows that the British welfare culture is much more – relatively – familialistic and gender-conservative than traditional welfare-regime classifications suggest (although in absolute terms, the British welfare culture appears as ideal-typically liberal with regard to item *c001*). Thus, 13.3% of the British EVS respondents say that jobs should preferably be given to male bread-winners in times of high unem-

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5   The poles of the spectrum are marked by Italy (-43.5) in the "res++" category and Sweden (74.2) in the "sol++" category.

ployment, slightly more than in the Netherlands (12.4%) but significantly more than in Denmark (2.3%). What item *d058* is concerned, the Netherlands and Great Britain switch roles with regard to being the most (relatively) gender-conservative, yet Denmark still appears as the most liberal welfare culture of the three, in congruence with the established view in the literature (see Esping-Andersen 1999: 86; Lewis 1992; Lewis et al. 2008; Siaroff 1994).

Tab. 4.2: *EVS items connected with the conservatism-liberalism axis (mean values, in %), 2008-10.*

		NL	DK	GB	IT	SE	IE
c001	**Jobs are scarce: giving men priority**						
	(1=agree)	12.4	2.3	13.3	20.1	2.4	15.6
	(2=disagree)	84.7	95.4	77.2	65.0	92.1	68.6
d058	**Husband and wife contribute to income**						
	(4=strongly disagree + 3)	53.0	21.4	25.0	11.1	6.9	22.5
	(1=strongly agree + 2)	45.2	75.4	67.6	83.3	86.5	68.1
c002	**Jobs are scarce: giving [nation] priority**						
	(1=agree)	36.3	24.3	66.4	58.5	20.6	66.2
	(2=disagree)	57.5	63.8	23.2	26.8	70.2	21.9
g043	**Immigrants maintain own/take over customs**						
	(1=maintain customs & traditions + 2 + 3)	10.0	10.8	16.3	17.0	9.1	23.4
	(8 + 9 + 10=take over customs)	33.1	35.4	37.6	31.9	38.8	23.7
c024	**Important in job: useful for society**						
	(1=mentioned)	60.4	18.4	35.8	50.2	13.6	42.3

Also with regard to attitudes towards immigration, the British welfare culture bears surprisingly conservative traits, with an astonishing 66.4% of the EVS respondents agreeing that native job applicants should be preferred in times of job scarcity. Denmark, by contrast, again displays the most liberal values with regard to item *c002 (Jobs are scarce: giving [nation] priority)*, followed by the Netherlands. Item *g043 (Immigrants maintain own/take over customs)* adds some further qualification to this initial impression, with Great Britain scoring the highest both with respect to an ethnic nationalism (that regards ethnic boundaries as 'natural' and hence unbridge-

able via cultural integration) and a civic nationalism (that regards the civil contract as overruling ethnic identities), whereas the Danish and Dutch welfare cultures look more uniformly civic-nationalist and hence liberal in this regard.

The last item in Table 4.2, *c024 (Important in job: useful for society)* adds a more directly labour market-related nuance to this picture, inquiring whether the welfare cultures of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain would be conducive to a holistic conception of activation (as connected with conservatism) or a purely labour market-oriented notion of activation (as connected with liberalism). As item *c024* tentatively shows, Dutch respondents find it much more important that paid employment is useful for society than their Danish and British counterparts. This supports the expectation that a holistic view of activation as encompassing not only paid work but possibly also other societally useful activities might be prevalent in the Netherlands but much less so in the other two countries.

To conclude, the Danish welfare culture looks coherently liberal based on the EVS items in Table 4.2 whereas the Dutch and British welfare cultures display both liberal and conservative traits. To substantiate this claim with a more solid numeric analysis, the same procedures as above can be used to illustrate the internal composition of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare cultures differentiated by EVS items *c001*, *d058*, *c002* and *g043*. The first step in such an analysis is to attach labels for medium or high conservatism/liberalism (or a conservative-liberal mix) to each of the four EVS items, following the same labelling rules as outlined in footnote 19. This yields the following labels:

Netherlands:	lib++ (*c001*);	cons+ (*d058*);	lib+ (*c002*);	lib++ (*g043*)
Denmark:	lib++ (*c001*);	lib++ (*d058*);	lib++ (*c002*);	lib++ (*g043*)
Great Britain:	lib++ (*c001*);	lib++ (*d058*);	cons++ (*c002*);	lib++ (*g043*)

The second step is then to associate the labels with values ranging from -2 (cons++) to 2 (lib++) and calculate a mean value for each welfare culture (see Appendix 4.2). This yields the result that the Danish welfare culture can be called uniformly liberal (2) whereas a 'mixed bag' for the Netherlands and Great Britain results in the overall categorization of a medium liberalism (1). The third and final step in assessing the welfare-cultural traits of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes on the conservatism-liberalism axis consists in counterchecking the hitherto-conducted analysis with absolute values calculated by aggregating both the 'conservative' EVS outcomes of all six countries in Table 4.2 (attached with a negative sign) and the 'liberal' EVS values (attached with a positive sign) and then adding up the two sums. Subsequently, a five-part spectrum can be drawn between the lowest and the highest sum, with each (negative or positive) side of the spectrum being divided into two and a half parts, and with the two half-parts converging in the middle of the spectrum creating a neutral cons-lib category. As it appears,

all six welfare cultures in Table 4.2 are situated in the liberal, positive half of such an empirically-derived heuristic spectrum, with Denmark (211.2) appearing as highly liberal but a bit less so than Sweden (248.6), and the remaining countries populating the medium liberal "lib+" category, although Great Britain (84.6) is closer to the cons-lib spectrum than both Italy (100.3) and the Netherlands (108.8), surpassed only by the even less liberal Ireland (54.6). Thus, for the three countries under study, the absolute welfare-cultural comparison corroborates the relative comparison but deviates from the established classifications of the welfare-regime school à la Esping-Andersen and Co.[6] In the next subsection, it will now be explored how the three welfare-state regimes under study fare on the institutional dimension, again using empirically-derived rather than a-priori constructed five-part numeric spectra as yardsticks of measurement.

4.1.2   Welfare-state regimes: The institutional dimension

As was discussed in Chapter 2, welfare institutions form the second dimension of an ideal-typical welfare-state regime framework. Institutions are here understood as formal or informal action-shaping "procedures, routines, norms and conventions" (Hall and Taylor 1996: 6) relating to the welfare state. Because the institutional design of welfare states has received much attention in the academic literature for nearly half a century by now, this dimension is only revisited briefly here.

On the **solidarism-residualism axis** that is ideal-typically associated with a strong versus weak welfare state and high versus low redistribution, a look at social expenditure in the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom can give us a good indication of where the three institutional systems are situated empirically. As Table 4.3 shows, Denmark and the UK resemble the institutional regime-categories typically assigned to them, with the Danish welfare state spending more than any other welfare state in Table 4.3 both in terms of public and total spending whereas the British welfare state spends much less public money and instead relies to a considerable degree on the private sector for providing welfare. The Netherlands, however, pose a surprise to traditional welfare-regime analysts, with both the public and private Dutch spending patterns surpassing the UK in terms of residualistic characteristics. What has been related here verbally is also supported by a numerical analysis: When two spectra of five equal quintiles are drawn from the lowest to the highest public spending on the one hand and from the highest to the lowest private spending on the other hand (with the lowest quintile representing strong residualism, the middle quintile representing a mixed category, and

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6   However, note that the same disclaimer applies as above because including more survey items might change the results of the tentative and exploratory analysis presented here.

the highest quintile representing strong solidarism), we see that from an internationally comparative perspective, the Netherlands mark the residualistic pole of both spectra, followed by the UK, whereas Denmark appears as the most solidaristic welfare system even when Italy, Sweden and Ireland are taken into account (see Appendix 4.3).

Tab. 4.3: Social expenditure as a percentage of GDP, 2009 (source: OECD.Stat).

		NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Public	Old age	5.8	8.2	6.7	13.0	10.2	4.5
	Survivors	0.2	0	0.1	2.6	0.5	1.1
	Incapacity related	3.1	4.9	2.9	1.9	5.0	2.4
	Health	7.9	7.7	8.1	7.4	7.3	7.1
	Family	1.7	3.9	3.8	1.6	3.7	4.1
	ALMPs	1.2	1.6	0.3	0.4	1.1	0.9
	Unemployment	1.4	2.3	0.5	0.8	0.7	2.6
	Housing	0.4	0.7	1.5	0	0.5	0.3
	Other social policy areas	1.4	0.9	0.2	0	0.7	0.6
	Total	**23.2**	**30.2**	**24.1**	**27.8**	**29.8**	**23.6**
Private	Mandatory private	0.7	0.2	1.0	1.6	0.4	0
	Voluntary private	6.0	2.7	5.3	0.7	2.8	2.2
	Total	**6.7**	**2.9**	**6.3**	**2.3**	**3.2**	**2.2**
TOTAL		*29.9*	*33.1*	*30.4*	*30.1*	*33.0*	*25.8*

Also on the **conservatism-liberalism axis** of the institutional welfare-state regime dimension that ideal-typically pertains to universal versus selective social protection, two key indicators are discussed here as illustrative examples of how the Dutch, Danish and British welfare systems are to be classified in conservative versus liberal terms. As Table 4.4 shows, the Dutch labour-market system relies to a much greater degree on protecting the employment status of job-holders than the Danish "flexicurity" system (see Madsen 2002 for more details) and especially the lowly regulated British labour-market system, with the result that traditional bread-winners (translate as: majority-ethnic males) are likely to crowd out newcomers to the labour market (such as women and migrants) to a much larger degree in the Netherlands

than in Denmark and especially the UK.[7] In terms of ideal-typical labels, i.e. when drawing a spectrum from the lowest to the highest 2008 employment-protection figures in Table 4.4 and projecting five conceptual quintiles (from "cons++" to "lib++") onto the respective country-values in analogy to the previous measurement exercises, it is confirmed that in terms of employment protection, the Dutch welfare system fits the conservative paradigm (cons++) whereas Denmark is in the middle category (cons-lib) and the UK spearheads the liberal part of the spectrum (lib++) (see Appendix 4.4).

Tab. 4.4: Indicators connected with the conservatism-liberalism axis (source: OECD.Stat/Eurostat).

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Strictness of employment protection						
2008	2.13	1.77	1.10	2.38	2.18	1.32
1998	2.77	1.90	0.98	3.06	2.49	1.17
Children 0-3 in formal childcare, in % (2010)						
0-29 hours weekly	44	10	31	6	18	21
30+ hours weekly	6	68	4	16	33	8
Total	50	78	35	22	51	29

However, using employment protection as the only indicator of welfare-institutional conservatism versus liberalism can be problematic because if governments take active steps to foster the labour-market entry of women, immigrants and other culturally-reified groups in combination with employment protection, employment protection will in fact strengthen rather than weaken the labour-market position of such groups (who are then regular or even preferred labour-market entrants). This is the case (only) in Denmark in our small sample, where a strong solidaristic welfare state employs more than twice as many women as men in its large public sector.[8] Furthermore, as Table 4.4 indicates, the fact that the Danish welfare state provides childcare facilities at an income-related cost leads to 78% of Danish children under three being in (usually full-time) childcare, in contrast to much lower figures in the Netherlands and especially the UK. If we again place the three

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7   Note that a process of some convergence can be observed over the past decade, with the strictness of employment protection having decreased in the Netherlands and Denmark but increased in Great Britain.

8   In 2007/08, the ratio of female to male public-sector employment was 2.37 for Denmark, 2.23 for the UK and 1.36 for the Netherlands (Data source: ILO, LABORSTA database; own calculations).

countries on a five-part spectrum between the lowest (cons++) and highest (lib++) total childcare rates, we see that in terms of institutionally promoting childcare as a means of encouraging mothers to work, Denmark appears as highly liberal (lib++) whereas the Netherlands are in the middle category "cons-lib" and the UK is in the medium conservative category "cons+". Because the two indicators of employment protection and childcare rates are measured differently, it is not possible to aggregate both indicators and compare the three welfare systems in terms of their absolute degrees of conservativeness/liberalness. However, as a rough indication of how the three welfare systems are composed internally, we can at least associate the respective country labels on both the employment-protection and childcare-spectrum with whole numbers between -2 to 2 and then calculate a mean for each country. This yields the relative result that on a five-part spectrum between -2 and 2, the Dutch welfare system appears as overall medium-conservative or "cons+" (-1) whereas the Danish system appears as "lib+" (1), as does the British system (0.5) – although the British system borders on the "cons-lib" category. In the following and final subsection of section 4.1, it will now be investigated how the regime-categorizations unearthed for the cultural and institutional welfare-state regime dimensions compare to the dimension of socio-economic stratification.

4.1.3   Welfare-state regimes: The stratification dimension

As in the previous two subsections, the discussion of the stratification effects of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes will be split along the two ideal-typical regime axes. With regard to the **solidarism-residualism axis** that pertains to the welfare state's interference in structures of economic (in-)equality, the regime story of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain can be told relatively quickly for the purpose of this research. As Table 4.5 shows, income inequality after taxes and transfers is much lower in the Netherlands and especially Denmark than in the UK. Furthermore, the economic stratification outcomes of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes seem to be produced largely outside of the traditional welfare-state realm because although redistribution rates are similar in all three countries (and even largest in the UK with regard to poverty alleviation), income inequality before redistribution is much higher in the UK than in the other two countries. This indicates that not only the (redistributive) welfare state but also wider institutional structures play a role in influencing the economic status of citizens in the three countries, such as the education system, wage-setting structures, or the industry structure (compare Hall and Soskice 2001; Hemerijck 2013).

Tab. 4.5: Income redistribution and poverty alleviation, late 2000s (source: OECD.Stat).

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Income inequality						
Gini before taxes and transfers	0.43	0.42	0.51	0.53	0.43	-
Gini after taxes and transfers	0.29	0.25	0.34	0.34	0.26	0.30
Net redistribution	0.13	0.17	0.16	0.20	0.17	-
Poverty (at 40% of current median income)						
Poverty rate before taxes and transfers	20.43	19.82	27.53	29.30	23.64	-
Poverty rate after taxes and transfers	3.77	2.35	5.88	6.40	3.94	3.50
Net poverty alleviation	16.66	17.47	21.66	22.90	19.70	-

In ideal-typical terminology, if we draw two spectra from the highest to the lowest income inequality after taxes and transfers and from the lowest to the highest poverty rate after taxes and transfers, dividing each spectrum into five parts and associating the respective parts with the labels "res++" (associated with the value -2) to "sol++" (associated with the value 2), we can draw the conclusion that the Danish welfare-state regime is the most equalizing and hence economically transformative of the three welfare-state regimes studied in this dissertation, receiving the label "sol++" on both spectra (mean value: 2). The Netherlands can be situated in the medium economically-transformative category ("sol+") but bordering on the neutral "sol-res" middle (0.5). Finally, the British welfare-state regime can be labelled economically-conservative or "res++" (-2), being surpassed only by Italy in terms of not equalizing absolute levels of economic inequality in society (Appendix 4.5).

To conclude the analysis of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes before turning to activation-policy regimes more specifically, Table 4.6 displays some indicators that can be associated with the **conservatism-liberalism axis** of (social) stratification. The rationale behind using unemployment rates differentiated by gender and descent as indicators of cultural divisions that both precede and shape structures of economic stratification is that "from a sociological perspective", employment structures can be regarded as the "result of conflicts over the form and extent of wage labour and the inclusion of female, older, younger, migrant and handicapped persons in the workforce" (Heidenreich 2009: 16). What gendered unemployment is concerned, Table 4.6 shows that female unemployment is lower than male unemployment in Denmark and the UK whereas female unemployment equals male unemployment in the Netherlands. This means that women who wish to work have an equal chance of being in employment relative to men in the

Netherlands whereas the Danish and British welfare-state regimes are even positively discriminatory towards women, although these figures say nothing about the quality (salary) or quantity (part-time, full-time) of work.[9] If one places the respective ratios of female to male unemployment on a five-part spectrum between the lowest and highest value, associating the five parts of the spectrum with the labels "cons++" to "lib++", we see that in relative terms, the (un-)employment chances of women in the Netherlands make the Dutch welfare-state regime appear as medium socially-conservative (cons+) compared to a medium social transformativeness of the Danish and British welfare-state regimes (lib+) (see Appendix 4.6).

Tab. 4.6: *Unemployment rates by gender and descent, 2010 (source: OECD.Stat).*

	NL	**DK**	**UK**	**IT**	**SE**	**IE**
Unemployment rate (harmonized)	4.5	7.5	7.8	8.4	8.4	13.9
Gender						
Male unemployment rate	4.5	8.5	8.8	7.7	8.7	17.2
Female unemployment rate	4.5	6.5	6.9	9.7	8.3	9.9
Ratio: female/male unemployment	1.0	0.77	0.78	1.26	0.95	0.58
Descent						
Migrant unemployment rate[a]	8	13	8	11	15	16
Ratio: migrant/total unemployment	1.78	1.73	1.03	1.31	1.79	1.15

[a] Data source: OECD International Migration Outlook 2012

Also what ethnic labour-market stratification is concerned, the Netherlands appear as the most socially conservative welfare-state regime in the small sample under study. As Table 4.6 shows, the ratio of migrant unemployment to total unemployment is highest in the Netherlands, which points towards disproportionately high structural barriers against the labour-market entry of migrants or disproportionately low barriers against the labour-market exit of migrants. Contrary to the gendered

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9   Note that the ratio of female to male unemployment says nothing about pre-institutional, i.e. cultural factors that prevent women and particularly mothers from even 'wanting' to work. A rough indication of real labour-market inactivity among women can be retrieved by juxtaposing the ratio of female to male unemployment with the share of housewives among the general working-age population as depicted in Appendix 5 (almost nil in Denmark but considerable in Great Britain and the Netherlands; cf. also Sainsbury 1994; Siaroff 1994). On the basis of such a juxtaposition, we can insinuate that involuntary labour-market inactivity is likely indeed about two percentage points higher among males than females in Denmark. In the Netherlands, by contrast, voluntary labour-market inactivity can be expected to be significantly higher among women than among men. In the UK, a lower female unemployment rate coupled with a considerable share of housewives could mean that voluntary labour-market inactivity is about balanced between men and women, although these are only 'eye-ball' estimations.

aspect of unemployment discussed above, Denmark appears as almost equally socially conservative as the Netherlands with regard to the labour-market participation of migrants, whereas a ratio of close to one in the UK makes the British labour-market regime look relatively ethnicity-neutral and hence socially transformative once again. In terms of ideal-typical labels, assessing the social conservativeness or transformativeness of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes with regard to ethnicity on a five-part spectrum yields the categorization "cons++" for the Netherlands and Denmark but the label "lib++" for the UK (Appendix 4.6).

When further associating the retrieved labels for the gendered and ethnic segregation of the Dutch, Danish and British labour markets with the whole numbers -2 to 2 and then calculating a relative mean value for each country, we see that the Netherlands overall have the most socially-conservative welfare-state regime of the three in terms of granting women and migrants access to the labour market and hence the chance of earning an income above the social-assistance level (-1.5 = cons++). Denmark (-0.5) is in the medium socially-conservative (cons+) category but borders on the middle category "cons-lib", whereas the UK (1.5) appears as unequivocally socially transformative or "lib++".

To conclude, in this section, the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes were classified on two ideal-typical regime axes (solidarism-residualism and conservatism-liberalism) as well as across three regime dimensions (culture, institutions and stratification). The purpose behind this endeavour was to provide a context to the structural embedment of activation policies or more specifically ALMPs (to which we will turn in the next section). After all, it has been argued in the literature that ALMPs mark a deviation from previously established cultural and institutional paths in some countries, with the result that tensions between wider welfare-state structures and formal policy regulations might present themselves at the level of policy implementation where the individual agents of the welfare state must act upon both field-specific and general policy mandates at the same time, and where such structural tensions are likely to increase the space for micro-level agency by necessitating creative policy interpretations and problem-solutions. In Table 4.8 below, the ideal-typical characteristics of the Dutch, Danish and British welfare-state regimes are summarized and juxtaposed with the ideal-typical characteristics of the respective activation-policy regimes. Here, however, let it suffice to say that the British welfare-state regime has emerged as the most internally-coherent from the above analysis, being uniformly liberal and for the most part residualistic across all three regime dimensions, although some solidaristic undertones in terms of state responsibility for welfare were also diagnosed on the cultural dimension. The Danish welfare-state regime appears as overall solidaristic but with some residualistic undertones again on the cultural dimension (in terms of a desire for more meritocratic rather than universal welfare provisions); also on the conservatism-liberalism axis, the Danish welfare-state regime can be char-

acterized as liberal but with partly conservative socio-economic stratification effects (for migrants). Finally, the Dutch welfare-state regime is the most internally-mixed of the three, with a predominantly residualistic welfare culture/system producing medium economically-transformative stratification effects. (Note that although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explain the curious puzzle how the Dutch welfare state manages to achieve medium economic transformativeness with a low and thus residualistic level of social spending, other research has shown that the Dutch part-time labour market might go a long way in explaining how incomes can be distributed more evenly without the welfare state proper interfering at all; cf. Goodin 2001; Van der Veen and Groot 2006). Also on the conservatism-liberalism axis, the Dutch welfare-state regime presents itself as largely conservative but with an overall liberal welfare culture, especially with regard to migration, and it will be interesting to see not only how (or whether) these contradicting tendencies are reflected in the Dutch ALMP legislation but also whether Dutch policy-imple-menters indeed have the largest space for autonomous micro-level agency among the three country cases, as the structuralist regime approach would suggest.

4.2   Activation-policy regimes: Any surprises?

Section 4.2 now takes a closer look at the activation-policy regimes of the Nether-lands, Denmark and Great Britain, focusing primarily on the reintegration-side of activation as opposed to the benefit-side. The goal of this section is not only to provide a detailed description of the Dutch, Danish and British activation-policy regimes as a background painting against which the discursive, institutional and societal agency of caseworkers can be assessed and explained in Chapters 5-7 and 8, but also to offer a cross-country ALMP-regime comparison that employs the same ideal-typical concepts as the welfare-state regime story told above, making it possible to determine whether or how activation-policy regimes and welfare-state regimes intersect in shaping the micro-level discourses and practices of caseworkers in the respective regime contexts. As in the former section, the characteristics of the Dutch, Danish and British activation-policy regimes are first discussed in relation to the cultural dimension in subsection 4.2.1, followed by a discussion of the institutional and stratification dimensions in subsections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3. Under each header, the two ideal-typical axes of solidarism-residualism and conservatism-liberalism are addressed separately. It should be noted that since the activation-policy regime analysis in this section is largely based on a close reading of the Work and Social Assistance Act (*Wet werk en bijstand,* abbr. WWB) of 2004 for the Nether-

lands,[10] the Act on an Active Social Policy (*Lov om aktiv socialpolitik,* abbr. LAS) and the Act on an Active Employment Policy (*Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats,* abbr. LAB) originally enacted in 1998 and 1993 for Denmark,[11] and the Jobseekers Act 1995 for Great Britain,[12] the ideal-typical regime labels given here are more subjective than the welfare-state regime labels assigned in the former section. In order to remedy this caveat, I will be careful to make as transparent as possible how I arrived at the respective activation-policy regime labels.

4.2.1 Activation-policy regimes: The cultural dimension

Let us begin by looking at cultural ideas about activation as they shine through in the ALMP legislation of the three countries under study. As we saw in Chapter 2 for the **solidarism-residualism axis** of activation culture, legal concepts of activation vary according to whether responsibility for welfare is assigned primarily to the state or individual citizens.

Activation as a responsibility of the state or individuals

A closer look at the ALMP legislation of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain reveals that only the Danish LAS and LAB contain elaborate references to the two ideational poles, with both solidaristic and residualistic connotations. For instance, the LAS begins with a reference to the solidaristic responsibility of the state to "create a financial safety net for anyone who is not otherwise able to provide for him or herself and his or her family" only to add in a more residualistic tone that "the purpose of financial support is to enable claimants to become self-

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10 I used the Dutch Work and Social Assistance Act in the version of 11 July 2011, the day of my last interview in the Netherlands (accessed via: http://www.wetten.overheid.nl/zoeken/). I also checked for relevant legal changes since 30 December 2010, the day of my first interview in the Netherlands. All English translations given here are my own.

11 I used version 190 of 24 February 2012 of the Consolidation Act on an Active Social Policy, and version 710 of 23 June 2011 of the Consolidation Act on an Active Employment Policy (accessed via: https://www.retsinformation.dk). According to the Danish Ministry of Employment, no official English translations of those Acts exist. Therefore, I made use of an unofficial translation of the Consolidation Act on an Active Social Policy by the *Landsorganisationen af Arbejdsledige,* Copenhagen (accessed via: http://www.fleksjobber.dk; no longer available online at the time of writing) and an older translation of the original Act on an Active Employment Policy by the ILO (http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/34479/64894/E93DNK01.htm) as well as Google Translate (http://translate.google.com).

12 The latest available version of the Jobseekers Act 1995 (accessible via: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/18/contents) is only updated until about 2000. Therefore, my discussion of the Jobseekers Act 1995 relies on secondary literature to a greater degree than the discussion of the Dutch and Danish Acts.

supporting".[13] Also the solidaristic agenda of helping employed workers to remain in their jobs is explained with reference to the residualistic goal of preventing citizens "from needing financial support".[14] The same ambiguity between a solidaristic and a residualistic activation culture is prevalent in the LAB, which states on various occasions that activation is both a "right and obligation" for the unemployed.[15] Next to this relative balance between solidaristic and residualistic cultural elements in the LAS and LAB, however, the Danish social-assistance legislation overall leaves no doubt that the Danish state is supposed to fulfil a strong role in combating unemployment, not only by "helping jobseekers to find work" but also by assisting "private and public employers who search new employees or who seek to keep employees employed" and even by creating the macro-economic conditions for a "well-functioning labour market".[16] The LAB also repeatedly states that jobcentres must direct their activating efforts towards vocational "areas where there is a need for labour".[17] Hence, in spite of a mix of solidaristic and residualistic ideas on activation in the Danish LAS and LAB, and in spite also of a discursive shift from "social integration to a much greater emphasis on social disciplining" that scholars have diagnosed in the Danish context over the past decade (Larsen and Mailand 2007: 103), the Danish activation culture still appears as medium solidaristic or "sol+" overall, based on a close reading of the Danish ALMP legislation.

Compared with the Danish legislation, the British Jobseekers Act 1995 and the Dutch Work and Social Assistance Act (abbr. WWB) contain less phrases reflecting either a solidaristic or residualistic notion of activation. The only overtly solidaristic formulation I could find in the WWB is that the Dutch state is responsible for providing the "necessary means for subsistence" to all residents.[18] The WWB furthermore speaks of a "right" to municipal support during the reintegration process, although the "duty" for being reintegrated into the labour market lies first and foremost with the unemployed themselves.[19] The Dutch activation culture can therefore be described as encompassing both solidaristic and residualistic elements (sol-res). In the British Jobseekers Act, finally, the complete absence of any solidaristic formulations indirectly portrays unemployment as a result of individual strategic decisions rather than a structural problem (compare Serrano Pascual 2007b: 297). Instead, the Jobseekers Act 1995 elicits a moralistic policy discourse that is typical of residualistic (res++) activation cultures in which benefit

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13 LAS, section 1(1-2).
14 LAS, section 1(1).
15 E.g. LAB, part VI.
16 LAB, section 1(1-2).
17 LAB, sections 22(3) and 17.
18 WWB, section 7(1)(b).
19 WWB, sections 9 and 10.

receipt is only deemed legitimate in the prevalence of a 'true' need that lies beyond an individual's control (cf. Bonoli 2003: 1024), stressing that a person must not only be "able" to work but also "willing" to "take up immediately any employed earner's employment" in order to be eligible for JSA.[20] Also the preamble to the Jobseekers Act contains a residualistic-moralistic element when referring to "persons without a settled way of life" as being eligible for assistance. To summarize how the Dutch, Danish and British activation cultures fare on the solidarism-residualism axis, the British activation culture appears by far as the most residualistic of the three, compared with the tentatively balanced Dutch activation culture and the most solidaristic Danish welfare culture (which however also contains some visible residualistic elements, therefore receiving the overall label of medium solidarism).

On the **conservatism-liberalism axis**, Chapter 2 showed that two ideational aspects are associated with conservative versus liberal notions of activation: a focus on the familial versus individual duties of unemployed citizens, and a holistic versus purely labour market-oriented activation concept. In the following, the ALMP legislation of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain is screened for both aspects.

Familial versus individual citizen duties

When it comes to the framing of citizen duties during periods of unemployment, the Dutch WWB again contains hardly any identifiable conservative or liberal discursive elements besides the provision that "family income" rather than individual income is taken as the basis for calculating the social-assistance benefit.[21] We can therefore attach the preliminary label of a moderate conservatism (cons+) to the Dutch activation culture, pending the assessment of holistic versus purely work-oriented activation ideas in the WWB below. Indications of conservative versus liberal activation-cultural traits are more rampant in the Danish LAS/LAB and the British Jobseekers Act 1995, with both the Danish and the British ALMP legislation containing some surprising conservative elements in light of the liberal welfare-cultural orientation diagnosed in section 4.1. Thus, in the Danish LAB and LAS, both the state and citizens are portrayed as having the responsibility to provide a livelihood for families. For instance, section 1(3) of the LAB states that unemployed persons should be assisted in finding a job "as quickly and efficiently as possible so that they can support" not only "themselves" but also "their families". Also in benefit terms, the LAS posits that "every man and woman is responsible under public law for maintaining him/herself, his or her spouse and children under

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20 Jobseekers Act 1995, section 6(1).
21 WWB, section 3 and part 3.

18".[22] The LAS furthermore grants married benefit recipients a benefit supplement if their spouse – although in principle eligible for benefits (associated with activation duties) – chooses to work "exclusively or mainly in the home".[23] To summarize, there is a strong familialistic undercurrent in the Danish ALMP legislation that comes as a surprise given that Denmark is often labelled as non-familialistic (see e.g. Esping-Andersen 1999: 86; Siaroff 1994). The same can be said of the British Jobseekers Act, where not only the income of married or unmarried partners but also the income of cohabiting children for whom at least one partner is "responsible"[24] is counted in the household income,[25] making the British activation culture surprisingly conservative in terms of the ideal-typical categorizations used in this dissertation.

However, it is also important to mention that both the Danish and British ALMP laws contain some more specifically liberal elements when it comes to the influence of individuals on the activation process (also mentioned by Olesen, qtd. in Dingeldey 2007: 833; and Serrano Pascual 2007b: 305). For instance, the LAS stipulates that unemployed clients must have "influence and responsibility in the arrangement of assistance"[26] and the LAB says not only that jobcentres must "take into account the wishes and requirements" of the client but also that job referrals must be "in cooperation with the person".[27] Unemployed clients in the Danish context also have the right to refuse jobs for reasons of conscience if the prospective work entails "the development and production of war materials".[28] In the British case, the Jobseekers Act grants unemployed persons the right to count as legitimately unavailable for employment "for example, on grounds of conscience, religious conviction or physical or mental condition", if only on a weekly basis.[29] All these provisions relativize the initially-stated conservative nature of the Danish and British activation cultures, leading to the overall assessment of a liberal-conservative mix (cons-lib) with regard to familialism/individualism in both cases. The next paragraph turns to the second ideal-typical distinction associated with the conservatism-liberalism axis of activation culture, namely holistic versus purely work-related ideas of activation.

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22   LAS, section 2(1).
23   LAS, sections 13(7) and 34(3)(1).
24   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 35(1) under "family".
25   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 13(2).
26   LAS, section 1(3).
27   LAB, sections 15 and 21d(2).
28   LAS, section 13(5)(10).
29   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 6(2)(b).

Activation as holistic versus purely work-related

In Chapter 2, conservative versus liberal activation cultures were identified as embracing either the holistic idea that activation should integrate citizens into society at large, or the narrower view that activation should simply integrate citizens into the labour market. Among the four legal Acts revisited here, the Dutch WWB is the only law containing a specific reference to a conservative-holistic activation concept. Thus, the WWB states that activation may include "social activation" in the sense of "unsalaried activities that benefit society and that are geared towards reintegration into the labour market or, if that is temporarily impossible, autonomous participation in society".[30] Hence, we can corroborate the earlier finding that the Dutch activation culture is conservative, although only moderately so (cons+) due to the small number of ideal-typically conservative provisions in the WWB (see also Barbier and Fargion 2004; Genova 2008). In contrast to the Dutch WWB, activation is interpreted exclusively in terms of labour-market reintegration in the Danish LAB, with "special support" being granted to vulnerable "persons who due to a limited capacity to work need special assistance in finding a job".[31] The Danish activation culture – defined earlier as mixed – can hence be diagnosed as tilted towards the liberal side, although again only mildly so (lib+) due to the small quantity of textual evidence on a work-related legal notion of activation in Denmark. Finally, also the British Jobseekers Act 1995 interprets activation as purely labour market-related, with the preamble stating that "the unemployed" should be offered "provisions to promote [their] employment" while "persons without a settled way of life" should be granted (financial) "assistance" only.[32] Therefore, the same applies to the British activation culture as to the Danish activation culture: A balanced conservative-liberal activation culture in terms of familialistic versus individualistic norms is pushed somewhat towards the liberal side by adding a purely work-related notion of activation, although only moderately so (lib+) due to a small number of relevant formulations in the Jobseekers Act 1995.

4.2.2 Activation-policy regimes: The institutional dimension

Moving on to the institutional dimension of activation, we saw in Chapter 2 that the **solidarism-residualism axis** of ALMP institutions bears primarily on the generosity and accessibility of the social-assistance system, the public or private

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30 WWB, section 6(1)(c).
31 LAB, section 1(3).
32 In Great Britain, some ideal-typically conservative elements geared towards societal participation were introduced with the New Deals of the late 1990s and 2000s. The New Deals were cancelled in 2010, however (see Lindsay 2007).

provision of activation services, and the investment-oriented versus workfarist character of reintegration measures. In the following, all three topics are discussed in more detail, again based on a close reading of the Dutch, Danish and British ALMP legislation. Note that the benefit systems of the three countries are discussed only shortly here because the focus of this dissertation lies on the reintegration-side of activation; however, a brief review of the generosity/accessibility of social assistance is in order here due to its repercussions for the composition of the benefit population.

The generosity and accessibility of the social-assistance system

To begin with, the British social-assistance system is the most residualistic of the three benefit systems, with Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) amounting to only £ 71 a week or about £ 308 (€ 370) per month for single persons aged 25 or older.[33] Also the accessibility of the British social-assistance system is low, with non-EEA (European Economic Area) nationals being excluded from claiming JSA.[34] Overall, the JSA system can hence be called highly residualistic (res++) following the ideal-typical regime labels used in this dissertation. By contrast, the Dutch and especially Danish social-assistance systems are much more generous. Thus, the basic benefit amount for a single person aged 27-65 in the Netherlands was € 656.93 per month in January 2011, although rates were much lower for younger persons under the (now repealed) Act Investing in Young People (*Wet investeren in jongeren* – WIJ) and still are under the now applicable WWB. Furthermore, municipalities can grant a monthly supplement of up to € 262.77 to single persons and single parents.[35] Also in terms of accessibility, the Dutch system appears as fairly solidaristic, with social assistance being available to anyone who resides legally in the Netherlands.[36] As a slight residualistic addendum, a four-week waiting period was introduced for young claimants below age 27 in January 2012 (i.e. after the end of the interview period). Overall, though, the Dutch system could still be rated as moderately solidaristic or "sol+" in 2011, due to a relatively high benefit level by international comparison. Finally, the Danish social-assistance system appears as the most solidaristic of the three, although a shift towards more relative residualism could be observed in Denmark over the past decade. By international comparison, how-ever, Denmark still stands out as one of the most generous benefit systems, with

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33   Rate as of April 2012.
34   See adviceguide "Can workers from abroad get benefits in the UK?". URL: http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits_e/faq_index_benefits/faq_benefits_entitlement_if_coming_from_abroad.htm [Rev. 2014-05-23].
35   Rates as of January 2011.
36   WWB, section 11.

the basic monthly rate for a single person above age 25 amounting to DKK 7,711 (€ 1,040).[37] Some of the residualistic elements in the Danish social-assistance legislation include a one-month waiting period;[38] the requirement that benefit recipients must confirm their unemployment status online once per week;[39] the provision that benefit recipients must use up all personal assets (not including immovable properties) above the low threshold of DKK 10,000 (€ 1,350) before becoming eligible for benefits[40] compared with € 5,685 in the Netherlands and £ 6,000 (€ 7,200) in Great Britain; the duty of local authorities to examine "whether reasonable, cheaper housing is available" in the case that high housing costs would make a client eligible for special support;[41] and finally, the de-facto exclusion of non-European immigrants with a residence period of less than seven years from the social-assistance system (see below). To summarize, the Danish activation system can be called highly solidaristic in benefit terms but with a relativizing residualistic catch: Solidaristic support only kicks in once unemployed persons have consumed all personal assets and once they are demonstrably integrated into Danish society. For the latter reason, Denmark receives the label "sol+" regarding the generosity and accessibility of its social-assistance system.

The public or private provision of reintegration services

The second institutional element ideal-typically associated with solidaristic versus residualistic activation-policy regimes is the public or private provision of reintegration services. Here, Great Britain stands out as the most residualistic ALMP system in our small sample. Public activation programmes exist but are largely limited to short and workfarist measures during the first year of unemployment (nine months for 18-24 year-olds). After that period, public activation services are virtually non-existent because long-term unemployed clients are referred to the Work Programme that is exclusively carried out by licensed "prime providers" selected by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (see DWP 2012). In light of the above, we might call the British activation system moderately residualistic or "res+" what the public versus private provision of activation services is concerned. In the Netherlands and Denmark, private providers are also used, but to a smaller degree. During an overhaul of the Dutch social-security system between 2001 and 2003, the Dutch municipalities had initially been required to buy activation services exclusively on the private market. Since the introduction of the WWB in 2004,

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37 Rate as of February 2012.
38 LAS, section 13b.
39 LAB, section 11(3).
40 LAS, section 14.
41 LAS, section 34(2).

however, the Dutch municipalities have been left free in this regard,[42] with private reintegration trajectories still accounting for about 40% of the 2011 municipal reintegration budgets yet with municipalities providing more and more services in-house (see Westerhof et al. 2012: 75). The Dutch activation system can therefore be called moderately solidaristic (sol+) with regard to the predominance of public reintegration services, although this assessment should be regarded as tentative due to much local variation concerning the implementation of activation measures in the Netherlands. Finally, although activation in Denmark has traditionally been a highly institutionalized state task, a provision was introduced in 2003 allowing for the transfer of activation and even casework to "other players".[43] Furthermore, as Bredgaard (2011: 769-71) points out, the use of private providers was initially highly encouraged by the Danish government through a set of incentive mechanisms, although a "centralization of market management" began after 2005 that led to a streamlining and eventual reduction of outsourcing to private providers among Danish jobcentres (p. 771). Overall, Denmark can thus be called moderately solidaristic or "sol+" just like the Netherlands when it comes to the use of external partners in the provision of employment services.

Social investment versus workfare

As was mentioned above, the third aspect on which solidaristic and residualistic activation systems differ is a focus on social investment versus workfare. Certainly the most solidaristic ALMP system in this regard is the Danish one, where the LAB contains a detailed list of (sufficiently funded) reintegration measures for the unemployed, including:
- Job counselling (part 4)
- Education, which can include Danish lessons (section 32[1][2]) and is a duty for young people under the age of 25 (sections 21b and 32[1][1])
- Elective professional training for up to six weeks (section 26a and part 10)
- Internships (part 11)
- Wage subsidies (part 12)
- Sheltered jobs (part 13)
- Start-up grants (section 75)
- Mentoring (sections 78-81)
- Job rotation (part 18)
- Skills-upgrading for employed workers (sections 102-3)
- Financial reimbursements for working tools (section 74), educational materials (sections 76-7) and transportation (sections 82-3).

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42 WWB, section 7(4).
43 LAB, section 4c.

In addition, the LAS contains provisions on rehabilitation measures for partially work-incapacitated persons (part 6). On the basis of this comprehensive list of human investment-oriented activation measures for clients with very different skill levels and problem diagnoses – also including preventive measures for employed persons in danger of losing their jobs – there can be no doubt that the Danish activation portfolio is extensive and can duly be labelled highly solidaristic (sol++), especially when the Danish system is compared with the activation systems of other welfare states. However, it should also be mentioned that some residualistic addendums to the solidaristic Danish activation system have been installed, such that the LAS contains a long list of the duties of the unemployed (most fundament-ally the duty to "exploit and develop their ability to work" by accepting job offers or activation offers)[44] as well as sanctions in the form of temporary or permanent benefit reductions that are to be applied when an unemployed person refuses a job, fails to appear for a job interview, fails to come to a caseworker appointment, or fails to participate in a medical assessment.[45]

Compared with the Danish activation system, the Dutch activation system for social-assistance clients is less solidaristic. In principle, all social-assistance recipients have a legal right to job-search assistance under the WWB framework.[46] However, between 2007 and 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment together with the Dutch municipalities and other stakeholders in the social security domain agreed on introducing the "selectivity" principle into the activation process, handing it over to municipalities and individual caseworkers to decide whether a particular client will be activated or not.[47] Hence, whether the Dutch activation system is social investment-oriented or workfarist can only be determined by empirical research, not by an analysis of legal texts. Also what the range of the offered activation measures is concerned, the WWB is inconclusive because the Dutch municipalities are almost completely free in devising reintegration measures of their choice. As will be suggested in the following chapters, the reintegration/ benefit funds allocated to the local level by the central government therefore play a much larger role than formal rules in deciding whether the Dutch ALMP system is socially-investive or workfarist in practice, with social investment dominating when budgets are generous and workfarism gaining the upper hand when budgets shrink. Beside the solidaristic-residualistic inconclusiveness of the Dutch activation system, it is also important to mention that the WWB does contain a number of

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44 LAS, section 1(2).
45 LAS, sections 13, 13a and 39-41.
46 WWB, section 10(1).
47 See "Plan van aanpak re-integratie" (Tweede Kamer 28719, no. 60) and "Brief van de minister en staatssecretaris van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid" (Tweede Kamer 28719, no. 64). Source: https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/zoeken/parlementaire_documenten [Rev. 2013-10-31].

punitive-workfarist provisions (which were even strengthened after the end of the study period via the option of mandatory work activities – so-called 'returning favours according to capability' or *tegenprestatie naar vermogen*). Examples include the duty of the unemployed "to take on, to their ability, generally accepted labour".[48] In addition, sanctions can be applied if unemployed persons do not "sufficiently" fulfil their legal "duties" or "if the person in question displays an insufficient sense of responsibility to provide for himself", unless the person is "not to blame" for such behaviour.[49] Finally, municipalities have the right to assign unpaid and non-competitive "additional" work activities to clients who are not immediately capable of taking up work for a duration of up to two years (so-called participation placements or *participatieplaatsen*), although in practice, participation placements often resemble sheltered work more than punitive measures.[50] In spite of such residualistic characteristics, I would overall classify the Dutch activation system as at least balanced or "sol-res" by international comparison because central-level funds allow the Dutch municipalities to maintain a visible degree of socially-investive measures even in times of financial crisis.

Finally, the British case once again appears as the most residualistic activation system by comparison. Before clients reach the 13th month of unemployment, activation consists mainly in "signing on" at a Jobcentre (formerly: Jobcentre Plus, abbr. JCP) every two weeks in order to claim benefits and discuss job-search efforts with a caseworker or "personal adviser". The limited activation programmes available throughout the first year of unemployment are usually relatively short/weakly funded and include quasi-wage subsidies (in the form of deductions from the social-security contributions of employers who take on unemployed workers after two or more years of unemployment)[51] and back-to-work bonuses,[52] besides mandatory work activities of up to 30 hours per week for four weeks,[53] work trials and work-experience placements procured by JCP staff among private employers,[54] sector-based work academies in which larger groups of unemployed are trained for large local employers, work clubs in which specified groups of unemployed can exchange experiences and support, a "new enterprise allowance" for self-employed starters, and volunteer work.[55] Apart from activation instruments that

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48 WWB, section 9(1)(a).

49 WWB, section 18(2).

50 WWB, section 10a(1;5).

51 Jobseekers Act 1995, section 27.

52 Jobseekers Act 1995, section 26.

53 Jobseeker's Allowance (Mandatory Work Activity Scheme) Regulations 2011, section 2(1).

54 Jobseeker's Allowance (Employment, Skills and Enterprise Scheme) Regulations 2011, section 2(1).

55 See http://www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/updates/get-britain-working/ for an overview of the activation measures available under the Liberal-Conservative coalition government's "Get Britain Working" initiative [Rev. 2013-08-13].

rely on the voluntary participation of employers, the British activation approach resorts substantially to punitive measures, with a large part of the Jobseekers Act 1995 and the associated Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations outlining the duties of the unemployed, including sanctions that are to be applied in the case of non-compliance "without good cause".[56] In deciding whether a client has a good cause for non-compliance, personal advisers and private providers "must take account of all the circumstances of the case, including in particular [the client's] physical or mental health or condition".[57] For instance, the Jobseekers Act 1995 specifies that clients must carry out job-search activities every week,[58] attend meetings at any time and place specified by an employment officer,[59] and be ready to "take up immediately any employed earner's employment",[60] although claimants can temporarily be allowed not to accept work at a lower remuneration level than before, or in a new occupation.[61] The Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations further-more specify that benefit claimants who fail to participate in job search or activation trajectories lose their benefits for two, four, or 26 weeks in consecutive cases,[62] unless the clients in question are vulnerable persons.[63] As compared with the Dutch and Danish activation systems, the British ALMP system hence appears as predominantly residualistic, albeit with some socially-investive elements, leading to the overall assessment "res+".

To summarize how the Dutch, Danish and British ALMP institutions fare on the solidarism-residualism axis of an ideal-typical activation-policy regime frame-work, we have seen above that the Danish activation system is highly solidaristic by international comparison,[64] in spite of some residualistic addendums concerning the accessibility of the benefit system and the private provision of activation services. The Dutch activation system is also in the moderately solidaristic category, albeit much closer to the "sol-res" middle category than Denmark (which ap-proaches the highly solidaristic "sol++" category), and with the side-note that the real design of the Dutch activation system is left to local actors to a much larger degree than in the other two countries. Finally, the British ALMP system can overall be classified as highly residualistic (res++), with a few elements of social investment supplementing an otherwise relatively restricted and workfarist social-assistance

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56   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 19(1;5-6).
57   Jobseeker's Allowance (Employment, Skills and Enterprise Scheme) Regulations 2011, section 7(3).
58   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 7(1).
59   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 8(1)(a).
60   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 6(1).
61   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 6(5).
62   Jobseeker's Allowance (Employment, Skills and Enterprise Scheme) Regulations 2011, section 8.
63   Jobseeker's Allowance (Employment, Skills and Enterprise Scheme) Regulations 2011, section 9.
64   If one associated the three individual labels with values from -2 to 2 and then calculated the mean, as was done in section 4.1.

system. To round off this subsection on the institutional dimension of the Dutch, Danish and British activation-policy regimes, the following paragraphs take a closer look at the institutional features associated with the conservatism-liberalism axis. On the **conservatism-liberalism axis** of ALMP institutions, three indicators characterize activation systems as ideal-typically conservative or liberal: a two-tier versus single-tier unemployment system, a decentralized versus centralized regulatory system, and the selectivity or universality of activation.

Single or two-tier activation systems

Whether an activation system has one or two tiers is important for the activation process because it has implications for the composition and relative homogeneity/heterogeneity of the activated population. In conservative activation systems that ideal-typically are composed of an insured and an uninsured branch, the client population tends to be split up into work-ready (insured) and more vulnerable and harder-to-place (uninsured) individuals. By contrast, liberal activation systems that ideal-typically comprise only a single tier, the client population tends to be more mixed and heterogeneous. Among the three countries studied here, the Netherlands stand out as most conservative or "cons++" due to a two-tier benefit system in which the Public Employment Service (PES) is responsible for social-insurance clients whereas the municipalities administer the social-assistance scheme. However, the WWB mandates municipalities to cooperate with the PES at least in processing new benefit applications,[65] with some municipalities having gone even farther than that, providing activation services via single service gateways (so-called joint jobcentres or *werkpleinen*). Insured clients are transferred to the municipal social-assistance system after three to 38 months of unemployment (depending on their work history), which makes the Dutch social-assistance population very diverse in terms of distance from the labour market. The same holds for Denmark, where the transfer from social insurance to social assistance takes place after a maximum of two years of insurance-based benefits. However, apart from this general similarity, the Dutch and Danish two-tier activation systems are also quite different. For instance, because of the low ceiling of insurance-based unemployment benefits in Denmark, benefit amounts are de facto often similar between the two benefit systems (Andersen 2011). In addition, activation services are administered by joint local jobcentres and under the single authority of the Danish municipalities since 2009, although procedural requirements and organizational cultures still differ between the two tiers (Bredgaard 2011). For these reasons, the Danish activation system can be classified as ideal-typically conservative but with

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65   WWB, sections 7(2) and 51(1).

some moderation, leading to the overall assessment "cons+". Finally, although Great Britain on paper has a two-tier benefit system (and a unified activation system) – both administered by Jobcentre offices under the auspices of DWP – the difference between the two tiers is negligible because the ceiling of contribution-based Job-seekers Allowance is so low that contribution-based JSA virtually equals the flat-rate "income-based" JSA (Clasen 2011). Moreover, contribution-based benefits are paid for a maximum of 6 months,[66] which further annihilates the empirical relevance of the insurance-tier in Great Britain. In ideal-typical terms, we can therefore say that the effectively single-tier British activation system fits the liberal paradigm with some qualifications – leading to the overall label "lib+".

Central or decentral regulations

The central versus decentral regulation of activation policies is a second ideal-typical feature distinguishing conservative from liberal activation systems, with decentral-ized conservative systems deliberately leaving local actors the final say in designing ALMP interventions whereas in centralized liberal systems, policy interventions tend to be dictated from above. Once again, the Dutch activation system is most in line with the conservative ideal type in this regard, with the WWB system being not only completely decentralized in terms of policy implementation but also highly devolved in terms of policy-making (although the municipalities must report annually to the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, who monitors their performance in accordance with the Ministry's "policy plan").[67] The complexity associated with policy-devolution has even led many smaller municipalities to either outsource the delivery of benefit administration and/or reintegration services to larger municipalities, or alternatively, to establish joint inter-municipal social-service agencies (so-called *intergemeentelijke sociale diensten* – ISDs).[68] In financial terms, the Dutch municipalities receive two budgets for social assistance from the central government: an earmarked reintegration budget (formerly: *werkdeel*; now: *participatie-budget*) and a non-earmarked benefit budget *(inkomensdeel)* as part of their general municipal fund *(gemeentefonds)*, which means that any surplus on the benefit budget can be put to other uses, just as deficits must be co-financed out of other municipal 'pockets' (Van Berkel 2013: 92). Alternatively, municipalities may also choose to apply for extra funds from the central government; however, if such a compensatory payment is granted for more than one year, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment can temporarily suspend the concerned municipality's budgetary autonomy – a horror scenario for most municipalities, according to some interview

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66   Jobseekers Act 1995, section 5(1).
67   WWB, sections 77 and 78(2).
68   WWB, section 7.

respondents.[69] Through this game-theoretical institutional design, the WWB seeks to stimulate municipalities to spend their ear-marked reintegration budget so 'smartly' that more people become employed, less benefits must be paid, and part of the benefit budget is consequently freed for other purposes.[70] Thus, one might say that game-theoretical elements in the institutional design of the Dutch activation system have triggered the activation not only of social-assistance clients but also of the Dutch municipalities, which are now expected to act as self-interested and partly autonomous policy-entrepreneurs in a deregulated or even "liberalized" bureaucratic environment (Hoogenboom 2011: 88; Van der Veen and Trommel 1999). It should be noted that 'liberalization' in this context refers to a marketization or economization of social-policy implementation, not the political philosophy of liberalism on which the ideal-typical categorization used in this study is based. In the terminology used in this dissertation, the devolution and associated deregulation (or 'liberalization') of the Dutch social assistance system corresponds in fact with strong ideal-typical conservatism (cons++).

Also in Denmark, the conservative element of decentralization was introduced in 2007 and strengthened in 2009, yet to complement an otherwise ideal-typically liberal activation governance structure. Thus, in spite of the decentralization of the ALMP system, the Danish unemployment legislation still contains a vast array of detailed regulations on how activation is to be carried out by municipal job-centres, thereby effectively limiting local discretion for devising original activation approaches.[71] To give just a few examples, section 10(2) of the LAS requires job-centres to follow up on client cases at least every two months, with special regulations applying when sheltered or subsidized work is used (*fleksjob* and *ansættelse med løntilskud*), and with municipalities losing government refunds if they do not adhere to the prescribed contact frequency (this provision is to be rolled back in the fall of 2014).[72] The LAB furthermore specifies that social-assistance applicants must enter "complete information on previous employment, education, qualifications and other matters of importance" in the online database *Jobnet.dk* no later than three weeks after submitting their application and in all instances prior to their first appointment with a caseworker.[73] For clients whose only social security-

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69 WWB, section 74a.

70 However, the fact that long-term unemployment began to decrease significantly in the Netherlands around 2000 (i.e. before the introduction of the WWB) indicates that the game-theoretical WWB design merely consolidated the decline of structural unemployment brought about by earlier reforms, such as the 1998 Act on the Insertion of Jobseekers *(Wet inschakeling werkzoekenden* – WIW; cf. Van Oorschot and Boos 2000) and the 2001 Work and Income Implementation Structure Act *(Wet structuur uitvoeringsorganisatie werk en inkomen* – SUWI).

71 Note that as of 1 January 2014, a number of the centralized regulations described here have been rolled back.

72 LAS, part 14; LAB, part 23.

73 LAB, section 13(1-2).

related issue is unemployment, the LAB gives a concrete conversation guideline for the first caseworker interview that is to take place no later than three weeks after submitting the benefit application, stating that "during the conversation it is to be explored how a person's job search can be supported, and the person shall be obligated to find at least two relevant job opportunities".[74] In the further activation process, jobcentres are then charged with the legal responsibility to ensure that clients under the age of 30 attend their first job interview no later than one month after applying for benefits (three months for clients over 30).[75] And finally, the LAB outlines not only which activation measures are to be used for which client groups, but also specified until 2011 how long activation measures should last (this provision was loosened in January 2012).[76] In spite of the formally decentralized structure of the Danish activation system, we can thus reasonably conclude that the Danish ALMP system is geared towards ensuring the equal treatment of unemployed clients across municipal jobcentres, hence matching the ideal-typical characteristics of liberal ALMP institutions. Also the 'activation' of municipalities by the central government, which consists in federal refunds being (wholly or partly) withheld from municipalities in the case of non-compliance with the above-cited procedural rules, can be interpreted in this light.[77] Hence, the Danish ALMP system can overall be classified as moderately liberal (lib+), in spite of its formally decentralized nature.

Finally, the British activation system is highly centralized, with Jobcentre offices acting as the executive arm of the Department for Work and Pensions, and the central government providing all funds for benefits and activation under the Jobseeker's Allowance scheme.[78] This even applies to Scotland and Wales, which have devolved authority over other areas of social security such as health, social work and housing (see Law and Mooney 2012; Rummery and Greener 2012). However, a relatively new development in Great Britain is that based on the recommendations of the Gregg Report (Gregg 2008), jobcentre managers were "given more autonomy to shape services locally" just as "employment advisers" were given "more flexibility to personalise support for each individual claimant" with the introduction of the Work Programme (DWP 2012: 2). To conclude, the British activation system is in line with the liberal ideal type (lib++) of activation governance in terms of bureaucratic centralization, although a trend towards relatively more individualization and hence local and individual policy variation has recently set in.

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74 LAB, section 14(1).
75 LAB, section 19.
76 LAB, especially part 10-13.
77 LAS, section 100; LAB, part 23.
78 Jobseekers Act 1995, section 38(1)(a-b).

Universal or selective activation

The third and final indicator associated with conservative or liberal ALMP institutions is the selectivity or universality of activation rights and duties, especially with regard to identity markers like gender, family status, and nationality. Although none of the country legislations reviewed here contain explicit references to gender, there are still indications that marital status and especially single parenthood are regarded as legitimate qualifiers for activation rights and duties. In Great Britain, for instance, lone parents of children under seven are able to claim Income Support (which is not associated with activation duties) rather than JSA.[79] Caseworkers are also authorized to take into account the unavailability of childcare as a legitimate reason for not being able to work full-time on a case-by-case basis, whereas "caring for another person" more generally only legitimates being unavailable for work on a weekly basis.[80] The Dutch activation system appears as equally conservative in this regard because both medical care obligations[81] and single parenthood are recognized as legitimate reasons for a reduced duty to work, such that single parents with children under 12 can only be forced to search for jobs after "the availability of childcare, [their] educational status and [their] mental and physical fitness have been taken into account".[82] Moreover, single parents with children under five can get a complete waiver from the duty to search for jobs, although they must be offered a "starter's qualification" if they do not already have one.[83] Also the Danish LAS and LAB, finally, contain several references to family status in combination with activation. For example, family reasons can count as a waiver from the duty to work during pregnancy, maternity leave or an adoption process, or when the benefit recipient must take "care of his/her children and no other childcare option is available".[84] Also health and "other special circumstances" can count as legitimate reasons for non-activation under the Danish activation law.[85] Hence, the previously diagnosed conservative undercurrent of the Dutch, Danish and British benefit system is confirmed for all three countries with regard to reintegration measures.

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79 See DWP (2010), "Changes to benefits for lone parents". URL: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/adviser/ updates/changes-to-benefits-for-lone/ [Rev. 2013-04-06].
80 See DWP, "Changes to Income Support for lone parents and Jobseeker's Allowance for all parents" (URL: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100210151716/http://dwp.gov.uk/docs/lone-parent-pack.pdf [Rev. 2013-10-06]), p. 6; and Jobseekers Act 1995, section 6(2)(b).
81 WWB, section 9(2).
82 WWB, section 9(4).
83 WWB, section 9a. As of 1 January 2012, the maximum duration of the waiver for single parents has become five years.
84 LAS, section 13(4)(4-5).
85 LAB, section 21(2).

With regard to the relevance of nationality for activation, Denmark has the most restrictive system because non-EU/EEA immigrants can be returned to their home country if they "need permanent assistance" before having resided legally in Denmark for at least seven years.[86] (On the other hand, it is only in the Danish legislation that special activation measures for immigrants are mentioned in the form of language courses). Also the UK restricts JSA receipt to UK and EEA nationals. This stands in stark contrast to the Dutch activation system, which is relatively liberal in that it regards all aliens residing legally in the Netherlands as deserving social assistance and thus activation.[87] Summing up the above-discussed elements of the selectivity versus universality of the Dutch, Danish and British activation systems, it appears that all three ALMP systems have moderately conservative (cons+) traits with regard to the relevance of family status and parental status for activation; however, in terms of the relevance of nationality, the Netherlands appear as highly liberal (lib++) whereas Britain receives a "cons+" mark and Denmark even a "cons++" mark for high selectivity. When taking these different labels together,[88] the Netherlands receives a neutral (cons-lib) classification in terms of ALMP selectivity/universality. Great Britain can be called medium conservative (cons+) while Denmark just about crosses the boundary into "cons++" territory.

The final step that is still pending in this subsection on the institutional features of activation policy is to assess how the ALMP institutions of the three countries under study fare on the conservatism-liberalism axis on the whole. To this end, the three indicators belonging to the conservatism-liberalism axis discussed above (single/two-tier system, centralized/decentralized system and universality/selectivity of activation) are again associated with numeric values and aggregated in the form of a mean value that can be placed on a five-part spectrum between -2 and 2. As a result, we see that the Dutch ALMP institutions (-1.33) appear as the most conservative (cons++) of the three, with Denmark being situated in the middle (0) and Great Britain displaying medium liberal (lib+) traits. This quick analysis yields no major surprises compared to the activation-cultural dimension, where the Dutch activation culture featured as "cons+" and the Danish and British activation cultures featured as "lib+". In the following subsection, it will now be investigated how the ALMP culture-institutions-nexus empirically relates to the stratification effects produced by the respective ALMP systems, before section 4.3 turns to the question which micro-level discourses and practices can be expected in each of the three regime contexts.

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86   LAS, section 3(4).
87   WWB, section 11.
88   By associating each label with a whole number between -2 and 2, then calculating three country means and assessing each mean on a five-part spectrum between -2 and 2, as was explained above.

4.2.3 Activation-policy regimes: The stratification dimension

As we saw in Chapter 2, the solidarism-residualism regime axis is ideal-typically associated with economic effects whereas the effects of the conservatism-liberalism axis play out in the domain of social (in-)equality. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed assessment of the stratification effects of activation in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, Table 4.7 provides some preliminary clues as to the economically transformative versus economically conservative stratification effects of activation that are associated with the ideal-typical **solidarism-residualism axis**. As the Table shows, Denmark spent most on activation in 2009,[89] followed by the Netherlands and – at a large distance – the UK.[90] If one presupposes that activation measures help the unemployed to improve their skills and/or find a job more quickly, one might insinuate that the UK invests much less in the transformation of economic inequality through activation than the other two countries. Moreover, a look at the most important activation measures shows that activation in the UK almost exclusively means the provision of job placement services whereas supported employment (as being somewhat more human capital-enhancing) has been the largest spending item in Denmark and the Netherlands, although in the Netherlands, this is currently changing due to budget cuts and the planned integration of the Sheltered Employment Act (*Wet sociale werkvoorziening*, abbr. WSW) into a new umbrella legislation by 2015 (see Westerhof et al. 2012, ch. 4). The second-largest spending items are job-search and placement services in the Netherlands and training in Denmark and the UK, although the amount spent on training in the UK is very small (compare Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008: 11-2). Very tentatively, one can therefore conclude from Table 4.7 that Denmark is the most economically transformative activation-policy regime in our small sample due to a high spending level on activation and a focus on human investment-oriented activation in the form of training. The Netherlands can be called a moderately economically transformative activation-policy regime due to reasonably high spending on ALMP, a large part of which goes to sheltered employment (the most 'passive' form of activation) and non-human-investment-oriented placement services, however. Finally, the UK must be called economically conservative due to the lowest spending level among all six countries displayed in Table 4.7 and a major reliance on placement services, although training does appear to be the second-largest spending item in the UK's activation portfolio and although it

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89 Later data were not available for all countries at the time of writing.
90 Note that the figures in Table 4.7 aggregate both insured and non-insured unemployed, whereas this dissertation focuses only on the latter group. Therefore, Table 4.7 can only serve as a rough indication of social assistance-related activation trends in the two-tier Dutch and Danish ALMP systems.

is too early to assess whether the Work Programme introduced in 2011 is changing the economic stratification effects of the British activation-policy regime. A crude spectrum-building exercise between the lowest and highest total spending on ALMP in Table 4.7 (see Appendix 4.7) confirms the view that the stratification effects of activation in the UK can be classified as highly economically conservative (res++), followed at a large distance by the much more economically transformative Netherlands (sol+) and especially Denmark (sol++).

Tab. 4.7: *Public expenditure on activation as a percentage of GDP, 2009 (source: OECD.Stat).*

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Placement and related services	0.24	0.23	0.20	0.00	0.14	0.05
Training	0.13	0.30	0.02	0.18	0.06	0.37
Job rotation/job sharing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Employment incentives	0.01	0.19	0.01	0.15	0.37	0.05
Supported employment/rehabilitation	0.50	0.68	0.01	0.00	0.22	0.01
Direct job creation	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.26
Start-up incentives	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00
Total	**1.05**	**1.40**	**0.24**	**0.36**	**0.80**	**0.74**

In order to describe the social stratification effects of labour-market reintegration measures on the **conservatism-liberalism axis**, one would ideally have to investigate which types of reintegration measures are used most often for men versus women and natives versus immigrants, and what the impact of said reintegration measures is in terms of transforming or solidifying human-capital related barriers to labour-market (re-)entry. Unfortunately, only fragmentary data are available on participants in activation programmes; therefore, it is difficult to make any definitive statements about the socially conservative or transformative effects of ALMPs in the three countries. However, the Labour Market Policy (lmp) database of Eurostat does provide some information on gender-disaggregated participant rates for some countries and some years. For instance, the number of male beneficiaries of employment incentives was consistently higher than the corresponding number of females in the Netherlands over the period 2007-2010, although male unemployment was lower than, or equal to, female unemployment over the same period, which points towards a preferential treatment of males with regard to employment incentives (see Appendix 6). For the UK, only 2007 data on employment incentives are available; here, a ratio of male to female participants of 1.1 correlates with an identical ratio of male to female unemployment, thus pointing towards a relatively equal treatment of men and women in this sub-area of activation. Finally, in Denmark,

females were positively discriminated against males as participants in employment incentives even when taking into account the ratio of female to male unemployment over the period 2007-2009, although that positive discrimination shrank steadily over the three years in question and even turned around in 2010. The few other activation areas for which gender-disaggregated participation rates are available add some more nuance to this comparative picture. For instance, direct job creation was preferably used for males rather than females in the UK over the period 2007-2009 (by yearly ratios of 2.69 to 3.06); training measures were preferably used for women rather than men in Denmark over the period 2007-2010 (an effect that even increased between 2009 and 2010 when taking into account gendered unemployment); and non-human investment-oriented placement services were used relatively more for women than for men in the Netherlands and Denmark over the period 2007-10. Hence, although it is not possible to provide a systematic (i.e. heuristic spectrum-based) comparison of the three ALMP regimes' social effects based on these fragmentary data, one can tentatively conclude from gendered activation as a proxy of conservative versus liberal stratification patterns that structural advantages for males are least present in Denmark, most present in the Netherlands, and present to a small to negligible degree in the UK. This yields the very tentative labels "lib++" for Denmark, "cons++" for the Netherlands and "lib+" for the UK.

Tab. 4.8: *Comparing welfare-state and activation-policy regimes across ideal-typical regime dimensions and axes.*

	NL		DK		GB	
Welfare-state regime						
Culture	*sol-res*	lib+	*sol-res*	lib++	*sol-res*	lib+
Institutions	*res++*	cons+	*sol++*	lib+	*res++*	lib+
Stratification	*sol+*	cons++	*sol++*	cons+	*res++*	lib++
Activation-policy regime						
Culture	*sol-res*	cons+	*sol+*	lib+	*res++*	lib+
Institutions	*sol+*	cons++	*sol++*	cons-lib	*res++*	lib+
Stratification	*sol+*	cons++	*sol++*	lib++	*res++*	lib+

Table 4.8 summarizes the labels attached to each activation-policy and welfare-state regime in a single overview, differentiated both by regime dimension and regime axis. In the next and final section of this chapter, it will now be discussed how those regime structures might shape the activation discourses and practices of individual policy-implementers if the structuralist regime logic translates to the micro-level without too much 'noise'. Attention will also be paid to policy-immanent

space for agency as well as structural ambiguities or tensions that might increase the room for manoeuvre of individual policy "crafters", thereby leading to more variation in "local welfare landscapes" than macro-level regime characteristics would initially lead one to expect (cf. Bannink, Bosselaar and Trommel 2013).

4.3   Expectations for implementation

The previous section presented a detailed analysis of the Dutch, Danish and British activation-policy regimes, preceded by a short discussion of the welfare-state regimes in which those policy regimes are embedded. Now, three country-specific activation 'blueprints' will be distilled from the above descriptions that specify (a) which activation patterns should be observable at the micro-level of ALMP implementation from a structuralist perspective, and (b) how much space individual caseworkers are likely to have for autonomously constructing street-level ALMP discourses and practices. Even from a structuralist regime perspective, two potential sources of such autonomous caseworker agency are thinkable. On the one hand, policy-makers can design ALMP systems in such a way that caseworkers are free to define the 'why', 'how' and 'what' of activation (respectively addressed by caseworkers' discursive, institutional and societal agency) independently, either because the law contains no detailed specifications in this regard or because caseworkers are officially given discretion to co-design the street-level face of the activating state. On the other hand, space for autonomous caseworker agency may emerge if structural ambiguities or tensions within/between the activation-policy and welfare-state regime levels present dilemmas to caseworkers that must be resolved in daily practice. To give an illustrative example, when an activation law is ambiguous on whether public or private providers should be used for young people, caseworkers are likely to create rules of thumb for cases in which either public or private providers represent the better choice, thereby exercising procedure-building institutional agency. Also structural tensions are likely to trigger creative agentic responses from policy-implementers, as when the use of private providers is encouraged in a traditionally etatist welfare-state environment where public-private provider relations are infrequent, hence necessitating policy-implementers to build public-private network relations from scratch.

  Before discussing for each country which activation patterns can be expected at the micro-level and how much space caseworkers might have for exercising autonomous agency, two further comments on the conceptual relationship between activation-policy/welfare-state regimes on the one hand and the embedded agency of caseworkers on the other hand are required. To begin with, it is important to mention that the existence of a policy-immanent or ambiguity/tension-based space for caseworker agency alone tells us nothing about whether caseworkers will use

that space for either reproducing or changing existing policy structures. After all, as is increasingly recognized in the institutionalist literature and especially in the literature on institutional work, creative agency may reproduce as much as change structural conditions in an aggregated manner (see for example Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca 2009). In the former case, the autonomous agency of managers and caseworkers in local jobcentres could be subsumed under the header of "institutional maintenance" or more broadly – in the terminology of this dissertation – the maintenance of regime structures (cf. Hirsch and Bermiss 2009; Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen and Van de Ven 2009; Zilber 2009). In the latter case, the autonomous agency of policy-implementers could be framed in terms of "institutional change" or again in the terminology used here, the transformation of pre-existing regime structures through micro-level practices (on an agency-centred conception of institutional change, see Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum 2009; Dorado 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Seo and Creed 2002). Because one must therefore conceptually distinguish between the existence of a space for agency and the way in which agents fill that space (i.e. with either regime-reinforcing or regime-changing actions), the structuralist activation blueprints sketched out below leave a conceptual void that can only be filled by an empirical analysis of street-level implementation processes, as will be illustrated in the following chapters. The second comment that is warranted here concerns a conceptual difference between discursive and institutional agency on the one hand and societal agency on the other hand. As the graphical illustration on page 32 showed, higher-level cultural and institutional factors serve as influencing factors on caseworkers' discursive and institutional agency, whereas aggregated stratification patterns are an outcome of – rather than an influential factor on – caseworkers' societal agency. Therefore, ideal-typical dissonances between aggregated ALMP budgets/participant rates and wider patterns of socio-economic stratification (resulting in divergent ideal-typical labels between regime levels on the stratification dimension) cannot be interpreted as structural tensions increasing the space for caseworkers' societal agency. Only if a difference is observable between specific policy prescriptions and the implementation of ALMPs (or else, if policy makes no prescriptions whatsoever concerning ALMP implementation) can a space for the societal agency of caseworkers be inferred. With this in mind, let us now turn to the question which agency patterns can be expected at the micro-level in the three active welfare states under study.

4.3.1   Expectations for discursive agency

At the end of this chapter, three structuralist activation blueprints shall be derived from the material presented above. In chapter 8, these activation blueprints will be used for contextualizing caseworkers' discursive, institutional and societal agency, which is discussed in the next chapters. As we saw in Chapter 2, discursive

agency refers to rationalizing what activation is or should be about. The need for such rationalization emerges not only in caseworkers' professional circles but also in the direct interaction with unemployed clients. To begin with a summary of cultural factors that might influence caseworkers' discursive agency in the **Netherlands**, we saw in subsection 4.2.1 that the Work and Social Assistance Act contains both solidaristic and residualistic discursive elements, although neither discursive strand is very pronounced in the WWB. This yields the expectation that the activation discourses of Dutch caseworkers will display both individualistic tendencies ascribing responsibility for work and social inclusion to the individual claimant, and structuralist tendencies that see the causes and cures of unemployment as being primarily a matter of national or even international policy trends and business cycles. This expectation is further reinforced by the wider Dutch welfare culture, which is also characterized by a mix of individualistic and systemic explanations of poverty and unemployment. To conclude, on the solidarism-residualism axis, street-level activation discourses in the Netherlands can be expected to be both individualistic and structuralist, although the weak emphasis on either discourse in the WWB coupled with an ambiguous wider welfare culture create a relatively large space for caseworkers to autonomously choose either discursive side.

What the conservatism-liberalism axis of ALMP culture is concerned, (mildly) conservative discursive tendencies are visible in the WWB, which contains not only references to the responsibility of family members to provide for each other but also the notion that activation should foster societal integration in general rather than just labour-market integration. Hence, whereas the Dutch activation culture swings between an individualistic and systemic framing of unemployment on the solidarism-residualism axis, street-level activation discourses related to the conservatism-liberalism axis are likely to follow an unambiguously conservative pattern in the Netherlands, at least what familialism and a holistic notion of activation are concerned. As before, however, the fact that conservative discursive templates are infrequent in the WWB indicates that Dutch caseworkers might have quite some space to autonomously take either a conservative or a liberal discursive stance towards activation. That space for autonomous discursive agency is further reinforced by structural tensions between the conservative-familialistic Dutch activation culture and the non-familialistic Dutch welfare culture. The conservative idea that societally "useful" activities are equally legitimate as paid work should be unequivocally embraced by Dutch policy-implementers, however, due to identical sentiments in the wider Dutch welfare culture, as we saw in subsection 4.1.1. To conclude, street-level activation discourses in the Netherlands can be expected to espouse familialism and a holistic notion of activation, although caseworkers are likely to have considerable space to discursively modify especially the familialistic aspects of the Dutch activation culture in daily practice.

Moving on to expected patterns of caseworkers' discursive agency in **Denmark**, we saw in section 4.2 that solidaristic cultural elements predominate in the LAS and LAB, with the state being rhetorically depicted as responsible not only for providing a financial safety net but also for creating the conditions for a well-functioning labour market (which includes the duty of jobcentres to activate clients into occupations where there is a shortage of labour). However, residualistic formulations are also present in the Danish ALMP legislation, calling it a citizen duty not only to participate in activation but also to become "self-supporting" if possible. On these grounds, one might expect street-level activation discourses in Denmark to assign responsibility for re-employment primarily to the state, although individuals may also be depicted as having to do their best to find work. In terms of the space that individual policy-implementers have for autonomous discursive agency, the partial solidaristic-residualistic discursive ambiguity of the LAS and LAB is likely to elicit discursive coping strategies from caseworkers who will seek to come to terms with a mixed policy-cultural logic not only as professionals but also as citizens and individuals. The presence of similar ambiguities in the wider Danish welfare culture can be expected to further add to Danish caseworkers' space for autonomous discursive agency from the viewpoint of a structuralist regime perspective.

As in the Netherlands, matters are less ambiguous on the ideal-typical conservatism-liberalism axis of the Danish activation culture, where liberal discursive elements (such as giving citizens a strong say in the activation process and interpreting activation as purely labour market-related) clearly have the upper hand in the LAS and LAB over only one identifiable conservative element – the responsibility of spouses or partners to provide for each other and their children. Hence, following the structuralist regime logic, we might expect street-level activation discourses in Denmark to represent unemployed citizens as 'equals' to state bureaucrats while also designating only paid work as a legitimate goal of activation. Furthermore, since not only the Danish activation culture but also the wider Danish welfare culture is strongly liberal in outlook, Danish caseworkers are unlikely to have the space to discursively re-define activation in more conservative terms. Only with regard to a certain cultural familialism that can be observed at the policy-level but not in citizens' opinions more generally, a need for ideational positioning and hence for autonomous discursive agency among caseworkers could emerge from a structuralist perspective.

As the last of the three country cases under investigation, the **British** activation culture displays a strong residualistic-liberal profile. Thus, no solidaristic formulations can be found in the Jobseekers Act 1995, yet also residualistic elements insinuating the unwillingness to work of the unemployed are relatively scarce, leading to the structuralist expectation that ALMP discourses will be mildly yet uniformly residualistic in Great Britain – ascribing responsibility for work and

reintegration exclusively to the individual. Due to a mix of solidaristic and residual-istic elements in the wider British welfare culture, however, one might also expect that policy-implementers will have some space for augmenting individualistic problem descriptions of unemployment with systemic explanations of unemployment and invocations of collective solidarity. No such space exists on the conservatism-liberalism axis of activation culture in Great Britain, conversely, where no space for discursive aberrations from the liberal tenets of freedom of opinion and a strictly work-related notion of activation can be expected due to a strong reflection of the same policy values in the wider British welfare culture. As a singular exception, a certain gender conservatism that is visible both in the Jobseekers Act 1995 and in the wider British welfare culture may provide an entry point of gender-conservative values into street-level activation discourses in Great Britain.

4.3.2   Expectations for institutional agency

Turning to the institutional dimension that re-emerges at the street-level in the activation routines, instruments and network connections devised by jobcentre staff, we saw in section 4.2 that the **Dutch** ALMP legislation makes hardly any formal prescriptions about which kinds of ALMP measures should be used, apart from naming the possibility of mandatory work-placements and sanctions, and making so-called starter qualifications mandatory for lone parents. Also on the question whether public or private actors should carry out the provision of activation services, the WWB remains silent. Due to this striking institutional openness of the WWB on both the solidarism-residualism and the conservatism-liberalism axis, it can be expected that individual policy-implementers (including caseworkers) will have a very large space for autonomously designing activation procedures, instruments and networks in the Dutch context. Also the fact that the resource-rich Dutch activation system (of the study period) is embedded in an overall much more weakly-funded welfare system may raise the expectation that actors from other, less resource-endowed policy fields will seek cooperation with municipal jobcentres at the street-level, thereby further increasing policy-implementers' space for institutional agency on the networking terrain. However, it should also be noted that in a very open and weakly-regulated institutional context such as the Dutch one, financial resources begin to play a very dominant role in shaping policy-implementers' institutional agency, with creative instruments being devised in times of affluence but minimalistic counselling and sanction regimes becoming instituted in times of budgetary restrictions (because pressuring clients is cheaper than buying expensive training courses or other measures). Therefore, it is possible or even likely that the institution-building agency of Dutch caseworkers is highly volatile to budgetary fluctuations.

The expected institutional-agency patterns in **Denmark** are very different from the Dutch case. From a structuralist perspective, one would expect only a very limited space for institutional agency among caseworkers in the Danish context, due not only to the absence of any structural ambiguities or tensions between solidaristic and residualistic elements on the institutional regime dimension but also and especially due to detailed regulations in the LAS and LAB (until 2012/ 2014) about counselling procedures, the frequency of counselling, the duration of activation, and the types of activation measures to be used depending on clients' distance from the labour market. Thus, directly work-oriented activation trajectories were prescribed for immediately employable clients until 2014; skill-development or work-experience trajectories were presented as standard measures for clients with multiple problems; and supported employment was reserved for vulnerable clients. Also with regard to gender and ethnicity, the detailed LAS and LAB leave little space for deviation from the liberal tenet that primordial identity markers are to play no role in the activation process, possibly with one exception: Danish caseworkers are permitted to grant waivers from activation duties if objectifiable obstacles to work are diagnosed such as bad health, lacking childcare or other "special circumstances". However, since state childcare is available virtually everywhere in Denmark, it is questionable whether parenthood will truly impact on activation duties in Danish street-level practice.

Institutional agency in **Great Britain** is somewhat more difficult to assess than in the other two cases because of detailed regulations and a homogeneous regime context going hand in hand with a policy in-built space for caseworker discretion as well as non-restrictions for individual policy-implementers to go beyond the minimalist prescriptions in the Jobseekers Act 1995. To elaborate, on the solidarism-residualism axis, the Jobseekers Act prescribes a strong focus on the duty of the unemployed to search for jobs, with sanctions ensuing if this duty is not fulfilled. Furthermore, during the first year of unemployment, options for additional services are relatively scarce, due not only to minimalist prescriptions in the law but also to scarce resources for activation outside of the Work Programme. Also on the conservatism-liberalism axis, caseworkers' space for institutional agency can be expected to be relatively confined due to a strong liberal public administration paradigm that fosters a task division between caseworkers as desk-workers and managers as institutional entrepreneurs (within confines). The so-resulting preliminary expectation of little room for caseworkers' institutional agency in the British context is further reinforced by the uniformly residualistic-liberal British activation and welfare system that lacks any structural ambiguities or tensions from which an increased space for caseworker agency might spring. However, to complicate this initially straightforward picture, the Department for Work and Pensions recently introduced more formal space for caseworker discretion (e.g. in terms of identifying suitable candidates for work experience). Other official areas of case-

worker discretion concern (conservatively) accepting lacking childcare as a legit-imate obstacle to work on a case-by-case basis and volunteer work as activation if it is deemed conducive to labour-market reintegration. Next to this policy-im-manent space for devising informal selection criteria and hence activation rules at the street-level, it should also be mentioned that the residualistic-minimalistic provisions on work-experience placements in the Jobseekers Act 1995 (as having to be procured by local jobcentres) leave quite some space for the entrepreneurial agency of jobcentre managers and possibly even caseworkers if they (as individuals) happen to be good at securing voluntary employer cooperation. In other words, although activation-policy structures can be expected to shape the institutional agency of policy-implementers with full force in Great Britain due to strict regula-tions and the absence of any structural ambiguities or tensions, not all institutional practices of British policy-implementers are likely to be structurally determined – due to the limited institutional stretch of the minimalistic activation provisions in the Jobseekers Act 1995 that leave open a large potential space for autonomous institutional practices at the British street-level.

4.3.3   Expectations for societal agency

Finally, the aggregated activation statistics discussed under subsection 4.2.3 may give us some hints as to the de-facto societal practices of caseworkers in the Nether-lands, Denmark and Great Britain. For instance, as the data from the **Netherlands** indicated (where the WWB remains silent on which activation instruments should be used and for whom, with the exception of lone parents), the OECD data pres-ented in Table 4.7 suggests that Dutch caseworkers used relatively expensive and hence solidaristic activation trajectories for the unemployed in 2009, with supported employment (including wage subsidies) featuring as the largest spending item, followed however by much less capital-intensive but possibly time-intensive job-placement services. Furthermore, in terms of different activation effects for pri-mordial identity groups such as men/women or natives/foreigners, fragmentary Eurostat data showed that males were activated more than females in the Nether-lands over the period 2007-2010 even when taking into account gendered unemploy-ment rates, although the reason for this may lie in the fact that that single parents (empirically most often: single mothers) can be legally exempted from activation if they have children under five. To summarize, when connecting these inferred societal-agency patterns of Dutch caseworkers with the structuralist predictions made earlier for caseworkers' institutional and discursive agency in the Netherlands, a structuralist activation blueprint emerges of counselling-intensive and capital-intensive activation trajectories, especially for men, implemented by caseworkers who not only have extensive agentic freedom to devise activation procedures, instruments and networks, but also to discursively frame activation in either

individualistic or systemic terms and to either embrace or depart from familialistic and holistic activation tenets.

If we look at aggregated activation figures for **Denmark**, as we did in subsection 4.2.3, we see very high expenditures on activation, which suggests that granting 'enabling' activation trajectories is the empirical norm at the Danish street-level – in line with the formal prescriptions made by the Danish LAS and LAB. This also comes back in the two types of activation instruments used most often in Denmark, namely supported employment and training measures. Also in conservative versus liberal terms, the very tentative statistics presented above showed that females are positively discriminated at the street-level of ALMP implementation in Denmark, hinting towards socially transformative ALMP implementation patterns and more particularly towards a non-application of the legal possibility to grant parents who lack adequate childcare waivers from activation duties. To conclude, when weaving the expected activation discourses, institution-building practices, and societal practices of Danish caseworkers into a coherent 'street-level ALMP regime' picture, it would appear that Danish caseworkers rely predominantly on capital-intensive and skill-focused activation measures (especially for women) that are nationally prescribed rather than autonomously devised. Only when it comes to private provider contacts and waivers from activation, Danish caseworkers can be expected to have some space for autonomous institutional agency. Most caseworker agency is likely to appear on the discursive terrain in Denmark, though, with structural tensions making it necessary to take a stance between systemic and individualistic explanations of unemployment, and either for or against familialistic welfare principles.

Lastly, for **Great Britain**, the aggregated ALMP statistics presented under 4.2.3 indicate that residualistic societal practices (in terms of a very low capital-intensity of activation measures and a strong focus on job-placement services, yet also some training) predominate at the street-level of ALMP implementation, in line with the legal framework of the Jobseekers Act 1995. ALMP participation rates among men and women (as a proxy of conservative versus liberal activation patterns) are liberally balanced in Britain, suggesting that the legal possibility to exempt parents from activation if no adequate childcare facilities are available is rarely made use of in daily street-level practice.[91] When also taking into account what we have learned above about the likely patterns of discursive and institutional agency among caseworkers in Great Britain, we might thus insinuate that workfarist and gender-neutral activation patterns predominate at the British street-level, with policy-implementers having little space to diverge from pre-set policy directives while

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91   Note again that the quoted figures precede the introduction of the Work Programme. Unfortunately, later data were not available for all countries at the time of writing.

simultaneously having a certain room to go beyond the limited standard ALMP portfolio (and also to exercise some policy-immanent discretion). As in the other two countries, British caseworkers can also be expected to exercise considerable discursive agency in positioning themselves towards the individualistic framing of unemployment in the Jobseekers Act 1995, although no noteworthy discursive aberrations from the Jobseekers Act's familialistic, work-centred and emancipatory cultural tenets seems likely. Table 4.9 gives a summary of the structuralist activation blueprints sketched out for Great Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands in this section.

Having hereby given an overview not only of the activation-policy and welfare-state regimes of the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain but also of their implications for policy implementation under the condition that the structuralist regime logic holds across all levels of the welfare state, Chapters 5-7 and 8 now turn to the practical implementation of ALMPs in the three countries under study. Besides offering in-depth descriptions of how caseworkers translate ALMPs into concrete discourses and practices based on empirical interview, vignette and observation material, the following chapters also investigate through which macro-micro-macro mechanisms the translation of formal ALMP regimes into operational ALMP regimes proceeds. In order to make the micro-level analysis comparable with the structuralist activation-policy and welfare-state regime story presented in this chapter, Chapters 5-7 are structured along the three types of micro-level agency that caseworkers employ in interaction with wider cultural, institutional and stratification structures, namely discursive agency (Chapter 5), institutional agency (Chapter 6) and societal agency (Chapter 7). As was mentioned before, Chapters 5-7 focus on street-level agency patterns in the Netherlands and Denmark whereas the more exploratory findings on the British case are presented in Chapter 8. Chapter 8 also builds a final bridge between the structuralist regime account of Chapter 4 and the agency-centred account of Chapters 5-7, culminating in a dynamic mechanistic model of how the embedded agency of caseworkers (as the last link in the policy-implementation chain) is shaped in different regime contexts.

Tab. 4.9: Structuralist blueprints for street-level ALMP discourses/practices in the three countries under study.

	NL		DK		GB	
Discursive agency	**sol-res**	**cons+**	**sol+**	**lib+**	**res++**	**lib+**
Expected discourses	Systemic/ individual-istic	Familialistic & holistic	Systemic/ individual-istic	Familialistic / work-centred, emancipat-ory	Individual-istic	Familial-istic/ work-centred, emancipat-ory
Agency-augmenting factors	*Weak policy-cultural templates* *Ambiguous activation and welfare culture*	*Weak policy-cultural templates* *Tension between activation/ welfare culture (familialism)*	*Ambiguous activation and welfare culture*	*Tension between activation/ welfare culture (familialism)*	*Weak policy-cultural templates* *Tension between activation/ welfare culture (indi-vidualism)*	--
Institutional agency	**sol+**	**cons++**	**sol++**	**cons-lib**	**res+**	**lib+**
Expected institutional practices	Creating in-struments & networks	Creating procedures	Very limited	Limited (selection criteria?)	Creating networks?	Creating proced-ures? (selection criteria)
Agency-aug-menting factors	*Very open regulations* *Tension between activation/ welfare system (budgets)*	*Very open regulations (exception: lone parents)*	--	*[Possibly: tension between ALMP/ wel-fare system (parents)]*	*Minimalistic regulations*	*Some policy-im-manent discretion*
Societal agency	**sol+**	**cons++**	**sol++**	**lib++**	**res++**	**lib+**
Expected societal practices	'Enabling' activation, esp. supported employment /counsel-ling	More men than women activated (single mothers?)	'Enabling' activation, esp. sup-ported em-ployment/ training	More women than men activated	'De-manding' activation, esp. job placement/ training	Equal activation rates for women and men

'Making' street-level activation discourses: The discursive agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers

As was explained in Chapter 2, this dissertation combines two analytical perspectives in researching the emergence of street-level ALMP regimes out of formal activation-policy regimes: an ideal-typical version of Esping-Andersen's structuralist welfare regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach first introduced by Lipsky. When bringing both perspectives together in a multi-level regime framework as was done in Chapter 2, we arrive at an implementation-regime heuristic that sees individual policy-implementers and particularly jobcentre caseworkers as the main vehicles for translating formal activation policy into operational practice. Moreover, as both theoretical perspectives argue, jobcentre caseworkers can be expected to exercise partly or even fully autonomous agency in building the street-level face of the activating state, either due to an immanent space for agency in policy design or due to the innate capacity of individuals to put their own norms and interests above the demands of abstract regulations. By implication, this means that the street-level face of the activating state need not by definition correspond with formal policy directives.

In the previous chapter, a first attempt was made to capture the possible street-level outlook of activation in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, based not only on a comprehensive review of the three countries' activation-policy and welfare-state regimes but also on an investigation of policy-immanent factors or structural ambiguities and tensions that may increase caseworkers' space for deviations from pre-set policy models. Against the background of that deductive analysis, Chapters 5-7 now switch perspective and turn to an inductive reconstruction of how caseworkers in Dutch and Danish jobcentres rationalize discursively what activation should achieve (Chapter 5), allocate resources and devise procedures towards that end (Chapter 6), and put clients on activation trajectories that may or may not improve those clients' 'human-capital' endowment and hence competitiveness on the labour market (Chapter 7). The term 'inductive' here implies that the in-depth description of how caseworkers put ALMPs into practice proceeds along the storylines emerging from the empirical material itself rather than following the conceptual terminology introduced in Chapters 2 and 4. In this way, the

possibility is accounted for that real-life implementation patterns may not only deviate from, but even altogether evade the conceptual repertoire of the structuralist regime approach. Also the macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms identified in Chapters 5-7 are based directly on the empirical material gathered for this dissertation, not on *a priori* theoretical expectations. In Chapter 8, it will be attempted to bring together the deductive and inductive analyses of Chapters 4 and 5-7, with possible in-congruencies between structuralist expectations and actual implementation patterns serving as signposts for new and better explanations of structure-agency dynamics in different regime contexts.

The focal point of the current chapter is the discursive agency of caseworkers, referring to caseworkers' capacity to construct or change activation-related ideas and perceptions through verbal means. As we will see further down, such verbal means can be exercised both internally (in the sense of "internal conversations" rationalizing what activation can or should [not] be about; cf. Archer 2003) and externally, i.e. in the interaction with unemployed clients. Furthermore, external discursive agency appears in two distinct forms as revealed by the Dutch and Danish interview data: a "people-processing" form that addresses only bureaucratically-relevant characteristics of unemployed individuals, and a "people-changing" form that aims to discursively reach into the private lives of citizens, seeking to effectuate changed citizen behaviour by instilling in unemployed persons a new image of themselves and their role in society (cf. Hasenfeld 1972).[1] Sections 5.1 and 5.2 investigate how internal and external activation discourses, as well as people-processing and people-changing discursive techniques, play out at the micro-level of ALMP implementation in the Netherlands and Denmark. Section 5.3 then reflects briefly on how the unearthed discursive-agency patterns relate back to the structuralist activation blueprints formulated in Chapter 4.

5.1   The discursive agency of Dutch caseworkers

A thorough analysis of the interviews with Dutch caseworkers, intersected by various coding rounds, revealed that the internal ALMP conversations of Dutch caseworkers circle mainly around the issue of how to frame the problem of unemployment in such a way that certain problem-approaches or solutions present themselves as relatively self-evident or even natural during the activation process. As subsection 5.1.1 shows, Dutch caseworkers achieve this mainly by focusing on

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1   Note that my use of the terms "people-processing" and "people-changing" differs somewhat from the definition of Hasenfeld, for whom both terms refer to public organizations' capacity to alter people's lives, yet with people-processing organizations doing so less directly than people-changing ones.

the individual level rather than the structural causes of unemployment. Hence, it comes as no surprise that in the external conversations between Dutch caseworkers and their unemployed clients (subsection 5.1.2), people-changing discursive techniques – geared towards changing clients' views of themselves in the world – play a prominent role. The two subsections below explore the internal and external activation discourses of caseworkers in the Netherlands in more depth while also presenting three mechanisms that make visible to the reader how the macro-level Dutch regime context influences the discursive agency of caseworkers at the micro-level.

5.1.1 Framing the problem of unemployment in the Dutch context

As was indicated above, the interviews conducted with 13 Dutch caseworkers in the period December 2010 – July 2011 showed that unemployment is primarily approached as a personal problem rather than a structural problem on the work-floors of municipal jobcentres in the Netherlands. This is illustrated well by the following quote of caseworker F1 who discursively assigns more weight to individual than structural causes of unemployment: *There are people living in this [remote] area who are 45, don't have a driver's license and say, 'I can't get anywhere'. Then I think, what have **you** done to change that? It starts with yourself!* Moreover and in addition to the problem of unemployment being framed as an individual-level problem, two individual-level concepts appear again and again in the accounts of Dutch caseworkers about the root-causes of unemployment: "being willing" (*willen*) and "being able" (*kunnen*). For instance, caseworker D1 says about the use of sanctions: *Sometimes, you might choose to impose a sanction on someone because they are unwilling [to work] although they are able, perfectly healthy.* Also caseworker F2 reports putting pressure on clients who are *unwilling but perfectly able* while her colleague F1 uses the willingness-ability yardstick in more general terms: *Are you unable, are you unwilling, is it a combination?* As the remainder of this subsection will show, the concepts of willingness and ability are used as discursive reference points by Dutch caseworkers to identify four distinct client types (and one hybrid type) that call for specific solutions and/or approaches during the activation process and that have a strong influence on the role played by discursive techniques in the activation process: (1) willing and able clients, (2) unwilling and unable clients, (3) unwilling yet able clients, (4) willing yet unable clients, and (5) clients whose unwillingness or inability to work is seen as potentially 'curable'.

The first client group appearing in the street-level discourses of Dutch activation practitioners are clients who can work and are willing to work. According to several caseworkers, this group is relatively scarcely represented among their client population because **willing and able** persons are not likely to end up in social assistance, at least not for long. Because unemployment is generally regarded as a temporary

spell for this client group, most Dutch caseworkers I have spoken to tend to let promising (*kansrijke*) clients go their own way after having received some basic information and job-search advice (unless management specifically asks caseworkers to spend more time on this group) because willing and able clients are deemed to be able to help themselves, thereby making any additional investment of time or money unprofitable. As caseworker D2 remarks, *if someone is active [looking for work] already, I'm not someone who will contact them on a daily or weekly basis. I don't worry about them much: They will find their way. I don't let loose entirely but I deal with them differently than with the other groups*. At the other end of the discursive willingness-ability spectrum is a second and equally small group of clients who are assessed as **unwilling and unable** to work, for instance because they have nearly reached the pension age or due to serious health conditions. Caseworker G1 reports about one such client case: *I have a client who turns 65 in November. … I ask: Are you counting the days to your retirement? Yes? Then we'll leave it like that*. Also caseworker A1 states: [*Advanced*] *age, … medical issues and no motivation. If those three come together, you can forget it*. Hence, because no return on an activating investment can be expected for 'unable and unwilling' clients, Dutch caseworkers tend to leave such clients *(rust klanten)* in peace either temporarily or – more rarely – permanently. Another road that caseworkers might take if clients are unable but not yet close to the pension age is to find a voluntary work placement for them: *Look, if you think from the beginning: 'This is not going to go very far,' then you see to it that the person does some volunteer work and then you're happy and close the project. You always have some ambition, but you're not going to invest a lot of money in a case like that* (A1). As with the first group, external discursive agency plays a negligible role in the activation process of group-two clients because the chosen reintegration trajectories – if any – do not require much caseworker time.[2]

   In between the two poles of being both willing and able and neither willing nor able, Dutch caseworkers mention two further client groups that receive more (discursive) attention in the activation process. The third group consists of clients who are assessed as being **able to work but unwilling to do so**. Because this client group is seen as hindered from working only by their own unwillingness to 'do their share' and actively participate in societal life, clients belonging to this group are generally regarded as "unworthy" of benefits (cf. Lipsky 1980: 23; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003: 143) although the justifications given for this perceived

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2   Aggressive clients (D1) and clients whose problems are not clearly identifiable (B, G1) are also sometimes counted among this group because caseworkers' inability to define or 'cure' a problem poses the same unsurmountable activation challenge as real incapacity to work. As caseworker D1 explains about aggressive clients, *you can't really place them anywhere. It's crazy that simply because they're aggressive they are left in peace, but sometimes they're really dangerous, what am I supposed to do about it? They're not the first in line for me.*

unworthiness vary from legalistic reasons (B: *social assistance is not meant for people like that*) to humanistic reasons (E1: *we have bred far too much dependency in the Netherlands*) and the communitarian notion that everybody must contribute in order for society to remain 'in balance' (A2: *you receive benefits, that also entails duties, you're expected to do something back*; B: *come on, participate, you can also participate*) (compare Etzioni 1968). When Dutch caseworkers have the impression that a client may not be actively looking for work without a legitimate reason, the most standard response stated in the interviews is a strict approach that seeks to create a watershed between "deserving" clients (to remain in the benefit system) and "undeserving" clients (to leave the benefit system), consisting in such measures as calling clients in more often, assigning them more intensive job-search tasks, following up on their job-search activities, *pester[ing] them until they are sick of it* (B), sanctioning noncompliance, or assigning them to mandatory work programmes. Although some external discursive agency comes to the fore regarding this third client group in the form of probing clients' true motivations (A1: *What's stopping you?*), challenging clients' accounts of their job-search activities (F1: *I sometimes say, 'I don't trust you'. They find it strange, but afterwards it often gets better*) or reminding them of their activation duties (F2: *Fine, you receive a benefit, that entails obligations. You are able to work, so I expect you to*), the strict caseworker approach is mostly limited to hands-on measures. Thus, although discursive techniques play a certain role in face-to-face encounters between caseworkers and group-three clients, non-discursive activation techniques predominate.

The fourth client group that emerges in the discursive grid between 'willingness' and 'ability' consists of clients who are principally **unable but still willing** to work. Although inability would normally lead to a highly restrictive or even stalled activation process because returning to the labour market is not a realistic prospect for fully 'unable' clients, several caseworkers report that they would nevertheless go the extra mile for impaired clients displaying a strong motivation to work. In the words of caseworker A1: *If there is motivation, I am still going to try something, irrespective of all the problems there may be.* As this quote illustrates, Dutch caseworkers tend to give motivation or willingness more weight in the activation process than the ability criterion. This also becomes evident in another quote by caseworker A1 in which he reacts to the hypothetical case of a client who is 30% work-incapacitated: *I will look very carefully which atmosphere and which type of work would be right for this man … I'd put a lot more energy into that, because 30%, what does that tell me?* The activation approach taken by Dutch caseworkers towards clients who are physically incapacitated but still willing to work usually consists in non-discursive measures such as referral to subsidized public workplaces or finding private *employers who have a feeling for that, who want to help a client to get his life back in order* (C1).

External discursive techniques only play a significant role in the activation process of a large hybrid group situated somewhere between group three (able yet unwilling) and group four (willing yet unable). These are clients whose **inability to work is seen as cognitive more than physical** and/or whose **unwillingness to work is seen as acquired more than innate**. As an example of cognitive rather than physical inabilities, caseworker A1 mentions clients who suffer from depression or other psychiatric conditions: *I have some very intelligent people that ended up in social assistance due to a depression or in the case of one woman, manic depression. But these are very intelligent people and so I try to coach them. Then you can see that you hit a spot, that it is possible to stir them and that's great.* On the willingness side, when caseworkers diagnose a perceived unwillingness to work as acquired more than innate, this is usually explained by socialization into a work-averse environment, as the following titbits express:

It has more to do with a kind of ignorance or helplessness than with being unwilling. In fact, you realize that almost everyone has motivation. They are just not always good at making something of that. (A1)

Life has been rough on him on all ends – you really have to spoon-feed everything to someone like that, you know, they've been taught so little. Often there is a reason behind that unwillingness – often it is more out of fear. (A2)

The girl hasn't really had a good role model. She's doing precisely what she was taught at home. (C1)

The people who didn't learn that at home or have ended up on the wrong path, yeah, those we get here often: people with a stain. He has a good heart, but he's been conditioned in a certain way. (G2)

According to Dutch caseworkers, another factor that can lead to an acquired dependency attitude or a fear of *stepping out of one's secure home* (B) and into the labour market is a long period of unemployment. Thus, caseworker F1 emphatically reflects: *If you're at home all day, you might clean the windows for one hour and that's your accomplishment for the day ... If you are then forced to participate in an activation trajectory, that messes up your daily routine*; and caseworker G2 states: *It also has to do with courage. People opt for security, however small it may be. If they have been out of work for a long time, they become used to this situation, they accept the fact that they're unemployed, it becomes a credo: nobody wants me.* Caseworker D2 even draws a parallel with mourning: *Sometimes they are even in mourning to some degree. Going suddenly from a good job and income to unemployment benefits and social assistance – that pulls the rug out from under their feet and they have to get used to having to start over from*

scratch. As all of these examples show, Dutch caseworkers see the root cause of unemployment in a bridgeable or 'curable' cognitive gap between a mind-set of fear or dependency and a work-oriented national welfare culture in the case of group five. For this reason, Dutch caseworkers tend to award most attention and time to this hybrid group, unless the creaming of promising clients is directed by management (as in municipality G, for instance).

Before subsection 5.1.2 explains in more detail how Dutch caseworkers use 'external' discursive techniques to make work-averse clients 'come around' during the activation process, let us summarize here what we have learned so far about the 'internal' discursive framing of the problem of unemployment among municipal jobcentre caseworkers in the Netherlands. The first observation made above was that Dutch caseworkers frame the problem of unemployment in individual terms and more particularly, in reference to the concepts of 'willingness' and 'ability'. Contradicting the current official discourse of policy-makers in the Netherlands who accuse Dutch caseworkers of lacking professional standards (see Blommesteijn et al. 2012; for an academic perspective, see Van Berkel, Van der Aa and Van Gestel 2010), I would therefore argue that Dutch caseworkers have in fact developed a professional identity since the introduction of the WWB that makes them take personal and professional ownership of the problem of unemployment as 'problem-solvers'. As problem-solvers, Dutch caseworkers tend to focus on those aspects of the problem of unemployment which they can affect and change (namely, individual-level causes rather than structural causes). Moreover, I would state based on the above discussion that the self-made Dutch caseworker-professionals have developed an efficient discursive frame of reference that allows them to identify individual-level problems that can best be solved by investing money (in the form of referring clients to an adequate private provider or workplace, when someone is motivated to work but lacks certain skills or physical ability) and individual-level problems that can best be solved by caseworker counselling (when motivation is seen as the biggest issue). Mechanism NL-5.1 gives a graphic illustration of this argument.

Mechanism NL-5.1
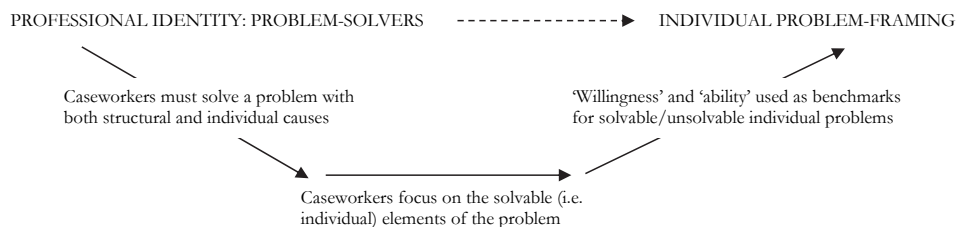
The second observation that can be deduced from the above-said is that in an open policy context which does not prescribe activation for all unemployed individuals, Dutch caseworkers find it self-evident to make entrepreneurial decisions on how much money or time (the latter as a prerequisite for discursive activation techniques) to invest in particular client cases. As caseworker F1 states, *in principle, you have to help everyone, but it is a question of setting priorities*. Regarding the time resource, the rule of thumb used to assess the size of a future return on investment (in the sense of employment or at least more societal participation) seems to be: the wider the gap between a (cognitive) status quo and future employment or societal participation – for as long as that gap is still bridgeable – the higher the prospective gains, and hence the more time and discursive energy to be invested during the activation process. This is illustrated well by the following quote of caseworker A1: *Some people are exactly on the boundary between … the chance of a happy ending or there just being a little bit too much lacking … Well, with someone like that, you try your best, time and time again, because you know that if you succeed, such a person will finally get a job and be integrated in society.* Also caseworker D1 goes in a similar direction when she muses about a difficult client whom she *work[s] with very closely at present*: *These are the people where my chances lie. They can flow off. So I pay extra attention to them.* Below, a second mechanism graphically connects the institutional openness of the Dutch activation system with an entrepreneurial ALMP discourse, mediated by rationalistic considerations of whom to grant basic or more intensive counselling in a context of finite (time) resources.

Mechanism NL-5.2

OPEN ALMP PROCEDURES   -▶   ENTREPRENEURIAL ALMP DISCOURSE

Municipalities and caseworkers are free to (not) activate clients at their own discretion

Selective counselling based on expected 'return on investment' becomes seen as legitimate

Limited time resources lead to a differentiation between basic and intensive counselling approaches
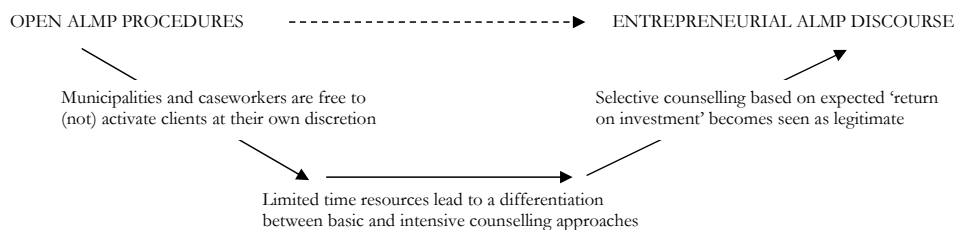
The next subsection now turns to discussing in more detail how Dutch caseworkers use external discursive means to "break through" (*doorbreken*) cognitive patterns of low self-esteem, a habitual dependency on benefits or a fear of entering the labour market.

5.1.2   Changing clients' mind-sets in the Dutch context

Above, we saw that Dutch caseworkers discursively distinguish between 'four plus one' client groups: willing and able clients who are generally afforded relatively

little attention (unless management interferes) because they are classified as able to help themselves; unwilling and unable clients who are also given little attention because they are regarded as 'hopeless' cases; able but unwilling clients who are pressured either to comply with job-search regulations or to leave the benefit system; unable but willing clients who are helped in spite of the high investment needed because motivation is given more weight in the activation process than the ability criterion; and a very large hybrid group situated between groups three and four, consisting of clients whose inability or unwillingness to work is seen as non-innate or non-physical and hence as potentially changeable. Because discursive agency as a means of making client worldviews more compatible with societal norms on work and participation features so prominently with regard to the fifth group, this subsection now elaborates more extensively how Dutch caseworkers seek to achieve a cognitive reorientation among their clients by resorting to external discursive techniques. Five such discursive techniques could be identified in the interviews with Dutch caseworkers: making a connection through trust, invoking rational interests, invoking social responsibilities, unearthing dreams, and encouraging concrete actions.

The basis: Making a connection

As many Dutch caseworkers state, using discursive techniques to change a client's worldview or self-perception in order to eliminate cognitive barriers against employment begins with establishing a personal connection with the client: *Especially during the first conversation, you have to make contact* (A1). This establishing a connection comes in two variants. On the one hand, Dutch caseworkers deem it important that their clients develop trust towards their caseworkers – implying that many clients are initially afraid that caseworkers will impose rules on them without inquiring about their personal needs or preferences. Thus, caseworker F1 says: *I think it's important to create a bond where they feel that they can trust you*; also his colleague F2 devotes her first talk with any new client to this objective: *In the beginning, I initiate a conversation to build up some trust*; and caseworker A2 elaborates: *You learn every time how to communicate in a different way and how to establish better contact and ask good questions, because that's what it's mainly about. To ask good questions and build trust with such a client*. As the last quote indicates, trust is seen as a prerequisite for efficient communication flows and hence as a vehicle for discursive agency in the caseworker-client interaction: Only if clients are open to receiving communicative messages from caseworker-senders because they trust their caseworkers will worldview-changing messages be taken seriously and have any effect on the self-perceptions and work-related cognitions of clients. The second variant of building a meaningful connection between caseworker and client consists in establishing an eye-level plateau for communication. As caseworker D2 says, *what*

tips the scale is whether you give clients the feeling that they also have a role in this; and caseworker A1 elaborates further: *I want you to take your life into your own hands and that you tell me what you need in order to do that and then I'll look with you into the possibilities there are. ... But if you come in here and I tell you: 'Well, now you have to go over there to arrange for Dutch lessons and I'll see you back in an hour', you know, that is also a possible approach. But that creates a lot more irritation*. Opening up a communication channel between caseworker and client based on a perceived eye-level relationship and trust is hence the first manifestation of discursive agency exercised by Dutch caseworkers in the client-interaction process.

Invoking rational interests

Once a trustful and eye-level communicative channel between caseworker and client has been opened, Dutch caseworkers employ four additional discursive techniques in order to move a client's self-perception or worldviews closer to a positive work-attitude. The first of these techniques, which is used when clients seem to entrench themselves in the relative security of the benefit system while fearing the relative insecurity of a competitive and volatile labour market is to 'talk' unemployment less attractive (D1: *try to do a paper round or something like that, then you're no longer dependent on us and we can part from each other*) and/or talking work – or activation as an intermediate goal – more attractive (A1: *it is your trajectory, it is your party. So the more you put into it, the more you get out of it*). This is done by assessing what clients find important in life and then discursively painting a vivid picture before the client's inner eye of how activation and consecutively employment (or, if paid employment does not seem feasible, a voluntary activity) would improve those life spheres. For instance, caseworker F2 reports how she convinced a reluctant client to enter a work-experience trajectory: *When I said we had to look at reintegration, he did not want to and enumerated all kinds of difficulties. But I spoke with him regularly and made the advantages clear to him, like: 'You will be in a group with other people, you can establish contacts, you won't sit alone at home anymore'*. The underlying rationale of this discursive technique seems to be that once clients accept a new cognitive reference point that lies beyond their current situation and creates a virtual cognitive path between the status quo and a potential better future, this will make it much easier for clients to overcome their fear of exposing themselves to a 'hostile' reality and take concrete steps on that path towards the desired end. As caseworker D2 summarizes, *the most important thing is that the clients themselves are motivated, that they come to realize: Social assistance is not everything, I want to do something and even something fun until I'm 65.*

Invoking social responsibilities

Whereas the discursive technique of invoking rational interests described in the former paragraph could be labelled rationalistic due to its focus on personal goals and strategic ways towards their achievement, another discursive technique used by some Dutch caseworkers is more moralistic in nature – namely the invoking of social responsibilities vis-à-vis family members and society. The moralistic discursive method is illustrated by caseworker-manager B who describes how she attempts to warm passive or discouraged clients to the idea of working: *These are clients that you have to motivate a lot, to make them realize that work is in fact something very positive because you contribute to society again, you can hold your head high and say to your neighbour, 'I'm off to work, I'm doing this and that, and I'm earning my own money'. And you can be a role model for your children.* Also caseworker C1 alludes to the social responsibility of clients vis-à-vis their children when she says: *You are an example for your children, they must also work later and not end up in social assistance.* Another variation of the social-responsibility discursive approach is to make clients aware of the financial burden activation programmes impose on tax-payers, thereby painting activation more as a gracious gift from society rather than an unwelcome societal duty: *I want to know how much [an activation trajectory] costs. And very often, I also inform clients about that. Simply to make them aware of the investment that is being made in them and the responsibility this entails for them* (A2). At an abstract level, the discursive technique of invoking social responsibility proceeds from a similar logic than the technique of invoking rational interests discussed above because both techniques consist in instilling a new mental reference point in the mind-set of clients that makes them view their present or future with new (and activation or work-oriented) eyes. The concrete nature of the insinuated new mental reference points can be quite different, however, ranging from rational interests or social responsibilities to personal visions and dreams, as the next paragraph will show.

Unearthing personal visions and dreams

The third discursive technique Dutch caseworkers tend to use either routinely or when clients appear as relatively immune to rationalistic or moralistic incentives is to unearth clients' dreams and inner drives as external reference points that can indicate a possible direction for activation or job search. The starting point of this holistic and very personal discursive approach is usually formed by a set of questions inviting the client to reflect on her or his life situation as a whole: *Who am I, what do I want, what am I capable of?* (G1); or *what do you actually want, what are your capabilities, where do you think you could work, what would you like to do, how do you envision that? (B);* or *what do you want, where do you want to be in the future?* (A2).

Similar in logic to the rationalistic and moralistic discursive approaches that seek to change clients' behaviour by first modifying the ideas and perceptions underlying those behaviours, the dream-focused discursive technique trusts that unearthing people's deepest longings and aspirations will turn their self-perceptions and consequently actions in a new direction. In that sense, the dream-work discursive technique resembles the logo-therapeutic principle developed by Viktor Frankl (1984) that having a sense of purpose in life is the basic prerequisite not only for being mentally and physically healthy but also for being able to manoeuver success-fully in the world. This is reflected very poignantly in the following statement of caseworker A2: *What do people find important in their life? … That's what it's about, isn't it. … So that they can use that as a source of motivation for also doing other things that give them less pleasure. You need that, don't you. If you don't know what you're doing it for, you're not going to succeed.* A similar view is inherent in the buzz phrase expressed by manager D3 and others that *everybody can do something, everybody wants something.*

However, although the logo-therapeutic discursive technique is quoted most often by Dutch caseworkers, it is also the discursive technique that makes the limits of caseworkers' discursive techniques in solving the problem of unemployment most apparent. After all, unemployment is not only or even primarily caused by individual cognitions, but at least as much or even primarily (depending on one's political views) by the structural supply of jobs at the regional and national level. Hence, after a client's deepest wishes and dreams have been identified, Dutch caseworkers often report that an even bigger challenge lies in aligning those dreams with what is possible to achieve in the 'real' world. As caseworker C1 frames it, *they often don't have a realistic picture. Want to become a pilot or start an education, but we want to let go of that: We simply have to work. And work leads to work, and if they want something else then they'll have to do an evening course. But for our clients, that's often not feasible, it's better to just find a job.* Also caseworker G2 speaks of the necessity to align dreams not only with labour-market necessities but also with the jobcentre's activation budget when he says: *We have to listen to their wishes while simultaneously keeping an eye on reality: What is the person capable of, which jobs are available in the area, what would be the timeframe of such an investment?* In municipality E where activation budgets had just been cut sharply when I conducted my inter-views, the tension between the dream-work discursive strategy and jobcentre budgets became even more apparent: *Of course you also ask about the client's wishes, but in actuality we can't accommodate them anymore* (E3). As becomes visible from those statements, the logo-therapeutic discursive approach in casework thus reaches an impasse where the intrinsic visions, dreams and drives of individual clients are not directly related to finding a job – which is, after all, what caseworkers are asked to achieve. Critical observers might therefore remark that once casework is redefined from a purely bureaucratic activity into a problem-solving activity,

as has been the case in the Netherlands since the introduction of the WWB in 2004, casework becomes infused with a paternalistic or "emotion work" element because merely counselling clients or referring them to other providers may not be sufficient for realizing the desired off-flow of benefit recipients into work (cf. Hochschild 1983; Morris and Feldman 1996). Rather, in order to 'feel' that they are contributing to reducing unemployment, caseworkers must strive to realign the internal realities of clients with the 'norm-al' reality of the working society while simultaneously disregarding the fact that the fate of many unemployed clients is eventually decided far beyond the shielded communicative space of the caseworker office. As promising as the dream-work discursive technique may be because it begins the journey towards work with the deepest and hence most intrinsic dreams and drives of the client, it thus also comes at the prize of potentially pulling dreams into the light that jobcentres cannot help to realize – hence possibly leading to disappointment and reduced motivation at a later stage in the activation process. Caseworker A1 implicitly points to this danger when he says: *You don't want to give up, at least if you're somewhat of a zestful caseworker, thus: he's a nice guy, it simply must be possible*; and: *What you also need in this profession is a boundless optimism. You shouldn't always be entirely realistic … I always see the possibilities and not the impossibilities*. In order to circumvent the danger of nurturing false hopes, caseworkers may therefore opt to resort to a final discursive technique that does not seek to change behaviour via changed mind-sets, but rather expects to change mind-sets via concrete actions.

Encouraging concrete actions

The final discursive technique emerging from the interviews with Dutch caseworkers consists in encouraging clients to take small concrete steps in the direction of paid or voluntary work This technique is used most often with regard to long-term unemployed clients who *think, 'I can do nothing, what would I do with my kids, … I can't leave the house, and then I'd have to commute, I'd have to pay for childcare, and I've been away from the labour market for so long, so what am I capable of really?* (B). Encouraging such clients to take small concrete steps towards employment may begin with giving them homework such as preparing a CV (B: *why don't you make a draft, look on the internet, and come back here in two weeks to show me what you've done*) or making a list of five potential employers, as caseworker C1 reports: *Then maybe they don't come back to us with five employers but instead they might have reacted to job vacancies, and that's what it's about for us: that they take initiative and realize: 'I must be active, otherwise it won't work'*. Another way of stimulating clients to take concrete steps towards employment may be to verbally frame a work-experience placement as a non-binding measure that can be cancelled if the client does not feel comfortable: *You simply should try it and if it doesn't work, we'll stop* (F2). [Caseworker F2 goes on to report about a client with whom she applied this method
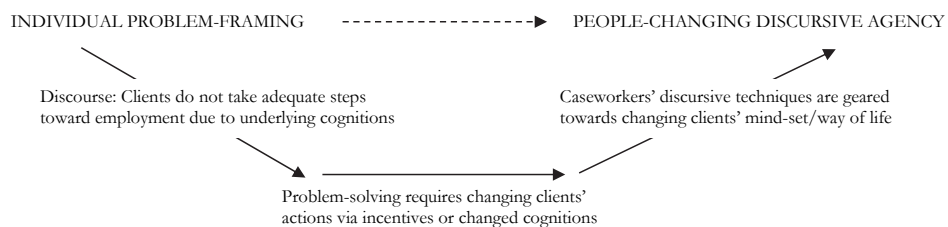
successfully: *He liked it so much that after a year when the programme was ending, he called me to ask whether it could be prolonged. That gave me a kick, 'Yes, I got him this far!'*]. A similar experience is reported by caseworker G1 concerning a client who had initially not been motivated to participate in a job-search and personality-development course but who became motivated during the process: *From 'I don't want to and it doesn't work for me', we were able to turn it around: 'Wow, I have learned a lot here, maybe I should consider looking at things differently, I should search for opportunities and look for work'*. As all of these examples show, the impetus behind convincing clients to try out an activation trajectory seems to be the expectation that if clients build up a regular (working) routine, establish meaningful relationships at a workplace, receive positive feedback from trainers, superiors or colleagues, and consequently develop a positive attitude towards 'being active', this will kick off a virtuous cycle of increasing self-esteem, at the end of which clients' self-perception has changed so much that falling back into inactivity appears as an ill option. As caseworker F1 puts it: *People often report that it makes them feel better: 'Someone expects me at work. That gives me a good feeling'*.

As was already mentioned above, the difference between the discursive technique of the rationalistic, moralistic and dream-work techniques described earlier and encouraging concrete actions is that the former seek to trigger a virtuous cycle between cognitions and actions by targeting the cognition-side, whereas the action-oriented discursive approach aims at the same virtuous cycle by focusing on the action-side. As caseworker D1 states: *During the next conversation, I ask them whether they have thought about [what they want to do]. 'We will now agree on something, because you're simply going to do **something**'*. Also caseworker F1 professes to focus on actions more than the cognitive-emotional causes of unemployment: *Wow, that must have been hard for you – but what are we going to do next?* As such, the action-centred discursive technique observed in Dutch jobcentres resembles a behaviourist therapeutic approach whose goal is to recondition non-desirable behaviour or a non-consensual mind-set through concrete experiences and feedback from the environment (cf. Pavlov 1927; Skinner 1974). Another variation of the action-encouraging discursive technique that fits a behaviourist interpretation can be found in caseworkers' verbal rewards for 'good' (i.e. employment-chances-fostering) behaviour, as in the case of caseworker G1 (*I had told her that I'm proud of her*) and caseworker B: *Praising, rewarding. Sometimes, it's almost like raising children. Yes, rewarding good behaviour*.

To summarize what we have learned about the 'internal' and 'external' discursive agency exercised by Dutch activation caseworkers, we have seen that Dutch caseworkers opt for counselling clients more intensively if they deem the cognitions underlying a diagnosed unwillingness to work or/and the actions flowing forth from a work-averse mind-set influenceable. Furthermore, we have seen that caseworkers use three categories of discursive techniques to move clients into or closer

to the labour market. On the one hand, caseworkers may try to change clients' work-averse cognitions by instilling new mental reference points in their clients' self-perceptions and worldviews via a personal communicative connection, thereby making clients look at themselves and the world from a different (and more work-oriented) angle. Caseworkers do so by summoning the rational interests, social responsibilities or visions and dreams of a particular client. On the other hand, caseworkers may choose to work directly with clients' habits and routines, challenging their clients to undertake small, concrete steps in the direction of the labour market that will hopefully, with time, expand those clients' psycho-emotional comfort zone towards including a regular workplace. Finally, Dutch caseworkers often say that using discursive techniques vis-à-vis clients remains a futile endeavour unless a trustful and potentially eye-level communicative channel is first created through which the communicative messages of the sender and receiver can travel back and forth. What all discursive-agency categories used in the Dutch context have in common is that they are people-changing in the sense that private layers of a client's personality are discursively targeted during the activation process rather than only clients' unemployed bureaucratic status. Mechanism NL-5.3 graphically illustrates how an individual framing of the problem of unemployment facilitates the use of people-changing discursive techniques at the street-level of ALMP implementation in the Netherlands, before section 5.2 turns to the discursive agency of Danish caseworkers.

Mechanism NL-5.3

INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM-FRAMING - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ▶ PEOPLE-CHANGING DISCURSIVE AGENCY

Discourse: Clients do not take adequate steps
toward employment due to underlying cognitions

Caseworkers' discursive techniques are geared
towards changing clients' mind-set/way of life

Problem-solving requires changing clients'
actions via incentives or changed cognitions

5.2   The discursive agency of Danish caseworkers

Let us now turn to discursive agency at the street-level of activation in Denmark. As before, I will look at the discursive agency of Danish caseworkers from two perspectives: First, how do Danish caseworkers frame the problem of unemployment internally, and with which consequences for the activation process? Second, how do Danish caseworkers use external discursive agency as an activating tool

in their conversations with clients, and (how) does that differ from the Dutch context?

5.2.1   Framing the problem of unemployment in the Danish context

What first springs to the eye when looking at how Danish caseworkers discursively frame the problem of unemployment is that the concepts of 'being willing' and 'being able' appear only peripherally. Instead, 'structural causes' and 'individual causes', intersected by an intermediary category 'structural causes as manifested in individual minds', stand out most prominently when Danish caseworkers speak about the possible causes of unemployment. The main **structural causes** of unemployment alluded to by Danish caseworkers are **deindustrialization** and **globalization**, implying that especially unskilled jobs have moved from high-wage countries to low-wage countries. Caseworker I1 explains how this affects the employment chances of low-skilled unemployed in Denmark: *It's those non-skilled jobs, you know, and as they disappeared from all over Europe ... these people are in a predicament in a way, because what are they supposed to do? Well, they're used to working, they are usually readily employable, but there is no labour market for **them**, you could say*. Caseworker H1 also refers to a structural loss of low-skilled jobs in Denmark, indicating that skill-training or education is usually seen as the only remedy for this structurally-induced type of unemployment: *We try, that is the general policy, the government policy: You have to educate everyone as much as possible. Get them skilled in a higher degree if possible. Because we can see we have lost over 100,000 jobs mainly to China and the cheap countries in the far East. ... That is the daily talk in Denmark, how we can't compete*. When discursive agency is used more directly and externally in the activation process, Danish caseworkers are thus likely to engage in conversations about the pros and cons of taking up a new education if a client is seen as lacking adequate skills, as will be discussed in more detail in subsection 5.2.2.

The second – and largest – cluster of unemployment-causing factors mentioned by Danish caseworkers encompasses **structural trends as they manifest themselves in individual cognitions**, meaning that individuals with a mind-set shaped by structural conditions of the past or of a different country are faced with an incongruent present reality. For instance, caseworker M1 talks about how the **economic boom** before the **financial crisis** of the late 2000s conditioned the expectations of employees and especially young people in such a way that finding a well-paid job was regarded as the norm: *Sometimes I think they act a bit spoiled. Because a lot of these ... unemployed people that we meet here have been used to [it] that is was so easy to get a job or be taken care of financially. So sometimes they think [activation] is a really big offer they're going to make to get just a small amount per month. They don't see that it's really difficult to get a job today*. Another observation made by caseworker M1 about the repercussions of the past boom on current unemployment is that even

under-qualified people used to be employed when workers were hard to find, such that under-qualified workers often do not look at themselves as low-skilled and hence in need of further qualifications nowadays: *[When] a lot of companies were really busy, they just needed all arms and legs they could get. ... When it started to slow down, they ... realized, 'Oh my God, we have been employing these 10 or 15 people totally wrong'. Because when all the companies were really busy, they didn't have the time to look at these people they employed in their company. So a lot of these people that I talk to, they think that they really have been very good at what they were doing, but that's not always right.* Caseworkers I1 and I2 express a similar idea, related however not to lacking skills but to social problems and particularly alcoholism that were not seen as social problems in the past but that make re-employment much harder in the current era and unemployment crisis: *[I1:] People who have been working for the last 30 or 35 years and maybe in a small place where there are only three or four other employees – maybe, you know, they have a beer in the morning, a beer in the afternoon. And a beer when they finish work. [I2:] But it's OK because the boss likes beer too. And suddenly,... [I1:] we have this crisis and they lose their jobs. And now their problems are visible. ... And although they are readily employable, they aren't really, you know.*

Next to a divergence between past and present hiring or working norms, Danish caseworkers also point to **welfare-state restructuring** as a factor affecting unemployment both in a positive and negative direction. In positive terms, caseworker I1 refers to the very generous and extensive Danish social-assistance system of the past that critical observers might see today as having bred a dependency-attitude: *There are also Danish people ... who are sort of, you know, injured by this welfare system of the 80s. ... They have no idea where the money is coming from. They just think it's there in a way, but now it isn't anymore. ... Because you have less and less people working, and more and more people receiving social benefits.* Also the following quote by caseworker L1 refers to the former welfare system as having co-created a certain benefit dependency, coupled however with individual factors and life circumstances: *We also meet people who just want to be on social benefits for the rest of their lives. And have been since they were 18 years old and now reach the age of 50 and can't really imagine how they should get a job. So, I can understand them as well. Someone failed along the way and I can't say who it was, if it was the system or [if] it was they themselves. Maybe it was just a combination.* Although a restructuring and down-scaling of the welfare state is consequently seen as a necessary and employment-friendly step by the respondents in question, one caseworker also points out that welfare-state down-scaling has gone hand in hand with reducing the size of the public sector, resulting in increased unemployment among public-sector occupations: *It is all about what education ... you have. Right now, the municipality and the public sector are cutting down jobs. ... That means if your education points towards the public sector, you won't get a job as easily as before.*

The final structural factor influencing unemployment at an individual level according to Danish caseworkers is **immigration**. Here, the main challenge is seen as lying in a realignment of a mind-set that is conditioned by a different (working) culture and the working norms and ethic of the Danish society. In the words of caseworker I2: *The problem is the mentality in that country. Maybe someone says, 'OK, I'm in my forties, normally in my home country I get to relax and my kids take care of my life. But they don't have that here. And this is very hard for them. Because ... in the mind, they have already gone into retirement. But only a few are like that.* Apart from family status and working norms, another way by which cultural patterns may shape immigrants' labour-market experiences in Denmark is through gender roles, according to several caseworkers. For instance, caseworker M2 observes a difference between young immigrant men and women in being open towards engaging in higher-education programmes: *At the moment we have a lot of young people, so it's males and females, and the females ... say 'OK', they want education. But the males are like 'Oh', it's so scary for them. Because their picture of themselves is that they are men and they can do everything and they don't need education. But as time goes by, they find out they need education to get a proper position in the Danish society.* In a nutshell, when Danish caseworkers perceive a client's unemployed status as being directly related to a structural trend in combination with personal factors (after all, not all members of the respective social groups are affected by the relevant structural trends in the same way), the main challenge they see for themselves is to open up such clients' minds to the *real world* (I1) and to realign such clients' job expectations with the labour-market status quo. In subsection 5.2.2, it will be explained in more detail how Danish caseworkers go about this task by exercising external discursive agency. First, however, the next paragraphs will give a few examples of individual-level causes of unemployment as framed discursively by Danish caseworkers.

As in the Netherlands (and probably in all countries where activation programmes for the unemployed exist), Danish caseworkers mention a number of **individual-level causes** of unemployment beside the above-described structural and quasi-structural trends. In general, many individual-level causes are explained with reference to a force lying outside individuals' sphere of influence, however. For instance, caseworkers H1 and I1 refer to unemployment as a habit that grows on people, as we also saw earlier for the Dutch context (H1: *You get used to having only the unemployment benefit ... you can do what you want. So I am a disturbing factor in their everyday life*; I2: *Sometimes they are afraid to do something different. It's easier to be taken care of and everything stays the way it normally is*) while caseworker H2 expresses understanding for the fact that becoming unemployed can be experienced as a shock that needs some time to be overcome *(If you stopped a job because of this or that, you are usually ... a little bit down. ... So you need a period to get yourself up and going [again])* – closely resembling the metaphor of mourning that caseworker D2 used in the Dutch context. Another set of individual-level but extrinsic factors

enumerated by Danish caseworkers as underlying unemployment is a bad up-bringing (K1: *He's been destroyed somehow by his parents, I think*) or, as we also saw in the case of the Netherlands, a family culture of benefit dependency that has conditioned clients away from the labour market from a very young age. Thus, caseworker I2 reports of *two, three generations* claiming benefits: *To go to work is not normal in the family. You go to the jobcentre and you get your benefits*. Also caseworker M2 answers to the question why some clients might be unwilling to take up an education: *Maybe … it is some family culture, they don't get educated in the family, so they carry it on*. And her colleague M1 explains how family cultures can overrule physical fitness in shaping individuals' employment chances, using an indirect reference to the concepts of willingness and ability: *Sometimes you need to start raising them once more. Because sometimes they really have a dysfunctional network when you look at their family background. Maybe someone from the family is already in the system and has been here for a long time, and you, oh my God, you really need to get up in the morning, you need to … yeah, even though they have all the [bodily] functions. Their head works, their arm works, they are ready to work or to go to school. But their mind is somewhere else. … They don't care about whether they have those holes in their CVs, for instance*.

The individual-level causes of unemployment cited by Danish caseworkers show a close resemblance with the fifth hybrid group identified by Dutch caseworkers, although the discursive labels of willingness and ability are lacking in Danish caseworkers' accounts of that group – unemployment is usually verbally constructed as individual yet extrinsic. In a small number of cases, however, Danish caseworkers also resort to an individual and intrinsic framing of unemployment, more particular-ly when clients are seen as individually unwilling (yet able) or physically or mentally unable (besides not being motivated) to work. If Danish caseworkers diagnose the causes of unemployment to lie in a client's perceived intrinsic **un-willingness** to work, their response is either to challenge the client's complacency (M1: *Why does she only [work] four, five hours a week? Is it a bit comfortable? Because then she has a lot of time to spend with her children, she doesn't need to rush from work… These are the kinds of questions we would have to ask*), sanctioning (although case-workers seem reluctant to sanction clients who *are so mistreated that they can't learn by your taking [away] the money*, as one caseworker remarks) or, if nothing helps, frustration and possibly referral to another caseworker as an exit-option. Thus, caseworker I2 reports about clients who are only interested in benefits: *When they don't want the help, just want the money, it is very, very hard for me*. And caseworker M1 confesses about her own psycho-emotional response to such clients: *If I have some of these persons who really annoy me or I really don't know what to do with them because I think, 'Oh my God, I have tried to go to the right, to the left, I don't know what to do with them', then I … maybe try a colleague or something that maybe can turn it all around. And then get it out of my head, yeah. Away, away from the desk*.

A similarly helpless but less emotional response is elicited when unemployment is seen as being caused by a mental or physical **inability** to work that has failed to be officially diagnosed. Here, caseworkers' frustration is directed more towards the standardized Danish activation system rather than the client. For instance, caseworker K1 gives an account of a client who *thinks he's some great football player and he cannot walk around in [municipality K] because everybody is looking at him and everybody wants his autograph. ... For him it's reality, there's no doubt about that. And him, for instance, if nothing changes – what can I do with him?* Caseworker K1 also indicates that difficulties can arise when problems beside unemployment make it virtually impossible to place a client in a workplace or work-experience programme (note that even public work-experience placements require an application procedure in Denmark): *I think it is a big problem that these people often fall between two chairs … because they often have an addiction and have some kind of mental disease, and nobody seems to want to take them in.* Caseworker L1 recalls a similar example, a *victim of war* who *can't open his mouth more than a centimetre or two because he's been shot through the jaw. And he lost his job and he lost his wife, and he can't get a [disability] pension because he's not well treated. ... So he's sort of stuck in the middle of nowhere and gets no help. So that's just one of them where I think it's hopeless. And we are a jobcentre and I have nothing to offer him.* Hence, although the strictly work-oriented and tightly regulated Danish activation system leaves caseworkers with less dilemmas of problem/cure-definition in individual client cases than the holistic and open Dutch activation system, the Danish system may reach its limits earlier than the Dutch system when clients do not fit the official problem definitions of unemployment and/or work-incapacity.

To summarize what we have learned above about the 'internal' discursive framing of the problem of unemployment among Danish caseworkers, the first insight we have gathered is that Danish caseworkers tend to adopt a macro-oriented framing of unemployment as being caused by structural trends such as deindustrialization, globalization, economic boom and bust cycles, welfare-state restructuring or immigration that manifest themselves in individual life-courses in the form of insufficient professional/social skills or inadequate job expectations. For entrepreneurial professionals like the above-described Dutch caseworkers who see themselves as problem-solvers and who feel an individual responsibility for solving the problem of unemployment, such a problem-framing would be unworkable because structural factors are beyond their sphere of influence. However, in the Danish context, a structural problem-framing does not pose a professional identity-problem because Danish caseworkers see their government as primarily responsible for macro-level problem-solving, and themselves as public servants who must appropriate legal procedures and instruments to individual client cases (although I encountered widespread consensus that procedures had become too standardized to accommodate the variety of real-life obstacles to employment in 2011/12; as one

caseworker put it, *sometimes the problems are too complex and this [system can't help] because it is so divided up*).[3] Hence, Danish caseworkers' professional identity as public servants implementing and individually appropriating the government's macro-level policy strategies renders it unproblematic for them to psychologically sustain a problem-definition that is beyond their own problem-solving capacity. Moreover, the fact that the strongly institutionalized catalogue of activation instruments in Denmark makes it possible to place virtually any (work-capacitated) client on an adequate activation trajectory leads to an experienced high rate of 'professional success' in caseworkers' daily work – after all, every referral to an activation programme is a successful referral. For this reason, 'professional failures' in the sense of impossible referrals only occur when a client *really just want[s] the social benefit* and *just tr[ies] everything* not to be activated (J1), yet these cases are described as relatively infrequent [H2: *I think we have a lot of people who are a bit uncomfortable about sitting and not doing anything*] and do not threaten Danish caseworkers' overall framing of unemployment as a supra-personal and structural problem (see mechanism DK-5.1).

Mechanism DK-5.1

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: PUBLIC SERVANTS – – – – – – – – – – – – – ▶ STRUCTURAL PROBLEM-FRAMING

Caseworkers must treat a structurally & individually-framed problem with standardized problem solutions

Structural problem framing is confirmed more than individual framing in client encounters

Few issues of non-fit/non-compliance arise due to tightly institutionalized ALMP system
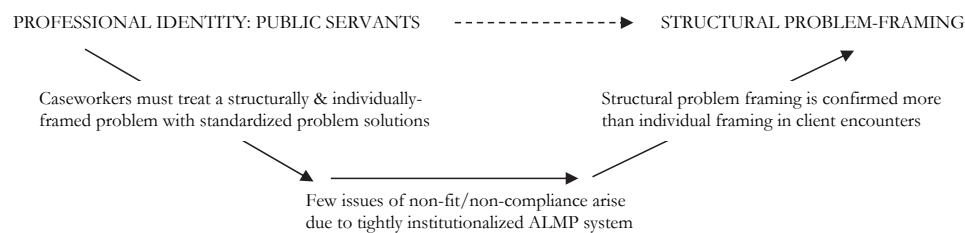
The second core insight that can be deduced from the above discussion of the discursive framing of unemployment among Danish caseworkers is that in contrast to Dutch caseworkers who describe entrepreneurial decisions regarding the resources to be invested in different clients as common-sense and smart, Danish caseworkers do not combine their structural versus individual problem-assessments with basic versus intensive counselling approaches (although different discursive techniques are openly used in different client cases, and although municipalities may choose to task different caseworkers with either basic or intensive counselling functions). A prominent reason why Danish caseworkers seem unconcerned about

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3   It should be noted here that several respondents mentioned that the Danish activation portfolio was even more elaborate and sophisticated in the past and that currently, *a little bit more specialized* approaches *in this standard world* would be desirable, as one caseworker put it. By international comparison, however, the Danish activation portfolio is still sophisticated at present.

how much time to invest in which clients may lie in the fact that in Denmark, stringent legal regulations require every client (except clients belonging to *match group three* until 2014) to be referred to an activity (i.e. a work-experience placement, education/training, or a job-search and counselling programme). As a result, caseworkers must grant each client at least basic counselling in order to find out which activation trajectory would be best suited for her or him. In general, the non-availability of a non-counselling option (as in the highly discretionary Dutch context) leaves Danish caseworkers little time to single out clients for intensive counselling, although one caseworker in my sample reports that she selects *two or three persons* every year *where [she] see[s] light* at the end of the tunnel because she *need[s] some success*. And further: *Of course, there are ten [with whom] I can do it, but I don't have the time*. In general, however, basic versus intensive counselling approaches are not a prominent topic in the activation-related discourses of Danish caseworkers, not least because more intensive counselling tasks can often be outsourced to activation providers or specialized caseworkers in the functionally-differentiated and professional-bureaucratic Danish activation system.

Mechanism DK-5.2
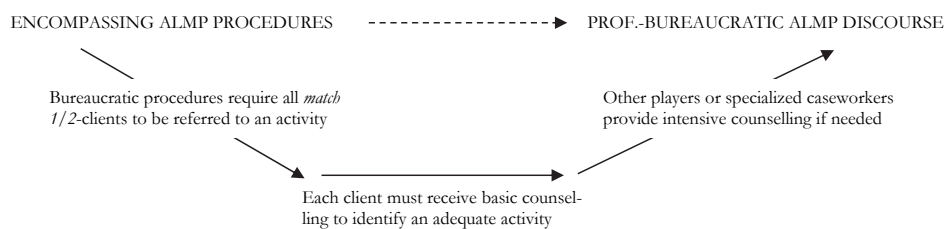
Having hereby given an overview of how Danish caseworkers 'internally' frame and rationalize the problem of unemployment, the following subsection now turns to the question how Danish caseworkers use external discursive techniques in order to prepare clients for an activation and/or job-search trajectory.

5.1.2 Changing clients' mind-sets in the Danish context

This subsection now takes a closer look at how Danish caseworkers use discursive agency in their direct interaction with unemployed clients. As we will see below, Danish caseworkers employ external discursive agency irrespective of whether the primary causes of unemployment are seen to lie at the structural or individual level, although the goals of the respective discursive tactics differ. Moreover, it will be shown in the following paragraphs that Danish caseworkers' discursive agency in the problem category 'individual causes' closely resembles discursive-agency

patterns in the Netherlands, although it ventures less far into the private life and/or personality of clients, whereas the discursive techniques used when structural trends are seen as the most prominent causes of unemployment are more uniquely Danish.

The basis: Talking procedures

Contrary to the Netherlands where establishing a communicative and eye-level personal connection with clients is described as the basic prerequisite for exercising discursive agency during the activation process, Danish caseworkers see the legal framework and particularly the LAB as the main basis for discursively aligning clients' skills and wishes with an activation programme leading up to labour-market participation. Hence, the communicative foundation for the caseworker-client interaction is usually laid by caseworkers introducing themselves to their clients (K1: *who we are, why they are in this team*), how the activation process is structured (K2: *then we go further to activation and what that is about*) and what is expected from clients during that time (K1: *and then we tell them about the rules, ... their duties when you have social benefits … you have to cooperate as much as possible*). Within the clearly-defined timeframe and the relatively standardized palette of activation instruments available to clients as outlined in Chapter 4, clients are then asked what caused them to be unemployed (J1: *how come you're in this situation … how come you can't support yourself anymore?*) and which direction they would like to take in their job search or personal development (K1: *and then of course we ask them what wishes they have, what interests and, you know, what they think is possible*; L1: *what do they want to achieve, by getting a job*). On the basis of the diagnosed match or misfit between a client's skills and wishes on the one hand and the current labour-market situation and activation toolkit on the other hand, a set of distinct discursive techniques is then applied in the remainder of the caseworker-client interaction, described in more detail below. What all those techniques have in common, however, is that they are labour market-focused to the highest possible degree. As caseworker L1 puts it, *I'm not sure we have questions we have to ask. But I try to keep focus on the job side*. Issues that might direct discursive attention away from employment may not be completely disregarded but are usually not addressed as substantial obstacles to work by Danish caseworkers – for example debt (J1: *I can say that you shouldn't talk to me about this, that you can go to the other [benefit] caseworker and talk about your financial situation*), drinking (I2: *if you have a boss that sees it as a problem, … try to stop drinking while working*) or even homelessness (J1: *it's a little hard, they [i.e. the homeless] still have to fulfil all the things we ask from them*). Overall, the discursive framework for activation talks in Denmark can thus be described as significantly more procedurally informed and exclusively work-oriented than in the Dutch context.

It should be noted that a personal and eye-level connection between caseworker and client, which is singled out as the most important prerequisite for discursive agency by Dutch caseworkers, is not fully absent in the discourses of Danish caseworkers, but it is first of all given much less discursive weight in the Danish context and secondly, it is seen as subordinate to the legal and procedural discursive frame described above. As caseworker H1 summarizes, *it is basically, you have the legal frame and in the frame you have to [show] respect, decency and [address the client as] a normal decent person. Talking respectfully to another person. Then things usually go easy*. Establishing a relation as the primary goal of communicating with a client is only cited by caseworker I2 and only in relation to clients who are very difficult to reach: *Some people I have [come] in [every] two weeks [or] one time in a month ... just to get a relation*. In general, however, getting access to all the relevant information both from the client and from the caseworker (as elaborated above) is seen as the best guarantor of a permeable conversation channel as a transmission belt of external discursive agency. As caseworker K2 puts it, *I think it is a little bit better for the relation and the conversation that they already know what it is that you have to do as a client and what it is that I can help them with*. In overall comparison to the Netherlands, we can therefore state that the detailed Danish ALMP legislation coats the primary communicators of caseworker and client in a non-personal discursive layer that orients the caseworker-client conversation towards procedural rules and labour-market participation, whereas in the Dutch context where such a discursive umbrella is absent, maintaining a good personal relation between caseworker and client stands in the foreground as the main powerful lever for changing clients' interests and actions through discursive means.

Structural causes: Talking education

After having established a basis for communication by way of explaining the relevant activation procedures, Danish caseworkers apply a variety of discursive techniques depending on their assessment of whether the causes of unemployment are primarily structural or individual in a particular client case. If the structural trends of de-industrialization, job-flight etc. are seen as paramount in having made a client unemployed, Danish caseworkers will usually go down either one or both of two related discursive roads: exploring further education or training, and explor-ing job-search opportunities beyond the client's former area of work. To begin with, if a client is low-skilled, an expressed challenge for caseworkers lies in *open[ing]* the *minds* of such clients to *these other possibilities*, which can be difficult *because often when you start an education, you don't get as much [money] as when you are working. So of course that's an argument, [so] that you really need to explain a lot and try to motivate* (M1). Also caseworker H2 describes: *They lose their jobs or the jobs move abroad. So what to do now? They don't have a tradition or the mind-set for education.*

… So that is the challenge for us I think. To get people to take some kind of education. Once again, a key aspect in taking away clients' concerns that education might be unaffordable or throw them years back financially is to provide additional information and ask the clients whether they *have … considered that [they] can get* an educational allowance, *student insurance* and *student card* to compensate for their costs (K2). As caseworker K2 reports, *there was a girl, she said well, now I can actually see that it makes sense. Because you have told about things that I didn't know. … And she was [like] 'Oh, now it is not so impossible anymore'*. Another discursive method used by Danish caseworkers to instil the desire for more education particularly in younger clients is to paint a dark picture of an education-less future: *So you need to explain to them that at this point, they will get in the back of the line because there are a lot of people who already have education [and] who have experience who get in front if they don't try to learn something new, get to the next level* (M1).

In analogy with mechanism NL-5.3 outlined above, the motivation behind providing detailed information on education and motivating clients to consider taking up a secondary or tertiary degree is to introduce a new cognitive reference point into the minds of clients that will cause them to leave their status quo-oriented frame of mind (e.g. M2: *things like they are too old to get an education*) behind and start seeing new possibilities ahead. However, education does not in all cases serve as a fruitful reference point for a bright client future according to Danish caseworkers; instead, some clients may even have to be discouraged from taking up an education that is either beyond their capacities or that would *educate [them in]to unemployment* (H1). As caseworker I2 reflects, sometimes if a client has a degree in mind *that they think is a very good idea* and *I know it's not*, this requires *mak[ing] them aware of that fact … because if you move into that area, there is quite a high unemployment rate. … So sometimes education is the best idea. But it can also be very hard for them to get an education. You know, in terms of what they are actually capable of doing.* Also caseworker H1 states: *Of course if they really want to, they can [quit the] unemployment benefit and go into the educational system. … Then my question is always, do you want to invest that, have you asked your wife…? Because you have to get the family behind you.* To summarize, when clients are low-skilled and in principle capable of further education, Danish caseworkers are very likely to motivate them to go in that direction while simultaneously discouraging them from educational trajectories that are beyond their capacities or that are geared towards shrinking sectors of the economy. Caseworker H1 who works only with work-ready clients even goes so far as to use a federal database containing green (growing), yellow (stagnating) and red (shrinking) job areas for determining whether to grant a desired training course or not: *Of course if I have to activate you, you have to go from somewhere here [red] maybe and to something green.* If continued training or education is not an option for a low-skilled client, another goal of external discursive agency stated by Danish

caseworkers is to encourage such clients to look for a new area of work, as will be explicated below.

Structural causes: Talking (job) mobility

Several caseworkers in Danish jobcentres stated that unemployed *people tend to look for jobs like the job they had before* (H1) although they are expected to search more broadly. As manager L3 (who started her career as a caseworker) explains: *So, for instance me, if I get unemployed, my goal for my next employment would be something like this, something like quality coordinating, project manager. But also, I'm a perfectly skilled clerk assistant. I cannot choose only to apply for jobs in what I want. I **have** to apply for jobs for what I'm capable of.* As a result and if further education is not an option, Danish caseworkers attempt to convince clients with outdated or specialized skills to broaden their job-search horizon. This could either mean changing their location (I2: *So sometimes you have to say: If you want that job, you have to move the body. And the kids. Or the family*; I1: *Is it impossible to live with his disabled sister somewhere else?*) or changing their profession. In the interviews with Danish caseworkers, three more specific discursive tactics appear that caseworkers use when trying to mentally pull or push clients towards a new area of work. The first tactic, employed by caseworker H1, is to invoke social responsibilities that will be hard to fulfil if clients stay unemployed: *You have a car, a family and a house, how are going to pay for that? – That usually works, because people want to take care of their family of course.* The second tactic, appearing in the interviews with caseworker I2 and manager L3, is to inquire about leisure-time activities or personal skills that could be turned into a paid job. Manager L3 reproduces a potential client dialogue eliciting this tactic as follows: *Yeah, I can see that you can do tailoring, how about, can you teach sowing … And then she will say she's got children, maybe she can work in a kindergarten. And she says, 'Oh, that sounds nice'. And I will put plan B as a kindergarten [teacher].* Also caseworker I2 makes use of the second discursive tactic geared towards affecting a change of profession: *What are you doing in your spare time? Would you like to help some boys with football ...? Maybe I can [discuss] that and then I say, 'OK, why don't you go to the [youth centre]? … You have to move on to another thing. It's hard because you are 50 years old and you have always worked in an office. But you have to change. … Even if [you] have to go out to be, what kind of work can I tell you, a garbage worker.* Finally, the third discursive tactic to turn clients' minds towards new work areas reported by Danish caseworkers is to paint a verbal picture of futile client attempts to find a job in their previous occupation, accompanied by a caseworker commentary that acclimatizes the client's mind to the idea that *you have to take what you can get in this time we have in Denmark now* (I2). The following quote by caseworker H1 illustrates how he uses that discursive technique: *If you are looking for a job in a factory, well OK, you can apply; many factories don't even*

want to see you. Fill out a form and go [home]. 'We call you, don't hold your breath' [they will tell you]. … Then [the clients] find out there is no way to find a job. OK, what to do now. You have to change careers.

To summarize what we have learned so far about the discursive agency of Danish caseworkers during the activation process: A characteristic feature of the Danish ALMP legislation is that concrete intermediary goals are formulated between a client's unemployed status quo and a potential employed future, namely education and (geographic/sectoral) job-mobility. As a result and when clients are seen as victims of structural upheavals in the labour market or the wider economy that can partly be remedied by higher labour-market flexibility, the discursive techniques used by Danish caseworkers are geared towards realigning their clients' mind-sets – conditioned by the labour market of the past – with a present-day reality in which one can no longer expect to find a low-skilled job or a job in one's previous occupation. Thus, strikingly and in contrast to the Netherlands, the necessary cognitive realignment is described as supra-personal by Danish caseworkers, out of the implicit consideration that all mind-sets are 'naturally' shaped by structural conditions and that if one has been socialized into the labour market during a past era of near-full employment, it is no wonder that one must be educated into a new reality by professionals who know how the current labour market works. The following quote by caseworker L1 illustrates this well: *Of course the personality has a stake in this, but I think experience and de-mystification … of what it means to have a job … is a big [part] of it. And also, I personally think, education.* In a nutshell, some discursive techniques applied by Danish caseworkers closely resemble those of Dutch caseworkers (invoking social responsibility and invoking interests, especially by painting a dark picture of a future in which the client does not become more skilled or flexible), although the framing of the underlying target of external discursive agency varies significantly between Denmark and the Netherlands: In the Netherlands, a 'work-averse' attitude is generally deemed curable by changing the way in which clients think about themselves as persons whereas in Denmark, an 'inflexible' attitude is predominantly deemed remediable by changing how clients look at their own employability. Interestingly, though, the interviews also show that in the rarer cases where Danish caseworkers classify a client as individually unwilling, their discursive responses and framings move much closer to what is the dominant discursive frame in the Netherlands, as will be elaborated below.

Individual causes: Invoking rational interests

To begin with, it should be noted here that accounts of Danish caseworkers exercising discursive agency vis-à-vis clients whose lacking motivation to work is seen as the primary problem behind unemployment are far less frequent but nevertheless existent in the Danish interviews. For instance, only one caseworker (I2) describes

how she invokes deep-seated intrinsic interests and paints a bright picture of a working future to lurk non-work-ready clients out of an attitude of passivity or dependency: *First, I will talk a lot with them. Motivation ... I say: 'Now you have your life. What is good in your life now? What is not so good? OK. So if you get cash benefits, it's good, you have all the time you need … [Then] this here is when you get a job. You don't have time for friends, for the computer. But what is the next bit? You have money to give gifts. You can buy the clothes you [want]'.* Although only caseworker I2 in my small Danish sample gave an example of using the discursive technique of invoking intrinsic interests vis-à-vis vulnerable clients, one can carefully conclude from this quote as compared with the quotes cited above that the interest-technique is framed positively (i.e. pointing towards a bright future) with vulnerable clients whereas it tends to be framed more negatively (i.e. warning of a dark low-skilled or inflexible job future) with job-ready clients in the Danish context.

Individual causes: Invoking social norms

Above, several examples were mentioned of Danish caseworkers invoking financial responsibility for one's family in order to motivate clients to enhance their skills or broaden their job search. When individual-level causes are seen as the primary factors causing unemployment in Denmark, however, again only one caseworker (H2) reports to use a variant of this technique to teach his clients adherence to norms of social representation: *He was very smelly when he got in here and he had stains under his shirt and so on. I usually tell people … 'This is a job interview for you as well. So if you come to me, you have to act and dress and do as ... when you get to a job interview. Otherwise I cannot see how you act in a job interview and give you some advice about it'. So I told him about that and we talked about it and he was OK with that.* As this example indicates, the discursive agency of Danish caseworkers moves much closer from extrinsic people-processing to intrinsic people-changing techniques once impediments to work are seen as primarily individual.

Individual causes: Invoking personal visions and dreams

As we saw in section 5.1, unearthing clients' personal visions and dreams as a source of energy for taking bold steps into a different future plays a key role in the discursive approaches of Dutch caseworkers. In Denmark, two caseworkers also mention working with dreams, although visions and dreams feature much less prominently in their accounts than in the interviews with Dutch caseworkers and although an immediate qualification in terms of labour-market relevance is simultaneously introduced in both cases. Thus, manager L3 recalls her previous experience as a caseworker when she paraphrases an activating conversation with an unemployed single mother: *Her plan A can be anything she wants. Because nobody*

takes anyone's dreams away from anyone. So, if she … wants to be a princess, that could be her goal A. That's alright with me, but she will need to have a dialogue with me to say, OK, what can you do. Caseworker K1 is somewhat more empathetic with her clients' concerns but also makes it clear that personal wishes and dreams can only be regarded as a stimulus for activation if they lead to a realistic prospect of employment: *And I think it's easier for us somehow to work with the people under 30 because no matter how sick they are, you know, or how many problems they have, many of them you know, they have some kind of wish or some kind of dream that they can talk about. It might not be realistic but I think it makes a big difference that they have these dreams that you can try to build on somehow. So we try to follow them as much as possible … But of course, we have to evaluate every time if it's something that is realistic for them to do.* Thus, the discursive evidence presented here suggests that the more individually the unemployment problem is framed regarding a particular client case, the more the external discursive agency of Danish caseworkers begins resembling the intrinsically-framed discursive agency-patterns identified for the Netherlands in section 5.1, with an individual's self-esteem and work motivation becoming the perceived most crucial factor in the activation process.

Individual causes: Encouraging concrete actions

Lastly, as in the Dutch case, some Danish caseworkers invoke the discursive power of encouraging small steps and concrete actions towards employment, especially when dealing with clients who are farther away from the labour market due to manifold problems. This might even begin with getting up in the morning – a challenge also cited by a number of caseworkers in the Netherlands: *It's step by step. Just to get them up in the morning is a very, very big thing. … Maybe they have something with the legs, with the body, … mental problems ... A lot of these people can't leave the apartment* (I2). If problems are a bit less severe, encouraging small steps may also consist in giving clients small chores that will help them to get their life back in order and maybe *in ten years* move into employment: *Some of them I have here every week. Just to say good morning. What have you done last week. OK, we were talking about three things you have to do. How many have you done. … OK, in the next week you have to do that. You have to go to the bank. You have to call your, whatever* (I2). Finally, encouraging small steps and concrete actions is also used as a discursive technique when clients are in principle employable but partially impaired. Here, the focus is less on overcoming a general attitude of passivity towards life but more on overcoming fears of participating in the labour market. As caseworker H1 suggests for a client with a history of depression, *I say, get out and get some practice, so you can prove to them and yourself that you can do it. Right?* In contrast to the extrinsically-framed discursive techniques employed by Danish caseworkers when unemployed is seen as structurally rather than individually-induced, encouraging

concrete steps towards employment is avowedly directed at the deeper and more intrinsic levels of a client's personality when personal work barriers are seen as key: *He is discouraged. So it is part motivation and esteem, and that is often a barrier for getting a job. If you don't believe yourself [that] you are good enough, how can anybody else? So let's experience some success in some way. So, let's find a job, an internship* (H1). Here again, the previously indicated mechanism regarding the application of extrinsically versus intrinsically stimulating discursive techniques is broadly re-iterated: The more personal problems a client has beside unemployment and the more individually the problem of unemployment is framed in the Danish context, the deeper Danish caseworkers are likely to venture into the personal dreams and motivations of clients as possible sources of behavioural changes, but only as far as a direct labour-market relevance is still given. This distinguishes the span of the external discursive agency of Danish caseworkers from the Dutch case, where the whole person and hence all layers of an individual's personality are in principle regarded as legitimate to address during the activation process.

To summarize, because a structural discursive framing of the problem of unemployment dominates over individual-level explanations in the Danish context, the external discursive agency exercised by Danish caseworkers in the activation process tends to process clients' job expectations and intended area of work more than their personality and/or way of life as in the Dutch context (see mechanism DK-5.3). However, as we saw above, the discursive agency of Danish caseworkers ventures closer to the people-changing paradigm predominating in the Netherlands if individual causes of unemployment are diagnosed as outweighing structural causes in particular client cases, although never as far into the private life-sphere of clients as is commonly deemed normal and legitimate in the Dutch context. A statement like the following of caseworker F1 in the Netherlands, which would arguably not sound trespassing to Dutch ears, would hardly ever be heard in Danish jobcentres: *For instance, someone might call in because they haven't received their benefit and they're concerned about their cigarettes. That's also something that you must debate. … If you then hear that someone got a job and quit smoking, that's great.*

Mechanism DK-5.3
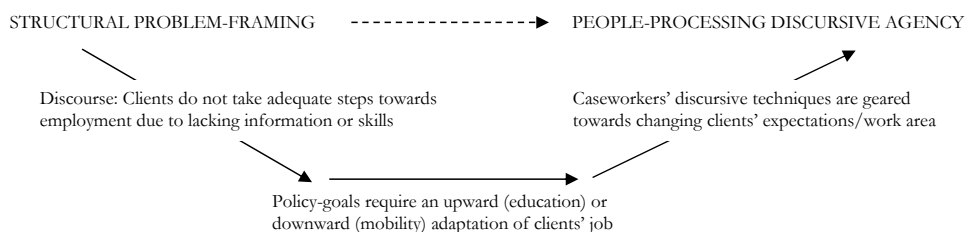
5.3 Discussion

To summarize the main findings of this chapter, it has been shown above that discursive agency patterns at the Dutch and Danish street-level follow two distinctive paradigms of internal and external conversations about activation. In the Netherlands, the internal conversations of caseworkers are characterized by an individualistic framing of unemployment, with clients' perceived willingness and ability to work being depicted as watershed factors for determining whether or not a client will be afforded extensive discursive attention in the form of counselling, and whether or not a resource-intensive activation programme such as skill training 'makes sense'. In Denmark, by contrast, a systemic framing of the problem of unemployment predominates in caseworkers' internal conversations, with the main obstacle to employment being seen to lie in structural trends such as globalization, deindustrialization, welfare-state restructuring and immigration that manifest themselves in the life-courses of individuals. Consequently and contrary to the Netherlands, external discursive counselling techniques are expended rather uniformly in the Danish context, with one universal goal of activation (namely, work) guiding caseworkers' decisions to employ either structure-oriented counselling techniques (revolving around education and job mobility) or individually-targeted counselling techniques (invoking rational interests, personal visions/dreams and social norms, or encouraging concrete actions).

How do these discursive patterns correspond with or diverge from the structuralist activation blueprints sketched out in Chapter 4? If we relate the unearthed street-level discursive patterns in the Netherlands and Denmark back to the structuralist regime blueprints sketched out in section 4.3, we see that in solidaristic-residualistic terms, the structuralist regime story by and large 'holds' across both the macro and micro regime levels. Thus, on the solidarism-residualism axis, Dutch caseworkers seem to use their structural space for autonomous discursive agency to focus on individual rather than systemic causes of unemployment, mediated by a 'problem-solver' professional culture whose roots can on the one side be seen in the scarcely regulated Dutch ALMP system (which implicitly awards ownership of the problem of unemployment to those implementing activation policy)[4] and on the other side in an entrepreneurial Dutch administrative tradition or welfare culture more generally (cf. Considine and Lewis 2003: 50; Van Berkel, Van der Aa

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4 Some policy documents and reports that explicitly charge policy-implementers and particularly caseworkers with solving the problem of unemployment in the Netherlands include Kok and Houkes (2011), Van Echtelt and Guiaux (2012), and the "Reintegration action plan" (*Plan van aanpak re-integratie*) negotiated between the central government, the Public Employment Service UWV, the municipalities, and the latter's interest organizations VNG and Divosa in the years before 2009 (URL: http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2008/09/16/plan-van-aanpak-re-integratie.html [Rev. 2013-11-03]).

and Van Gestel 2010). Correspondingly, Danish caseworkers use their structural space for autonomous discursive agency to tip the balance between a (stronger) systemic and a (weaker) individualistic framing of unemployment towards the former, mediated on the one hand by a strongly regulated ALMP-institutional context that defines bureaucratic success as finding individually-adequate and labour market-relevant activation trajectories for individual clients rather than solving the problem of unemployment proper, and on the other hand by a 'public-service professional' administrative culture that is deep-rooted in the Danish welfare tradition (cf. Poulsen 2009).

Also in conservative-liberal terms, street-level discursive patterns in the Netherlands and Denmark correspond largely with the expectations raised by the structuralist regime blueprints of Chapter 4, although concepts associated with the conservative and liberal ideal types feature much less prominently in the ALMP discourses of Dutch and Danish caseworkers than solidaristic/residualistic concepts. Thus, caseworkers' structural space to either embrace or defy familialistic notions of welfare is filled with notable familialistic formulations on the work-floors of Dutch jobcentres (e.g. F2: *Is she ready for that, given her background and her children whom she raises alone*; and D2: *…or maybe other work that can be combined with her care responsibilities, with the kids*) whereas familialistic statements are strikingly absent in the Danish context. Also a holistic notion of activation as integration into society appears frequently in Dutch caseworkers' talks about activation, whereas Danish caseworkers focus almost exclusively on the work-side of activation (with a few exceptions, e.g. I2: *And I know I'm in a Jobcenter. That person will never, never, never get a job. But if I can get him a better life, I find that I have done a good job*). Finally, as we saw above, the 'people-processing' discursive techniques employed by Danish caseworkers in their direct interaction with unemployed clients tend to keep a respectful 'liberal' distance towards clients' private life sphere and inner life (e.g. K1: *I would, with his permission of course, get something from his doctor, his psychiatrist*) whereas Dutch caseworkers as 'people-changers' tend to enter much farther into the private and personal life sphere of their clients (cf. Trommel 2009) – mirroring the structuralist discursive patterns foretold in Table 4.9.

However, it is also crucial to mention that besides confirming the abstract regime story of Chapters 2 and 4, this inductive micro-level chapter on the discursive agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers has also provided new insights on the agency-driven mechanisms connecting regime structures with caseworker discourses and discursive techniques. For instance, apart from demonstrating that (and how) individualistic framings of unemployment unfold via the concepts of 'willingness' and 'ability', we have seen above that the dichotomy of people-processing versus people-changing discursive techniques can be seen as two poles of an ALMP-discursive spectrum, with Dutch and Danish caseworkers navigating flexibly between both poles depending on whether they see individual clients as 'victims'

of larger structural trends or as individually unwilling/unable to work. With this preliminary conclusion in mind, the following chapter now turns to the institutional agency of Dutch and Danish jobcentre caseworkers and inquires about cross-country patterns of institution-building practices at the micro-level.

'Making' street-level activation institutions: The institutional agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers

After having investigated how Dutch and Danish jobcentre caseworkers 'internally' frame the problem of unemployment, followed by the application of 'external' discursive techniques during the activation process in the attempt to open clients' minds to perceived problem solutions, this chapter addresses the institutional agency exerted by caseworkers in the Dutch and Danish context. Analogously to the concept of discursive agency which was defined in Chapter 5 as the "capacity of caseworkers to construct or change activation-related worldviews or perceptions through verbal means", institutional agency refers to the latent or manifest capacity of caseworkers to build, adapt and change the meso-level institutions of the welfare state (meaning jobcentre organizations and their external relations) through micro-level actions.

The following sections explore in more detail whether and to what degree Dutch and Danish caseworkers possess institutional agency, which forms of institutional agency predominate in which regime context, and which broader mechanisms can account for the observed agency patterns at the street-level of ALMP implementation. As in the previous chapter, the discussion in sections 6.1 and 6.2 is based only on interviews with caseworkers and managers in 13 Dutch and Danish jobcentres, while Chapter 8 adds more exploratory results on the institutional agency of British caseworkers. Section 6.3 concludes the chapter by adding some reflections on the relation between the unearthed institutional-agency patterns with the structuralist regime story foretold in Chapter 4.

6.1   The institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers

As a thorough analysis of the interviews with Dutch caseworkers (and their managers, as an additional source of information) revealed, the institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers appears in five concrete forms: (1) developing organizational routines, (2) procuring/developing activation instruments, (3) carrying out manage-

ment tasks, (4) carrying out trainer tasks, and (5) creating and maintaining external network relations. In the remainder of this section, I describe each category of institutional agency in turn, giving the reader a better taste for the manifold manifestations of caseworker institutional agency in the Dutch context. Moreover and departing from that description, two macro-micro-macro mechanisms are presented below that account for the emergence of the observed institutional-agency patterns in the Dutch context.

Tab. 6.1: *Instances of institutional agency among caseworkers in seven Dutch jobcentres.*

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Developing organizational routines						
Procedure development	Procedure development		Voice in proc. development	Procedure development	Procedure development	Procedure development
Procuring/developing activation instruments						
In-/formal procurement	Formal procurement				Informal procurement	
Conceptual development		Conceptual development	Conceptual development			
Management tasks						
Account management	Budget/ account management			Account management		Budget management
Legal advisory function		Advisory function	Advisory function		Advisory function	
Trainer tasks						
		Immigrant summer course		Application trainings	Application trainings	Application/ psych. trainings
External network relations						
	Provider relations			Provider relations	Provider relations	Provider relations
Employer relations	Employer relations	Employer relations	Employer relations	Employer relations	Employer relations	Employer relations
Professional relations: UWV			Professional relations: UWV	Professional relations: UWV	Professional relations: UWV	Professional relations: UWV
Professional relations: Other	Professional relations: Other	Professional relations: Other	Professional relations: Other		Professional relations: Other	Professional relations: Other

Table 6.1 gives a brief overview of the institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers as it presented itself in the interview data. As was already indicated in Chapter 3, Table 6.1 (as well as Table 6.2) does not lay a claim to being complete because the interviews for this research were conducted in a semi-open manner, meaning that some questions varied between the interviews. Therefore, Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 should not be understood as exact representations of the institutional agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers; rather, the Tables should be seen as inductive images, probably displaying only a part of the 'truth' about caseworker institutional agency at the micro-level. That part of reality which *is* displayed in the two Tables, however, can be assumed to be meaningful enough for being described, compared, and used in order to derive a set of mechanisms that can account for the observed institutional-agency patterns.

Developing organizational routines

The first thing that springs to the eye when looking at Table 6.1 is that Dutch caseworkers possess a very high level of institutional agency, which is surprising given that traditional casework is limited to the confines of the caseworker office. Table 6.1 therefore gives the impression that Dutch caseworkers perform some of the local institution-building functions traditionally performed by managers, and further down it will have to be explored how the high degree of institutional agency among jobcentre caseworkers in the Netherlands comes about. To first start with some examples, however, a prominent arena for the institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers is the development of organizational routines and procedures, not just for their own clients but for their entire team, department, or jobcentre organization. Out of the six jobcentres where procedure-developing caseworker agency was observed, jobcentres A and F stand out as the most striking examples. Thus, jobcentre A started working with the so-called *re-integratieladder* ("reintegration ladder", a classification instrument for identifying clients' distance from the labour market) in 2006 according to manager A3, and hence long before the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) launched a similar nation-wide instrument in 2009 (the so-called *participatieladder* or "participation ladder"); remarkably, the original reintegration ladder was designed by two caseworkers according to caseworker A1. Another prime example of the institutional agency of caseworkers in the Dutch context is jobcentre F, which had only recently been opened at the time of the interviews. Partly due to coordination problems at the management level according to manager F3, the caseworker staff was closely involved in setting up the jobcentre – attending working groups on room planning (F1: *we had to make a plan about rooms and occupants, how we wanted to arrange that*), special target groups such as *young people* (F1), *workshops* for clients (F1), and intake procedures (F2: *intake used to be individual, now it's ten clients at a time*). Besides developing an influential classifica-

tion instrument and assisting managers in setting up a new jobcentre, another eminent way for caseworkers to exercise institutional agency in the Dutch context includes devising new client-processing routines when a new decentralized social-security reform is introduced. Thus, caseworker A2 reports (similarly to caseworker G2): *I've been involved with the Act Investing in Young People from the beginning; I participated a lot in developing ideas, making decisions and creating procedures.*

Apart from these prominent examples of caseworkers exercising procedure-developing agency in the Dutch context, four more minor examples appear in the interviews such as setting up open client consultations (B: *I have a consultation hour every Monday from 10-12. That consultation hour is open to everyone, whether they are clients or not and whether they have questions on benefits, debts, or the financial implications of a divorce*), vetoing the introduction of standardized caseworker trainings on how to impose sanctions (manager D3: *That discussion is still ongoing, I haven't achieved a breakthrough yet. Of course I could say, 'I want it and therefore we'll do it like that', but … it needs a steady basis of support, they must want it*), initiating new target-group specializations (manager E4: *Some [caseworkers] said, we'll take all single clients separately, childcare is not an obstacle for them … then we can talk only about work. And of these, we take the youngest first because they have the longest future ahead of them*) and optimizing procedures (E2: *We're also involved in developing ideas about processes or working routines that don't run completely smoothly yet*). As all of these examples show, Dutch caseworkers are closely involved in developing departmental or jobcentre-wide administrative procedures and routines in six out of the seven Dutch jobcentres studied. This might indicate that Dutch caseworkers fulfil a vital role in building the street-level institutions of the Dutch activating state besides co-creating street-level ideas on active citizenship. The next paragraph on the ALMP instrument-building agency of Dutch caseworkers corroborates this view.

Procuring/developing activation instruments

As Table 6.1 shows, caseworkers help to develop or procure activation instruments in at least five out of seven Dutch jobcentres – again a substantial share. Formal procurement activities among caseworkers can be observed in two jobcentres, A and B. In jobcentre B, the smallest jobcentre in the sample, caseworker-manager B de-facto determines which activation instruments are used for which clients and which instruments should be expanded or developed in the future (e.g. *I would like to further expand contacts with the local employers*). In jobcentre A, caseworkers are officially encouraged to propose instruments for procurement to the senior-level staff. Thus, caseworker A1 reportedly procured an NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) training after following the training himself: *This woman approached me, and I was at that time following her training. And she offered a free trajectory. [The training] was so fantastic that I went up to our line manager and said, 'Well, shouldn't*

we pick up on that?' She said: 'I'd suggest you begin with a pilot of ten people'. ... Now that trainer is used a lot. Caseworker A1 also reports of other occasions when caseworkers informally procured activation instruments in jobcentre A, *like Ergo Control which came in via [a colleague's name] as far as I can recall, and Fashion with a Mission, which came in through me*; and his colleague A2 recalls how he convinced his superiors to add a financial-coaching instrument to the jobcentre portfolio that he had come across in the care sector: *I thought, 'That would be useful for us here, too', so I collected colleagues' opinions about it, after first presenting it to the department head. … As it happens, some money was left over, so it could be set up for one year and now it's being continued.* In other Dutch jobcentres such as jobcentre F, the procurement of new activation instruments by caseworkers seems to proceed more informally, as is suggested by the following response of caseworker F2 to a question about private reintegration providers: *In the past, our senior manager was very active on this terrain, did a lot of tenders. [Now], well, people approach us a lot, of course. From within our own network, from other municipalities, or through someone else we know.* To conclude, given that caseworkers perform a procurement function in at least three Dutch jobcentres I visited, it is probably safe to say that caseworker-procurement is a characteristic feature of the Dutch street-level ALMP regime, although I cannot make any definitive statements about the frequency of caseworker-procurement based on my small sample.

Another but related area in which caseworkers appear as assiduous institutional agents in the Netherlands is the conceptual development of new activation instruments. In jobcentre A, for example, caseworkers and managers joined in a series of *brainstorming sessions* about possible improvements for the reintegration process: This *led to a whole list of things and that will soon be picked up on, for instance on-the-job coaching was one of them,* as caseworker A1 recollects. In jobcentre C, caseworker C1 and her colleague developed a reintegration tool for their own clients, distilling ten sample job ads from the most frequent types of vacancies in local newspapers. Clients are asked to use those job ads to find out which job would provide the best match between their dream profession, their skills, the local labour-market situation, and any family responsibilities they might have: *Often they realize, 'The job I chose is not the right one for me or my family situation, so I have to look for another one'.* Caseworker C1 also reports how managers and caseworkers in their jobcentre pooled ideas on how to increase the employment chances of immigrant clients, arriving at a (later implemented) *multi-cultural life-coach* who *bridges the gap between a foreign and the Dutch culture.* Another instance of caseworkers devising new activation instruments for their jobcentre is related by caseworker D2, who *recently, together with three colleagues, went to [municipality name] where they had devised a societal participation programme enabling clients with a longer distance from the labour market to familiarize themselves with a working environment again.* Upon their return, D2 and her colleagues subsequently *translated that programme to [municipality D]* where it

became integrated in the municipality's standardized work programme for all clients. To summarize, my interview data indicate that the procurement and conceptual development of activation instruments by caseworkers is not only relatively frequent in the Netherlands but also deemed good 'business practice' (since caseworkers talk about it with a certain professional pride). This stands in stark contrast to the Danish context, where accounts of caseworkers procuring or developing new activation instruments are completely absent in my interviews. Hence, we can tentatively conclude that the institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers on the activation instrument terrain is unusual by international comparison, and two mechanisms will be presented below that may account for this unique entrepreneurial activity of Dutch caseworkers on the institutional dimension.

Management tasks

As yet another instantiation of the institutional agency of caseworkers at the micro-level in the Netherlands, caseworkers carry out managerial tasks in all Dutch jobcentres surveyed. Most importantly perhaps, caseworkers have budgetary responsibility and/or manage provider accounts in four jobcentres in the sample. Once again, jobcentre A stands out as particularly entrepreneurial in this regard, with each caseworker managing at least one provider account (involving communication, monitoring, and other administrative tasks according to manager A3). Also in jobcentre B, caseworker-manager B is fully responsible for administering provider accounts and budgets due to the small size of her jobcentre while in jobcentre E, caseworkers took the initiative to monitor private providers more closely, initiating talks along the lines of *well, here is what is stated in the contract, there is for example a 50% target but we see few results, how are you going to realize this target, what are you doing concretely, which clients are you working with? If clients do not attend, we want to know, or can we help you with that?* (E4). The most striking example of managerial agency among caseworkers was encountered in jobcentre G, however, where caseworkers dealing with vulnerable clients have a personal reintegration budget of € 100,000 per year which *they can spend at their own discretion* by *dealing creatively with their budget* and *making common-sense choices* about how much money to invest in which client (G3). Jobcentre G even operates a tendering database matching individual client profiles with 11 certified providers, with caseworkers rather than senior managers having to write and administer the client tenders: *They have to get used to … looking at a client from a commercial perspective and put the relevant information online. … You have to make a good client profile because the reintegration companies must be able to calculate the risks* (G3). As these examples show, Dutch caseworkers serve as co-managers on many occasions, not only performing tasks outside the traditional caseworker realm but also bearing considerable responsibility for those tasks.

In a related manner, Dutch caseworkers assist their managers not only as co-managers but also as co-experts, as in jobcentre A where caseworker A2 served as a legal specialist and contact person for the Act Investing in Young People (WIJ) in 2011. In three further jobcentres, caseworkers' role as co-experts is explained by the hands-on knowledge of caseworkers that managers lack if they have never worked as caseworkers. Out of such considerations, manager C2 says that she *regularly take[s] a caseworker with [her] to a private provider if [she has] a new idea,* and further: *In such cases, I like to get the advice of the caseworker.* Also manager D3 reports that she solicited caseworkers' advice before undertaking an evaluation of jobcentre D's private contractors: *What are your experiences with work-experience placements? What is your impression of reintegration company X? Do you think they are doing enough?* Finally, caseworker F2 reports that she and her colleagues were consulted in redistributing the jobcentre's reintegration budget in the face of upcoming budget cuts: *We recently made agreements about how to distribute our budgets … Looked how much we spend, how much we have left, what we want to invest money in.* Overall, the agency-category "managerial tasks" confirms the previously formulated impression that Dutch caseworkers display an unusually high degree of institutional agency by international comparison, sparking the question how the squirming entrepreneurial activity of caseworkers in the Netherlands can be explained. To this question we will turn below, after addressing two more agency categories visible on the institutional terrain of the Dutch ALMP implementation regime: trainer tasks and networking activities.

Trainer tasks

A relatively recent phenomenon triggered by the cutting of municipal budgets for reintegration in the Netherlands is that caseworkers are deployed as trainers whereas formerly, private reintegration providers would have been called in (and paid) to work with bulks of clients on their social skills, self-esteem, and job-search qualifications. Caseworkers give in-house application workshops in three Dutch jobcentres in the sample, for instance in jobcentre E where caseworker E2 is involved in continuous group-counselling sessions of one day per week (E2: *whenever someone flows off, we immediately invite someone else to join*). Apart from monitoring clients' job applications, these group-counselling sessions also involve the practising of job-interviews *and anything [clients] might need in fact, whatever they themselves indicate would be useful for them* (E2). Finally, jobcentre E also offers a more extensive application training of three days per week that is equally *run by caseworkers* according to caseworker E3. Another example of caseworkers fulfilling trainer tasks is jobcentre F, where caseworker F1 was scheduled to give *workshops about key qualifications to clients together with an experienced colleague* at the time of the interviews. The farthest-going trainer activities among caseworkers were found in

jobcentre G, where caseworkers not only give in-house application workshops on a voluntary basis (manager G3: *We had a trainer come in who demonstrated how to do it and then also gave each caseworker individual tips*) but also can become certified to give intensive three-month group trainings of two days per week involving not only job-search skills and mock job-interviews but also skill assessments and personality trainings. Another example of trainer agency among Dutch caseworkers is jobcentre C, where caseworkers participated in a summer work academy for immigrant clients, *so that [those clients] could work actively on their language skills during the summer months* (C2). This provided the impetus for devising the multi-cultural life-coach mentioned under "developing activation instruments" above: *During those activities we saw that one client would sit down, another took no initiative, a third came dressed differently than we are used to. You saw all kinds of cultural differences, for example, some men did not want to receive instructions from women. … That's how we came up with the multi-cultural life-coach* (C1). Cross-fertilization between various types of institutional agency among caseworkers can also be observed in the last agency-category to which we now turn, with caseworkers using their external network connections not only for procuring work-experience placements but also for acquiring new ideas than can be translated back into their own jobcentre organization, as discussed under the header "procuring/developing new activation instruments" above.

External network relations

As Table 6.1 shows, the highest degree of institutional agency among Dutch caseworkers is visible in the category of establishing and maintaining external network relations, extending not only beyond the office walls but even beyond the walls of the jobcentre building(s). For example, caseworkers in four jobcentres reported to have regular contacts or even personal relations with private reintegration providers, coordinating activation trajectories (often by phone or email, as in the case of caseworkers B and E3) or even in the form of triangular talks with providers and clients in order to solve problems (F2) or nominate clients for a traineeship (G2). Provider relations can also be more informal, however, as in the case of A2 who *used to go there to have a cup of coffee*, or caseworker G1 who once worked for a private reintegration company and therefore pays close attention to a provider's reputation when outplacing clients: I *have contacts with companies of which I know that they do the job well*. Another aspect of networking-agency among Dutch caseworkers is the establishment and maintaining of employer relations, visible in all seven jobcentres under study. In three jobcentres (A, D, F), caseworkers report that they use personal contacts with employers for placing individual clients in jobs or work-experience trajectories. To quote caseworker F1 as an illustrative example: *We have established our own contacts with employers over the years. You can call them*

up: *'Hey, I've got someone who likes carpentry, would you be willing to take him into your carpenter's shop for a month?'.* At the time of the interviews, two jobcentres (D, F) were on the way towards formalizing the already informally occurring outplacement activities of some caseworkers while in jobcentre C, the creation of employer networks for outplacement purposes had already become part of the official task description of the so-called off-flow-team (*uitstroom team*). This even included follow-up services to employers if a client turned out as an improper match, as caseworker C1 recollects: *That employer immediately gave her a contract for one year, but after two to three weeks she went on sick leave – she had serious rheumatism. ... I found it very sad, the employer was obliged to [pay her sickness benefits]. So we promised to find another job for her.* Employer services are also a defining part of caseworker E2's employer relations, who organizes *job markets, meetings, and speed dates* in order to bring unemployed clients and employers together.

As was illustrated above, establishing relations with employers and private providers is deemed useful by Dutch caseworkers because such network connections can be used to outplace clients in jobs or work-experience trajectories. As caseworker G1 puts it, *[I have contacts] with educational institutions, reintegration companies, colleagues of course, sometimes with employers, every now and then social workers, psychologists, anything ... that can be necessary to get your client back on track.* Besides for work placements, however, Dutch caseworkers also use networks for the in-flow of information and expertise into their own work and/or jobcentre organization. This is particularly relevant for professional contacts with the PES and other municipalities, as was already made clear above by the example of caseworker D2 translating another municipality's activation instrument to her own working environment. Other knowledge or expertise functions performed by professional networks according to Dutch caseworkers include providing background information on complex client cases (B: *We have a youth network here in [municipality B] ... where we talk about children with problems ... There, you sometimes hear things going on in the homes [of clients]*), giving advice on complex client cases (F1: *It can happen that we call each other, like, 'Piet just came to [our municipality] and he came from you[r municipality] – what's the story?'*), and spreading best practices (F1: *Often you can ask a colleague from another municipality how they help clients back into work, then you need not repeat the same mistakes;* A2: *I had someone from the UWV sitting in [on my client consultation], they wanted to observe how I did it*). The latter function also occurs 'naturally' when caseworkers switch to another jobcentre and take their knowledge with them, as in the case of caseworker C1 who reports to have lobbied for her self-developed sample job ads when visiting her future workplace in a neighbouring municipality. As all of these examples make clear, Dutch caseworkers perform a variety of tasks that shape the institutional design of the street-level Dutch activating state, thereby exercising a degree of institutional agency that far exceeds the traditional role of jobcentre caseworkers.

When seeking to explain the strong institution-building role of Dutch case-workers both within jobcentre organizations and externally, two mechanisms can be distilled from the interview material gathered for this dissertation. The first mechanism departs from the observation that the open Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB) creates a vast unregulated space for the institution-building agency of local policy-implementers, which the manpower of municipal councillors and managers is insufficient to fill. As a consequence, caseworkers side with managers in the development of local welfare institutions, either as a response to the relatively large array of undefined situations encountered in their daily work which require creative solutions, or even in response to requests from managers to participate in institution-building processes. The following quote by caseworker C1 exemplifies well how caseworkers must sometimes fill an empty local institutional space with institution-building action, in this case resulting in the procurement of jobs and work-experience placements becoming a formal caseworker task: *We started with nothing. Only a handful of clients. On the first day, we went to a [local supermarket], asking them to employ two of our clients. That was immediately arranged and successful. So, learning by doing.* Another quote by caseworker F1 illustrates how managers sometimes rely on the institutional agency of caseworkers as co-managers, as was already elaborated above: *Here especially, you're really expected to contribute to the structure of the [new] jobcentre, it's really the caseworkers who must take the lead in that … The attitude is, 'you come up with something and then we approve it or not'.* As both quotes suggest, the devolution of ALMP policy in the Netherlands has created a large space for institutional agency at the local level that municipal councillors and managers are unable to fill out entirely. As a result, caseworkers often spontaneous-ly or by managerial mandate contribute to the construction of local welfare institu-tions, a process that is further intensified by on-going budget cuts in the Nether-lands that make managers even more dependent on the collaboration of caseworkers in the management domain, as the new role of caseworkers as professional trainers outlined above demonstrates. In the words of caseworker D2, *because we are now faced with budget cuts, the municipality is forced to spend its money differently. That can also mean, 'Hey, don't we have professional staff, how are we going to capitalize on that?'*
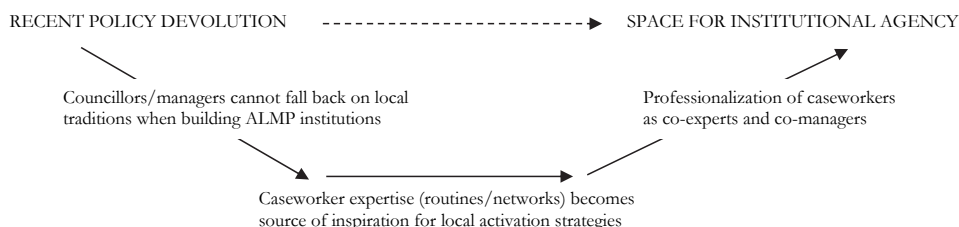
Mechanism NL-6.1
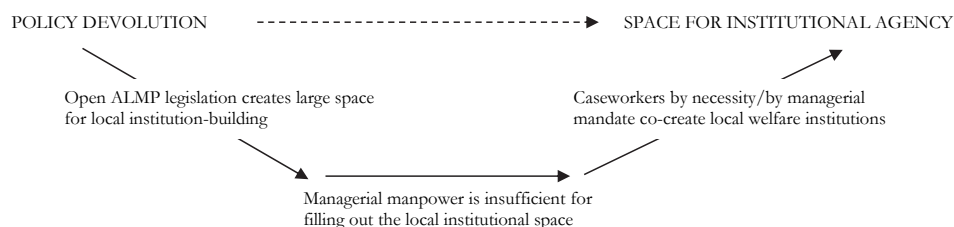
A second and related institutional mechanism that increases the space for the institutional agency of Dutch caseworkers pertains to a lacking 'sedimented' or institutionalized knowledge on activation at the local level.[1] In a devolved policy-environment where institution-building shifts from national to local entities, municipal councillors and managers are made responsible for accruing knowledge about how to best activate whom when and for how long, with caseworkers serving as a crucial source of such knowledge because only they interact personally with clients and can hence catch nuances of the practical effects of activation that abstract controller-statistics are blind to. As a result, Dutch managers (or local politicians in small municipalities where the manager and caseworker-role coincide) regard caseworkers not only as capable co-managers but also as the real experts on activation, as comes back in virtually all interviews I conducted with managers in the Dutch context (albeit to a lesser degree in jobcentre E, the largest jobcentre organization in my sample, and although manager F3 expresses a critical attitude towards the partly autonomous expert role of caseworkers). For instance, manager-caseworker B reports about her relation with the municipal board: *In principle, all our proposals are read by the municipal council and the aldermen, to be ratified by them. But in practice, what I propose is what they ratify.* Also manager D3 professes: *It all begins with the caseworkers in the consulting room.* In a nutshell, the second institutional mechanism linking the high degree of institutional agency among Dutch caseworkers back to the newly devolved social-assistance context of the Netherlands unfolds via the transmission belt of restricted managerial (or local political) knowledge on activation, as a result of which caseworkers become co-experts on activation, leading to a professionalization of Dutch caseworkers not only on the discursive terrain but also on the institutional terrain. Furthermore, as was already hinted at above, there is some indication in my interviews that the perceived expert role of caseworkers is interrelated with municipality size: In small to medium-sized municipalities or groups of collaborating municipalities, the expert role of caseworkers seems to be more pronounced than in very large jobcentres, although it must be emphasized here that the jobcentre sample investigated in this study is too small to make any definitive statements in this regard.

As a final remark, it should be noted that several Dutch respondents suggest that not only the young 'age' of the devolved Dutch social-assistance system but also frequent policy changes and reorganization processes keep the Dutch activation

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1 Since 1997, the Dutch municipalities have been responsible for providing sheltered workplaces to partially work-incapacitated persons under the Sheltered Employment Act *(Wet sociale werkvoorziening – WSW)*. It is no coincidence that the usually semi-public WSW companies have become prime providers of work-experience placements under the WWB as well, since they provide the closest approximation to active labour market programmes with which the Dutch municipalities have institutionalized experience.

system ever-evolving and demand for the expert knowledge of caseworkers high (see also Van Berkel 2013: 91). For instance, caseworker E2 remarks in reply to my question of how long clients stay unemployed on average: *It varies, because there is quite some sedimentation due to changes of teams and changes of clients [from one caseworker to another].* Also manager F3 talks about the detrimental costs of organizational overhauls on working routines and, in effect, client outcomes: *It took two months before we had a team leader who could take over [the team formation]. Until that time, it was a bit puzzling: Who would take care of the clients? That was a difficult start. It had a detrimental effect on our work: Our off-flow figures are much lower than last year.* In contrast, stable organizational structures and working relations are mentioned as contributing to good working conditions, as by caseworker A2 who contrasts his stable municipal jobcentre with the PES located in the same building: *They have had so many reorganizations already, at some point … people are a bit worn-out. … With … temporary contracts not being extended yet new people being taken on just a short while later. It is so unpredictable if you work at the UWV … You just can't compare it with what we have built up here.* Hence, when changing policies or organizational structures, policy-makers and managers should be aware that this can keep ALMP institutions from stabilizing, with the result that a considerable amount of caseworker time and energy will have to be invested in building ALMP procedures, instruments and networks rather than dealing more directly with clients and their reintegration into the labour market (or society more generally).

Mechanism NL-6.2

RECENT POLICY DEVOLUTION ----------------------▶ SPACE FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENCY

Councillors/managers cannot fall back on local traditions when building ALMP institutions

Professionalization of caseworkers as co-experts and co-managers

Caseworker expertise (routines/networks) becomes source of inspiration for local activation strategies

To conclude, municipal jobcentre caseworkers in the Netherlands have a remarkably large space for institutional agency, as this section has shown. The vast majority of the interviewed caseworkers express a favourable view of their own freedom to co-create institutional structures at the micro (and aggregated macro-) level, although caseworker F2 also points out that as with any entrepreneurial activity, institutional agency among caseworkers sometimes runs the risk of diverting resources into purely organizational processes and away from the clients for whom caseworkers see themselves as primarily responsible: *Sometimes it's an advantage, but it can also be a disadvantage. Sometimes it's necessary to say top-down, 'this is our vision, we want to do it like this'. … That is sometimes missing, so that you don't know*

exactly what is going on. Several interviewees also refer to colleagues who allegedly are less inclined to busy themselves with institutional-entrepreneurial activity, as caseworker A2 who says, *some people are not so eager to get involved with such things, they just want to see clients and administer activation trajectories.* On the whole, however, nearly all of the Dutch caseworkers I interviewed for this study express satisfaction with their institutional room for manoeuver. It therefore seems that the entrepreneurial self-image of Dutch caseworkers carved out in Chapter 5 also holds for the institutional dimension of the Dutch street-level ALMP regime, with caseworkers not only 'talking' entrepreneurially but also acting entrepreneurially. The next section now turns to the Danish case, discussing which forms of institutional agency have come to the fore in the interviews with Danish caseworkers and their managers, before section 6.3 puts the institutional-agency patterns unearthed in this chapter in the context of the structuralist regime blueprints sketched earlier.

6.2   The institutional agency of Danish caseworkers

As for the Dutch case, the interviews with Danish caseworkers and managers were screened thoroughly for instances of institution-building agency among caseworkers. The results of this screening exercise are summarized in Table 6.2. As a quick glance at the Table shows, the main finding concerning the Danish case is that Danish caseworkers are significantly less avid institutional agents than Dutch caseworkers. Except for the last category, "external network relations", only a few instances of institutional agency can be observed under each header. In addition, the agency category "procuring/developing activation instruments" is completely void for caseworkers in the Danish context, with Danish managers bearing that responsibility alone. Below, the unearthed institutional-agency patterns among caseworkers in Denmark are described in more detail. Furthermore and in analogy to the Netherlands, two mechanisms are presented that account not only for the observed agency-patterns but also, and more importantly, for the near-absence of institutional agency among Danish caseworkers.

Developing organizational routines

In the agency-category "developing organizational routines", only jobcentre K seems to provide a breeding ground for institutional entrepreneurship among caseworkers in the Danish sample. Two instances of the procedure-developing agency of caseworkers are visible in jobcentre K: initiating group-counselling sessions (to be elaborated further under "trainer tasks") and instigating a waiting period of one week for young unemployed under 25. This waiting period sets in after an initial

exploratory talk about education has taken place and before the actual benefit intake is carried out, in the hope that *maybe [the clients] won't come back … or maybe they will be out [in the labour market] before they even get in here* (K2). Furthermore, cross-fertilization can be observed between institutional agency-categories also in Denmark, with the aforementioned waiting period having been adapted from a municipality in Jutland *where they were doing this already* and where K2's *colleague [name] … I think, and [name] … went* to learn about the procedure. In all other jobcentres visited in Denmark besides jobcentre K, procedure-developing agency seems to reside exclusively at the managerial level, as will be elaborated further with regard to mechanism DK-6.1. It is therefore important to keep in mind that procedural agency may well exist at the street-level of ALMP implementation in Denmark, but primarily at the managerial level and not at the caseworker-level, on which this study focuses.

Management tasks

Institutional agency among caseworkers is more visible with respect to aiding managers than with respect to autonomously developing organizational procedures in Denmark. For instance, in jobcentre H, one caseworker reports about a working group that evaluates *which kinds of subsidized jobs work and which don't* (H2). Also in jobcentre L, caseworkers participate in a working group on anti-discrimination *where we try to talk about [whether] there is discrimination based on ethnicity or a handicap or language barriers … [in order to] create awareness* (L1); as caseworker L1 furthermore adds in response to my follow-up question, *I was asked [to join]. But people can also volunteer for that*. Finally, a third example of the managerial agency of caseworkers in the Danish context comes once again from jobcentre K, where caseworker K1 reports about herself and her colleagues advising the management on designing a new activation instrument combining work with treatment for young people: *Of course we had comments on how to do it and we were part of the first … meetings with the young people and those who run the project. And then we gave feedback and, you know, so we didn't write it but we have been asked along [the way] what we think and how it was best to do*. Contrary to the Netherlands, however, I did not come across a single instant of Danish caseworkers managing provider accounts or activation budgets (apart from having some leeway regarding the costs of training measures, which can also be observed in the Netherlands, though; to quote caseworker H1 as an example: *3,500 Kroner per week I am allowed to grant. If it is more, I have to ask*). Thus, although caseworkers seem to have more co-managerial agency than procedure-developing agency in Denmark, the managerial agency of Danish caseworkers still lags far behind that of their Dutch colleagues.

Tab. 6.2: Instances of institutional agency among caseworkers in six Danish jobcentres.

H	I	J	K	L	M
Developing organizational routines					
			Procedure development		
Management tasks					
Account management assistance					
			Advisory function	Advisory function	
Trainer tasks					
			Group counselling		
External network relations					
			Provider relations	Provider relations	
					Employer relations
Professional relations: other			Professional relations: other		

Trainer tasks

Only in one Danish jobcentre in the sample, caseworkers perform trainer-like tasks in front of larger groups of clients – namely in jobcentre K, where group counselling sessions were instituted by caseworkers to accommodate rising caseloads as a result of the government's shortening of the mandatory activation period (after which clients return to the jobcentre as regular job-seekers) from 26 to *more or less two weeks* in January 2012 (K3). As caseworker K2 reports, *two of my colleagues go to that meeting and I think there are around 12 or 14 people. … They are told that they need to bring two applications for jobs they have applied for and two jobs they want to apply for. … If there is somebody who wants to talk one on one, … we try to make it possible,* for instance if someone has *found an internship they would like and … they have questions about it*. As this singular example of casework-enhancing trainer activities from the Danish context shows, rising caseloads may affect the institutional agency of caseworkers, although shrinking reintegration budgets (that were diagnosed as fostering trainer activities among caseworkers in the Netherlands) could play an even larger role in the upgrading of the traditional caseworker role, as a direct comparison of the Netherlands and Denmark tentatively suggests.

External network relations

As in the Netherlands, the category "external network relations" contains most observed instances of institutional agency among caseworkers in the Danish context. However, contrary to the Netherlands, there is little evidence of caseworkers serving as external ambassadors of their respective jobcentre organizations beyond the purely administrative coordination of activation trajectories with private providers (K, L). The remaining three items in the last category of Table 6.2 pertain to relatively informal or even private communication with insurance funds and sickness insurances (H2), former classmates, colleagues (K1) and former employers (M2), without any visible direct influence on the institutional design of the jobcentres in question. Thus, caseworker H2 reports: *We've had some contact with the sick insurances ... They also have people in for job search, skills and so on … We have talked about how we do it to share our experiences. Also to get insider knowledge ... If I have an interview with an unemployed [person] ... I can tell [them] what will happen if [they] get ill*. As this quote shows, H2's network relations bear consequences primarily for his interaction with clients but not for the jobcentre as a whole. The institutional repercussions of caseworker K1's ongoing relations with former colleagues and classmates are even more fleeting, influencing perceptions more than actions: *I have a colleague who used to work in [municipality H] ... And I think it was much more strict than we are in [K], from what she's told me. ... And I think I also heard [that] from my old classmates.* Only caseworker M2's relations with her former employers unfold some institutional effects by shaping her colleagues' assessment of the local labour-market situation and thus of regional-structural obstacles to employment that must be overcome through activation: *My experience is from my former work where a lot of companies were really busy, they just needed all arms and legs they could get, that just when it started to slow down, they realized, 'Oh my God, we have been employing these 10 or 15 people totally wrong. ... I know one company ... where they actually sat down and looked, and they had about 100 misemployed in one year*. On the whole, however, we can conclude based on the Danish interviews that the absorption of new ideas or contacts into the jobcentre organization is a task performed by managers rather than caseworkers. Also the outplacing of clients into jobs and work-experience trajectories is carried out by specialized procurement teams across the board in Denmark, contrary to the Netherlands where caseworkers are institutionally active in both domains.

To conclude this overview of the institutional agency of Danish caseworkers, it appears that caseworker institutional agency is much less frequent in Denmark than in the Netherlands, even more so if the outlier-jobcentre K were eliminated from Table 6.2 without which hardly any evidence would remain of caseworkers' institutional agency in the Danish context. Hence, when turning to the mechanisms that account for the perceived agency patterns in Denmark, one should keep in

mind that the Danish activation system is overall characterized by a very low level of institutional agency among caseworkers, although single jobcentres may well deviate from this general picture, especially when top-management facilitates or even promotes a co-managerial caseworker role. This seems to have been a crucial factor at play in jobcentre K, where director K3 commented about her caseworkers' initiative to conduct group-counselling sessions: *To be honest, I was not very involved in it. They did it because they found it a rational way to work and I respected that. And I thought it was interesting, too.*

Turning now to the question how the low level of institutional agency among Danish caseworkers can be accounted for, two mechanisms are presented that explain the observed street-level agency patterns with reference to wider activation-policy regime structures. The first of these mechanisms links the small space for the institutional agency of Danish caseworkers back to the 'centralized decentraliza-tion' prevailing in the Danish ALMP system until 2014 (cf. Bredgaard 2011: 768), with the Act on an Active Social Policy (LAS) and the Act on an Active Employment Policy (LAB) prescribing to such great detail when which types of activation measures must be used for which client groups that managers hardly need to fall back on the manpower of caseworkers to fulfil their institution-building tasks. This postulated mechanism is supported by the fact that most interviewed Danish managers avowedly display a very high level of institutional agency, especially in jobcentres where institutional agency among caseworkers seemed weak or virtually non-existent, as was already alluded to above (under "developing organ-izational procedures"). In jobcentre I, for instance, the jobcentre director, a formerly self-employed entrepreneur who ran a *family company in advertising and marketing for 23 years,* devised an innovative jobcentre structure in which two caseworker teams (generalists and sickness specialists) are supported by a third caseworker team specializing in intensive job-counselling as well as a fourth administrative team relieving the other three teams from their administrative burdens. Manager I3 explicitly states that he sees the capacity to shape local welfare institutions as the most important element of his work: *There are fences and you have a field to play on, but it is going OK. ... But one of the things that are also important for me is that if I did not have any influence on the [local] political system, I wouldn't be here. I would not sit here as a production manager for the jobcentre. That would be no fun at all. I want a challenge ... Influence, I want influence.* A similar view is stated by manager K3 who also professes that the capacity for institutional agency energizes her in her work: *Even though we complain a lot about ... being puppets on the string of the national government, we still have a great say ourselves. In making programmes and target groups and things like that. And that's what I think is crucial. Because if we don't feel the energy that comes from [saying], 'Yes, we did this and see what happened!', then it will die down. It won't work.*

Also in jobcentre J where not a single playing field for the institutional agency of caseworkers emerged from the interviews, the senior management was very active not only in setting up a standardized scheme for referring non-work-ready clients to work-experience placements accompanied by on-the-job treatment or training, but also promoted their novel approach through the for-profit counselling of other municipalities, most notably in Poland but also in Serbia, Russia, and Iceland. Here again, a senior manager (J4) who used to work *as a project manager* in the private sector and who had *always been working a little bit innovative and entrepreneurial* identified herself as a major driving force behind developing and selling jobcentre J's innovative activation approach (*It started with me, actually*). Hence, also in jobcentre J, a highly dynamic institutional-agency field could be observed at the micro-level but with managers, not caseworkers, being the carriers of that agency. Finally, also in jobcentre L – the largest jobcentre in the Danish sample – managers displayed a high institution-building dynamism as exemplified not only by a large array of employer-services (e.g. identifying key personnel in a company's real versus formal power structure, express job-matching within one week, international recruitment, and job-carving for academics) but also a close cooperation with the Danish insurance funds that continue to provide benefit and activation services to the insured unemployed during the first six months of un-employment in municipality L; as manager L4 explains, *we have found that it was the smart[est] thing to do to establish a cooperation with the unemployment insurance funds, that they would do … what is necessary [during the first six months] … for us.* As these examples show, institutional agency is by no means absent in the central-ized-decentralized street-level Danish ALMP regime but resides first and foremost at the managerial level and not with caseworkers, whose institutional creativity is expected to play out in adapting legal and manager-made procedures or instru-ments to particular client cases (only).

Below, the above-discussed mechanism accounting for the low institutional agency of caseworkers in the Danish context is depicted graphically. As in the Dutch case, we can again perceive a link between the prevailing degree of legal regulation and the available caseworker space for institutional agency at the micro-level, mediated by the manpower factor: In a highly regulated policy environment as the Danish one (at least until 2014), managerial manpower suffices to fill any remaining gaps in the local institutional fabric so that managers must scarcely rely on caseworkers to assist them in their street-level institution-building work. How-ever, as we learned from the Dutch case, the manpower mechanism is sensitive to personnel budgets because managers can only tick off all the institution-building chores on their to-do-lists if there are enough paid managers to cover these tasks, as is implicit in the following quote by manager J2: *We could do it better with more money, more employees.* Another factor that was identified above as influencing the institutional agency of caseworkers directly, i.e. not through the manpower mechan-

ism, lies in rising caseloads (let us recall: in jobcentre K, caseworkers suggested and implemented group-counselling sessions when rising caseloads made their regular work-routines difficult). More often in the interviews, however, rising caseloads triggered an opposite response, namely the ritualistic application of standard procedures and/or fatalistic emotional withdrawal (cf. Berg 2006). As an illustration of ritualism, caseworker I2 describes her personal client approach in the following terms: *Everything in boxes. Systematic. And that way, I have the energy to do it. Because we have a lot of clients.* Furthermore, an indication of the withdrawal-response also comes to the fore in caseworker M1's remark that clients do not stay on her mind for long after she closes the jobcentre door behind her in the evening: *I don't care. I really don't care. But I mainly think that's because we have a lot of people through this system.* (Note that also in the Dutch case, four caseworkers report of high caseloads leading to a tunnel vision or concentration on their bureaucratic deskwork [A2, B, E2, E3], a finding that is also confirmed by the research of Van der Aa [2012] in three Dutch municipalities). When taking all of these examples together, it therefore seems safe to say that a direct effect of caseloads on the institutional agency of caseworkers is observable, with high or rising caseloads tending to direct caseworkers' attention away from exercising any institutional agency beyond the caseworker office in the Danish as well as in the Dutch context, although an opposite and agency-promoting effect of rising caseloads also emerges sporadically, as the example of jobcentre K shows.

Mechanism DK-6.1

CENTRALIZED DECENTRALIZATION - - - - - - - - - - - ▶ LIMITED SPACE FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENCY

Detailed ALMP legislation creates small/
medium space for local institution-building

Caseworker space for institutional
agency is highly restricted

Managerial manpower is overall sufficient
for filling out the local institutional space
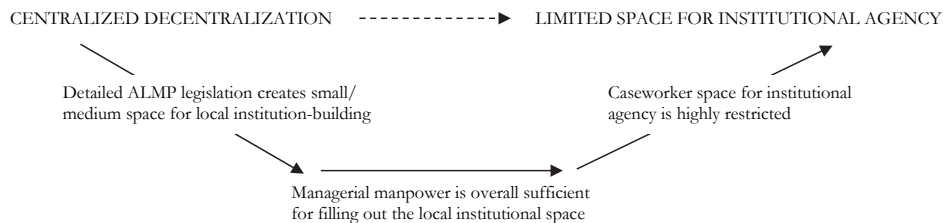
As in the Dutch case, a second and related mechanism must be added to supplement the first because the richness in detail of the Danish ALMP legislation did not materialize out of thin air but rather stems from a long tradition of activation in Denmark, with a national PES having existed since 1913 and with the Danish municipalities having carried out activation tasks since the 1970s but especially since 1994 when individual action plans were introduced and employment services were decentralized (Bonoli 2012: 196; Bredgaard 2001: 25-7; Larsen 2013: 110). By implication, the two-rounded jobcentre reform of 2007 and 2009, which merged the two systems into a single whole under a municipal banner, did not create an institutional void that had to be filled by the institution-building efforts of managers

and caseworkers, as was the case in the Netherlands in 2004; instead, the new municipal ALMP system in Denmark could build forth on a large, institutionalized body of knowledge on activation that had long surpassed the phase of finding out which measures 'work' in the activation realm (cf. Knuth and Larsen 2010: 189). To the contrary, one might even say that the jobcentre reform of 2007/2009 triggered processes of de-institutionalization more than processes of institutionalization because all aspects of the former municipal activation systems that were not immediately employment-related had to be done away with. In the words of one manager, *when I was first a manager in 1998, this jobcentre dealt with all kinds of [measures], … all the initiatives that the municipality took towards adults. That also meant taking them into care or giving them psychological treatment etc. These things we can't do now because there was a wall put down between us – we are the job-job-jobcentre and we must only think in [terms of] jobs – … and the social stuff … over in the social department.* Apart from narrowed-down goals of activation, the Danish jobcentre reform further triggered processes of de-institutionalization by weakening collaborative ties between municipal jobcentres, insurance funds and employer associations (although new mandatory collaborations with private reintegration companies were put into place, but removed again in January 2014) as well as by strongly reducing the professional discretion of caseworkers, making them accountable to standardized rules on the frequency and duration of activation (rolled back in January 2014 as well). Also the institutional-entrepreneurial space of managers was decreased through game-theoretical performance targets and remuneration mechanisms that prioritize certain types of activation instruments over others (H1: *[If] I activate someone, the municipality pays … and then the state gives the municipality the money back. Not all of it, depending on what kind of activation. … If it is related to factories or shops, … you get a higher percentage [50%] than if you buy some courses [30%]*; see also Andersen and Svarer 2012: 16; Larsen 2013: 118). However, as the above-cited examples of the institutional agency of Danish managers showed, Danish managers' institutional-entrepreneurial capacity has not been deconstructed to the same degree as that of caseworkers because game-theoretical incentives leave more room for creativity than strict procedural rules do. In a nutshell, one might therefore state that caseworkers have been more affected by the de-institutionalization of their professional knowledge than managers in the wake of the jobcentre reform of 2007/2009 (see also Jørgensen, Baadsgaard and Nørup, forthcoming), a process that has deepened the long-established functional differentiation between institution-building managers and client-processing caseworkers in the Danish street-level ALMP system. How or whether these dynamics will change after the roll-back of key restrictions on caseworker discretion in January 2014 remains to be seen.

A final point that should be mentioned here is that the replacement of institutionalized knowledge with standardized rules of implementation in the Danish context has been costly. As manager L4 points out, *so if we don't do it [i.e. starting activation*

measures] on time, the government holds back some money that they would normally pay us if we did everything on time. It's a very direct sanctioning of the municipality if we don't do what's in the legislation. And that's why we use a lot of resources controlling how we do these [client consultations]. Furthermore and as in the Netherlands, these controlling costs are proportionately higher for small jobcentres lacking staff for monitoring legal changes and translating them into jobcentre procedures than for large jobcentres in Denmark. In the words of manager H3, *if you are [located] in a very small municipality, then it is difficult to get that form of professionalism. … The [legal] problems we come across every day in [municipality H], maybe they see them once a year.* Also manager K3 draws a connection between municipality size and legal/ controller expertise when she says, *we are the biggest municipality [in the region]. … We have so many facilities, we have so many consultants with so many specific talents and all that. We don't need the other[ ] [municipalities] as much as they need us.* As these quotes tentatively suggest, it is thinkable that the wall of functional differentiation drawn up between managers and caseworkers through disparate institutional logics (games versus rules) is broken down in very small Danish jobcentres where managers do not have sufficient capacity to darn the local institutional space without the help of caseworkers, although no very small Danish jobcentre is included in the sample that could have been used to further investigate this claim.

Mechanism DK-6.2

LONG-STANDING ALMP TRADITION ------------▶ LIMITED SPACE FOR INSTITUTIONAL AGENCY

Jobcentre reform solidified work-related institutional knowledge but de-institutionalized other knowledge

Reinforcement of the task differentiation between managers and caseworkers

Replacement of de-institutionalized knowledge by incentive games (managers)/rules (caseworkers)
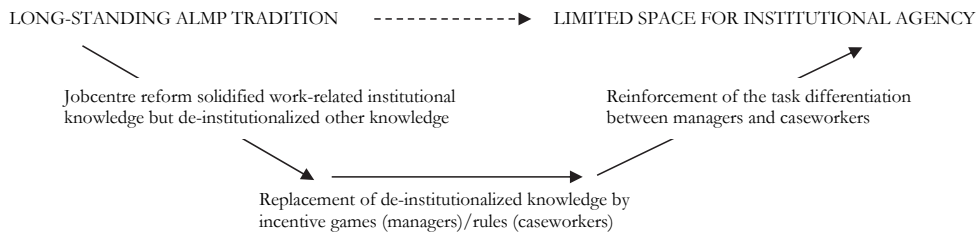
6.3   Discussion

In concluding this chapter, let us briefly recapitulate what we have learned above about street-level institutional-agency patterns in the Netherlands and Denmark and how those patterns relate back to the structuralist regime templates developed in Chapter 4. Based on interviews with caseworkers and managers in 13 Dutch and Danish jobcentres, this chapter discussed whether caseworkers have the capacity to build, adapt or change the meso-institutions of the welfare state (meaning jobcentre organizations and their external relations) in the two countries. The major finding of this chapter has been that Dutch caseworkers exercise considerably

more institutional agency than Danish caseworkers, especially if one were to disregard the Danish outlier-jobcentre K. Danish caseworkers also display less types of institutional agency than Dutch caseworkers, with none of the Danish inter-viewees reporting of caseworkers procuring or developing activation instruments. After describing various instances of institutional agency among caseworkers, two mechanisms were presented for each country that may account for the strong institutional-entrepreneurial activity of Dutch caseworkers as well as the relative lack of institutional agency among their Danish peers. It appeared that the openness or closed-ness of the relevant ALMP legislation shapes the institutional agency of caseworkers to a very high degree, with caseworkers only having such space if their managers are not able to fill the holes left open by national ALMP regula-tions on their own. This finding is in line with the theoretical predictions of the structuralist regime perspective in Chapter 4, which predicted a high level of procedure, instrument and network-building activity among Dutch caseworkers but little institution-building agency among Danish caseworkers, especially when it comes to ALMP instruments that are already specified in the Danish ALMP legislation.

However, besides confirming the theoretical predictions of a structuralist regime perspective that expects macro-level conditions to be reproduced locally and individually, the analysis in this chapter also unearthed agency-driven mechanisms of policy translation that partly mirror and partly go beyond the street-level bureau-cracy approach introduced by Lipsky. To begin with, the institution-building capacity of managers (on which the institution-building entrepreneurialism of caseworkers depends) was found to be sensitive to two interrelated factors identi-fied by Lipsky: personnel budgets and caseloads. More specifically, the effect of personnel budgets on managers' capacity to build local welfare institutions was shown to be tentatively inverse, with managers' institutional capacity decreasing (and caseworkers' capacity increasing) when budgets go down. Also high or rising caseloads seem to be inversely related to caseworkers' institutional agency, abating caseworkers' curious desire to learn from colleagues near and far, and instead triggering a more inward-looking orientation geared towards 'bureaucratic survival' and keeping workloads manageable.

Another SLB-theoretical tenet that reappeared in a more general version in the above analysis consists in the 'time' factor (let us recall: Lipsky [1980: 14] postulated that frequent policy change makes caseworkers go searching for a 'workable' (and hence relatively uniform) service minimum, with tailor-made solutions only being pursued if clients are perceived as exceptionally 'promising'). Mechanisms NL-6.2 and DK-6.2 added an institution-building aspect to this earlier observation by Lipsky, showing that in 'young' institutional systems such as the relatively recently devolved Dutch ALMP system, caseworker-experts have a lot of room to co-build ALMP procedures, instruments and networks for their jobcentre organizations and

even to assist their superiors with traditional management tasks such as account management; contrariwise, long-standing national and local ALMP templates (as in Denmark) counteract the search for novel institutional practices, especially among caseworkers (whose professional discretion was curtailed and whose professional knowledge was partly de-institutionalized in Denmark in the aftermath of the jobcentre reform of 2007 and 2009).

In summary, besides confirming the broad stipulation of Chapter 2 that combining a structuralist regime approach with the agency-centred SLB perspective goes a long way in explaining how caseworkers put ALMPs into practice, the inductive analysis of the current chapter also provided important new insights on the institutional agency of caseworkers in devolved and/or decentralized-centralized ALMP systems. A lesson from this chapter that transcends both theoretical approaches merged here has been that municipality size might matter for caseworkers' institutional agency: The capacity of caseworkers to co-build local welfare institutions seems to be higher in small municipalities, although it should be kept in mind that the evidence supporting this postulated mechanism is limited – calling for more research on this question. Having hereby presented an interview-based account of the ways in which Dutch and Danish caseworkers build the street-level face of the activating state on the institutional dimension, the next chapter rounds off the micro-level part of this study by addressing the societal agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers.

'Making' street-level activation effects: The societal agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers

Chapter 7 provides the last step in the agency-centred analysis of this dissertation by looking at the capacity of jobcentre caseworkers to influence – through their decisions of *whom* to activate *how* – the 'human capital' endowment of their unemployed clients and hence, in an aggregated manner, structures of social and economic stratification. To operationalize this so-called societal agency of caseworkers, the results of a vignette study are presented in this chapter that was conducted among the caseworker respondents at the end of the interviews with them. Two vignettes were used that concern an older native male with mental health issues who lives with his disabled sister, and an immigrant single mother with a higher-education background (see Chapter 3 for a full description of the vignettes). Handing each vignette separately to my respondents, I asked them to read the text carefully and then tell me what they would do with such a client, without mentioning any further hints as to what kind of answer might be expected from them. That way, I hoped to catch a quasi-empirical glimpse of how jobcentre caseworkers activate different types of clients in different structural settings, and with which potential outcomes for clients and society at large. Sections 7.1 and 7.2 interpret the vignette results with an eye to the structure-agency dynamics unfolding at the micro-level of ALMP implementation in the Netherlands and Denmark. In addition, each section presents a set of mechanisms that account for the observed patterns of caseworkers' societal agency in the Dutch and Danish context. Section 7.3 concludes with a reflection on how the societal-agency patterns emerging from the vignette data relate back to the structuralist regime story of the production of ALMP outcomes in Chapter 4.

Before turning to the empirical findings of the vignette study, a few words should be said here about the interpretation matrix that was constructed for analysing the vignette results, depicted in Figure 7.1. As the Figure shows, the vignette results have been used to find out whether caseworkers' capacity for societal agency can override structural preconditions in the implementation of activation policies in the two countries. If that were not the case, i.e. if national structures fully determined how caseworkers implement activation policy at the micro-level as posited

by the structuralist welfare-regime approach, we should observe relatively uniform activation practices not only among direct caseworker colleagues (i.e. colleagues within one and the same jobcentre) but also across jobcentres. Also if local rather than national structures predominated in shaping micro-level activation outputs, we should see relatively uniform societal practices among direct caseworker colleagues but differences between jobcentres.[1] Both scenarios are depicted on the left-hand side of Figure 7.1.

Conversely, if the agentic capacity of individual caseworkers trumped national and local context structures in the micro-level implementation of ALMPs as postulated by the SLB approach, we should observe direct caseworker colleagues to espouse different activation approaches irrespective of being employed by the same jobcentre and irrespective of living in the same country. Furthermore, in order for autonomous societal agency to be prevalent at the caseworker-level, one would also have to show that differential activation approaches among direct caseworker colleagues cannot merely be traced back to departmental affiliation. In the latter case, i.e. if inner-organizational divisions rather than individual creativity or preferences were mainly responsible for shaping caseworker's societal practices, one would have to conclude that agentic capacity lies first and foremost with jobcentre managers who create inner-organizational task divisions in the first place. Both agency-dominated scenarios are illustrated on the right-hand side of Figure 7.1.

Fig. 7.1: *Interpretation matrix for the vignette analysis.*

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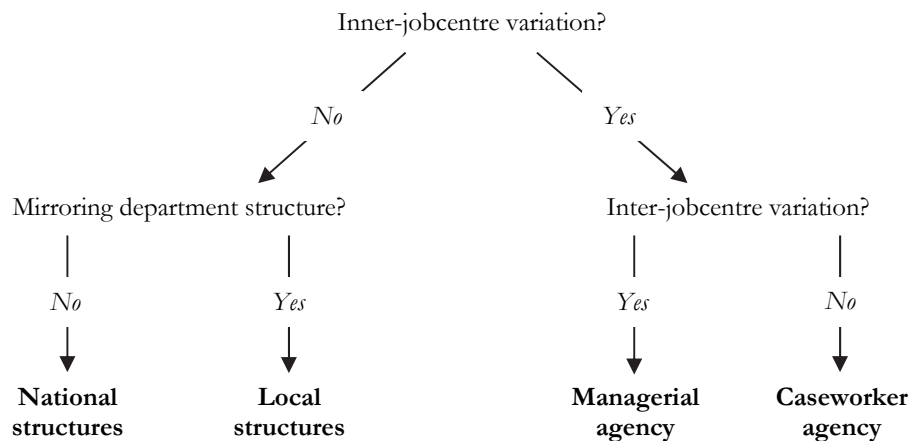
1   The term "local structures" pertains to the structural surroundings of the jobcentre organization, both geographically and in terms of agentic relations across institutional fields. Examples include local labour-market structures, local industry structures, and local political structures as potentially influencing the societal agency of caseworkers and/or managers.

In sections 7.1 and 7.2, the interpretation matrix will be used to interpret caseworker responses to the vignettes Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen and Emina Mujačić in the Netherlands and Denmark. For each country, the vignettes will first be analysed with regard to the question whether street-level implementation patterns are predominantly shaped by context structures or individual agency. In a second analytical round, it will then be pondered whether national or local context structures, or rather managerial or caseworker agency, are/is primarily responsible for shaping street-level activation effects. Each country section closes with one or two mechanisms explaining the unearthed activation patterns.

7.1   The societal agency of Dutch caseworkers

Let us begin by casting a look at how ALMPs are implemented at the micro-level in the Netherlands. Table 7.1 illustrates the activation measures proposed by Dutch caseworkers for the hypothetical client **Bart Boonstra**, a 56-year old Dutchman who shares his home with his disabled sister and who had to leave his job as a procurement agent due to a clinical depression. In order to draw up Table 7.1, the activation measures proposed by Dutch caseworkers in response to the vignette Bart Boonstra were first coded openly and then clustered into four overarching instrument categories: job-search and placement trajectories, work-experience trajectories, personal and skill development trajectories, and a miscellaneous category "other".

A closer look at Table 7.1 shows that the activation approaches proposed for Bart Boonstra vary considerably among direct caseworker colleagues in the Dutch context, both in terms of overarching instrument categories and in terms of specific instruments within identical categories. For instance, in all five jobcentres where more than one caseworker was interviewed, the activation measures proposed by direct caseworker colleagues fall into non-identical instrument categories. Furthermore, even when staying within one and the same instrument category, direct caseworker colleagues choose such different instruments as volunteer work versus psychological counselling in jobcentre A, Work First[2] versus sheltered work in jobcentre D, a private reintegration provider versus a range of in-house services in jobcentre F, or education/training versus an ability test in jobcentre G. Due to the observable variety of activation measures proposed by direct caseworker colleagues for Bart Boonstra, we can therefore conclude that the implementation pattern depicted in Table 7.1 is more in line with the agency-centred SLB perspective than with the structuralist welfare-regime perspective. In order to find out

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2   Note that Dutch activation practitioners use the term "Work First" as referring to mandatory work (experience) placements, whereas in the academic literature, "Work First" is generally associated with the concept of workfarism more abstractly.

whether the societal agency emanating from Table 7.1 lies predominantly with managers or caseworkers, it must now be investigated in a second step in how far the observed instrument variation corresponds with jobcentre-internal department structures or not.

Tab. 7.1: Reintegration measures proposed for Bart Boonstra in the Dutch context.

	A1	A2	B	C1	D1	D2	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	G1	G2	Σ
Job search and placement														
Job placement (1)			•	•	•			•		•				5
Job coach/reintegration provider (2)	•	•									•	•		4
Application training/counselling (3)						•		•		•		•		4
Applying for jobs (4)						•								1
Job carving (5)								•						1
Making a list of possible employers (6)				•										1
Video message for employers (7)								•						1
														17
Work experience														
Wage subsidy (8)								•		•		•		3
Work First (9)	•					•								2
Work experience placement (10)									•	•				2
Internship (11)							•						•	2
Sheltered work (12)				•	•									2
Employer tax cut 50+ (13)										•				1
														12
Personal & skill development														
Volunteer work (14)		•			•						•			3
Psychological counselling/coaching (15)	•	•												2
Ability test (16)												•	•	2
Training (17)							•					•		2
														9
Other														
Medical test (18)				•				•			•	•	•	5
Personal budget for care sister (19)			•	•										2
														7
Total number of service alternatives														*45*

As a second look at Table 7.1 reveals, departmental affiliation explains the majority of the variation in activation approaches among direct caseworker colleagues in the case of Bart Boonstra. This points towards a considerable influence of jobcentre managers, who are responsible for devising departmental task divisions and the associated activation procedures in the first place. To give some illustrative examples, caseworker E2 proposes a variety of job search-related activation measures for Bart Boonstra while her colleague E3 opts exclusively for a work-experience placement. This difference can be linked back to the departmental structure of jobcentre E, with E2 belonging to a department for work-ready clients that still had a reasonable reintegration budget available in 2011 whereas E3's department, focusing on clients with some distance to the labour market, had almost no reintegration funds left at the time of the interviews. The same phenomenon of organizational structures influencing caseworkers' activation approaches is visible in jobcentres A, D and to some degree G: caseworker A2's more 'understanding' approach compared to his colleague A1 may stem from the fact that A2 is used to working with homeless clients; D2's strictly work-centred approach may be due to the fact that D2 deals only with job-ready clients whereas her colleague D1 deals with more vulnerable groups; and G2's exploratory and skill-oriented approach might have to do with G2's working exclusively with young unemployed, as opposed to his colleague G1 who works with clients above age 27. Based on these findings, the influence of department structures and hence jobcentre managers on activation outcomes seems to account for most – but not all – of caseworkers' societal agency in the Netherlands with regard to vulnerable clients like Bart Boonstra. Instances where the societal agency of individual caseworkers remains visible in Table 7.1 even after taking into account departmental structures include caseworker E1 who at the time of the interviews had just stopped working for the same department as caseworker E2 but who takes a much more simplistic route towards activation than her colleague, and caseworkers F1 and F2 who fulfil the same jobcentre-internal role but who nonetheless differ in their activation approaches. Hence, we can tentatively conclude from Table 7.1 that the capacity for societal agency vis-à-vis vulnerable clients is allotted more to managers than to caseworkers in the devolved Dutch ALMP system (compare Bosselaar et al. 2007), although caseworkers also have some room for autonomous societal agency (allowing them to switch between overarching instrument categories) and although Dutch caseworkers are relatively free to devise specific ALMP instruments within instrument categories what vulnerable clients are concerned.

As a final remark and to countercheck the agency-centred conclusion drawn from Table 7.1 based on the interpretation matrix of Figure 7.1, let us see if any regional rather than national or local specificities in activation approaches can be observed among jobcentres A-G in relation the hypothetical client Bart Boonstra. If we subdivide the research sites into a Southern half (A, B, C, E) and a Northern

half (D, G, F), the only – very tentative – sign of possible supra-local but sub-national structural influences on activation outcomes could be that a medical assessment as embodying a relatively 'bureaucratic' activation approach is mentioned much more often by caseworkers in the North than in the South of the country. However, due to the small sample size, this statement should be taken with a grain of salt and must await further substantiation (or refutation) based on other research.

Let us now turn to the vignette **Emina Mujačić**, a single immigrant mother of two children with a small part-time job as a seamstress and a B.A. diploma in fashion design. Table 7.2 shows which activation instruments Dutch caseworkers suggested for Emina.

Tab. 7.2: *Reintegration measures proposed for Emina Mujačić in the Dutch context.*

	A1	A2	B	C1	D1	D2	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	G1	G2	Σ
Job search and placement														
Working more hours (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		12
Finding second part-time job (2)			•	•	•	•						•		5
Finding other job (3)	•			•	•	•								4
Applying for jobs (4)						•	•		•					3
Upgrading position at current employer (5)										•	•			2
Job placement (6)				•					•					2
Turning hobby into job (7)													•	1
Application training (8)												•		1
														30
Work experience														
Wage subsidy (9)				•					•					2
Work First (10)						•								1
Internship (11)				•										1
														4
Personal & skill development														
Language / writing course (12)	•		•						•	•		•	•	6[a]
Education (13)										•	•	•	•	4
Authentication BA diploma (14)				•				•		•		•		4
Training (15)			•			•					•			3
														17
Other														
Child care (16)	•	•		•					•	•		•		6
														6
Total number of service alternatives														*57*

[a] E1/2/3: not beyond secondary level (NT2)

In the interpretation matrix in Figure 7.1, we saw that if direct caseworker colleagues consistently use different ALMP instrument categories, agency can be assumed to determine activation practices more than structural conditions. As Table 7.2 shows for Emina Mujačić, however, only direct caseworker colleagues G1 and G2 display fundamentally different activation approaches within one and the same jobcentre, in that caseworker G2 focuses almost exclusively on personal and skill development whereas his colleague G1 focuses primarily on Emina's quickly entering the labour market (although also G1 deems education a viable option). Besides jobcentre G, some additional minor variations can be observed between direct caseworker colleagues in other jobcentres; thus, in two jobcentres (A, E), one caseworker offers an educational or training element on top of a more work-focused approach whereas their colleagues do not. Furthermore, in jobcentres E, F and G, only one caseworker thinks of childcare as a relevant issue for the reintegration process whereas their colleagues do not. For the rest, the instrument categories chosen by direct caseworker colleagues for Emina Mujačić are strikingly homogeneous within jobcentres, indicating that there is considerably less room for the societal agency of policy-implementers with regard to job-ready or already working clients like Emina than for vulnerable clients like Bart Boonstra. However, as in the case of Bart, a look at the specific instruments proposed by Dutch caseworkers while staying within fixed instrument categories shows that some room for autonomously devising activation trajectories remains for caseworkers even when clients are in principle work-ready. Examples of the latter include training versus the authentication of Emina's fashion-design diploma in jobcentre D, working more hours versus a range of job search-related trajectories in jobcentre E, and turning a hobby into a job versus directly job-related measures in jobcentre G. The first conclusion to be drawn from Table 7.2 is thus that homogenizing structural influences have the upper hand in determining activation outcomes for Emina Mujačić by far, although in some instances, autonomous societal agency is also visible. Moreover, within largely structurally-determined, standardized instrument categories, some room remains for Dutch caseworkers to autonomously devise specific activation instruments, although much less so for Emina than for the less-work-ready client Bart, as was discussed above.

When inquiring in a second step whether national or local context structures are paramount in shaping activation practices in the case of Emina Mujačić, one must focus on the homogeneity or heterogeneity of ALMP instrument categories across jobcentres. As Table 7.2 shows, activation approaches are relatively homogeneous in terms of instrument categories not only within jobcentres (with the slight exceptions of jobcentres G and A, E, F) but also across jobcentres in the Netherlands, focusing primarily on job search-related trajectories combined with an educational element. This suggests that national rather than local structural influences are at work here, leading to a relative standardization of activation practices in spite of

the formal autonomy of Dutch municipalities on the reintegration terrain. To substantiate this argument with some empirical illustrations from the vignette results, job search-related activation approaches predominate in all seven Dutch municipalities. Furthermore, an additional training element is considered a possibility everywhere except in municipality C, and adequate childcare is addressed by caseworkers in five out of seven municipal jobcentres (A, C, E, F, G). Most strikingly, though, 12 out of the 13 Dutch caseworkers interviewed propose that Emina should seek to work more hours in her current job before entering an activation trajectory, a rate of correspondence that is unmatched not only by the vignette results for Bart Boonstra but also by the vignette results from the Danish context. Only when looking at tertiary education as a potential activation instrument, a sub-national (but supra-local) rift can tentatively be observed in the Netherlands, once again between the far-Northern jobcentres F and G and the rest of the country.

When comparing the vignette results for Emina Mujačić with those for Bart Boonstra, it becomes apparent that the Dutch ALMP implementation regime is characterized by a dynamic tension between homogenizing structural influences at the national level and diversifying managerial societal agency at the micro-level, with 'structure' predominating in the case of Emina and managerial societal agency predominating in the case of Bart, although some room for the autonomous societal agency of caseworkers persists in both cases. In order to account for the different implementation patterns emerging between the two client groups represented by Bart Boonstra and Emina Mujačić, three possible explanations come to the fore in the interviews that can be subsumed under two macro-micro-macro translation mechanisms, an institutional (NL-7.1) and a cultural or discursive one (NL-7.2). The first partial explanation pertains to fragmented legal standards in the Dutch Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB): As was discussed in Chapter 4, single parents form the only specific target group of activation in the WWB, with single parents of children under five being exempted from the duty to work for up to five years while simultaneously also having a right to a so-called starter's qualification. Although neither condition applies to Emina Mujačić whose youngest child is five and who holds a tertiary degree in fashion design, it is thinkable that caseworkers routinely develop activation blueprints for eligible single parents that in practice are implicitly taken over for the activation of non-eligible single parents as well. Some proof for this argument is provided by the fact that four caseworkers refer explicitly to the age of Emina's children and/or her legal duty to work (D2, E1, F2, G1); to quote caseworker D2 as an illustrative example: *Her son is five, so ... she has full work obligations. If she had children under five, she could apply for a waiver and get some training. In the past, we used to be considerate if someone had children, but the legislation is very strict: You simply have to work, so that also applies to her*. Further support for the argument that standardized activation blueprints have emerged for all single parents triggered by legal specifications for single parents with
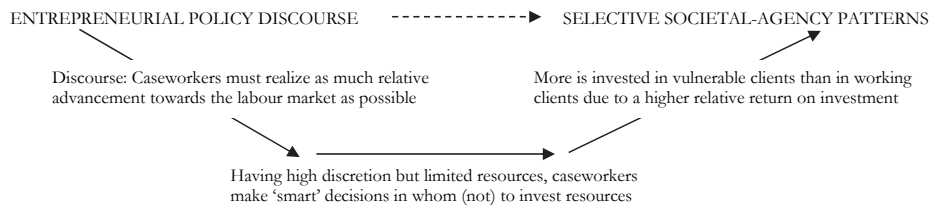
children under five is given by the fact that 10 out of 13 Dutch caseworkers (A1, A2, C1, D1, D2, E2, E3, F1, F2, G1) explicitly attune their activation decision to Emina's single-parent status and/or childcare responsibilities, such as caseworker A2 who asks, *how about the divorce … how are the childcare responsibilities distributed? … Do you have childcare?* and caseworker D1 who would propose Emina to work a few more hours so *she can also be at home for the kids and doesn't even need childcare.*

Beside a special legal status for unemployed single parents, a second possible institutional reason behind the relative standardization of activation approaches for Emina Mujačić in comparison with Bart Boonstra might lie in the fact that a number of special tax credits for (single) working parents are available in the Netherlands apart from the fact that alimony counts as income, too. Therefore, Emina's small income from work and alimony immediately triggers financially-strategic considerations among 10 caseworkers (A1, B, C1, D1, E1, E2, E3, F1, F2, G1) to determine how much additional money Emina would have to earn to surpass the benefit threshold. Because that amount is fairly low so that Emina *would actually only need a few extra hours* to be *out of here* (E2), caseworkers' attention immediately shifts away from reintegration measures and on to the quickest way for Emina to be *free of us and we of her* (D1), *leave the benefit system* (E3), *become independent of benefits* (A1, D1), *not even enter the benefit system* (B), or simply *flow off* (Dutch: *uitstroom*) (A1, A2, C1). A plastic example of such financially-strategic thinking is given by the following quote of caseworker C1: *I would check if she has applied for all tax credits at the revenue office: the single-parent tax credit, the supplementary tax credit for parents, and the combination tax credit. When adding those up, she might even have enough income to flow off.* Another indication that the financially-strategic thinking visible in the case of Emina Mujačić is triggered first and foremost by Emina's single-parent status and not just her having an income lies in the fact that legally, Bart Boonstra should also be subject to financially-strategic considerations – after all, he lives with his disabled sister whose income might have to be credited against his benefit – yet only one caseworker in the Dutch sample spontaneously thinks of that: *Maybe they will be counted as a shared household; in terms of benefits, that's important because one needs to know how much he must earn to leave the benefit scheme* (F1). Hence, we can state with some certainty that socially differentiated activation and tax rules have a standardizing influence on the ALMP measures chosen for single parents relative to other client groups in the Netherlands, as is depicted graphically below.

Mechanism NL-7.1

SOCIALLY-DIFFERENTIATED TAX REGIME ----------▶ SELECTIVE SOCIETAL-AGENCY PATTERNS

Special ALMP/tax regime
for single/working parents

ALMP measures are standardized for single/
working parents but fragmented for other clients

Caseworkers apply national blueprints to single/working
parents but departmental blueprints to other clients
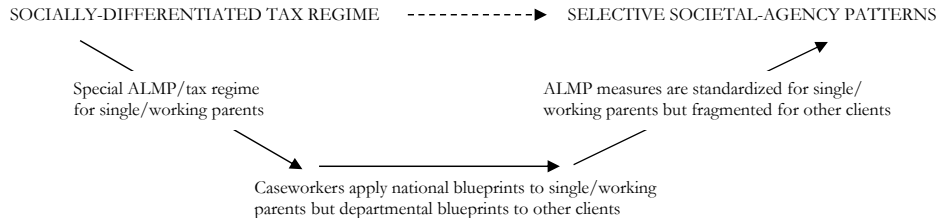
A third and final partial explanation of why street-level activation practices are much more standardized for Emina Mujačić than for Bart Boonstra could lie in an entrepreneurial policy discourse in the Dutch context (see Chapter 5) that frames caseworkers as policy entrepreneurs who must spend their (monetary and time) resources in such a way that an optimal cost-benefit ratio is realized between resource expenditures and the aggregated advances of unemployed clients towards the labour market. From such a perspective, working clients do not promise a high return on investment because they are already in the labour market, for which reason Dutch caseworkers generally prefer to invest their limited resources in tailor-made activation trajectories for vulnerable clients, for whom activation money can buy a big leap forward on a figurative or actual "participation ladder" (*participatie-ladder*). In effect, the Dutch policy discourse of caseworkers as policy entrepreneurs thus triggers varied and tailor-made responses to the fifth "hybrid" client group outlined in Chapter 5 (to which Bart Boonstra belongs) but more standardized responses to the "willing and able" group of clients who are seen as being able to help themselves, as is illustrated by the statement of caseworker D1 about Emina Mujačić: *She already works, has a part-time job. She is already in work, she is motivated to work, she radiates that. ... So I think I will talk with her about whether it would be possible to get some extra hours at her current employer*. Also caseworker D2's remark that Emina could get a training measure *if there is no other way*, caseworker E1's statement that Bart's reintegration plan would depend on a *cost-benefit analysis* and the formulation used by caseworkers D1 and G1 that adding more hours to Emina's current workload would be the *simplest* way to make her flow off points in a similar direction. Mechanism NL-7.2 summarizes how an entrepreneurial policy discourse may lead to divergent societal-agency patterns at the street-level of ALMP implementation in the Netherlands, according to the argument made above.

Mechanism NL-7.2

ENTREPRENEURIAL POLICY DISCOURSE ------------▶ SELECTIVE SOCIETAL-AGENCY PATTERNS

Discourse: Caseworkers must realize as much relative
advancement towards the labour market as possible

More is invested in vulnerable clients than in working
clients due to a higher relative return on investment

Having high discretion but limited resources, caseworkers
make 'smart' decisions in whom (not) to invest resources

To conclude, three standardizing factors emerge from the interviews with Dutch caseworkers that apply to single parents and/or working clients like Emina Mujačić but not to other client groups: legal regulations about the work and activation duties of single parents, tax credits for (single) working parents, and a street-level discourse about the entrepreneurial spending of activation resources. As the vignette analysis suggested, all three factors exert a direct standardizing influence on Dutch caseworkers' practices vis-à-vis single parents and/or working clients, although a limited space for the autonomous societal agency of caseworkers remains even within legal or discursive action blueprints. When standardizing factors do not apply, as in the case of a vulnerable client like Bart Boonstra, the vignette analysis furthermore revealed that managers play a paramount role in determining activation outcomes for the fifth "hybrid" client group in the Dutch context, although also here, some room is left for caseworkers to fill in the missing blanks with autonomous societal agency. In the next section, it will now be investigated how the vignette results from the Dutch context resonate with street-level activation practices in Denmark, and whether the above mechanisms still hold or must be adapted in the light of the Danish findings.

7.2   The societal agency of Danish caseworkers

Also in the six Danish jobcentres visited, the caseworker interviews ended with a vignette study asking the caseworkers to sketch out their responses to two hypothetical client cases. This section reports on the structure-agency dynamics visible in the vignette results from Denmark, again separately for the clients Jørgen Andersen (Bart Boonstra's Danish alter ego) and Emina Mujačić. Also as in the former section, a mechanism-based explanation is distilled from the interview material accounting for the perceived societal-agency patterns in the Danish context. Table 7.3 illustrates how 10 Danish caseworkers and two managers (J2, L3) responded to the vignette Jørgen Andersen.

As was the case with Bart Boonstra, Table 7.3 shows that the proposed activation approaches of direct caseworker colleagues for **Jørgen Andersen** differ in terms of instrument categories in all jobcentres except M (and only slightly in jobcentre K). Especially in jobcentres H, I, J and L, direct caseworker colleagues do not coincide in their use of either directly job search-related or work-experience trajectories, or a combination of both. Further differences are added by whether caseworker colleagues consider psychological counselling or skill-training an option, besides some additional miscellaneous measures. However, although one can conclude based on the interpretation matrix outlined in Figure 7.1 that societal agency trumps context structures in the street-level activation of Jørgen Andersen in Denmark, it also emerges from Table 7.3 that differences among caseworker approaches are much less stark than in the Dutch context (especially if one disregards the 'outlier' jobcentre I).[3] The same overall impression is confirmed for the range of specific instruments that caseworkers propose within one and the same instrument category: Especially if one were to leave out jobcentre I, that range (16 instruments proposed in Denmark) is smaller than the range of specific instruments proposed by Dutch caseworkers (19 instruments). For instance, under the header "job search and placement", we see that most Danish caseworkers resort to job-counselling/placement, application training, and personal efforts by Jørgen to find a new job. Also in the "personal & skill development" category, we see only two options: a six-week training and psychological counselling. To conclude, the first impression one can gather from Table 7.3 is that societal agency among policy-implementers appears as frequently in Denmark as in the Netherlands with regard to the client group represented by Jørgen Andersen aka Bart Boonstra, although the range of that agency is lower in Denmark, based on a higher concentration of instrument categories within and across jobcentres and a smaller range of ALMP measures within each instrument category (especially if I1's response is taken with a grain of salt). Having hereby established that the societal agency of policy-implementers weighs heavier than structural conditions in producing activation outcomes for less work-ready and/or older clients in Denmark, the next question that awaits an answer is whether that societal agency is primarily in the hands of managers or caseworkers in the Danish context.

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3   Caseworker I1 responded to the vignette Jørgen Andersen via e-mail because he had to leave the interview ahead of schedule. One might therefore assume that I1 would have enumerated less ALMP trajectories if he had had less time to reflect on his response. I1's much shorter list of measures for Emina Mujačić – which he proposed during the interview – further supports this assumption.

Tab. 7.3: *Activation measures proposed for Jørgen Andersen in the Danish context.*

	H1	H2	I1	I1	J1	J2	K1	K2	L1	L3	M1	M2	Σ
Job search and placement													
Job counselling/placement (1)		•	•					•	•	•	•	•	7
Application training (2)						•			•	•			3
Changing profession (3)				•	•								2
Searching job through personal network (4)			•		•								2
Turning volunteer work into job (5)				•									1
Making a list of possible employers (6)			•										1
Unsolicited job applications (7)			•										1
Referral to recruitment agencies (8)			•										1
													18
Work experience													
Internship (*praktik*), 4 or 13 weeks (9)	•		•		•		•	•					5
Wage subsidy (*løntilskud*), 26 weeks (10)		•	•			•				•			4
Mentor (on job) (11)						•							1
													10
Personal & skill development													
Training (*uddannelse*), up to 6 weeks (12)				•					•				2
Psychological counselling (13)								•	•				2
													4
Other													
Consulting doctor on work capacity (14)							•	•				•	3
Relocating to other city (15)			•										1
Organizing relief from care duties (16)											•		1
													5
Total number of service alternatives													*37*

As we saw in Figure 7.1, a sufficient condition for caseworkers having autonomous societal agency in the ALMP-implementation process is that activation approaches (in terms of instrument categories) differ among direct caseworker colleagues irrespective of jobcentre-internal task divisions, i.e. departmental structures and/or target-group specializations. Once again as in the case of Bart Boonstra, the vignette study suggests that societal agency is mostly the terrain of managers rather than caseworkers in Denmark, on the grounds that in four out of the five jobcentres where such variation can be observed, it can be traced back to the jobcentre-internal functions of the respective caseworkers. Thus, H2's proposing in-house job-counselling or even intensive counselling sessions between client and caseworker for Jørgen

besides a 26-week work-experience placement whereas his colleague H1 only proposes an internship to *get out [there] and get some practice* may have to do with the fact that H2 generally works with young clients who need additional guidance in finding out what they would like to do professionally. Also caseworker colleagues I1 and I2 differ quite substantially in proposing a long list of directly job-related measures plus an internship or a wage subsidy (I1) versus training, being paid for volunteer activities or a change of profession (I2), reflecting I1's being a work trainer in jobcentre I's so-called *activity team* while I2 carries out more traditional social work for the *match-two* and *three* target groups. Moving on to jobcentre J, a clear distinction between job search versus work experience can be observed among caseworker J1 who is responsible for work-ready clients in the *match-one* target group and caseworker J2 who deals with less work-ready clients in the *match-two* and *match-three* target groups. Finally, in jobcentre L, caseworker L1 who is responsible for *match groups two* and *three* is more inclined to add a training or counselling element to the standard combination of job-counselling and application training in jobcentre L's own *labour-market centre* (*arbejdsmarkedcentret*), whereas manager L3 who works as a quality coordinator for the labour-market centre relies exclusively on the standard approach plus a work-experience placement after the standard trajectory has ended. Only in jobcentre K, the relatively similar approaches of caseworker colleagues K1 (who is responsible for *match groups two* and *three*) and K2 (who works with job-ready clients in the target group *match one*) run counter to the otherwise dominant influence of jobcentre-internal task divisions on activation outcomes.

So far, we have seen that as in the Netherlands, managerial agency rather than the local or national structural context dominates activation practices in Denmark with regard to the vignette Jørgen Andersen. As a final step, let us now inquire whether any supra-local but sub-national clusters can be observed in Table 7.3 that might point towards homogenizing influences not mentioned in the interpretation matrix used for the vignette study. Interestingly and unlike in the Netherlands where the slightest hint of a North-South divide could be observed, a tentative division between "entrepreneurial" and more "traditional" jobcentres can be observed in Denmark. Thus, managerial societal agency is more visible in jobcentres where the top and middle-management are very active in developing integrated activation approaches or fostering exchange and learning among internal and external agents (I, J, and L in the current study, see Chapter 6 on the institutional agency of caseworkers) while more traditional jobcentres where managers see their main role in providing for the smooth running of the professional-bureaucratic jobcentre 'machine' (H, K and M in the present study, although jobcentre H sides with the entrepreneurial jobcentres in relation to the vignette Jørgen Andersen) are overall more indicative of homogenizing structural influences. A further hint that the societal outcomes of activation may be influenced by entrepreneurial versus

traditional management approaches in Denmark is that a medical assessment of Jørgen Andersen's work capacity (as a passive reintegration instrument that is generally more associated with a professional-bureaucratic rather than an entrepreneurial approach to casework) is proposed by caseworkers K1, K2 and M2 but not by any other Danish caseworkers in our small vignette sample. Finally, if we take a closer look at jobcentres K and M as the main representatives of a more traditional, professional-bureaucratic group of Danish jobcentres in this study, it appears that the instrument categories used – internally homogeneously – by caseworkers in the two jobcentres do not coincide, with caseworkers K1 and K2 proposing job-search trajectories, work-experience and a medical assessment whereas M1 and M2 prefer job-search trajectories in combination with work-experience or a personal/skill-development training. Hence, it is possible that in contrast to the societal agency of managers dominating activation outcomes in entrepreneurial jobcentres, local context structures exert a certain influence on activation outcomes in more traditional Danish jobcentres. However, because this observation is based on a very small number of observations, the vignette results for Emina Mujačić should be awaited before adding more vigour to this claim.

Table 7.4 contains the vignette results for **Emina Mujačić** in the Danish context. Contrary to the Netherlands where the Emina Mujačić-vignette was associated with very strong structural influences on activation practices, structural and agentic influences are balanced in the Danish vignette results, based on direct caseworker colleagues using relatively uniform ALMP instrument categories in the traditional jobcentres H, K and M but different instrument categories in the entrepreneurial jobcentres I, J and L. However, when looking at caseworkers' choice of reintegration instruments within each instrument category more specifically, it becomes evident that the range of ALMP measures proposed for Emina Mujačić is very small – smaller than for Jørgen Andersen and certainly smaller than in the Netherlands. For instance, the job search-related ALMP instruments mentioned by the Danish respondents comprise little more than job-placement, Emina's finding an (additional) job by herself, and job-counselling. Also the miscellaneous category "other" contains just a single option, namely Emina's relocating to Copenhagen. The only exception to this overall pattern is the instrument category "personal and skill development" that contains a larger range of instruments than the same category for Jørgen Andersen, and also than the same category for Emina Mujačić in the Netherlands. Overall, the first conclusion one can draw from Table 7.4 is thus that both agency and structural influences are evident in the vignette results for Emina in the Danish context, with societal agency predominating in the entrepreneurial jobcentres mentioned above and homogenizing structural influences predominating in the more traditional jobcentres.

Tab. 7.4: Activation measures proposed for Emina Mujačić in the Danish context.

	H1	H2	I1	I2	J1	J2	K1	K2	L1	L3	M1	M2	Σ
Job search and placement													
Job counselling/placement (1)					•	•		•	•	•	•	•	7
Finding other/full-time job (2)	•	•		•	•						•		5
Keeping part-time job (3)	•				•		•						3
Working more hours (4)												•	1
													16
Work experience													
Wage subsidy (*løntilskud*), 26 weeks (5)						•	•		•	•			4
Internship (*praktik*), 4 or 13 weeks (6)			•				•	•					3
Mentor (on job) (7)						•							1
													8
Personal & skill development													
Danish writing course (8)	•	•					•	•	•				5
Tertiary education (9)			•	•									2
Authentication of BA diploma (10)		•		•									2
Writing test (11)									•				1
Training (*uddannelse*), up to 6 weeks (12)						•							1
Primary education (13)		•											1
													12
Other													
Relocating to Copenhagen (14)				•									1
													1
Total number of service alternatives													*37*

As before, the second step in analysing the vignette results concerns the question whether the observed within-jobcentre variation of ALMP approaches can be traced back to jobcentre-internal task divisions and/or department structures – which would be indicative of managers exercising most societal agency – or whether no such systematic relation exists, which would imply that caseworkers have considerable room for exercising autonomous societal agency and choosing activation instruments for their clients as they deem fit. In the case of Emina Mujačić, the same pattern appears in the Danish context as for her Dutch alter ego: In two of the three jobcentres where direct caseworker colleagues apply different instrument categories, that variation is due to those caseworkers' task specialization and hence the societal agency of jobcentre managers rather than caseworkers. Thus, in job-centre J, caseworker J1 who deals with job-ready *match-one* clients opts for directly job search-related measures whereas manager J2, who is responsible for *match group*

two and the later eliminated *match group three*, focuses more on work-experience trajectories and even an on-the-job mentor. Also in jobcentre L, caseworker L1 who works with less job-ready clients is more inclined to offer Emina an additional language training than manager L3 who works within the jobcentre's labour-market centre. Only in jobcentre I, the activation world sketched so far seems to be upside-down, with caseworker I2 who deals with vulnerable clients being much more strict and work-focused in her approach than her work-trainer colleague I1. To summarize, as in the Netherlands and as for Jørgen Andersen in Denmark, the Danish vignette results for Emina Mujačić suggest that micro-level societal agency – where it exists – is primarily the terrain of jobcentre managers rather than caseworkers. As a final step, it will now be investigated whether the simultaneously diagnosed influence of context structures on activation outcomes pertains predominantly to the national or local level.

As we saw above, the influence of structural influences on activation seems to trump societal agency in jobcentres H, K and M based on identical caseworker approaches in terms of instrument categories within each jobcentre. Upon closer inspection and contrary to the Dutch context, however, it appears that the homogeneity of caseworker approaches ends at the jobcentre door, with local rather than national structures dominating the activation approaches proposed for the work-ready client Emina Mujačić in the more traditional Danish jobcentres. Thus, caseworkers H1 and H2 combine a job search-related activation trajectory with an educational element; caseworkers K1 and K2 combine job search with a work-experience placement and a writing course; and caseworker colleagues M1 and M2 focus exclusively on Emina's job-search process. We can therefore conclude that the vignette Emina Mujačić tentatively confirms the conjecture made with regard to Jørgen Andersen that where structural influences on micro-level activation processes are visible in Denmark, these stem from the local level rather than the national level.

Overall, the societal-agency story told by the vignettes for Denmark is one of more societal agency being exercised with regard to less work-ready clients like Jørgen Andersen than for work-ready clients like Emina Mujačić – a pattern that was already observed for the Netherlands. Moreover, as in the Netherlands, societal agency is predominantly exercised by managers rather than caseworkers in Denmark, although there is somewhat less evidence of managerial societal agency in Denmark than in the Netherlands, just as Danish caseworkers have considerably less space for societal agency when it comes to devising tailor-made instruments within general instrument categories than their Dutch counterparts (as indicated by the smaller number of specific instruments and service alternatives proposed for both vignettes in the Danish context). Besides both managers and caseworkers in Denmark having less space for societal agency than their Dutch peers, three more differences between the Danish and Dutch ALMP implementation regimes were

identified in this chapter. To begin with, structural conditions have a stronger influence on the street-level practices of policy-implementers in Denmark than in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Dutch and Danish ALMP implementation regimes differ in that the influence of structural conditions – where it exists – stems from the local level in Denmark but from the national level in the Netherlands. Finally and with regard to supra-local but sub-national homogenizing structures that were not explicitly addressed by the interpretation matrix in Figure 7.1, it appeared that a tentative division between agency-dominated entrepreneurial jobcentres and structure-dominated traditional jobcentres can be observed in Denmark whereas in the Netherlands, a very tentative geographic North-South divide (if any) came to the fore in the vignette data.

When seeking to explain the societal-agency patterns identified at the street-level of ALMP implementation in Denmark, one has to make a convincing argument about how a relatively standardized activation-policy regime nevertheless produces noticeable differences in practice between a fully-work-ready client like Emina Mujačić and an officially fully – but practically less work-ready – client like Jørgen Andersen. The explanatory mechanism proposed below departs from the premise that the match group-differentiated Danish activation-policy regime until 2014 formally differentiated between three (now: two) labour-market match groups that each warrant a particular activation focus (in a nutshell, job-search assistance for *match-one* clients, training or work-experience measures for *match-two* clients, and temporary non-activity for *match-three* clients; cf. Larsen and Jonsson 2011). As a result, each jobcentre in Denmark is responsible for developing activation blueprints that fit the needs of local employers as much as the needs of the local *match one* and *match two* populations, although middle-managers determine how much leeway caseworkers have in tying up tailor-made instrument packages for individual clients. In practice, the interviews suggest that Danish caseworkers tend to make use of that discretion more freely when additional problems besides unemployment are diagnosed because complex problems are seen as requiring more holistic cures, as caseworker K1 phrases it: *We are always told that you work in a jobcentre, you don't do social work. That's what our counsellor and our team leader say. But when you work with match categories two and three, I think it's impossible not so see it in a holistic perspective*. Furthermore, there is some evidence in the vignette study that activation approaches are more varied even within the *match one* target group – to which Jørgen Andersen is generally counted in Denmark – in the presence of a complex problem assessment; thus, seven out of 12 respondents (H1, I1, I2, J1, J2, L1, L3) address Jørgen's age as a possible obstacle to re-entering the labour market, while eight respondents (H1, H2, I1, J1, J2, K2, L1, L3, M2) mention the possibility that Jørgen's unstable mental health might slow down his reintegration process (although there is also widespread agreement that depression is not per se an impediment to work: *There is some depression, OK. That is why I say, 'Get out and get*

some practice, so you can prove to them and yourself that you can do it' (H1). Besides complex problems, another factor that can increase variation in Danish caseworkers' activation responses according to the vignette study is the practical impossibility to place a particular client in a clear-cut match group; as caseworker M2 says about Jørgen Andersen, *it depends on what he would tell us of course. ... Yeah, a mild form of depression, but is it always he has this feeling or is it only sometimes in special situations? That would be the difference between [match] one or two, I think.* Also the following quote by caseworker L1 gives a good illustration of how uncertainty about a client's match group triggers a larger variation in activation responses than a clear-cut match-group association: *If he's fully recovered from the nervous collapse ... I would make him a match category one and send him to the AMC ... If he was a match category two, we have ... a cognitive psychological centre. ... And also, if he was not fully recovered, we could talk about qualifications.* Mechanism DK-7.1 summarizes more abstractly how an economically-differentiated policy regime (differentiated by labour-market match groups, not social status) translates into divergent patterns of societal agency in the Danish street-level ALMP regime.

Mechanism DK-7.1
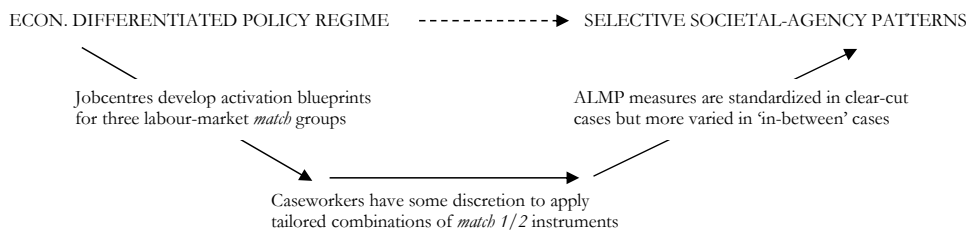
7.3   Discussion

This chapter investigated the societal agency of individual policy-implementers – defined as the capacity to influence macro-level stratification structures through autonomously choosing activation measures for clients – by analysing the results of a vignette study conducted in 13 Dutch and Danish jobcentres. Once again, the findings of the inductive micro-level analysis were roughly in line with the structuralist regime predictions made in Chapter 4: In both the Netherlands and Denmark, caseworkers have a wide palette of reintegration services on offer, including a notable range of 'enabling' services, especially for vulnerable clients. Furthermore, the vignette study provided some confirmation of the structuralist expectation that the higher ratio of activated men compared to women in the Netherlands can be traced back to single parents (empirically most often: single mothers) of children

under five being legally exempted from activation duties whereas in Denmark, the legal possibility to exempt parents from activation if they lack adequate child-care plays no visible role in street-level practice due to the wide availability of affordable public childcare – or simply due to a refusal of Danish street-level bureaucrats to count parenthood as an obstacle to work.[4] Because the qualitative vignette results therefore mirror the aggregate statistics of what caseworkers 'really do' in practice presented in Chapter 4, we can reasonably assume that also the more in-depth information provided by the vignette analysis is an adequate representation of daily work practices in the two countries. However, beside confirming that the structuralist regime perspective overall captures well how caseworkers activate citizens at the street-level of ALMP implementation, the vignette analysis also yielded a much more sophisticated picture of the ways in which structural precon-ditions interact with the societal agency of street-level bureaucrats in bringing about activation effects. These additional insights transcend even the utilitarian agency dynamics described by the street-level bureaucracy approach which explains selective societal-agency patterns mostly with reference to complex regulations, frequent policy change, scarce resources, caseworker norms, caseworker interests, or the chemistry between individual caseworkers and clients.

For instance, the vignette analysis revealed that not only complex regulations but also complex client cases increase the selectivity of activation measures across countries. Thus, counselling and training measures (predicted to vary strongly between the Netherlands and Denmark in Table 4.9) differed much more notably between vulnerable and work-ready clients than between countries in the vignette study,[5] which shows that the 'structurating' power of activation-policy regimes and wider welfare-state regimes diminishes once clients fall outside the implicit policy-regime template of the work-ready person whose employability can be increased by active labour-market measures. Correspondingly, the space for auto-nomous societal agency increases across countries if clients have complex problems, rationalized by an entrepreneurial discourse of investing ALMP resources efficiently in the Dutch context but by a match group-differentiated policy regime in Denmark

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4 As caseworker J1 explains: *You can't go on just working five hours and get social benefits from here. Except if there are some problems. Say that ... she's sick, she's got some problems. ... If you have a child, you have one year [in which] you can go on leave with benefits. And then after that one year, you have to be ready to go out and work again full-time.*

5 Counselling measures are proposed much more often for Bart/Jørgen than for Emina both in the Netherlands (15/3) and Denmark (13/7). Training measures are proposed much less often for Bart/ Jørgen than for Emina both in the Netherlands (2/13) and Denmark (2/9). Counselling measures comprise the categories job placement, job coach/reintegration provider, referral to recruitment agencies, application training, job counselling, and psychological counselling/coaching. Training measures comprise the categories training, education, and language courses.

that increases the range of considered activation measures when clients fit more than one match group.

Other findings of this chapter shed a new and differentiated light on the relative capacity of caseworkers and managers to influence the societal effects of ALMPs. Thus, as the vignette analysis showed, local spaces for the societal agency of policy-implementers are populated far more by managers than by caseworkers in both countries – refuting political arguments that caseworkers can be made positively or negatively responsible for the performance of jobcentres in terms of labour-market integration. However, there are also marked country-differences what the relative space for the societal agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers/managers is concerned. Most crucially in the light of the current discussion, Danish case-workers (and managers) have less space for societal agency than their Dutch peers, due to a highly detailed ALMP legislation in Denmark that leaves few undefined gaps in the institutional fabric of local activation landscapes – with hardly any gaps remaining for the autonomous societal agency of caseworkers after the Danish managers have done their instrument and procedure-building job (see Chapter 6). Another notable difference between societal-agency patterns at the Dutch and Danish street-level is that structural influences on activation practices tend to be national in the Netherlands but local in Denmark, due to a selective activation and tax-regime for working/single parents in the Netherlands that – unlike in Denmark – sets this group apart from other clients while simultaneously standardizing activation practices vis-à-vis single/working parents across Dutch jobcentres. Finally, the vignette analysis tentatively showed that a slight rift between "entrepreneurial" and more "traditional", professional-bureaucratic jobcentres can be observed in Denmark, with managers leaving a pronounced personal mark on activation out-comes in the entrepreneurial group whereas the influence of local structures is more dominant in the traditional group. For the Netherlands, the vignette results pointed towards a very weak geographic North-South divide between jobcentres, with edu-cational ALMP trajectories being somewhat more common in the traditionally Social-Democratic North, although the small sample underlying this study does not allow for a definitive statement in this regard. As a final general remark, some caution should be maintained with regard to the interplay between structural con-ditions and societal agency in the Netherlands and Denmark as it emerged from the vignette analysis: Societal agency poses only one of three forms of micro-level agency investigated in this dissertation; thus, even in the absence of any space for societal agency, other forms of agency may well be present at the street-level, as we saw in Chapters 5 and 6 (although with less direct consequences for the ad-dressees of ALMPs, i.e. clients). With this in mind, Chapter 8 now turns to the questions how the three types of micro-level agency investigated in Chapters 5-7

are mutually interrelated in different types of regime contexts, and which lessons can be drawn from the study at hand about how caseworkers translate active labour market policy into discourses and practices under different systemic conditions.

Multi-level regime dynamics, with the British case as a litmus test

In the era of activation, interventions for bringing the unemployed back into work have become increasingly individualized. This means not only that unemployed persons are discursively and institutionally awarded responsibility for their own labour-market integration, but also that enabling measures such as training, counselling or flanking social services are allocated individually on a case-by-case basis. In order to enable street-level bureaucrats to make the 'right' decisions about whom to activate how, activation reforms have gone hand in hand with governance reforms such as decentralization, inter-agency collaboration and increased case-worker discretion (see Van Berkel and Borghi 2008; Van Berkel and Valkenburg 2007). For this reason, some have argued that a new policy paradigm of "co-production" is currently emerging under which service allocation is a matter of individual agency more than policy rules (cf. Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff 2012). Conversely, others have posited that precisely because local and individual discretion has become systemic in active welfare states, policy design shapes frontline practice more now than in the past when Lipsky and others discovered informal discretion as the policy-implementation norm (cf. Durose 2011; Ellis 2011). In this dissertation, I set out to investigate how frontline workers in Dutch, Danish and British jobcentres implement active labour market policy, and in how far their activation discourses and practices are shaped by the wider policy and welfare-state context. The previous chapters showed that policy implementation continues to be strongly and systematically – albeit not always intentionally – shaped by policy and welfare-state structures in the activation era, even in decentralized and individualized policy environments like the Dutch and Danish social-assistance systems.

In Chapter 8 of this dissertation, I now present a synthesized model of how activation-policy and welfare-state regimes shape the kind (or 'quality') and scope (or 'quantity') of the discursive, institutional and societal agency of jobcentre caseworkers. This will be done in two analytical steps. Section 8.1 begins by combining the macro-micro-macro policy translation mechanisms inductively derived in Chapters 5-7 into a unified analytical picture, with the goal of identifying principles of policy translation that are analytically generalizable (cf. Yin 2009). After section

8.2 has presented the exploratory findings from Great Britain as a litmus test for the generalizability of the analytical conclusions from the Dutch and Danish cases, section 8.3 culminates in five plus one key conclusions about how policy regimes shape caseworker practice in the era of activation. Section 8.4 ends the chapter with some reflections on the theory-building potential of pragmatic research and more particularly, on theoretical cross-fertilization between the structuralist welfare-regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach.

8.1   Multi-level regime dynamics: Preliminary insights from the Dutch and Danish cases

In Chapters 5-7, extensive interview material from the Netherlands and Denmark was used to inductively reconstruct how caseworkers translate formal policy into operational ALMP discourses and practices. As was argued in the discussion sections of the three chapters, the unearthed agency patterns are largely in line with the structuralist expectations for policy implementation derived from the two countries' activation-policy and welfare-state regimes in Chapter 4, which implies that smart ALMP system design – which is first and foremost the responsibility of national policy-makers rather than local managers – is essential for effective activation at the street-level.

However, the analytical story told in this dissertation goes much further than that because in addition to confirming the structuralist regime perspective on policy implementation told in section 4.3, Chapters 5-7 also brought to light a number of macro-micro-macro policy translation mechanisms that lie outside the structuralist theoretical vocabulary and that can only be detected through bottom-up, inductive research. As a first step in building a synthesized policy-translation framework that enriches the structuralist 'bones' of activation-policy and welfare-state regimes on three regime dimensions (i.e. culture, institutions and stratification) with the 'flesh' of street-level agency processes, Figure 8.1 combines the mechanisms described in Chapters 5-7 into a single model. The boxes signify (a) context factors that were shown to influence policy implementation in practice and (b) agency-outcomes at the street-level. To the left of each box, in bold italic font, it is specified how the respective factors play out in Denmark. To the right of each box, in regular italic font, it is specified how the same factors play out in the Netherlands. With an eye to generalizable mechanisms of how policy shapes the discourses and practices of jobcentre caseworkers in the era of activation, five preliminary insights can be drawn from Figure 8.1 that will be further refined in section 8.3 on the basis of the exploratory interview, observation and vignette data collected in two British jobcentres.

Fig. 8.1: A visual summary of the mechanisms unearthed in Chapters 5-7.
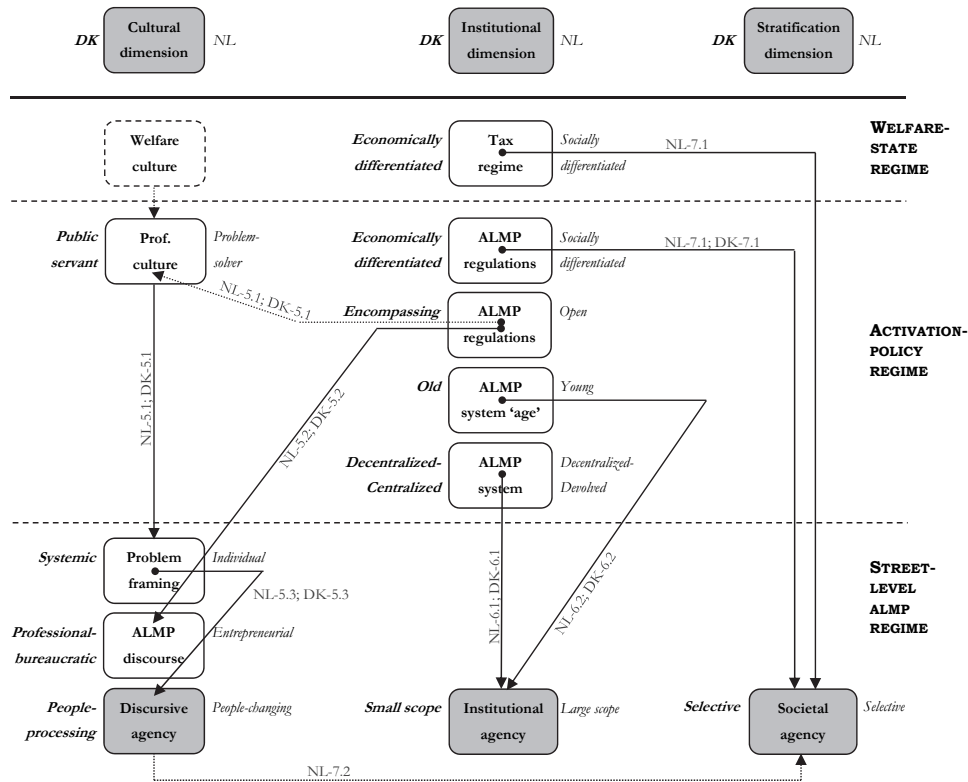
The **first key observation (finding F1')** emerging from Figure 8.1 concerns the differentiation between welfare-state regimes and activation-policy regimes as structural influences on caseworker actions. As Figure 8.1 shows, the only welfare-institutional context factor that had an observable influence on street-level ALMP practice in the analysis of Chapters 5-7 was the tax system or more particularly, incentives and disincentives to work for lone parents. On the cultural dimension, evidence for the micro-level influence of welfare-state structures was even more subtle, with welfare-cultural influences on the professional identity of caseworkers having been formulated as an assumption rather than a solid finding in Chapter 5 (although the findings of other scholars do suggest that welfare-cultural influences on the professional identity of Dutch caseworkers as problem-solvers and Danish caseworkers as public servants exist; cf. Jensen 1998; Pedersen and Löfgren 2012; Poulsen 2009; for a wider perspective, see Painter and Peters 2010). Hence, whereas the structuralist regime approach would see both regime levels as 'structure' and

hence as equally shaping how caseworkers engage with colleagues, managers, external collaborators, clients, and even themselves in internal conversations (cf. Archer 2003), the inductive perspective taken in Chapters 5-7 reveals that what happens at the street-level of ALMP implementation is first and foremost influenced by the immediate policy environment, not by the wider welfare-state context. This is a very important insight for smart ALMP system design because it means that new administrative logics can be infused into policy-implementation systems irrespective of existing administrative traditions (as forming part of 'welfare culture'), which contradicts the claim of some historical institutionalists that radical institutional change is only possible when historically rare "windows of opportunity" open up (cf. Pierson 1996).

The **second insight (F2′)** that can be gained from Figure 8.1 concerns action-shaping influences across regime dimensions. According to the inductive analysis of Chapters 5-7, ALMP institutions are more influential in shaping street-level policy outcomes than ALMP culture because ALMP institutions exert a direct action-shaping influence on all three kinds of caseworker agency: discursive, institutional, and societal. Put somewhat more abstractly, the findings of Chapters 5-7 suggest that contrary to the welfare-regime tenet of culture influencing institutions and institutions influencing stratification patterns, institutions serve as the navel point of the production of street-level ALMP effects, shaping the societal agency of caseworkers not only directly but also indirectly via discursive agency blueprints. This finding is in line with an empirics-based and usually quantitative school of social-policy research that has repeatedly demonstrated a strong influence of institutions on culture rather than the other way round (see Gingrich and Ansell 2012; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Koster and Kaminska 2012; Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2013). Furthermore, this finding again underlines the core message of this dissertation that the societal effects of activation policies are a matter of institutional ALMP system design much more than of autonomous "co-production" processes at the individual level.

The **third key observation (F3′)** emerging from Figure 8.1 is that liberal versus conservative regime characteristics – as being associated with the notions of a 'neutral' bureaucratic state versus a morally 'partisan' state – are much more decisive for street-level ALMP outcomes than solidaristic versus residualistic regime characteristics (that entail notions of national versus individual responsibility for welfare, respectively). It should be noted, however, that what 'solidaristically' large activation budgets are concerned, the Dutch and Danish ALMP systems were relatively similar in the study period (although this has now changed due to rigorous budget cuts in the Netherlands). Hence, the non-observed influence of ALMP resources on the micro-level agency of caseworkers in the Netherlands and Denmark could also stem from the fact that two similarly affluent ALMP systems were compared in Chapters 5-7. In order to determine with more certainty whether

a solidaristic versus residualistic institutional context has a direct or indirect influence on street-level ALMP effects, we should therefore await the British findings and use them as a litmus test for the impact of monetary and (related) time resources on individual agency patterns in local jobcentres.

As a **fourth point (F4′)**, only one macro-level regime characteristic appears in Figure 8.1 that is not addressed by the structuralist welfare-regime approach but does appear in the street-level bureaucracy approach, namely the 'age' of the ALMP system. As was shown in Chapter 6 in particular, 'young' systems by definition leave more relative space for the institutional agency of caseworkers than 'old' systems because in newly designed systems (whether they be centralized or decentralized), institutional ways of doing things have not yet had time to mature or even be defined in the first place (cf. Streeck and Thelen 2005: 30). By implication, not only designing entirely new ALMP systems but also overhauling existing ALMP systems increases caseworkers' institutional-agentic space, for instance when frequent macro-level policy-adaptations or meso-level reorganization processes lead to a constant de-institutionalization of existing institutional knowledge and a required re-institutionalization of new institutional knowledge, as several respondents have stated. It should be mentioned, however, that although the time-factor has not received much attention in the welfare governance literature to date (a notable exception is Van Gestel and Hillebrand 2011), it has been widely discussed in the broader institutionalist and comparative social policy literature (e.g. Briggs 1967; Clegg 2007; Palier 2001; Pierson 2004). In this respect, the current research encourages further cross-fertilization between comparative implementation studies and institutionalist theory.

The **fifth and final key insight (F5′)** concerns context conditions that increase caseworkers' scope for agency. If we juxtapose the inductively derived Figure 8.1 with the deductively formulated expectations for policy implementation summarized in Table 4.3, three main agency-augmenting conditions emerge that differ between the three regime dimensions of culture, institutions and stratification. On the cultural dimension, the strong discursive agency of Dutch and Danish caseworkers can be traced back to ambiguous activation and welfare cultures in both countries with regard to systemic versus individual framings of responsibility for welfare and job-insertion, which confirms the analytical necessity to take multiple regime levels into account when explaining street-level activation discourses. On the institutional dimension, by contrast, policy-immanent factors (especially open regulations) and the young 'age' of the Dutch ALMP system seemed most crucial for explaining Dutch caseworkers' very large scope for institution-building activities. Finally, on the stratification dimension, a task-related logic rather than a regime-derived logic accounted best for the partially autonomous agency patterns observable in both countries, with caseworkers having more room for autonomous societal

agency across the board when clients have complex problems beside unemployment proper.

As the five preliminary findings drawn from the research at hand illustrate, a pragmatic research design that combines inductive and deductive reasoning with two complementary theoretical approaches is very fruitful for gaining a deeper understanding of the 'inner life' of ALMP systems. However, because pragmatic research is so methodologically challenging that it can only take into account a small number of in-depth cases, one must also be careful with generalizing pragmatic research results to a wider population of cases. In order to somewhat compensate for the small sample size, the following section presents exploratory interview, vignette and observation material from two British Jobcentre offices. Because the British ALMP system differs from the Dutch and Danish systems on a number of important aspects such as regulatory centralization, limited funding, and a strong reliance on private providers, the British case can reasonably be regarded as a "most-different" litmus test case that is very suited for probing the generalizability of the preliminary research findings from the Dutch and Danish cases discussed so far.

8.2   The British case as a litmus test

Due to the exploratory nature of the British data material, this section discusses the discursive, institutional and societal agency of British caseworkers only briefly. The main goal of section 8.2 is to prepare section 8.3, where the British findings are used to either substantiate, refute, or refine the claims made in section 8.1 about the translation of activation-policy (and welfare-state) regimes into practice.

8.2.1   The discursive agency of British caseworkers

The most important finding about the micro-level discursive agency of British caseworkers, as compared to their Dutch and Danish colleagues, is that a distinctive street-level discourse on the causes of unemployment is hardly visible in the British context. Only one British caseworker respondent voiced a personal opinion about the welfare state having contributed to structural unemployment, stating that a *dependency culture* has been *massively nurtured by the Labour socialists to secure votes*. Apart from that singular statement, however, musings or opinions about either systemic or individual-level causes of unemployment are absent in my interviews with British caseworkers. Instead, the few indications of a street-level activation discourse I encountered in Great Britain revolved not around constructing a manageable verbal representation of unemployment as in the other two countries, but rather around constructing a 'spirit' in which central regulations should be *inter-*

pret[ed] … the right way (N1). That discursively-constructed implementation spirit reportedly circles around the liberal key notion that *you've got to treat everyone the same, otherwise it would be unfair* (N5). However, according to the district manager of jobcentre N, a discursive shift from equal to differentiated citizen treatment was taking place at the time of the interviews, to the liberal-solidaristic effect that the goal of activation should become *equality of opportunity, not just treatment*. A related aspect of such a differentiated implementation spirit is the idea that caseworkers must make sure that their customers (or *claimants*, as *we should actually call them* – N5) not only perform all their duties as jobseekers, but also *get all other benefits they are entitled to* (N2). In addition to this principle of legal equality, a second element of a discursively-constructed implementation spirit that emerged from the exploratory British interview data is the notion that clients should not be forced to accept just any job because only the *right* job leads to *full, sustainable employment* (N5).[1] In the words of jobcentre director O6, caseworkers must *pick the provision that is right, otherwise it would be a waste of time and money*. Tentatively, I would therefore state that in contrast to the Netherlands where caseworkers feel responsible for solving the problem of unemployment, and to Denmark where caseworkers feel as brokers of a welfare state whose task is to combat the structural causes of unemployment, British caseworkers feel a double responsibility to implement regulations uniformly as state bureaucrats, but also to spend "taxpayer money" sensibly as agents of the tax-paying public (and thus only where this is likely to have an employment effect).

Turning now from British policy-implementers' internal conversations about the spirit in which activation should be implemented to the discursive techniques they employ more directly or 'externally' in the interaction with unemployed clients, the exploratory interview and observation results from the British context point towards some similarities between Great Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands, but also to some differences between Britain and the other two countries. The similarities present themselves mostly in relation to the discursive technique of invoking rational interests, although this technique is more strongly shaped by the extensive and detailed IT platform used in client-processing in Great Britain than in the other two countries: Even establishing a relation with the client tends to proceed via discussing the personal information required by the IT system in the British context rather than through a discursively professed mutual information exchange (as in Denmark) or 'connecting' to the client as an individual (as in the Dutch context). Finally, another three uniquely British discursive techniques were encountered in jobcentres N and O that are discussed in more detail below.

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1   The same idea was expressed by many Dutch caseworkers (A2, B, C1, D1, D2, E2, F1, F2, G2) and some Danish caseworkers/managers (I2, I3, K3, L1).

The basis: Entering personal information into the IT system

Although one British jobcentre manager told me that personal advisers in her jobcentre use the IT *customer assessment tool* not during client interviews *because it deters focus* but rather *as a rating system afterwards*, my observations in that jobcentre gave me the impression that both client intakes as well as singing-on conversations and longer counselling sessions are strongly structured by feeding the centralized IT system in the British context, not least because the required information is so extensive and detailed that completing the required information after the client has left seems hardly feasible. (This assessment is not only supported by the participant observations of Wright [2001: 241] but also by the fact that during one observation, a *2 minutes user inactivity warning* appeared on the computer screen because the caseworker and client had engaged in a longer conversation). More specifically, some of the questions posed to clients while I was observing referred to qualifications and skills (N1), job-search strategies and preferences (O1: *How long would you be happy to carry out a job for?*; *Would you consider part-time work as well?*), barriers to work (O4: *Have these problems posed obstacles to work: qualifications, references, transportation?*), and clients' *confidence to find a suitable job within three months* (O4), but also more personal questions concerning upbringing (O1: *Have your parents/guardians worked until you were 16?*) and work-related living habits (O1: *How long do you need to get ready in the morning, when do you get up?*). As all of these examples show, although British caseworkers do find it important to *build up a picture* (N1) of – as well as a *relationship* (N3) with – clients, these pictures and relationships are strongly guided by standardized questions in the IT system.[2] The same is true for the discursive technique of invoking rational interests, to which we now turn.

Invoking rational interests

As in Denmark, a standardized IT tool for *better-off-calculations* exists in Great Britain that caseworkers use to convince clients and especially lone parents that *work is necessary outside of school* (N2; also N4). Also for disabled clients, better-off-calculations are used to convince them to voluntarily join the Work Programme (N4). However, in concordance with the liberal implementation paradigm which seeks to enforce legal duties and legal rights in a 'fair' manner, better-off-calculations may also serve the purpose of discouraging clients from applying for disadvantageous jobs in the British context. For example, caseworker O2 calculated in my

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2   A similar story is told by the research of Toerien et al. (2013) who recorded more than 200 work-focused interviews in eight British Jobcentre Plus offices.

presence how much money the client in front of her would be able to keep from her wage if she took on an advertised job – concluding that the job was *cancelled out*, yet adding that it would be *up to* the client to decide if she *still want[ed] to apply*. Caseworker O2 also advised another client not to take on a temporary job for one week because this would have caused the client to lose his *housing benefits and council tax*, therefore making him financially worse off in the end. In a nutshell, as this short paragraph has shown, British caseworkers use institutionalized better-off-calculations as a tool for counselling clients on prospective jobs, although such advice goes both ways, i.e. not only encouraging labour-market entry but also discouraging clients from accepting too precarious jobs.

Invoking social norms, encouraging concrete actions & talking job mobility

Besides invoking rational interests, I caught a glimpse of three discursive techniques in British jobcentres that the readers of this dissertation will already be familiar with from the Dutch and Danish context, namely invoking social norms (exemplified by caseworker N2's statement that lone parents must be convinced that *work is necessary outside of school* and also by N3's statement that lone parents should be *persuade[d]* that *part-time work is better than IS* [Income Support]), encouraging concrete actions (N1: *I try to give them one action every time they come in*), and talking job mobility (N1: *make them think where else they could look, widen the field*; N3: caseworkers' task is to *guide* and *help people to move into* a *needed or wanted direction*; O1: *Are you comfortable with ICT work? … Do you want me to change call centre to reception work?*). However, as in Denmark in particular, British caseworkers stress that the discursive techniques of invoking rational interests and social norms, encouraging concrete actions, and talking job mobility are geared towards the *overall objective* of moving *back into employment as quickly as possible* (N3). Moreover, several caseworkers emphasize that discursive techniques must be geared towards realistic job options (O1: *There's no point in putting something in there for which there are no jobs; it must be realistic*; N2: *Come on, it's the real world now*). Also in these two aspects, discursive agency in the British context somewhat resembles discursive agency among Danish caseworkers in abstract terms, although in empirical application, British caseworkers seem much more tied by procedural regulations than Danish caseworkers in their direct client interaction. As was already indicated above, however, the tight conversational guidelines in British jobcentres also yield at least three discursive techniques that were not witnessed in either of the other two countries. These are now presented and discussed, before subsection 8.2.2 turns to the institutional agency of British caseworkers.

Discursively fitting clients to procedures

As the tentative interview and observation results from Great Britain show, tight procedural guidelines for client conversations yield a specific type of discursive agency among caseworkers, namely the discursive fitting of client cases to categories in the policy regulations and/or IT system (see also Caswell, Marston and Larsen 2010; Marston 2006). Possibly, this type of discursive agency is also prevalent in the Netherlands and Denmark to some degree, but I could not observe it because I did not carry out observations there. At least in Great Britain, though, I could witness how the IT customer assessment tool influences conversations among caseworkers and clients. For example, caseworker O1 remarked matter-of-factly to a client about the latter's professional skills: *So you have customer service skills from your job as hairdresser*.[3] In the same conversation, caseworker O1 asked her client: *Are you available immediately? … Which days?* Only to add at once: *Hours in a day must be eight*. Sometimes, caseworkers also suggested a convenient answer to the client, possibly to speed up the conversation, as by saying: *How do you mainly look for jobs? – I take it mainly internet*. These quotes suggest that although the discursive agency of British caseworkers fits the people-processing approach (defined in Chapter 5 as seeking to change clients' expectations or work area but not their personality or way of life) more than the people-changing approach (which does not stop at the boundaries of clients' private lives), people-processing techniques can also become 'people-refitting' or even people-changing if tightly regulated procedural categories allow only particular client answers and associated behaviours while ruling out others, as illustrated above.

Offering encouragement

The remaining two discursive techniques I encountered exclusively in the British context – yet possibly because I did not carry out observations in the other two countries – were less procedure-informed than the previous ones, being oriented not towards rules and regulations but towards the client as a human being. The first of those techniques consists in offering encouragement to discouraged clients, *try[ing] to avoid demoralization at any cost* (N3). Thus, caseworker N3 says that an important caseworker task is to *motivate people, get their spirits up, boost their confidence*. For instance, as he reports, he might say to an older client, *'You may be older,*

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3   One Danish manager (L3) indicated that this might not be uncommon in Denmark either: *The law … requires that … you apply for the jobs that you're qualified and have the skills [for]. That means that if you are a bricklayer … and you also, let's say, have some volunteer work every Saturday in a youth club. When you get unemployed, you are not only qualified to lay bricks, you are also qualified to work in a kindergarten.*

but you have a skill set, experience and routine'. Also in jobcentre O, I could observe caseworkers applying this technique in practice, for instance by telling a new client at the end of the intake interview: *I wish you luck. You're flexible and have good skills, so I'm not worried too much* (O1). Also caseworker O2 told a client of hers before he was transferred to the Work Programme: *I'm sure you'll find something, it's just been hard luck. I won't forget about you*. As all of these examples show, British caseworkers make an effort to show a humane and personal face to their clients in spite of the standardized, strict and demanding character of the Jobseeker's Allowance regulations. This becomes evident even more strongly in the following and last type of discursive agency applied by British caseworkers in their interaction with unemployed clients: talking strict procedures more humane.

Talking strict procedures more humane

As we already saw in Chapter 4, sanctions and work duties play a central role in the British ALMP legislation. Yet precisely because such a workfarist interpretation of activation rests on an image of the unemployed as lazy, unwilling people who need a *wake-up call* or even *kick in the bottom* (O6) that does not fit all (or even most) real-world clients, caseworkers in the British context undertake visible attempts to talk the strictness of the JSA regulations more humane. To give some examples, caseworker O1 informed one client about the official job-search requirements (*What do you have to do to receive JSA?*) in a light and nonchalant tone, then adding the soothing remark: *No problems there at the moment*. Also the explanation of the mobility rules applying to that client (JSA claimants are expected to travel up to one hour to work and 90 minutes back during the first three months of unemployment) was followed by the abovementioned question *'How long do you need to get ready in the morning, when do you get up?'* and the qualifying remark: *Oh, so that's no problem. Again, let's hope you can find something closer to here*. Especially when it came to checking the client's job-search activities, caseworker O1 made sure to let the client know that this was not a matter of distrust: *We have to keep track of what you're doing. … I'm sure you won't, but it's for people who don't do anything that we use those measures*. Also the jobseeker's agreement was discursively presented not as a contract binding the client to certain duties but rather as a mere formality: *Last thing, I only need you to sign a few forms*. Finally, to give an example from another client conversation I witnessed, caseworker O2 told a client who was being transferred to the Work Programme: *The benefit won't change, everything will stay the same, except you won't be seeing me. A lot of people view it negatively, but it is actually extra help for you*. As these quotes show, strict regulations that reflect a negative view of jobseekers as 'lazy' persons elicit a balancing type of discursive agency from British caseworkers if they perceive a mismatch between the 'spirit' of the rules and the actual clients sitting in front of their desks.

To give a brief summary of the discursive agency of British caseworkers as it emerged from the exploratory British interview and observation material, we have seen above that normative ideas as well as caseworkers' intrinsic interest to protect themselves psycho-emotionally from too much negative interaction shape street-level discursive patterns in the British context, partly in line with (but also going beyond) phenomenological arguments in the street-level bureaucracy literature (cf. Lipsky 1980: 15-6, 18-9, 23; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). First of all, we saw in this section that the 'internal' discursive image of activation constructed at the British street-level is not oriented towards unemployment but rather towards the normative question how central regulations are to be applied to unemployed individuals 'in the right spirit'. That spirit was shown above to be constructed as revolving around two discursive reference points: equal treatment and diligent spending. Furthermore, in juxtaposition to the Dutch and Danish cases, one might argue that the perceived absence of any discursive attempts to construct a manageable representation of unemployment in the British context can be traced back to a bureaucratic professional identity in a centralized implementation system that depicts policy-makers, not caseworkers (or managers) as having to lay out procedures that adequately address the problem of unemployment. When looking more narrowly at the 'external' discursive agency of British caseworkers in the form of discursive techniques applied in face-to-face encounters with clients, we saw above that British caseworkers do exert discursive agency, only in a more procedure (and IT)-oriented way than in the other two countries surveyed for this dissertation research. In this vein, the discursive techniques employed by caseworkers in Britain resemble the people-processing type witnessed in Denmark more than the people-changing type diagnosed for the Netherlands, although it also became visible that due to the strict nature of the JSA regulations, people-processing discursive agency takes on a 'people-refitting' character in the British context that pushes job-search activities in specific directions while foreclosing others. On the flipside, however, this subsection also demonstrated that British caseworkers make deliberate efforts to make clients aware of their rights and also to talk regulations more humane when perceiving clients as willing to work and hence 'deserving', thereby making Britain's street-level ALMP culture less workfarist in practice than the country's legal activation culture would suggest.

Relating the exploratory findings on the discursive agency of British caseworkers back to the structuralist activation blueprint for Great Britain sketched out in Chapter 4, we again see that structural tensions provide caseworkers with the space to water down the individualistic-workfarist discourse of the Jobseekers Act 1995 in daily practice, in line with structuralist expectations. Thus, although no overarching discourse on activation as a societal phenomenon can be observed on the work-floors of British jobcentres, the discursive techniques employed by British caseworkers vis-à-vis clients are both individualistic-residualistic (as the Jobseekers

Act 1995 would have led one to expect) and solidaristic, as the residualistically-solidaristically divided British welfare culture indicated. In this logic, it would appear that the use of solidaristic discursive techniques by British caseworkers such as offering encouragement or talking strict procedures more humane is indicative of an experienced tension between legal regulations seeking to "responsibilize" (Clarke 2005) clients and daily experiences of clients who are willing to work, which caseworkers resolve by drawing from the ideational repertoire of the wider British welfare culture in which systemic explanations of personal need are represented equally besides individualistic ones. Also what conservative versus liberal notions of activation are concerned, the ALMP discourses of British caseworkers meet the structuralist expectations raised in Chapter 4, displaying both work-centred and citizen-emancipatory elements. Only with regard to a cultural familialism that was evident both at the policy-regime and wider welfare-state regime level in Great Britain, a disparity can be identified between structuralist expectations and real-world discourses: At least in my exploratory research, no evidence of a familialistic activation discourse in Great Britain could be found. This may be due to the limited number of interviews and observations I conducted in the British context, but a more likely explanation is that British caseworkers would perceive paying more than average (discursive) attention to one specific target group such as lone parents as contradicting the equal implementation spirit they feel bound by.

Rather than now delving immediately into the question what the exploratory findings on the discursive agency of British caseworkers teach us about the five preliminary lessons drawn from the Dutch and Danish cases in section 8.1, the following two subsections first address – briefly – the basic features of the institutional and societal agency of British caseworkers. Section 8.3 then reflects whether the previously formulated five lessons from the Dutch and Danish cases must be changed or refined in the light of the discursive, institutional and societal agency-patterns encountered at the British street-level.

8.2.2 The institutional agency of British caseworkers

As Table 8.1 shows, the prevalence of institutional agency among British case-workers can be discussed relatively quickly for the purpose of this dissertation. If one does not include the informal sharing of best practices among caseworker colleagues in the Table (which I was told about in jobcentre O but which was also omitted from Tables 6.1 and 6.2 for the Netherlands and Denmark in Chapter 6), we see that only two types of institutional agency are visible among caseworkers in Great Britain, namely co-management tasks and establishing or maintaining external network relations. To begin with the latter, only one short reference was made by manager N5 to caseworkers *us[ing]* their own *contacts* for placing clients

in mandatory work activities or work-experience placements, necessitated in part by the fact that *it is hard to get employers to do this* (i.e. offering placements).

Tab. 8.1: *Forms of institutional agency among caseworkers in two British jobcentres.*

N	O
Management tasks	
Account management	Account management
(Legal) advisory function	(Legal) advisory function
External network relations	
Employer relations	

Moving on to management tasks, in both British jobcentres I visited, caseworkers assisted their managers with monitoring accounts, either by combing the client database for suitable candidates for sector-based work academies (one caseworker was pulled off for this task in jobcentre N) or by monitoring all new claims in order to make sure that each new claim is followed by an intake interview within three days (in jobcentre O). Furthermore, also in jobcentre O, the assistant advisers responsible for signing-on had to check who might be a suitable candidate for a work-experience placement – in line with DWP procedures. Another subtype of management tasks carried out by caseworkers in British jobcentres consisted in an advisory function to management. Thus, in both visited jobcentres, caseworkers served as *champions* for certain work areas or had specialized *subject expert roles* such as environmental issues, digital services, private providers, the Work Programme (earlier: the Flexible New Deal) in jobcentre N; and clients aged 16-17, mandatory work offers, New Enterprise Allowance, adult literacy, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), lone parents, and the jobcentre's external agenda in jobcentre O. In practice, this means that whenever a relevant meeting takes place, the champion or subject expert attends in place of a manager. Furthermore, the champion/subject expert advises management on the respective area of expertise, just as she or he is responsible for communicating new developments to the other colleagues.

In summary, we see that caseworkers in Great Britain have a notable space for institutional agency on the co-management terrain – more so than in Denmark – although the boundaries of that space are much more narrowly defined in Great Britain than in the Netherlands. However, one should keep in mind that hardly any space for the institutional agency of British caseworkers seems to exist outside of the co-management category (at least according to the exploratory findings from jobcentres N and O) whereas five to six types of institutional agency were diagnosed in the Dutch and Danish context (yet on the basis of a larger sample of respondents). In relation to the Dutch and Danish findings, one might therefore formulate the very tentative assumption that the centralized and strongly institutionalized British employment system has abetted not only a bureaucratic caseworker mentality on the cultural dimension but also a Fordist functional differentiation between managers and caseworkers on the institutional dimension. From this angle, the currently observed space for the institutional agency of British caseworkers as co-managing professionals rather than mere rule-abiding bureaucrats would appear as a historically new phenomenon, triggered by the individualization of employment services in the activation age. Such an interpretation is supported not only by the fact that the influential Gregg Report of 2008 recommended the "devolution of decision-making to advisers" as "a key element of a future more personalised conditionality regime" (p. 77), but also by district manager N8 saying that a new flexible caseworker approach (*do[ing] what's right for the customer*) had been in place for one year at the time of the interviews, as well as by managers N5 and O6 reporting that it had taken their advisers quite some time to get used to a less regulated work mode. In addition, the stipulation that British caseworkers' room for institutional agency is largely a product of the new policy agenda of increased caseworker discretion and professionalization is also in line with the structuralist activation blueprint formulated under 4.3, which predicted that institutional agency among British caseworkers would primarily emerge in the procedural and to some degree in the networking domain. In section 8.3, it will be elaborated further what these findings from the British case imply for the preliminary lessons drawn earlier from the Dutch and Danish cases. First, however, a short glimpse at the societal agency of British caseworkers is offered in the next subsection.

8.2.3 The societal agency of British caseworkers

As was already stated in Chapter 3, the vignette results from Great Britain – as a proxy for the societal agency of British caseworkers – are very scarce, not only due to the small number of British jobcentres in the sample but also because I could only carry out the vignette study in one of the two visited jobcentres (plus one Work Programme provider in the case of the hypothetical client Michael Davis (aka Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen), who would be referred to the Work Program-

me because he has been unemployed for more than one year). For this reason, it is not possible to discuss the vignette results from the British context in the same way as the vignette results from the Netherlands and Denmark, i.e. focusing on intra- and inter-jobcentre variation. However, the very tentative vignette results from jobcentre N and one additional Work Programme provider can at least provide a rough indication of (a) whether differences in treatment can be diagnosed between caseworkers or between vulnerable clients (i.e. Michael Davis) and work-ready clients (i.e. Emina Mujačić) as in the Dutch and Danish context; and (b) whether the proposed measures are roughly in line with the expectations formulated on the basis of the structuralist regime blueprints in Chapter 4. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 depict the vignette results for Michael Davis and Emina Mujačić in the British context.

Tab. 8.2: Reintegration measures proposed for Michael Davis in the British context.

	N1	N2	N3	N11	Σ
Job search and placement					
Job placement (1)				•	1
In-work support (2)				•	1
Job counselling (3)			•		1
Identifying transferable skills (4)			•		1
					4
Work experience					
Work trial (5)	•				1
					1
Personal & skill development					
Skill training (6)	•				1
Psychological interventions (7)				•	1
					2
Other					
Carer's allowance for care sister (8)	•		•		2
Work Club 50+ (if it existed) (9)	•				1
Health action plan/weekly coaching (10)				•	1
					4
Total number of service alternatives					*11*

Tab. 8.3: Reintegration measures proposed for Emina Mujačić in the British context.

	N1	N2	N3	Σ
Job search and placement				
Finding (part-time) job (1)		•	•	2
Finding second part-time job (2)	•			1
Better off-calculations (3)			•	1
				4
Personal & skill development				
English course (4)			•	1
				1
Other				
Childcare (5)			•	1
				1
Total number of service alternatives				6

As the two Tables show, marked differences between caseworkers can be observed what the activation measures proposed for the two hypothetical client cases are concerned. For instance, caseworker N2 focuses primarily on procedural rules, limiting her discussion of the two vignettes to the remark that Michael Davis would be referred to the Work Programme while Emina Mujačić would only be eligible for benefits if her part-time job stayed beneath 16 hours per week, with any potential earnings being subtracted from the benefit. By contrast, caseworkers N1 and especially N3 propose a wider variety of potential measures for one or both client(s), such as job-counselling, a work trial, skill/language training, carer's allowance, or counselling on childcare options. Although it is not possible to generalize these very limited findings on the societal agency of caseworkers to the whole of Great Britain, we can at least formulate the informed hypothesis that in line with Lipsky's (1980: 89-90, 107-8) presupposition, activation-policy regimes characterized by only minimal legal activation requirements (namely, job-search assistance) leave a large unintended space open for individual caseworkers and probably also jobcentre directors to decide whether they will offer additional measures to unemployed clients. (Some support for this hypothesis is also found in the research of Fletcher [2011] on the UK). By implication, this means that caseworkers' societal practices can vary quite considerably in liberal-residualistic activation-policy regimes in spite of the liberal tenet of equal citizen treatment, because individual jobcentres and caseworkers are not prohibited from offering more services than the prescribed

minimum – if they can. For instance, jobcentres may be able to go beyond a minimal range of service offers if they happen to have a very effective partnership manager who *oils the wheels* with private employers and is *really good at making people do things they'd otherwise not want*, as is the case in jobcentre N according to manager N7. Another enabling factor not addressed by the SLB approach may consist in extra funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), as reported by district manager N8; or from a devolved national parliament (such as Holyrood in Scotland), for example for career development services, work training, or apprenticeships, as reported by manager O6.

Apart from a surprisingly large space for the societal agency of caseworkers in a highly centralized activation-policy regime context, three more observations can be drawn from Tables 8.1 and 8.2 that go beyond the theoretical tenets of both the SLB and the structuralist welfare-regime approach. To start with, the conclusion formulated in Chapter 7 for the Netherlands and Denmark that caseworkers' influence on activation outcomes is higher for vulnerable clients than for work-ready clients is confirmed by only one of the three caseworkers interviewed in jobcentre N, namely N1 who is 'creative' regarding Michael Davis but purely and singularly work-focused regarding the work-ready client Emina Mujačić. Contrariwise, caseworkers N3 and N2 disconfirm the stated pattern, with N3 being relatively 'creative' in both cases and N2 applying an almost uniform approach to both cases. This could mean that *if* selective activation approaches are present in a highly centralized and standardized ALMP implementation context such as Great Britain, deviations from standard approaches are more likely to occur in relation to vulnerable clients than to 'normal' clients (see also Karagiannaki 2007: 192). However, due to the very small number of respondents, this conclusion must be treated with caution. As a second remark, if we compare the measures proposed by the Work Programme provider (N11) with the measures proposed by British Jobcentre caseworkers, we see that at least in the case of municipality N and at least in the early period of the Work Programme, more measures and resources were available for the long-term unemployed than for short-term unemployed clients in Great Britain. This very tentative indication is in line with the political objectives of the Work Programme (DWP 2012) but must await further substantiation by other evaluative research. A final comment that should be made here pertains to the limited correspondence between the vignette study and the structuralist regime blueprint for Great Britain, which suggests that although British caseworkers can in (legal) theory offer a variety of activation trajectories as stated in the responses to the vignettes, empirical take-up is much more limited due to a limited number of placements (often depending on voluntary offers by employers and partly non-governmental organizations [NGOs]).

Having hereby given an overview of the discursive, institutional, and societal agency of caseworkers in Great Britain, the following section now turns to the

question what the tentative ALMP implementation patterns unearthed in the British context imply for the five preliminary findings derived earlier from the Dutch and Danish findings. By thus synthesizing what all three country cases together teach us about the translation of active labour market policies into caseworker practice, it will emerge what a pragmatic research agenda – combining both deductive and inductive reasoning – adds to traditional 'either structuralist or agency-centred' and 'either top-down or bottom-up' analyses of activation.

8.3 Multi-level regime dynamics: Final conclusions

In section 8.1, the macro-micro-macro policy translation mechanisms detected for the Dutch and Danish cases in Chapters 5-7 were amalgamated into five preliminary core findings from this research. Below, the additional British case will now be used to test the wider applicability of the findings from the Netherlands and Denmark. Where necessary, the earlier findings will be modified in the light of the new insights from the British data, resulting in five plus one key conclusions from this research.

The first preliminary finding from the Dutch and Danish cases presented above was that most context factors influencing ALMP discourses and practices can be found on the policy-regime level rather than the welfare-state level. In the light of the exploratory British research results, this finding can be confirmed. Three policy-regime factors were identified in the British context as influencing what the street-level agents of the activating state 'do' in order to move unemployed clients closer to or back into work: a bureaucratic professional identity on the cultural dimension and a centralized ALMP system (infused with a new agenda of widened local and individual discretion) as well as a workfarist and minimalistic ALMP legislation on the institutional dimension. Contrariwise, only one welfare state-level factor was identified in section 8.2 as potentially shaping the professional identity of British caseworkers, namely a welfare culture that amends bureaucratic professional values with a perceived duty towards the taxpaying public to spend activation funds diligently (and thereby potentially entrepreneurially-selectively, in spite of the liberal-cultural mandate of equal citizen treatment; cf. also Van Berkel 2013: 90). When taking the Dutch, Danish and British research findings together, the first insight emerging from this research about how individual agents build the street-level face of the activating state by appropriating wider regime structures in their applied discourses and practices is thus as follows:

> *F1. Policy-regime factors are much more influential in influencing the regime-building discourses and practices of caseworkers than the wider welfare-state regime context.*

As was mentioned previously, this finding has repercussions on institutionalist debates around "path-dependency" because it illustrates that new administrative logics can effectively be infused into ALMP systems even in the presence of opposed welfare-cultural traditions (cf. Cortell and Peterson 1999; Schreyögg and Sydow 2011).

The second preliminary finding presented earlier postulated a hierarchical relation between the ideal-typical regime dimensions of institutions, culture and stratification, with institutional context factors serving as the major transmission belt for the translation of structural conditions into all three types of micro-level agency (discursive, institutional and societal) – a theoretical refinement to both the structuralist welfare-regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach. Again, this preliminary finding was confirmed by the exploratory British research results, with (a) the centralized British ALMP system (infused with new localizing and individualizing elements) influencing not only the bureaucratic professional identity of caseworkers on the cultural dimension but also the restricted yet notable institutional agency of British caseworkers on the institutional dimension; and (b) with the workfarist British ALMP regulations triggering not only discursive attempts to humanize the application of ALMPs on the cultural dimension but also autonomous and partly selective societal practices on the stratification dimension because when only minimalistic services are legally guaranteed, caseworkers have an unintended space for amending guaranteed services with increased personal efforts if this is deemed 'worthwhile'. Hence, when taking all three country cases together, we can summarize the second core finding of this dissertation relating to multi-level regime dynamics in the ALMP arena as follows:

> **F2a.** *Institutional context factors play by far the most important role in shaping all three types of micro-level agency. Cultural context factors visibly shape only one type of micro-level agency (namely, discursive agency).*

A related finding depicted in Figure 8.1 has been that street-level activation discourses might exert a direct influence on the societal agency of caseworkers. This was the case in the Netherlands, where selective activation practices can be explained not only by an open institutional system but also by an entrepreneurial street-level discourse of selectively investing financial resources in clients. The Danish case had put a question mark behind this finding, however, because also in Denmark, selective activation practices were used for Jørgen Andersen and Emina Mujačić despite a liberal-equal implementation discourse – probably owing to a legal "match group" differentiation on the institutional dimension. Also the exploratory British case questions or at least qualifies the earlier interpretation for the Dutch case because in jobcentre N, two out of three caseworkers displayed non-

selective activation patterns vis-à-vis Michael Davis and Emina Mujačić in spite of a very strong policy discourse of tailor-made and thus differentiated more than equal treatment, arguably due to a homogenizing influence of highly standardized ALMP procedures coupled with a relatively small palette of activation instruments available in practice (often depending on the voluntary cooperation of employers and NGOs). In a nutshell, the British findings lend credence to the earlier stipulation that societal-agency patterns at the street-level are first and foremost shaped by the institutional context, with caseworkers' space for autonomous agency increasing universally if client cases are complex and therefore fall outside the 'employable' norm on which ALMP systems are built. This leads to the following addition to the second finding of this dissertation summarized above:

> *F2b. A direct influence of street-level activation discourses on caseworkers' societal practices ('whom to activate how') can only partly be substantiated on the basis of the current research.*

The third preliminary finding extracted from the Dutch and Danish cases at the beginning of this chapter was that conservative versus liberal regime characteristics (in terms of decentralization/weak regulation versus centralization/strong regulation) are much more important in shaping caseworker agency than solidaristic versus residualistic regime characteristics. On the institutional dimension, this finding remains unchanged in the light of the British case. Also on the cultural dimension, the earlier finding was confirmed, with the British case revealing a primary rift between decentralized (conservative) ALMP systems that bring forth lively activation discourses and centralized (liberal) ALMP systems that are not at all conducive to the emergence of 'internal' activation-related discourses in street-level reality. On the stratification dimension, however, the earlier-formulated preliminary finding must be qualified in view of the British results. As was shown tentatively in section 8.2.3, variation between caseworkers (regarding whom to activate how) seems to be multiplied in residualistic activation systems where only job-search assistance is standardized and other measures can, but need not be, offered depending on the local availability of placements as well as on the professional judgement of the caseworker. Hence, it seems that for the societal agency of caseworkers, solidaristic versus residualistic policy characteristics (and more concretely: financial resources) are most decisive for street-level activation outcomes. The third and partly revised key finding of this research thus reads as follows:

> *F3. Whether an activation system is centralized/strongly regulated or decentralized/ weakly regulated has a primary influence on jobcentre-internal discourses and institu- tion-building practices. Whether an activation system is endowed with ample or scarce*

resources has a primary impact on the (societal) outcomes of activation for unemployed citizens.

The fourth preliminary research result formulated in section 8.1 pertained to the 'age' of the activation system as addressed (albeit with different theoretical implications) by the street-level bureaucracy approach. Based on the Dutch and Danish findings, it had been argued that the space for the institution-building agency of caseworkers is by definition larger in 'new' and weakly institutionalized activation systems than in 'old' and highly institutionalized activation systems, especially if 'centralized decentralization' reforms (as in Denmark) restrict the professional discretion of caseworkers by law. This finding can tentatively be confirmed based on the findings from the highly institutionalized British ALMP system, where caseworkers have developed a relatively bureaucratic attitude to their work and tend to engage in institution-building activities only when mandated to do so by their managers. Even the political agenda of professionalizing the delivery of activation services in Great Britain by giving caseworkers more space for determining the frequency and length of client consultations needs time to take off according to my British manager respondents because caseworkers are not used to having – and using – such space. The fourth finding emerging from the cross-country and multi-level analysis of street-level activation regimes in this dissertation can therefore be summarized as follows:

> *F4. The institutional agency of caseworkers tends to be much lower and restricted in 'old' and strongly institutionalized activation systems than in 'young' and weakly institutionalized activation systems.*

Finally, the fifth and last preliminary finding formulated above was that a pragmatic research approach yields three unique insights on how regime structures affect caseworkers' scope for discursive, institutional and societal agency. To begin with, the Dutch and Danish cases suggested that in the discursive domain, caseworkers' space for agency increases especially in the presence of welfare/ALMP-cultural ambiguities and tensions. On the institutional dimension, the age of the ALMP system as well as open ALMP regulations seemed to exert a strong structural influence on caseworkers' agentic capacity. Conversely, a task-related logic rather than structural factors seemed to dominate caseworkers' space for autonomous societal agency in the Netherlands and Denmark, with more room for creativity emerging when clients are vulnerable. When reflecting these previous findings in the mirror of the exploratory findings from Great Britain, two further refinements can be made. With regard to the first point on the embedded discursive agency of caseworkers, the three country cases together speak the analytical message that structural *ambiguities* (especially at the policy-regime level but likely also at the

welfare-state level) are decisive for whether 'internal' activation and unemployment-related street-level discourses emerge in the first place, whereas structural *tensions* between regime levels create a secondary space for (de-)emphasizing certain macro-discursive elements over others at the street-level. The second refinement that the British case offers to the earlier results from the Netherlands and Denmark concerns the societal agency of caseworkers. While the British case lends some support to the supposition that caseworkers' space for societal agency increases when clients are vulnerable, it also brings to light an additional potential source of a societal-agentic space at the micro-level, namely residualistic ALMP regulations that pre-scribe only minimal counselling support, leaving it to individual caseworkers and local jobcentres to devise or procure more extensive activation trajectories involving private employers or NGOs – if they can. In summary, the fifth core finding of this dissertation research is that

> *F5. From a synthesized theoretical perspective, caseworkers' space for autonomous agency is increased by (a) structural ambiguities and/or tensions on the cultural dimension (triggering discourse creation or adaptation, respectively); (b) 'young' and/or 'open' ALMP systems on the institutional dimension; and (c) complex client cases and/ or minimalistic service standards on the stratification dimension.*

Figure 8.2 incorporates the five plus one key findings listed above into Figure 8.1, which depicted the preliminary findings from the Dutch and Danish cases only.

Fig. 8.2: A revised summary of the multi-level regime dynamics unearthed in this dissertation.
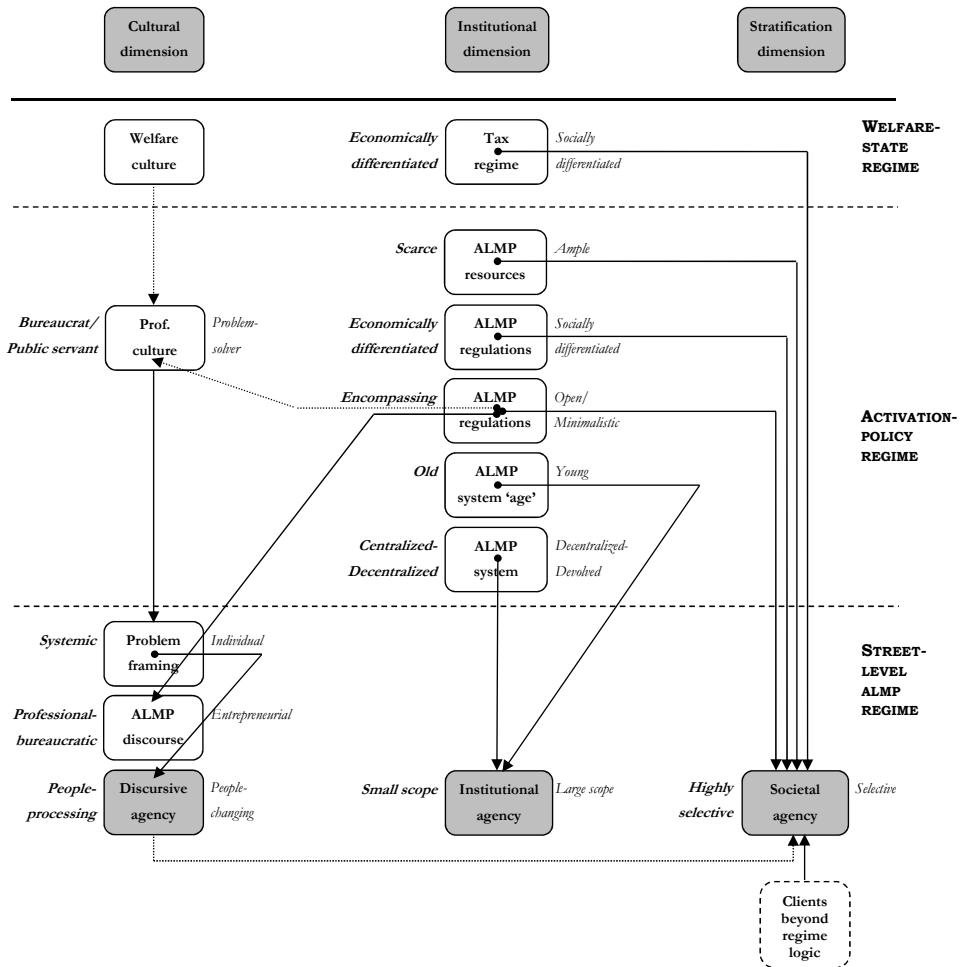
To conclude, this section scrutinized and partly refined the policy-translation insights formulated earlier on the basis of the Dutch and Danish cases. The resulting six core findings from this research can be regarded as the theoretical answer to the research question posed in the introductory chapter:

> **RQ.** *How are active labour market policies translated into street-level discourses and practices in the Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, and what is the role of policy design and the wider welfare-state context in shaping caseworker agency?*

As this research has hopefully demonstrated, a theoretical merger between the structuralist welfare-regime approach and the agency-centred street-level bureau-

cracy approach works well in illuminating the construction of street-level activation regimes from a multi-level and multi-dimensional perspective. Furthermore, as I hope this research has also demonstrated, combining deductive and inductive reasoning in a pragmatic view on the translation of (formal) active labour market policies into aggregated (operational) street-level discourses and practices can yield valuable new insights that either epistemological perspective alone would miss if it were not for the other. Although I learned the hard way that carrying out pragmatic research is complex and time-consuming not only in the field but also and especially when trying to write up one's results, I think pragmatic research is well worth the while not only for scientists interested to learn more about the inner life of activation regimes, but also for practitioners seeking to design activation systems more effectively. Section 8.4 now closes this chapter with some reflections on the theory-building potential of pragmatic research, after which Chapter 9 adds some final comments on the practical relevance of the research at hand.

8.4 Reflections on the theory-building potential of pragmatic research

In Chapter 1, I explained that I developed my research question in an inner dialogue with two theoretical orientations: the macro-oriented, structuralist welfare-regime approach and the micro-oriented, agency-centred street-level bureaucracy approach. At first glance, the two approaches seem to imply very different conceptualizations of caseworkers as the last link in the policy-making chain, with the welfare-regime approach regarding caseworker discourses and practices as mere substrates of higher-level policy and welfare-state structures whereas the SLB approach sees the agentic capacity of caseworker-individuals as an active force in shaping the street-level face of the welfare state. Although the SLB approach is therefore much closer to the policy paradigm of "co-production" that sees service allocation as an interactive process between reflexive individuals, this dissertation has shown that regime structures (still) strongly interplay with individual agency in bringing about street-level policy effects.

Above, I claimed and hopefully demonstrated that a pragmatic research approach combining two theoretical perspectives alongside inductive and deductive elements is particularly well-suited for shedding a multi-facetted light on the complex interaction between 'structure' and 'agency' in creating street-level ALMP regimes out of caseworker actions. On the remaining few pages of this chapter, I would now like to enter into a dialogue with the welfare-regime and the street-level bureaucracy schools of thought, discussing the lessons both theoretical bodies can draw from the theory-synthesizing and theory-building pragmatic research presented in this book.

For the welfare regime approach, the main lesson to be learned from the research at hand is certainly that welfare-state and policy structures translate to the policy-implementation level via individual agency, whose scope increases under six key conditions: on the cultural dimension, (1) structural ambiguities and (2) structural tensions; on the institutional dimension, (3) the degree of local autonomy built into the ALMP system and (4) the age of the ALMP system; and on the stratification dimension, (5) minimalist budgets and service prescriptions that allows frontline workers do 'go the extra mile' in selected client cases beside (6) a system-crossing, universal human tendency to become more creative when individual client cases evade the dominant activation logic. Among the three country cases investigated here, cultural ambiguities were most visible in the Netherlands and Denmark, triggering lively internal conversations about the best potential cures for unemployment. Cultural tensions between the welfare-state and activation-policy levels seemed of less empirical importance but were observable in Great Britain, where over-arching activation discourses are absent but where caseworkers systematically infuse solidaristic discursive elements into otherwise 'workfarist' conversation guidelines. On the institutional regime dimension, the third and fourth conditions were again most visible in the Netherlands, whose ALMP system is not only highly decentralized and devolved (thus offering much opportunity for the institution-building agency of caseworkers, mediated by the manpower and expertise mechanisms) but also subject to ongoing substantial reforms that keep institutional developments from sedimenting – thereby creating a constant need for organizational remodelling. Finally, the agency-related implications of a relatively narrow activation logic became most visible on the stratification dimension of the British ALMP system, where minimalistic ALMP provisions lead to a highly selective distribution of available ALMP resources among clients. In a nutshell, the three country cases investigated in this dissertation have shown that the scope for the autonomous agency of policy-implementers varies by regime context, with discursive agency dynamics dominating in decentralized systems (Netherlands and Denmark), institutional agency dynamics dominating in devolved and/or young ALMP systems (Netherlands), and societal agency dynamics being most exposed in workfarist ALMP systems (Great Britain) – next to a universal tendency to treat vulnerable clients more creatively that could be observed everywhere.

A second key addition to the structuralist welfare-regime approach that has emerged from the street-level perspective of this study is an answer to the question how even in the activation age that calls for tailor-made employment services and hence deliberate agentic autonomy for front-line workers, street-level activation patterns come to bear nationally coherent characteristics in all countries and across all three ideal-typical regime dimensions. As especially the example of the Netherlands – where activation-policy devolution has gone farthest – has shown, one central factor in this regard is the cognitive-emotional need of caseworkers (already

identified by Lipsky [1980]) to keep their work understandable and manageable. In response to this universal human need, ambiguous or tension-laden cultural environments and/or weakly regulated institutional systems trigger a search for viable discursive and practice blueprints at the street-level, fostering the emergence of formal and informal network connections through which discursive and institutional templates diffuse relatively quickly across jobcentres. A second homogenizing factor – also particularly virulent in devolved ALMP systems as the Dutch one – is the level of resources provided by the central government, with caseworkers' societal-agency patterns moving from tailor-made 'social investment' towards a more standardized and 'workfarist' service minimum when activation budgets drop substantially. Hence, as the above analysis has revealed, street-level bureaucracy dynamics can lead to homogenizing rather than diversifying policy-implementation patterns on a national scale in policy contexts characterized by a large degree of regulatory openness and ambiguity.

When turning to the lessons which the street-level bureaucracy approach can learn from the research at hand, four aspects come to mind. Firstly, a key insight for SLB thinking emanating from this study is that caseworker agency comes in multiple forms. A three-fold distinction between discursive, institutional and societal agency proved useful in this dissertation not only because it fitted the empirical data material, but also because it brought to light that Lipsky's rational-choice theoretical agency conception corresponds mainly with 'societal' agency while other, more phenomenological agency conceptions in the SLB literature pertain mainly to 'discursive' agency (e.g. Dubois 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Prottas 1978) whereas the 'institutional' agency dimension is so far largely neglected in SLB research. Secondly, the above analysis showed that the rational choice-theoretical principal-agent dynamics between managers and caseworkers described by Lipsky seem to be less relevant in decentralized or even devolved ALMP systems than in centralized ALMP systems such as the UK. This means that certainly in a European context where decentralized forms of welfare provision are frequent, the street-level bureaucracy approach must be amended by a regime perspective if it is to adequately capture the "structurating" (Giddens 1981) influence of policy design and the wider welfare-state context on policy implementation processes.

This brings us to the fourth and final lesson SLB theory can learn from this research: The capacity of caseworkers to influence the street-level outcomes of the welfare state (via societal agency) should not be overrated, especially in devolved ALMP systems. Thus, as this study has shown, jobcentre managers have more room for influencing activation practices than caseworkers in decentralized or devolved ALMP systems like Denmark and the Netherlands. Furthermore, supra-organizational homogenizing factors have a defining influence on activation outcomes as well, with local influences being visible in Denmark and national influences coming through in the Netherlands. Only in centralized and residualistic ALMP system

such as the British one where a minimalistic activation standard prevails, case-workers have a large unintended space to go beyond the workfarist minimum in relative terms. With these theoretical lessons in mind, Chapter 9 now outlines some final implications of this research for practitioners of activation, and especially the policy-makers who are primarily responsible for designing ALMP systems.

Epilogue: Policy design and caseworker agency –
Lessons for practitioners

I began this dissertation by reflecting back on the journey that led up to my research question, and I would like to end this dissertation with some further reflections on the practical relevance of my research. It is my sincere wish that activation practitioners will not only recognize themselves in this study, but also that some useful lessons about 'smart' ALMP system design will emerge from this book.

As we saw in Chapters 4-8, the three ALMP systems investigated here are not only characterized by different types of regulations and levels of resource endowment, but also do different things 'well' in practice. Thus, in the study period (2010-2012), the Netherlands and Denmark invested considerable amounts in the activation of social-assistance recipients whereas the UK spent considerably less (see Table 4.7). Also in terms of authority over policy implementation, the three ALMP regimes are very different, with such authority being highly devolved in the Netherlands, decentralized-centralized in Denmark at least until 2014, and highly centralized in the UK's Jobcentre system that is overseen directly by the Department for Work and Pensions. As a result, operational ALMPs take different shapes at the street-level of ALMP implementation in the three countries, as was discussed in Chapters 5-8. Thus, the three ALMP systems put different degrees of mental and emotional strain on their street-level staff, due to varying degrees of procedural uncertainty and complexity experienced in daily practice. Furthermore, the three ALMP systems have very different implications for the role played by caseworkers in local institution-building (implying the co-development of local activation instruments, procedures, and networks). Finally, the three ALMP systems have quite different effects for unemployed clients, not only in terms of job-search assistance, training or life support but also in terms of the degree to which such measures vary between local jobcentres or even individual caseworkers. In the following, those policy-relevant aspects are addressed in more detail.

In Chapters 5 and 8, we looked at the **discursive agency** of jobcentre caseworkers. This agency type was conceptualized as both internal dialogues in which caseworkers rationalize what activation is or should achieve, and external dialogues in which caseworkers try to communicatively navigate individual clients towards

the so-rationalized goals. An important policy-relevant insight that can be drawn from Chapters 5 and 8 is that the internal conversations of caseworkers serve as a signpost of where caseworkers experience mental strain in their work, causing them to develop discursive coping mechanisms. In the Netherlands, caseworkers were faced with the basic moral dilemma "Who deserves to be activated?" in the study period due to a combination of very open ALMP regulations with large but shrinking municipal ALMP budgets that made it necessary to think more carefully about how to distribute the available resources. In Denmark, the situation was quite different in 2011-12 because central regulations already answered the question how specific target groups (in terms of age or distance from the labour market) should be activated. Here, we saw that centralized service allocation procedures diverted caseworkers' attention away from the question who should be activated how (or not at all), and on to the question how clients can be convinced that certain strategies or skill-sets are necessary for competing in a globalized labour market. Also in the centralized UK system that offers only minimal activation support during the first year of unemployment, the question who should be activated (or not) does not pose itself to caseworkers; instead, caseworkers seem to be most preoccupied with the question how workfarist ALMP regulations – assuming that many job-seekers are unwilling rather than unable to find a job – can be discursively softened and appropriated to real clients who are motivated to find work. Hence, a major practical lesson to be learnt from the Danish and British cases is that if regulations governing the treatment of individual clients are very detailed, caseworkers' psychological response to such regulations depends crucially on the degree to which such formal rules and real client cases coincide. If caseworkers recognize the 'spirit' behind regulations in the problems and clients they encounter in their daily work, they are likely to internalize the official policy goals, as when Danish caseworkers develop elaborate communicative strategies for counselling clients into further education or training. Contrariwise, when caseworkers perceive regulations as diverging from reality (e.g. because jobs that would earn clients a living are hard to come by), caseworkers are likely to de-emphasize certain regulatory elements in daily application. This means that if policy-makers wish to achieve a large degree of correspondence between formal and operational activation policy, it is vital that they base client-processing regulations on an evidence-based interpretation of the main causes of unemployment among their client population.

Also with regard to the **institutional agency** of jobcentre caseworkers, a number of policy-relevant conclusions can be drawn from this study. Most importantly, an ALMP system's degree of regulation has strong bearings on the degree to which caseworkers will participate in the construction of local ALMP procedures, instruments, and networks. In open institutional contexts as the Dutch one, caseworkers tend to assume a co-expert role in the implementation of ALMPs, which can make local activation approaches very innovative – not least because caseworkers may

import new ideas from professional and peer networks into their own organizations. Also the integration of employers in local activation strategies seems to be facilitated by an ALMP system design like the Dutch one, where caseworkers have a strong say in the local appropriation of ALMP objectives. On the flipside, however, it should be noted that institutional entrepreneurship among caseworkers may take time away from actual client encounters, where the primary task of caseworkers lies. Also, there is a risk that if no predefined ALMP blueprints exist, every job-centre or municipality will have to 'reinvent the wheel' to some degree what ALMP procedures and instruments are concerned. Strongly regulated ALMP systems like the British and partly the Danish one that rely on a strict task-differentiation between managers as institutional entrepreneurs and caseworkers as activation professionals/bureaucrats are arguably more resource-efficient in this regard, but also less innovative, relying on more standardized portfolios of activation instruments, counselling procedures, and stakeholder relations. Hence, I would posit based on this research that designing ALMP systems in an open (i.e. devolved and/ or weakly regulated) manner is particularly advisable when a country just begins to make the 'activation turn' and must therefore find adequate procedures and instruments for addressing the main obstacles to work among their unemployed population. However, whenever an open system design is chosen, it should also be ensured that central evaluation rounds are carried out at regular intervals in order to identify best practices and facilitate policy-learning across municipalities. Also, it might be advisable to gradually introduce more regulations as nation-wide policy learning progresses in order to free caseworker time for actual client consultations. Correspondingly, in ALMP systems that have long been up and running, it might be 'smart' to formally prescribe procedures and/or instruments that have been proven to be effective, so as to free the street-level staff from having to find out individually or locally how to best activate unemployed clients. Nevertheless, some room for local and individual autonomy should always be retained in order to keep street-level ALMP institutions dynamic and responsive to the economic and social environment. Especially in times of economic crisis or boom, such street-level institutional elasticity is crucial because detrimental effects might occur if policy-implementers must wait for national policy coalitions to build a consensus on new action paths before local activation strategies can even marginally be adapted to a changed labour market environment and client composition.

Finally, this study has also looked at client treatment in different types of ALMP regimes (**societal agency** in the terminology used in this dissertation). Here, street-level activation budgets are decisive for the range and coverage of ALMP measures in practice. In scarcely funded systems such as the British one, ALMP instruments are logically more limited in scope and accessibility than in more amply funded systems like the Danish and Dutch ones. However, when assessing the adequacy of activation budgets in empirical practice, one should keep in mind that policy-

makers determine how much money to spend on activation based on partly subject-
ive ideological assessments of the main reasons behind unemployment. If a lacking
work motivation of unemployed individuals is perceived as the main cause behind
unemployment, it is indeed a rational response for policy-makers not to 'waste'
money on activation, relying instead on low benefits, strict eligibility criteria, short
benefit duration as well as (cheap) job-search monitoring, (cheap) job-search advice
and (cheap) sanctions as instruments for making the unemployed more 'active'.
If, on the other hand, an insufficient human capital stock among the unemployed
population in terms of professional skills, social skills or psychological resilience
is seen as causing high unemployment, more money for up-skilling, work training,
in-work support and/or intensive counselling should sensibly be made available
in order to increase the productive capacity and hence employment chances of
unemployed individuals. In a nutshell, this implies that large activation budgets
are not by definition 'better' than tight budgets. Furthermore, amply-filled ALMP
coffers may even create "lock-in" effects – keeping some individuals longer in
activation (and hence unemployment) than necessary – if they are not accompanied
by qualifying regulations on whom to activate how (see Martin and Grubb 2001).
Therefore, when evaluating whether enough money is spent on activation or not,
one should use as a yardstick whether the size of activation budgets is in line with
politicians' stated labour market agenda (for example, a policy rhetoric of human
capital investment coupled with a very low activation budget would be an ill
combination); and secondly, whether politicians' problem assessment of the main
reasons behind unemployment (as underlying the size of activation budgets) is
empirically justified.

   As a last remark on the societal agency of caseworkers in local jobcentres, this
study has shown that not only activation instruments, but also the street-level
allocation mechanisms for distributing activation offers vary greatly between the
three countries investigated here. The Danish system relies first and foremost on
differentiated central procedures outlining which service types are to be used for
which client groups, based on the assumption that strong clients can help them-
selves (hence ALMP resources would be wasted on them), very weak clients need
social services rather than activation (at least until 2014) and the middle group
should receive the most extensive activation offers because here, the largest potential
return on investment in the sense of employment chances can be earned. Interesting-
ly, the very openly regulated Dutch system seems to achieve a very similar distribu-
tion of ALMP measures in practice, albeit not via central procedures but rather
through the mechanism of local and individual discretion. Hence, another important
practical lesson to be drawn from this study is that not only central regulations
differentiating clients and activation trajectories by distance from the labour market,
but also institutionalized caseworker discretion in open regulatory systems can
foster a differentiated and hence potentially tailor-made allocation of activation

services. Contrariwise, standardized and one-size-fits-all regulations as in the British case seem to elicit more opaque forms of caseworker discretion at the individual level, especially when only a very limited number of services and placements can be distributed among clients. Therefore, a final policy-relevant lesson to be learned from this research is that the institutionalization of caseworker discretion leads to more systematic and coherent forms of discretionary behaviour than when caseworker discretion appears as an unintended side-effect of overly standardized, one-size-fits-all ALMP regulations.

To summarize, the core message of this dissertation is that although individual caseworkers have some space for autonomous agency in all ALMP systems – especially when it comes to vulnerable clients who only partially 'fit' the policy agenda of activation – policy design has a very strong influence on the content and range of individual caseworker agency. Therefore, policy-makers are well-advised to carefully calibrate activation resources and regulations to the desired implementation outcomes at the street-level. Crudely put, I would argue based on this research that open versus detailed ALMP rules, combined with large versus small ALMP budgets, yield five ideal-typical orientations of caseworker agency that have both advantages and disadvantages in daily application (except for the fatalistic orientation, which presumably has no positive effects for clients what-soever). Figure 9.1 illustrates how radically innovative, entrepreneurial, professional, ritualistic and fatalistic agency patterns are linked systematically to different policy designs. Among the three country cases investigated here, the Netherlands clearly fit the 'entrepreneurial' street-level regime type while Denmark fits the 'professional' type and Great Britain could be seen as resembling the 'ritualistic' type, although some clear professional elements are visible in the discursive and societal agency domain in Britain, just as some ritualistic elements are visible in the institutional and societal practices of Danish caseworkers. Of the remaining two types (fatalism and radical innovation) I found only marginal evidence in this research, but the public administration literature suggests that such an ideal-typical pair might well exist in ALMP systems where high regulatory uncertainty, coupled with very limited resources, triggers fatalistic behaviour among most policy-implementers but radically innovative policy responses among some (cf. Berg 2006: 560; Matland 1995: 160).

Fig. 9.1: *Five ideal-typical agentic orientations and their systematic relation to policy design.*
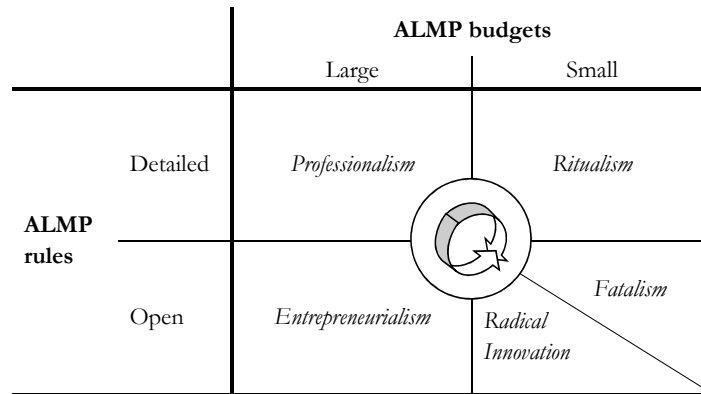
In terms of the main strengths and weaknesses of the respective street-level regime types, the professional-ritualistic British system is certainly the most cost-effective among the three ALMP systems investigated in this dissertation, spending only limited amounts on activation during clients' first year of unemployment. In addition, the British system is positively biased towards more vulnerable clients because those who are still unemployed after one year receive more intensive and holistic support by a Work Programme provider – at least in theory. On the flipside, however, a risk associated with the professional-ritualistic British system is that due to lacking activation funds, the productive potential of the unemployed population is both depreciated during the first year of unemployment (because individuals are quickly pushed into jobs for which they are over-qualified) and not developed as much as it could be (because no investments in the professional, social or psychological capital of the unemployed are made). Here, the professional Danish system has its particular strengths, due to its strong focus on training and education – especially for young people. Another advantageous feature of the professional Danish ALMP system is that (just like the British system) it differentiates client treatment not by benefit regime (i.e. unemployment insurance/social assistance) or social problem categories (e.g. lone parenthood or disability) but merely by distance from the labour market, which means that activation funds can be channelled very effectively towards those clients where the largest relative advancement towards employment can be expected. On the flipside, the "social investment" approach underlying the Danish system design requires a relatively high level of resource endowment (cf. Midgley 1999; Morel, Palier and Palme 2012).

Finally, the main strength of the entrepreneurial Dutch ALMP system lies in its innovative potential, although possibly less so in the current climate of budget cuts than in the study period 2010-2012. Still, one can learn from the Dutch case

that policy devolution coupled with large activation budgets and game-theoretical funding mechanisms unleashes an inventive spirit down to the caseworker level that can lead to innovative activation approaches and the bottom-up involvement of external stakeholders (including employers) in local activation initiatives. The risks involved in the entrepreneurial Dutch approach concern not only significant local policy differences and relatively high costs, but also the danger that the wheel will partly be reinvented in each municipality due to lacking procedural standards for ALMP instruments and client groups. Hence, not only centrally-orchestrated policy-learning processes would be beneficial for entrepreneurial ALMP systems, but also the gradual introduction of certain policy standards that allow caseworkers to save time on 'standard' cases, thereby having more time and creative energy to spend on complex client cases.

If the comparative research at hand could contribute in any way to the design of smarter and more effective ALMP systems that increase the employment and life chances of unemployed individuals, I would feel grateful to have met my personal targets with this work.

Dutch summary / *Samenvatting*

Het onderwerp van dit proefschrift is de relatie tussen beleidsregimes en beleidspraktijken op het terrein van activerend arbeidsmarktbeleid in Nederland, Denemarken en Groot-Brittannië. Het onderzoek is gebaseerd op 75 interviews uit de periode 2010-2012, naast een documentanalyse en descriptieve statistieken. De kernboodschap van mijn onderzoek is dat regimekenmerken (met name regelgeving en budgeten) in sterke mate bepalen hoe activeringsbeleid wordt ingevuld op de werkvloer. In het volgende zal de inhoud van elk hoofdstuk nader worden toegelicht.

Hoofdstuk 1 introduceert mijn onderzoeksvraag:

Hoe wordt activerend arbeidsmarktbeleid vertaald naar discoursen en praktijken op de werkvloer in Nederland, Denemarken en Groot-Brittannië, en welke invloed heeft het beleidsoftewel verzorgingsstelsel op de 'agency' van klantmanagers?

Deze onderzoeksvraag is opgesplitst in drie deelvragen:

1. Welke contextfactoren kunnen van invloed zijn op de discoursen en praktijken van klantmanagers in Nederland, Denemarken en Groot-Brittannië? Welke verwachtingen voor de aard en mate van het agentschap van klantmanagers zijn af te leiden uit deze factoren? (Hoofdstuk 4)
2. Welke discoursen en praktijken vertonen Nederlandse, Deense en Britse klantmanagers, en hoe zijn deze gerelateerd aan de respectievelijke context? (Hoofdstuk 5-7)
3. Welke conclusies betreffende de relatie tussen beleids-/verzorgingsstaatscontext en individueel agentschap komen voort uit de analyse in hoofdstuk 4-7, en hoe verhouden zich deze conclusies tot de Britse casus? (Hoofdstuk 8)

Na een algemene inleiding wordt de analytische doelstelling van het proefschrift nader geconcretiseerd, namelijk het in kaart brengen van mechanismen waardoor activerend arbeidsmarktbeleid vertaald wordt naar de werkvloer in drie Europese landen. Ik betoog dat er nog weinig onderzoek gedaan is naar de *governance* kant van activering, zeker als het gaat om het microniveau, d.w.z. het niveau van de interactie tussen klantmanagers en cliënten. Om de individuele uitvoering van activering beter te kunnen begrijpen, introduceer ik twee tegenstrijdige theoretische benaderingen: de *welfare regime* aanpak (van Esping-Andersen) en de *street-level bureaucracy* aanpak (van Lipsky). Terwijl de *welfare regime* aanpak zou voorspellen dat beleidsdiscoursen en praktijken voornamelijk worden beïnvloed door de institutionele context, suggereert de *street-level bureaucracy* aanpak dat beleidsuitvoerders hun eigen invulling geven aan activering, waardoor beleidsdiscoursen en praktijken sterk verschillen op het micro-niveau. In het tijdperk van activering wordt veelal voorspeld dat de autonomie van uitvoerders verder toeneemt in verband met de individualisering en decentralisatie van beleid. Mijn studie laat echter zien dat (en hoe) de beleidscontext de uitvoering van activering in sterke mate blijft beïnvloeden.

Hoofdstuk 2 gaat nader in op de twee theoretische benaderingen die ten grondslag liggen aan het onderzoek. Hiervoor wordt een ideaaltypische versie van de *welfare regime* aanpak ontwikkeld die niet alleen toepasbaar is op verzorgingsstaten (oftewel *welfare-state regimes*) maar ook op specifieke beleidsterreinen zoals activering, oftewel *activation-policy regimes*. Verder wordt de ideaaltypische *welfare regime* aanpak in dit hoofdstuk aangevuld door drie theoretische inzichten uit de *street-level bureaucracy* literatuur, namelijk:

– De instituties van de verzorgingsstaat bestaan uit twee componenten: wettelijke regelgeving en uitvoerende organisaties;
– Door vorm te geven aan de regelgeving, bepalen deze organisaties het beleid feitelijk mee;
– Het laatste impliceert dat de individuen die vorm geven aan het organisatiebeleid feitelijk het landelijke sociaalbeleid mee bepalen. Dit omvat niet alleen bestuurders, maar ook klantmanagers en zelfs cliënten.

De uit de synthese van de *welfare regime* aanpak en de *street-level bureaucracy* aanpak ontstane "implementatie-regime heuristiek" laat zien door welke mechanismen beleid vertaald wordt naar discoursen en praktijken op de werkvloer, en welke rol de beleidscontext daarbij speelt. Vooral culturele/institutionele complexiteiten, frequente beleidsveranderingen en schrale budgeten worden geacht de ruimte voor de *agency* van individuele klantmanagers te vergroten. Dit model dient als analytische lens voor de empirische analyse in het proefschrift.

In **hoofdstuk 3** wordt de onderzoeksaanpak nader belicht. Ik leg uit dat ik een pragmatische onderzoeksbenadering toepas – d.w.z. een combinatie niet alleen van een deductief en een inductief onderzoeksperspectief, maar ook van verschillende onderzoeksmethoden (interviews, observaties, vignetten, descriptieve statistieken, documentanalyse). Ook beschrijf ik in dit hoofdstuk wie mijn respondenten waren, hoe ik de deelnemende werkpleinen/landen heb geselecteerd en hoe de interviews zijn verwerkt en geanalyseerd. Betreffende de casusselectie is te vermelden dat de micro-analyse in hoofdstuk 5-7 uitsluitend berust op de *most-similar* casussen Nederland en Denemarken. De *most-different* Britse casus wordt gebruikt om de eerdere bevindingen te toetsen in hoofdstuk 8.

Hoofdstuk 4 vormt het begin van de empirische analyse. Uitgaand van drie ideaal-typische regime dimensies (namelijk: cultuur, instituties en sociaal-structurele effecten) beschrijf ik de verzorgingsstaatsregimes oftewel activeringsregimes van de drie onderzochte landen. De beschrijving van de verzorgingsstaatsregimes berust voornamelijk op descriptieve statistieken. Daarbij worden alle tot een bepaalde regimedimensie behorende indicatoren verwerkt tot een ideaaltypische regime classificatie (liberaal vs. conservatief, solidair vs. residualistisch, of gemengd). Ook de bespreking van de Nederlandse, Deense en Britse activeringsstelsels mondt uit in een reeks ideaaltypische classificaties, berustend op een documentanalyse van de relevante wetgeving in de drie landen. Aan het einde van hoofdstuk 4 worden naar aanleiding van deze ideaaltypische regime classificaties een aantal verwachtin-gen geformuleerd betreffende de aard en mate van *agency* onder klantmanagers in de drie landen.

Tegen het licht van de macro-analyse in hoofdstuk 4 wordt in de hoofdstukken 5, 6 en 7 nader ingegaan op de vertaling van activeringsbeleid naar het micro-niveau. In overeenstemming met de in hoofdstuk 2 ontwikkelde driedimensionale regime classificatie maak ik een onderscheid tussen het discursieve (hoofdstuk 5), institutionele (hoofdstuk 6) en maatschappelijke (hoofdstuk 7) agentschap van klantmanagers.

Hoofdstuk 5, het eerste 'micro' hoofdstuk van deze studie, laat zien hoe Nederland-se en Deense klantmanagers de doelen van activering discursief inkleden in hun dagelijkse praktijk en hoe zich deze "innerlijke discoursen" (*internal conversations* – Margaret Archer) voortzetten in "uiterlijke" (*external*) gesprekken tussen klant-managers en werkloze cliënten. Met betrekking tot de 'innerlijke' discoursen van klantmanagers vallen twee dingen op. Ten eerste *'framen'* Nederlandse klantmana-gers de oorzaken van – en remedies voor – werkloosheid vooral in individuele termen, terwijl Deense klantmanagers werkloosheid eerder in structurele termen vatten. Ik beweer dat dit onderscheid te maken heeft met verschillen in de admini-stratiecultuur van de twee landen: in Nederland wordt van klantmanagers verwacht

dat zij een eigen bijdrage leveren aan het oplossen van de werkloosheid, terwijl van Deense klantmanagers enkel verwacht wordt dat zij door de politiek bedachte oplossingen toepassen op de werkvloer. Ten tweede kan geconstateerd worden dat Nederlandse klantmanagers sterk geneigd zijn om hun dienstverlening aan te passen aan de individuele bereidheid van cliënten om te werken, terwijl Deense klantmanagers een zo gelijk mogelijke behandeling benadrukken – ten minste binnen hun eigen specialisatie of doelgroep. Naast de administratiecultuur kan ook de grote beleidsvrijheid in de Wet werk en bijstand (Wwb) worden aangehaald als mogelijke verklaring voor de ondernemendheid van Nederlandse klantmanagers ten opzichte van hun Deense collega's die een meer professioneel-bureaucratische houding vertonen. Tot slot wordt in hoofdstuk 5 gekeken naar de 'uiterlijke' discoursen van klantmanagers in de zin van conversatietechnieken die gebruikt worden tijdens gesprekken met werklozen. Volgens mijn analyse pogen Nederlandse klantmanagers kwetsbare klanten vooral te activeren door diens zelf-perceptie of levensvisie te veranderen, terwijl Deense klantmanagers hun cliënten vooral proberen te prikkelen om flexibeler te worden qua vakgebied of reistijd naar werk. Dit derde en laatste verschil tussen het discursieve agentschap van Nederlandse en Deense klantmanagers is te herleiden naar de individuele versus structurele *framing* van werkloosheid en activering in de twee landen. Samengevat komt uit hoofdstuk 5 naar voren dat zowel de nationale administratiecultuur als de institutionele context een aanmerkelijke invloed hebben op de discursieve *agency* van klantmanagers. Verder toont hoofdstuk 5 aan dat spanningen of ambiguïteiten in de culturele context daadwerkelijk de discursieve speelruimte van klantmanagers vergroten – zoals voorspeld in hoofdstuk 4.

Na deze beschouwing van activeringsdiscoursen op de werkvloer van Nederlandse en Deense sociale diensten gaat **hoofdstuk 6** nader in op het institutionele agentschap van klantmanagers. Hiermee wordt bedoeld dat klantmanagers niet alleen ideeën over activering ontwikkelen en deze toepassen in gesprekken met werkloze klanten, maar dat zij ook meebouwen aan organisatiestructuren en administratieve processen binnen hun organisaties. Opnieuw blijken er duidelijke verschillen te bestaan tussen Nederlandse en Deense klantmanagers. In Nederland vervullen klantmanagers veelzijdige institutionele taken zoals het ontwikkelen van organisatie-procedures of re-integratie instrumenten, maar ook managementtaken, taken rond *coaching* en het onderhouden van externe netwerkrelaties. Dit komt mede door de open regelgeving in de Wwb, die lokale bestuurders op zoek laat gaan naar kennis op het gebied van activering – ook onder klantmanagers. Ook het feit dat het Nederlandse bijstandsstelsel relatief recent volledig gedecentraliseerd is (2004) heeft ertoe bijgedragen dat er nog geen verzadiging van *institution-building* processen is ingetreden, waardoor klantmanagers nog steeds de ruimte hebben om als lokale institutiebouwers te fungeren. Precies het tegenovergestelde is het geval in Dene-

marken, waar gemeenten al decennia lang verantwoordelijk zijn voor activering en waar een gedifferentieerde taakverdeling tussen bestuurders en klantmanagers is ontstaan. Daardoor is in Denemarken weinig institutioneel agentschap onder klantmanagers op te merken, behalve wanneer institutioneel agentschap bewust gestimuleerd wordt door leidinggevenden (zoals in gemeente K in deze studie). Beide bevindingen komen overeen met de in hoofdstuk 4 geformuleerde verwachting dat Nederlandse klantmanagers meer ruimte voor institutionele *agency* hebben dan Deense klantmanagers.

Ten slotte onderzoekt **hoofdstuk 7** de maatschappelijke *agency* van Nederlandse en Deense klantmanagers, oftewel de vraag op welke manier klantmanagers activerende voorzieningen toedelen. Hiervoor heb ik een vignetanalyse uitgevoerd in de twee landen. Een vignetanalyse houdt in dat respondenten gevraagd worden hoe zij met een reeks hypothetische casussen zouden omgaan in de praktijk. Voor dit promotieonderzoek zijn twee vignetten gebruikt: Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen/Michael Davis, een 56-jarige man met een lichte depressie die bovendien voor zijn gehandicapte zus zorgt; en Emina Mujačić, een 38-jarige alleenstaande moeder van twee kinderen uit Bosnië met een Bachelor-diploma als modeontwerpster. Drie uitkomsten van de vignetanalyse zijn hetzelfde voor Nederland en Denemarken: ten eerste hanteren klantmanagers in beide landen – in overeenstemming met de in hoofdstuk 4 geformuleerde verwachtingen – een breed palet aan re-integratie instrumenten dat niet alleen toeleiding naar werk omvat, maar ook werkervaringsplekken, korte opleidingen en ondersteuning bij mantelzorg, kinderopvang of medische hulp. Ten tweede overwegen klantmanagers in beide landen meer opties voor kwetsbare klanten zoals Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen dan voor direct bemiddelbare klanten zoals Emina Mujačić. Als laatste blijken de gehanteerde re-integratie instrumenten in beide landen in sterkere mate door afdelingshoofden of teamleiders bepaald dan door klantmanagers zelf – dit wordt duidelijk uit het feit dat er een zichtbare link bestaat tussen (bestuurlijk bepaalde) afdelingsstructuren en de overwogen re-integratie instrumenten. Naast deze overeenkomsten tussen Nederland en Denemarken brengt de vignetanalyse echter ook twee kernverschillen naar voren wat betreft re-integratiepraktijken in de twee landen. Zo schijnen Nederlandse uitvoerders (d.w.z. bestuurders en klantmanagers) over het geheel genomen meer speelruimte te hebben voor de invulling van re-integratiebeleid dan hun Deense collega's. Daarnaast schijnt het lokale niveau in het gedecentraliseerde maar tegelijkertijd sterk gereguleerde Deense systeem een sterkere rol te spelen dan in het geheel gedecentraliseerde Nederlandse stelsel, waar landelijke patronen zichtbaar zijn. Deze paradoxale laatste bevinding heeft niet alleen te maken met speciale activeringsnormen en belastingkortingen voor alleenstaande ouders in Nederland, maar ook met de grote beleidsruimte in de Wwb die een landelijke dialoog en zoektocht naar *'best practices'* bevordert.

In **hoofdstuk 8** worden de in hoofdstuk 4 geformuleerde verwachtingen ten opzichte van de aard en mate van de *agency* van klantmanagers afgewogen tegen de empirische bevindingen uit hoofdstuk 5-7. Op basis van deze analyse worden vijf voorlopige conclusies getrokken en in een volgende stap getoetst aan de hand van de exploratieve Britse casus. Dit leidt tot zes finale kernbevindingen van mijn onderzoek:

1. De onmiddellijke beleidscontext bepaalt de *agency* van klantmanagers in veel sterkere mate dan het verzorgingsstelsel (*welfare state regime*).
   2a. De institutionele context beïnvloedt alle drie vormen van agentschap op het micro-niveau (discursief, institutioneel, maatschappelijk). De beleidscultuur/politieke cultuur heeft alleen invloed op het discursieve agentschap van klantmanagers.
   2b. Een aantoonbare samenhang tussen de culturele context en maatschappelijke *agency* is alleen zichtbaar in Nederland.
3. Klantmanagers oefenen een hogere mate aan discursief en institutioneel agentschap uit in gedecentraliseerde/zwak gereguleerde activeringsstelsels dan in gecentraliseerde/sterk gereguleerde activeringsstelsels. Voor de maatschappelijke *agency* van klantmanagers zijn daarentegen budgeten van het grootste belang: discretie bij de toedeling van re-integratie instrumenten neemt toe als de middelen afnemen.
4. Klantmanagers hebben meer ruimte voor institutionele *agency* in 'jonge' dan in 'oude' activeringsstelsels.
5. De volgende factoren vergroten telkens de ruimte voor (a) discursief, (b) institutioneel en (c) maatschappelijk agentschap op het micro-niveau: (a) structurele spanningen/ambiguïteiten, (b) open regelgeving en de 'leeftijd' van het activeringsstelsel, (c) schrale budgeten en kwetsbare klanten.

Hoofdstuk 8 sluit af met een reflectie over het nut van een pragmatische onderzoeksbenadering die niet alleen twee verschillende theoretische perspectieven verbindt, maar ook inductief en deductief onderzoek. Ik beweer dat een pragmatische onderzoeksbenadering tot vernieuwende inzichten kan leiden, vooral betreffende de mechanismen waardoor zich beleids- en verzorgingsstelsels al dan niet vertalen naar discoursen en praktijken op de werkvloer.

In de **epiloog (Hoofdstuk 9)** van het proefschrift verdiep ik ten slotte de kwestie naar de praktische relevantie van mijn theoretische bevindingen. De kernboodschap van de epiloog en tevens van het hele proefschrift is dat de implementatie van activeringsbeleid in hoge mate bepaald wordt door de beleidscontext, alhoewel klantmanagers per definitie een bepaalde ruimte voor discretie hebben. Daarom

is het van groot belang dat beleidsmakers de regelgeving en budgeten omtrent activering nauwkeurig afstemmen op de beoogde beleidseffecten. Ik laat zien welke combinaties van regelgeving (open/gedetailleerd) en budgeten (ruim/krap) leiden tot een ondernemende, professionele, of ritualistische invulling van activerings-beleid. Bovendien bespreek ik de voordelen en nadelen van elk implementatie-patroon.

APPENDICES

Serious and humorous contemplations on the scientific method

Serious:

> *Once a scholar has identified a suitable mathematical function or a suitable set of dependent or independent variables, she can begin to look for a causal story to provide an intuition to back the findings. When she writes up the results for publication, the sequence is often reversed. She will state that she started with a causal theory; then looked for the most plausible way of transforming it into a formal hypothesis; and then found it confirmed by the data. This is bogus science.* (Elster 2007: 49)

(Thanks to Falk Ostermann for pointing me to this quote).

Not so serious:
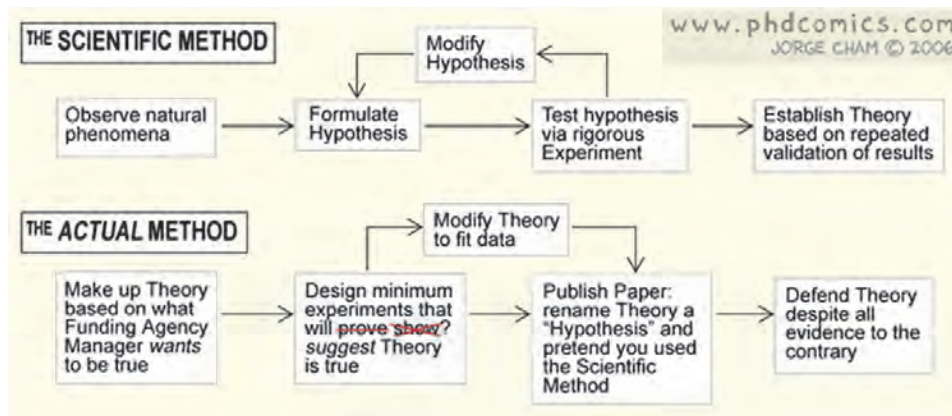
APPENDIX 2.1

Topic guide for interviews with managers

Introduction

– What is my RESEARCH about?
– Explain: My main interest is on ACTIVATION/REINTEGRATION measures for the long-term unemployed
– I am looking at jobcentres in different contexts (3 countries – UK, NL, DK; labour markets; municipality size)
– I want to understand how the jobcentre MANAGEMENT adapts national activation policy to local contexts. Moreover, I want to learn from CASE-WORKERS how this works out in daily practice
– The interviews will be ANONYMIZED

Organizational structure

– TASK DESCRIPTION of manager?
– HOW LONG have you been working at this jobcentre, what is your BACK-GROUND?
– DEPARTMENTS / LAYERS OF MANAGEMENT?
– WHO does WHAT within the jobcentre? (benefit administration, reintegration/activation, short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, young people, client groups with special problems…?)
– Who HIRES new caseworkers/managers? What QUALIFICATIONS are needed for working at a jobcentre in Denmark?

Reintegration

– Which REINTEGRATION TRAJECTORIES are used by the jobcentre? Through which PROVIDERS? How were those providers SELECTED? How would you ASSESS cooperation with them?

- If several providers/trajectories: How do caseworkers decide WHICH RE-INTEGRATION TRAJECTORIES to use for which clients?
- Does the jobcentre have certain PERFORMANCE GOALS? Does the jobcentre face any particular local/regional CHALLENGES in implementing activation policy? Do you think that REINTEGRATION works (not) – why?
- BUDGETS – to what extent is the work of the jobcentre influenced by budgets (size, structure)?
- Are there any groups of clients who are NOT TRANSFERRED to a reintegration provider? If so, why (these)?
- How do you deal with clients who are VERY UNLIKELY to ever find work again?
- How do you deal with clients who are UNMOTIVATED or who are suspected of FRAUD?

Local/regional context

- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, INDUSTRY SCTRUCTURE
  PRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES…

Is there ANYTHING ELSE I should know in order to understand how this jobcentre tackles activation/reintegration?

Topic guide for interviews with caseworkers

Introduction

– What is my RESEARCH about?
– Explain: My main focus is on ACTIVATION/REINTEGRATION measures for the long-term unemployed, not on unemployment benefits
– I am looking at jobcentres in different contexts (3 countries – UK, NL, DK; labour markets; municipality size)
– I want to understand how CASEWORKERS deal with reintegration trajectories in their daily work
– First, I have some BROADER QUESTIONS; at the end of our talk, I would like to briefly discuss TWO HYPOTHETICAL CLIENT CASES
– The interviews will be ANONYMIZED

Professional background, tasks

– EDUCATION, TRAINING?
– HOW LONG have you been working at your jobcentre? What did you do BEFORE that?
– What are your RESPONSIBILITIES here at the jobcentre? Could you describe a TYPICAL WORKING DAY?
– What is REWARDING about being a caseworker? What are the CHALLENGES?

Reintegration

– For which CLIENTS are you responsible? What are the most frequent 'TYPES' of clients?
– What is your CASELOAD? How FREQUENTLY do you see the average client?
– Which REINTEGRATION TRAJECTORIES are available? If several: How do you decide WHICH CLIENT to refer WHERE? What QUESTIONS do you ask clients?

- Do you have any contact with private PROVIDERS of reintegration measures? If so, how would you ASSESS cooperation with them?
- How do you learn when an individual reintegration trajectory has been COM-PLETED (successfully) or been interrupted?
- Formal/informal COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES with managers and case-worker colleagues?
- What do you do with DIFFICULT CASES (people unwilling to work, people with severe problems, cases not matching certain criteria…)?
- Does it happen that clients are NOT REFERRED to a reintegration provider? If so, why (these)?
- Do you think that REINTEGRATION works (not) – why?
- Has there lately been a client that has left a strong impression on you (positively or negatively)? If so, could you tell me a little bit about what made that CASE SPECIAL?
- What do you think makes a GOOD CASEWORKER?

Local/regional context
- What kind of JOBS are relatively easy to find in this area, which are very difficult to find?
- To what extent does the state of the ECONOMY influence your daily work?
- To what extent do NEW POLICIES OR LAWS influence your daily work?
- Is there ANYTHING ELSE I should know in order to understand how you as a caseworker deal with activation/reintegration trajectories for clients?

CLIENT EXAMPLES: Bart Boonstra/Jørgen Andersen/Michael Davis & Emina Mujačić

- Start with BART/JØRGEN/MICHAEL
- Which REINTEGRATION MEASURE would you choose for this client, and why?
- Do you foresee any particular PROBLEMS with this client?
- How would you assess this client's CHANCE OF FINDING A JOB?

→ F O L L O W   U P   O N   A N S W E R S …

Descriptive statistics on the EVS sample, 2008-10 wave

		NL	**DK**	**GB**	**IT**	**SE**	**IE**
	N	1,554	1,507	1,561	1,519	1,179	2,015
x001	*Sex respondent*						
	(1=male)	45.10	49.60	42.50	48.10	46.70	44.50
	(2=female)	54.90	50.40	57.50	51.90	52.70	55.50
x003	*Age respondent*						
	min	17.00	18.00	16.00	18.00	18.00	17.00
	max	95.00	95.00	103.00	95.00	75.00	93.00
	mean	54.80	49.79	52.07	47.89	48.95	44.28
	stddev	17.35	16.84	19.02	18.20	15.42	18.04
g005	*Citizen of [country]*						
	(1=no)	1.90	2.60	4.40	00	4.30	3.00
	(2=yes)	98.00	97.40	95.60	100.00	94.70	97.00

Heuristic comparison of six welfare cultures
(solidarism-residualism axis)

Relative comparison

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
e035						
Divergence of lower from higher value	29.9%	77.5%	1.2%	30.1%	50.3%	27.3%
Label	res+	res++	sol-res	res+	sol++	sol+
Label value	-1	-2	0	-1	2	1
e037						
Divergence of lower from higher value	65.2%	63.4%	82.7%	19.9%	75.7%	70.9%
Label	sol++	sol++	sol++	res+	sol++	res++
Label value	2	2	2	-1	2	-2
e038						
Divergence of lower from higher value	73.8%	43.8%	74.0%	84.4%	63.1%	46.9%
Label	res++	res+	res++	res++	res++	res+
Label value	-2	-1	-2	-2	-2	-1
e190						
Divergence of lower from higher value	1.4%	34.4%	3.6%	31.6%	68.9%	13.6%
Label	sol-res	sol+	sol-res	sol+	sol++	sol+
Label value	0	1	0	1	2	1
LABEL VALUE: ø [e035; e037; e038; e190]	**-0.25**	**0**	**0**	**-0.75**	**1**	**-0.25**
LABEL	**sol-res**	**sol-res**	**sol-res**	**res+**	**sol+**	**sol-res**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (-2) to strong solidarism (2)

-2	-1.2	-0.4	0.4	1.2	2
res++	res+	sol-res	sol+	sol++	
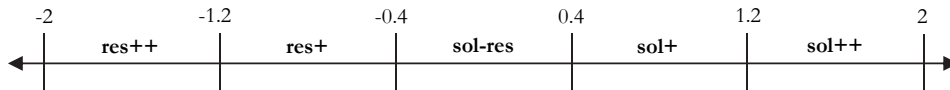
Absolute comparison

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Σ sol [e035; e037; e038; e190]	107.0	113.9	139.2	111.0	165.4	112.8
Σ res [e035; e037; e038; e190]	120.7	127.0	129.0	154.5	91.2	143.3
Σ sol – Σ res	-13.7	-13.1	10.2	-43.5	74.2	-30.5
LABEL	**res+**	**res+**	**sol-res**	**res++**	**sol++**	**res++**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (-43.5) to strong solidarism (74.2)

-43.5	-26.1	-8.7	0	14.8	44.5	74.2
res++	res+	sol-res		sol+	sol++	
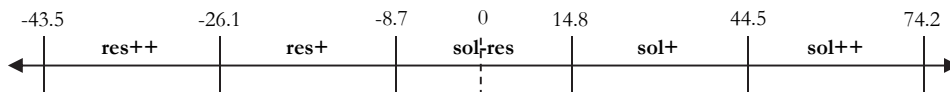
Heuristic comparison of six welfare cultures
(conservatism-liberalism axis)

Relative comparison

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
c001						
Divergence of lower from higher value	85.4%	97.6%	82.8%	69.1%	97.4%	77.3%
Label	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib++
Label value	2	2	2	2	2	2
c002						
Divergence of lower from higher value	36.9%	61.9%	65.1%	54.2%	70.7%	66.9%
Label	lib+	lib++	cons++	cons++	lib++	cons++
Label value	1	2	-2	-2	2	-2
d058						
Divergence of lower from higher value	14.7%	71.6%	63.0%	86.7%	92.0%	67.0%
Label	cons+	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib++
Label value	-1	2	2	2	2	2
g043						
Divergence of lower from higher value	69.8%	69.5%	56.6%	46.7%	76.5%	1.3%
Label	lib++	lib++	lib++	lib+	lib++	cons-lib
Label value	2	2	2	1	2	0
LABEL VALUE: ø [c001; c002; d058; g043]	**1**	**2**	**1**	**0.75**	**2**	**0.5**
LABEL	**lib+**	**lib++**	**lib+**	**lib+**	**lib++**	**lib+**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (-2) to strong liberalism (2)

-2		-1.2		-0.4		0.4		1.2		2
	cons++		**cons+**		**cons-lib**		**lib+**		**lib++**	
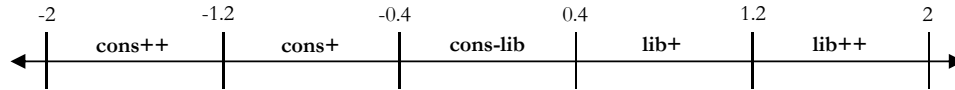
Absolute comparison

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Σ lib [c001; c002; d058; g043]	220.5	270.0	205.6	207.0	287.6	182.3
Σ cons [c001; c002; d058; g043]	111.7	58.8	121.0	106.7	39.0	127.7
Σ lib − Σ cons	108.8	211.2	84.6	100.3	248.6	54.6
LABEL	**lib+**	**lib++**	**lib+**	**lib+**	**lib++**	**lib+**

Heuristic spectrum: From a conservative-liberal mix (0) to strong liberalism (248.6)

|			0	49.7		149.2		248.6
	[cons++]	**[cons+]**	**cons-lib**		**lib+**		**lib++**	
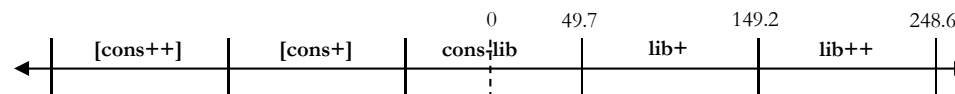
APPENDIX 4.3

Heuristic comparison of six welfare systems
(solidarism-residualism axis)

Relative comparison (public spending)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Public spending (% of GDP)	23.2	30.2	24.1	27.8	29.8	23.6
Label	res++	sol++	res++	sol+	sol++	res++
Label value	-2	2	-2	1	2	-2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (23.2) to strong solidarism (30.2)

23.2		24.6		26.0		27.4		28.8		30.2
	res++		**res+**		**sol-res**		**sol+**		**sol++**	
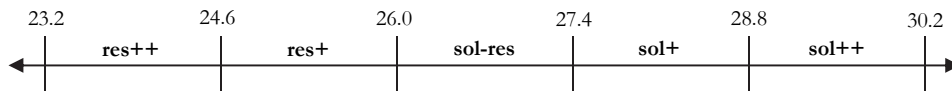
Relative comparison (private spending)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Private spending (% of GDP)	6.7	2.9	6.3	2.3	3.2	2.2
Label	res++	sol++	res++	sol++	sol+	sol++
Label value	-2	2	-2	2	1	2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (6.7) to strong solidarism (2.2)

6.7		5.8		4.9		4.0		3.1		2.2
	res++		**res+**		**sol-res**		**sol+**		**sol++**	
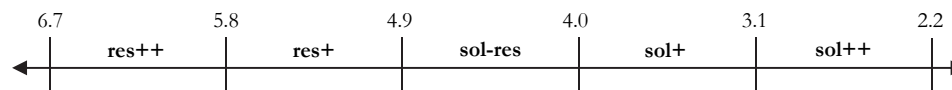
Relative comparison (total)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
LABEL VALUE: ø [public; private]	**-2**	**2**	**-2**	**1.5**	**1.5**	**0**
LABEL	**res++**	**sol++**	**res++**	**sol++**	**sol++**	**sol-res**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (-2) to strong solidarism (2)
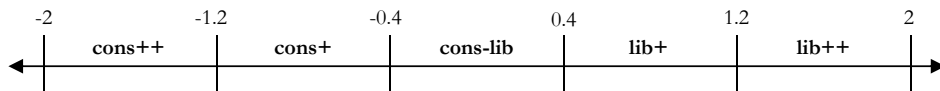
APPENDIX 4.4

Heuristic comparison of six welfare systems
(conservatism-liberalism axis)

Relative comparison (employment protection)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Employment protection, 2008	2.13	1.77	1.10	2.38	2.18	1.32
Label	cons++	cons-lib	lib++	cons++	cons++	lib++
Label value	-2	0	2	-2	-2	2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (2.38) to strong liberalism (1.10)

```
2.38          2.12          1.87          1.61          1.36          1.10
   ◄───  cons++    │    cons+    │   cons-lib   │    lib+    │    lib++    ───►
```
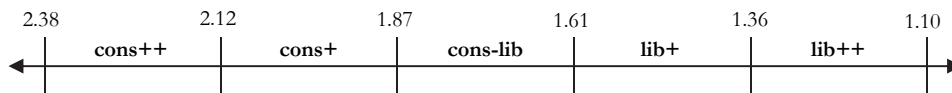
Relative comparison (childcare)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Children 0-3 in formal childcare, 2010 (in%)	50	78	35	22	51	29
Label	cons-lib	lib++	cons+	cons++	cons-lib	cons++
Label value	0	2	-1	-2	0	-2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (22) to strong liberalism (78)

```
22            33.2          44.4          55.6          66.8          78
   ◄───  cons++    │    cons+    │   cons-lib   │    lib+    │    lib++    ───►
```
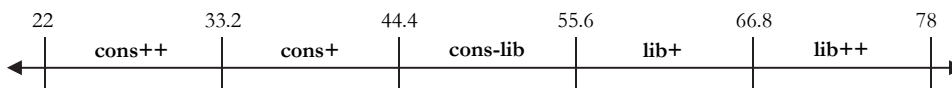
Relative comparison (total)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
LABEL VALUE: ø [empl. prot.; childcare]	**-1**	**1**	**0.5**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**
LABEL	cons+	lib+	lib+	cons++	cons+	cons-lib

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (-2) to strong liberalism (2)
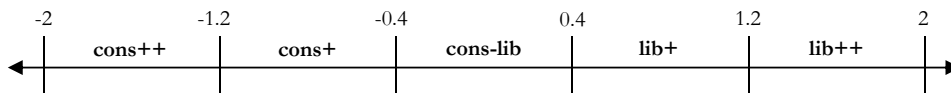
Heuristic comparison of six stratification systems
(solidarism-residualism axis)

Relative comparison (income inequality)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Gini, after taxes and transfers	0.29	0.25	0.34	0.34	0.26	0.3
Label	sol-res	sol++	res++	res++	sol++	sol-res
Label value	0	2	-2	-2	2	0

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (0.34) to strong solidarism (0.25)

0.34		0.322		0.304		0.286		0.268		0.25
	res++		res+		sol-res		sol+		sol++	
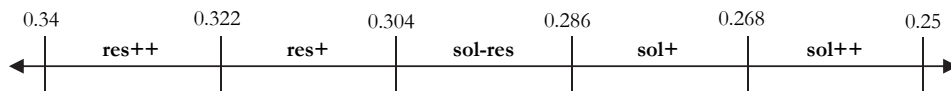
Relative comparison (poverty rate)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Poverty rate, after taxes and transfers (in%)	3.77	2.35	5.88	6.4	3.94	3.5
Label	sol+	sol++	res++	res++	sol+	sol+
Label value	1	2	-2	-2	1	1

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (6.4) to strong solidarism (2.35)

6.4		5.59		4.78		3.97		3.16		2.35
	res++		res+		sol-res		sol+		sol++	
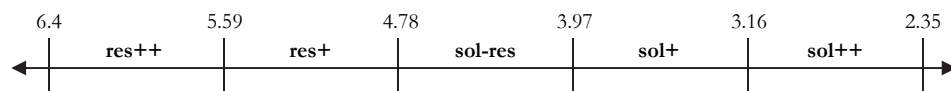
Relative comparison (total)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
LABEL VALUE: ø [Gini; poverty]	**0.5**	**2**	**-2**	**-2**	**1.5**	**0.5**
LABEL	**sol+**	**sol++**	**res++**	**res++**	**sol++**	**sol+**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (-2) to strong solidarism (2)

-2		-1.2		-0.4		0.4		1.2		2
	cons++		**cons+**		**cons-lib**		**lib+**		**lib++**	
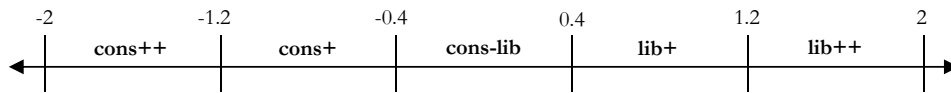
Heuristic comparison of six stratification systems
(conservatism-liberalism axis)

Relative comparison (unemployment by gender)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Female minus male unemployment, 2010	1.00	0.77	0.78	1.26	0.95	0.58
Label	cons+	lib+	lib+	cons++	cons-lib	lib++
Label value	-1	1	1	-2	0	2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (1.26) to strong liberalism (0.58)

Relative comparison (unemployment by migration status)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
Migrant minus total unemployment, 2010	1.78	1.73	1.03	1.31	1.79	1.15
Label	cons++	cons++	lib++	lib+	cons++	lib++
Label value	-2	-2	2	1	-2	2

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (1.79) to strong liberalism (1.03)
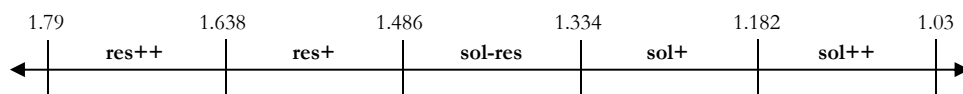
Relative comparison (total)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
LABEL VALUE: ø [fem. residue; migr. residue]	**-1.5**	**-0.5**	**1.5**	**-0.5**	**-1**	**2**
LABEL	**cons++**	**cons+**	**lib++**	**cons+**	**cons+**	**lib++**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong conservatism (-2) to strong liberalism (2)
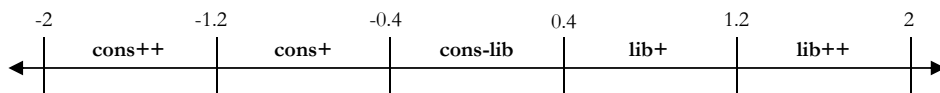
APPENDIX 4.7

Heuristic comparison of the stratification effects of six ALMP systems (solidarism-residualism axis)

Relative comparison (ALMP expenditure)

	NL	DK	UK	IT	SE	IE
ALMP expenditure (as% of GDP), 2009	1.05	1.40	0.24	0.36	0.80	0.74
LABEL	**sol+**	**sol++**	**res++**	**res++**	**sol-res**	**sol-res**
LABEL VALUE	**1**	**2**	**-2**	**-2**	**0**	**0**

Heuristic spectrum: From strong residualism (0.24) to strong solidarism (1.40)
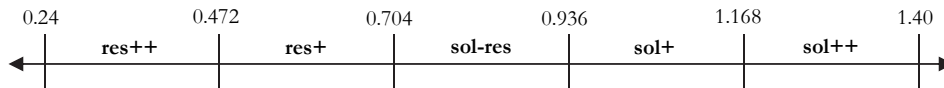
Distribution of housewives by age group in the EVS, 2008-10
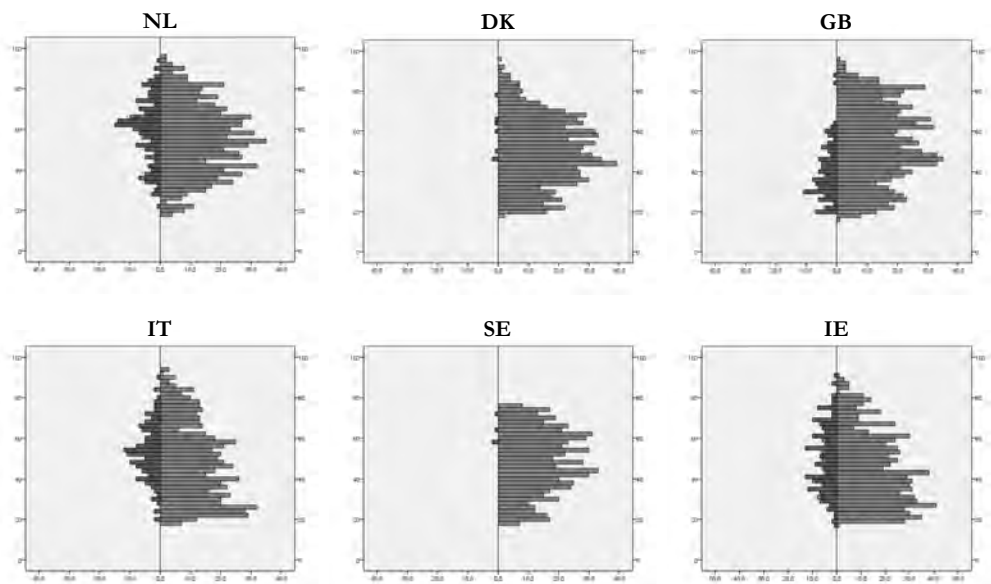
Housewives (left) versus non-housewives (right) by age-group. EVS item *x028 (employment status)*, 5=housewife, not otherwise employed.

A P P E N D I X 6

ALMP participants by type of action

		2007	2008	2009	2010
Labour market services					
NL	*Men*	87,650	81,420	103,950	110,940
	Women	111,220	109,210	118,180	120,540
	Ratio m/w	0.79	0.75	0.88	0.92
DK	*Men*	6,274	7,024	10,001	
	Women	8,366	8,732	10,300	
	Ratio m/w	0.75	0.80	0.97	
Training					
DK	*Men*	22,705	26,942	31,112	37,968
	Women	31,075	34,412	33,796	41,337
	Ratio m/w	0.73	0.78	0.92	0.92
Employment incentives					
NL	*Men*	19,500	17,990	16,310	13,930
	Women	16,000	14,470	11,870	9,540
	Ratio m/w	1.22	1.24	1.37	1.46
DK	*Men*	7,530	7,799	11,359	20,719
	Women	10,913	10,889	13,000	18,959
	Ratio m/w	0.69	0.72	0.87	1.09
UK	*Men*	19,260			
	Women	17,480			
	Ratio m/w	1.10			
Direct job creation					
UK	*Men*	5,250	6,200	5,990	
	Women	1,950	2,100	1,960	
	Ratio m/w	2.69	2.95	3.06	

Source: Eurostat.

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Acknowledgements

Active welfare states have a mission: Making citizens self-sufficient via paid employment. In practice, this encompasses both enabling instruments such as training and intensive counselling, and demanding instruments such as job-search monitoring and sanctions. This study takes an inside look at three active welfare states: The Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain. Based on extensive interview material, the book gives a detailed overview of how jobcentre caseworkers treat unemployed clients, co-build jobcentre organizations, and discursively justify their activation strategies. By showing how the practice of activation is systematically shaped by the wider policy environment, this book offers valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners dealing with active labour market policies.

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