

Negotiating Active Citizenship in Street-Level Practices: An Institutional Logics Perspective

Stephan Dahmen, Bielefeld University

1 Transformations of Citizenship: The Case of the Youth

The Social Investment Turn (Morel, Palier, & Palme, 2012) comes with a focus on preventive policies, personalized interventions, and activation to strengthen citizens' capacities to handle social opportunities as well as to overcome personal hardships on their own. As such, it has serious implications for the transformation of citizenship in contemporary welfare states (Jenson 2012) which becomes distinctively visible in the case of young people. As a "citizen-worker of the future" (Lister 2003), a specific political attention is cast on the younger generation: youth is either seen a strategic investment into the human capital of the future as it "pays off" in terms of later monetary outcomes, or as a special target group of workfare measures and activation programs designed to provide incentives to take up work as fast as possible. As such, youth citizenship differs from the citizenship status of adults – in regards to the access to welfare rights, but also the design and rationalities of programs of the welfare service state which are also granted and designed according to age norms and cultural conceptions of the status of youth. This is reflected in the design of current work as well as that education-related youth policies on the European level: as the European commission states, regarding its youth guarantee scheme, "preventing unemployment and inactivity therefore has the potential to outweigh these costs and as such represents an opportunity for smart investment in the future of Europe, its youth" (European Commission 2012, p. 8). Youth as a "smart" investment in the future discursively constructs youth as citizen-workers of the future and depicts the human capital of the future generation as a key impact parameter of the welfare state. The European youth guarantee scheme serves as a prime example for a new type of transition policies, and exemplarily summarizes scope and direction of similar policies in different European member countries. For instance, these policies are underpinned by a series of normative assumptions and expectations about young person's social and economic activity. First, they entail a conditionalization of benefits - or in the words of the European Commission - a strict coupling of "eligibility of social assistance for youth at high risk of marginalization with a rigorous mutual obligation approach" (European Commission 2012, p. 18). Youth are conceived as rationally choosing actors that must be provided with the right incentives (carrots) and penalties (sticks) to enter work. Secondly, they often come with early tracking and monitoring devices for so called "NEET's" or the "youth at risk" of dropping out. This early monitoring and profiling are part and parcel of a social investment approach that aims at "prepar(ing) rather than repair(ing)" (Hermerijck 2017), and thus requires identifying "youth" based on risk factors prior to the occurrence of a specific life-course-event. As such, all young people facing the transition to work potentially come into the gaze of transition policies. Thirdly, these schemes focus on the avoidance of "inactivity" by focusing on an encompassing inclusion of the young and unemployed in employment or education measures (Dahmen and Ley 2016). For example, the European youth guarantee scheme proposes that a concrete offer is made within four weeks of registration. Finally, these policies have a strong focus on individualized counselling and guidance (individualization).

As an example, the European network of public employment services highlights the aim to strengthen the role of “career transition management” (ibid, p. 8) in order to “equip jobseekers (...) with the knowledge and skills to make informed career transitions and take control of their career paths” (European Commission 2012, p. 23). This individualization discourse “encourages young people to ‘take charge of their biography,’ build their employability through improving or consolidating their skills,” (Antonucci and Hamilton 2014, p. 263), and has been touted to amount to a “political production of individualized subjects,” (Crespo-Suarez and Serano Pacual 2007). The policy paradigm of “activation” thus comes with an emphasis on active citizenship where young people are seen as both responsible for and able to achieve economic self-reliance. The increased focus on conditionality criteria, the stronger individualization of services as well as the implementation of a contradictory mix of “client-centeredness” and “compulsion” (Lindsay and Mailand 2004, p. 196) are common characteristics of contemporary reforms of transition policies.

2 Analyzing Activation and Citizenship in Street-Level Practices

The turn towards the welfare service state and the associated changes in citizenship requires bringing the frontline level of policy implementation into the center of focus. The much-cited adage that “street-level bureaucrats implicitly mediate aspects of the constitutional relationship of citizens to the state. In short, they hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship,” (Lipsky 1980, 4) particularly applies in times of the welfare service state where individualized service provisions become key concerns. In a nutshell: while in the classical welfare state, street-level organizations’ activities were limited to check eligibility and process clients, whereas, in a welfare service state, they increasingly become “people changing” institutions (Hasenfeld 1973) in which increasingly the person’s own dispositions, aspirations, and motivations come to be the center focus. In the context of a so-called “individualization” of policies (Valkenburg 2007) – the nexus of policy-making switches to the frontline level of interaction with the client. In fact, as Ludwig Mayerhofer points out, while pedagogical interventions were, in the Keynesian welfare state arrangement, one form of intervention among many others, they are now a means for producing self-responsible subjects – in a central position. Such policies aim at fostering welfare citizens’ responsibilities for shaping one’s own integration trajectory and are aiming at the “promotion of desirable self-regulation” (Dean 2007) in which increasingly the motivations (embodied through a norm of subjective engagement and the demand to be the actor of one’s own re-integration) are made relevant. Through the re-distribution of responsibility between the state and the individual (Serrano-Pascual 2007), citizenship is transformed from “status to contract” (Handler 2003). The self-governing, autonomous individual is the underlying ethos (Yeatman 2007, 2009). The need for this specific perspective on the frontline level is accentuated by a growing qualitative research literature on activation in which activation is described as a new form of production of neoliberal subjectivity (Dean 1995, Darmon and Perez 2011, Akerstrom-Anderson 2007). This research highlights, mostly based on Foucault’s Theory of subjectivation, the “practices of self-formation” (Dean 1995, p. 567) involved in the making of employable subjects. And in fact, the institutional program of activation comes with a new rationality of governing the unemployed that - in comparison to old forms of social control stressing conformity and disciplinary power (for example the poor house) - highlights self-responsibility, empowerment, and individual agency of citizens. As Rose puts it, “governing in a liberal-democratic way means governing *through* the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite of them,” (Rose 1998, p. 155). Taking this into consideration, there is an urgent need to look at those “technologies of citizenship” (Cruikshank 1999, p. 4) that align the self-governing capacities of subjects “with the pursuit of governmental objectives present at the

micro-levels of institutional everyday life, where citizens are constituted” (ibid.). Or as Ludwig-Mayerhofer puts it, “as activation aims at promoting the desirable self-regulation of citizens, a micro-sociological analysis of the ‘practices’ of activation appears as the most promising approach to analyze the core features that make up the ‘active welfare state,’” (Ludwig Mayerhofer 2007, p. 15, own translation).

3 From Discretion to Organizationally Embedded Practices – Beyond the Street-Level Calculus of Choice

As the last section has shown, the current transformations of citizenship require a research approach that allows to study activation in situ, “in action” – through an in-depth analysis of the people-processing and people-changing work accomplished by the frontline workers and their potential effects on citizens. Current research of activation practices has largely drawn on the street-level bureaucrat-approach (henceforth SLB), starting from the common assumptions that frontline workers “interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs,” and they “have substantial discretion in the execution of their work,” (Lipsky 1980, p. 3). With roots in administration and political sciences, the street-level bureaucracy-approach focusses mainly on the interplay between policy programs and their situated implementation of frontline workers. Regarding activation programs, it has highlighted the increasing role of discretion in cases of conditionalized, individualized, and managerialized activation settings (see e.g. Wright 2001, Thorén 2008).

Nevertheless, SLB theory is increasingly seen as having several “blind spots” that prove to be problematic when analyzing activation practices. Firstly, while SLB theory has focused on the interplay of bureaucratic rules and directives, and their implementations, it has put less importance on the interactionist dimension of their work, particularly between SLB’s and their clients (Johannessen 2019). Secondly, SLB theory operates with an “implementation-control-discretion-narrative” (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2012, p. 517), and comes with a “false distinction prevalent to date between street-level discretion and rule-based implementation” (Maynard Moody and Portillo 2011, p. 271). From an interactionist standpoint, a perspective that opposes rules to discretion isn’t convincing: while rules certainly have an impact on how situations are interpreted, they do not predetermine locally situated behavior. This has most prominently been described in Anselm Strauss’ concept of “negotiated order.”: This concept highlights the fact that an organization does not exist independently of the actions of their members, and that organizational members are continually “negotiating” the pre-existing results of the processes of the organization (Strauss et. al. 1978, p. 5ff). In this process, codified organizational rules do not simply act as a coercive structure (like in the Weberian notion of bureaucracy), nor can they exhaustively prescribe what to do in a particular case:

“rules always require judgment concerning their applicability to the specific case. Does it apply here? To whom? In what degree? For how long? With what sanctions? The personnel cannot give universal answers; they can only point to past analogous instances when confronted with situations or give “for instance” answers, when queried about a rule’s future application” (Strauss et al. 1963: 153, cited in Johannessen 2018, p. 20)

Thirdly, and in line with the previous points, Lipsky’s approach remains too strongly seated within the toolkit of rational choice institutionalism in which the behavior of SLB’s is influenced by an:

“organizational context that sets the goals, rules, budgetary and time resources for bureaucratic action and second, the intrinsic cognitive-emotional utility functions of individual street-level bureaucrats which, in interplay with the organizational context, will determine whether street-level bureaucrats rigorously apply, creatively adapt, or undermine formal policy goals in their interaction with clients and client groups,” (Rice 2013, p. 2).

The rational choice aspect of SLB is, for instance, reflected in Brodtkin’s “street-level calculus of choice” (Brodtkin 2016, p. 447). Focusing on the structure of street-level work (e.g. resources, demands, infrastructures, and incentives), street-level theory assesses how these conditions produce specific patterns of discretion. As Brodtkin writes:

“according to this calculus, one can assume that caseworkers will select action A over B when A is less costly and more rewarding. It follows that management strategies that change the informal calculus of costs and benefits will result in different patterns of discretionary choice,” (Brodtkin 2011, p. 259).

In order to overcome the “blind spots” of contemporary SLB-Theory, I follow Maynard Moody and Musheno’s (2012) claim to open up SLB research to a more multidimensional makeup of the organizational context of institutional work. They show that street-level agents legitimize decisions by referring to widely held (and often taken-for-granted) social norms and judgments about deservingness that they “use” rather than “follow” rules, and even develop stable informal rules and routines in the absence of bureaucratic control (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000, 2003, 2012). Rather than conceiving SLB-practices as contributing to or jeopardizing higher-order technical-bureaucratic organizational goals, SLB-practices have to be analyzed in their own right. To put it bluntly: Organizational rules are not straightforwardly implemented but require situated, case-based interpretation, “their decisions and actions are guided by meaning, not function” (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000, p. 253). As a consequence, future SLB-research needs to focus on the “pragmatic improvisation as an expression within the context of rules, practices, and roles” (ibid: 520). Rather than utilizing “conventional and simplistic notions of hierarchical rationality” (Maynard Moody and Portillo 2010, p. 254).

Accordingly, this requires extending the focus of attention from the regulative dimension (official legal rules and organizational prescriptions) of institutions to informal, normative and cultural cognitive patterns of interpretation and sense-making (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). As proposed by the “institutional logics” approach (Thornton and Ocasio 2012) “individual and organizational behaviour (...) must be located in a social and institutional context, and this institutional context both regularizes behavior and provides opportunity for agency and change” (Thornton and Ocasio 2012, p. 102). Instead of conceiving SLB’s actions as guided by cost-benefit considerations on the basis of clear policy prescriptions, I argue that human service organizations are themselves home to “multiple and negotiated local meaning systems” (Binder 2007: 551). As an example, through its increasing reliance on government funding, the non-profit organization in the present case-study faces a strong pressure to comply to the strict procedural requirements of the legal sanctioning system of the unemployment insurance (state), while at the same time the organizations staff is guided by a strong commitment to their professional ideology, that is, by a commitment to young participants well-being. At the same time, the organization must maintain exchange relations with employers and the labour-market (young persons are expected to find a job during their participation in the measure). Rather than rational adaptation of frontline staff to ambiguous

policy prescriptions as highlighted by Brodtkin (2016), SLB's face potentially "rival normative systems" (Heimer 1999, cited in Binder 2007, p. 552), different interpretation patterns and "cultural repertoires" (Swidler 2001) used to make sense of their everyday work. The notion of "embedded agency" (Thornton and Occasio 2008, p. 104) highlights that SLB's practices are embedded in an organizational environment that both enables (through providing specific vocabularies of motives) or restricts certain courses of action. As Binder puts it: "Logics are not purely top-down: real people, in real contexts, with consequential past experiences of their own, play with them, question them, combine them with institutional logics from other domains, take what they can from them, and make them fit their needs" (Binder 2007, p. 568).

A perspective looking at the ways frontline agents deal with and interpret the different conflicting meaning systems in a given organization also allows a novel perspective for the analysis the transformations of citizenship in the Welfare Service State (see introduction of this special issue): Through focusing on the moment of policy implementation, it allows to show if, and if yes, how the traditional, rather legalistic conception of modern social citizenship enters into critical tensions with the normative focus personalization and individual responsibility in the Welfare Service State and how these tensions are dealt with on the frontline level.

4 Research Design: An Ethnography of Activation Practices

The present study is based on data collected for a research project aimed at analyzing the people-processing and people-changing activities involved in regulating transitions from school to work. The main goal of the study was to analyze how the contradictory legal and bureaucratic prescriptions from funding institutions and the labor-market are reflected in the practical doings and sayings of frontline workers and how they situationally deal with these contradictory demands. The analyzed activation measure is a so-called "motivation semester." Motivation semesters are active labor measures financed by the Swiss unemployment insurance which are implemented and targeted toward young job seekers aged 16-25. Conceptually, and in terms of target group, they are similar to the preparatory measures for apprenticeship-seeking adolescents in Germany. Motivational semesters can be seen as characteristic for the introduction of youth-specific activation measures, as they were the first measure specifically designed for young persons. In addition, they provide a particular well-suited case-study for analyzing how frontline agents deal with divergent contradictory rationalities: aside from the obvious administrative-bureaucratic rationalities represented through the rules and artifacts of unemployment insurance, educational rationalities (the target group are young persons who are aiming at a gaining access to upper secondary *education*) as well as generational rationalities (as often minor, young persons, the clients are markedly different from adults) become relevant (see e.g. Dahmen 2019, p. 405). Not to mention, historically, the analyzed measures were some of the first that installed qualified staff with an educational professional background, adding a sort of shared professional knowledge structure that proved to be considerably different to purely administrative staff. In terms of an ethnographic research design, a focused ethnography (Marcus 1995) of key institutional situations (entrance interviews, group-work sessions, weekly one-on-one counselling sessions) was conducted. Several ethnographic interviews (Spradley (1967) with key informants (N=15) and young participants of the measure (N=20) were also conducted. In addition to the interviews, many official documents that were used in the everyday practices were analyzed. This multimodal research design ensured to capture the (material) equipment of the institutional context.

4.1 Activation as an Institutional Invitation to “Work on Oneself”

Motivational semesters face a contradictory situation: they deal with participants with specific labor-market barriers but have limited leverage on those structural barriers. This is the reason that these barriers are re-signified into individualized “employability troubles” that are treated on the level of the individual. One of the few characteristics of participants that the motivational semesters have a hold on and that can be changed are the professional aspirations of the young job-seekers. This is also reflected in the contract agreement between the public employment service and the provider of the motivational semester. One of the central official goals of the motivational semester is to support the young participants in finding a “realistic and realizable” job choice that consists of, on the one hand, their “interests,” and on the other hand, takes into account the “realities in the labor-market.” A central institutional “site” in which the activation happens are at the weekly individual counselling sessions between participants and personal advisors. In these sessions, the progress of the participant is evaluated, future actions are planned, and all issues related to the participant’s future are discussed. Frontline agents are thus placed between two contradicting goals: on the one side, they are deemed to match persons to existing job opportunities, on the other side, they are required to take into account the job aspirations and wishes of the claimants. The following quote shows that frontline agents frame the issue of finding a suitable job offer as mainly depending on the inclinations, wishes and dreams of the participant.

“We start with the dreams of the young person: What do you have? What personal resources are at your disposition? What profile can you identify with? Rather artistic? Or rather in sales? Do you prefer working inside or outside?... That allows us to bring each young person to the point where they ask themselves these questions in a non-menacing way: What should be my career? Who am I?” (Interview)

This quote carries the idea that choosing a job and career path is, above all, something that the young person must do by himself. It sounds like an invitation to a future-oriented self-exploration and points to the intention of fostering a kind of “biographical reflexivity,” and is an invitation to project oneself into the future and to develop a concern for the future life-course. The fact that this quote describes what happens during the face-to face meetings of the weekly individualized counselling sessions is central – in such a context, the utterance “*what should be your career? Who are you?*” does not prescribe a fixed answer (“good,” “bad”), but opens up a decision space in which the subject is demanded to behave reflexively and puts the counselled person in the position in which he is demanded to perform a kind of self-exploration or a work on oneself. The institutional arrangement of the individualized counseling puts the service user in a position in which he is asked to analyze his past life, define certain characteristics of his personality, and unfold his motivations and interests. This reconstruction of a calculating, planification-oriented, future-oriented posture seems to be the main goal as the same professional argues: it is about “*just bringing everybody to where they ask this question to themselves,*” (interview). This initiation to biographical reflexivity and the incitation to develop biographical plans amount to a demand to project oneself into a socially structured opportunity space. As Bjorn and Jensen (2010) put it:

these regular individualized counselling meetings amount to a form of “dialogue-based activation” in which “you receive a new chance to present or narrate yourself in a new manner in forms which makes you a participant in a dialogue leading to a social contract. It is a new occasion to do what we all are doing, i.e. to create and maintain an

identity through the reproduction and renewal of the autobiographical narrative,” (p. 328).

The encouragement to produce a self-narrative of possible future selves is not happening in a free-floating space: even though professionals highlight the fact that they “*start from dreams, from self-representations, of what they wish for themselves, and from how a job should look like in order that they are happy,*” the narrative self-imagination fostered here is very much oriented towards the production of “viable” future selves which are “*realistic and realizable*” and “*keeps the road*” (or can withstand) the evaluations of the labor-market. The most striking thing about how these future oriented planning activities are portrayed, is the strong normative individualism that comes with the language of choice. The choice of a profession, despite obvious demand-side barriers, is described as a “reflexive-choice biography” (Beck and Beck Gernsheim 2002), and as a reflexive project of self-realization.

It places the subject as an individual “manager” of one’s life-course and biography, and the strong focus on the individuality and the own preferences of the young person aims at producing “individuality itself, independently capable of action and driven by one’s internal motivations” (Ehrenberg 1999, p. 311). The importance that is put on the fact that “*young people have to ask themselves these questions*” reveals the reluctance to directly impact, control, or prescribe the biographical plans of the young persons, and reflects the idea that young persons exercise this control on themselves and interiorize structural limits by themselves. It furthermore points to the instauration of a specific relation to oneself, in which the young person rationally calculates and evaluates, based on self-observation (“*what do I want?*”) their labor-market options (“*What can I rationally expect?*”), a project of the self. The fact that there is no mention of structural factors (for instance the labor market situation) which potentially impedes the execution of a biographical plan, and the high importance that is put on the idea of “self-realization” through work (“*What (sic) are you?*”) shows that structural factors are faded-out in this addressing practice, conceptualizing the young person as an autonomous manager of his/her own biography. In doing so, the quote incorporates a number of normative premises about job choice: firstly, on the premise that job choices are primarily a matter of individual, naturalized dispositions that simply have to be discovered. Consequently, the client is brought to see himself as the author, the only source of a (legitimate) biographical description of an envisioned future. Seen in such an individualistic fashion, he is the only person that can possibly do something about it and is accordingly responsible to do so. Secondly, he is installed as a responsible self-observer who observes his current everyday activities, hobbies, and inclinations as expressions of individual skills and competencies that are intrinsic to his personality and constitutive to whom he is as a person (“Who are you?”). He learns to describe himself as a bundle of competencies and capacities. Thirdly, he learns to evaluate himself in the light of specific social norms – in this case, a social norm of self-realization and self-optimization – and potentially, interiorizes them as a privileged relation to himself.

4.2 (Non)-Sanctioning Practices as a Compromise of Different Organisational Rationalities

The Motivational semesters operate with a standardized and conditionalized sanctioning scheme as defined by law. Despite the clear-cut conditionally programmed rules of the catalogue of sanctions, frontline workers display a certain creativity in the application of these rules. The pure possibility to do so results from the fact that the concrete application of sanctioning criteria happens in the sphere of client interaction – as there is no direct purview of the administrative level, the translation of rules into practice is only loosely coupled to the

organizational criteria. The existence of this discretionary levy leaves space for a practice of sanctioning that is not based on a simple application of sanctioning rules, but rather leaves space for a multiplicity of other modes of judgment than the administrative one. For instance, while official documents issued by the unemployment insurance explicitly define recurrently being late as a sanctionable behavior leading to a temporary cut of unemployment benefits, frontline agents seemed to be rather reluctant to issue a sanction. Rather than simply following an administrative rule, frontline agents discuss sanctions with reference to different, rival normative systems. In doing so, they situationally negotiate administrative rules, professional commitments and internal organizational requirements. The tensions between these different logics seem to be a constant concern during everyday work and require a constant re-balancing in ongoing situations. The latter is reflected in the following quote drawn from an interview with a frontline agent:

“If a youngster is recurrently late, we are legally obliged to sanction him. Actually, according to the official rules, within three times of coming to late, we could expulse him from participation. But that’s against our objective – we want participants to be on time by their own accord, we want them to realize by themselves that being on time is a requirement without which one cannot make it in the world of work. In addition –if we would apply the sanctioning criteria as demanded by the employment agency, we would need to expulse half of the participants and have no one to work with left” (Interview quote)

As the above quote shows, the compromise of these different logics of action and evaluation is a continual task that must be situated and negotiated by the frontline agents. On the one hand, the strict enforcement of the “one-size fits all,” conditional sanctioning rules is rejected by the frontline agents. This amounts to an administrative treatment of clients that consequentially invalidates the possibility to account for the personal attachments and vulnerabilities of the singular person and restricts the possibility of a trusting relationship between client and professional. The temporary suspension of the bureaucratic horizon of evaluation takes place in a discretionary grey sphere implying a deliberate flouting of legal prescriptions and formal evaluation criteria. This temporary suspension of the legal horizons of judgments enable a form of “situated judgment” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2000, p. 208) in which the young person is not apprehended in terms of abstract requirements of active citizenship, but as a concrete person with personal attachments and (dis-)abilities who – at least potentially – is equipped with a capacity to voluntarily comply to the abovementioned requirements. The frontline agent faces the necessity to perform a situated compromise between different modes of evaluation, equally valid in the organization: On the one hand, young people should be evaluated in terms of criteria of the labor-market (in this case, the expectation of being on time), and on the other hand, legal rules stating that receiving unemployment benefits are tied to conditions that are valid for all, independent of their personal circumstances. Last but not least, specific requirements of the people-changing technologies of the organization that require the co-productive engagement of the client and that are not enforceable ex parte through impersonal law but require a trusting relationship between client and professional. These different rationalities seem to be incompatible, as a strict enforcement of sanctioning rules would invalidate attempts to foster the self-guided incorporation of the “codes of the world of work.” The omnipresence of this conflict throughout the case-study at hand is, for instance, reflected in narratives by other frontline professionals: in some situations, in which young participants came too late to the Motivational Semester, the frontline agents made the application of the administrative sanctioning criteria dependent on the capacity of the young person to justify and apologize for

his tardiness. Here, the deliberate breaching of an administrative rules opens up a space where the “employability troubles,” which are seen as issues of private life conduct, can be individually treated.

4.3 Integration Contracts as a Technology of Citizenship

Particularly, during the first weeks of the motivational semester, the counsellors negotiate with every young person an individualized integration contract. These integration contracts have a hybrid character: they are both a sort of administrative form as well as an institutional ritual to foster the young clients inner dialogue through negotiating its contents. On the one hand, the integration contract has administrative character – objectives are fixed in written form, there exists a blank form which contains a checkbox for the goals of the client and is signed by both parties. Furthermore, the goals are equipped with a timeline, whereby, the achievement of a goal can be evaluated. The integration contract document is stored in the individual file of the participant and can be used for different purposes. Integration contracts also imply an evaluative exercise: the negotiated objectives are brought up regularly in the counselling encounters where the progress towards reaching the objectives is discussed. The fact that there exists an operationalization of the objectives, in terms of indicators and progress, indicates a specific concern for transparent and measurable steps. This is reflected in one of the most common topics of integration contracts: tardiness. As the following observed protocol shows that, although tardiness is officially a sanctionable offense, punctuality is not formulated as a requirement for the participation in the measure. What’s more, these conditions of participation are individually negotiated in order to foster autonomous self-control:

The counsellor opens up a folder and takes out an integration plan form: „Perhaps you might already start to consider what goals you want to set for yourself during your time at the measure. You already mentioned that you would like to do an internship in the logistics-sector. The young person is hesitant at first, and then replies: “and in sales.” The Counsellor replies: “we can write that down, too. Are there other things you want to work on? Emile (professional from the workshop) said you were late two times last week, I mean – it would be good if you would work on that, but I will not urge you... (ethnographic protocol)

As can be seen in the observation protocol, the goal of “not being too late” is not simply written down and stipulated by the institution, it is translated into an interactive demand which reflects on the smaller steps that lead to being on time. These possible steps are to be formulated by the client based on the resources and means he has at his disposition. The administrative tool, “integration agreement,” becomes a pedagogic tool to help with the young person’s goals and to fix – via documentation – the means of realization and the indicators of their future evaluations. The indicators of their future evaluations are thus not imposed from the outside, but instead emerge from a dialogue about what the young person could possibly want for himself and for his future. This situation is paradoxical in several ways: being too late is officially a sanctionable behavior and would lead, if repeated, to an exclusion from the Motivational Semester. In the process of negotiating the integration agreement, this administrative rule is ignored deliberately in order to make it “as if” the young person would set these goals himself. The “control” is displaced from organizational dispositive and disciplinary practices to the person, who is asked to perform this control on himself. As the following quote shows, the practice of negotiating the integration agreement amounts to fostering an “inner dialogue” about what one wants to achieve by and for oneself. Through the attempt to make the young person “express” a goal to add to the integration agreement and

to which they “commit” themselves freely without obvious coercion, the case-manager is operating in a balancing act between imposing specific goals and leaving space for the expression of individual plans. Here, professional action oscillates constantly between “should do” and “can do” subtly mixing the refusal to act paternalistic to “moralize” the behavior of clients to impose what one thinks is the best, while at the same time, maintaining the injunction “to take oneself in one’s own hands, to get implied and to be engaged” (Cantelli and Genard 2007, p. 25). We see that the contractualized matrix of the integration agreement is a “powerful pedagogical motor” (Pattaroni 2005). On the one hand, it installs the young person as a responsible self-observer who can “work on oneself” insofar he “knows” what his own characteristics are that are impeding him from entering the labor-market. On the other hand, this contractual agreement activates several techniques that individualize the person and oblige the person to “account” for his actions and to stand up for what he did (or did not). It addresses the person as a responsible and autonomous person. In this process, a specific relation to oneself is fostered in which the person promises, to himself and to the social worker, to act in a certain way in the future. The contractual relation assigns a “grammar” of autonomy as it assigns the person as a “self” from which he must account for his actions and deeds.

5 Conclusion

Firstly, these empirical examples highlight the contractualization of citizenship as a new dimension of governing the unemployed. Citizens are asked to individually negotiate “integration contracts” with state agents. The idea of the contract corresponds exactly to the idea of the citizen of the advanced liberal state that acts as a moral, self-responsible person autonomously setting goals for oneself, and who is equipped with a strong will and able to comply with his self-set goals. In this context, Robert Castel has coined the term “negative individualism” to designate situations where the contractual matrix “demand(s) or indeed dictate(s) that impoverished individuals behave like autonomous persons” (Castel 1995, p. 449). Similarly, for Born and Jensen, the growing use of contracts between the state and its citizens constitutes a new societal rationality of governing people “that institutionalizes new expectations to the subjects, namely that they are to be reflexive and responsible for themselves” (Born and Jensen 2010, p. 328) and that aim at the “transformation of the poor into self-sufficient, active, productive, and participatory citizens” (Cruikshank 1999, p. 69). As the empirical examples have shown, the negotiation of citizenship in contractualized, individualized integration agreements is, at least in this empirical case, both about coercive activation as well as the promotion of desirable self-regulation. On a more abstract level, the organizational technology of the individualized action plan is a prime example of the liberal paradox, “with people being socially subjectivated by individually subjecting themselves to a governing programmatic of self-rationalization” (Lessenisch 2012, p. 310), or more precisely, of “self-mobilization and self-control” (ibid.). The liberal ethos of self-controlled citizenship forbids a strict disciplinary prescription of goals to be figured into the integration agreement. On the contrary, opposite to the disciplinary prescription, the individual integration agreement governs through freedom and through a technology that does not prescribe but creates the individual as a responsible self-observer who acts upon himself.

Secondly, the article has highlighted that structural conflicts resulting from the incompatibility of the application of administrative categories and rules and other conventions of evaluation are to be treated on the level of frontline interaction. The tensions between coexisting and competing institutional logics are engaged, rejected, and sometimes transformed in the day-to-day work activities of the welfare professionals. In the example of

applying sanctions, where frontline agents balance the strict demands of a bureaucratized procedural prescriptions with the individual excuses, vulnerabilities and life situations of users show that there is gap between institutional work as designed and institutional work as implemented. The findings show that much effort must be dedicated to coordinate activities on the frontline with the administrative logic. Here, the administrative logic meets interactional requirements of frontline practices and specific occupational norms that one could call a “logic of care” (Mol 2008, cited in Björk 2013). While the administrative logic “wants the professionals to follow pre-established courses of action... the logic of care emphasizes the need for adjustment and ‘tinkering’ in clinical practice” (Björk 2013, p. 182-183). The simultaneous existence of these two logics puts the frontline agents in a situation where a lot of invisible “articulation work” (Straus 1985) is required, “work that gets things back ‘on track’ in the face of the unexpected and modifies action to accommodate unanticipated contingencies” (Strauss and Star 1998, p. 10). The findings have shown that without this kind of work, the motivational semesters would hardly be able to - on the one hand – maintain its exchange relations with the public employment service while - on the other hand – doing “appropriate” work by accommodating for the individual users and their respective life-world.

References:

- Akerstrom-Andersen, N.** (2007). Creating the Client Who Can Create Himself and His Own Fate - the Tragedy of the Citizens' Contract. *Qualitative Sociology Review*,3(2), 119-143.
- Antonucci, L., Hamilton, M., & Roberts, S.** (2014). Constructing a theory of youth and social policy. In: Antonucci, L., & Hamilton, M. (eds.) *Young people and social policy in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 13-34.
- Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E.** (2002) *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, Sage, London.
- Binder, A.** (2007) For love and money: Organizations' creative responses to multiple environmental logics. *Theory and society*,36(6), 547-571.
- Björk, A.** (2013). Working with different logics: A case study on the use of the Addiction Severity Index in addiction treatment practice. *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 30: 179-199.
- Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L.** (2000) The reality of moral expectations: A sociology of situated judgement *Philosophical explorations* 3(3), 208-231.
- Borghi, V., & Van Berkel, R.** (2007) Individualised service provision in an era of activation and new governance. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*,27(9 10), 413-424.
- Born, A. W., & Jensen, P. H.** (2010) Dialogued-based activation—a new “dispositif”? *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 30(5/6), 326-336.
- Brodkin, E. Z.** (2011). Policy work: Street-level organizations under new managerialism. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21, 1253–1277.
- Brodkin, E.Z.** (2016) Street-Level Organizations, Inequality, and the Future of Human Services. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership/Governance*, 40:5, 444-450.
- Crespo Suarez, E., & Serrano Pascual, A.** (2007). Political production of individualised subjects in the paradoxical discourse of the EU institutions. In: Van Berkel, R., & Valkenburg, B. (eds.) *Making It Personal. Individualising activation services in the EU*. Policy Press, Bristol, 107-127.

- Cruikshank, B.** (1999). *The will to empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects*. Cornell University Press, London.
- Dahmen, S.** (2019). Soziale Arbeit als ‚art of composition‘ –Zur konventionsbasierten Regulierung von Übergängen von der Schule in Ausbildung in Motivationssemestern. In: Imdorf, C., & Leemann, R., & Gonon, P. (eds.) *Bildung und Konventionen: Die „Economie des conventions“ in der Bildungsforschung*. Springer Fachmedien, Wiesbaden, 403-426.
- Dahmen, S., & Ley, T.** (2016). Jugend als soziales Kampffeld? Die Konstruktion von Jugend und Jugendpolitiken in Europa zwischen wohlfahrtstaatlicher Regulierung und Politiken der Partizipation. In: Luedtke, J., & Wieczorek, C (eds.) *Jugendpolitiken. Wie geht Gesellschaft mit" ihrer" Jugend um?* Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 28-51.
- Darmon, I., & Perez, C.** (2011). ‘Conduct of conduct’ or the shaping of ‘adequate dispositions’? Labour market and career guidance in four European countries. *Critical Social Policy*, 31(1), 77-101.
- Dean, M.** (1995). Governing the unemployed self in an active society. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(4), 559-583.
- Ehrenberg, A.** (1999) *La fatigue d'être soi: dépression et société*. Odile Jacob, Paris.
- European Commission** (2012). Proposal for a Council Recommendation On Establishing a Youth Guarantee. Brussels, 5.12.2012 COM(2012) 729 final
- Genard, J. L., & Cantelli, F.** (2007). Jalons pour une sociologie politique de la subjectivité. In : Cantelli, F., & Genard, J. L. (eds.) *Action publique et subjectivité*. LGDJ, Paris, 13-40.
- Handler, J. F.** (2003). Social citizenship and workfare in the US and Western Europe: from status to contract. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 13(3), 229-243.
- Hasenfeld, Y.** (1973). 'People-processing organizations: An exchange approach', *American Sociological Review*, 37: 256-263.
- Hemerijck, A.** (Ed.). (2017). *The uses of social investment*. Oxford University Press.
- Jenson, J.** (2012). A New Politics for the Social Investment Perspective: Objectives, Instruments, and Areas of Intervention in Welfare Regimes. In D. Natali & G. Bonoli (Eds.), *The politics of the new welfare state* (1st ed., pp. 21–44). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johannessen, L. E.** (2018) Between standardisation and discretion. The priority setting of triage nurses. Doctoral Thesis (url: <https://hdl.handle.net/10642/6310>, retrieved on 17.02.2020)
- Johannessen, L. E.** (2019). Negotiated Discretion: Redressing the Neglect of Negotiation in “Street-Level Bureaucracy”. *Symbolic Interaction*. Maynard-Moody, S./ Portillo, S. (2010) Street-level bureaucracy theory. In Johnston, J.M., & Romzek, BS, & Durant, RF (eds) *The Oxford handbook of American bureaucracy*, Oxford university Press, Oxford, 252-276.
- Lessenich, S.** (2011). *Constructing the socialized self. Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*. New York, 304-319.
- Lindsay, C., & Mailand, M.** (2004). Different routes, common directions? Activation policies for young people in Denmark and the UK. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 13(3), 195-207.
- Lipsky, M.** (1980)(2010). *Street-level bureaucracy. Dilemmas of the individual in public service*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York.
- Lister, R.** (2003). Investing in the Citizen-workers of the Future: Transformations in Citizenship and the State under New Labour. *Social Policy/Administration*, 37(5), 427-443.

- Ludwig-Mayerhofer, W., Dölemeyer, A., & Sondermann, A.** (2007). Die neue Staatlichkeit: Sozialverwaltung im aktivierenden Staat. In: Ludwig-Mayerhofer, W. (Hg.): *Fallverstehen und Deutungsmacht. Akteure in der Sozialverwaltung und ihre KlientInnen*. Budrich, Opladen, 11–40.
- Marcus, G. E.** (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology*, 24(1), 95-117.
- Maynard-Moody, S. W., & Musheno, M. C.** (2003) Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of public service. University of Michigan Press, Michigan.
- Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M.** (2000) State agent or citizen agent: Two narratives of discretion. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2), 329-358.
- Morel, N., Palier, B., & Palme, J.** (Eds.). (2012). Towards a social investment welfare state?: Ideas, policies and challenges. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Pattaroni, L.** (2005). Politique de la responsabilité: promesses et limites d'un monde fondé sur l'autonomie (Doctoral dissertation, Paris, EHESS).
- Rice, D.** (2013) Street-level bureaucrats and the welfare state: Toward a micro-institutionalist theory of policy implementation. *Administration/Society*, 45(9), 1038-1062.
- Robert, C.** (1995). *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*, Paris, Fayard.
- Rose, N.** (1998). *Inventing ourselves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rose, N.** (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge university press, Cambridge.
- Spradley, J. P.** (1976) *The ethnographic interview*. Waveland Press, Lon Grove IL.
- Star, S. L., & Strauss, A.** (1999) Layers of silence, arenas of voice: The ecology of visible and invisible work. *Computer supported cooperative work (CSCW)*, 8(1-2), 9-30.
- Strauss, A. L., Schatzman, L., Bucher, R., Ehrlich, D., & Sabshin, M.** (1975) Negotiated order and the coordination of work. In: Strauss, AL (Ed.) *Professions, Work and Careers*. Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 175-202.
- Swidler, A.** (2001) *Talk of love: How culture matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thévenot, L.** (2001a) Organized complexity: conventions of coordination and the composition of economic arrangements *European journal of social theory* 4(4), 405-425.
- Thorén, K. H.** (2008). Activation policy in action: A street-level study of social assistance in the Swedish welfare state (Doctoral dissertation, Växjö University Press).
- Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W.** (2008) Institutional logics. In: Li, S. X.; Royston Greenwood, Christine Oliver, Roy Suddaby, and Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson: *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 99-128.
- Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M.** (2012) *The institutional logics perspective: A new approach to culture, structure, and process*. Oxford University Press.
- Valkenburg, B.** (2007). Individualising activation services: Thrashing out an ambiguous concept, In: Van Berkel, R., & Valkenburg, B. (eds) *Making it Personal: Individualising Activation Services in the EU*, Policy Press, Bristol, 25-43.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D.** (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization science*, 16(4), 409-421.
- Wright, S.** (2003). The street level implementation of unemployment policy. In: Millar, J. (ed.) *Understanding Social Security: Issues for Policy and Practice*. Series: Understanding welfare. The Policy Press: Bristol, 235-253.

Yeatman, A. (2007). The subject of citizenship, *Citizenship Studies*, 11 (1), 105-115.

Yeatman, A. (2009). *Individualization and the Delivery of Welfare Services: Contestation and Complexity*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Author's Address:

Stephan Dahmen
Faculty for Education, Bielefeld University
Universitätsstraße 25, 33615 Bielefeld+49 521 106 3300
stephan.dahmen@uni-bielefeld.de