

Chapter 2: A theory of effective policies on social exclusion

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we would like to introduce a new theory of effectiveness of social policies. It emerged on the basis of three observations we made in research we did among young people in disadvantaged neighborhoods in the city of Rotterdam and on policies and services for these young people to support them in their path through education into the labor market (Spies, Tan & Davelaar 2016).

The first observation was that the most important result of policies aimed at stimulating participation of young people in education and work, is drop out. Out of 4300 young people that applied for support at the central youth counter (one-stop-shop for education, work, care and income support) between June 2013 and June 2014, after one year 840 had found a job or re-entered education, 1800 had dropped out in some phase of the process, and 1600 were still on benefits. Those who did find work or returned to school did so mostly on their own strength: more than half did not participate in a program. We do not know what happened to young people after they dropped out. Many probably found a way to provide for themselves. It is also very likely that quite a few are not able to manage on their own strength and with their activities disappear from the radar and do not get the support they need. They are probably the ones with most disadvantaged social backgrounds (Spies 1996). Even if part of the drop outs still found a job, these results can only to a limited extent be attributed to the policies, interventions or programs they participated in. By and large, unintended by-products seem to be the most important result of the social system as a whole. Of course, this is from an effectiveness perspective. From a legitimacy perspective these results are often seen as successful prevention of misuse of the social system.

The second observation we made was that most young people as well as neighborhood professionals we interviewed had a negative perception of most policies and services available to young people. A youth worker said: "young people only go to the youth counter if they have to, but they don't expect anything from it". Young people do not see much value in the 'opportunities' they are being offered, and even if they are interesting with regard to the content of the work, they do not lead to a real job. For example, two young people with migrant backgrounds independently from each other, wrote a job application twice, once with their own name on it, and once with the Dutch sounding name of a friend on it. The latter was invited both times, while they themselves were not. If discrimination is the problem, they do not think that job application training is going to help them. Many young people also said that they do not feel they are being taken serious, and that rules and procedures are in the way of them getting ahead. For example, one young woman who tried to start a babysitting service at home, after a number of disappointing pathways towards a cleaning job, could use support in making a business plan. However, her caseworker decided that she had to do cleaning work in return for her benefit as he had little faith in her initiative towards self-employment.

The third observation we made was that services and programs available to young people in Rotterdam are quite diverse, ranging from training, work experience, guidance and mental health care, to creating and offering job opportunities and support in making a business plan. Also the programs that are available seem to be successful in terms of outflow into employment or education compared to others that are not contracted or

provided by the municipality, and they seem to have a consistent logic of intervention. When looking closer, in case studies we did on some of these programs (see chapter X for the case study on the Buzinezzclub), they all mentioned that they had difficulties with some groups of young people that were referred to them, but were not really equipped to help. The reason stated is often 'some participants have too many problems and need more intensive guidance than we can offer'. It is normally framed as a quantitative problem of 'too little'. That may be the true in some cases and in some contexts, especially in Eastern European countries. However, with the diversity of services available in the Netherlands it seems that at least part of the problem is a qualitative mismatch between programs and participants.

Against the backdrop of these observations the question is how to explain the rather limited success of interventions and programs that in itself appear to be effective, at least compared to others, and how to strengthen the logic of intervention and to increase effectiveness. In the following sections we develop a theory to this end, by combining five typologies. Typologies we see as instruments to make complexity manageable in professional conduct and in policy making (Layder 1992). In our case they provide a two-dimensional space in which interventions and people can be positioned to make relations and connections visible, and that can help to answer the question what kind of intervention is adequate in which case. The aim is not classification, but heuristic: to aid in finding a strong(er) logic of intervention. We connect five typologies:

- positions vis-à-vis social inclusion and exclusion;
- views of people;
- individual ambitions and abilities in relation to social participation.
- discourses on social exclusion;
- interventions that consist of both a content (forms of social policy) and an approach (relational);

By connecting these we construct a basic model of types of interventions and corresponding ideal-types of participants and vice versa, and of a framework that provides a way to match these and to develop in each case a strong logic of intervention. The model differs from other typologies, such as Merton's typology of deviance (Merton 1957), through its multilayered nature and its relational focus on matching intervention and people.

The central argument we would like to put forward is that the effectiveness of a policy, and the effectiveness of the system, depends on the extent to which the assumptions on which it is based hold true for those addressed or affected. In other words: the question whether the view of people implied in a policy or intervention matches the image of self of the individual addressed by this policy or intervention. Or more specifically: matches the theory they have about themselves (Harré 1985). Often in this central argument, the image of self (identity) is taken as the 'dependent variable', as policies may actually shape people's identity. While this is undoubtedly true, the other form causality is also true: the subjectivity of clients – their cooperation or resistance – partly shapes policies (Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1984; Lipsky 1980). The main argument we would like to put forward is that in this duality, the extent to which there is a match between the assumptions about people and their self-assumptions (or theory about themselves), largely determines the effectiveness of policies and interventions. In professional

practice, it is not the general plausibility of assumptions that is relevant, only the extent to which they hold true in specific cases.

2. Social inclusion and exclusion and implicit views of people as concepts to link policies and people's own strategies

2.1 Social inclusion and exclusion as a situation

In the EU the language of social inclusion and exclusion has mostly replaced previous discourses on poverty. Social inclusion we loosely define as being about money (income, poverty, debts), social participation (work, possibly also education or civil society activities – taking part in societies most important functional systems), a feeling of belonging (identity, shame and pride), and sharing dominant social norms and values (obeying the law, as the legal system is exclusionary by intent).

Vobruba (2007) distinguishes different positions regarding social in- and exclusion. Traditionally, in a top-down policy perspective, social exclusion is seen as bad and social inclusion as good. Most social systems define social inclusion (as a situation) in a narrow way, as having a low-skilled job in the secondary labour market. However, people themselves may disagree with institutionalized normality being good. For example:

- some people are in some ways socially included but not happy about it, e.g. working poor who feel 'locked in' rather than included, or people who aspire a 'normal' existence and subjectively feel they belong, but are not (or not yet) able to get a job;
- some people are socially excluded by choice (e.g. monks, artists, creatives, entrepreneurs, criminals, whizzkids involved in their cyber communities).

We use this model to distinguish different types of people among social assistance clients, who are all to some extent (money, participation, feeling of belonging, sharing important social norms and values) socially excluded.

In theory, in opposition to social inclusion as normal, three types of not-normal can be distinguished: social exclusion, self-exclusion, and unsatisfactory inclusion – feeling locked in rather than included (Vobruba 2007).

2.2 Inclusion and exclusion as a process

Social inclusion or exclusion not only refers to a situation, but also to a process. Three interconnected levels can be distinguished in which social inclusion and exclusion is produced and reproduced:

- the macro-level of the social division of opportunities;
- the meso-level of a supporting or limiting social network (family, friends, neighbourhood);
- the micro-level of individual factors (habitus, competences, abilities and limitations).

In the lives of people these levels are integrated and can be said to constitute their ability: a combination of their competences, resources and opportunities. In policies, however, these constitute three rather separate levels for interventions that aim to increase people's ability and self-sufficiency. With regard to interventions, especially the process-side of social inclusion and exclusion is relevant. In section 4 we link different discourses and intervention strategies to these different levels. In section 3 we come back to people's own strategies regarding social participation, according to their abilities and ambitions.

2.3 Different views of people

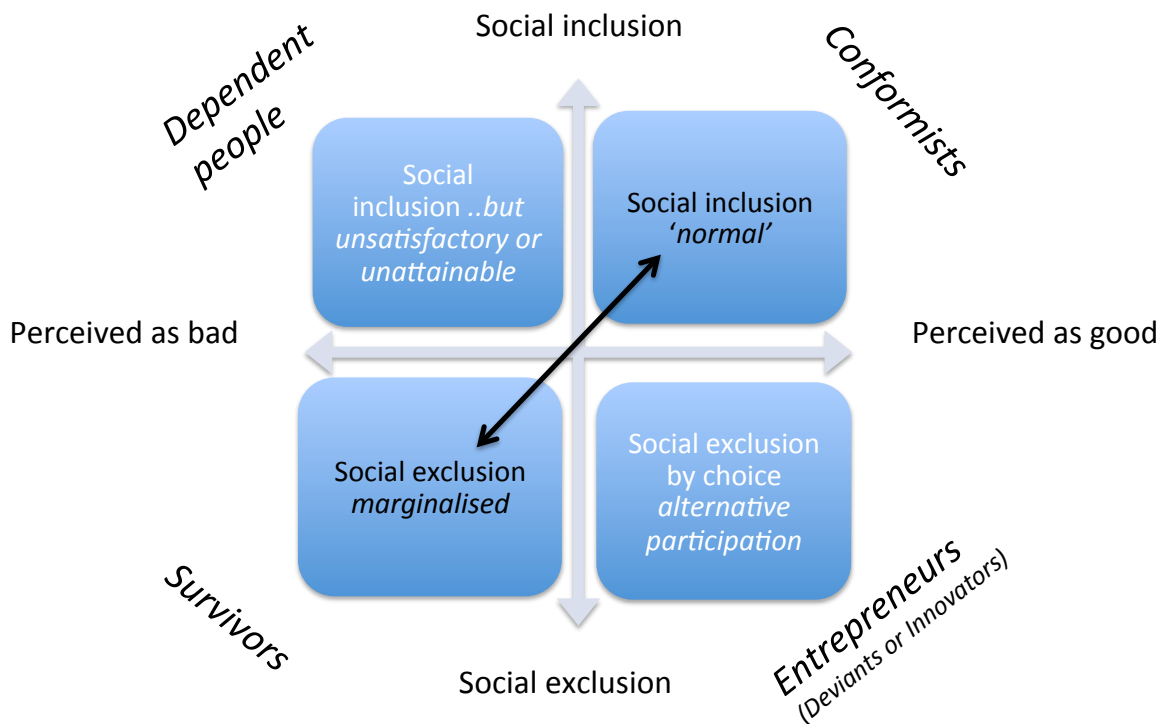
Applied to young people at the margins of society, or to social assistance clients, these four 'sociological positions' (section 2.1) imply different views of, and assumptions about people. In figure 1, the upper right quadrant assumes *conformist* people who are 'close to normal'. The only thing lacking for social inclusion is probably a job. They feel they belong, they conform to rules and norms, any debts are manageable. They mainly need an opportunity: a job.

The upper left quadrant assumes *dependent* people who seem to be stuck, lacking the ability to move. They either feel included (identity, culturally, in norms and values) but do not manage to find or keep a job, or they have a job but feel stuck in it, lack a feeling of belonging. They need other people to help them get ahead.

The lower left quadrant assumes *survivors* – people in survival mode who live day by day, try to make ends meet, solve problems today by creating even bigger problems for tomorrow, taking opportunities as they come along whether they be criminal activities, shadow economy jobs or regular, temporary jobs.

The lower right quadrant assumes people who are different, whose ambitions do not correspond to mainstream society's view of 'normal'. We like to call them *entrepreneurs*. Different can mean both deviant and innovative. They can be criminals (the 'big guys', the organizers, as opposed to those who are often caught first by the police, to be found among the *survivors*). They can also be innovative entrepreneurs in the normal economic sense – in this case not yet at the point of a start-up, as they are still on benefits. Or they can be people with alternative (non-conformist) values and ambitions for social participation.

Figure 1: positions vis-à-vis social inclusion and exclusion and views of people



This scheme integrates objective and subjective perceptions of social inclusion and exclusion. As such it is an adequate tool for linking policies/interventions and people's own strategies – a matching tool, so to speak. The different views of people linked to the

four positions can be used to provide a general idea of assumptions underlying different kinds of policies and interventions (see section 4), and also to sketch a general picture of different strategies people use with regard to social participation (see section 3). Both the different situations and the implicit views of people serve as uniting concepts, for linking objective and subjective perceptions.

3. People's own strategies regarding social participation

As the central dimensions to analyze people's strategies we take *ability* (horizontal axis) and *ambition* (vertical axis). In the scheme above the horizontal axis consists of the subjective experience of a situation of inclusion or exclusion. For an individual we take this experience to reflect a lack of choice, or having options to choose from respectively. In other words: as reflecting different degrees of agency, as determined by one's ability. In line with the different levels (micro, meso, macro) we distinguished in section 2.2, *ability* we see as consisting of human capital (competences), social capital (network and resources), and the ability to see, create and use opportunities. In short: all resources available to an individual to achieve something. What is relevant depends on their ambition. The central question, to us, is to what extent someone has what it takes to realize their ambition.

Ambition refers to the vertical axis of the scheme above, the dimension of social inclusion or exclusion. Ambition can have different directions. The first direction is social participation through work in the secondary labour market (i.e. normality as defined in the social system). Opposed to this are (a) resignation and (b) alternative forms of social participation (subcultural, entrepreneurial, criminal). Alternative ambitions can be both deviant and innovative. Together, ambition and ability constitute a strategy in relation to social participation. In an analogy: a steering wheel and an accelerator.

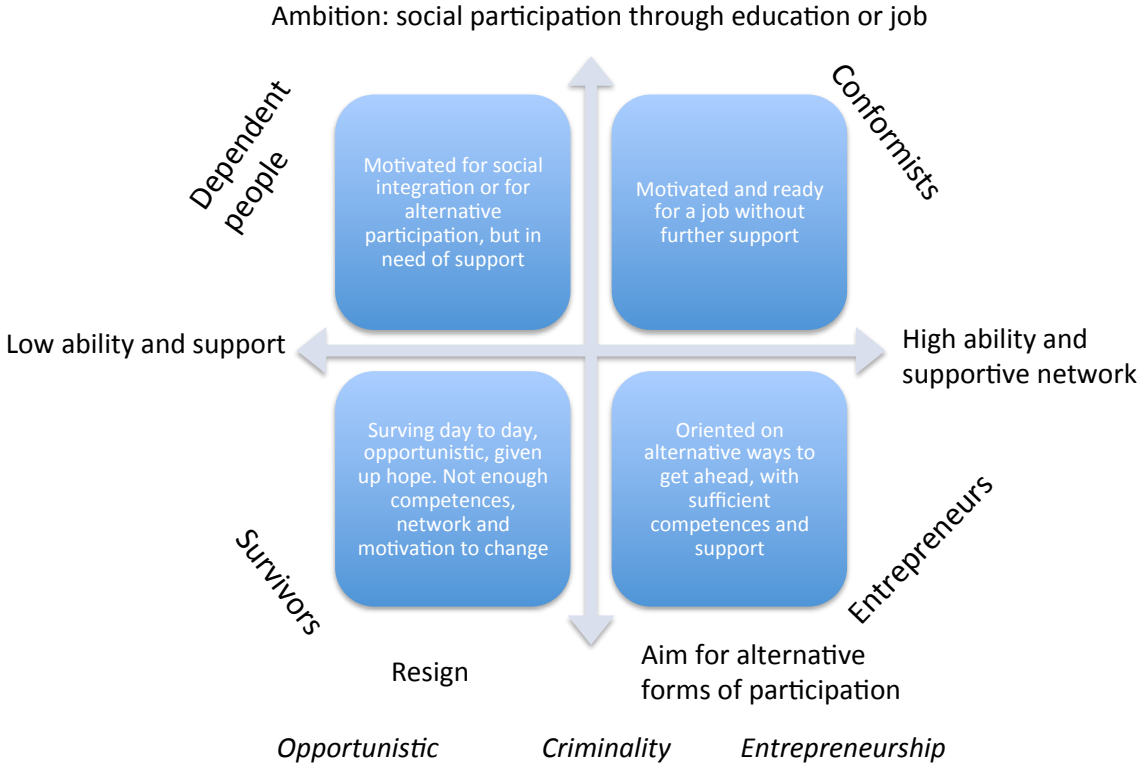
Analysing strategies on the basis of ambition and ability implies a reduction of complexity. We do this for several reasons. Firstly, *ambition* and *ability* (or motivation and competences) are core concepts in almost all social policies. They are the basis for determining the right to a benefit, for own strength, and for social participation and contributing to society. Secondly, this way of looking links to common sense: what people can and want is highly relevant for what we can expect from them. This means that policy delivery does not need to be dependent on experts, expert systems and a top-down approach in which people do not necessarily feel ownership of steps that are taken. Thirdly, it is a reduction of complexity that still provides a lot of room for improvement of existing practices.

Still, *ambition* and *ability* are somewhat problematic concepts. Many people are not really able to answer the question what it is that they can and what they want. *Ambition* suggests free choice and a voluntaristic view of people. In a more deterministic view, people can also be regarded as walking a path that is determined by nature and nurture. *Being* (who are you and what is your path?) can therefore be regarded as a complementary concept for *wanting*; one looks to the past, the other to the future in order to get a picture of where one is heading. Also, ambition is not only about words, but also about commitment, confidence and habit.

Ability partly consists of practical action that is not always easy to explain (Bourdieu 1984). Competences consist of knowledge, skills and attitude. Constructing a picture of

someone’s ambition and ability can sometimes be done by directly asking. More often it implies listening closely, noticing when someone’s eyes start to gleam, and noticing what is not talked about. Looking at someone’s life history and biography, and the threads that seem to emerge from this; trying to derive people’s competences from what they have achieved so far.

Figure 2: Individual strategies and views of people



4. Policy discourses, implicit views of people and intervention strategies

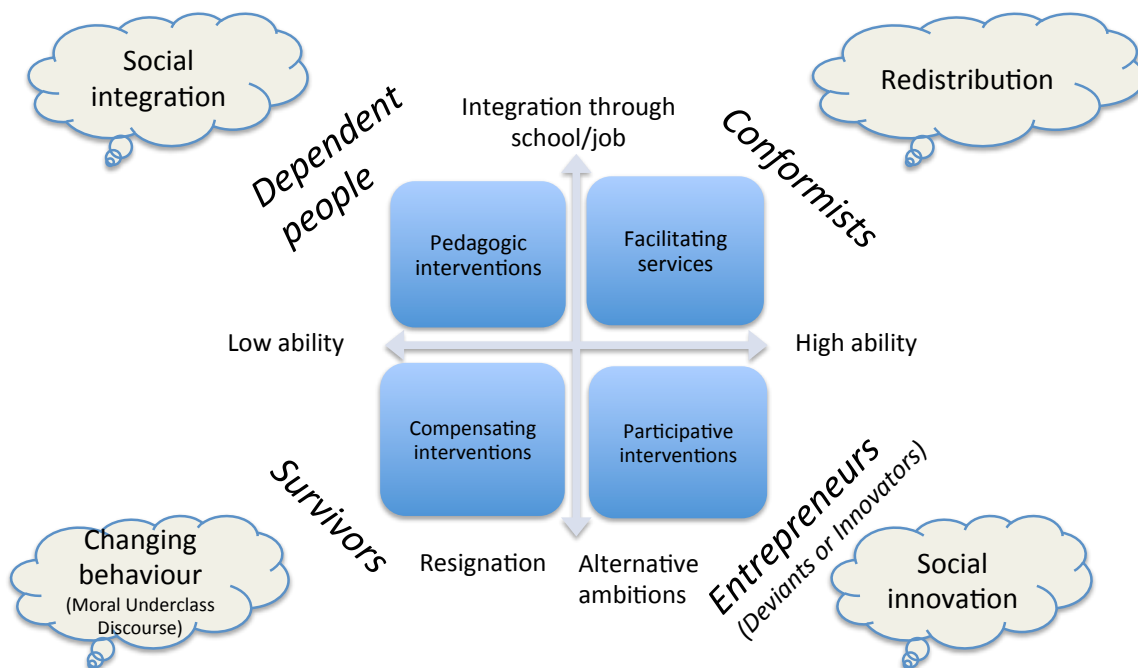
4.1 Policy discourses and their views of people

The four ‘sociological positions’ and different views of, and assumptions about, people (section 2) not only correspond to different individual strategies regarding social participation (section 3), but also correspond to four different discourses on social exclusion. Three of these are distinguished by Levitas (2005): a redistribution discourse (politically in most EU countries: socialist parties), a social integration discourse (politically: social democratic parties) and a moral underclass discourse (politically: populist parties). In addition a fourth discourse can be distinguished that seems to be popular in the European Union and with some green parties and liberal parties: a social innovation discourse¹. These discourses share the same views of people as outlined above:

¹ Here we refer to a more specific notion of co-creation and grass-roots initiatives, i.e. a particular, narrow understanding of social innovation. In a broader understanding social innovation is about meeting social needs in a better way, addressing new social needs and increasing people’s capacities to act, and can address all quadrants of figure 3.

- the redistribution discourse assumes *conformist* people: it assumes people who, when provided with opportunities, will use these opportunities towards social inclusion, to realize a 'normal' existence: a job, a family, a house and so on. This discourse addresses the macro level in social exclusion (see section 2.2), and tries to change the social division of opportunities.
- The social integration discourse assumes *dependent* people: it assumes people who, when taught soft skills and competences, will be able to use opportunities towards social inclusion. It assumes that people lack competences and a supportive social network, but in essence are motivated to work and contribute to society. This discourse addresses the micro and meso levels in social exclusion: it tries to build human and social capital (competences and social network).
- The moral underclass discourse assumes *survivors*: people in survival mode who are not-so-social and behave as victims in a way that can be a nuisance to other people. This discourse addresses individual behavior, the micro level of social self-exclusion. It assumes people need to be pointed the way and taught competences and soft skills, to use opportunities towards social inclusion
- The social innovation discourse assumes *entrepreneurs*: it assumes creative, entrepreneurial people in their own way, with talents and ambitions that can be developed towards innovative social participation. Their being different is perceived as a potential. This discourse addresses mostly social capital – developing a social network in which entrepreneurs can flourish. Alternatively, a criminological version of this discourse assumes deviant people: dangerous criminals with a potential to organize a business. In this version the same types of interventions (addressing the social network) are proposed 'in reverse', to counteract criminal activities.

Figure 3: Policy discourse, views of people and intervention strategies



4.2 Interventions

Interventions we regard as a combination of a policy-content and a communication approach on a relational level. Regarding content several types of policy can be

distinguished that target the *macro-level* of the social division of opportunities, the *meso-level* of social networks and communities, and the *micro-level* of individual competences, soft skills and mindset.

Micro-level policies include building (self)confidence, developing competences through training and work experience, changing people's way of thinking through cognitive interventions and removing barriers through compensating actions. Meso-level policies can be distinguished in two types: building social capital by supporting people in bridging distances to employers and institutions and by developing their social network, and strengthening human and social capital by creating communities that enable people to develop a positive identity – especially those who feel different often equate being different with lower social value. Macro-level policies include creating and offering opportunities through stimulating general job growth and positive action, among others through wage subsidies, social return agreements to stimulate employers to take on people on benefits in return for a government contract, individual job hunting to find job openings for people without placing them in competition with others (to avoid discriminatory selection processes), and provision of micro credits for start ups of businesses.

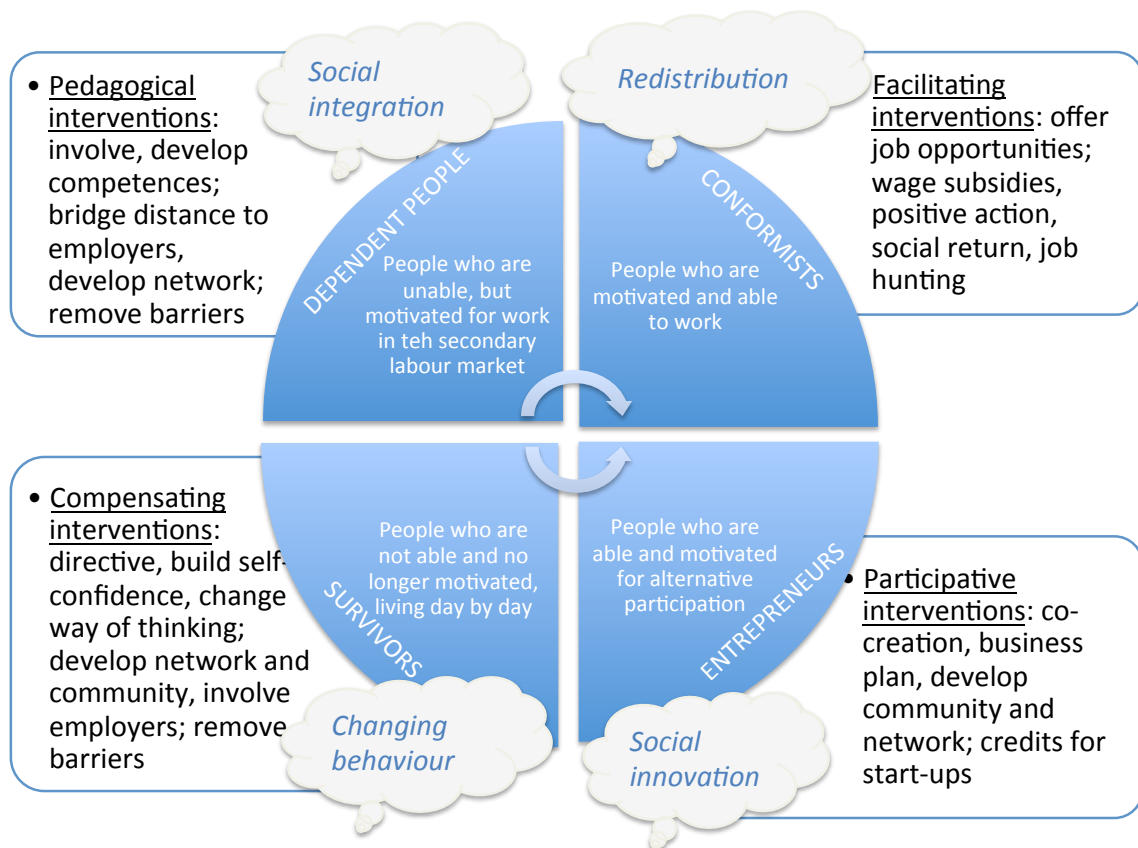
In addition, policies also require making contact, building trust, clearly communicating expectations, and enforcing the law when individual strategies move beyond legal boundaries.

The content of these policies in a relational sense is normally embedded in different approaches. The approaches we distinguish are inspired by Hersey & Blanchard (1977). They distinguish two dimensions, of competences and of commitment, which can be high or low. However, the opposite of high commitment can be both 'no commitment' and 'alternative commitment'. We prefer the term ambition to commitment, but like the notion that ambition is linked to a theory of oneself, and includes mental aspects (will), a feeling of commitment, and self-confidence. Hersey & Blanchard distinguish directive, coaching, stimulating and delegating styles. Adapted to our context of social exclusion policies and with a modification of the dimension of ambition to also include alternative ambitions, we distinguish a facilitating approach, a pedagogical approach, a compensatory approach, and a participatory approach. These approaches, again, fit the model very well (see figure 3 and 4).

5. Conclusion: subjectively logical interventions resulting from adequate matching

When we link the preceding typologies of people's own strategies (section 3) and intervention strategies (section 4) through the uniting concepts of views of people and situations with regard to social inclusion and exclusion (section 2), we arrive at a model that matches assumptions of policies to people's self concepts. If the effectiveness of a policy depends largely on the extent to which the assumptions on which it is based hold true for those addressed or affected, this model distinguishes four different ideal types of logical intervention for different ideal types of people.

Figure 4: subjectively logical intervention model



The model is summarized in a different way in table 1. As stated in the introduction, the central hypothesis is that if there is a match between the view of people, and the assumptions implicit in an intervention on the one hand, and strategies of actual participants on the other hand, the intervention is effective. If there is a mismatch, we can expect resistance, drop-out, not so good results or problems getting worse.

Analytically we can distinguish three types of problems. The first is mentioned above: a mismatch between intervention strategies and people's own strategies. For example, the social system often has a hard time with *entrepreneurs*, whom the system tries to discipline into low skilled work in the secondary labor market, which often meets with resistance. An alternative approach is to go along with their ambitions towards alternative forms of social participation. Another example is that the social system often points out people's own responsibility to everyone asking for support. Some people do not need to be told, others are being overcharged, and yet others it helps to take direction of their lives. An approach that is adequate for some people is applied to all people, which can have counterproductive effects. Also, both *conformists* and *survivors* blame the system for their social exclusion, the first rightfully so, the second by way of an excuse. Generally speaking, in developed social systems (such as the Netherlands) most of the policies and interventions distinguished in the model above already exist. However, people are often referred to these different policies on the basis of institutional criteria rather than on the basis of the view of people, or specifically on the basis of matching assumptions in interventions to actual strategies of people (Spies & Van Berkel 2001; Spies & Van de Vrie 2014).

A second reason for negative results could be that a certain type of policy or intervention strategy is missing. Social innovation debates, for example, often focus on the lower right quadrant of the model. In most social systems there seems to be a quantitative and qualitative gap regarding participative support for people who are able and motivated for alternative participation. Policies for bottom-up support and developing grass-roots initiatives could fill in this gap.

A third type of problems is associated with the type of dynamic in the model. The logic of the social system normally works clockwise: starting in the lower left corner first build or regulate motivation, then competences, than offer opportunities. There is no reason to assume, however, that this should be the natural sequence. That depends on the starting situation and of the ambition and ability of those involved.

We use this model to analyze the policies and initiatives described in the following chapters. In the concluding chapter we will assess the broader potential of these cases, and address the question to what extent these can be interpreted as social innovation – that is: new approaches to fill gaps in existing services – and to what extent they can be interpreted as a paradigm shift – a different way of looking and using existing approaches, as an alternative to prevailing work first policies.

Type	Position re: social inclusion and exclusion	Discourse	Ability and ambition	Intervention approach
<i>Conformist people</i>	Socially included in feeling and mindset, only lacking a job	<i>Redistribution</i> Create job opportunities. If people get a chance, they will use it. <u>Social inequality</u> as social problem	Being able and motivated to participate in a way that the social system defines as normal (i.e. job in the secondary labor market)	<i>Facilitating approach</i> , offer opportunities, create job openings, social return agreements with employers
<i>Dependent people</i>	a. Socially included in feeling and mindset, but not in participation. Lacking ability to get or keep a job. b. Socially included regarding job (working poor), but not in feeling of belonging	<i>Social integration</i> : strengthen self-reliance, develop competences and motivation, offer a perspective Social integration as an individual <u>problem of a lack of soft skills and competences</u>	Motivated to participate in a way that the social system defines as normal (secondary labor market), but lacking competences and/or supportive social network. Motivation can suffer.	<i>Pedagogical approach</i> , “classis” re-integration (training and work experience)
<i>Survivors</i>	Socially excluded both in feeling (of not belonging) and in non-participation	<i>Moral underclass</i> : non-social victim-behaviour that poses a nuisance to other people, which needs to be dealt with strictly and strongly. Interpreted positively: empowerment and changing mindset <u>Social exclusion as an individual problem</u>	Unable and no longer motivated to participate, no hope or wish for social inclusion, only partly self-reliant. Problems have grown out of hand, living day by day, re-active rather than in control	<i>Compensating approach</i> , directive, build self-confidence and discipline, change way of thinking, remove barriers Also: build trust, empowerment
<i>Entrepreneurial people</i>	Social exclusion by choice	<i>Social innovation</i> through creativity, entrepreneurship in their own way <i>Deviance</i> Dangerous criminality because of different norms and values	Not motivated for social participation as defined in the social system; alternative ambitions, non-conformist, with talents and competences to shape these ambitions. Belonging through subcultures, communities or life styles.	<i>Participative approach</i> Co-creation, entrepreneurship, create communities

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