Social protection and labour market policies for vulnerable groups from a social investment perspective

The case of 'Scène Active' in Geneva

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1. Introduction

This report was prepared in the framework of the Europe H2020 project 'Rebuilding an inclusive, value based Europe of solidarity and trust through social investments' (RE-InVEST). The RE-InVEST project aims to contribute to more solidary and trustworthy Europe, through an inclusive, powerful and effective social investment strategy at the EU-level. Moreover, the project itself adopts a participative approach that lends a voice to vulnerable groups and civil society organisations. The RE-InVEST consortium consists of members of the informal network 'the Alliances to fight Poverty', a network of civil society organisations, trade unions, policy makers and academics co-ordinated by the Flemish Christian labour movement 'beweging.net', and committed to a more inclusive Europe. The consortium covers a broad range of European countries, both geographically (12 countries, 13 regions) and in terms of representation of different welfare and labour market traditions. The analyses are carried out by the local partners, who consist of NGOs and/or researchers.

In particular, this report is one of the seven national case studies that make up the qualitative research of the RE-InVEST work package 'Investing in social protection and inclusive labour market policies'. The purpose of this work package can be summarised as follows:
- re-assessing the role of social protection and active labour market policies (ALMPs) from a social investment perspective. This means that our theoretical framework, which builds on the key notions of social investment, human rights and capabilities, will be used as the reference framework to evaluate the role of social protection and ALMPs in producing sustainable social inclusion;
- applying this framework to the evaluation of national/regional policies through participatory qualitative research into specific measures in the field of ALMPs and social protection, from the perspective of the most vulnerable groups. Special attention is being devoted to recent reforms and innovations (the EC's Youth Employment Initiative, social activation, social enterprises, tax-benefit reforms, etc.). Mixed research teams have carried out this research in seven countries (England, Portugal, Switzerland, Latvia, Belgium, France and Austria) between September 2016 and June 2017;
- in addition to the national case studies, a statistical analysis is focusing on the distributional effects as well as the effectiveness of social protection systems and ALMPs based on the EU-SILC data, by means of multilevel hazard models;
- the combined findings will result in a synthesis report as well as recommendation papers for the Annual Growth Surveys.

The theoretical framework applied in the RE-InVEST project builds on a human rights and capabilities approach. The model is spelled out in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1   From human rights and capabilities to individual well-being
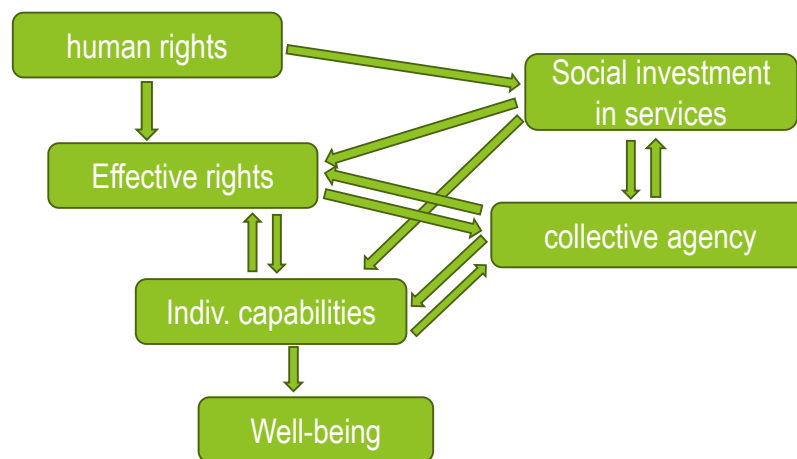
Formal human rights (e.g. right to work, right to social protection) are values, social norms which do not automatically result in improved well-being. For the implementation of such rights (mainly in the field of economic, social and cultural rights), different types of policy measures need to be implemented: legislation, organisation of (public) services, subsidies, social transfers, inspection, judicial enforcement, ... From a capabilities perspective, the welfare system surrounding vulnerable individuals can be seen as a set of conversion factors. Although some legal measures may establish effective rights (e.g. right to a guaranteed minimum income), most policies necessitate additional 'social investment' in individual and collective capabilities through public or subsidised service provision (e.g. training provided by the employment agency) and the transfer of power and resources – either directly to individuals/households (e.g. social benefits), or to government agencies, companies and civil society organisations (e.g. employment or training subsidies). These 'collectives' in turn interact with individuals and may invest in their capabilities.[1] Collectives can enhance or restrain individual capabilities.

The well-being of vulnerable individuals is reflected in their actual levels of functioning in various dimensions of life (family life, social and cultural participation, work, housing, education etc.) but also in the full range of available alternative options in each dimension. Freedom of choice is therefore an essential quality characteristic of social investment policies. For example, 'work first' programmes (prioritising the take-up of low-paid work over training, and irrespective of any match with the job seekers' competences or aspirations) may result in higher short-run employment effects; however, such measures may well constrain the beneficiaries' freedom and future employability to such an extent that their capabilities and well-being are reduced. In the field of social protection, income transfers can be seen as resource supplements that enable households or individuals to invest in their own education, housing, health, mobility - as well as in their children or other dependent household members. From this perspective, generous social protection schemes can foster the employability and social inclusion of vulnerable groups: this perspective predicts the opposite of the 'making work pay' paradigm, which advocates lower benefits - of limited duration - as an incentive to take up work.

RE-InVEST aims at giving vulnerable people a voice through participatory action research that can be used in policy recommendations and advocacy at local, national and EU-level. Participatory action research views participants as co-researchers who have special knowledge about their own situation. Rather than being just interviewed about their experiences or views, vulnerable people are enabled to take part in examining, interpreting, and reflecting on their own social world, shaping their sense of identity, and getting a voice in public deliberation (another key dimension of capabilities).

This necessitates an iterative process of knowledge generation that includes several steps of mutual trust building, knowledge production and sharing, empowerment, newly generated knowledge and action that

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1   Individuals in turn can invest in collective capabilities through contributions and/or voluntary action.

builds upon this knowledge. Crucial for this kind of knowledge generation is the 'merging' or 'crossing of knowledge' that comes from three parts: academic knowledge developed by researchers; experiential knowledge acquired by vulnerable people throughout their lives; and the knowledge of professionals and civil society organisations that work with them (see Figure 1.2). Every research team at local level includes members from these three different backgrounds.

Figure 1.2   Merging of knowledge

In particular, this paper assesses the project Scène Active in Geneva, which offers 40 places for young people between 17 and 25 years old (with a certain flexibility: young people between 15 and 17 years old can also be accepted), who are neither in training, education nor in employment. These young people are thus part of the category of the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). As it is well known, Switzerland is one of the European countries with the lowest rate of school dropout.[2] Yet, precisely because having obtained a diploma has become the norm, the negative consequences of lacking a qualification in terms of higher risk of unemployment and precarious employment are especially strong in Switzerland: Moreover, in recent years many different transition measures have been developed, signalling an overall declining capacity of the formal educational system to include young people in a 'normal' school or educational trajectory. Thus, also in Switzerland, there are an increasing number of NEETs and young people passing through such transition measures (i.e. not following the 'conventional' tracks toward dual apprenticeship or the academic path).

One of the main reasons behind these tendencies seems to be that employers are the sole gatekeepers for accessing (dual) vocational trainings and apprenticeships. This means that employers establish both how many apprenticeships places are available (and in which domains) as well as the criteria for accessing them, which implies that the admission to apprenticeships follows an economic (rather than civic or educational) logic and access to upper secondary education is operated through a market driven mechanism. This makes the offer of apprenticeships also highly dependent on the economic fluctuations of the labour-market. The result is that more than 20% of every cohort cannot find an apprenticeship place (or follow the academic path) and has to enter the transition system. This situation in turn leads to the quantitative extension of so-called 'bridging offers' (transition measures) for young people in such situations. About 20% of all youngsters and 40% of the pupils coming from tracks with 'basic' demands are now enrolled in such programmes. Thus, public intervention has not moved in the direction of regulating or taming the apprenticeship market (i.e. no obligations are imposed on employers to hire apprentices; or the State is not envisaged as a kind of last resort employer for apprentices that could not find a market solution), but rather in that of developing different programmes and measures aimed at improving the marketability of young people. Hence, one can say that there is a form of social investment in this area, with the central objective of raising the rate of upper secondary graduates to 95% (as stated in the federal Programme 'Case Management Vocational Training'). Indeed, enhancing access to upper secondary education is widely envisaged as a silver bullet for

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2   We summarise here some information on the Swiss context. For further detail see our WP3 national report.

reducing later welfare expenditure (the objective of cost containment is central to all reforms of the Swiss welfare State). Yet, the preference for market solutions is not questioned. This is the specificity of the Swiss path to social investment. In this context, supply-side adaptability is clearly privileged at the expenses of demand-side interventions (for a detailed analysis, see Bonvin & Dahmen, 2017).

All in all, the Swiss educational and apprenticeship system has proved to be a highly selective one, where school marks act as signals for employers when they recruit candidates for an apprenticeship. This implies that youngsters with bad marks and other negative signals are disadvantaged in many ways: the lack of apprenticeship places when the economy slows down boosts selective practices, where stigmatisation by employers vis-à-vis pupils with bad school marks or displaying other signals interpreted negatively (lack of motivation, cultural differences, etc.) tend to play a crucial part. Here, market mechanisms do not seem able to solve the problem.

In the specific case of the canton of Geneva, around 1.000 young people each year leave the school without having obtained a qualification (Petrucci & Rastoldo, 2015). In this population, boys, immigrants and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds are overrepresented. However, in explaining the probability of school dropout, the kind of school frequented by the young people is much more important than socioeconomic and gender factors. Hence, the lower the status of the educational track in which one young person is, the higher the probability of his or her school dropout.

Among the many transition measures aimed at re-integrating disadvantaged young people that are proposed in the canton of Geneva, Scène Active is probably one of the most innovative and most participatory programmes.[3] It is of special interest for the RE-InVEST project because it is *explicitly* based on the capability approach as a normative framework of reference. Scène Active is part of the association 'Accroche', which works with disadvantaged young people in the canton of Geneva. The project strives to complement the many interventions already existing in the field of the inclusion of vulnerable young people, focusing especially on the most disadvantaged ones. Indeed, the project targets precisely those young people who are excluded from the official political goals stating that 95% of young people should obtain a professional degree. As the director of Scène Active explains, 'If this objective is reached, who will care about the 5% left?' Scène Active thus aims at supporting disadvantaged young people in the development of their professional and social competences, in the reconstruction of their self-esteem and in the elaboration of a professional project. It is an inclusive and 'low-threshold' programme, which pursues the objective of developing the capabilities of the most disadvantaged young people.

The fact that Scène Active is specifically targeted towards the most disadvantaged young people has important implications for the structure and the functioning of the project. In order to make Scène Active attractive for vulnerable youngsters, the project is focused on the construction of a theatre play to be performed in a true theatre: the participants not only write the plot and develop their own characters but they also construct the scenography, prepare the costumes, elaborate the music and the videos that appear during the play. Thus, 6 workshops or 'ateliers' constitute the project: theatre, music, video, scenography, costumes and cooking. At the beginning of the year the participants choose in which workshop they want to take part – with however the obligation for all participants to attend the workshop 'theatre'. Each workshop is directed by at least one 'maître of atelier' (workshop trainer) or professional teacher (in the case of the atelier theatre, they are two). Furthermore, each participant has to develop his or her own character.

The project lasts nine months. During the first months of Scène Active (from October until January), it is focused almost exclusively on the different workshops: during this period the participants are not stressed with issues relating to their professional inclusion, such as the preparation of motivation letters, CVs and applications. There is already a great pressure in this direction from other institutions (those delivering cash benefits for instance) or from their family. But precisely this aspect related to professional insertion is problematic to implement for these young people. Thus, the basic idea of the project is to focus on other aspects,

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3 Beuret, Bonvin and Dahmen (2015) had the opportunity to assess this project, named Scenic Adventure, in the framework of the SocIEtY EU project 'Social Innovation – Empowering the young for the common good' (FP7).

trying to look for what these people can do and to value these dimensions: 'instead of insisting on those aspects that do not work, the goal is to look for the talent that each young person has' (workshop trainer).

Through the preparation of the play and thanks to the show at the end of the project, which is performed in a true theatre with true spectators, Scène Active tries to re-build the participants' self-esteem. Hence, as the director of the project explains, Scène Active is built on two 'parallel and non-competing goals': the collective project of realising a performance and 40 individual projects of inclusion. 'Ideally after Scène Active, the youngsters should be able to do what they have reason to value' the director says explicitly referring to Amartya Sen's capability approach, which strongly influenced the conceptualisation of Scène Active.

Through the voices of the participants and the professionals working in the project, this report presents the principles and the functioning of Scène Active as well as some of its internal tensions. Furthermore, the impact of Scène Active on the participants is assessed against Sen's capability approach: to what extent does the project Scène Active expand young people's capabilities (their real freedom to lead the kind of life they have reason to value)?

2. Structure, principles and functioning of Scène Active

2.1 Budget, institutional network and the professional team

Scène Active is an experimental or pilot project, which for the moment is established for three years (the year 2016-2017 was the second one). The project has a yearly budget of 800,000 CHF, which comes for the greatest part from private donors. While this budget is sufficient for realising the project in a satisfactory manner, all professionals interviewed have complained that they work in conditions of stress and lack of time. Many have also pointed to the lack of professional social workers. This is especially problematic for the workshops trainers:

'There is a lack of social workers. They are never there during my atelier. I am not an expert of the social domain and I thought that a social worker would have always been with me during the workshop. But this never happens – only if I explicitly ask. I don't know if I do well with the youngsters. This year there was a person doing an internship and I asked her to stay with me at least during the excursions. Because if there is one youngster who does not want to cooperate, what can you do? You leave the others and the artistic dimension for doing social work with this one?' (workshop trainer)

Even if the budget is not very high, the professional team has a large degree of freedom in managing it since the private donors put very few conditions on the use made of the money. This freedom is used by the director for focusing the project on a goal which is hardly measurable: the reconstruction of the self-esteem amongst vulnerable young people.

The project is part of a network of institutions that work in the domain of social inclusion, especially of young people. The project cooperates for example with the institution responsible for social assistance in the canton of Geneva, through which many of the young people get their first knowledge about Scène Active. Sometimes there are also tensions with these collaborating institutions, insofar as they often insist that more room should be given for the search of internships, jobs and trainings within the project. Yet, Scène Active generally focuses - at least in the first part of the programme - on re-building young people's self-esteem, leaving such research for other institutions and/or for a later phase.

Concerning the professional team working in the project Scène Active, it is composed of 7 workshop trainers (costumes, scenography, sound and music, multimedia, cooking and two for the atelier theatre - 440% FTE all in all), three social workers (175% FTE) and one director (100% FTE). The role of the social workers is on the one hand to follow the young people individually, supporting them in the development of their professional projects and on the other hand to facilitate the work in the different ateliers, addressing possible crises and motivation downturns. All young people interviewed are greatly satisfied with the work done by the professionals. The social workers have been largely appreciated for their capacity to anticipate young people's needs: when one of the participants had a problem, it was not even necessary for him or her to ask for help because the social workers were already there, taking the initiative. Furthermore, all young people agree that the social workers are ready to listen to them, without making any judgement upon them. Also the maîtres of atelier are appreciated for their capacity to motivate the youngsters even for activities – especially the theatre – where many of the young people feel uncomfortable in particular at the beginning of the project. The leaders of the workshops were thus able to let the young people try and experiment, giving them confidence. Many of the young people interviewed stressed the importance of having 'true' professionals, experts in the field covered by the workshops. Especially for those young people who want to work in the domains of the arts and of the social, it was very important to have successful examples of people working in these domains. Indeed as a participant to the project says:

Concerning the content of the programme, in Scène Active the young participants write the plot, they construct the scenography, they produce the costumes, the music, the videos, etc. One big difficulty is thus to construct a play which is the expression of their individual and collective desires, fears and worries while at the same time being coherent for the spectators. This year the play was composed of many small sub-plays in order to maximise the possibility for each participant to influence the content of the sub-play in which he or she plays. Furthermore, each participant is asked to develop his or her own character while also the title of the play is democratically chosen: all proposals are taken into account and then it is voted among them.

Next to this direct way of letting the participants influence the content of the play, there is another more indirect way: through the costumes they produce, the scenography that they construct, etc. in the different workshops they also shape the content of the play in an original way. As a maître of atelier explains, in a normal process, the music, the scenography, etc. are developed *after* the plot has been fully developed. In contrast, within Scène Active there is not enough time to wait that the plot is ready before starting the scenography or the costumes. Thus, everything occurs at the same time so that also the scenography influences the content of the plot rather than only the other way round. This original approach of 'co-construction' implies that the scenography, the costumes, the music, etc. provide constraints – but also lines to follow – for the elaboration of the plot. In this context, the advantage is that since the participants work in small groups in the ateliers, each youngster has a great capacity of influencing the content of the plot also in this indirect way.

The large freedom and the possibility of influencing the content of the activities deployed are a great difference with regard to the experiences that the youngsters have had previously, especially at school:

The possibility open to everybody to influence the content of the collective work is for many youngsters a central means for improving their self-esteem so that the individual and the collective dimensions are strongly linked:

While in many of the past (negative) experiences of the youngsters, they felt they were reduced to passive spectators, they (re-)discover thanks to Scène Active the pleasure of being actors, not only of a play but of a life project of their own.

2.2   The principle of non-exclusion between freedom and responsibility

The project Scène Active is based on the principles of freedom and responsibility. The principle of the 'free adhesion' implies that each youngster freely decides to come to Scène Active. At the beginning of the year it is thus necessary to sign a kind of contract between each youngster and the director of the project. Also the rules governing the project are established each year through a collective discussion at the beginning of the programme. It is assumed that the strength of such rules is much greater than if the professionals would

impose them in a top-down manner. However, also those rules are weakly interpreted (i.e. there is some margin of manoeuvre with regard to their enforcement). As the director explains:

'In the system 'rule-transgression-sanction', the youngsters have the power: they know that if they do not come for three times they are excluded and you have no choice, it is written in the regulation.' (director)

In contrast, the aim in Scène Active is to interpret the rules in light of the specific situation of each participant. Indeed, the youngsters have very difficult but also very different stories, thereby requiring the adaptation of standards and rules instead of having the same rules for everybody:

'In one case I can make a comment if a youngster comes two minutes late, in the other I am happy if he comes two times per week (...) I don't treat all in the same manner because not everybody has the same needs (...) I always say: you don't have to look at the others, you have to look at yourself. Everybody should give 110% of oneself: for one person this means coming only in the afternoon, for another it means leaving at 2 pm after having well worked for three hours.' (director)

This capacity to adapt the context, including the way rules are enforced, to the youngsters - to each of them - while at the same time realising a collective project is one of the most significant characteristics of Scène Active. In fact, in the vast majority of other measures it is clearly the youngsters who have to adapt themselves to the context and to abide by the rules. The strongest contrast is with the school environment:

'It is not like at school: if there is something that you really do not want to do, you can propose something else and it is possible to discuss until you have found something for you. (...) We are all equal here: they will never tell you to do something you really don't want to do. They do not feel superior. If you don't agree with something, you can say that, you can explain and we talk about it. Our opinion is taken into account and we always try to reach a compromise.' (youngster)

This large freedom left to the participants is balanced by the importance accorded to the value of responsibility. Indeed, the entire collective project of the play can only be pursued if everyone is committed to that project. Constructing the play becomes thus the opportunity for these young people to learn freedom and responsibility.

From this perspective, the most important principle within Scène Active seems to be the principle of non-exclusion: whatever the behaviour of the youngsters, no one can be excluded from the project. This principle clearly resonates with the attempt to target the most disadvantaged young people – those who would most certainly be excluded from other more formal and strict programmes or measures. The principle of non-exclusion implies that there is a high tolerance with regard to young people's retards and absences. And indeed, on average only 20 people (on a total of 40) are present in the daily work of Scène Active (note, however, that despite this, all youngsters are actively involved and present in the public representations of the play). Such absenteeism creates important problems for the collective work on the play. However, what is important to stress here is that the principle of non-exclusion allows reaching a population which is generally excluded by 'normal' interventions. In this context, the role of the professionals is to:

'Welcome the young people with their vulnerabilities, breaking the vicious circle "I was absent, I am not good, I won't go anymore".' (social worker)

Breaking this circle requires an unconditional 'love' for each participant:

'A youngster who comes only in the afternoon still merits being warmly welcomed.' (workshop trainer)

Thus, the solution to problems of discipline is never seen in the use of sanctions:

'It is necessary to learn the constraint and the rigor through pleasure rather than fear.' (maître of atelier)

Hence, the whole professional team strives to raise the youngsters' awareness about their responsibility:

'You should be there as a responsibility towards the others.' (director)

In this context, the theatre is an exceptional means to learn responsibility:

'A guy is motivated for having an important role in the play (he is even talented at acting) but then he does not come for three weeks and finally he can only play a tree and he is angry ... "but, yes, of course the play advances even without you".' (director)

From this perspective, while the principle of non-exclusion implies that there is no sanction, there are some automatic consequences resulting from participants' absences. Thus, they learn to behave responsibly through the fact that they feel they are indispensable for achieving the collective task of the play. Having a role in a play implies that others trust you, that others need you and that they count on you. This trust and importance accorded to each youngster also encourages the rebuilding of the self-confidence of these young people. For instance, speaking loud and clear enough to be heard and understood obliges to work on one's self-esteem. Taking part in a play thus becomes a metaphor of taking a place in life and within society. Succeeding in creating a show at the end of the year means constructing

'A product of quality that exists and remains: it is very important for these young people who have till then developed a sense of total inutility to be able to say "I have done it".' (director)

All interviewed youngsters have stressed the importance of the theatre in helping them to overcome their shyness and lack of self-esteem. For many of the participants it was difficult to play the theatre especially at the beginning. But the professional team was very careful at encouraging them without forcing them. They adapted to the exigencies and rhythms of each youngster:

'They never force you. If you really don't want to do something you can say that and we find a solution. For example, if someone does not want to talk during the play we can imagine a character who cannot speak (...). Here we have the courage of saying what we are not able to do because they never judge you.' (youngster)

This possibility of revealing oneself as weak and vulnerable without being judged, together with the feeling of being indispensable in a collective project, are in sharp contrast with the negative experiences that the youngsters have had at school or at work and with their frequent frustration of finding no job or apprenticeship (even when they have a degree).

'They fired me from the internship without a reason whereas at Scène Active they will never tell me 'that's it, you are out'. Here we are not an object or a number, we are persons.' (youngster)

'At school they did not judge me on my own capacities but always with regard to what a 'normal' or 'average' person was supposed to do. They judged on average rather than assessing each person (...) I wasn't strong enough for certain tasks and I had bad marks because of that even if I put a lot of effort. It was like: you are not good enough, goodbye. (...) This is good at Scène Active: they are happy if you are there; it is not like at school or at work where if you are there or not it is the same and if you are not there you are fired.' (youngster)

2.3   Profile of the participants

As the director of the project explains, the goal of Scène Active is to reach the young people who are the most far away from the labour market and the training system, i.e. the 5% that politics implicitly accepts losing on the road (those outside the official target of 95% with a vocational or academic degree). However, even if the target population is the most vulnerable, the director stresses the great heterogeneity of the beneficiaries' profiles and the importance of such variety. This is not only a practical issue: indeed, if all participants would be drug addicted or would have great psychological problems, it would be difficult to create a theatre play. More deeply, this diversity makes Scène Active culturally 'richer' – more than many other projects which focus on men, consumers of cannabis, immigrants, etc. because

'They are those who are visible in the public space, those who disturb and those who are explicitly addressed by policy-makers.' (director)

Thus, within Scène Active participants:

'Do not all have problems of addiction within their families and they are not all on welfare; they do not listen to the same kind of music; there are boys and girls from different countries ... some even have a degree.' (director)

The participants arrived to Scène Active in different ways and for different reasons. Generally, other institutions or social workers have suggested them to go to Scène Active. Some of the participants of this year are there thanks to a brother/sister or a friend who frequented Scène Active last year. Some of the youngsters started Scène Active because they have *'nothing to do'* and *'too much free time'*. The majority wanted to *'overcome their fear of speaking in public'* and *'be less shy'* but also to *'become more social'*, *'make some friends'* and *'learn to work in group'*.

Despite the high heterogeneity in the profiles of the participants, during our interviews we observed that many of the youngsters have a migratory background, have grown up in a disadvantaged socioeconomic context and experience a difficult situation within their families (many parents are separated/divorced; some of the youngsters have been victims of violence at home).

A central aspect that all participants have in common is that they do not know where they want to go:

'Even if we are all different, we have all the same problem: we don't know what to do in life because we have not had any support.' (youngster)

Even those with a degree have advanced for many years *'without a goal in mind'* (youngster with degree). Thus, even those less disadvantaged who managed to finish the compulsory school and obtain a degree have had difficulties to find something or to orient themselves:

'During the intake interview they explained me that Scène Active is for disoriented people without a degree. I had a degree but I was disoriented and they accepted me.' (youngster with degree).

Thus, the selection procedure is very open and youngsters asking to participate in Scène Active and confirming this intention after a first meeting are admitted (a waiting list is established for all those who cannot be admitted due to an insufficient number of places).

This 'disorientation' and the absence of specific goals are noted also by a young person who frequented Scène Active last year:

'I cannot find a greater objective that transcends me. I have difficulties in finding a goal, a passion that motivates me, encouraging me to advance. (...) I could find a job and work without passion in order to pay the bills without passion. Maybe this is the best solution. But I aspire for more. We don't live for working ... that's the point where I am disappointed by society.'

Crucially, this lack of orientation and of meaningful goals is not interpreted as a 'crisis of adolescence'. It reveals a profound social and cultural crisis concerning the sense of work and the articulation between the collective dimension of finding a place within society and the individual dimension of developing a personal identity.

3. Some Inherent Tensions

3.1   Too much tolerance?

Like in all projects there are also some tensions at Scène Active. One of the most debated questions among the participants is whether there is enough discipline within the project. As already seen, there is much absenteeism in Scène Active. This is especially true on Wednesdays, the day dedicated to the atelier theatre since many are shy and do not want to participate in this atelier. Yet, it would be important to be present precisely on Wednesday where the most important decisions concerning the show are taken all together. Thus, while the opportunity to participate and influence the content of the play is open to everybody, it is clear that it is impossible to take advantage of this opportunity if one does not come at all. Furthermore, on Wednesday afternoon social workers are available for helping the participants preparing their applications, motivation letters, etc. Also in this case, the opportunity is there but in order to catch it, it is necessary to be present.

From this perspective, the principle of non-exclusion implies that many participants are often absent without incurring any sanction. The professional team tries to raise the awareness among the participants about the importance of being present and actively participating in the project even if the youngsters are free not to come:

'They want to make us autonomous, this is why they do not say 'do this', 'don't do this'. They want that we learn to be autonomous.' (youngster)

'They try to make us understand that the project is important for everybody so that everyone should come because if one is missing the others cannot advance as well.' (youngster)

Indeed, especially when it is time to do the rehearsal those who are absent make it difficult for those who are present. Hence, some participants would like that the professional team be stricter and impose more discipline:

'For example, if there is a person who is absent for two weeks and then comes back, one could make a little pressure on her, saying 'well, you are not there, we cannot advance, we will have to look for a substitute', just to make this person saying "ah, I have to be there". Because it is a pity: there were people who wanted to be part of this project and there was not enough place for them and they, they have the place and they don't come.' (youngster)

'If you arrive at 2 pm and you play the whole time with your mobile phone, then you could also stay at home. I was angry with those who come late. Now I think it is their problem. But it's complicated, especially for the rehearsals: we always have to look for people replacing those who are absent. (...) I think that those who arrive too late should be sent home. (...) Some people come, they eat the lunch that we prepared and then they leave again. They don't work, they just come for lunch. But you are able to come on time. At least it should be said to those who are late that they have to wait outside until the break. But if you do that half of them will stop coming completely. And you cannot change the rules now, in the middle of the year: it should be clear from the beginning.' (youngster)

On the contrary, another youngster suggests starting smoothly and then become stricter with the date of the show coming closer and closer:

'At the beginning it is good that there is this tolerance but then with January or February, they should become stricter.' (youngster)

But the majority agrees that at least the late arrivals should be tolerated:

'It is good that there is this tolerance with the hours because if they are strict I arrive one or two times late and then I stop coming altogether. I should be here at 9.30 am I am here at 10 am. I cannot manage to arrive before that time. If this would be a school I would have stopped to go to school because I knew that they would have been strict with me. In Scène Active, it is true that I arrive 30 minutes late, but – as they say – at least I am there.' (youngster)

Thus, on the one hand, the 'softness' of the rules allows Scène Active to welcome young people who are not used to staying in more formal contexts and would not enter any other kind of measure. This tolerance is a fundamental condition for reaching out to the most vulnerable part of the population, making Scène Active highly inclusive. On the other hand, the 'softness' of the rules jeopardises the success of the project: absences and late arrivals are important obstacles in the advancement of the collective work on the play. Thus, there is a tension between the inclusiveness and the success of the project. This tension is especially felt by the maîtres of atelier:

'We lose so much time in explaining what we have done to those who were absent. Sometimes I have the impression to lose those who are there for looking after those who are not there. I advance with those who are there and I am sorry for the others. I don't want to lose those who come. (...) Sometimes I think we are too kind. There is a participant that I would expel from the project. In any case I am happy that he does not come because he prevents the others from working. Thus I say "I do without them" and I work with those who are there – but those who are present are angry and rightly so: why are they only two instead of six? (...) Tolerance is good but if we want to do something for these young people, they should be there.' (workshop trainer)

The director is aware of this tension when he says that:

'A balance has to be found between the social dimension where everybody is kind, everybody is beautiful - and the artistic and technical dimension where the point is that of producing something good.' (director)

However, it seems that the inclusiveness of the project takes precedence over any other goal since it is the very purpose of Scène Active to reach the most vulnerable people:

'It would be impossible to be stricter on late arrivals or absences because of the anxiety it would generate. For example, when I did not go to school for one week, when I was back I did not feel good: all teachers asked me why I had been absent. Psychologically it is very stressful. Everybody wants to know why you were not there. The fact that here there are no sanctions, that if you are not there for 5 days and then you come back, they are happy to see you and you don't have to justify yourself and they don't judge you – all this is very important especially because this is a programme for people who don't have goals, who have nothing. I haven't been working for two years, imagine I don't come for two days and there are sanctions, I couldn't. It is for this reason that I did not want to start an apprenticeship directly, since I can stand on my feet. I wanted to do Scène Active first to start smoothly. (...) But to those who are often absent you don't want to ask "why weren't you there?" Rather you say: 'you are missing a good opportunity, you don't know what you are missing. While you are doing nothing I am having an extraordinary experience.' (youngster)

3.2   Does Scène Active prepare for the future?

Another important discussion among the participants is whether Scène Active should award a degree at the end of the programme. The discussion on the importance of having a degree at the end of Scène Active touches similar points to those raised by the debate on the lack of discipline. Indeed, also in this case, the tension is between a project that aims to be inclusive and at the same time successful. Many of the participants would have liked to have a degree at the end of the programme, certifying the competences they have acquired with their work in the ateliers:

'I find it frustrating that we don't receive a degree certifying that we have done Scène Active (...). Having this kind of certificate would help some people to be more serious and come more often and more on time because they know there is something at the end (...). This would greatly help above all those who want to work or study in these domains after Scène Active.' (youngster)

Yet, as already anticipated, establishing a degree is in tension with the goal of making Scène Active inclusive in respect with vulnerable young people:

'If it becomes a recognised training then the context should become more formal and strict. But it is good precisely that the context is not strict because it opens some possibilities to people ...' (youngster)

Also, establishing a degree is difficult because at Scène Active each participant has his or her own personal goals:

'At the beginning I asked: what is the goal? Because I want to find an apprenticeship and I asked if this was the objective for everybody in the programme. But they told me that each person has his or her own goals because Scène Active is a project of personal development. For me the goal is to find an apprenticeship but for another if he did not talk to his mother and at the end of the year he manages to talk to her, this is a success. Thus, there is no degree because everyone has a different goal.' (youngster)

Another debate is whether the final show comes too early during the project – in the first two years it was at the end of April. For some participants the show comes even too late because *'after the show there is another dynamics, we have become finally a group after the play'* (youngster). But the majority would like to do the show later because the time after the show is *'empty'* and *'boring'*. Programmeming the show later is seen also as a means for having more time to prepare it and thus to work with less stress. However, the most important reason for postponing the show – and this is the reason why the professional team finally decided to postpone it next year – is that January and February are the most appropriate months to search for apprenticeships and trainings. Having the performance in June would allow to have more time to conduct such research in January and February instead of having to practice for the show – as it is now, with the show in April.

But as the director explains:

'At the same time we should prepare the performance and the applications for the apprenticeships – thus the two goals compete. But the problem is that there is a period "before" and an "after" the show. I cannot start the programme with the preparation of the applications; but after the show it's too late.' (director)

Starting only after the show with the preparation of the applications is problematic also because the great majority of the participants stops coming after the show. For this reason, it would be important to start earlier the preparation of the after-Scène-Active.

These specific discussions on the appropriateness of having a degree and on the timing of the show are linked with the more general question on the capacity of the project to prepare the participants for the future. Indeed, some participants of last year have participated in the programme again this year. This year in turn a group of participants would like to participate again next year. Hence, even if participating in Scène Active two times in a row remains the exception and a detailed motivation letter is required explaining the reasons why one wants to do it again, this possibility opens up the question about the capacity of the programme to prepare for the future.

The paradox here lies in the fact that precisely the aspects that seem to be the assets of the programme are also its main weaknesses. Thus, an informal and tolerant context, a friendly and convivial environment as well as a competent and very engaged professional team make difficult the transition after the programme is finished. In other words, the extraordinary quality of the project can become a trap rather than a bridge toward a successful insertion in the labour market and in society at large. As a girl who participated in Scène Active last year explains:

'For one year we have a moral, psychological and personal support ... it's difficult when we stop (...) I experienced Scène Active more like a "bridge" than an "island" because I found something after it but this dimension of "island" is present: they are all nice and smiling: we are not used to but we get used very quickly. Unfortunately, they are not all like this in life. Just after Scène Active I had an internship and the director was terrible. The kindness that they have, we don't see it on the road.' (youngster)

4. The Impact of Scène Active on participants' capabilities

4.1 General impact on participants' life

For many participants the most important impact of Scène Active on their life is that of re-starting a 'normal' rhythm in their daily life: waking up in the morning, going out, having something to do during the day. Indeed, many youngsters have been doing 'nothing' – as they put it – for three or four years. Many of them have got used to living during the night and sleeping during the day. Scène Active represents thus for these young people the opportunity to restart having a daily routine.

Another concrete impact of Scène Active is that it opens up a network and contacts, especially in those domains where the professional team works – in the social and the artistic areas. Thus, many participants have found a job, an internship or a training in these domains through the contacts provided by the professional team. But some of the participants have also found an apartment thanks to the contacts and the support delivered by the professionals.

Yet, the most relevant effects of Scène Active are at a less concrete and immediate level: the rebuilding of participants' self-confidence and self-esteem, the overcoming of one's shyness (one could say: the discovery of one's capability for voice), the attainment of transversal professional competences and knowledge and social and relational skills, such as the capacity to work in team.

'Before Scène Active I was closed in myself and I spoke to nobody; I stayed alone hidden in a corner. Thanks to Scène Active I opened myself towards other people, I've fought my shyness. Because in all jobs you cannot be shy: you have to discuss with the people, exchange with them. For me it was this that changed the most before and after Scène Active: the shyness and the motivation.' (youngster)

A girl who *'did not even manage to finish a one-week internship'* before Scène Active is proud of herself: she managed to come every day to Scène Active. And her mother too is very happy to see her daughter waking up every morning because she has something to do, after some years spent *'doing nothing'*. Thanks to Scène Active this girl has also overcome her shyness. Before Scène Active she didn't ask any question, for instance during an internship. Now she dares going to present her application directly in the companies:

'I even dared going to the 'direct recruitment', where you go to present yourself directly in a company with your application. I've never done anything like that before, I was too shy. But now I've done it already two times.'

For many participants Scène Active improved the relationships within their families and more generally with other people:

'I had not many friends when I arrived in Scène Active. Actually I had no friends at all. The only friends I have, they are here.' (youngster)

'My mother is so happy to see me waking up each morning.' (youngster)

We also conducted some interviews with the participants to the programme Scène Active last year in order to see what opportunities they found in the meantime and where they are after one year, thereby assessing the 'impact' of Scène Active over the medium to long run. Many of the participants to the programme of last year have found something (a job, an apprenticeship or a training curriculum) or at least they have clear ideas on where they want to go. Furthermore, in these interviews it has become clear that the deepest and long-lasting effects of the programme are at the level of self-confidence and self-esteem as illustrated by the following quotes:

'Scène Active gave me a lot of self-confidence. But you cannot see the impact immediately. It is only with the time that I've started to see all the things that Scène Active offered me. You cannot see the results instantaneously. But then you start noticing through some experiences, such as an internship, that you have developed a lot and that you are much more self-confident about your competences. I succeeded in the recruitment interviews and I've even received congratulations because - they told me - it is rare to see such a young person who knows herself so well and who puts so much passion in the things she does.' (participant of last year)

'You can see very well the difference between before and after Scène Active, especially in the other people. There were some very shy persons who did not speak a word who have been transformed. People who were not that social, who never went out in a group, during the year at Scène Active it was the first time that they went out with friends.' (participant of last year)

'Now I can go alone to professional appointments. Before Scène Active I always went to such meetings with my mum. Now I can communicate with people, I manage to discuss with them. Before, I was very shy and I didn't dare to speak.' (participant of last year)

Since one of the main goals of Scène Active is to rebuild the self-esteem of the participants, the programme can be considered as a success in this respect. The reason for this success lies in the large freedom accorded to the participants - which also teaches them to behave responsibly - and in the respect, absence of judgment and even unconditional 'love' that the professional team gives them.

'Scène Active reinforced my self-confidence. Since there is no final judgment we dare more to try doing something because even if it doesn't work, it's not that bad. The same applies to the theatre: at the beginning it was very stressful for me but now I do that. We learn how to trust ourselves. It is the large freedom that they give us that actually teaches us to be self-confident. They let us try things ... then if we have some doubts we can always ask, they support us. And there is no judgment. This is the central point: we are never judged. This is what allows to build self-esteem. (...) We also learn to trust the other, not only ourselves. We learn how to work in a team, with people who have different ways of working and of thinking. You need to be patient. Oh yes. Scène Active taught me the patience!'

In terms of more classical outcome indicators, the impact is similar to that of other programmes targeted at vulnerable youth, as shown in the following table (information provided by the professional team):

Participants of the year 2015-2016	Outcomes one year after
4	Training/Apprenticeship/Internship
11	Other insertion measures
6	Work
3	Defined their project, but not yet implemented it
8	Regular follow-up by the network
7	Still looking for their path
3	No information available

With respect to this year, the large majority of the participants have a precise personal project at the end of the programme, as specified in the following table:

Participants of the year 2016-2017	Personal project at the end of the programme
21	Training/Apprenticeship/Internship
4	Work
7	Will repeat Scène Active next year
5	Regular follow-up by the network
10	No information available (7 stopped Scène Active)

The figures for 2016-7 concern only projects or aspirations, they all the same show that youngsters, who were 'disoriented' at the beginning of the project, have for the most of them much clearer ideas about their project for the future. This is interpreted as an important result. The 2015-6 figures are still more revealing in this respect as they concern not only projects or aspirations, but concrete outcomes and achievements. They show that for half of the participants a solution has been found (training, work or another insertion measure) while for the other half, they are still striving for concrete solutions of social or professional integration (3 of them, though, have more precise ideas about this). One could say that the rate of success in terms of self-confidence and self-esteem is extremely high and that this has translated into concrete solutions for half of the participants one year after the end of the programme.

4.2   Impact on individual capabilities

Scène Active is a project explicitly inspired by Sen's capability approach (e.g. Sen 1999, 2009). What is, then, the impact of this programme on participants' capabilities? As a brief reminder, a person's capability is defined as his or her real freedom to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value. Crucially, this real freedom emerges from the interaction between individual and societal factors. Thus, individual capability should not be confused with capacity, skill or any other individual characteristic. For example, a disabled person may still enjoy the real freedom to move around the city if an efficient service of public transportation is accessible to disabled people. Furthermore, the notion of capability is close to that of autonomy since it involves a reflection on the use of this real freedom.

Hence, agency or capability involves two components, which are also two steps: autonomy and freedom of action (Claassen, 2016). Autonomy involves the choice of the goals and of the means to achieve such goals. The agent values his or her ends, i.e. autonomy is not about responding quasi-automatically to incentives imposed by others. Rather, autonomy involves self-regulation and self-determination: the ends are deliberately endorsed by the agent as worthy of pursuit. After the person has established his or her goals and chosen the means for achieving them (which implies that such means are available), the second component of agency requires that the person is free to realise such goals. Thus, agency requires both autonomy and freedom of action. Furthermore, both autonomy and freedom of action have an internal and an external dimension (Claassen 2016, Table 4.1).

Table 4.1   Individual agency and its components

	Autonomy	**Freedom to act**
Capacities (internal capabilities)	Capacity to set ends and means	Capacity to realise ends
Options (external capabilities)	Availability and awareness of options (sense of entitlement)	Non-interference by others

Source adapted from Claassen (2016: 4).

From this perspective, it is possible to assess policies and programmes with regard to their effects on these two dimensions: autonomy and freedom to act. In particular, for distinguishing the kinds of public action that promote autonomy from those that undermine it through paternalistic interventions, Ben-Ishai (2012) argues that autonomy should be seen both as a status and as a capacity. The status dimension of autonomy involves respect and recognition whereas its capacity dimension involves the competences required for a person to be able to determine his or her own ends. Paternalistic interventions are problematic for both dimensions of autonomy. On the one hand, they usually treat individuals with disrespect and misrecognition. This is because paternalism deprives people from the intrinsic good of autonomy, imposing on them a vision of the good from above, and such imposition involves disrespect. In fact, by imposing a vision of the good from above, paternalism assumes that individuals are incapable of having and following their own conception of the good. Hence, paternalistic public action does not recognise the person as an agent capable of determining his or her own ends. On the other hand, paternalistic interventions generally undermine

individuals' capacity for autonomy because such interventions deprive people of the opportunity to develop and exercise autonomy. In other words, autonomy as a capacity can be learned only through praxis, i.e. by practicing it. Paternalistic interventions impede this practice and thus do not allow individuals to improve their capacity for autonomous choices.

Furthermore and most significantly, Ben-Ishai (2012) argues that autonomy-enhancing interventions challenge existing patterns of domination and inequality whereas paternalistic ones tend to perpetuate them. Finally, she argues that an autonomy-enhancing intervention opens up spaces for democratic participation rather than 'speaking for others', which is a characteristic of paternalism. To sum up, with regard to processes, autonomy-enhancing interventions are characterised by democratic participation. This ensures that individuals are respected and recognised (status dimension of autonomy) and that they also have the opportunity to further develop their autonomy by putting it into practice (capacity dimension). With regard to outcomes, autonomy-enhancing interventions challenge patterns of inequality and domination. This conception of autonomy-enhancing interventions is summarised in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2   Autonomy-enhancing interventions

Process: democratic participation		Outcome: challenging patterns of inequality and domination
Status dimension	Capacity dimension	
Refers to respect and recognition	Refers to the competences necessary for determining one's own ends	
Involves the intrinsic value of choosing	Requires the opportunity to learn this capacity by practicing it	

Source Authors' own elaboration based on Ben-Ishai (2012).

Finally, as we have argued in the theoretical framework (Deliverable 4.1 of WP4), the capability approach involves a complex anthropological vision: individuals are seen as socio-political actors rather than passive beneficiaries - as in charity frameworks - or economic and productive actors - as in the human capital approach where activation coincides with employability-enhancing programmes. In the capability approach, human beings are seen as *receivers* - which involves the dimensions of human vulnerability and need - as *doers* - which implies that they are autonomous subjects capable of free and responsible action if they are given the means to be 'really' free - and as *judges* - which suggests that human beings are capable of formulating certain values and goals and of making them count in the course of collective decision-making processes.

Taking into account all these elements, it is now possible to evaluate the programme Scène Active in terms of its impact on capabilities:
1. Does Scène Active expand participants' agency in the double dimensions of freedom to act and autonomy - with the latter further specified in the dimension of process (autonomy as status and as capacity) as well as at the level of outcomes (in terms of reducing inequalities and domination)?
2. How does Scène Active take into account the three anthropological dimensions of the receiver, the doer and the judge? And how does the programme help participants to further develop these dimensions?

In the evaluation of Scène Active we distinguish between the promotion of participants' capabilities *within* the project and the promotion of participants' capabilities *through* the project. With the first aspect we ask to what extent the participants have been given the opportunity to flourish in the three anthropological dimensions of the capability approach and in terms of autonomy and freedom to act during the programme, in the activities proposed. With the second aspect we study the consequences of the project on these same dimensions but for the later life: in which ways and to what extent does Scène Active promote participants' capabilities in the future, that is, once the project is finished?

Concerning the first aspect (capability-expansion *within* the project), it is clear that Scène Active can be considered a capability-enhancing intervention. Indeed, in Scène Active participants are treated as vulnerable

people – receivers – who need support and care. But they are also treated as doers and judges, leaving them a large degree of freedom in influencing the content of the play and thus of the collective project as a whole. Furthermore, each participant is treated with respect and left free to learn to act autonomously also through mistakes (thereby addressing both the status and capacity dimensions of autonomy). Finally, the explicit focus on the most vulnerable youngsters implies that the programme seeks to challenge patterns of inequality and domination, at least within Scène Active itself.

Concerning the second aspect (capability-expansion *through* the project), the evaluation is more difficult since we have limited and only short- to mid-term information on what happens to the participants after Scène Active (we have some information concerning those who have participated last year but we cannot evaluate the long-term effects of the programme). However, it seems clear that Scène Active supports the participants in developing their own desires and aspirations, thereby enhancing their autonomy – understood as the capacity to set ends and means as well as the awareness of the available options. In fact, through a personalised and careful support, the professional team is engaged in helping each participant to find his or her way working both on the side of individual aspirations (i.e. the capacity to aspire) as well as on that of identifying and studying the available options.

Yet, it is equally clear that one limitation of Scène Active as an intervention for vulnerable young people is that it mainly helps them finding their way and equips them to that purpose whereas it does only very little for modifying the socioeconomic context in which those people live (and are called to integrate themselves). In other words, Scène Active acts mainly upon participants' individual conversion factors, improving their competences, self-esteem, etc. but it intervenes very little on social conversion factors, such as the availability of jobs and apprenticeships or the access criteria for training programmes, etc.

From this perspective, it seems that Scène Active cannot completely challenge patterns of inequality and domination since these are rooted in social structures that cannot be contested solely by acting upon single individuals. What is required for challenging systemic inequality and domination is political action. This is not ignored by the programme altogether: in the words of the director Scène Active aims not only at preparing *'productive workers'* for the economy but also *'democratic citizens'*. Yet, this political dimension - which corresponds to the 'judge' anthropological dimension - is less developed in the programme (and it is virtually absent from most other activation programmes).

In particular, in nearly all our interviews we could observe a dominant discourse – both among the professionals and the young participants – which tends to identify Scène Active as a *'work on oneself'*. In this discourse, the restoration of individual self-confidence risks becoming the only goal of Scène Active as if psychological factors such as the degree of self-esteem were the sole causes of participants' disadvantage as well as the only factors to be changed in order to achieve success. Such a discourse may have potential individualistic and de-politicising effects, according to which patterns of inequality and domination would be presented as non-challengeable. This would set a clear limitation to the ambition of Scène Active to act as a crucial arena for raising political awareness among disadvantaged young people (as is claimed by the director).

For example, many participants express their regret that they did not work hard enough at school (a self-blaming discourse), but very little is said about the inegalitarian pattern of a system in which the young people with the least good marks have to choose at the age of 15 what their future job will be and that makes people's life chances depend to a large extent on such a very early selection procedure. Similarly, many participants have a very stigmatising vision of those on social assistance, accepting in a rather uncritical way the *'rules of the game'* and adhering to the discourse centred on individual motivation and merit:

'When you say that a person is on welfare, for me, this person is doing nothing. I don't want to be classified as a person who does nothing. Because everyone wants to be normal and the majority of people work. When the whole group of your friends says 'I do this', 'and I do this' and I do nothing, it's not that good.' (youngster)

'They accepted me at the social assistance because I was searching for a training. Because if they see that I do nothing they will stop helping me – which is normal. That is why they helped me: they saw that I was motivated, that I was actively searching, etc.' (youngster)

In order to achieve Scène Active's ambition to train democratic citizens, it seems that more emphasis should be placed on a collective reflection about the structural and political origins of the social disadvantage affecting those young people. Even for a factor which is at the very heart of the personal project like self-esteem, there are social and political roots and it would be important to link the lack of individual motivation and self-confidence to a political refection on the structural causes of these shortages, such as an economically and culturally deprived social environment, etc. This would go in the direction of combining both ambitions of Scène Active: equip individuals to integrate society (and not only the labour market in a narrow sense), but also strive to challenge society as it is, i.e. the existing patterns of inequality and domination.

This could be achieved for example via the establishment of discussion groups and debate sessions on political subjects that are close to the participants' experiences and to their direct interests, such as the inclusion of disabled or vulnerable pupils in 'normal' schools or the access to apprenticeships. Such internal discussions could then lead to public events, such as roundtables with local politicians – as we managed to do last year with 7 participants of Scène Active (see our WP3 report). This could be a complementary output of Scène Active beside the show, which would help better taking into account the 'judge' anthropological dimension together with the 'doer' and the 'receiver' dimensions.

5. Conclusion

Scène Active provides a good example of an innovative project inspired by the capability approach, focused on enhancing the capabilities of vulnerable young people. The project uses the theatre (and the various ateliers aimed at preparing the play) as a means for developing participants' self-esteem as well as their social and professional competences. The programme is thus different from the human capital approach which aims at including people in the labour market. Indeed, in this case the project unambiguously aims at enhancing participants' capabilities – a broader and more ambitious goal. Thus, the project does not see the NEETs as 'wasted human capital' but in terms of capability-deprivation.

We have argued that while *within* the project Scène Active actually manages to expand participants' capabilities, its effect on young people's capability once the project is finished is less clear. In particular, we argue that more room should be given in the project for raising the political awareness among the participants concerning the causes of - and possible remedies to - the situation of social disadvantage in which they live. If not, the risk is that - despite the exceptional results in terms of enhanced self-esteem and other individual conversion factors among the participants - the project fails to increase the chances of reforming the social conversion factors, which inevitably requires political action. In such a case, the objective of adaptability (which is undeniably an important goal) would prevail over that of challenging the dominant patterns of domination and inequality. Thus, in coherence with the normative and theoretical framework proposed in WP4 of the RE-InVEST project, our analysis confirms that in order to overcome social disadvantage the issues of 'political poverty' and lack of participation cannot be ignored. Hence, more effort should be put in opposing the tendency to overlook the political dimension of disadvantage (the 'judge' anthropological dimension).

Finally, this study confirms the crucial role played by recognition as a fundamental dimension of social justice (e.g. Honneth, 1995; Fraser, 1997) and as a precondition for the development of human capabilities. Indeed, as the experience of Scène Active clearly shows, acting in favour of vulnerable young people requires to recognise them, treating them as worthy subjects and with dignity and respect, that is, considering them as final ends rather than as means. This conclusion is of crucial importance in the development of an alternative normative model for policies addressing vulnerable groups. Rather than framing the issue in the terms of economic 'investments' aimed at the fructification of 'wasted human capital', policies should try to target vulnerable groups, addressing simultaneously the various dimensions of their disadvantage. This means considering the target people of these policies as receivers, doers and judges: not only as beneficiaries of benefits or as economic actors but as socio-political subjects with values and goals, capable of responsible behaviour once the means of their real freedom are provided.

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