

Promises & practices of personalisation: Discursive trajectories in Norway's new work approach

Erika Gubrium & Ivar Lødemel

Social Sciences, Oslo & Akershus University College

Methods: Policy text analysis

- Coverage
 - Early policy stage: formulation
 - Some focus on 1990s and early 2000s, as contrast to more recent developments
 - Analytic focus beginning in 2004 (leading up to the NAV Reform) and ending in 2012
 - Contextual focus on welfare system (NAV) reform, but main focus on Qualification Programme (new SA work approach) and developments within regular SA

Norway's work approach (SA)

- 1964 Social Care Act (*Lov om sosial omsorg*)
 - Temporary, “help to self help” through work approach, rights and duty ideology
- Status by early 2000s
 - Strong rational choice ideology (on paper)
 - Limited programming, primarily workfare, benefits and services discretionary

Qualification Programme (2007)

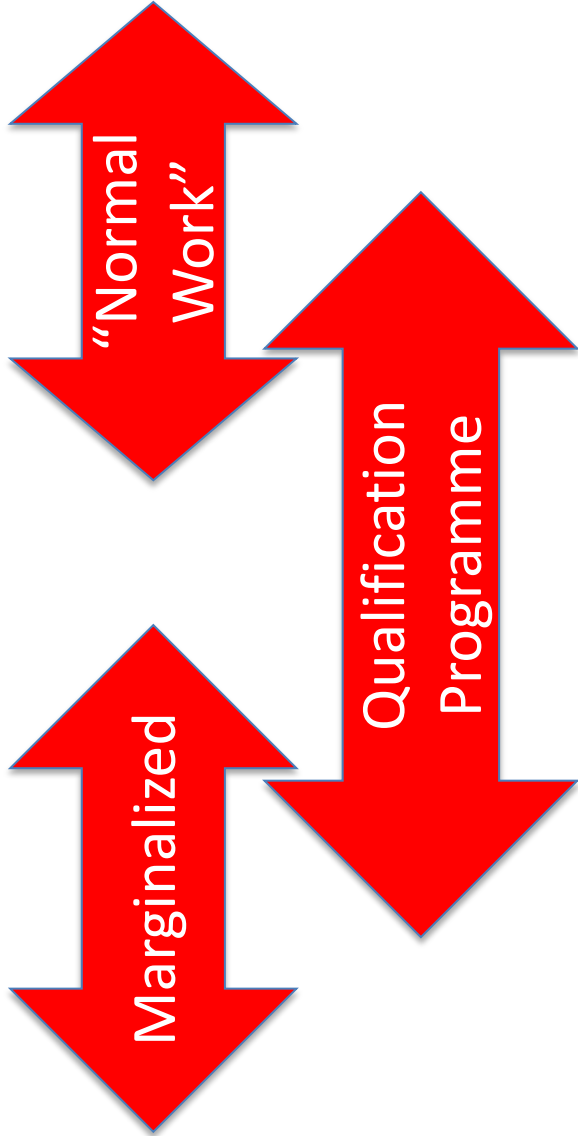
- On the heels of the NAV reform
- Outlier in trend toward work first
- Promise of new incentives for those eligible
 - Customized programmes via an individual plan
 - Higher benefits
 - (Eligibility)

Text-based analytical framework

| Work-first | | Human capital |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Top-down Negative sanctions | User choice/ participation | User-negotiated Positive sanctions |
| Work-seeking | Programming | Broadly-focused |

Rational choice assumptions

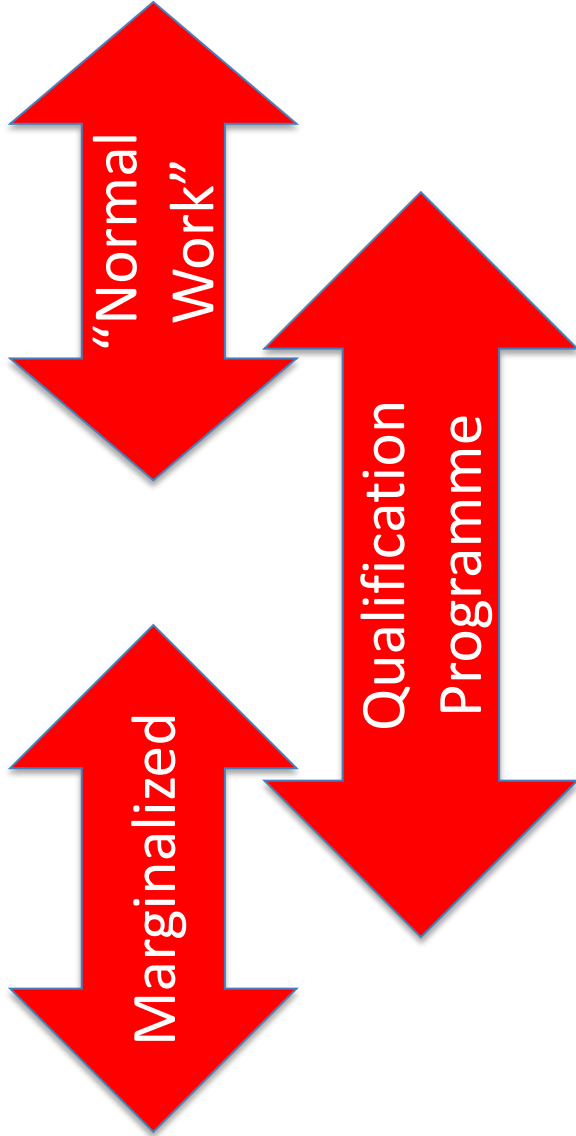
Employability = Deservingness



Interview Findings

Interview participants place themselves – or feel placed – on a system hierarchy

People who deliver applications to the disability office - they're received in a totally different way than those...who apply at the SA office. There are categories, you know? ...[In the SA office] it's a little like "tisk tisk shame shame." In [the disability office]...it's because of health and...other reasons (Kari Anne, 202-223).



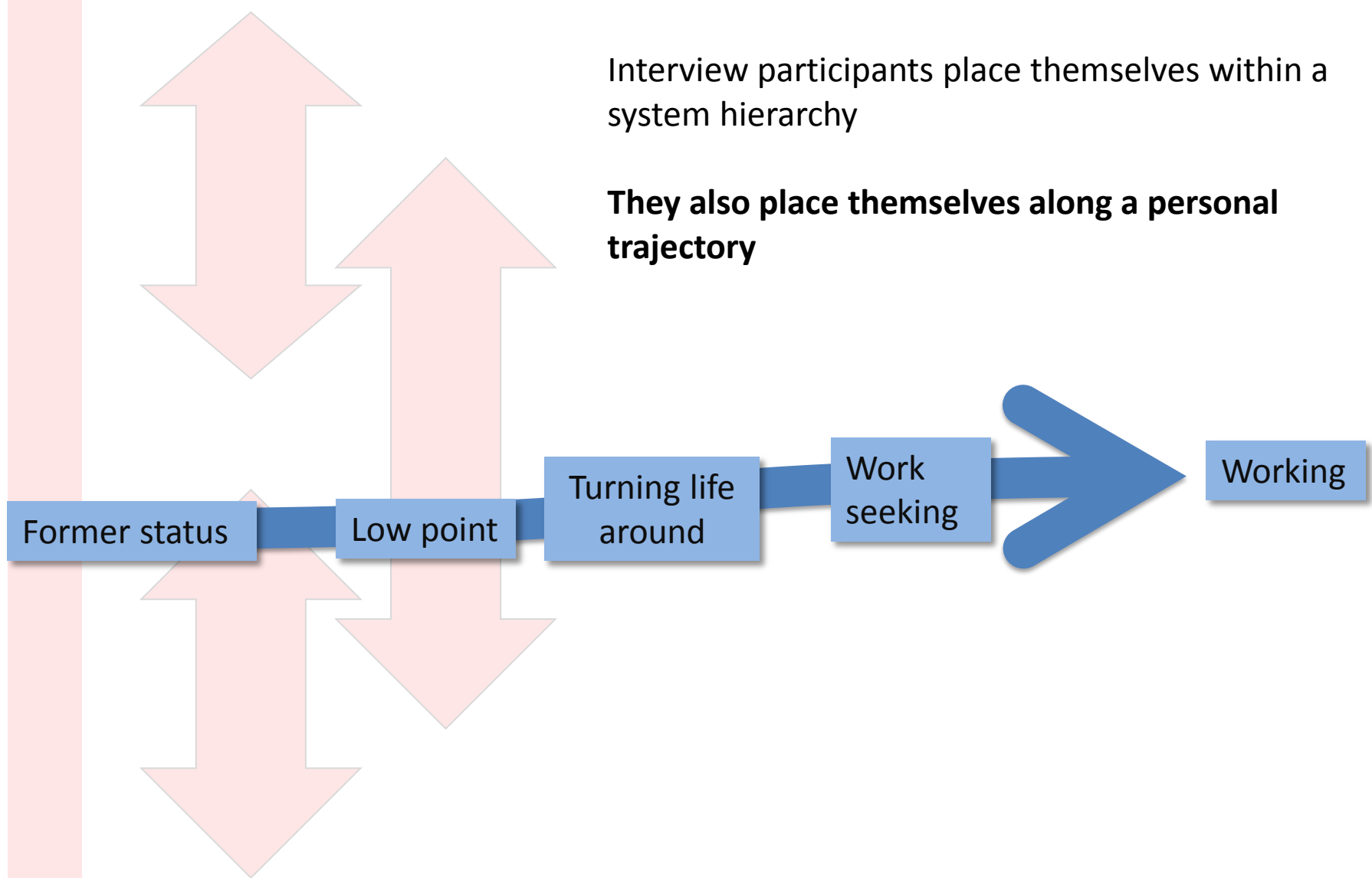
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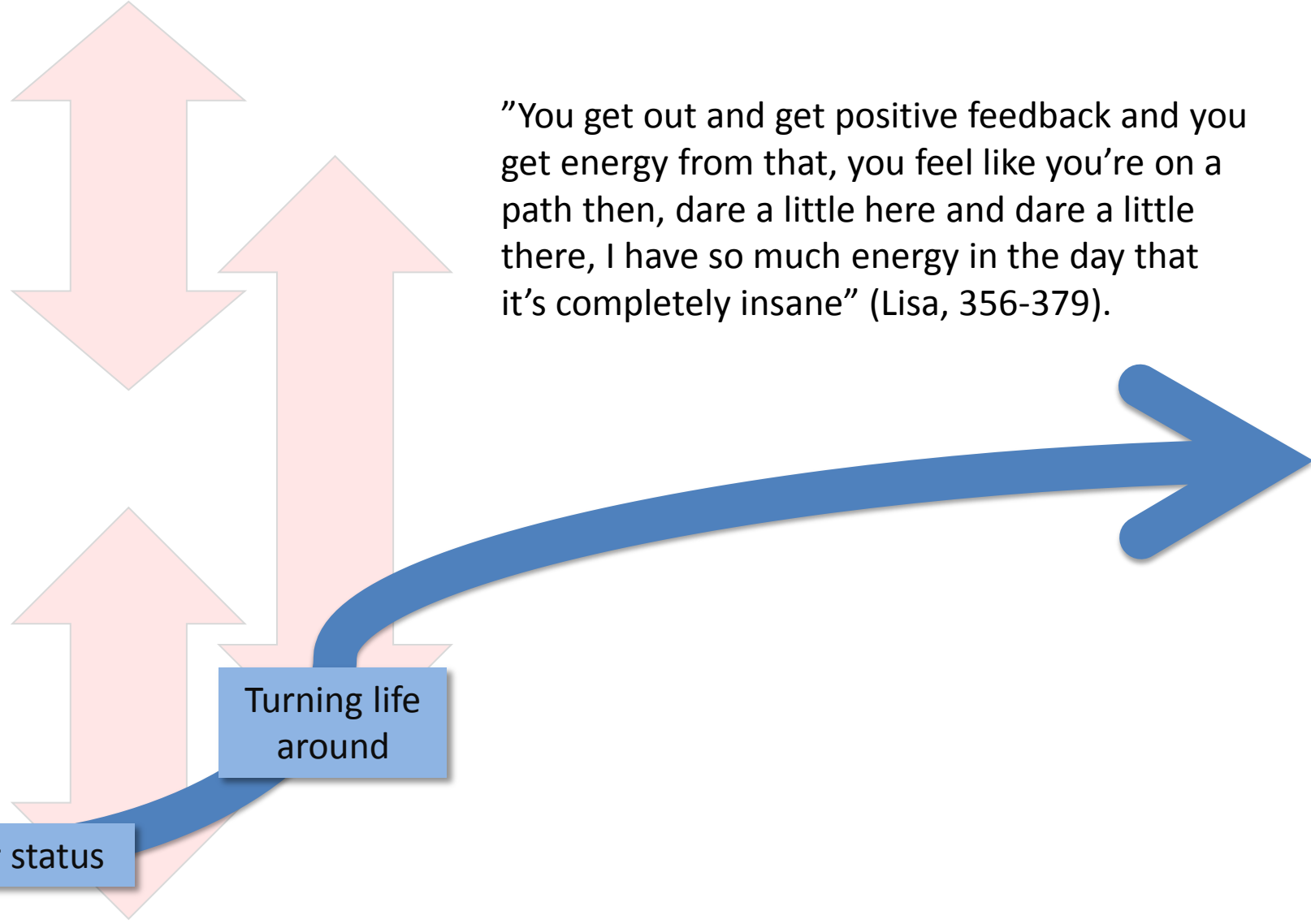
The more pitiful you look, the more help you receive. ...And since I arrive looking so good every time...they don't look at me, I feel that they don't look at me like someone who's having difficulties. I must almost...play a part...yeah. And that's not how I am" (Gabriel, 1095-1105).

Interview participants place themselves within a system hierarchy

They also place themselves along a personal trajectory



"You get out and get positive feedback and you get energy from that, you feel like you're on a path then, dare a little here and dare a little there, I have so much energy in the day that it's completely insane" (Lisa, 356-379).



Former status

Turning life
around

PERSONAL TRAJECTORY

Former status

Work seeking

“I feel...I’ve been categorized – a little like – [with] a group of people who I’m really not – I feel the need to advance...I’m not saying that I’m too good, it’s not that. But I’m saying that I’m maybe a little more, you know, many of them in the QP...aren’t in my situation, it’s two different situations...What I really want is a job, a good job, and get me out as quickly as possible” (Gabriel, 86-110).

PERSONAL TRAJECTORY

A user-informed policy analysis

Findings:

- Personalisation rhetoric and agency
- Mismatch between policy presumptions and user particularities enhances user shame

A user-informed policy analysis



In summary:

- One-size-fits-all presumptions not effective for SA users. There is a need to reconsider the RC assumptions informing labour activation programming.