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► **To cite this version:**

Manlio Cinalli. Final Report for the United Kingdom. [Research Report] Unempol. 2005, pp.44 - 76.
hal-03608964

HAL Id: hal-03608964

<https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03608964>

Submitted on 15 Mar 2022

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The Contentious Politics of Unemployment in Europe

Political Claim-making, Policy Deliberation and Exclusion from the Labour Market

Chapter 3: Final report for the UK

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Basic parameters of the British policy approach
 - 2.1. Historical background and classification of the British welfare state
 - 2.2. British policy model
3. Unemployment and public policy
 - 3.1. Development and structure of unemployment in the UK
 - 3.2. National policy instruments and benefits to fight unemployment
4. Public debates on unemployment: the claims-making data
 - 4.1. The basic outline of the newspaper analysis
 - 4.2. Media discourse on British unemployment
 - 4.3. Public actors – who is involved in the media discourse
 - 4.5. Argumentative structure of the public discussion
 - 4.6. Targets of public criticism
 - 4.7. The Role of the EU in public discourse
5. Political deliberation in the field of labour market policies
 - 5.1. Interviews with political actors
 - 5.2. Organisational networks
 - 5.3. Action forms of actors
 - 5.4. The role of the unemployed within unemployment policies
 - 5.5. The role of the EU in political deliberation
6. Résumé and conclusion

Table 11B: List of the ten most frequently mentioned influential organisations by actor location (multiple options)

Table 12B: The ten most frequently mentioned targets by actor location

1. Introduction

Unemployment has stood out as a crucial and controversial issue in the UK. Long term and unskilled unemployed have assisted powerlessly to the continuous erosion of their welfare entitlements, with little prospect of finding work. The New Labour government has promoted significant reforms to the labour market in order to move more people from welfare to work. These include the working families' tax credit, changes to the system of national contribution, a national minimum wage, and the New Deal, which started as a specific policy directed at young people, but was soon extended to older people, single parents and the disabled. The unemployment issue has thus attained high priority on the agenda of both mass media and public administration, especially during the first New Labour government, opening space for further involvement of civil society at large.

In this context, it is of great interest to analyse actors, their initiatives and their action across the public and policy domains. The following report aims to synthesize the main findings of this analysis for the British case. Amongst others, it strives to reconstruct the main strands of public contentions in regard to issues, participating actors and debated policy solutions. It also wishes to underscore the role of the European Union and its potential impact on British public debates. In particular, we are interested in learning how inclusive these public debates are with reference to weak and precariously organized groups such as the unemployed. To this end, we will present the findings of the British project in three steps. First, we will give a picture of unemployment in the UK and describe the established policy instruments and strategies – as a frame for better understanding the role and direction of current policy debates and reforms. Second, we will reconstruct the structure of public debates by presenting our data on claims-making within a leading British newspaper (the Guardian). Finally, institutionalised policy deliberations and various aspects of the public domain will be analysed using interviews conducted with important political actors.

2. Basic parameters of the British policy approach

The fight against unemployment is part and parcel of British public policies since a long time. Moreover, we can identify a specific 'neo-liberal' approach to combating unemployment and dealing with the unemployed. To better understand the debates and policy reforms, it is thus beneficial to reflect upon this British policy style before entering the specifics of our findings.

The liberal model of welfare state promotes means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social-insurance plans, while encouraging the market either passively or actively [Esping-Andersen, 1993]. This model is generally based on poor benefits and strict rules for entitlement, targeting a stigmatised clientele of low-income. In particular, it is characterised by 1) low ratio social expenditure/GDP, 2) low social protection from effects of unemployment, sickness, old age, maternity and lone parenthood, 3) high exposure of households with below- average incomes to the full costs of market, 4) low replacement levels of income by state benefits and pensions, 5) high levels of income inequality and relative poverty, 6) crucial role for means-tested benefits, 7) predominance of male breadwinner model, and 8) a culture of reliance on self-financed, family support and care, supplemented by charity and occupational provision [Ginsburg, 2001]. Of course, this model provides an important instrument for furthering the analysis of the British welfare state, since it is possible to match the theoretical model with actual developments of welfare structures, assessing the extent to which the UK fits with the liberal model.

2.1. Historical background and classification of the British welfare state

It can be argued that the so-called ‘classic’ British welfare state between WWII and the end of the 1970s did not fit properly the liberal model, but it relied on a welfare model establishing social rights to a basic, universal level of provision and protection. The extensive provision of low rent social housing, the national health services and public social services provided outstanding protection from the market costs of housing, health and social care. In addition, the social insurance system, which was accompanied by the development of a safety-net role for means-tested benefits, provided almost everyone with a nationally uniform and un-stigmatised right to subsistence income. However, the New Right long leadership of Thatcher, which was established in May 1979 and lasted firmly until November 1990, brought about significant changes in the British welfare system. While founding its leadership on a pragmatic and populist approach, the new government was increasingly driven by neo-liberal faith in 1) monetarism, 2) supply-side policies, 3) anti-public discourse, and 4) new managerialism.

Firstly, the control of inflation replaced ‘full employment’ as the principal goal of economic policy, with the consequential control of the money supply through interest rate rises and restraint of public expenditure. Secondly, the New Right relied on capital and labour deregulation, rejection of foreign exchange controls, tax and benefits cuts, anti unions measures, utility privatisation, removal of minimum wage legislation. Thirdly, the New Right stood against the provision of services by public bodies, particularly local government, fostering ideas that undermined the pay and status of public professionals. Lastly, the ‘contract culture’ and the ‘new managerialism’ in the public and third sectors firmly emphasised the importance of efficiency and effectiveness, aiming to changes which were cost-driven, performance sensitive and commercially minded. The ‘globalisation discourse’ offered a crucial opportunity for the implementation and formulation of this new economic policy framework. While the anti-inflationary strategy was presented as the only recipe to face global market competition, mass unemployment was considered to be the necessary evil of this strategy. The restructuring (and consequential job loss in basic industries such as steel, coal, railways, telecoms and energy) was hardened by public expenditure restraint, since the New Right drastically reduced the resources which could have answered the needs and claims raising from the process of restructuring, with no possibility to reengage the unemployed within public service employment.

Two main arguments have developed in the social policy literature about the changes which have been brought about by the New Right. On the one hand, supporters of the ‘modernisation view’ have argued that the classic welfare state has been modernised according to the needs of global competition to achieve further efficiency, while maintaining its main welfare structures. Indeed, the neo-liberal agenda was never widened as far as including elimination of housing allowances, private schooling, and private health insurance. On the other hand, supporters of the ‘residualisation view’ have emphasised that a deeper transformation of the British welfare state has been taking place since the early 1980s, leading to the reinforcement of liberal regime characteristics. From this point of view, New Right policies have been completely shaped according to the neo-liberal model, drawing on arguments about inevitability and economic advantage of globalisation.

2.2. British policy model

As I have already stated, post-New Right Britain has been drawing on a ‘neo-liberal’ model that combines both residualisation and modernisation. Although it is emphasising the elements of modernisation, the current New Labour government has not abandoned residualisation, relying extensively on the legacies of Thatcherism. As regards taxation, New La-

bour is following on the path of New Right, ruling out 'tax and spend' policies and emphasising the virtue of prudence in public finance. At the same time, increases in indirect taxation have enabled the government to finance further spending on welfare-to-work, health service and education, since groups lobbying on behalf of lone parents, disabled people and pensioners have challenged New plans to cut pensions and welfare benefits. As regards income inequality, New Labour policies aim to achieve positive redistributive effects, particularly in favour of low-income households with children. The introduction of a Working Families Tax Credit, a new Child Care Tax Allowance, and increases in Income Support for families and Child Benefit for the first child, aim to redress effectively the dramatic peak of people living on incomes of less than half the average, which was reached during the Thatcher government.

As regards flexibility, New Labour is clearly following the New Right belief in a flexible market to stand against global economic competition. The British labour market has emerged in the last two decades as one of the least regulated amongst the OECD states, with different measures to promote non-standard conditions of employment such as part-time, fixed-term, freelance and temporary contracts. These measures have undermined unions' power, increased work incentives for benefits' claimants, abolished minimum wages, contracted out public services and taken at distance European social-democratic influence. Nevertheless, New Labour is ignoring the New Right assumption that flexibility is synonymous of deregulation, thereby reversing some policies of previous governments, such as the decision to abolish minimum wages regulations in low-pay industries, or the decision not sign up to the EU Social Charter. Lastly, as regards privatisation of welfare, the process of state hollowing out, with gradual disappearance of public service, has been favoured by New Labour measures, in line with a trend started with the New Right. Yet, the New Labour frameworks of legal and administrative regulation and of public finance corroborate the British welfare state as much as the provision of direct public services, effectively addressing the risk to transform the government into a mere financier of privately provided services.

In sum, while it continues to follow the important paths that were drawn by the New Right, the New Labour government (like other EU social-democratic governments) is trying to firmly sustain welfare provisions with the crucial aim to protect the weaker parts of the population, tackling unemployment, poverty, and income dispersion. It can be argued that the British welfare state is currently drawing on a 'neo-liberal' model, which is close to but different from the conventional liberal model. While emphasising the elements of modernisation, the current New Labour government is extensively drawing on the legacies of Thatcherism. Economic competitiveness, workfare/labour market policies, and interventionist governance were already central features of the Conservatives' strategy between 1979 and 1997. The New Labour government has broadened this latter strategy, although it has clearly strengthened its intervention in workfare and developing measures which deal directly with social exclusion. New Labour is continuing the monetarist and supply-side policies carried out during Thatcherism. It is relying on workfare policies, emphasising the necessity to raise living conditions of people in low paid employment through the minimum wage, working families tax credit, child care tax credit and wage subsidies. It is promoting interventionist and regulatory governance embracing both public service and private finance and contracting for welfare provision. At the same time, New Labour is implementing some measures to promote social cohesion and tackle social exclusion.

3. Unemployment and public policy

Unemployment is definitely not homogeneously distributed across the UK labour force, with some groups heavily suffering unemployment (for example, young and unskilled men) and other groups virtually immune from it (for example, professional workers).

- Unemployment and Gender: In contradiction with many countries of Continental Europe, in the UK unemployment amongst men is considerably higher than it is amongst women.
- Unemployment and Age: Younger workers have substantially higher unemployment rates than their elders. The position of young people has worsened since the 1970s, particularly in comparison to the over-fifties.
- Unemployment and Profession: Unemployment rates amongst unskilled and semi-skilled worker men are the highest.
- Unemployment and Ethnic Groups: Not surprisingly, white suffer very low unemployment if compared with other ethnic groups. Amongst all ethnic groups, men have the highest unemployment rate.

3.1. Development and structure of unemployment in the UK

Focusing on the last century, four main significant periods for unemployment can be indicated:

1. Before WWI: unemployment rate was around 5%.
2. The Interwar Time: unemployment rate fluctuated around 9%.
3. The Post-War Boom (1945-75): unemployment fluctuated around 2.5%.
4. From the 1970s Recession Onwards: unemployment has been between 7% and 9%.

Unemployment falls when aggregate demand expands and rises when there is a contraction. Thus, one possible strategy of government can consist in sustaining an expansion of real demand through an expansionary fiscal policy and reduction of interest rates. However, this strategy unavoidably leads to rising inflation and deterioration of trade balance. This explains exactly what happened, for example, between 1986 and 1990, when the drop of unemployment rate from 11% to 7% (thanks to expansionary fiscal and monetary policy, alongside with an international boom and a fall in commodity prices) was matched by a sudden increase of inflation (which rose from 2.5% to 7.8%) and a trade balance deficit of 4% of GDP. The government, at this point, started a policy contraction. By 1993, unemployment had risen back over 10%, but inflation had dropped at 3% alongside with a considerable improvement of trade balance.

This pattern of high inflation and trade balance deficit when there is low unemployment, and low inflation and positive trade balance when there is high unemployment, is not only the basis on which the suffered choices of fiscal and monetary policy of government are founded, but the clear indication of the existence of a 'systemic' baseline level of unemployment such that actual employment should not move below it (otherwise contractionary policies will soon be necessary). This systemic baseline level of unemployment is known as the 'equilibrium rate' or the NAIRU (non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment). Although it is difficult to detect which particular factors may change the equilibrium rate, as well as to understand its precise different numerical dimensions throughout time [Layard *et al.*, 1991: 435-48], it seems evident that until the late 1960s both actual and equilibrium unemployment were relatively stable at around 2.5%. Afterwards, until 1980 unemployment was sustained below the equilibrium rate, as rising inflation and trade balance worsening show. Yet, the fact that unemployment rose clearly testifies that fact that the equilibrium rate must have increased even

further. Rising unemployment above the (still increasing) equilibrium rate in the first half of the 1980s was matched by decreasing inflation and trade balance surplus. At the end of the 1980s unemployment fell relative to a stable equilibrium rate inflation and trade balance worsened again. Throughout the 1990s, finally, the equilibrium rate appears to have constantly decreased. This has brought about a parallel decline of actual unemployment, which, and at the end of the old millennium, was (and probably still is) a little below the equilibrium rate [Nickell, 1999:21].

While it is quite straightforward that the marked increased generosity of the unemployment benefit system, the sharp rise in trade union pressure and a remarkable rise in commodity prices produced the sudden rise in equilibrium unemployment at the end of the 1960s, it seems difficult to understand why the same equilibrium rate has not fallen faster and further (possibly, near the 1960s level) once, since the mid-1980s, many of the original causes of its increase have gone into reverse; that is, commodity prices have come back in real term at their level of 1960s, the unemployment benefit system have become substantially less generous, and the power of trade unions has been broken down. Certainly, some benefits are still provided in a way that they encourage unemployment (for example, housing benefits in high rent areas). To this it should be added that the recession of early 1980s increased the specific proportion of long-term unemployment (which contributed to the persistence of high unemployment, since the long-term unemployed find it very difficult to come back in a job), as well as the decline in the value of North Sea oil production which put pressure on the trade balance (thereby raising the equilibrium rate of unemployment).

Yet, the most important factor which seems to explain why the UK equilibrium rate remains high is the collapse in demand for unskilled workers since the late 1970s, induced by the widespread advent of technological industry and informatics on the one hand, and by the competition of new economic ‘tigers’ at the level of global trade. At the same time, increasing demand for skilled workers has outpaced its supply, thereby producing negative effects on the equilibrium rate. This means that in the UK skill shortages have caused inflationary pressure even when unemployment has been at a historically high level. The possible solutions should thus consist in programmes targeting the long-term unemployed and the unskilled, aimed at the same time to the provision of a higher level of training and education, as well as to the reform of benefit system.

3.2. National policy instruments and benefits to fight unemployment

Expenditure on social security is the largest single function of government spending. Over 30 million people (more than half of the population) receive income from at least one social security benefit. For means-tested benefits such as income support, receipt of the benefit will depend upon the income of the claimant, as well as upon personal characteristics such as age and family type. For contributory benefits such as incapacity benefit, eligibility depends upon the right amount of National Insurance Contributions (NICs) paid by the claimant during her life. Some benefits, such as child benefit, are universally available to all people who meet some qualification criteria.

Focusing in particular on unemployment benefits, the Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) is a taxable benefit and can be either contributory or means-tested. It was introduced by the Conservative cabinet and replaced unemployment benefit and income support for unemployed people from 1996. Claimants of this benefit cannot work more than 16 hours per week, have to be able to start work immediately, and have to actively look for a job (attending interviews, collecting information or writing applications). The claimant must also sign a ‘job agreement’ with the Employment Service, in which she indicates the desired hours and type of job, plac-

ing reasonable restrictions to preferences and offering his/her work for up to 40 hours per week. Refusing to take a job offer may result (if no justifiable reason is provided) in loss of JSA. There are two different types of JSA:

1. Contribution-Based Jobseeker's Allowance: This is paid for up to six months provided that the claimant have paid sufficient NICs in one of the two tax years prior to the beginning of the year in which the claimant claims the benefit. Claimants cannot have earnings above £5 per week or be in receipt of income support. It is possible to receive contribution-based JSA regardless of savings, capital or partner's earnings.
2. Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance: This is a means-tested benefit which might be received by those who do not qualify for contribution-based JSA provided that they have a sufficiently low income. Claimants cannot be in receipt of income support and must not be working more than 16 hours per week. Only one partner in a couple can receive income-based JSA, and the partner of the claimant may not be working for more than 24 hours per week.

Other unemployment benefits include the Job grant, which is a one-off Euro156 ca. tax-free means- tested payment for people aged 25 or over who were previously receiving a qualifying benefit, such as jobseeker's allowance, income support, incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance, and who are starting or returning to full-time work. This work must last at least five weeks. While it is not a benefit specifically elaborated for unemployed people (but rather, for people on low income), the Income Support (IS) is indeed very similar to income-based JSA. IS, which is a taxable and means-tested benefit, protects mainly lone parents and carers, people who are incapable of work and disabled people. IS claimants cannot be working more than 16 hours per week or be in full-time education. As with income-based JSA, claimants' income (with earnings' disregard as for JSA) must be less than their basic personal allowance. Lastly, the New Deal Employment Credit is a taxable and means-tested benefit consisting in a wage top-up which can be paid for up to 52 weeks. Recipients are those who start work, including self-employment. They must have adhered to a New Deal programme, and they can also receive a training grant to help pay for work-related training.

Since its election in 1997, the New Labour government has made a number of reforms to the labour market designed to move more people from welfare to work. These include the working families' tax credit, changes to the system of national contribution, a national minimum wage, and, in particular, the New Deal. This was launched in 1998 by the New Labour government to help people to find work, that is, giving the chance to undertake meaningful work that might be valued by future employers. It started as a specific policy directed at young people aged 18-24 (The New Deal for Young People) but was soon extended to people over 25 years old (New Deal 25+; and New Deal 50+), to single parents (New Deal for Lone Parents) and to the disabled (New Deal for Disabled). The New Deal for Young Persons aims at helping long term unemployed into a stable employment status through the implementation of a set of actions. These include advice and guidance to improve job searching, training and education to improve participants' skills, as well as provision of work experiences in environmental task forces, in voluntary service or in some kind of subsidised employment. Accordingly, the programme which is co-ordinated nationally by the Employment Service through local Jobcentres, has relied on a wide network of governmental bodies and private corporations, charity societies and voluntary groups, environmental organisation and local associations, training providers and local authorities across the UK. The programme is universal, that is, eligible participants (young unemployed for more than six months) are due to participate on the charge of having their subsidies cut off.

The New Deal 25+ is aimed to those who are aged 25 or over and who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for 18 months or more out of the last 21. In this case too, New Deal

provides the individual with a Personal Adviser, a service tailored to her needs, the possibility to draw an action plan for getting a job, practical help and training, job-focused interviews skills. If the participant does not find a job during the first four months, a package of ‘full-time intensive help’ is agreed with the personal adviser, which includes at least two of the following: work experience, work placement with employers, occupational training and help with motivation and the skills (communication, presentation, and teamwork amongst the others) needed to be employed. While maintaining many of the characteristics common to the programmes for Young People and 25+, such as the personal adviser and the provision of intense help in order to understand and fully grasp real chances and potentialities in the labour market, the New Deal is not compulsory for people over 50 years old, lone parents and the disabled, who can voluntarily take part in the programme by contacting their local jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office.

4. Public debates on unemployment: the claims-making data

In democratically structured polities the public sphere has a strong impact on the formulation and implementation of public policies. In this sense, it is crucial to investigate whether the portrayed policy debates follow and/or take up debates within the mass-mediated public sphere. Moreover, it is of importance to analyse the structure and dynamic of these public discourses in regard to issues, actors and arguments in order to understand better who influences and/or dominates the public definition of the problem, of the political accountability and of adequate measures. Likewise, we need to trace back whether public debates exclude specific actors and/or issues, and which effect this exclusion has on the course of public debates. It is to be assumed that public debates are responsive to pressing social problems and public worries, and thus quite inclusive for non-institutionalized actors such as the unemployed.

4.1. The basic outline of the newspaper analysis

The British data on political claims-making were collected from every second edition of the Guardian Newspaper (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and for the comparative part of the project cover eight years 1995-2002 inclusive. After data cleaning the British sample has 750 cases. The unit of analysis was the single political claim, broadly defined as a strategic intervention, either verbal or non-verbal, that is made in the public sphere on behalf of constituency group, which if realised would bear on the interests or rights of other groups or collectivities. In order to define a sample for political claims-making acts over unemployment, we included only claims-making acts that referred explicitly to unemployment, underemployment, or joblessness, and their related synonyms. This meant excluding those claims relating to the economy or labour market which were unrelated to the core political issue field of unemployment. Claims referring to related fields (i.e. employment policy, economic development policy, and other issues concerning the situation of the labour market or the creation of jobs) were coded only if they referred explicitly to the issue of unemployment. In addition, claims by organised groups of unemployed people were also coded, regardless of their thematic focus. Hence, our sample of claims-making is not directly compatible with a single policy field but focuses on the political issue-field relating to unemployment. For an instance of political claims-making there must by definition be a defined set of interests of a ‘beneficiary’ within the constituency of the unemployed, whose interests would be affected –either beneficially or harmfully- if the stated political claim were realised.

4.2. Media discourse on British unemployment

Table 1 shows the beneficiaries the ‘unemployed constituencies’ from the sample of claims-making. A first point to note here is that in more than half of cases (56.1%) political claims-making acts defined a beneficiary of workers or labour groups whose interests were either

being challenged or promoted. This included workers at companies under threat or facing actual redundancy and the precariously employed (36.8%), workers and employees under threat in general (16.8%), the working poor (2.4%) and illegal workers (0.1%). A further four tenths of demands (43.6%) were about the interests of the actual organisations and groups of the unemployed, where among those categories specified by political claims the young unemployed were prominent (8.9%). This indicates that more than half of the debate about unemployment in the UK is about people who are actually in work, but who are facing the prospects of unemployment in some way, whereas the remainder of the debate is about people actually in the condition of unemployment. We will use this distinction in investigating some of the findings below.

The first row in Table 2 shows the distribution of claims-making acts per annum. This shows a fluctuating pattern of claims-making over the time period. The bottom row of Table 2 shows the unemployment rate in the UK which declines over the period from 9.8% in 1995 to 5.6% in 2001. At first glance it appears that the fluctuations in the overall level of claims-making over unemployment do not bear any clear relationship to the objective indicator for unemployment over the period. However, when we distinguish between claims-making relating to workers' facing the prospects of unemployment (row two) and claims-making relating to the unemployed (row three), we see that the overall trend in the political discourse about the (already) unemployed in general falls over the period as does the objective level of unemployment. This suggests that the political discourse over the unemployed is declining and becoming pacified over the period in line with actual falls in unemployment. This issue field appears to be becoming less contentious. However, at the same time there appears to be a rise in overall contentiousness in the debates about workers' threatened with unemployment. This leads to the tentative conclusion that in the British case, political contention over the actual unemployed appears to be being replaced to a certain extent by political contention over the position of workers' under threat of unemployment.

4.3. Public actors – who is involved in the media discourse

A starting point for examining the actual contents of the British data-set is to look at the collective actors who made demands or engaged in collective actions over the issue of unemployment in our sample. Table 3 details the share of claims-making by collective actors in the field of unemployment politics. In Table 3 the detailed types of actors have been aggregated into eight categories: state and executive; political parties; private companies, employers' associations, trade unions, non-governmental organisations acting specifically on behalf of the unemployed, the constituency of the unemployed acting for themselves, and finally, other civil society actors. A first point from Table 3 is the prominence of state and executive actors who make over a third of claims-making (35.5%) in the field of contentious politics over unemployment. More than a fifth of all claims were made by British government and executive actors (22.0%), compared to only 3.5% by regional and local state actors, and a tiny 2.0% by the European Union, and 1.1% by extra-EU Supranational and transnational state bodies, such as the IMF, ILO and OECD. This shows that central government is by far the most dominant actor in debates about unemployment in the UK.

A second point to note from Table 3 is private companies (19.7%) and employers' associations (5.5%) together account for a quarter of claims-making. These business interests account for a larger share than the trade unions (16.7%), NGOs for the unemployed (0.8%), and the unemployed themselves (0.5%). This weaker showing of the representatives of labour interests, in contrast to the representatives of capital and commerce, perhaps gives a first indication of the extent to which British debates about unemployment are strongly shaped by eco-

nomic interests, rather than workers' or labour interests. In addition, the miniscule presence of the unemployed and NGOs working on their behalf, in the political debates about their interests, suggests that debates about the unemployed in the UK have been pacified, or that the unemployed are too weak to mobilise sufficient resources to enter the public domain. The unemployed themselves appear as 'objects' of the discourse about their condition and are not significantly 'protagonists'. Of the other civil society actors who made up more than a sixth of demands (16.9%), by far the largest proportion (12.3%) were research institutes, think tanks, and universities, who in most cases were making political claims about unemployment issues on the basis of their research. Again this strong presence of a research community implies an institutionalised field of politics about unemployment, where grants and sponsorship are available for expert knowledge production on the problem. The only other type of civil society actors who were present to any extent were Churches (0.7%) and welfare organisations (0.7%).

The second two columns in Table 3 show the shares of claims by actors, first in the field of claims where the interests of workers' under threat of unemployment were at stake, and second in that where the unemployed were the constituency. This uses the distinction about the constituencies made in Table 1. The interesting point to note from the second two columns of Table 3 is that there appears to be two overlapping debates in the field of unemployment politics in the UK, the first about workers' facing the prospect of unemployment, and the second about how to deal with the unemployed. Private companies (33.3%) are the most prominent actor in debates about workers' facing unemployment, followed by the trade unions (22.8), and state and executive actors only come third (20.7%). The structure of this political field is very different to the one about the unemployed, where private companies make hardly any contribution (2.4%), and state and executive actors dominate the field making more than half of all claims (54.1%), followed by other civil society actors (24.3%), which as we have already stated are primarily research institutes, think tanks and universities.

4.4. The role of the unemployed in public discussion

As already determined before the unemployed themselves as well as their situation hardly play any role in the public discussion. Analysing whether the actors argue more in favour or disfavour of the unemployed we created a position-variable that shows for every claim if the intention is positive, negative or technocratic from the unemployed's point of view. We coded each act of claims-making with a score of -1, 0, +1, dependent upon whether if realised the political demand could be seen to be beneficial (+1) or harmful (-1) to the interests of the constituency of the unemployed. A score of zero was given for cases of neutral positions, or where the expressed political demand was not clearly beneficial or detrimental to the interests of the unemployed constituency. When we calculate an average score for each collective actor, then we arrive at a figure between -1 and +1 for the aggregate position of the claims-making of that actor with respect to the interest of the unemployed. The first column in Table 4 shows the average position scores for the collective actors in the field of unemployment politics. We have arranged the actors in order running top-to-bottom from -1 (against to the interests of the constituency) to +1 (in favour of the interests of the constituency). This gives a first qualitative indicator for the positions of collective actors relative to one another in the issue field over unemployment. A first point to note from the first column of Table 4 is that the claims-makers who take up the most strong position against the interests of the unemployed are private companies (-0.77) and employers' associations (-0.12). At the other pole of the discursive field Trade Unions (+0.74), unemployment-specific NGOs (+0.83) and the Unemployed (+1.00), make the case for the unemployed, though it should be noted that we have already seen from Table 3, that the unemployed themselves and unemployment NGOs, have

only a very small presence in the public domain. Effectively this shows that the key protagonists in the British contentious field of unemployment politics are private companies (19.7%, -0.77), on one side, the trade unions on the other (16.7%, +0.74). This demonstrates evidence for a cleavage between the interests of capital, on one side, and the interests of labour, on the other. However, it is also worth noting that the position of private companies against the interests of the unemployed is a discursive gulf away from the overall average (+0.24), and that state and executive actors (+0.39), other civil society actors (+0.57), and political parties (+0.68), take up a position that is far more supportive to the interests of the unemployed. This indicates that there are also more likely to be links and coalitions between actors on the pro-unemployed side of the debate, whereas the private companies take up a more isolated position in the public sphere.

Turning to the second and third columns in Table 4, we have once more made a distinction between those claims made about the constituency of workers facing potential unemployment, and the constituency of the already unemployed. Here we see important differences that build on those already mentioned regarding the share of actors in the field (Table 3). A first point to note is that the strong position against the interests of the unemployed constituency that we find among private companies occurs with respect to workers under threat of unemployed, where indeed most of the claims by private companies were made (33.3% share of field, -0.84 position). This appears as a highly contentious issue field, with this strong anti-constituency position of the private companies opposed by the strong pro-constituency position of the trade unions (22.8%, +0.72), who gain significant support from other civil society actors (11.2, +0.55) and to a lesser extent from the state and executive actors (20.7, +0.37). Here then it appears that the protagonists in the debate about workers under threat of unemployment are the private companies, whose position is challenged by the trade unions, supported by civil society actors and political parties, and the state also takes a stance that is also broadly defensive toward the interests of workers under threat (+0.37, compared to an overall average of +0.06). By contrast, the third column shows a different structure of contentious issue field where the interests of capital are far less present. Employers associations make public demands against the interests of the unemployed (4.0, -0.08), but the small amount of demands by private companies are actually in favour of the unemployed, most likely about increasing employment (2.4%, +0.50). The British political debate about the unemployed is strongly dominated by the state whose position is slightly below the overall position (54.1%, +0.40, compared to overall average +0.47). The trade unions again take up a pro-unemployed position but again have much less to say than they do about workers under threat (8.8%, +0.79). In fact the political discourse about the unemployed appears to be a strongly pacified debate with the state dominating proceedings and then civil society actors (24.3%, +0.58), which are mostly universities and research institutes, presenting a stance that is more pro-unemployed than the government but not a large discursive distance away from the official stance. This gives the impression of an institutionalised field of politics where exchanges are between the state as a provider and researchers and expert knowledge providers who –often supported by the state– offer advice on policy directions. Overall then, there are clear differences in the debate about unemployment, between the political field over the conditions of workers under threat of unemployment which is highly contentious, and the field over the unemployed, which is broadly uncontested, and where the debate most likely exists to specify policy alternatives for state and executive actors.

4.5. *Argumentative structure of the public discussion*

Another important aspect of claims-making is the contents of issues which are raised by political demands. Table 5 shows the type of issues that were mobilised by claims-making in the UK. It divides the issues into five main macro categories: socio-economic issues in relation

to the labour market; welfare systems and social benefits; (re)insertion into the labour market; issues relating to the constituency of the employed; and other issues. In general, these run from market issues (Non-state then state), to welfare provision, to measures for inserting the unemployed back into the labour market, and then issues relating to the conditions and situation of the unemployed themselves. We have included subcategories and sub-subcategories under these macro categories, which are of special interest for the British case. In addition to these issue categories, in the second column of Table 5 we have also aggregated the average position (-1 to +1) of all claims made in each issue category relative to whether they were for or against the interests of the unemployed. This then shows an indicator for to what extent overall claims-making about a specific issue is either favourable (+1) or unfavourable (-1) to the unemployed. The first striking finding from Table 5 is that issues mobilised about unemployment in the UK are strongly focussed on market and economy type issues with 77.5% of all claims being about socio-economic issues relating to the labour market, in contrast to a tiny 1.2% about issues relating to the condition of the unemployed. An eighth (12.5%) of claims-making mobilised issues about measures for getting the unemployed back into the labour market, and a further 7.5% covered issues about welfare and benefits to them. In addition, the second column in Table 5 shows that socio-economic issues were mobilised in a way that was in general more against the interests of the unemployed (+0.17), when compared to issues about welfare (+0.43) and measures for reinsertion into jobs (+0.56), and about the condition of the unemployed (+0.44).

Indeed the major conflict lines in unemployment politics in the UK appear to come within the category of socio-economic issues relating to the labour market. Here we see that more than four tenths (41.7%) of issues over unemployment are about macro-economic issues which exclude state activities, and that these tend to go against the interests of the unemployed (-0.10 compared to average +0.24). A key component here is that a quarter of all demands were about dismissals (25.9%) which of course are strongly against the interests of workers and the unemployed (-0.36). What we see here then in the British case is that a considerable proportion of the debate about unemployment is constructed by economic issues that occur beyond the state's activities and responsibilities. The UK appears to a large extent to be dominated by a free market type discourse focussed on macro-economic issues which shapes the way in which issues about unemployed are mobilised in the public domain. However, there is still a debate about the role of the state within the economy with almost a fifth of demands (18.7%) raising issues about the state's regulation of the economy and its consequences for unemployment, and a further tenth (9.5%) about state policies relating to the labour market. That economic development/promotion issues (+0.43) and state policy relating to the labour market (+0.49) both give an overall position that is much more favourable to the interests of the unemployed than macro-economic issues (-0.10), shows a line of cleavage in the British debate over unemployment regarding the extent to which and how the state should intervene into the economy for the unemployed.

4.6. Targets of public criticism

One important element of political discourses resides in the fact that actors speak with each other, meaning that they refer to the statements or actions of other organizations, blame them for particular problems and/or call them into action. Thus, another important variable coded by our data refers to the institutional and organisational addressees on whom political demands are made to do something about an issue in the fields of unemployment politics. Just over half of the acts of claims-making in our sample (52.4%) called upon specific actors as targets. Table 6 shows the share of claims-making which targeted specific types of actors as addressees. Perhaps unsurprisingly two thirds of all claims-making (66.2%) called upon state and executive actors to respond to issue defined within unemployment politics. The other

main actor category which appears as an addressee is private companies (19.1%). Once more by distinguishing between claims-making about workers facing unemployment and the unemployed constituency in the second and third columns of Table 6, we see specific differences. Although we saw earlier that private companies have the largest share of claim-making in the field of claims-making over workers (33.3% - see Table 3) and more than state and executive actors, we see nonetheless that it is state and executive actors who are called upon most to act and politically respond to perceived problems in this field (53.9% compared to 30.7% private companies). This indicates that although private companies are the main protagonists in the politics about workers faced by unemployment prospects, it is still governments and the state which is called upon to take responsibility and respond to such problems.

Turning to the problems relating specifically to the unemployed constituency, more than eight tenths of demands with addressees (83.0%) call upon the state and executive actors to do something about the situation. This once more underlines that the field of politics constructed around the unemployed and their interests appears mainly to be a form of client politics built around the central position of the state. Of course, state and executive actors could be those operating at the national, regional and local, European or supra/transnational levels. Another indicator for 'Europeanisation' or supra/transnationalisation of the field of unemployment politics would be if European actors were increasingly called upon by actors to do something in response to unemployment problems in the UK. Table 7 shows the scope of actors who were addressees of claims in our sample of claims-making acts. From Table 7 we see once more that the extent of 'Europeanisation' that we find is somewhat limited, with eight tenths (79.1%) of demands being made on national addressees, and fully six tenths being made on national state and executive actors (58.8%).

4.7. The Role of the EU in public discourse

Another focus of investigation of this project is to examine the extent to which political debates about employment in the UK have been 'Europeanised'. In the absence of the development of a European public sphere in any meaningful sense so far, one would expect to find 'Europeanisation' in national public spheres which remain dominant. One indicator for the 'Europeanisation' of the political debates about unemployment would be finding evidence of European actors as prominent claims-makers within national public spheres. Table 8 shows the geographical scope of the claims-making actors who appeared in the British sample, where it was possible to determine this from the information in the article. We aggregated the sample into five categories regional and local; national; European (EU); supra/transnational (Non European; and unspecified where the scope of the organisation or group was unclear. The supra/transnational category covers all acts by supra-national and foreign actors not including the EU, whereas as European (EU) includes the European Union's supranational institutions, such as the Commission, as well as transnational and bi-lateral actors such as joint statements by the finance ministers of EU countries.

Table 8 shows that three quarters of the actors who make demands political demands are national (75.5%), with a further twelfth (8.6%) sub-national actors. We find that 8.4% are Non-EU supra/transnational, and only 4.9% European. Overall this indicates a limited transnationalisation of the national field of politics over unemployment. The bottom row of Table 8 gives the average position of the claims-making by different actors aggregated actor scope. It is interesting that the supra and transnational actors have an overall position that is strongly against the interests of the unemployed (Non EU -0.57, EU -0.08) when compared to national (+0.31) and especially regional and local actors (+0.61). This indicates that debates carried by supra and transnational actors generally make demands that go against the British unemployed. In addition, we see that most of the non-EU supra-nationalisation comes from private

firms (34.5% of claims-making by private firms is supra/transnational non EU). A large proportion of these demands are made by multi-national private companies. This demonstrates that the political cleavage over unemployment has a dimension which relates to economic globalisation. On one side, international private companies act against the interests of the British unemployed, whose interests are defended most strongly by actors at the regional level (+0.61) and then by national actors (+0.31) on the other.

Although the state and executive claims-makers are predominantly national (80.8%), it is worth looking at what European state and executive actors (who account for 5.7% of claims by state and executive actors) do in the unemployment field. A first point is that when aggregated these European state actors have a position that is lower than average (+0.20 compared to average +0.24) relative to the interests of the unemployed. Again it appears that political globalisation does not necessarily bring demands that are supportive of the national unemployed. We do find examples of the EU commission challenging the British government record on employment, such as Employment and social affairs commissioner Pádraig Flynn presenting a Report on the Future of Social Protection in the EU showing that the British unemployed are worse off than in other main European industrial countries. In addition there joint initiatives like that of the Amsterdam Treaty where EU governments signal their commitment to balance concerns for market economic efficiency with action to combat 'social exclusion' of the unemployed. Also our sample includes the European Commission responding to key national crises about unemployment by fast tracking the provision of aid to South Wales in response to Corus's decision to close its steel plant in the region. There are also stated commitments to the unemployed including a joint declaration by the European Centre for Industrial Relations promising to make an effort to halve unemployment by year 2000. At the same time we also find national politics using the European stage as a forum for making demands, with Labour MEPs lobbying against the closure of the Corus Steel Plant, apparently with support of the national government. In another case, Conservative MEPs call for an EU directive granting temporary workers the same rights as part-time counterparts to be scrapped. Overall, however, these examples of the 'Europeanisation' of politics over unemployment are somewhat limited in number, and for the most part issues of unemployment politics appear to be fought out in the national arenas.

We have also looked at the possibility of the Europeanisation of unemployment politics by looking at the scope of actors making claims, and the scope of addressees on whom demands are made. It is easier to determine the scope of actors than issues, which by definition are less easy to pin down, but in Table 9 we have also included issues which are framed with a European or Non-EU supra/transnational frame of reference. Our objective in Table 9 was to see if there is any discernible trend towards and increasing presence of Europe as an actor, as an addressee, or as a frame of reference, within the debates on unemployment politics. A first point from Table 9 comes from the issue scope. Although we find a greater presence of Non-EU supra/transnational actors and addressees than EU ones, this is not the case for issues, where 5.5% are framed with reference to the EU, and only 1.3% as Non EU supra/transnational. Many of the supra/transnational actors were multinational firms, but the international arena disappears as a focus of issues. In contrast we see that the EU remains. Perhaps this can be seen as an indication that the European Union is seen as a legitimate framework of interpretation for political issues because of the presence of a set of political institutions which are largely absent in the supra/transnational arena, with even organisations such as the WTO being dominated by nation states. However, perhaps the main point to draw from Table 9 is that at least from our data it is not possible to see any discernible pattern of Europe increasingly appearing as an actor, as an addressee, or as a frame of references for issues, over time at least from the debates over unemployment politics.

5. Political deliberation in the field of labour market policies

The structure of public debates outlined above raises the question of whether policy deliberations within the institutionalized arena of policy-making follows similar patterns and cleavages. Is political decision-making and implementation governed by similar actors and inter-organizational relations, issues and agendas? And are institutionalised policy deliberations characterized by different forms of social exclusion when compared with the public sphere?

5.1. *Interviews with political actors*

This report is based on 39 semi-structured interviews with main national and local actors within the contentious field of unemployment in the UK, focusing on direct action and involvement of actors across the public and policy domains. In particular, interviews have been conducted with a) policy actors and state institutions, b) intermediary actors such as political parties, unions, and employers' associations, c) non-governmental organisations, welfare associations and pro-beneficiary charities, and d) groups promoting direct mobilisation/participation of the unemployed themselves. The interview schedule for each category of actors has been specifically designed to analyse where these actors locate themselves in relations to other actors within the same field. The interviews have been coded in full and analysed with the use of SPSS software. They include not only qualitative in-depth questions (examining, for example, framing of the issues and 'perceived' role of legislative provisions and policies for structuring actors' demands) but also sets of standardised questions which aim to investigate action repertoires, mobilisation and communication strategies, institutions on which demands are made, as well as relationships of influence, co-operation and disagreement amongst different types of organisations in the field. This analysis of networks and relationships has been based on the elaboration of closed lists of actors engaged in the multi-organisational field of unemployment in the UK, allowing the employment of techniques of (descriptive) network analysis. It should be emphasised that the questionnaire has also gathered information on how actors across the public and policy domains see the potential influence of increasing European integration in the unemployment field. Interviewees have thus been asked to give more open-ended prognostic statements, thus allowing for comparison of opinions that are expressed by actors of different types.

The selection of actors to be interviewed was first of all tackled through the examination of our claim-making dataset. This dataset was particularly useful to detect crucial policy-makers and intermediary actors in the unemployment field, although it did not provide sufficient information for the selection of organisations representing the interests of the unemployed (including organisations of the unemployed themselves). This problem was addressed through an extensive analysis of practitioners' publications, access to online primary sources, and personal knowledge of the researchers who were involved in the project. Following this process of selection, organisations were contacted via telephone in order to detect spokespersons who could provide answers to the specific questions of the interview schedule. Researchers then contacted these spokespersons via formal letter and arranged an appointment with a final email or phone-call. The final sample of interviewed actors includes 25 national actors and 14 local actors (Table 10). The two interviews with church organisations have been included within the 'local NGOs' since the representatives of the Catholic Church and the Church of England have decided to speak exclusively on behalf of their own local areas. It should also be emphasised that one of our interviewed actors was fully engaged in unemployment mobilisation throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, and hence, could not provide any quantitative data that could be recorded in the following tables. Nevertheless, it made available extensive

and valuable in-depth qualitative knowledge on past and recent mobilisation of the unemployed, which was particularly useful for the completion of this report.

5.2. Organisational networks

Having presented our interviewees with a same list of actors of different types (to which they have been free to add additional names), we have asked them to mention the most influential actors in the unemployment field. Although they have been elaborated on answers given to different versions of the same question (allowing for multiple mentions, three mentions, and one only mention respectively), tables 11A and 11B emphasise the importance of national policy actors, confirming the centralisation and nationalisation of the British unemployment field. In particular, the Treasury and the Department for Work and Pensions emerge as the two most important actors in the field. They are followed by Jobcentre Plus (another national policy actor), and the Labour Party, which, in spite of its ‘intermediary’ role, is likely to be perceived as a national policy actors, given its hold on government since 1997. Perhaps, it should be noticed that local actors seem to give a more than proportional share of mentions for the Labour Party. This can be explained, however, by the predominance of this party in the local council of our selected local case study, that is, Barnsley in Yorkshire.

In addition, it is important to emphasise that the rank-ordered lists of the most mentioned organisations in tables 11A and 11B is matched by the actors’ indication of their main targets in tables 12A and 12B. Indeed, it is just natural that national policy-makers are the most important targets of claim-making in the unemployment field (something which can be also confirmed by the analysis of the claim-making dataset). Table 12A and 12B, however, show that the order between Treasury and Department for Work and Pensions is reversed. This latter department is now in the first place. Furthermore, the Department of Trade and Industry emerges as a crucial target, although it is hardly mentioned or considered to be influential in the previous table. At the same time, table 12A shows that the Labour Party is a crucial target within the unemployment field. It is clearly its very nature of (influential) intermediary actor between people and institutions which makes this party so important as a target within the unemployment field. Yet, as it has already been noticed in the previous section, table 12B indicates that our local case study crucially impacts on the aggregate data of table 12A, since the local government in Barnsley is under Labour control.

As regards relationships of co-operation, our data crucially show that in general actors in the unemployment field are not interested in co-operation with grassroots groups of the unemployed themselves, with little exception for few non-governmental organisations. Figure 1 includes a graphical representation of the web of co-operative ties between all the actors which have been interviewed, that is, the nodes of the figure. Each tie between two nodes indicates the existence (and the direction) of a relationship of co-operation between a pair of them. The first evident characteristic of this network is its fair density, owing to the fact that a large number of actors are linked to each other. It is graphically clear that some organisations stand out for their activity of co-operation, such as the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), while the organisations more ‘isolated’ interact directly at least with another central actor, and hence, they are no more than a few edges away from any other organisation within the network. Of particular interest, however, is the portion of network amongst non-governmental organisations, whose intervention is in favour/on behalf of the unemployed. The evident characteristic of this portion of network consists of its very low density, with a large number of actors disconnected with each other or merely related through relatively long paths. Although the issue-field is characterised by some good contacts between different types of actors, independent organisations working on behalf of the unemployed appear to be unwilling to forge a broad web of reciprocal linkages of close co-

operation, while aiming to keep some basic degree of information exchange within the network.

By contrast, Fig. 1 indicates a good amount of ties across hierarchically different positions, despite the fact that they are not the normative expectation. In fact, the entire field is dominated by the development of extensive linkages which connect organisations across the public and policy domains. It is thus evident that in the unemployment field, different types of organisations aim to access different social positions in order to acquire additional resources. On the one hand, policy-makers are interested in the support which pro-unemployed voluntary organisations can provide in terms of welfare services, production of knowledge, sharing of expertise, and public legitimisation. On the other hand, pro-unemployed organisations obtain in exchange a privileged access to higher political positions and financial resources, thus reinforcing their organisational strength and public acknowledgement. In sum, the entire issue-field is ‘vertically’ stretched, with increasing competition amongst pro-unemployed actors to reach the top level of the policy domain and gradual detachment of the beneficiaries (the unemployed themselves) at the bottom of the public domain. To complete the analysis of inter-organisational networks, Fig. 2 includes a graphical representation of the web of ties of disagreement between all the actors which have been interviewed, that is, the nodes of the figure. Each tie between two nodes indicates the existence (and the direction) of a relationship of disagreement between a pair of them. It is clear that this network has lower density when compared to the previous web of co-operative ties, due to the fact that a higher number of organisations have avoided to foster relationships of disagreement with other actors in the field.

5.3. Action forms of actors

The British national context in terms of action forms is considered to be traditionally more pacified than other European national contexts. As regards the unemployment field, ideological and class conflicts are expressed particularly through competition of organised interests, rather than through direct mass participation and disruptive protest. Direct action in the specific field of unemployment has been used at times during the 1980s and early 1990s, when large mass marches for jobs took place throughout the UK. Yet, it is rather accurate to say that there has been little visible direct protest on this issue during the last ten years, with only limited action initiated by organisations of the unemployed themselves. In addition, the data show that different types of actors make use of a wide repertoire of techniques, with the only exception of court actions. Table 13 sums up the range of strategies that actors use across the public and policy domains. Policy-makers rely on media-related strategies to inform the general public, while they use strategies to directly inform the public to reach practitioners. They can also hire public relations firms, run advertisements, and poll the public. Intermediary actors and non-governmental organisations make a crucial use of their good access to policy-makers, engaging in a good range of techniques to target policy-makers, either directly (lobbying politicians and co-operating with public officials) or indirectly (relying on media-strategies and providing research for consultation).

5.4. The role of the unemployed within unemployment policies

Although table 13 shows a fair use of strategies which aim to mobilise the public, a more detailed examination of our data indicates that these strategies are often based on techniques which consist merely in direct mail fund-raising. The data show, in fact, that within the public domain all the actors make only a very limited use of protest, with the only exception of a particular unemployed organisation, namely, the Network of Unemployed Centres Combine. In sum, while they have been the objects of crucial restrictive reforms, the unemployed have

generally shown only limited capability for direct action. They have engaged in protests against government throughout the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, but they have not voiced their claims beyond the local level during the last decade, mobilising only occasionally and as result of specific industrial disputes. The British unemployed have thus relied on the direct support of pro-unemployed organisations, which have put on the side the recourse to protest action and fully engaged in activities of information, research, dissemination, lobbying, consultation and co-operation with policy-makers.

Certainly, the National Unemployed Centres Combine (CC) also campaigns directly on behalf of the unemployed, linking together various local 'unemployed workers centres' across the UK. CC stands out as the main organisation which actually involves unemployed people in its own organisational activities, working for the bottom-up promotion of their interest rather than for the elaboration of top-down solutions to tackle unemployment. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasise that this organisation has increasingly reduced scope and intensity of its action since the mid-1990s, facing some major obstacles in promoting the direct involvement of the unemployed. In particular, its network of local centres has gradually shrunk due to increasing funding constraints, halt of street protest, and new political conditions, which have forced groups to demobilise, strengthen their links with the unions, and to adapt to government strategies.¹ While some of these centres have dealt with the restrictive legislation of three successive New Right governments,² other centres have decided to support actively government policies since the election of New Labour in 1997.³ CC has then worked to strengthen its ties with trade unions, churches and other civil society organisations in order to fill in its distance from the main policy-makers.⁴

5.5. The role of the EU in political deliberation

Drawing on widespread theses of Europeanisation, trans-nationalisation, and globalisation of social and political processes, it is crucial to assess the extent to which the ongoing processes of European integration and increasing relevance of EU institutions in the field of unemployment policy is linked to strategies and decisions of national actors. A crucial point of this report consists in the analysis of actors across national public and policy domains in order to provide an empirical assessment of contemporary processes of trans-nationalisation, and in particular, Europeanisation. Table 14 sums up the range of strategies that British actors use at the EU level. Following a pattern which is similar to that of table 13 (action repertoire at the national level) the data show that intermediary actors and NGOs employ a good range of techniques to target policy-makers, either directly (lobbying politicians and co-operating with public officials) or indirectly (relying on media-strategies and providing research for consulta-

¹ Although several centres have continued to engage regularly in forms of mobilisation under the direction of CC, the last significant episodes of direct protest were organised in 1995, when three marches were organised to protest against the introduction of the 'job seekers allowance' by the Conservative government. One took place between Newcastle and Sheffield; another took place between Liverpool and Sheffield; while a local march was organised between Derby and Sheffield.

² Accordingly, these centres became providers of services to the unemployed rather than offering the means to organise and mobilise them per se.

³ For example, the old 'unemployment centre' in Sheffield has changed its name in 'Centre for Full Employment'. It has accepted to co-operate with the New Labour government in supporting programmes that re-engage unemployed people back into the labour market. In particular, the centre for full employment has taken active part in the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM), employing hundreds of people in project of community value and creating work in the third sector of the economy.

⁴ At the end of 2003, for example, postcards reporting article 23 of the UN declaration of Human Rights (stating free choice of employment) were sent to each MP at Westminster, while a CC leader participated to the annual TUC conference in order to lobby on the issue of unemployment benefits and welfare reform.

tion). However, two crucial differences should be noticed between distributions of action forms at the national level and EU level across different categories of actors. First, table 14 shows that organisations of the unemployed themselves are almost inactive at the EU level. The only exception consists in some limited action carried out by the Network of Unemployed Centres Combine. The second difference consists in the distribution of ‘regular’ and ‘occasional’ forms of actions which are employed. Tables 13 and 14 present aggregate data of both ‘regular’ and ‘occasional’ forms of action, but it is important to highlight that many of them are used regularly at the national level and only occasionally at the EU level, as well as the smaller size of action at the EU level. Table 14 also indicates that local actors are proportionally more active in contributing to political campaigns and mobilising the public.

In general, most interviewees are quite sure that the EU is playing an (increasingly) active role in the unemployment field, especially on the specific issue of job creation. Many local actors, for example, have debated at length both the negative and positive aspects of the direct intervention of the EU within the area of Barnsley through programmes such as ‘Objective 1’ and the ‘Territorial Employment Pacts’. It should be emphasised, however, that a substantial number of organisations are explicitly against an increase in European influence in unemployment politics, as our data in table 15 seem to suggest. In fact, as regards future developments, other data in table 16 indicate that actors are evenly split between those who believe that the role of the EU will increase on the one hand, and those who think that the role of the EU will not be changing on the other. Only few actors think that the role of the EU will become less important compared to the national level. In sum, it is clear that many actors believe that national sovereignties are dealing with an ongoing process of integration which might foster further EU intervention in the wider field of social policy. The very fact that this process appears to be difficult to control is a crucial element which reinforces actors’ opposition to an increase in European influence.

6. Résumé and conclusion

Focusing on the most relevant findings of this report, it should firstly be emphasised that in the UK public debates over unemployment politics deal with the position of workers or labour groups who are in a position of precarious employment more than with the conditions and position of the unemployed constituencies themselves. Making the distinction between these two types of beneficiaries – ‘workers threatened by unemployment’ vs. the ‘unemployed’ – was a useful distinction for the analysis. In addition, it should be highlighted that we have found no clear relationship between objective levels of unemployment and the level of public debates over unemployment.

It appears that in the UK political contention over unemployment issues is generally declining over the period as debates have become pacified. This process of pacification is not directly traceable to a decline in unemployment, but to political factors, and the weakness of the movement of the unemployed and the labour movement mobilising on behalf of the unemployed. In the unemployment field, state policy responsiveness and co-optative strategies of policy-makers have discouraged the employment of visible political action in the public domain, strengthening the role of small specialist organisations that target relevant policy-makers. Indeed, the definite demise of the unemployed protest movement in the public domain has occurred at the same time when the New Labour has taken on responsibility for government. Not only has this ‘opening up’ of institutional channels of access led unemployed organisations to strengthen their direct forms of institutional involvement in the political process, but it has attracted a wider range of voluntary organisations willing to seize the new resources, and whose input has further weakened the direct efforts of groups of unemployed.

The major conflict lines in British unemployment politics appear to come within the category of socio-economic issues relating to the labour market. Many issues over unemployment are about macro-economic issues which exclude state activities, and these tend to go against the interests of the unemployed. A key component was that a quarter of all demands were about dismissals which of course are strongly against the interests of workers and the unemployed. In the UK a considerable proportion of the debate about unemployment is constructed by economic issues that occur beyond the state's activities and responsibilities. The UK appears to a large extent to be dominated by a free market type discourse focussed on macro-economic issues which shapes the way in which issues about unemployed are mobilised in the public domain. However, there is still some debate about the role of the state within the economy. Overall there is a line of cleavage in the British debate over unemployment regarding the extent to which and how the state should intervene into the economy for the unemployed.

Both claims-making and interview data show that the unemployed are more the 'objects' of political discourse and intervention on their condition, and do not feature significantly as protagonists. Indeed, the identification and contact with groups of unemployed was itself a problematic step of the research. State and executive actors dominate political debates and intervention on issues of unemployment, while civil society organisations such as research institutes and think tanks supply the government with information on the topic. Similarly, political parties seem to focus 'pragmatically' on the issue of unemployment, avoiding its over-politicisation and deep 'ideological' party competition. The unemployment field thus emerges as a very nationalised, centralised and institutionalised political space. All interviewees have mentioned only a very small number of organisations as influential actors, and in particular, the Department for Work and Pension, the Treasury, and the Job Centre Plus. Intermediary actors, welfare organisations and groups of unemployed play only a minor role. The importance of national and central policy-makers has been confirmed by the evaluation of actors' networks. Indeed, the general trend is that non-governmental organisations are in regular contact with policy-makers, engaging in a direct relationship with institutional actors in order to gain some efficient means to influence formulation, implementation and development of policy.

The role of the EU level is somewhat limited when compared to the national level. We did find some evidence for Europeanisation, with EU actors making demands in the British public domain, but these were as likely to be against the interests of the unemployed as for them. According to our data, political debates and action over unemployment remain for the most part a national affair. There is no clear evidence for an increase in the Europeanisation of the public debates over unemployment, either by an increase in EU actors in the national public sphere, in more issues with an EU frame of reference, or by the EU being increasingly called upon to politically respond. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise that if the EU plays a part within the British unemployment field, this is mainly through the action of intermediary actors and policy-makers. In fact, the European dimension seems to play a minor role also from the perspective of non-governmental organisations, which focus mainly at the national level since this is considered to be the central locus where unemployment policy is formulated.

7. Appendices

7.1. Tables

Table 1: Constituencies of ‘the unemployed’ whose perceived interests are affected by acts of political claims-making, Britain 1995-2002

	%	N
Workers’ and Labour force organisations and groups	56.1	421
Working poor	2.4	18
Illegal workers	0.1	1
Employees’/workers’ groups (facing prospective or actual employment)	36.8	276
Other unspecified workers, employees, (facing prospective or actual employment)	16.8	126
Unemployed organisations and groups	43.9	329
Young unemployed	8.9	67
Old unemployed	0.8	6
Women unemployed	1.5	11
Migrant/ethnic minority unemployed	2.3	17
Disabled unemployed	3.1	23
Long term unemployed	2.3	17
Social welfare recipients among unemployed	1.7	13
Other unspecified unemployed	23.3	175
ALL	100.0	750

Table 2: Level of Political Claims- making Over Time by Year – UK 1995-2002 (8 years)

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	All	N
Share of all claims (%)	13.7	6.8	12.5	11.9	22.5	6.8	18.5	7.2	100.0	750
Workers facing Unemployment constituency	8.6	9.0	5.9	12.6	29.9	5.5	24.7	3.8	100.0	421
Unemployed constituency	20.4	4.0	21.0	10.9	13.1	8.5	10.6	11.6	100.0	329
Unemployment rate* (%)	9.8	9.0	7.7	7.0	6.7	6.0	5.6	-	N/A	N/A

Average number of claims-making acts per annum is 93.75 (12.5% of total)

*Figures from Labour Force survey (See British National Template p.)

Table 3: Collective Actors' Share in Political Claims-making by Type, and by Constituency of the Unemployed

%	Share in All Claims	Share in Claims (Workers' Constituency)	Share in Claims (Unemployed Constituency)
State and Executive	35.3	20.7	54.1
Political Party	4.5	4.5	4.6
Private Companies	19.7	33.3	2.4
Employers' associations	5.5	6.7	4.0
Trade Unions	16.7	22.8	8.8
NGOs for Unemployed	0.8	0.0	1.8
Unemployed	0.5	1.0	0.0
Other Civil Society	16.9	11.2	24.3
All Actors	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	750	421	329

Table 4: Collective Actors' Average Position on 'the Unemployed', by Actor type, and by Constituency of Unemployed

%	Average Position in All Claims (-1 to +1)	Average Position in Claims (-1 to +1) (Workers' Constituency)	Average Position in Claims (-1 to +1) (Unemployed Constituency)
Private Companies	-0.77	-0.84	+0.50
Employers' Associations	-0.12	-0.14	-0.08
State and Executive	+0.39	+0.37	+0.40
Other Civil society	+0.57	+0.55	+0.58
Political Party	+0.68	+0.79	+0.53
Trade Unions	+0.74	+0.72	+0.79
NGOs for Unemployed	+0.83	N/A	+0.83
Unemployed	+1.00	+1.00	N/A
All Actors	+0.24	+0.06	+0.47
N	750	421	329

Table 5: Issues raised by Claims-making in Unemployment Politics, and average position of the issue to the interests of the unemployed (-1 against, to +1 for)

	%	Average Position to Constituency	N
Socio-Economic Issues Relating to Labour Market	77.5	-0.17	581
<i>Macro Economic Issues (Non state)</i>	41.7	-0.10	313
Economic change/competiveness (sectoral)	3.9	-0.10	29
Economic change/competiveness (regional)	2.3	+0.65	17
Social dialogue	2.8	+0.90	21
Dismissals (not including state action)	25.9	-0.36	194
<i>Economic Development/Promotion Policy</i>	18.7	+0.43	140
Liberalization, flexibility	3.1	+0.22	23
Economic effects of monetary policies on national economy	5.2	+0.38	39
State subsidies to companies	2.1	+0.25	16
<i>State Policy Relating to the Labour Market</i>	9.5	+0.49	71
<i>State Policy Relating to the Labour Force</i>	2.4	+0.78	18
<i>Working Conditions</i>	1.3	-0.10	10
<i>Targeted/Group Specific Employment Measures</i>	3.9	+0.62	29
Welfare Systems and Social Benefits	7.5	+0.43	56
<i>Unemployment-Insurance System</i>	2.1	+0.44	16
<i>Social Aid/Assistance</i>	4.9	+0.41	37
Minimum Wage/Basic income	2.4	+0.28	18
<i>Other</i>	0.4	N/A	3
(Re)Insertion into the Labour Market	12.5	+0.56	94
<i>Active Measures of (Re)Insertion</i>	9.6	+0.55	72
Targeted/Group specific (re)insertion measures	7.5	+0.50	56
<i>Training and development for unemployed</i>	2.5	+0.53	19
<i>Educational Issues</i>	0.4	N/A	3
Issues Relating to Constituency of Unemployed	1.2	+0.44	9
Other Issues	1.3	+0.30	10
All	100.0	+0.24	750

Table 6: Addressees of Political Claims-making over Unemployment, and by Constituency of Unemployed

%	All Actors	Workers' Constituency	Unemployed Constituency
State and Executive	66.2	53.9	83.0
Political Party	2.5	1.8	3.6
Private Companies	19.1	30.7	3.0
Employers' Associations	1.0	0.4	1.8
Trade Unions	4.1	6.1	1.2
Other Civil Society	7.1	7.0	7.3
All Addressees	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	393	228	165

Proportion of claims-making acts with addressee 52.4%

Table 7: Addressee of Political Claims-making over Unemployment by Scope

%	Regional and Local	National	European	Supra-transnational Noneuropean	Unspecified
State and Executive	1.8	58.8	4.6	1.0	0.0
Political Party	0.5	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Private Companies	1.5	10.7	1.5	5.1	0.3
Employers' Associations	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.3
Trade Unions	1.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Civil Society	1.5	4.1	0.0	1.0	0.5
All Addressees	6.4	79.1	6.4	7.1	1.0

Proportion of claims-making acts with addressee 52.4%

N is 393

Table 8: Scope of Collective Actors making Claims over Unemployment, and Average Position by Scope

%	Regional and local	National	European	Supra-transnational (Noneuropean)	Scope Unspecified	N
All Actors	8.6	75.5	4.9	8.4	2.7	750
State and Executive	6.8	80.8	5.7	3.0	0.0	265
All Non-State and Executive	7.4	72.6	4.5	11.3	4.1	485
Political Party	17.6	82.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	34
Private Companies	5.4	49.3	6.8	34.5	4.1	148
Employers' Associations	2.4	90.2	4.9	2.4	0.0	41
Trade Unions	8.8	76.0	6.4	0.8	7.2	125
NGOs for Unemployed	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10
Other Civil Society	4.7	89.0	1.6	0.8	3.9	127
All Actors Average Position	+0.61	+0.31	-0.08	-0.57	+0.30	+0.24

Table 9: Geographical Scope of Claims-making Actors, Institutional Addressees, and Issues over time (1995-2002)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	All
EU actor scope	6.9	0.0	4.4	10.2	3.5	2.0	5.1	7.5	5.1
Supra/International (Non EU) actor scope	4.0	5.9	11.0	10.2	11.4	7.8	8.8	5.7	8.6
N	101	51	91	88	158	51	136	53	729
EU issue scope	4.9	5.9	5.4	10.1	4.9	5.9	1.4	11.1	5.5
Supra/International (Non EU) issue scope	0.0	3.9	1.1	6.7	2.5	0.0	0.7	3.7	1.3
N	103	51	93	89	163	51	139	54	753
EU addressee scope	7.2	0.0	6.1	7.5	4.9	0.0	8.8	16.7	6.3
Supra/International (Non EU) addressee Scope	0.0	8.3	8.2	11.3	1.9	3.4	17.5	4.2	6.6
N	55	24	49	53	103	29	57	24	394

Table 10: Distribution of interviewees across actor categories and national/local location⁵

	National	Local
Policy Actors	3	2
Intermediary	5	4
NGOs	16	4
Unemployed Organisations	1	4
Total	25	14

⁵ See Appendix 3 for a complete list of interviewed actors (and abbreviations).

Table 11A: List of the ten most frequently mentioned influential organisations by actor type (multiple options)

	Policy	Interm.	NGOs	Unemp.	TOTAL
HM Treasury	4	11	17	4	36
Department of Work and Pensions	5	8	16	3	32
Jobcentre Plus	4	8	15	3	30
Labour Party	1	11	13	3	28
Local Jobcentre Plus Offices	3	8	12	2	25
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation	3	7	13	1	24
Trades Union Congress	3	5	11	3	22
European Commission	4	6	10	1	21
Institute for Public Policy Research	2	5	12	1	20
Confederation of British Industry	1	5	11	2	19

Table 11B: List of the ten most frequently mentioned influential organisations by actor location (multiple options)

	National	Local	TOTAL
HM Treasury	24	12	36
Department of Work and Pensions	23	9	32
Jobcentre Plus	22	8	30
Labour Party	16	12	28
Local Jobcentre Plus Offices	17	8	25
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation	17	7	24
Trades Union Congress	16	6	22
European Commission	15	6	21
The Institute for Public Policy Research	14	6	20
Confederation of British Industry	16	3	19

Table 12A: The ten most frequently mentioned targets by actor type

	Policy	Interm.	NGOs	Unemp.	TOTAL
Department of Work and Pensions	1	7	12	2	22
HM Treasury	1	7	10	1	19
Labour Party	0	7	7	4	18
Department of Trade and Industry	1	7	7	1	16
Jobcentre Plus	1	5	9	1	16
Trades Union Congress	3	3	7	1	14
European Commission	2	5	4	1	12
Liberal Democrats	0	6	4	2	12
Local Authorities	0	4	6	2	12
Conservative Party	0	3	6	2	11
European Parliament (MEPs)	2	6	2	1	11
Local Jobcentre Plus Offices	0	3	7	1	11

Table 12B: The ten most frequently mentioned targets by actor location

	National	Local	TOTAL
Department of Work and Pensions	16	6	22
HM Treasury	16	3	19
Labour Party	11	7	18
Department of Trade and Industry	12	4	16
Jobcentre Plus	14	2	16
Trades Union Congress	11	3	14
European Commission	9	3	12
Liberal Democrats	7	5	12
Local Authorities	8	4	12
Conservative Party	9	2	11
European Parliament (MEPs)	8	3	11
Local Jobcentre Plus Offices	7	4	11

Table 13: Distribution of action form categories expressed in standardised form by actor scope

Action form	Policy actor		Intermediary		NGOs		Unemployed	
	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local
Media related	.6	.6	.92	.7	.78	.7	.6	.33
Informing the public	.58	.5	.68	.7	.45	.3	.4	0
Negotiating/lobbying	.88	1	1	1	.87	.83	1	.66
Consultation	1	.66	.85	.31	.84	.56	.75	.33
Court-action	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Political campaigns	n/a	n/a	.33	.66	.04	0	0	0
Mobilizing the public	n/a	n/a	.42	.43	.07	.21	.62	0

Tab. 14: Distribution of EU action form categories expressed in standardised form by actor scope

Action form	Policy actor		Intermediary		NGOs		Unemployed	
	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local
Media related	.26	.5	.84	.5	.25	0.1	.06	0
Informing the public	.33	.2	.36	.36	.08	.05	0.2	0
Negotiating/lobbying	.55	0	1	.25	.47	.33	.66	0
Consultation	.77	.16	.65	.12	.34	.25	0	0
Court-action	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Political campaigns	n/a	n/a	.26	.25	.02	0	0	0
Mobilizing the public	n/a	n/a	0.1	.28	.007	0	.25	0

Table 15. Support for an increase in European influence by actor type

	In favour	Against	Missing ⁶
Policy Actors	1	2	2
Intermediary	4	4	1
NGOs	8	6	6

Table 16. Estimated future importance of EU policies by actor type

	Increasing	Unchanged	Decreasing	Missing
Policy Actors	2	2	0	1
Intermediary	4	2	2	1
NGOs	8	8	2	2

⁶ A high number of missing values indicates that our interviewees could not tell anything about the position of their organisation. Interviewees were at times simultaneously in favour and against different aspects of European influence.

7.2. Figures

Figure 1: Inter-organisational Relationships of Co-Operation within the Unemployment Field

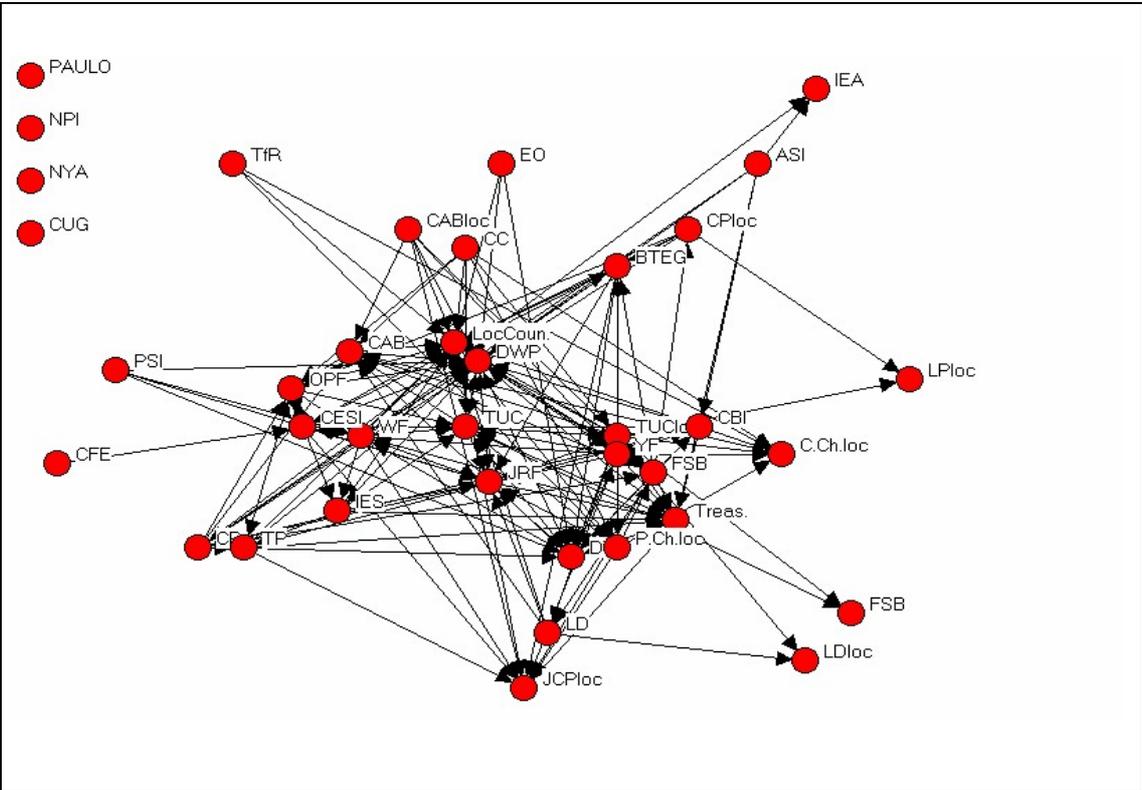
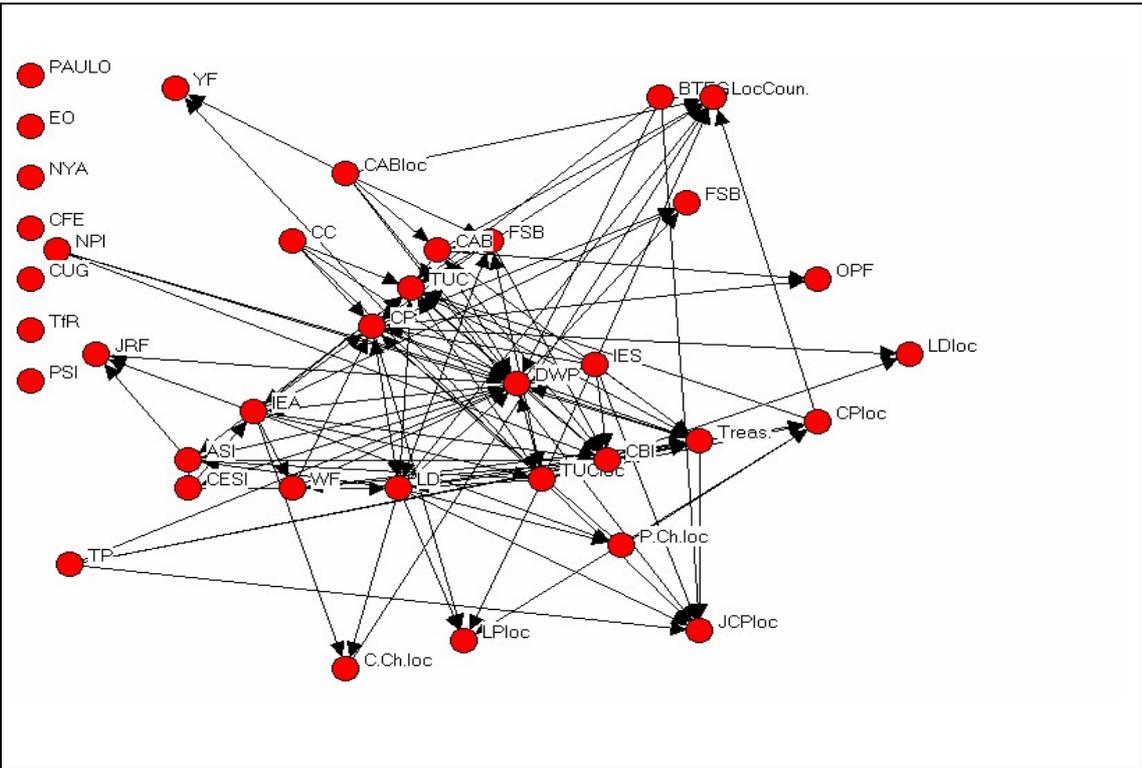


Figure 2: Inter-Organisational Relationships of Disagreement within the Unemployment Field



7.3. List of Interviewed Actors (and abbreviations)

1. Barnsley Council (LocCoun.)
2. Department for Work and Pension (DWP)
3. Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)
4. Jobcentre Plus – Barnsley (JCPlac)
5. Treasury (Treas.)
6. Catholic Hallam (C.Ch.loc)
7. Confederation British Industry (CBI)
8. Church of England (P.Ch.loc)
9. Conservative Party – Barnsley (CPlac)
10. Conservative Party (CP)
11. Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
12. Labour Party – Barnsley (LPlac)
13. Liberal Democrats (LD)
14. Liberal Democrats – Barnsley (LDloc)
15. Trade Unions Congress (TUC)
16. TUC Yorkshire (TUCloc)
17. Adam Smith Institute (ASI)
18. Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG)
19. Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI)
20. Citizens Advice Bureau – Barnsley (CABloc)
21. Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
22. Employment Opportunities (EO)
23. Fabian Society (FS)
24. Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)
25. Institute of Employment Studies (IES)
26. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)
27. National Youth Agency (NYA)
28. New Policy Institute (NPI)
29. One Parent Family (OPF)
30. National Training Organisation (PAULO)
31. Policy Studies Institute (PSI)
32. Work Foundation (WF)
33. Tomorrow's People (TP)
34. Yorkshire Forward (YF)
35. Centre For Full Employment (CFE)
36. Churches Unemployment Group (CUG)
37. Network of Unemployed Centres Combine (CC)
38. Together for Regeneration (TfR)
39. Vicar Marshall

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