



ABLEISM AT WORK:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE POWER IN DISCOURSES OF DISABILITY IN WORKPLACES AND ON THE LABOR MARKET

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN DUTCH

Dit eindrapport van Werkpakket Handicap 2 (WPD2) bestaat uit zes onderdelen. Het eerste deel is een Nederlandstalige samenvatting van het onderzoek gevoerd in het WPD2 (1). Het tweede deel leidt het onderwerp “handicap en werk” in (2), met specifieke aandacht voor de veranderende ervaringen rond tewerkstelling voor mensen met een handicap (2.1), de barrières rond arbeid voor mensen met een handicap geïdentificeerd in de wetenschappelijke literatuur (2.2), een uiteenzetting over het concept van validisme (‘ableism’ in het Engels) dat centraal staat in dit werkpakket (2.3), en de gebruikte methode (2.4). De drie opeenvolgende delen bevatten de empirische studies die werden uitgevoerd in het kader van dit werkpakket (3, 4, 5). Tenslotte trekken we de beleidsimplicaties van het onderzoek uitgevoerd in dit werkpakket (6), specifiek hebben deze betrekking op de loonsubsidies, strategisch gebruik van de business case, redelijke aanpassingen, het ondersteunen van organisationele veranderingen en een meer flexibele sociale bescherming.

Door het VN Verdrag voor de Rechten van Mensen met een Handicap in 2009 te ondertekenen engageerde België zich ertoe om het recht op vrij gekozen werk te vrijwaren (artikel 27). De werkzaamheidsgraad voor personen met een handicap in ons land is de laatste jaren flink gestegen, toch blijft de kloof met de algemene werkzaamheidsgraad nog (te) groot (42,7% t.o.v. 71,9%) (WSE Vlaanderen, 2014). Daarnaast blijven tal van andere problemen voortbestaan zoals de horizontale en verticale segregatie van mensen met een handicap, de loonkloof, de oververtegenwoordiging in tijdelijke en deeltijdse contracten, en het niet toekennen van nodige redelijke aanpassingen op het werk (Van Laer, Verbruggen en Janssens, 2011).

In de wetenschappelijke literatuur vinden we verschillende barrières terug die het voor mensen met een handicap moeilijk maken om aan betaald werk te geraken en een succesvolle carrière uit te bouwen. Deze barrières kunnen worden ingedeeld op basis van het niveau waarop ze ontstaan. Ten eerste zijn er maatschappelijke ‘macro’ barrières. Zo is er onderzoek dat aantoonde hoe de materiële structuren van de markteconomie systematisch bepaalde groepen, zoals mensen met een handicap, uitsluit of benadeelt. Hiernaast is er onderzoek die eerder de symbolische barrières op macroniveau benadrukt, en hoe ideeën rond normaliteit en dominante betekenissen rond handicap zorgen voor een moeilijke arbeidsintrede en doorgroei. Ten tweede zijn er barrières op het ‘meso’ niveau van (werk)organisaties. Organisaties zijn in een machtige positie om de toegang tot betaald werk te beperken via hun aanwervingsbeleid. Onderzoek toont aan dat vooroordelen en discriminatie van mensen met een handicap in aanwervingsprocessen diffuus blijven. Ook wanneer organisaties bereid zijn om mensen met een handicap in dienst te nemen, zorgen gestandaardiseerde en inflexibele processen soms voor een moeilijke tewerkstelling. Organisaties stemmen hun structuren en processen (onbewust) op een (ideale) normwerknemer zonder beperkingen af, wat nadelig is voor individuen die buiten die norm vallen, zoals werknemers met een handicap. Bovendien worden nog steeds vaak redelijke aanpassingen niet toegekend uit gebrekkige kennis rond de wetgeving en de afdwingbaarheid ervan, angst dat ze de bestaande (informele) hiërarchie tussen categorieën van werknemers binnen het bedrijf zouden verstoren, duur zouden zijn of de controle over werkprocessen zouden doen afnemen. Tot slot zijn er verklaringen voor de slechtere positie van mensen met een handicap op de arbeidsmarkt op het ‘micro’ niveau van het individu zelf en de interpersoonlijke relaties. Stereotypen, vooroordelen en discriminatie door andere organisatieleden kunnen leiden tot fysieke segregatie, discriminatie in HR processen en uiteindelijk lagere welzijn van werknemers met een handicap. Op dit microniveau worden ook medelijden, paternalisme, angst, jaloezie en pesterijen op de werkplek onderzocht. Verder is er toenemende aandacht voor het fenomeen van zelflimiterend gedrag en een laag zelf vertrouwen bij mensen met een handicap.

In deze studie bestuderen we de rol van de verschillende, context-specifieke betekenissen die aan handicap worden gegeven in organisaties en door arbeidsbemiddelaars in het in stand houden van ongelijkheid tussen mensen zonder handicap en mensen met een handicap. Hierbij kijken we niet enkel naar de betekenissen die geproduceerd worden door actoren in posities van autoriteit (organisaties, bemiddelaar, de staat) maar ook hoe werknemers met een handicap zelf proactief omgaan met de betekenissen die op hen worden gekleefd om een positieve identiteit te construeren in de werkomgeving. Theoretisch vertrekken we van het concept van validisme (‘ableism’ in het Engels) dat steeds meer gebruikt wordt in ‘disability studies’ om de relatie tussen

handicap en ongelijkheid op het werk te onderzoeken. Validisme verwijst naar “een netwerk van overtuigingen, processen en praktijken die een bepaald type zelf naar voor schuiven als de perfecte volwaardige mens” en hoe handicap hierbij discursief komt te staan als de tegenpool van dit ideaal. Validisme toont aan hoe handicap een inherent negatieve categorie is die essentieel is om de persoon zonder handicap als norm te kunnen voorstellen. Deze binaire, hiërarchische categorisering zit diep in onze cultuur en wordt gezien als een ‘natuurlijke’ reactie op een afwijking.

De drie studies in WPD2 onderzoeken alle hoe organisaties en de arbeidsmarkt steunen op een validistische visie van de mens, een assumptie dat de ‘normale’ werkende mens een mens zonder beperkingen is, en deze assumptie ook zelf reproduceren. Empirisch onderzoeken we dit aan de hand van een meervoudige gevalsstudie van drie bedrijven in Vlaanderen/België, waaronder twee publieke organisaties en één privaat bedrijf. Binnen elke organisatie werden meerdere actoren (30 werknemers met een handicap, 23 supervisors van werknemers met een handicap, 3 HR managers, 6 vakbondsvertegenwoordigers en 2 arbeidsdokters) geïnterviewd met behulp van semigestructureerde interviewleiden. Aanvullend werden 11 interviews met personeel uit bemiddelende instanties (GTB, GOB en GA) uitgevoerd. De data werden telkens geanalyseerd vanuit een kritische discourse analytische traditie die de nadruk legt op de rol van taal en discursieve praktijken in processen van marginalisering en subordiatie.

De eerste studie *“De constructie van positieve identiteiten in validistische werkplekken: De discursieve praktijken van werknemers met een handicap in hun omgang met discoursen rond lagere productiviteit”* gaat op zoek naar de manieren waarop werknemers met een handicap omgaan met het discours van handicap als verminderde productiviteit in het construeren van een positieve identiteit op het werk. Een positieve identiteit vormen is bijzonder moeilijk omdat mensen met een handicap zich tussen tegenstrijdige discoursen bevinden: als mensen met een handicap worden ze gedefinieerd op basis van wat ze *niet* kunnen, terwijl ze als werknemers geconstrueerd worden als ‘humaan kapitaal’ dat economische waarde creëert. Deze studie draagt bij tot de literatuur rond handicap door te duiden hoe sprekers met een handicap een positieve identiteit bewaren ondanks negatieve geïnstitutionaliseerde verwachtingen van lagere prestaties zowel door het uitdagen als het bevestigen van validistische assumpties. Ook al wordt in hun narratieven validisme slechts deels of tijdelijk in vraag gesteld, de analyse toont aan dat discoursen nooit volledig ‘dicht’ zijn, en dat ze mogelijk in vraag kunnen worden gesteld.

De analyse identificeerde drie soorten discursieve praktijken waardoor werknemers met een handicap een positieve identiteit op het werk bekomen. Ten eerste zijn er praktijken die de assumptie van hun lagere productiviteit expliciet tegen gaan. Ze doen dit door bijvoorbeeld aan te geven hoe ze zelf hun handicap proactief managen om verlies te vermijden. Sprekers verwezen hier ook vaak naar objectieve maatstaven zoals verkoopcijfers en positieve evaluaties om hun productiviteit en waarde voor het bedrijf aan te tonen. Ze stelden het nut van een loonsubsidie voor het bedrijf in vraag en verwezen tot slot naar het belang van een goede fit tussen de competenties van de spreker en de job vereisten. Ten tweede vonden we praktijken die het discours van lagere productiviteit weerleggen door productiviteit anders te definiëren. Ze maken hiervoor gebruik van argumenten zoals de superieure toewijding van mensen met een handicap aan hun werk en beter begrip en empathie voor klanten en collega’s. Door op de kwalitatieve dimensies van productiviteit te focussen creëerden sprekers nieuwe discursieve mogelijkheden om hun handicap voor te stellen als een competentie die prestaties verhoogt. Dit is in lijn met de zogenaamde ‘business case’ voor diversiteit, die poneert dat verschillen waardevolle bronnen zijn. En ten derde stelden we praktijken vast die het discours van lagere productiviteit expliciet bevestigen maar de verantwoordelijkheid voor deze lagere productiviteit naar de collectiviteit schuiven. Door te duiden op de onmogelijkheid om bepaalde taken te kunnen uitvoeren ondanks goede intenties, aan te tonen hoe de werkomgeving niet werd aangepast en te duiden op de compensatie door loonsubsidies, claimen sprekers een legitieme plek in de organisatie ongeacht hun lagere productiviteit.

In de tweede studie *“Validisme op het werk: Een Foucauldiaanse analyse van mensen met én zonder handicap in drie organizationele waarheidsregimes”* positioneren we eerst het concept van validisme binnen de post-structuralistische theorie van Michel Foucault. Deze theorie benadrukt hoe taal een waarheidsregime produceert die subjecten op specifieke manieren definieert en normeert. Organisaties produceren proactief een specifieke waarheid die de correcte, aanvaardbare manier van zijn bepaald voor hun werknemers, die

bepaalde categorieën van mensen waardeert en andere marginaliseert. Vanuit dit perspectief, dat in lijn is met validisme, kunnen we aantonen dat organisaties specifieke waarheidsregimes produceren die telkens werknemers met een handicap in tegenstelling plaatsen tot de 'ideale' werknemer zonder handicap, doch op specifieke manieren.

Empirisch analyseren we de validistische waarheidsregimes van een Vlaams publiek agentschap, een bank en een lokale overheid. In de eerste organisatie wordt handicap beschouwd als een productiviteitsgebrek dat administratief moet worden opgevolgd en gemanaged om het ideaal van de efficiënte en flexibele werknemer in de publieke sector discursief te kunnen ondersteunen. In de tweede organisatie wordt handicap gezien als een barrière die door de werknemer zelf, met de ondersteuning van de organisatie, moet worden weggewerkt zo dat zijn of haar potentieel tot uiting kan komen. In de derde organisatie wordt de zorg voor werknemers met een handicap als een sociale verantwoordelijkheid van de ideale werknemer voorgesteld, die ook 'zorg' voor de lokale burgers moet dragen. De analyse toont verder aan dat mensen met een handicap hun identiteit construeren binnen de waarheidsregime van hun organisatie. Ze gebruiken namelijk de specifieke terminologie van deze regimes om over zichzelf op het werk te spreken in termen van productiviteit en flexibiliteit, competentie en potentieel, en zorg en maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid. De resultaten laten ons zien hoe de termen van de inclusie van mensen met een handicap sterk afhangen van de organisatie-specifieke 'waarheid' en hoe hun definiëring tegelijk de functie vervult om de ideale werknemer op een organisatie-specifieke manier te definiëren. Hierbij opereert handicap als een hiërarchisch organiserend, binair principe dat ongelijkheid in stand houdt.

In de laatste studie *"Activering van personen met een handicap: Een analyse van het perspectief van professionals in arbeidsbegeleiding en -bemiddeling"* wordt geanalyseerd hoe arbeidsbemiddelaars en -begeleiders van personen met een handicap betekenis geven aan hun interventies. Deze actoren spelen een cruciale functie in het bevorderen van de deelname van personen met een handicap aan het beroepsleven in de reguliere arbeidsmarkt. De toenemende initiatieven om tewerkstelling in de reguliere economie te verhogen kaderen aan de ene kant binnen het bredere activeringsbeleid waarbij betaald werk centraler wordt als grond om beroep te kunnen doen op de bescherming via van de welvaartstaat. Aan de andere kant heeft België zich geëngageerd, door het VN Verdrag aangaande de Rechten van Personen met een Handicap (VRPH) te ondertekenen, om het recht van mensen met een handicap op vrij gekozen werk in de reguliere arbeidsmarkt te vrijwaren. GTB's en GOB's bieden in opdracht van de VDAB ondersteuning aan mensen met een handicap. Hun activiteiten zijn geschoeid op de leest van „Individual Placement and Support“ (IPS), een benadering naar (re)integratie op de arbeidsmarkt die uitgaat van het belang van een snelle plaatsing van de cliënt in een reguliere job en van het centraal stellen van zijn/haar voorkeuren en wensen. Ondanks het uitgebreid onderzoek naar de IPS-benadering is tot heden nog maar weinig geweten over de rol van betekenisverlening door de bemiddelaars en begeleiders in de doeltreffendheid ervan.

In deze studie gaan we na hoe de betekenisgeving in ondersteuningsprogramma's bijdraagt tot de relaties op de arbeidsmarkt tussen de cliënten en hun (mogelijke) werkgevers en of deze een basis vormen voor duurzame arbeid of voor verdere stigmatisering van personen met een handicap. We baseren ons op 11 semigestructureerde interviews met leden van GOB's (7), GTB's (3) en de VDAB (1). Uit de analyse blijkt dat de sprekers frequent werk voor hun cliënten vanuit een individuele logica benaderen, waarbij de cliënt in grote mate zelf verantwoordelijk wordt gesteld voor zijn/haar succes op de arbeidsmarkt, bijvoorbeeld in termen van het aangrijpen van kansen op training en het opdoen van ervaring. Onbetaalde stages worden als een verplichting voorgesteld omdat ze kansen op betaald werk creëren, die door de cliënt moeten worden waargemaakt. De narratieven van de deelnemers steunen veel minder frequent op een logica van werk als recht. Ondanks hun duidelijk besef van de kwetsbare positie van mensen met een handicap ten aanzien van werkgevers, benadrukken ze enkel uitzonderlijk de verantwoordelijkheid van deze laatsten voor het creëren van inclusieve organisaties. We interpreteren deze tegenstrijdigheid in het toeschrijven van verantwoordelijkheid als het gevolg van de specifieke positie van bemiddelaars en begeleiders, die hen in staat stelt de verantwoordelijkheid enkel op hun cliënten op te leggen in hun dagdagelijkse beroepspraktijk, waardoor ze bestaande ongelijke machtsrelatie tussen werkgevers en mensen met een handicap reproduceren.

Tot slot willen we in deze Nederlandstalige samenvatting ook nog even de beleidsimplicaties meegeven die we kunnen afleiden uit de drie studies. De eerste betreft de loonsubsidies. De drie studies laten zien dat de loonsubsidies een belangrijk financieel duwtje geven aan organisaties. Maar ook personen met een handicap zelf kunnen het gebruiken om legitimiteit in de werkplek af te dwingen en ondersteuning te eisen. Toch zien we dat deze loonsubsidie ook sterk het idee naar voor draagt dat mensen met een handicap een individueel verlies met zich meebrengen. Nochtans blijkt uit onze resultaten dat dit zogenaamde verlies eerder het resultaat is van de relatie tussen het individu én de specifieke werkomgeving. Om dit idee van een individueel tekort te minimaliseren, zouden de loonsubsidies daarom moeten worden ingebed in een breder gamma aan ‘concentrische interventies’ zoals aanpassingen aan de micro-context (bv. redelijke aanpassingen) én organisationele veranderingsinitiatieven die barrières wegnemen en zo de inclusie en productiviteit kunnen stimuleren. Samen zou dit de ‘fit’ tussen individu en job of organisatie kunnen doen toenemen en de aandacht verplaatsen naar de relatie tussen het individu en zijn omgeving. Hoewel zulk een aanpak het systeem van loonsubsidies dus niet fundamenteel zou veranderen, zal het wel anders worden gepositioneerd.

Ten tweede willen we graag ijveren voor een strategisch gebruik van de business case om stereotypes te veranderen. De business case werd gebruikt door diverse actoren in deze studies om mensen met een handicap voor te stellen als positieve en waardevolle werkrachten. Hoewel deze business case sterk bekritiseerd is geweest in de kritische management en sociologische literatuur, lijkt een meer pragmatische en genuanceerde kijk erop hier toch aangeraden. We zagen in de drie bedrijven dat mensen met een handicap vaker werden voorgesteld als risico’s en obstakels, en de business case was dus zeker niet de centrale constructie die aan hen werd toegekend. Enkel bij de bank zagen we dit naar voor komen door recente evoluties die daar plaats vonden. Het is dus belangrijk dat beleidsinitiatieven een begrip van handicap als economische waarde promoten. Echter, indien dit in isolatie van andere initiatieven gebeurt zoals wetgeving en financiële stimulansen, dan zal de business case op zichzelf niet leiden tot een betere positie voor personen met een handicap op de arbeidsmarkt.

Ten derde hebben we een aanbeveling geformuleerd met betrekking tot redelijke aanpassingen op de werkvloer. Enkele van onze respondenten ervaarden moeilijkheden met het verkrijgen van redelijke aanpassingen. Door drie bedrijven te betrekken in dit onderzoek kregen we verschillende manieren te zien om mensen te voorzien van zulke aanpassingen: een intern gedocumenteerd proces; zelf gestuurde actie; en extern ondersteunde procedures. Wat betreft redelijke aanpassingen zouden we graag aanbevelen om zoveel mogelijk gebruik te maken van praktijken die de controle van werknemers zelf vergroot en hun afhankelijkheid van de goede wil van managers en collega’s verkleint. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld door werknemers hun eigen aanpassingen te laten bestellen via een simpele intranet applicatie. Verder kan de Dienst Arbeidshandicap (VDAB) het administratieve werk volledig op zich nemen, waardoor de (kost) effectiviteit van de procedure zou toenemen en verschillen tussen bedrijven zouden wegebben. Dit zou redelijke aanpassingen mogelijk kunnen veranderen van een reactief ad hoc instrument naar een algemene voorziening, die toch op maat is van individuele noden. Natuurlijk moet de redelijkheid van aanpassingen steeds worden beoordeeld in de specifieke context, maar door maximaal in te zetten op redelijke aanpassingen kunnen we mogelijk de lagere scores van werkbaar werk die mensen met een handicap ervaren omkeren. Ook zou dit de mobiliteit tussen organisaties doen toenemen, wat hun carrières ten goede zou komen.

Verder willen we organisatieverandering naar meer inclusie ondersteunen en goede praktijken promoten. Hoewel deze studie op zoek ging naar drie bedrijven die relatief veel deden voor werknemers met een handicap en dus als ‘best cases’ kunnen worden gezien, kwamen we hier ook praktijken tegen die als discriminerend kunnen worden bestempeld. De studies laten bijvoorbeeld zien dat organisaties mensen uitsluiten op basis van niet-essentiële job criteria. Beleid moet daarom organisaties doen bekeren naar een ruimere inclusie zodat een bredere vijver van mensen past binnen de jobs en de organisatie, waardoor discriminatie omwille van de associatie tussen competenties en identiteiten afneemt. Er is uitgebreid onderzoek geweest dat vast stelt dat structurele verandering brengen in bedrijven moeilijk is, maar toch nodig om de werkervaring van mensen met een handicap te verbeteren. Bedrijven moeten dan ook door de overheid ondersteund worden in dit doel. Een voorbeeld van zo’n verandering is het plaatsen van liften en automatische deuren, het vertalen van websites in gebarentaal of het bekomen van het Anysurfer label. Maar ook het installeren van inclusieve HR praktijken en een betere balans tussen werk en privé dragen hiertoe bij. We zien

ten slotte tegenwoordig dat individuen veel mogelijkheden kregen aangeboden om zichzelf aantrekkelijker te maken voor de werkgever. Echter, bedrijven zelf worden niet langer ondersteund (verder dan hun wettelijke verplichtingen) om niet te discrimineren, wat we beklagen.

Vooraf via studie twee hebben we enkele goede praktijken naar voor zien komen. Bijvoorbeeld het gebruiken van de loonsubsidies om een extern gespecialiseerd kantoor aan te stellen dat mensen met specifieke beperkingen kan begeleiden gedurende hun carrière of wanneer er zich een probleem voor doet. Zo kan een continue begeleiding en hoogstaand advies verzekerd worden. Een andere goede praktijk is het intern tellen van werknemers met een handicap als halve FTE (full-time equivalent). Hierdoor wordt de interne mobiliteit van de werknemer gestimuleerd en krijgt ook het hele team een voordeel doordat eventueel een extra halve werkkraft kan worden aangenomen. Verder wordt ook het praten over de status van de handicap op regelmatige tijdstippen en het documenteren ervan als een goede praktijk bevonden. Dit omdat zo communicatie erover wordt gegarandeerd en willekeur van lijnmanagers wordt ingeperkt. Beleid zou dit soort goede praktijken moeten promoten en kennis erover delen tussen bedrijven.

Ten vijfde argumenteren we dat beleid moet werken naar een bredere basis voor burgerschap en een meer flexibele sociale bescherming moet nastreven. We zagen in de studies dat wanneer mensen worden opgenomen in de arbeidsmarkt, dit toch nog steeds gebeurd via ondergeschikte posities. Ook wordt alle verantwoordelijkheid voor tewerkstelling op de schouders van de persoon met een handicap zelf geduwd. Zolang de gelijkwaardige behandeling door werkgevers tussen mensen met en zonder handicap een ideaal blijft kan het ethisch problematisch zijn om hen te dwingen tot arbeidsdeelname in het reguliere circuit. Daarom zou de basis voor burgerschap moeten worden uitgebreid naar meer dan enkel de deelname in betaald werk. Ook andere vormen van sociale deelname die een sociale en economische waarde hebben en functioneel zijn voor de maatschappij moeten worden geïncorporeerd als basis voor echte inclusie binnen onze maatschappij. Activering moet dus niet enkel slaan op betaalde arbeid maar ook op andere activiteiten.

Daarnaast is het risico dat mensen nemen als ze betaald werk willen 'uitproberen' momenteel nog heel groot. De inflexibiliteit van de sociale bescherming zorgt ervoor dat mensen blijven steken in een afhankelijkheid van uitkeringen, ook al willen ze dat zelf niet. Toekomstig beleid zou hieraan moeten werken opdat mensen hun ondernemend gedrag kan worden gestimuleerd zonder dat de bescherming afneemt.

2 INTRODUCTION

In this introductory section, we introduce the societal and scientific background of the studies conducted in WPD2. More specifically we will first elaborate on the changing experience of employment for PWD. The second part of this section will summarize the barriers to employment as identified in the current scientific literature on a macro, meso and micro level. The third and last part of this section will then go on to identify the research gap.

2.1 THE CHANGING EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PWD

In modern Western societies, people with disabilities are expected to be active on the labor markets. In 2009 Belgium ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In doing so, it agreed to guarantee a number of rights, one of which being the right to freely chosen work, as articulated in article 27. Work is considered as the most important pathway to inclusion nowadays yet the employment numbers of people with disabilities lack far behind those of non-disabled people. In Flanders, only 42,7% of all people with a disability within the 18-65 age segment were employed in 2014 compared to 71,9% in the general population (Samoy, 2014). Low employment levels, horizontal and vertical segregation, wage gaps, all sorts of temporary contracts and the refusal of granting reasonable accommodations all point to the urgent need for action. On top of that, our labor markets have gone through significant changes during the last decades which can possibly further endanger the employment chances for people with disabilities (Roulstone, 2002). For instance, new technologies in ICT might seem to bring opportunities for working from the home but could further segregate those deemed 'different'. Outsourcing of simple jobs to far away countries reduces the number of jobs available for less qualified people and jobs have become more complex in general (Baumer, 2014). And reduced state intervention between employees and employers and the growing responsibility of individuals in making things happen for themselves contributes to a medical individualized conception of disability as a personal problem instead of societal responsibility. For this reason and many more, an in-depth investigation into the employment experience of people with disabilities is welcome.

2.2 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

There is a long tradition of academic research, both theoretically and empirically, that have sought for explanations for the low employment numbers of people with disabilities. This body of research can be categorized into three groups.

1 MACRO EXPLANATIONS OF THE DISADVANTAGED POSITION OF DISABLED INDIVIDUALS

In disability studies, much of the research on work and disability has made materialist analyses of macro-structural barriers, from a Marxist perspective (Abberley, 2002; Barnes and Mercer, 2005; Finkelstein, 1981; Hall and Wilton, 2011; Roulstone, 2002; Wilton and Schuer, 2006). This is because early British disability studies were heavily influenced by radical structuralism, and more specifically historical materialism (Goodley, 2010). These materialist analyses explain how capitalism excludes certain groups from participating in economic activity. They give a political ethical dimension to the study of disability by addressing disabled individuals' material needs through increased socio-political participation and socio-spatial inclusion. This literature adheres to a 'social model' conceptualization of disability whereby individuals are not in se disabled but rather, it is society that disables them. In particular, it is the deeply divisive nature of capitalist economies that renders disabled people open to exploitation. Accordingly, it is capitalist society that needs to be changed, not the individual that needs to be fixed, as in the individual, medical model of disability. Despite its merits, this social model is very narrow as it does not allow for any other factors to potentially form a barrier to disabled people's economic integration. Moreover, radical structuralism completely excludes the individual, their subjective accounts and the body, in favor of a macro-sociological focus on the social system (Goodley, 2010).

Besides these material conditions, ideas on normalcy and general discourses about disabilities also construct the economic participation of disabled people. They are inherent to the institutions of society and create structures that are rather symbolic, as opposed to material. The focus within so-called symbolic structuralism is

not so much on class but more on culture. Ideas and beliefs about disabled people in our society create an “ableist culture”. In this culture, non-disability is discursively constructed as the normative expectation (Williams and Mavin, 2012). Ableism can be defined as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human” (Campbell, 2008). Not many studies have however directly investigated the impact of these symbolic structures on the economic participation of disabled people.

2 MESO EXPLANATIONS OF THE DISADVANTAGED POSITION OF DISABLED INDIVIDUALS

Most of the research on disability and work is done at the organizational level. A first set of barriers often mentioned within this perspective deal with organizational policies and HR issues. A second set deals with problematic inter-personal relationships.

2.2.2.1 HR processes as the source of disadvantage

The reluctance to hire employees with disabilities is a first explanation for low employment rates. Many experiments show how disclosing a disability leads to lower estimates of potential performance by employers. Employers often use a human capital argument for not hiring disabled individuals. When asked what prevents them, they stress experience, qualifications and training rather than disability as the primary determinants of employers’ hiring decisions (Wilton and Schuer, 2006).

Once they are member of an organization, disabled employees experience other problems. General organizing practices can discriminate against them because they assume able-bodiedness. Disabled people have an inevitable disadvantage stemming from the inability to meet standards of performance in work. For instance in the study by Corlett and Williams (2012), disabled teachers had trouble carrying around large amounts of teaching materials, but were expected to do so like everybody else. This practice was based on the assumption of particular physical capacities by all employees. Another example of organizational exclusionary practices is illustrated by Zanoni (2011), who found that disabled workers (as well as female and older ones) were discursively constructed by an automotive firm as either incompetent or resistant workers within the factory lean production system. The above examples indicate how contemporary ways of organizing work continue to perpetuate the marginalization and oppression of disabled people (Hall and Wilton, 2011).

Even when disabled employees have a legal right to ask for changes in the way of organizing work, they are often denied that option by their employer. The denial of reasonable accommodation is therefore a last issue preventing a successful labor market participation discussed here. For people with disabilities, to effectively utilize their full potential at work, accommodations might be required. When applying for a job, the biggest concern of disabled employees besides the accessibility of the workplace, is about not being granted needed accommodations (Kim and Williams, 2012). These concerns are justified since research shows there is an incongruence between what employees with disabilities need in terms of physical arrangements or other organizational policies and what is offered to them (Kulkarni and Valk, 2010). Receiving workplace accommodations positively impacts satisfaction (Moore et al., 2011), while being denied such accommodations is experienced by disabled workers as the most prevalent form of discrimination (Roessler et. al., 2011).

A study of Foster (2007) showed how negotiations on adjustments were highly individualized and outcomes almost entirely contingent upon the knowledge, attitudes and goodwill of poorly trained line managers. The adjustment process itself often led to instances of bullying by managers, resulting in stress and ill health among employees. Managers may assume disabled employees fit in existing organizing processes which are (implicitly) based on a non-impaired workers, and therefore respond negatively to any request for alternative arrangement (Corlett and Williams, 2012). The lack of action or willingness to adjust work practices stems from wanting to keep costs low and retain control over work processes (Harlan and Robert, 1998). Besides this, employers fear other employees will judge the ‘unequal’ treatment as unfair (Colella, 2001; Paetzold et al., 2008). Despite posing such issues, most job accommodations are relatively inexpensive (e.g., 50% of accommodations cost less than \$50, and 69% cost less than \$500) (Stone and Colella, 1996) and in most countries enforceable by laws. However knowledge about the legislative aspects of accommodation among employees themselves is usually limited (Kim and Williams, 2012) and there is a potential in the legislation for deeming certain accommodations ‘unreasonable’ (Foster, 2007; Harlan and Robert, 1998).

2.2.2.2 Inter-personal relations as the source of disadvantage

A second group of explanations at the organizational level deals with problematic inter-personal relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Good illustrations can be found in work of social psychologists (Colella, 2001; Colella and Stone, 2005; Stone-Romero et al., 2006; Stone and Colella, 1996). It is possible that people with disabilities may be viewed and categorized differently such that their actual attributes are overshadowed unfairly by their perceived attributes. Stereotyping can lead to low expectations among other organizational members concerning the capacities of the disabled employees. The impact of attributes such as the type of impairment, aesthetic qualities, concealability, disruptiveness and perceived danger have an impact on the size of the stigma that is put on disabled people by their environment.

Stereotyping and stigmatization may lead to strained relationships among organizational members and possibly to physical segregation from co-workers (Stone et al., 2007). Yet precisely a strong network of professional acquaintances is important because networks directly shape career outcomes by regulating access to jobs, providing mentoring and sponsorship, channeling the flow of information and referrals, augmenting power and reputations, and increasing the likelihood and speed of promotion. Social networks also indirectly influence career outcomes as they offer the setting in which socialization and identity development occur (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007).

Other common problems in the work setting are pitying and patronizing (Van Laer et al., 2011). Both open and more subtle forms of discrimination (Snyder et al., 2010), or ill-treatment in general (Fevre et al., 2013) and lack of respect (Schur et al., 2009) are often mentioned barriers to successful integration into the workplace. Such processes undermine the emotional well-being of people with impairments and leave them being hurt by the reactions of other people, being made to feel worthless and unattractive, inducing the need to 'over-achieve' in order for others to consider them as full contributors. Other possible emotional responses from co-workers with the potential of becoming barriers are fear and envy (Colella, 2001; Colella and Stone, 2005; Van Laer et al., 2011). Fear can come from the perception that disabilities are contagious (e.g. HIV); from the anticipation of unexpected behavior (e.g. epilepsy) or even from being reminded of one's own mortality (existential fear). Envy on the other hand is caused by the impression that employees with disabilities are granted special treatments and have less obligations or will cause additional workload for their environment. As we discussed earlier, the granting of reasonable accommodation and following perceptions of unfairness can pose threats to healthy co-worker relationships as well (Paetzold et al., 2008).

Focusing on the inter-personal dimension through the concept of stigma (Benoit et al., 2013; Henry and Lucca, 2004; Heslin et al., 2012; Jones, 1997; McLaughlin et al., 2004), different from the social model literature, these study do not sufficiently emphasized the oppressive nature of discursive structures in society.

3 MICRO EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED POSITION OF DISABLED INDIVIDUALS

Some research (Heslin et al., 2012; Jones, 1997; Stone and Colella, 1996) has focused on the role of disabled employees themselves in their treatment in organizations. Self-limiting behavior can occur when people internalize negative perceptions of others and lead to low self-esteem (Van Laer et al., 2011a) and discouragement, when workers' previous search for work was so disappointing that they become less assertive and loose hope (Heslin et al., 2012).

This stream of literature, found in psychology and rehabilitation studies (Auerbach and Richardson, 2005; Henry and Lucca, 2004; Kukla and Bond, 2012; O'Sullivan et al., 2012; Roessler et al., 2011; Yanchak et al., 2005), has traditionally investigated issues such as individual adjustment to impairment and explored the consequences of impairment for identity (Shakespeare, 2002). These writings fall into a "negotiation model": people who suffer a loss of self go through a process during which they negotiate their lives to be as ordinary as possible and so retain some contact with desired life-worlds (Watson, 2002). These definitions make it appear that the individual is a relatively 'closed system', that adjustment is a process that occurs primarily within the individual. This literature also seems to consistently frame the concept of adjustment as adjustment to ones limitations rather than adjustment to attitudes toward disability (Olney and Kim, 2001).

4 THE RESEARCH GAP

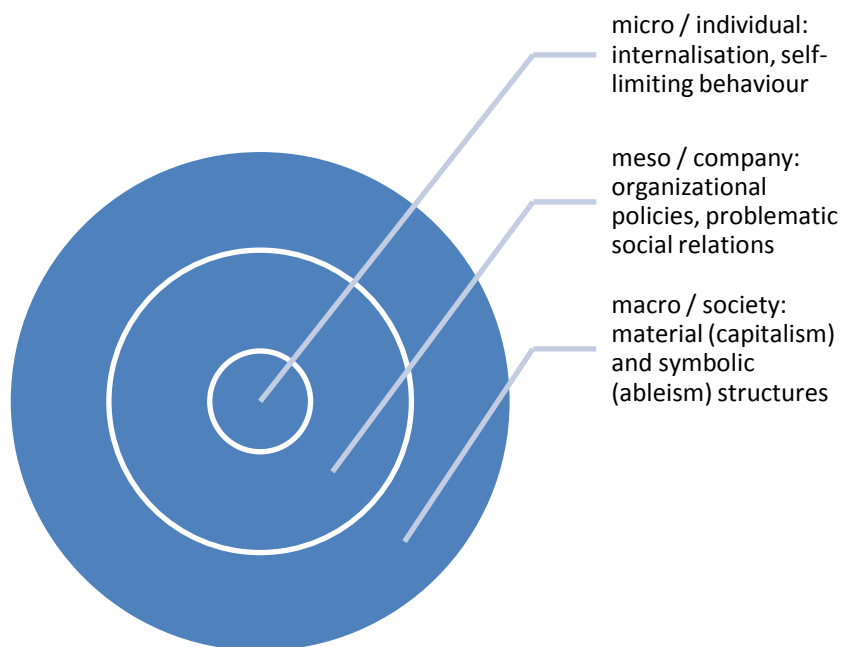
Little research however has combined multiple levels, that highlight the individual's embodied experience and still operate within a social model framework that locates the problem of disabled people's marginalization outside of the individual and into oppressive societal structures. With this research project we fill this gap.

In the first paper *"Constructing positive identities in ableist workplaces: Disabled employees' discursive practices engaging with the discourse of lower productivity"* we connect the individual micro level through the concept of "discursive practices" to the societal expectation of people with disabilities as less productive employees. This paper is renewing because, although studies on symbolic structures (negative symbolic representations of disability) have been very useful, our current knowledge on how disabled people themselves engage with such discourses in their attempts to craft positive workplace identities up until now was very limited, if not inexistent.

In the second paper, *"Ableism at work: A Foucauldian analysis of ablebodied and disabled subjectivities in three organizational regimes of truth"*, we look at the differential subject positions each company makes possible through its regime. We also reflect on how employees with disabilities positions themselves with regard to the ongoing subjectification processes. Hereby we connect the meso and micro level.

And at last, the third paper, *"Activating people with disabilities: Analysis of the perspective of professionals in supported employment programs"* describes the symbolic structures imposed by employment support professionals. The level of research can be located at the macro and meso level, for the focus lies on employment support organizations and how they give meaning to disabled people, inspired by societal discourses on activation and responsabilisation.

GRAPH 1: LEVELS OF DISABILITY AT WORK RESEARCH



2.3 ABLEISM DEFINED

Traditionally disability studies has pointed to the need for a social model instead of individual conceptualization of disability. In line with such a view, individuals are not in se disabled but rather, it is society that disables them. Even though the social conception of disability is very appealing for studying the problematic economic participation of disabled employees due to its focus on oppressive structures, it does not offer a fully

satisfactory approach. The social model has been without a doubt a revolutionary catalyst in transforming an understanding of disability from medical abnormality and personal tragedy to one of socio-political oppression (Oliver, 1990; Thomas, 2007). In recent years however there is an increasing number of criticism of the social model from feminist, postmodernist and poststructuralist sources, though critics vary in their desire to reject, reform and defend the social model of disability (Thomas, 2004).

A common heard critique to social models is that they fail to consider the role that impairments have upon individuals (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001; Vick, 2012). It does not adequately address more complex forms of disabled embodiment (Driedger and Owen, 2008). Many scholars thus argue for a more embodied epistemology of disability that encapsulates both experiential and social constructionist dimensions (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). This is what Goodley (2010) terms the 'turn to impairment' in 'second wave' writings on disability, as an attempt to re-socialize impairment. A good empirical illustration can be found in Roulstone and Williams' (2014) work on 'impairment effects' among disabled managers. Attention to the lived experience is also paid by Thomas, who developed an extended social model: the relational model, which takes account of structural barriers as well as the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability (Reeve, 2004; Thomas, 1999).

Whereas disability studies is still occupied with debating the distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability', ableism as a conceptual tool situates itself in the histories of knowledge and is embedded deeply and subliminally within culture (Campbell, 2009: 18). The 'business-as-usual' forms of ableism are so absorbed into the function of Western societies that ableism as a site of social theorization represents the last frontier of inquiry. The intention is not to propose ableism as another explanatory grant narrative, but rather it helps us focus on different questions and sites of study (Campbell, 2009: 20). Ableism goes beyond discrimination and prejudice: it reaches into the "caverns of collective subjectivity to the extent that the notion of disability as inherently negative is seen as a 'naturalized' reaction to an aberration".

Multiple scholars have used the term ableism to some extent, but the most profound elaboration on the concept was given by Fiona Campbell in her book, *Contours of Ableism* (2009). She mentions some earlier definitions of writers, that I have summed up in the following table and extended:

TABLE 1: DEFINITIONS OF ABLEISM

Campbell, 2001: 44	A network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, essential and fully human. Disability is then cast as a diminished state of being human
Ho, 2008	An attitude that devalues disability through the valuation of able-bodiedness equated to normalcy
Chouinard, 1997: 380	Ideas, practices, institutions and social relations that presume able-bodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalized . . . and largely invisible "others".
Amundson and Taira, 2005: 54	Ableism is a doctrine that falsely treats impairments as inherently and naturally horrible and blames the impairments themselves for the problems experienced by the people who have them.
Linton, 1998: 9	Ableism includes the idea that a person's abilities or characteristics are determined by disability or that people with disabilities as a group are inferior to non-disabled people'
Wendell, 1996 cited in Goodley, 2010: 12	Social biases against people whose bodies function differently from those bodies considered normal and beliefs and practices resulting from and interacting with these biases to serve discrimination.

Regimes of ableism are characterized by a few core elements. The first element is the notion of the normative. An ableist world view is based on a scenario in which people without disabilities are the norm and people should either strive to become that norm or keep their distance (Griffin et al. 2007; Kumar et al., 2012). Ableism is a normative expectation against which all are assessed. It denotes an attitude of devaluing disability by considering non-disability as the only true and normal way of being (Ho, 2008). Throughout history, ableism was mobilized by certain social groups to reassure and legitimize their own 'elevated' status within society. All those deemed 'others' were enforced to fit in and emulate the norm (Wolbring, 2004).

A second characteristic of an ableist regime is the enforcement of a constitutional divide between the human/natural and aberrant/quasi human. This binary is an important element in the operation of ableism.

The belief that disability and impairment are inherently negative and should the opportunity present itself be ameliorated or eliminated is integral to understanding this mechanism. Because ableism ensures that people have a preference for certain sets of capabilities, those who do not have these or are represented as if they do not have these are discriminated against (Wolbring, 2004).

A last important element is the apparent 'natural' nature of ableism. Regimes that have a preference for able-bodied people have conceptions about disability that are so ingrained into the collective consciousness that seeing disability as something inherently negative is simply considered as something natural and harmless (Campbell, 2009).

In this report we want to find out how ableist ideas infringe in organization processes and keep the norm of non-disability alive and this while organizing is assumed to be neutral. Nevertheless, the fact that organizations are often organized along the needs of a typical white and male worker has been documented by critical scholars worldwide. That however that worker is also free from any physical or mental impairment will be demonstrated in the papers to come...

2.4 METHOD

In this part of the document, the research design will first be explained. Then the data sources, interview procedure and the data analysis will be elucidated.

1 RESEARCH DESIGN

We used a multiple case study and multiple sources design. A multiple case study design using a number of distinct cases seemed most suited to document on the presence of ableism and how it varies across different organizations (Creswell, 2013; Myers, 2013; Yin, 2009).

However the recruitment of these three companies appeared not to be easy. The process went as follows: First the VDAB (Flemish Service for Employment and Mediation) was asked to send a recruiting email with information on the project to all companies employing over ten people with disabilities in the regular economy. This resulted in a list of ten companies that were willing to be contacted by the researcher in order to acquire more information on the project. Parallel with this, the researcher searched for companies employing many people with disabilities through the internet and personal networks. The researcher aimed to include both public and private companies because it could be expected that profit motives in the private sector and the example function in the public sector could lead to differences in the employment of people with disabilities. In addition, a requirement was that the company needed to have a policy surrounding the employees with disabilities. Thirdly, the companies needed to be big enough, in order to be able to include labor representatives as data sources (see point 2). And lastly, a requirement was that the share of employees with disabilities could not exceed the 15% to avoid using 'extreme cases'.

This search ultimately resulted in the engagement of three organizations. These three organizations were thus purposively sampled (Jupp, 2006): they stood out as disability friendly employers who had specific policies for facilitating the employment experience of this group and a relatively large number of disabled employees. The first company was EmployOrg. EmployOrg is a public organization employing about 5,000 employees and providing several services for jobseekers such as personal guidance and trainings. It was founded in the late eighties with the objective to make the labor market in Flanders as transparent and dynamic as possible. Although the organization did not succeed in reaching the (non-binding) quota of 2.0% for Government Administrations, it still is the leading public agency in terms of employing staff with disabilities. It employs about 1/5th of all workers with disabilities employed in the public sector.

The second company was LocGov. LocGov is a regional public administration body, employing around 800 employees. It covers a wide array of services including physical planning of the region, promotion of the touristic attractions and social well-being of its inhabitants. LocGov is quite a young organization, with its existence located in the late nineties when one regional area decided to split up into two smaller areas with

each their own governance. This public administration has succeeded in reaching the target percentage of 2% staff with disabilities and uses quite progressive measures to do so such as the reserved job system.

And the last company was BankCorp. BankCorp is a large private banking and insurance company, employing about 15 000 people, and which knows a long history of fusions and mergers. Since 2009 it has become part of a large international network and is in the top 6 most solid banks in the world. BankCorp offers banking services to both individuals and professionals. There are no targets set by the Government for private companies, yet they are expected to not discriminate against minority employees.

2 DATA SOURCES

As is typical for a multiple case study design (Creswell, 2013), multiple data sources were included in the project. In each organization, multiple stakeholders were interviewed and additional information sources were collected. These included internal and external documents such as websites, brochures, mission statements and job vacancies in order to reconstruct the policies and procedures that were in place in each organization to deal with diversity and disability in particular.

The various stakeholders were: employees with disabilities, supervisors of employees with disabilities, HR managers, labor union representatives, and employment support professionals. For the recruiting of the first group of stakeholders, all the disabled employees within each firm were sent an email of the first author by someone in the personnel office in blind copy with the question if they wanted to participate in an anonymous study on the employment opportunities of disabled people in Belgium. In the first company, EmployOrg, 13 out of 63 disabled employees responded positively. At LocGov, 8 out of 17 disabled employees were willing to participate. And at BankCorp 9 out of 68 agreed to be interviewed by the researcher. All the approached participants fit within the following definition of people with a work-related disability as defined by the Flemish government administration: ‘every long-term substantial problem of participation in work due to an interplay of functional limitations of mental, psychological, physical, bodily or sensorial nature, limitations in performing activities, and personal and external factors’ (Samoy, 2014: 6, own translation).

Supervisors in the study were asked to participate in a similar vein. HR personnel and trade union representatives were however contacted directly by the first author and asked to participate. The inclusion of supervisors and HR personnel in this particular study was important because in general, these actors are an important but understudied aspect of success at work for disabled people (McLaughlin, Bell et al. 2004; Kulkarni and Valk 2010). And more specifically for this study’s purpose, they are considered as speakers with authoritative voices in the construction of ableist discourses that are constitutive of the regime. They also have a strong hand in the (ableist) organizing processes that potentially produce inequalities, such as: the organizing of general requirements of work; recruitment and hiring; wage setting and supervisory practices but also informal actions while doing the work (Acker, 2006). HR managers and supervisors thus construct the regime and how disability is understood within their firm (Duff et al. 2007). Also trade union representatives were included because in the Belgian context trade unions have historically played an important role in the constitution of collective agreements at various levels and there is a high degree of syndicalism. In addition, previous research has demonstrated the important role for disabled employees (Foster and Fosh, 2010) in reconfiguring the ‘personal as political’ and integrating disability concerns into wider organizational agendas.

In addition, a last group of stakeholders were included in the research project: employment support services. These were purposively sampled as well: we aimed for the inclusion of participants from services in different regions, which sometimes also differ in terms of their client profile. These nine professionals from specialized services are called “specialized guidance” (“Gespecialiseerde Trajectbegeleiding en –Bepaling” – GTB) and “specialized training, support and mediation” (“Gespecialiseerd Opleidings-, Begeleidings- en Bemiddelingscentrum” – GOB). GTB centers place most emphasis on supporting persons with disabilities in determining employment goals and searching for jobs, while GOB centers mainly provide training in specific job skills, support to engage in traineeships and external training/education, and mediation to obtain employment. This professions were also interviewed through semi-structured interviewed.

TABLE 2: DATA SOURCES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT OF WPD2

	<i>EmployOrg</i>	<i>BankCorp</i>	<i>LocGov</i>	<i>support professionals</i>	<i>total</i>
pwd	13	9	8		30
managers	7	9	7		23
HR department	2	1	1		4
occupational doctors	1	1	-		2
labor union representatives	2	2	2		6
support professionals				11	11
total	25	22	18	11	76

3 INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

All semi-structured interviews were carried out in the corresponding organizations, during the office hours or sometimes during lunchbreaks or after work. The interviews with disabled employees were carried out following a questionnaire of open questions organized in five main sections: the nature of the impairment, the professional trajectory, the current job, social relations at work, and policy-related issues. The interviews with other organizational actors were organized in a different manner: own professional trajectory, experience with disability, organizational policies, evaluation of Flemish and Belgian policy measures. And lastly, the interviews held with support service professionals were organized as follows: own role in organization, the profile of the clients, the structure/nature of the service, ways in which employment support is provided, expectations about clients, interactions with employers, evaluation of Flemish and Belgian policy measures, barriers to inclusion, collaborations with other stakeholders.

The interviewer allowed the order to be altered by respondents to not disrupt the flow of the conversation and to pursue emerging themes based on the respondent's answers. The interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours, were all audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis of the data was conducted on the transcripts in the original language (Dutch), translating only the excerpts that were included in the findings sections once the interpretation had been written up. In general, common ethical guidelines of informed consent were followed (Creswell, 2013) and anonymity was stressed in all communication to the respondents, the names included in this text are pseudonyms.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

In this report three different papers will be presented. In the following table, their titles are enlisted, as are the specific research questions these papers aim to answer and the interview material used.

All three papers use the methodology of critical discourse analysis. This type of discourse analyses is a popular approach among organizational scholars interested in studying power and power relations (Phillips and Oswick, 2012). A critical discursive lens allows us to look at how meaning is conveyed and how power relations are maintained and/or subverted. Language is here not considered simply as a technical device for transmitting meaning but essential in making meaning. There is a strong social constructionist epistemology in this research that sees language as constitutive and constructive of reality rather than reflective and representative (Phillips and Oswick, 2012).

The focus within critical discourse analysis is on unraveling hegemonic discourses that privilege and marginalize certain groups of people. What makes it critical is that it seeks not just to study and understand society but rather to critique and change society (Patton, 2002). In sum, it is thus our aim to explore how discourses get into the bodies/minds of (non)disabled people in ways that might contribute to ableism.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

	Title of the paper	RQ's	Data used
1	<i>"Constructing positive identities in ableist workplaces: Disabled employees' discursive practices engaging with the discourse of lower productivity"</i>	How do disabled employees craft positive identities amid the ableist assumption of lower productivity?	30 interviews with employees with disabilities, spread across the three different companies.
2	<i>"Subject positions within different organizational disability regimes: a study of three cases"</i>	How do truth and power give rise to ableist organizational regimes? Which ableist subjectivities emerge? How do disabled subjects reproduce/contest power through technologies of the self?	65 interviews with all interviewees except employment support services professionals
3	<i>"Activating people with disabilities: Analysis of the perspective of professionals in supported employment programs"</i>	How do support professionals make meaning of disability, employment and employment support?	11 interviews with employment support services professionals

3 CONSTRUCTING POSITIVE IDENTITIES IN ABLEIST WORKPLACES: DISABLED EMPLOYEES' DISCURSIVE PRACTICES ENGAGING WITH THE DISCOURSE OF LOWER PRODUCTIVITY

Eline Jammaers, Patrizia Zanoni, Stefan Hardonk

3.1 ABSTRACT

This article explores how disabled workers engage with the ableist discourse of disability as lower productivity in constructing positive identities in the workplace. Disabled employees inhabit a contradictory discursive position: as disabled individuals, they are discursively constructed for what they are *unable* to do, whereas as employees they are constituted as human resources and expected to be *able* to produce and create value. Our discourse analysis of 30 in-depth interviews with disabled employees identifies three types of discursive practices through which they construct positive workplace identities: 1) practices contesting the discourse of lower productivity as commonly defined; 2) practices contesting the discourse of lower productivity by redefining productivity; and 3) practices reaffirming the discourse of lower productivity yet refusing individual responsibility for it. The study advances the disability literature by highlighting how disabled speakers sustain positive workplace identities despite the negative institutionalized expectations of lower productivity both by challenging and reproducing ableism as an organizing principle.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Ableism has recently been advanced as a new lens to conceptualize the marginalization of disabled people at work (Corlett and Williams, 2011; Williams and Mavin, 2012).¹ Ableism refers to 'ideas, practices, institutions and social relations that presume able-bodiedness' (Williams and Mavin, 2012: 271) or non-disability as an normative organizing principle against which all are assessed (Campbell, 2009; Wendell, 1996), generating a collective understanding of disability as a diminished state of being human (Campbell, 2008). Applying this concept to workplaces, this emerging literature has started to document how disabled employees are discursively constructed as less capable, willing and productive workers and thus as less valuable for and/or employable by organizations (e.g. Foster and Wass, 2013; Holmqvist et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014; Vandekinderen et al., 2012). Resting on a Foucauldian understanding of power (Campbell, 2008), these studies have advanced prior understandings of disability in the workplace by unveiling the normalizing effects of discourses of disability. These discourses – structured collections of texts that bring objects and subject positions into being (Fairclough, 1992; Hardy and Phillips, 1997) – produce and maintain subordinate identity positions which become established over time as transparent, normative expectations (Abberley, 2002; Corker and French, 1999).

Aiming to underscore the disciplinary power of language (Foucault, 1977), the literature informed by ableism has focused on deconstructing how dominant representations of people with impairments disable them, paying relatively scant attention to how disabled subjects themselves engage with such discourses in the workplace (Williams and Mavin, 2012). Yet from the critical literature on employees' identity work in organizations, we know that subjects are not passive consumers of managerially designed discourses. On the contrary, they more or less actively and critically interpret, make own and enact such discourses to construct and maintain positive identities (Knights and Willmott, 1989), or identities that imbue the self with worth (Fine, 1996) and that are associated with a positive social meaning (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003). This is not only true for employees who have historically been cast as the norm, but also for those who have been constructed in subordinate terms in relation to that norm, such as women (e.g. Denissen, 2010), ethnic minorities (e.g. Van Laer and Janssens, 2011) and older workers (e.g. Ainsworth and Hardy, 2009). In this perspective, the power of ableist discourses is predicated upon disabled employees' own self-positioning within such discourses, through the development of identities aligned with them (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Taking stock of these theoretical insights, this paper aims to advance the emergent literature on disability from an ableist perspective by analyzing how disabled employees discursively engage with the prevailing ableist

discourse of disability as lower productivity in crafting positive workplace identities. We conduct a critical discourse analysis of the discursive practices through which speakers, in their identity work, deploy the discursive resources available to them to construct preferred versions of themselves (Choukiaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Kornberger and Brown, 2007). Our analysis is guided by the research question: How do disabled employees craft positive identities amid the ableist assumption of lower productivity? Empirically, we address this question by analyzing 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with disabled employees of three Belgian organizations.

Disabled employees are a particularly relevant group to gain a better understanding of how language exert power in subjects' own identity work because they inhabit a highly contradictory discursive position in the workplace. As disabled individuals, they are discursively constructed for what they are *unable* to do, a defining characteristic of the social identity ascribed to them in all types of social settings (Davis, 2003; Shakespeare, 2006). On the contrary, as employees, they are hired for what they are *able* to do, as human resources creating value for their employer (Foster and Wass, 2013; Zaroni, 2011; Vandekinderen et al., 2012). In this sense, disabled employees represent an extreme case of a social group for whom the crafting of a positive workplace identity is exceptionally challenging and thus empirically more transparently observable (Eisenhardt, 1989), enabling theory development.

3.3 ABLEISM AT WORK: DISABLED INDIVIDUALS AS LESS PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES

Ableist ideas and practices produce a particular kind of self and body that is projected as perfect and thus 'fully human' (Campbell, 2001). Embedded deeply and subliminally within culture, ableism therefore reproduces a widespread collective belief that 'impairment is inherently negative and should the opportunity present itself, be ameliorated, cured or eliminated' (Campbell, 2008: 6).

Conceptually, the notion of ableism builds on a social model of disability which, since the late 1960s, has increasingly displaced traditional individualized and medical explanations for the economic and social deprivations encountered by disabled people (Barnes, 2000; Abberley, 2002; Goodley, 2010). In the social model, disability is not an individual trait but rather the effect of cultural, social and material structures of the modern world which create disability and marginalize individuals (cf. Barnes and Mercer, 2005; Barnes, 2000; Abberley, 2002; Roulstone, 2002). The social model literature highlights how industrial capitalism has historically oppressed disabled people by constituting them as inherently less productive or reliable individuals than the 'normal worker' (Foster, 2007), or as synonym for those who cannot meet the demands of the modern production systems (Galvin, 2006; Woodhams and Danieli, 2000). This negative representation continues on in contemporary capitalism where global competition constantly increases productivity demands (McMullin and Shuey, 2006).

Similar to the social model literature, the emerging literature on ableism points to the socially constructed nature of disability. Yet it highlights the key role of language in normalizing negative representations of disabled people as deviant, unproductive and unemployable, excluding them from paid work or subordinating them within organizations. This normalization becomes particularly striking in a neo-liberal context (Wilson and Beresford, 2002) in which workers are no longer simply seen as partners in the exchange relationship with the employer, but rather as living embodiments of human capital, which they need to proactively manage, as 'entrepreneurial subjects' (Munro, 2012; Foucault, 2007).

For instance, Foster and Wass (2013) show how, drafted with the ideal worker in mind, job descriptions requiring multiple-tasking, inter-changeability and teamwork reproduce an ideology of candidates with an impairment as unfit, disabling them. Similarly, Zaroni (2011) shows how lean production systems exclude disabled workers, fostering their discursive construction in the factory as either unable or unwilling to work. Recent studies about disabled jobseekers document how they are commonly discursively represented as lacking experience and soft communication skills which are essential in the service economy (Lindsay et al., 2014) and as passive and unable to meet the criteria of employability (Holmqvist et al., 2013; Vandekinderen et al., 2012). These studies share an emphasis on what disabled people *cannot* do and cast them as not entrepreneurial.

The pervasiveness of negative representations of disabled workers has also been documented by the social psychological literature. Focusing on individual cognitive and psychological processes, these studies show how bias and stereotypes of disability as lower productivity, incompetence, helplessness and dependency persistently disadvantage workers in selection processes (Heslin et al., 2012) and hamper their social acceptance by others when employed (Colella, 2001; Ren et al., 2008; Stone and Colella, 1996). Common concerns are the additional costs of employing disabled individuals (Colella et al., 2004; Snyder et al., 2010) and expected lower levels of performance (McLaughlin et al., 2004; Vornholt et al., 2013). Accordingly, disabled workers themselves have been found to feel a constant obligation to disclose their impairment and to persuade both employers and coworkers that they can be productive (Von Schrader et al., 2013).

Whereas reasonable accommodations might alleviate some of the barriers encountered by disabled employees in their work environment (Kim and Williams, 2012; Roessler et al. 2011), reasonable accommodations do not challenge ableism as an organizing principle. Reflecting an individual, post-entry approach, they fail to remove barriers *a priori*, such as the physical inaccessibility and the disabling social organization of work (Wilton and Schuer, 2006). In addition, employers have been reluctant towards granting accommodations (Paetzold et al. 2008; Kulkarni and Valk, 2010) precisely because they potentially disrupt the institutionalized (ableist) hierarchy in the workplace (Harlan and Robert, 1998). Such ‘special privileges’ elevate disabled employees above able-bodied employees, which is considered out of proportion to their worth in the organization (Robert and Harlan, 2006).

These streams of disability literature have generated important insights into the multiple mechanisms through which negative symbolic representations of disability – variously conceptualized – contribute to the persistent marginalization of people with an impairment in contemporary workplaces. Much smaller is however our current knowledge on how disabled people themselves engage with such discourses in their attempts to craft positive workplace identities. In general, studies giving voice to disabled workers and their identity work are still sparse, likely due to the emphasis of social model and ableism studies on material and discursive structures (Foster, 2007). The studies that do (e.g. Brown et al., 2009; Gupta, 2012; Kim and Williams, 2012; Roulstone and Williams, 2013; Värlander, 2012; Vick, 2012) approach their narratives as entry points into their workplace experiences rather than as ways to engage with powerful discourses. As the individual sense-making remains disconnected from hegemonic, macro-level discourses reproducing ableism, this approach fails to shed light on the key role of the own identity work of disabled individuals in the operation of power (cf. Thomas and Davies, 2005).

In this study, we would like to advance the extant literature through a fine-grained analysis of the discursive practices by which disabled employees justify their being in the organization and create positive workplace identities amid the negative ableist discourse of lower productivity. To our knowledge, only Corlett and Williams (2011) have to date examined individuals’ discursive practices to investigate how disabled academics negotiate reasonable accommodations. While attuned to our theoretical perspective, the focus on reasonable accommodations only tangentially addresses the challenge encountered by disabled workers in developing positive identities compatible with the foundational idea of employees as *productive* human resources. This challenge is paramount in ableist workplaces in contemporary societies infused with a neo-liberal ideology (Vandekinderen et al., 2012).

3.4 DISCURSIVE PRACTICES, IDENTITY WORK AND POWER

The identity work of people belonging to historically subordinated groups in the workplace has been widely investigated. The underlying idea is that not only class-based but also other social identities shape power relations in organizations (e.g. Collinson, 1988; Brown and Coupland, 2005). In this literature, identity is conceived as the precarious product of discursive activity in which subjects themselves partake. Their identity work occurs through discursive acts, securing a sense of identity, which can express self-reflection or dissatisfaction with a specific identity position (Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Mumby, 2005; Thomas and Davies, 2005). For instance feminist scholars have documented female employees’ discursive acts resisting male privilege through irony (Trethewey, 1997) and humor (Martin, 2004), casting themselves as mother over younger male employees (Kondo, 1990), claiming to work extra hard (Dick and Hyde, 2006), suppressing gender difference by appealing to shared identities and beliefs (Denissen, 2010), and even graffiti (Bell and Forbes, 1994). Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) explored how gay men struggled with normative discourses of

professionalism to maintain a positive identity. Slay and Smith (2011) and Van Laer and Janssens (2011; 2014) documented the struggles of ethnic minorities to construct professional identities in white dominated contexts. Other studies have shown how older workers, who are commonly discursively constructed as ‘in decline’ and less productive, can re-appropriate such discourses to craft resistant workplace identities (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2009; Trethewey, 2001; Zanon, 2011).

This literature shows how, in order to fully understand language and power, close attention is warranted to the ongoing discursive practices through which subjects constitute their sense of the self (Ashcraft, 2005). A focus on how speakers’ discursive practices proactively co-shape subject positions for themselves by using available discursive resources (Thomas and Davies, 2005) reveals the productive dimension of power enabling possibilities of being, not only foreclosing them (Foucault, 1977; Mumby, 2005). Speakers enter a struggle with other social actors to fix advantageous meaning and definitions over who they are (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), which might challenge, to various extents, existing power relations (Phillips and Hardy, 1997). As stated by Mumby, ‘[a]lthough certain grand narratives or Discourses frame the interpretive possibilities, the struggle over meaning remains open to alternative, resistant and counterhegemonic accounts’ (2005: 33). Ultimately speakers may more or less explicitly resist, in their identity work, the construction of selves within managerially inspired discursive contexts (Alvesson et al., 2008; Brown and Coupland, 2005; Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Zanon and Janssens, 2007). Taking this theoretical lens allows us to gain insight in how disabled people construct positive identities in ableist workplaces imbued with discourses of disability as lower productivity.

3.5 METHOD

1 THE BELGIAN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The empirical study was carried out in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium. Historically, the Belgian policy on disability has been one of segregation, both in education and on the labor market (Samoy and Waterplas, 2012). The Belgian employment rate for disabled people is significantly lower than the European average: 20 of the 31 European countries fare better (Samoy, 2014). Moreover, when professionally active, disabled people are often employed in state subsidized sheltered workshops (Samoy and Waterplas, 2012).

In the last two decades, the Belgian social welfare system has increasingly evolved towards a workfare system. Under impulse of EU labor market policies and legislation (European Commission, 2010), paid work has become the main way for historically underrepresented groups to participate in society (Vandekinderen et al., 2012). More generally, social security benefits have increasingly been made conditional not only upon individuals’ past employment but also on their efforts to regain access to paid work when professionally inactive. Recent measures have limited unemployment benefits in time and increased the legal retirement age to 67. Long exempt from activation because considered unfit for work, disabled people are today increasingly being ‘activated’.

In line with this paradigmatic shift, the Flemish regional government has invested in activation measures to raise the employment rate of disabled people from 42,7% in 2014 to 43% by 2020. This target is to be reached in the first place through integration in the regular labor market (Samoy, 2014) but also by means of a 3% quota on public administrations and 2% quota on local governances (Departement Bestuurszaken, 2014). Activation is pursued through free-of-charge employment support for unemployed disabled job seekers. Based on a medical assessment, this guidance is geared to measuring individual competencies and developing skills to enhance the fit between disabled candidates and employers’ demands (cf. Vandekinderen et al., 2012).

Recently, the Government passed the ‘Decree of Customized Work’ (2013) (‘maatwerkdecreet’) whose main goal is to enhance the employment of disabled people through bridging the gap between social enterprises and regular businesses. The Decree provides grants for so-called ‘organizations for customized employment’, an umbrella category for alternative employment which includes sheltered workshops, social workshops and integration enterprises. The goal of these organizations is to activate vulnerable groups on the labor market and to smoothen their transfer to the regular economy. The Decree also provides grants for ‘departments of customized employment’ (‘maatwerkafdelingen’), which are established by businesses willing to employ vulnerable persons, with the needed guidance and support, within their economic activities (Valkeneers, 2015).

This policy change reflects broader international trends of neo-liberal social valuation of human life characterized by strategically reduced social intervention (Roulstone, 2002), along an increased emphasis on individual self-actualization and flexibility (Wilton and Schuer, 2006; Yates and Roulstone, 2012). In line with what Foucault, in his later work, has termed neo-liberal governmentality, state intervention is today primarily aimed at developing human capital (Foucault, 2008; Munro, 2011) to reduce the distance between disabled people and the open labor market (Barnes and Mercer, 2005). Disabled citizens are recast from passive receivers of benefits or citizens entitled to a suitable job in a sheltered workplace to individuals who are themselves responsible for making active efforts to enter the labor market or return to it as soon as possible (Berghman and Lammertyn, 2005).

Despite the novel focus on activation, the Belgian policy also shows continuity with the past. Since 1965, a system of wage subsidies has provided financial incentives for businesses to employ disabled people by compensating estimated productivity loss caused by impairments and the higher risk incurred by the employing organization (Samoy and Waterplas, 2012). This measure compensates for wage costs ranging from 40% in the first year of employment to 20% in the third, fourth and fifth year. However, the employer may apply for up to 60% reimbursement if a higher productivity loss can be demonstrated. After a period of five years with the same employer, the subsidy can only be extended if an assessment of the worker's productivity in the subsidized job shows a continued need for it. The wage subsidy is important to our study because it institutionalizes the hegemonic discourse of disabled employees as less productive and less valuable employees into compensatory bureaucratic and organizational praxis.

2 CASES AND DATA

This study is based on a total of 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with disabled employees in three large organizations: a regional public agency (13 interviewees; 2.3% disabled staff), a local public agency (eight interviewees; 2.0% disabled staff) and a private bank and insurance company (nine interviewees; 0.4% disabled staff). The data were collected during a larger, publicly funded project for the Flemish Policy Centre for Equal Opportunities Policies 2012-2015, which also included in-depth interviews with other actors: supervisors, HR staff, company doctors, and trade union representatives. The organizations were selected through purposive sampling (Jupp, 2006) because they employed sufficient numbers of people with a work-related disability, as defined by the Flemish government administration: 'every long-term substantial problem of participation in work due to an interplay of functional limitations of mental, psychological, physical, bodily or sensorial nature, limitations in performing activities, and personal and external factors' (Samoy, 2014: 6, own translation).

The first author contacted the human resources department of each organization, providing information on the objectives and the methodology of the study. They agreed to participate in the study and subsequently launched an open call to recruit disabled employees as interviewees. Common ethical guidelines concerning informed consent were followed (Creswell, 2012) and anonymity was stressed in all communication. The names included in this text are pseudonyms. Participants were 15 men and 15 women, had a broad range of chronic illnesses and impairments, covered a broad age range and were employed in a variety of jobs.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out following a questionnaire of open questions organized in five main sections: the nature of the impairment, the professional trajectory, the current job, social relations at work, and policy-related issues. To inductively identify relevant topics to be included in the questionnaire, next to those featuring in the disability literature, six pilot interviews were conducted (Turner, 2010) with three disability/diversity experts in the organizations, one disability expert of the public Service for Mediation and Employment and two professionally active disabled persons who were not members of the three organizations. From the pilot interviews, the issue of productivity emerged as a relevant theme. Therefore some specific questions on this topic were included in the interview guideline: Could you describe how your disability affects your job? Would you say you have a similar productivity compared to other colleagues performing a similar job? Do you think others in this organization (colleagues/supervisor) believe that you are less productive? The guideline was set up following the life course, yet the interviewer allowed the order to be altered by respondents to not disrupt the flow of the conversation and to pursue emerging themes based on the respondent's answers. The interviews lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half, were all audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis of the data was conducted on the transcripts in the original

language (Dutch), translating only the excerpts that were included in the findings sections once the interpretation had been written up.

3 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis aimed at identifying and classifying the discursive practices through which disabled workers engage with the issue of productivity in their identity work. An overview of the steps in the data analysis, the full coding tree and the frequencies are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 4: DATA ANALYZING STRUCTURE

Step 1: Identifying fragments on productivity	Step 2: Positioning towards lower productivity discourse in identity work	Step 3: Discovering the underlying discursive practice to craft a positive workplace identity	Claim	Step 4: Identifying the discursive resources used
Fragments on productivity (109)	Contesting lower productivity (73)	Rejecting association disability – lower productivity (39)	Claiming equal productivity	Proactively managing the disability (15) Calling in objective measures (11) Questioning the need for wage subsidies (6) Calling in job fit (7)
		Generating alternative meaning to productivity (32)	Claiming higher productivity	More motivation/loyalty (17) Better understanding (7) More concentration (2) Superior handling of repetitive tasks (2) Superior verbal skills (3)
	Reproducing lower productivity (36)	Rejecting individual responsibility(36)	Complying with lower productivity + Questioning who bears responsibility	'Willing but unable' (27) Lack of accommodation (7) Wage subsidies (2)

First, the first author identified all fragments on productivity (109) in the interview transcripts, mostly but not exclusively resulting from answers to the above mentioned questions on productivity. In a second phase, we conducted a critical discourse analysis, focusing on the discursive and argumentative structure of the excerpts. Relying on axial coding (Wicks, 2010), the authors jointly identified two main ways in which the fragments related to the hegemonic discourse of disability as lower productivity. The majority of the fragments (73) contested the discursive construction of disability as lower productivity, while the remaining reproduced it (36).

In a third phase, we further examined the first set of 73 fragments, identifying two sub-categories: 1) excerpts in which respondents claimed equal productivity as able-bodied employees (39) and 2) excerpts in which respondents claimed superior productivity (32). We observed that while the former sub-category mentioned commonly used measurements of productivity, the latter redefined productivity in alternative ways. We then examined the second set of 36 fragments. Although we could not identify any further lower-level codes, we observed that in these fragments the idea of lower productivity was reproduced yet systematically followed by the speaker's rejection of individual responsibility for it. Our data analysis thus resulted in three main discursive practices, which featured in our data with similar frequencies.

Fourth, the first author initiated the open coding of each individual fragment based on the discursive resources featuring in it (e.g. proactively managing the disability, calling in objective measures). These third-level codes emerged based on the discursive resources through discussions with the second and third author in multiple rounds, to ensure inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2012). To end our analysis, we checked how the three discursive practices were distributed across individual respondents and organizations. Twenty-six respondents out of 30 used at least two discursive practices, five respondents used only one practice and two respondents used no discursive practice. Although the small numbers do not allow to make conclusive statements, the first discursive practice was slightly more frequently used in the bank and insurance company, the second in the regional public agency and the third in the local public agency.

3.6 FINDINGS

In speakers' narratives, the topic of productivity emerged both spontaneously and in articulated answers to the productivity-related questions asked by the interviewer. In their attempt to construct positive workplace identities, they positioned themselves towards the discourse of disability as lower productivity, casting them as slower, less flexible, more absent, etc. workers, by combining three discursive practices, which distinctively positioned them in relation to productivity.

1 CRAFTING A POSITIVE IDENTITY BY CONTESTING THE DISCOURSE OF LOWER PRODUCTIVITY

Through the first discursive practice, speakers openly contested the ableist discourse defining them as less productive compared to a hypothetical 'normal' able-bodied worker by relying on a variety of discursive resources. Most frequently, they highlighted their own agency, their ability to eliminate potential productivity loss caused by their disability:

I try to deal with the effects of my impairment. When I'm in a meeting and someone talks too softly for me to hear, *I just ask him to speak up*. I tell him also because I assume that others [non-disabled] might have troubles understanding him, too. But for me then of course the problem is more pronounced. But *I always look for an appropriate space to have the meeting, in advance*. A space that is as small as possible. (Adriaan, project manager with a hearing impairment)

To me it's really important that I work as hard and as good as anyone else. I have made it my personal point to never hide behind the fact that, for instance, 'I did not see it'. To give an example: once in a while it could happen that when making slides, little errors sneak in. Little things such as a wrong alignment, or a small typo. I know that, so *I focus on this really hard to avoid it*. (Dieter, trainee with a visual impairment)

In these excerpts, respondents project identities as workers in full control, proactively and preemptively creating the conditions that ensure their own productivity.

A second frequently deployed discursive resource were past positive productivity assessments and outcomes of HR appraisals. The following quotes are illustrative:

I don't think I suffer from productivity loss, *if that was the case they wouldn't have promoted me twice so far*. I work in a commercial environment, you've probably heard this from other colleagues, too. Here they are really not going to give you slack because of your disability. *Numbers are the only thing that interests them*. (Tom, financial advisor with a hearing impairment)

I regret that we aren't paid *on a variable basis*. I think that if we were, I would *earn more*. (Dieter, trainee with a visual impairment)

Similar to these excerpts, other ones mention quantitative evidence such as the number of telephone calls handled, files processed or complaints treated as well as positive feedback on performance received from managers, colleagues or the HR department. These 'objective' measures enabled speakers to discount the alleged lower productivity and promote a more positive identity for themselves.

Another type of 'objective' evidence featuring in the narratives was the wage subsidy received by the company. Speakers deployed this resource to counter the dominant discourse of lower productivity indirectly. They questioned the ethical legitimacy of a financial compensation for productivity loss that did not occur:

I believe that *it isn't fair that there is a wage subsidy for me*. I know I will prove myself and that *there is no need for financial compensation*. I am convinced that I do my work as well as anyone else and even better than some colleagues. (Dieter, trainee with a visual impairment)

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An employer would be stupid of course not to accept the wage subsidy. But *it feels wrong* somehow. *Why should you reward somebody for hiring people with a disability? I think it's a bit wrong.* A wrong attitude. It looks as if you should give a bonus to a company for hiring disabled people while most disabled people can perform their job correctly. (Eric, manager and wheelchair user)

Finally, some fragments highlighted the good fit between the speaker's competencies and the job requirements as evidence for his/her productivity:

I dare to claim *that there is no single difference between my productivity and that of colleagues in the same business.* Why? My work is not affected by the fact that it takes me longer to move around. Most of my job consists of coordinating work, managing teams, yes sometimes travel, but okay that's just travel time. In the end, you are judged based on the results of your team and yourself, and I am confident there is no productivity loss. (Eric, manager and wheelchair user)

In this case, the speaker deploys the content of his job as manager as evidence to argue for the irrelevance of his disability. By circumscribing the job demands, he is able to craft a work identity as a fully competent worker. The claim is further strengthened by adding additional evidence pointing to his team's and his own performance.

In this first discursive practice, disabled employees explicitly contest the discourse of disability as lower productivity by constructing themselves as productive workers. To do so, they proactively draw on various discursive resources to create an identity as conscious managers and even as 'guardians' of their own productivity. Speakers thus leverage the neo-liberal discourse of subjects as entrepreneurs of their own human capital (Munro, 2011) to counter the discourse of disability as of lower productivity.

This discursive practice relates to ableism as an organizing principle in a two-fold, contradictory way. Though countering the discourse of disability as lower productivity, it also reaffirms the rightfulness of productivity as a key criterion for determining who can be a worthy organizational member. Hereby it explicitly uses able-bodied colleagues as a term of reference for assessing productivity. By stressing that they produce work output that is (at least) as high as the output of able-bodied workers, speakers resist a negative identity but reproduce dominant discourses of productivity valuation and the measures that enact them in the workplace, contributing to their taken-for-grantedness.

2 CRAFTING A POSITIVE IDENTITY BY REDEFINING PRODUCTIVITY

Through this second discursive practice, speakers also explicitly countered the ableist discourse of disability as lower productivity. Most frequently, they constructed the higher productivity in terms of their inherent and superior dedication to work:

People with polio have the tendency to prove themselves. That's something really odd. I know a couple of other people like that. I once got a reaction of someone that came into my office looking for the office chief and he said: "You're the person in charge? You?". I said "Yep, sorry, you're going to have to do with me". (Harold, project manager and a wheelchair user)

Last time I was placed, I was out for eight months... People should understand though, we shouldn't get fired on the spot because we are not capable. People with a psychological disability are not incapable. *They even want more, they are more motivated to perform well as soon as they are better.* They fight, they fight their illness. (Katherine, administrative worker with chronic depression)

Also common were constructions of one's disability as a source of superior understanding and empathy for ill colleagues and clients:

When I have a client in prison who could qualify for an [accredited] work-related disability, I tell him. Usually the reaction is: "Yes, but a people with a disability...". They are reluctant [to apply]

because they expect they will get an extra negative label [on top of having been in prison]. When I then tell people that I am disabled myself and explain to them how it works, they'll go like: "Really? Do you also have a disability?" *and then that's one barrier less between us.* (Stefanie, counselor with fibromyalgia)

When people have something going on, I will more quickly defend them, because I know what it is like to be different. Even if it is only temporary. We're a close team and I am very helpful, if I can help out, I will. And people appreciate that. They respect me and my disability. (Karolien, financial advisor with a mobility impairment)

By focusing on specific qualitative dimensions of their own productivity, speakers create novel discursive possibilities to reconfigure their disability as enhancing their performance in the workplace directly or indirectly by contributing to a positive social climate.

Finally, one's disability was recast as the source of other valuable competences. The following excerpt constructing a hearing disability as a source of superior concentration is exemplary:

After my internship, I experienced a lot of problems during my search for work. Often jobs require being able to handle telephones or people just don't have too much faith in deaf people. They doubt very quickly whether you will be able to do the job. *But as a matter of fact, as a deaf person, you are able to completely focus on the administrative tasks. [...] Because I can't hear anything, I don't have to pick up the phone and I can completely focus on the files.* For instance my colleagues will be working on a file and then the phone rings and their work gets interrupted. I don't have that problem of course. (Els, administrative worker with deafness)

Similarly, other respondents argued that they could better handle repetitive tasks or had better verbal skills due to their impairment.

Through this discursive practice, disabled employees contest the discourse of disability as lower productivity by generating alternative meanings of productivity and projecting an identity of more productive workers. Different from in the first discursive practice, disability is here highlighted, yet its negative evaluation reversed into a positive one. Echoing the business case for diversity (cf. Zanoni and Janssens, 2004), speakers infuse disability with economic value and thus as a valuable asset for the organization. In order to do so, they redefine productivity in selective ways, often stressing qualitative aspects.

The relation of this discursive practice to ableism as an organizing principle is again two-fold. On the one hand, this discursive practice powerfully counters the discourse of disability as lower productivity, by systematically associating disability with higher productivity. On the other hand, to do so it needs to reduce disabled workers solely to their productivity. Although this discursive practice enables speakers to craft powerful, positive workplace identities, this is achieved at the cost of downplaying their agency. In order to eliminate doubts surrounding one's competences, they are portrayed as 'natural' manifestations of one's impairment, with a strong self-essentializing effect. Similar to the first, this second discursive practices has self-disciplining effects: it produces docile bodies by 'quasi-fixing' their meanings, reifying the dominant social order (Clegg, 1989; Foucault, 1977; 1990).

3 CRAFTING A POSITIVE IDENTITY BY REFUSING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOWER PRODUCTIVITY

Distinct from the previous two, the last discursive practice reproduces the ableist discourse of disability as lower productivity. However, speakers at the same time de-problematize lower productivity by rejecting responsibility for it. Most fragments rejected responsibility by referring to one's inability to be more productive despite one's will. The following quote is exemplary:

You can make as many adaptations as possible, and I will be able to work faster, but I don't think I will ever be as fast as someone else. It works, it's not that I'm sitting there doing nothing. But I think *I'll always work at a slower pace.* [...]. My previous supervisor did not want to accept that I

indeed, at the end of the day, *whether I want to or not*, I can do my very best and all, I did try really hard to make her happy, but... (Dirk, administrative worker with visual impairment)

Other interviewees similarly described, in all honesty, how they worked at a slower pace, or could not handle as many tasks as they used to, or were unable to deal with stressful and complex situations demanding flexibility on their part. In all cases, they took distance from their disability casting it as a tragic event that could have happened to anyone, completely outside their control and thus something for which they should not be held individually accountable. A respondent told us:

Sometimes people say: 'Well, I'd fancy working from the home as well'. That's very difficult for me. People that don't understand the situation and... well don't give pleasant reactions. You know... I am already struggling with it [my disability] so much, because I want to keep up with the team, and I used to do all that, I used to really be an eager beaver, and now... Pfff... I really can't... [Laughs with despair]. *So yeah, you do less and less just because you can't do it anymore.* (Marjan, counselor with fibromyalgia)

This speaker expresses her deep regret about being less and less able to work due to the worsening of her impairment, casting herself as willing but unable to do more. This is often discursively achieved by stressing the lack of understanding from able-bodied people, as in the previous quote, or the incommensurability between one's situation and theirs, as in the following one:

I got some remarks like: "Oh, my back hurts, too" and "Others will get jealous [of your reasonable accommodation]". You know, if your back hurts that bad, then get it accredited [by the Flemish Service for People with a Disability]. And if others also want a day off in the week and a couch in their office, I'll tell them: "Fine! But then you'll have to carry a bag of poo around your waste 24/7, too. *We'll switch places. You can have it!* And I'll come to work 5 days a week! *You can have it all!* But that [stoma], you take with you!" And then it gets quiet of course. (Alice, data analyst with chronic illness)

A second discursive resource speakers deployed to explain their productivity loss was the lack of accommodations from their employer:

I am sure there is a loss of productivity. [...]. I do compensate for a lot, if you ask me. I've been at this department the longest. I know how many things work around here, I handle them more quickly than others, but I lose huge amounts of time when I have to go through documents *because things aren't in an accessible format.* (Peter, web support manager with visual impairment)

I think it's a missed opportunity for the organization as well. Because, *say I had had the program installed from the beginning [...], there would have been an increase in output*, I would have benefitted from it and so would they. I could have gone through two more evaluations yesterday for example. (Birgitte, personnel staff worker with dyslexia)

Here, the unsuitable work conditions are foregrounded to shift the responsibility for one's lower productivity to the organization.

A last discursive resource deployed by respondents was the wage subsidy, as illustrated by the following quote:

People should be respected as they are! If they are a bit slower, then let them be! It's not their fault, either. I always get the impression around here that if you get paid the same, you should perform the same. But that's just not how things work. I used to think that since I'm always sick, the company does not benefit from me at all, so *I decided to go and get my "disability label", now at least I'm worth a dash and a subsidy. That will compensate for what I give too little.* Somewhere you bear this sense of guilt [...]. But they should just respect people and deal with them in a normal way without pointing fingers and saying: "You over there, you don't perform enough". (Claire, instructor with chronic illness)

In this fragment, reference to a compensation by the state for the speaker's productivity loss allows her to claim a rightful membership in the organization independent of her productivity. By collectivizing the cost and thus the responsibility, the compensation relieves the individual from 'bearing all the guilt' for the productivity loss. In this way, an alternative positive identity is crafted by contesting the moral legitimacy of the organizational expectation of equal productivity.

Through this discursive practice, respondents reaffirm the discourse of disability as lower productivity, yet proactively draw on various discursive resources to construct the negative consequences as a collective rather than an individual responsibility.

Although distinct from the previous two, also this third discursive practice stands in an ambiguous relation to ableism as an organizing principle. On the one hand, at first sight it embraces the subject position offered by the ableist discourse of disability as lower productivity. On the other, it introduces a fundamental critique of productivity as a key criterion for individual disabled workers' valuation as worthy organizational members. Interestingly, here speakers simultaneously highlight the lack of control over their disability and reaffirm their own agency, claiming a legitimate place in the organization and legitimizing their refusal to strive to meet the norm of able-bodied workers. This discursive practice is radical in that it reclaims organizational membership based on ethics, undermining dominant instrumental understandings of employees as productive human resources. Fundamentally questioning the neo-liberal individualization of the subject (Foucault, 2008), it enables speakers to advance alternative metrics of valuation to construct themselves outside economic worthiness (Hall and Wilton, 2011) and to reaffirm a collective responsibility for their disability in the workplace.

3.7 DISCUSSION

Taking stock of the critical literature on identity, control and resistance, this study aimed to get a fine-grained understanding of how disabled employees engage with the institutionalized discourse of disability as lower productivity. Whereas the literature on ableism highlights the disabling and exclusionary effects of disability discourses, we directed our attention to disabled employees' own discursive practices, engaging with the discourse of lower productivity in an attempt to construct identities imbued with worth. From our analysis, three discursive practices emerged through which disabled speakers distinctively positioned themselves vis-à-vis representations of disability as lower productivity. Despite the partially conflicting workplace identities these practices project, they were frequently combined in speakers' narratives, resulting in complex, multilayered identities which stand in ambiguous relations to the discourse of lower productivity and to ableism as an organizing principle. Below we first discuss how our study contributes to the extant literature on ableism in the workplace and then reflect on how, conversely, it speaks to the broader critical literature on identity.

A critical, identity-centered perspective advances current understanding of power in the literature on ableism in the workplace by highlighting how language exerts power by impinging upon the subject's own understanding of the self (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). As our findings illustrate, even hegemonic discourses of disability do not succeed in completely fixing the meaning of disability in subordinate terms, but are on the contrary re-appropriated, as discursive resources, in creative ways that partially question subordination. By approaching disabled individuals' discursive practices as constitutive of discursive structures, we show how power, control and resistance are precarious effects of contested identity work (Foucault, 1986; Knights and Willmott, 1989), rather than structural outcomes. This articulation of macro-level discourses and micro-level discursive practice is theoretically appealing as it allows to recover individual agency within a social model of disability. The social model has increasingly been critiqued for its overemphasis on structure leading to overly deterministic accounts in which disabled individuals are absent (Shakespeare, 2006). While others are looking for ways to recuperate the subject outside the social, for instance through the notion of impairment effects (Williams and Mavin, 2013) or psycho-emotional disablism (Reeve, 2002), our approach rather highlights the co-constitutive nature of the relation between the subject and discursive structures, re-balancing it. Our findings further add to the literature on ableism by shedding novel light on the relation between ableism as a principle of organizing and hegemonic workplace discourses of disability. Whereas this relation is currently conceptualized as a linear, one-to-one correspondence (e.g. Foster and Wass, 2013; Holmqvist et al., 2013; Lindsay et al., 2014; Vandekinderen et al., 2012), our analysis points to complexity and ambiguity. In the first

discursive practice we see how explicit opposition to the discourse of disability as lower productivity goes together with the re-affirmation of ableism. In the second, such opposition is rather paired with a rejection of ableism and through the redefinition of productivity. Conversely, the third practice reaffirms the lower productivity discourse, yet radically rejects productivity as a metrics for valuation, thereby rejecting ableism.

By simultaneously drawing on other hegemonic discourses, speakers further complicate this relation, with different implications on the dynamics of control and resistance. This is particularly manifest in the second discursive practice, which contests ableism by using the business case of diversity, yet by doing so inevitably reduces the disabled subject to a productive resource. This reduction deflates the political effect of this discursive practice, as superior productivity becomes an essential condition for the inclusion of disabled employees in the workplace, and thus also a legitimate ground for exclusion when unmet (Zanoni and Janssens, 2004). Future research could further develop this insight by investigating more systematically how specific organizational discursive regimes offer specific sets of discourses, which speakers can draw on when engaging with discourses of disability.

Third, the analysis of the discursive resources deployed by our respondents reveals that hegemonic discourses which commonly produce subordinate representations of disabled individuals – such as the medical discourse (Barnes and Mercer, 2005), the business case for diversity (Zanoni and Janssens, 2004) or neo-liberalism (Munro, 2011) – can be re-appropriated by disabled employees to construct positive workplace identities. This is a theoretically and politically important observation, as it points to the possibility for speakers to leverage negative hegemonic discourses, next to the social and legislative discourses (Corlett and Williams, 2011), to their own advantage. Combining them inter-textually, they can generate counter-hegemonic discursive practices to claim recognition on their own terms in the workplace (Foster, 2007).

This study also speaks to the broader critically oriented literature on minorities' identity struggles and resistance in the workplace. In line with this literature, our findings highlight the simultaneous compliant and resistant nature of the workplace identities crafted by members of historically subordinated social groups (e.g. Denissen, 2010; Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Van Laer and Janssens, 2014). Our analytical focus on discursive practices, however, revealed speakers' simultaneous deployment of multiple discursive resources – e.g. representations of disabled workers as superior 'self-managers' and as 'victims of their impairment' – to construct even contradictory representations of the self. In this sense, the crafted identities do not appear to be particularly secure (cf. Collinson, 2003; Knights and Willmott, 1989) but rather diffuse. This diffuse character defers meaning, making it difficult to pin these identities down, decreasing the likelihood that they be re-appropriated by others to discursively reproduce disabled employees' subordination. These insights complement and qualify current understandings of compliance and resistance through subordinate subjects' identity work, which tend to focus on the struggle involved in resolving the incompatibility between organizational cultures based on the ideal worker's norm and social identities such as ethnicity, religion, age, class (e.g. Collinson, 2003; Denissen, 2010; Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Future research might want to examine how speakers belonging to subordinate social groups combine a broader variety of hegemonic discourses, including but not limited to those constitutive of social identities, and to which extent these combinations result in coherent identities.

The observed re-appropriation of negative hegemonic discourses of disability by disabled employees to construct positive workplace identities is further important as it counters the idea, widespread in the critical diversity literature, that only representations of the subject resting on legal discourses such as equal opportunities, reasonable accommodations and anti-discrimination are conducive to more equality. Our study rather shows that subordinating discourses can also offer discursive resources from which subjects can create alternative, more positive identities and subject positions for themselves (Wrench, 2005).

3.8 CONCLUSION

With this paper, it has been our intention to provide a catalyst for research denaturalizing ableism and unveiling its disabling effects. Specifically, we have examined how people with impairments engage with the disabling hegemonic discourse of productivity and, by doing so, themselves co-shape the possibilities for alternative, non-ableist workplaces. Approaching disabled people as agents, we have attempted to recuperate their own role in the operation of power in ableist workplaces to re-balance the historical focus of the social

model literature on social structures. Attention to disabled subjects' own discursive practice is theoretically and politically warranted. Theoretically, it is needed because the power of ableist discourses is predicated upon their self-positioning within such discourses. Examining this self-positioning is crucial for understanding how such discourses are reproduced and/or subverted and resisted. Politically, it is warranted because it advances representations of disabled workers as political subjects who can 'fracture' ableism, even if partially and temporarily, rather than as mere objects of policies by organizations and the state. This type of representations is vital to envision social change in the workplace respecting the principle of disabled workers' self-determination 'nothing about us without us'.

Notes

¹ A note on terminology is warranted here. Both the terms 'disabled individuals' and 'individuals with impairments' are currently used by scholars and activists working from a social model of disability. Where disability has predominantly been approached as an issue of minority politics, as in the US and Canada, the term 'people with disabilities' is generally used to refer to a minority in society that is devalued, stigmatized, and marginalized. Where the emphasis has rather traditionally been on social barriers to inclusion, as in the UK, the term 'disabled people' is more common. This term highlights that it is society that disables and oppresses people with impairments, by preventing their access, integration and inclusion to all walks of life, making them disabled. Both approaches are social, as the cause of the disability is primarily located in society (rather than in the individual) and is problematized. As the literature on ableism in which this paper is positioned consistently uses the term 'disabled individuals' (e.g. Campbell, 2009; Foster and Wass, 2012; Goodley, 2011; Vandekinderen et al. 2012; Williams and Mavin, 2012), for coherence, we use this term.

4 ABLEISM AT WORK: A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF ABLEBODIED AND DISABLED SUBJECTIVITIES IN THREE ORGANIZATIONAL REGIMES OF TRUTH

Eline Jammaers, Patrizia Zanon, Stefan Hardonk

4.1 ABSTRACT

In this paper we build on Foucauldian theory to further theorize and investigate the concept of ableism in work contexts. By considering the subject as an outcome of processes of subjectification informed by the normative, binary opposition between the ablebodied and the disabled, we can uncover subtle inequality mechanisms more thoroughly. Drawing on three in-depth case studies, we show how three distinct ableist organizational regimes of truth subjectify disabled workers – by considering the disability as a lack to be managed; as a social responsibility to be cared for; and as an obstacle to performance to be neutralized – and how disabled workers themselves position themselves within these subject positions through technologies of the self. Our study advances our understanding of how organizational regimes of truth set the terms of disabled workers' inclusion – as subjects – in organizations, while at once reproducing subordination and oppression along ablebodied norms within workplaces. It further speaks to more critically oriented diversity studies by showing how social identities similarly operate as organizing principles reproducing inclusion at the cost of alterity and subordination within.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Ableism has recently been brought to the forefront of disability studies as a novel, promising new way to theorize the mechanisms of the subordination and oppression of disabled people (Williams and Mavin, 2012). It has been defined as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, essential and fully human” (Campbell, 2001, 44).

Although the term ableism increasingly features in scholarship on disability, this notion remains today conceptually underdeveloped and there is still little consensus as to what practices and behaviors constitute it (Campbell, 2009). In her seminal work, Campbell (2009) identifies some core characteristics of this notion, which prefigure its potential to redefine current understandings of disability. First, ableism is about the construction of disability through the constitutional divide between two binaries: the disabled and the ablebodied. Ableism posits “a constitutional divide between two distinct and entirely clear ontological zones: disabled and abled (normate)” (Campbell, 2009: 8). The binary dynamic is not simply comparative but rather co-relationally constitutive: “[t]he uncivil disabled body is *necessary for the reiteration of the ‘truth’ of the real and essential human self* who is endowed with masculinist attributes of certainty, mastery and autonomy” (Campbell, 2009: 11; stress added).

Second, in these binary opposite, the ablebodied are given precedence over the disabled, in order to “deceive us into valuing one side of the dichotomy more than the other” (Corker 1999: 638). The disabled is constituted as “inferior” (Linton, 1998: 9) and “marginalized and invisible ‘others’” (Chouinard, 1997: 380). This entails that ableism is marked by “a belief that impairment/disability is inherently negative and should the opportunity present itself, be ameliorated, cured or eliminated” (Campbell 2009: 5). As a deep-seated belief that disability is an inherently negative tragedy, ableism entails that disabled people should strive to attain non-disability and become ‘normal’, or the standard typical way of being. In an ableist worldview, impairment and disability are treated as harmful to individuals (psychologically, spiritually and bodily) as well as to the social order, and, more particularly, economic life (Campbell, 2009), as disabled people are regarded as less productive (Jammaers et al., 2016).

The notion of ableism thus problematizes the notion of able(ness), allowing to de-naturalize common understandings of humanity as ablebodiedness by drawing attention to the normalizing effects of dominant, mutually constitutive representations of ablebodied versus disabled individuals. More particularly, it helps

question the ‘taken for grantedness’ of norms that come to form the basis for the terms on which disabled individuals come to exist as subjects in organizations.

Ableism as a theoretical lens has been advanced as a possible way to address some of the flaws within the “strong” social model. The social model opposed the earlier medical model in which disability was considered as an individual medical problem that needed to be cured or eliminated as soon as possible. The social model has transformed the understanding of disability from a medical abnormality and personal tragedy to a matter of socio-political oppression (Shakespeare, 2006; Thomas, 2007). Because society, through inaccessible spaces and discriminatory attitudes, is not adapted to ‘different’ kinds of human being, it excludes people with biological impairments, truly disabling them.

One of the critiques that has been directed to the social model is its unrealistic strict divide between the biological impairment and the social disability, an impairment is always linked with social factors and is always experienced in a social context (Shakespeare 2006; 2013). For instance, definitions of what ‘counts’ as an impairment will affect how many people and who exactly will be considered as having an impairment and how and, by exclusion, how many people and who exactly will be considered ‘average’ or ‘normal’ (Shakespeare, 2006). A second ground for critiquing the social model has been its over-emphasis on structure and lack for individual agency (Corker, 1998; 1999; Gabel and Peters, 2004; Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2004). Many scholars now argue for a more embodied epistemology of disability that covers both the experience of people and the social constructionist dimension (Goodley, 2010; Hughes & Paterson, 1997).

Ableism contests the treatment of impairment as a pre-social biological substrate that does not need examination. Resting on a post-structural epistemological stance, it sees both disability and impairment as inherently social phenomena. It shifts attention to the subject as an outcome of processes of subjectification informed by the normative, binary opposition between the ablebodied and the disabled. Therefore, by conceptualizing the social as constitutive of the subject rather than solely of the disability, ableism re-defines the relation between the subject – not merely its disability – and the social context as one of mutual constitution, overcoming the ontological ‘gap’ between disability and impairment. In addition, and to rectify the strong structural focus of the traditional social model, as subjectification rests on individuals’ identity construction through identity work, ableism allows to account for disabled workers’ agency, including their (ine)narrable experience of disability/impairment. Whereas the social model conceptualizes disability as the collective experience of oppression (ref), ableism incorporates the subject, as an agent in processes of identity formation. Ableism is at “once an epistemology (a knowledge framework) and an ontological modality (a way of being) that frames an individual’s identity formation” (Campbell 2009: 29). Accordingly, as argued by Corker (1999), the aim of ableism is not the creation of a utopian barrier free world, but rather the development of a social space in which the dichotomy of the ablebodied versus the disabled cease to operate as subjectifying norm elevating the former and subordinating the latter.

Up until now, little research has explored how the ablebodied norm informs and constitutes organizations, despite their presumed ‘neutrality’ (Mumby 2008; Williams and Mavin, 2012). While analyses of how other social identities operate as organizing principles have become common –e. g. racism, ethnocentrism, (hetero)sexism and ageism (e.g. Nkomo, 1992; Ainsworth and Hardy, 2009; Acker 2000, 2006; Calás and Smircich, 2009) –, ableism has to date only sporadically been used as a theoretical lens in the context of work (Jammaers et al, 2016; Williams and Mavin, 2012; Thanem, 2008; Foster and Wass, 2013). The studies that do attend to ableism share an attention for the normalizing effects of ablebodied norms upon disabled employees applying it to the business case (Thanem, 2008), the discursive strategies used to defend themselves with regard to productivity issues (Jammaers et al., 2016), and the constructed misfit between the ideal employee and the disabled job seeker (Foster and Wass, 2013).

Building on this emergent body of literature, this paper has a two-fold goal. First, we further develop the notion of ableism by taking stock of the long Foucauldian tradition. By reconnecting ableism to Foucauldian theory, we focus on the production and normalization of subjectivities in ‘regimes of truth’ and how the subject itself is involved in the process of its own subjectification through technologies of the self. Second, we empirically investigate how three Belgian organizations function as specific ‘ableist regimes of truth’ – *organization specific strategic fields in which truth is produced and a divide is institutionalized in accordance with ableist principles* – which normalize able-bodiedness and how disabled employees deploy technologies of

the self to position themselves vis-à-vis specific modes of subjectification. We organize the analysis of our cases by addressing the following research questions: *How do ableist organizational regimes of truth normalize able-bodiedness? Which subjectivities do they produce for able-bodied and disabled employees? and How do disabled subjects reproduce/contest their own subjectification through technologies of the self?*

4.3 BEYOND A 'STRONG' SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

From the mid-seventies onwards, the social model has become “the principal point of reference in disability studies debates in Britain” (Thomas, 2004: 573). It replaced the prior dominant medical model of disability, wherein disability and impairment were equated to one another and treated as a medical and individual problem. In a medical model view, should the opportunity present itself, the disability has to be cured as soon as possible through rehabilitation and retraining on the part of the individual. However, from a social model angle, the biological impairment should be defined separately from the social disability because it is not a person’s impairment that disables them but rather the way in which society is structured (Oliver, 1990). And so any causal relationship between impairment and disability is therefore dismissed. In particular, the early British disability studies were heavily influenced by radical structuralism, and more specifically historical materialism (Goodley, 2010): they addressed disabled individuals’ material needs and endeavored for an increased socio-political participation and socio-spatial inclusion.

Despite its ethical and political merits, this “strong” social model has received an increasing number of criticisms from various sources such as feminists (e.g. Thomas, 2004), postmodernists and poststructuralists (e.g. Corker, 1999). Such critiques have led to multiple, eclectic versions of the social model which incorporate aspects of the traditional or ‘strong social model’, yet fit better to current contexts and trends (Gabel and Peters, 2004).

Various critiques have been formulated on the ‘strong’ social model of disability. A first critique is the problematic divide between impairment and disability on which it rests and which it reproduces. Seeing impairment as purely biological or prosocial and pre-cultural is erroneous (Thomas, 1999), as there is no body outside discourses and “the discourses we deploy to represent impairment are in fact already socially and culturally determined” and so (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002: 25). Also, what counts as an impairment is a social judgement (Shakespeare, 2006) and many impairments are aggravated by social arrangements, for instance through badly designed transport. In some cases, social arrangements are even the direct cause of impairments, for instance in the case of war and poverty (Abberley, 1987). Related to this, a second key element of critique has been the failure of the model to encompass the personal experience of pain, although this sometimes significantly impacts the daily lives of people (Thomas 1999, French 1993). Feminist writers have argued that people are indeed both disabled by social barriers and by their bodies. Yet a strong social model of disability does not properly approach these more intricate forms of disabled embodiment. Thirdly, in the strong version of the social model, disability is seen as merely a consequence of material relations (Goodley, 2010). The model has “favored a materialist, if not Marxist, worldview” (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997: 299) and language has been sidelined. Therefore, the traditional model has not been receptive to all sociocultural factors (Corker, 1999).

In sum, it has been argued that experiences have been found to be better explained through a framework which views the individual/society dichotomy as dialogic (Corker, 1999) and sees disabled people as social agents.

4.4 ABLEISM THROUGH A FOUCAULDIAN LENS: POWER/KNOWLEDGE, SUBJECTIVITY AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

The emergent notion of ableism is congruent with a Foucauldian conceptualization of power, which similarly emphasizes the key role of language and knowledge in its operation and effects (Foucault 1980). Power operates by classifying and documenting individuals and placing them under continuous forms of surveillance, turning them into objects of power/knowledge (Foucault 1977). Through both language and embodied social practice, a truth of normality is defined, “thereby ruling in certain ways of thinking, talking, and acting, while

ruling out others” (Hardy and Thomas 2014: 324). In this sense, power regulates political life not only by repressing, but also, most importantly, by producing certain ways of being. Individuals are governed through “the guiding, influencing, and limiting of their conduct in ways that accord with the exercise of their freedom” (Tremain, 2005: 10). By virtue of their subjection to these limits of conduct, “subjects are in effect formed, defined and reproduced”: power enables subjects to act however in ways that constrain them (Tremain, 2015: 19).

“Truth is not outside power or deprived of power, it is produced by virtue of multiple constraints and it induces regulated effects of power” (Foucault, 1976: 112). Truth is “linked by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it” (Foucault 1976: 113-114). A regime of truth “is that which determines the obligations of individuals with regard to procedures of manifestations of truth” (Foucault, 1979-80: 91). The rules of each game of truth define the divide between true and false statements, and are the result of historical, social, cultural and ultimately ‘political’ production (Foucault, 1979-80; see also Lorenzini, 2012). Accepting a regime of truth means accepting a subjection or a subjectivation, “since every regime of truth asks to the individuals who are implicated in it a specific self-constitution” (Foucault 1979-80: 96).

Although subjects are influenced by regimes of truth, actors struggle to maintain or promote their preferred meanings and subject formation does not occur in a deterministic, totalizing way (Thomas and Davies, 2005; Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994). As power relies on subjects for its operation, subjects are always ‘in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power’ (Foucault, 1980: 98). Foucault’s later work draws attention to the possibility that individuals oppose these relations of power (resist) or transform themselves within them through technologies of the self. Technologies of the self are internalized procedures that ‘permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality’ (Foucault 2000b: 225). The notion of technologies of the self entails an emancipatory potential “because of the individual’s capacity for autonomy, reflexivity and critique”, although this potential might not be always realized (Foucault 2000a cited in Reeve, 2002: 497).

Subjects are understood here as “life-long effects of constitutive power relations”, that is, “continuously constituted and reconstituted through concrete and institutional practices and discourses over the course of its life-time” (Tremain, 2015:16). Rather than as stable, natural entities, bodies always depend on social context and historical period, “they are always experienced as mediated through different social constructions of the body” (Mills, 2003: 83). A Foucauldian lens accordingly moves away from an analysis of the individual subject to an analysis of the constitution of the subject, or the process by which the individual is produced as an effect of power (Mills, 2003). The analysis of subjection and resistance, in the relation between institutions, government, organizations and individual subjects, allows to theorize oppression without falling into a conceptualization of normality/abnormality as a biological trait (Mills, 2003).

Conceptualized through a Foucauldian lens, ableism represents a form of disciplinary power that governs subjectivities by constituting them as ablebodied (normal) or disabled (abnormal). Ableism shifts the focus from barriers to an investigation into how the ‘disabled’ subject is produced through social structures and how this process is power laden. It moves beyond the “narrow confines of individual, psychologicalized life-stories” to “a collectivist history of ideas as constituted through discursive practice” (Campbell, 2009: 29). And so through employing the concept of ableism, we see as problem not the persons with disabilities, “but the way that normalcy is constructed to create the “problem” of the disabled person” (Davis, 1997: 3). By decentering abledness, the study of disability can unveil how ableism operates as an organizing principle, disciplining individuals into specific subjectivities.

More specifically to our aim, ableism can be productively deployed to unveil how organizations function as specific regimes of truth that exert power and domination by differentiating and ordering individuals, marking them out as ablebodied or disabled subjects, mutually constitutive and exclusive categories which come to be collectively seen as ‘true’ and taken for granted (Knights and Willmott, 1987; Foucault, 1982). HRM practices such as job ladders, seniority systems, and human asset accounting enforce the correct way of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ in the organization, excluding some to the advantage of others (Towlney, 1993). These practices render

individuals and their behaviors predictable and calculable and by sanctioning or correcting any departure from the norm, create a useful workforce. Accordingly, we conceive of organizations as ‘ableist organizational regime’, or “a specific strategic field in which a certain truth is produced in accordance with ableist principles”. Resting on this concept, we address three research questions: How do ableist organizational regimes of truth normalize ablebodiedness? Which subjectivities do they produce for able-bodied and disabled employees? and How do disabled subjects reproduce/contest their own subjectification through technologies of the self?

4.5 INVESTIGATING ABLEISM THROUGH A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

We empirically investigated ableist organizational regimes through a multiple case study of three Belgian organizations: a bank (pseudonym: BankCorp), a regional public agency (EmployOrg) and a local public agency (LocGov). The study was conducted in the frame of a larger research line on disability sponsored by the Flemish Ministry for Equal Opportunities Policies in the period 2012-2015. The three cases were purposively sampled (Jupp, 2006) because they had official policies and practices concerning disabled employees and employed a substantial number of employees with an officially recognized disability, as defined by the Flemish government administration: ‘every long-term substantial problem of participation in work due to an interplay of functional limitations of mental, psychological, physical, bodily or sensorial nature, limitations in performing activities, and personal and external factors’ (Samoy, 2014: 6, own translation). These criteria enhanced the likelihood that subtle processes of discrimination would be at play because the more open forms of discrimination would have been prohibited through the policies. Because ableism works on a deeper more subtle level of everyday life, we thus needed organizations that were open to the entrance of disabled people but likely to be infringed with ableist assumptions nevertheless. The three selected cases seemed most suited to document on the presence of ableism and how it varies across different organizations (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2009). Two public companies (EmployOrg and LocGov) and one private company (BankCorp) were included in the sample. It is important to keep this divide between public and private companies in mind, because government companies are expected to hold more social responsibility and be a good employer. Indeed previous evidence confirms both a greater prevalence of disability practices and policies in the public sector (Jones and Wass, 2013).

1 DATA SOURCES

The main data source of the case studies were 65 extensive semi-structured interviews with 30 disabled employees, 23 supervisors of disabled employees, 4 HR managers, 2 occupational physicians and 6 trade union representatives. Supervisors and HR personnel were included because extant literature suggests they play a key role in shaping workplace experiences of disabled employees yet remain understudied (McLaughlin, Bell et al. 2004; Kulkarni and Valk, 2010). More specifically for this study’s purpose, as authoritative speakers, their voices are constitutive of the organization’s ableist regime of truth. They also have a strong hand in the ableist organizing practices such as general requirements of work, recruitment and hiring, wage setting and supervisory practices but also informal actions while doing the work (Acker, 2006). HR managers and supervisors thus co-construct the regime of truth determining how ablebodiedness and disability are understood within the firm (Duff, Ferguson et al. 2007). Trade union representatives were included because in the Belgian context trade unions have historically played an important role in collective agreements at various levels and there is a high degree of syndicalism. In addition, previous research has demonstrated their important role for disabled employees (Foster and Fosh, 2010) in reconfiguring the ‘personal as political’ and integrating disability concerns into wider organizational agendas. As common in case study research (Cresswell, 2013), we further collected additional data from documents such as websites, brochures, mission statements and job vacancies.

We first contacted the HR unit of each organization to ask for participation in the study. HR personnel and trade union representatives were contacted directly by the first author and asked to participate. All the disabled employees within each firm were sent an email by someone in the personnel office in blind copy with the question if they wanted to participate in a study on the employment opportunities and experiences of disabled people in Belgium. Anonymity was guaranteed to participants. In the first company, EmployOrg, 13 out of 63 disabled employees responded positively. At BankCorp 9 out of 68 agreed to be interviewed. And at LocGov, 8 out of 17 disabled employees were willing to participate. Supervisors in the study were asked to participate through a similar procedure.

All semi-structured interviews were carried out during the office hours or sometimes during lunchbreaks or after work. The interviews with disabled employees were guided by a questionnaire of open questions organized in five main sections: the nature of the impairment (e.g. Could you tell me something about the medical and social aspect of your impairment?), the professional trajectory (e.g. What was your experience with searching for a job?), the current job (e.g. How important is the job you do today to you? Does it strongly define the person you have become?), social relations at work (e.g. Describe the relationship with your colleagues), and policy-related issues (e.g. How do you personally feel about reserved jobs, quota or other forms of positive discrimination?). The interviews with the other organizational actors were guided by a questionnaire of open questions organized in five main sections: own professional trajectory (e.g. Can you describe what your career here has looked like so far?), experience with disability (e.g. Have you come across the topic of disability before?), support given to disabled employees by managers (e.g. What does your company do different specifically for its disabled staff?), support given to managers (e.g. Are you supported by your company in handling disability related issues?), and policy-related issues (e.g. Do you have a suggestion for improvement for your company or the Government?). The interviewer allowed the order to be altered by respondents to not disrupt the flow of the conversation and to pursue emerging themes based on the respondent's answers. The interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours, were all audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis of the data was conducted on the transcripts in the original language (Dutch), translating only the excerpts that were included in the findings sections once the interpretation had been written up. In general, applicable ethical guidelines of informed consent were followed (Creswell, 2013) and anonymity was stressed in all communication to the respondents, all individual names included in this text are pseudonyms.

2 DATA ANALYSIS

In a first phase, each author separately read a sample of interviews to get acquainted with the interview material and get a general impression of the three organizations. Already in our early discussions, we shared the impression that the three organizations offered distinct subject positions for their able-bodied as well as their disabled employees. To address the first research question – Which subjectivities do ableist organizational regimes of truth produce for able-bodied and disabled employees? – we systematically analyzed the interviews with HR personnel, supervisors, and trade union representatives as well as internal documents (websites, brochures, mission statements and job vacancies), identifying fragments on ideal employees as able-bodied and disabled employees.

In a second phase, to answer the second research question – How do ableist organizational regimes of truth normalize able-bodiedness? – we singled out general policies, practices and procedures as well as those that dealt with diversity and disability constituting the regime of truth in each organization from all data sources. We then reconnected them to the produced able-bodied and disabled subjectivities. By so doing, we re-embedded subjectivities in organizational truth in order to unveil the normative nature of abled(ness) in each organization, marking out 'preferred bodies'.

In a last phase, we analyzed the interviews with disabled employees to address the third research question: How do disabled subjects reproduce/contest their own subjectification through technologies of the self? Specifically, we searched in the transcripts fragments that described technologies of the self, i.e. instances of resistance.

4.6 FINDINGS

1 EMPLOYORG: CONTAINING DISABILITY IN THE NAME OF EFFICIENCY

A public organization employing about 5,000 workers, EmployOrg provides several services including labor market mediation, competence development and career services for jobseekers such as personal guidance and trainings. It was founded in the late eighties with the objective to smoothen the functioning of the Flemish labor market. It has a double mission as career facilitator, "creating maximal room for all Flemish citizens to

develop their careers, [...] with the aim to create a better labor market and welfare for all” and as a service provider, “helping citizens to develop their careers in accordance with the market demand and together with other service suppliers [...] with special attention to disadvantaged groups ” (organization’s website). Attention towards disabled and ethnic minority jobseekers grew in 2007, when the Flemish Minister of Work called for additional action to ‘activate’ these groups, who have historically had a disadvantaged position on the labor market. Since, EmployOrg has become a knowledge center on issues of disability and employment and has been monitoring the employment rate of disabled individuals in the organization and the Flemish labor market.

Most EmployOrg members are employed as job consultants, who guide clients towards (re-)employment and keep contact with potential employers, and as instructors, who give a broad package of courses and trainings to clients. Employees are expected to be good listeners, empathic and flexible. Activities are structured in teams of individuals carrying out similar tasks. They are evaluated individually on a yearly basis by their supervisor. As other Belgian public sector organizations, EmployOrg used to employ personnel in statutory contracts giving a permanent, civil servant statute but has increasingly shifted to private law contracts, which provide less pension entitlements and allow the organization to fire employees more easily. Wages are collectively negotiated for each function based on the required educational qualifications and tenure. Careers are bound to level of scholarly degree, yet individuals with people management and organizational skills can become team leaders. As a result of budgetary cuts in the Flemish and Belgian public sector, EmployOrg has reduced its personnel over the years. A trade union representative mentioned 300 people less and a plan to cut an additional 7%. Retirees are not substituted and teams and individuals are asked to be increasingly flexible and to work more efficiently. In this context, the ideal employee is “someone you can always count on, who is flexible to take over someone else’s job when needed” (Sandrine, disability expert).

At the time of the study, 2.3% of EmployOrg personnel had an official impairment. The organizations had thus not reached the (non-binding) target of 3% disabled employees for public organizations. Still, it was the leading public agency employing about 20% of all disabled workers in the public sector. According to respondents, this relatively high number had ‘organically’ grown over time. Although there used to be a system of reserved jobs for disabled people, this practice gradually got out of use. Other practices included the monitoring of the number of disabled staff and offering internships to disabled jobseekers. The organization offered a broad variety of reasonable accommodations, including in some cases a reduction in working days with full wage retention. Also, in the past a yearly meeting of all disabled staff was held to exchange knowledge and practices, although this practice had recently no longer been implemented due to illness of the person in charge.

Managers explained the high share of disabled employees as the result of ‘chance’ and described EmployOrg’s current approach towards hiring disabled people as “just not excluding anyone” (Sandrine, disability expert). The topic of disability is today low on the organizational agenda and both the HR manager and the disability expert were unsure of the latest disability target percentage and actual percentage reached. When asked about the reasons for not reaching the target percentage of 3%, the HR office mentioned the general recruitment halt in the public sector in the last years, the decrease of low-level jobs, and further (erroneously) referred to lower wage subsidies for the public sector as compared to private sector.

Within the ableist organizational regime of EmployOrg, disability stands for an individual’s inability to work efficiently and effectively, a productivity loss, which is at odds with the organizational subjectivity of flexible and efficient public sector employees, carrying out ever more demanding jobs due to personnel cuts. The following excerpts are telling:

We need to remain realistic of course. I mean, at our department, someone who is blind can work here perfectly. Because we only have telephone contact. But what we can’t hire here, are people who are deaf. And I think, well yeah those target percentages [about the share of disabled employees] are nice and all, but it also depends on who applies for a job and the reality [of the work] is often forgotten among those policy makers in the diversity department. (Isabelle, manager)

Say a wheelchair user is located at one of these desks here. And say he or she needs to go to the toilet. The toilet for disabled people is downstairs. That person, and I am certain of this, will be away from his desk for half an hour. Only to get to the toilet and back. Let’s say 40 minutes. Well then, that person has not been productive for 40 minutes, right?! (Sandrine, disability expert)

Although respondents mention in their narratives job requirements and physical barriers in the workplace, they do so to stress the inadequacy of disabled individuals. Inscribed within this truth, disabled people are cast as burdens which the organization cannot take on without enduring productivity losses.

This ableist regime produces a negative ontology of disability characterized by subject positions for the disabled employee as lacking essential skills. EmployOrg's disability policies are accordingly centered in bureaucratic procedures documenting and managing the nature of the disability and its evolution, applicable accommodations, the estimated productivity loss, and subsidy requests. This is reflected in the words of the disability expert:

Since a couple of years we have started to objectively measure the loss in productivity. And now we see that there are indeed losses suffered by the company. People don't admit this, but we have it on paper, in black and white. The loss is documented. And of all the files I see, they almost all exceed 15% [productivity loss]. Not all of them, almost all. There is a loss of productivity, if not, then the measurement must be wrong. (Sandrine, disability expert)

The cornerstones of this bureaucratic process is an individual file documenting the needed and granted accommodations at the beginning of the employment relation or the disability and which is the basis for an annual meeting between the line manager and disabled employee in which, among other more general affairs, the disability is assessed. The file avoids that disabled workers have to renegotiate accommodations with a new supervisor and is further used by managers to legitimize accommodations granted to an individual towards his or her coworkers:

Each year all our consultants receive a yearly evaluation in January or February. In that document [the integration protocol as it is officially called] it is stated that each year it has to be included in the yearly evaluation and assessed. So it is part of the whole evaluation process, you see. And so I take it with me and read out loud the things that have remained unchanged, or if there has been a positive or negative evolution. (Anne, manager).

Within the EmployOrg regime, many disabled employees constructed subjectivities aligned with the ableist regime:

I'm at the welcome desks and I'm fine here. If I was to be a real consultant, register people who come in and look for work, go over files and stuff. No, I believe I can't take on such a job. I always think to myself, is that fair towards the client sitting in front of me? And then my answer is no. I think I should not be in such a position. But I don't mind, I'm happy with what I have. I am quite capable of putting such things beside me. I think I have a good job and good colleagues. And so I'm happy. (Luc, visually impaired employee)

I think I have become quite incapable of being a valuable member in my team. And my chef, she complains about, well she says "You have your written document, you have gotten a reduction in tasks, but for the loss in productivity you cause, I am not given any substitution." Yeah so I have less tasks to do, but it is at the expense of my team and other colleagues. And I feel that this is not right. For me, I am left with so much guilt, unbelievable, and then I try to do a bit more anyways or I stick to my rights but then... Nobody understands me. (Marjan, disabled employee).

In these fragments, speakers express awareness of their incompetence and construct themselves as a burden for the organization. They similarly construct an identity congruent with the subjectivity offered to them as disabled workers and thus at odds with the ideal employee, yet their identities deploy different techniques of the self. Whereas the former takes peace with his current job in the name of delivering a quality service to clients, the latter expresses her feelings of deep guilt for not meeting co-workers' expectations.

Other disabled employees did not embrace the offered subject position. Rather, they were highly critical of EmployOrg, which they expected to be a model employer for the disabled. Instances in which the disability policies did not lead to fair treatment were used to construct explicitly resistant identities:

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When I wanted to resume work here I knew a lot about the legislation on disability and employment. [...] And so I knew that the wage subsidy could be used for granting the disabled worker reduced working hours without wage loss on the paycheck. And so I returned here, and I figured, I'll start working half time first [with full retention of wage] because I had my disability certificate and met all the necessary requirements. On the contrary... Nothing was arranged. Reduced working hours because I acquired a disability? Impossible!!! It was as if a bomb had dropped! I was furious! (Albrecht, disabled employee)

Several people that asked me "Why don't you apply for the job [of director]?" So I went to the [retiring] director and he said: "Well, you know, with your back and everything, we need to do a lot of moving around, a lot of meetings have to take place, and that's not going to be changed". So he told me straight that they were not going to do any concessions because I happen to have a physical disability. That was the function and it was not open for adaptations. Yeah... And there I stood [...]. I think there is a fear, a fear that I won't be able to attend meetings or fall out if I had a meeting the day before far away. But actually, there might be solutions to those problems, right?! Maybe it's not so necessary to have all those meetings. Or maybe I could attend those meetings from home right, through video conference, or whatever, the technology is there for God's sake! But no, they are not prepared to be open for such requests, that's in general the spirit within management here at EmployOrg. (Betty, disabled employee)

These employees verbalize the ableist assumptions of the disability practices. They point to how EmployOrg, the knowledge center for disability and employment, does not itself practice what it preaches to other employers, as it is reluctant to grant needed accommodations and to promote disabled people.

EmployOrg's regime of truth is centered on productive, flexible workers that increasingly need to achieve set goals with less to meet the ideal of an efficient public organization. The presence of disabled workers is accordingly portrayed as resulting simply from chance (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013), rather than from an engagement to become more inclusive. In this regime, the disabled is not less human in general terms, as posited by the literature on ableism, but it is a less productive human. It is abject in the workplace in so far as he/she is not adequately instrumental to the achievement of a perfect state of organizational being, a state of full productivity that aligns the public organization with business ideals. It therefore needs to be contained and policed, fixed in a (lower-rank) position whose productivity requirements can still be met and/or can be compensated for.

Disabled workers are offered a workplace subjectivity of less productive and flexible workers, an organizational strategy of normalization of disability through containment, whereby their disruptive potential is placated (Swan, 2010). In this regime, the disabled is disturbing because it reminds the organization, through its embodiment, of human beings' productive limitations. It is however at once also necessary, as an alter ego to able-bodied public workers to uphold the truth that they are fully productive. Its policing and containment is needed to sustain the collective ideal of becoming an efficient public organization, similar to a private firm, for which 3% share of disabled personnel is unreasonably high.

Disabled workers construct themselves within this regime by conforming to different degrees to the offered subjectivity and deploying technologies of the self to express more or less happiness and perfection. While some faithfully reproduce an identity of less productive workers and express guilt, others construct antagonistic identities deploying their professional knowledge on disability to develop a sharp critique of the ableist regime. In this latter case, a short-circuit occurs between the regime at EmployOrg and the truth it propagates to other employers to obtain employment for jobseekers from disadvantaged groups, a discrepancy that is leveraged by some to resist.

2 BANKCORP: NEUTRALIZING DISABILITY TO REALIZE EMPLOYEES' POTENTIAL

BankCorp is a large private banking and insurance company employing about 15,000 people in the country. The company was taken over by a large international bank in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. It provides retail and corporate banking services through a network of local offices serving both individuals and companies. BankCorp is a competitive environment offering a wide range of jobs in finance and accounting, marketing,

sales, and ICT, among others. When selecting candidates, the HR department looks, next to the formal qualifications, for “*brains, heart and guts*”: reasoning ability, such as speed of reasoning and accuracy; empathy to understand clients; and negotiating skills, dealing with stress, and competing.

The most prestigious job for starters is the traineeship, a demanding trajectory of 18 months during which promising new hires change functions every 3 months to get to know various departments of the bank. Employees’ performance is closely watched through regular evaluations by the changing supervisors and evaluations are passed on to the next supervisor and department. Wages are highly competitive and individually negotiated, and open communication about wages with peers is avoided. Hay-grading scales are used to stimulate individual’s ambition to advance in their careers and competitiveness by providing recurrent standardized evaluations enabling comparisons between employees. Promotion is conditional on excellent performance, and entails the employee’s classification into a higher category on the scale. The higher one’s Hay grading in relation to one’s age, the higher one’s prestige in the organization and potential to further progress. Scores go from 9 to 23 (CEO level), with management levels starting at 17.

The ideal BankCorp employee is ambitious, assertive, hardworking, dynamic and autonomous:

Autonomy is really sacred around here. Everyone is responsible for his own work. I have total confidence in my team I only demand two thing: quality and a respect for deadlines. (Audrey, manager)

To work here, you have to have a university degree, be able to think one step ahead, take charge of things, be reflective and not just follow the crowd, ...When I got into the graduate management traineeship, it was reserved for the very few, there were university degrees in psychology, biology, commercial engineering... They looked for a certain, how do you call this? An extra factor and I think those were predominantly people who were positive, motivated and wanted to get somewhere in their lives... (Melissa, manager)

It is an ‘unencumbered’ worker, who is fully productive, can compete within a meritocratic environment which will reward him for his efforts.

BankCorp started monitoring the percentage of disabled staff a couple years ago. Despite efforts to give equal opportunities to disabled individuals, their share at the bank remains low at 0.4% in 2012, or about 70 people. The company implements a number of practices that attempt to neutralize disabilities in order to release the potential in every employee. The diversity manager told us: “the best people are chosen, and statistically now and then one of those best people has a disability”. Socio-demographic identities do not matter, as long as workers are qualified and can function well in the work context:

The quality and expertise of people, that is the number one thing around here. And if those people happen to have a disability or not, that is less important. (Joost, manager)

There are people without a disability here in my team that need a lot more time to adapt to changes than her: a change of process, in the environment... She is someone who is really cheerful, easy-going, and pleasant (Laurence, manager)

To ensure that managers do not discriminate in the selection process, a systematic random test is done every month. Applications over the past month are selected randomly and an investigation occurs into whether there has been an issue of discrimination on any ground. This is done both for candidates who were hired and not selected. In addition, all HR managers responsible for recruitment and selection have received a specific antidiscrimination training by a non-profit disability advocacy organization. Through role play, they learned how to focus on individuals’ abilities rather than their impairment. At the time of the data collection, external recruiting partners were also following the same training. Additionally, e-training about anti-discrimination and disability was given to all line managers. The training is reflected in respondents’ refusal to treat disabled colleagues in a condescending or patronizing manner:

Well, he does not see a lot of things. I think for the people here, in the beginning they were not really sure what the impact of his visual impairment would be and what he could and could not

see. And also, just people who pitied him and still do perhaps. Even managers did so! A colleague of mine came to me and said 'Isn't that an odd situation, with that guy'. While for me, I was like: 'But hey, it's okay, he'll get there, you don't have to be bothered with it. He'll come and tell you if he can't see something'. (Charlotte, manager)

This quote foregrounds that employees should not be pitied and should rather be treated as workers in charge of their own work. The assumption that disabled employees are and should be in control of their disability in order to do their work is also reflected in the way BankCorp provides reasonable accommodations. Individuals can directly request them through an intranet application 'my disability' by making a selection from a list of material adaptations. This tool allows disabled people to autonomously order the equipment they need independent of the goodwill of line managers to take the issue to heart for them.

An important disability practice at BankCorp concerns the allocation of wage subsidies through the internal management accounting system. Employees who entitle the firm to a wage subsidy are counted as half FTE's on the budget of their department. This entails that they weigh less on the budget, taking away pressure on them to perform as able-bodied colleagues if they are unable to. It further brings in more understanding of colleagues who might find that they are handling more tasks than the disabled person for a similar wage. In this sense, this policy aligns well with the meritocratic truth in the bank. Also, importantly, the disabled employee becomes more attractive to other departments, fostering his or her internal mobility, an important condition for career progression in the organization. Although this management accounting technique might indirectly signal that disabled workers are less performing, it was praised by disabled staff themselves.

In this ableist organizational regime, disability is proactively neutralized by taking away perceptual, technical and economic barriers so that disabled individuals can be productive to their full potential and can be rewarded for their performance according to a meritocratic ideal. This equal opportunity policy is currently evolving towards the business case, which attempts to valorize specific individuals' skills tied to disability for the business. This recent evolution was triggered by the case of a visually impaired worker whose sight gradually declined no longer allowing him to work efficiently in the fast changing ICT environment he was in. The organization has offered him a customer satisfaction job for disabled clients, where he is in charge of accessibility of products and bank premises to clients, an increasingly important issue for the bank. The diversity manager told us:

We've changed from using diversity as a tool for soft HR to seeing diversity as a real business case. Companies always talk about the business case, but how many companies really think through the business case for diversity among customers? And actually, in fact, invest money in it? Well we have done that here! We started with an investment in making our local offices accessible to less mobile clients. [...] A couple of products have also become more accessible over the last year towards blind customers. [...] Our [blind] colleague who is responsible for customer satisfaction for clients with disabilities now has proposed a new card reader for home banking with larger keys and speech function. [...] We have had two meetings now with about 30 associations for all sort of disabilities to better understand their biggest concerns when using our services and products. (Kate, diversity manager)

The business case rationale pushes the truth of equal opportunities and merit one step further towards the identification of the potential value in the disability itself for the organization. Disability is no longer merely neutralized by taking away barriers to enable performance, but it is rather valorized to constitute performance.

Overall the disability regime at BankCorp offers to disabled employees a strong subject position of 'making it happen for oneself' and attempts to create the conditions for individuals to take up responsibility for their work and professional success. Many disabled respondents construct identities aligned with this ideal and pay tribute to individual merit:

The bar was set high there. For me that was a good thing. And there I received the honest feedback of managers who told me in the beginning: 'OK, you can start here' but really did not know what to expect from me. And to be honest, I did not know myself what they could expect. It was hard to tell in advance. Afterwards they told me I did an excellent job, and that they were mostly satisfied that everything went smoothly and that I indeed was able to do everything that

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I promised I could do. It was a relief for me as well to hear such comments because starting in a new function every time is really a challenge for me. People should not be silly about such things, yes at BankCorp they are open to diversity, but a manager still does not know how to deal with it, what can be expected of you. But once you prove yourself, you will have extra credibility, because they know it's not self-evident. They will never ask me questions about it [the disability] though, because it's taboo. But I don't have any problem with that really. (Dieter, disabled employee)

Although this respondent feels that BankCorp's meritocratic system values him despite his disability, he also mentions how in this context his disability is a taboo, something that cannot be legitimately spoken out in interactions between disabled employees and ablebodied colleagues. In a similar vein, the following excerpt stresses that there is no place for complaining about one's condition at work:

I've always acted like everybody else. I've never wanted to be part of that, all whining and complaining. I know I have to work hard, sometimes harder than someone else. But that is the only option for me. I don't talk about it [my disability] to other people. (Jasper, disabled employee).

In this regime, disabled workers seem able to adopt an ideal subjectivity and climb up the ladder if they perform according to standards. The cost of their assimilation into a productive ideal is however the erasure of their disability. The expectation is that they detach themselves from and hide their negative embodiment from their productive being. By reaffirming impairment as an undesirable state, these employees themselves reproduce the ableist regime of truth.

Other respondents also drew from the offered subject position of subject with productive potential, yet did so to construct a resistant identity denouncing the lack of meritocracy and even discrimination:

Before I became ill, I was promised an advancement. When I came back they told me the advancement deal was off, because I no longer had the potential. That was one person's judgment and it has been engraved into my memory ever since. [...]. I now have an attitude like, I don't expect anything from the bank. But they don't have to expect anything of me either, I'll do my hours and that's that. (Vincent, disabled employee)

Because I was on a job search for so long, I accepted this job here, although it was beneath my qualifications and desires. I didn't feel good about it when I signed the contract but I gave it a shot anyways. I did not know until I arrived on my first day, where they would put me. I was asked to do a very simple job. Day in, day out, pushing two buttons on my keyboard to sort out incoming papers into two different categories. Truly a job that did not match my abilities. In my team there was another deaf woman. And they afterwards admitted to me that they had put me there for that reason [because I am also deaf]. I took this placement very badly. I had attended various universities for so long and gathered multiple diplomas, I worked so hard for them. And then I ended up there, in that job. After three days I wanted to quit because I could not accept such treatment. (Julie, disabled employee).

In both accounts, respondents construct identities aligned with the ableist truth of competence, performance and merit, yet do so to point to the misrecognition of their potential by the organizational environment due to their disability. In these cases, speakers align with the truth not to comply, but on the contrary constitute themselves as resistant subjects.

BankCorp's ableist regime centers on individual self-managed competence and performance to be rewarded through meritocracy. Disability is accordingly constituted as an individual characteristic which needs to be neutralized through multiple practices eliminating barriers to performance. In this sense, BankCorp's regime of truth resembles an 'ideal' neo-liberal regime in that the organization appears to effectively take on responsibility to create a level playing field offering equal opportunities and facilitating performance (Noon, 2010) yet also expects individuals to take responsibility or grab the chances they are offered. It both enables and requires disabled employees to assimilate by offering them a subject position of ideal workers and within which their disability needs to be concealed to the extent that it becomes a taboo in the workplace. Most

recently, a novel truth and practices are emerging which rather valorize disability as a distinct competence along a business case rationale (Zanoni and Janssens, 2004), yet it is still unclear which novel subject position will be offered to disabled employees as an effect of this evolution.

Disability appears here to stand for a barrier diminishing one's potential to perform. This truth separates the disability from the subject, makes it ancillary to her and abject (Thanem, 2008). For the subject himself or herself, disability is turned into an obstacle that needs to be overcome and neutralized, so that his or her productive potential can fully be released and the 'true' subject can come through. This occurs through self-management and yet with the support of the organization.

The assimilatory power exerted by the ableist organizational regime is reflected in the many accounts of disabled employees projecting subjectivities which stress self-control, merit, and recognition for one's achievements, yet also regularly point to the 'unspeakable' nature of disability within such regime of truth. Also antagonistic subjectivities reflect the ableist organizational regime, as they highlight its failure to meet the expectations of fair treatment, opportunities to realize their potential and meritocracy that it raises. Indeed, disillusioned respondents question the meritocracy and the organizational willingness to effectively eliminate bias.

3 LOCgov: CARING FOR THE DISABLED AS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LocGov is a regional public administration employing around 1,000 people. It is responsible for outlining regional policies in economy and agriculture, health and well-being, leisure and culture, living and environmental issues, traffic and mobility and education and provides a wide array of services including the physical planning of the region, the promotion of the touristic attractions and the social well-being and health of its inhabitants. LocGov is a young organization issued from the division of a previous region in the mid-nineties into two smaller regional areas. Most jobs at LocGov consist of administrative work or project coordination. As in the whole public sector, careers in this organization are rather flat and depend on educational qualifications. Wages are set collectively, publicly known and based on education and years of service, leading to little competition between personnel. According to the mission statement, Employees of LocGov are:

expected to want to make a valuable contribution to society and to do this through cooperation and respect. Therefore the organization offers a motivating HR policy with a good work-life balance. Each employee should strive for open communication with partners and stakeholders in order to realize valuable projects together.

One of the core values of LocGov is commitment: the organization cares about the well-being and motivation of employees and believes in the philosophy that every person carries out his or her motivation, enthusiasm and appreciation to one another.

In recent years, LocGov has been going through a change leading to a stronger focus on management and numbers and leading to the firing of about 100 employees in 2014. It has also increased control on its personnel:

They used to trust people, consider them experts and let them handle their stuff, and now and then give some directions. Now it's all more strict. I believe it's the dumbest people policy one can introduce really. (Alexander, disabled manager)

Despite this evolution, the ideal employee seems to remain an employee who is sensitive to social issues and has respect for coworkers and clients.

At the time of the study, the organization employed 3% disabled workers, meeting the target for public organizations, and further had set an own target at 4%. LocGov is permeated by a strong belief in equal opportunities whereby diversity is considered a social responsibility of the organization. This translates in the

ambition to employ a diverse workforce that reflects the region's population and towards diverse citizens, helping them to integrate in the region. Various interviewees talked about diversity as 'good for everyone' and 'adding a new and valuable perspective to things'. Accordingly, LocGov implements very progressive disability practices. For instance, it has a reserved job system, a targeted recruitment measure reserving a number of vacancies exclusively for disabled applicants, with the aim of 'enhancing their opportunities for success' (Wim, diversity expert). In principle, managers who plan to hire new people can choose whether or not they open up their vacancy as a designated job. Moreover, this organization employs various people with relatively severe disabilities, such as autism and personality disorders.

The advanced policy does not mean that instances of prejudice never occur in the organization. A manager told us:

One of my colleagues once told me: "The day that I have to hire a disabled person, will be the worst day of my life". And I replied: "Why the hell would you say that?". I can understand that people feel uncertain and don't know how things will go. But to say that it will be the worst day of your life and that you would be forced into such a decision, is wrong. That mentality has to go! I don't think it is out of bad will necessarily, but rather out of ignorance. People should do a mind switch here and say: "Why would someone with a disability work differently?". (Helen, manager).

To curb some line managers' resistance against employing disabled candidates, when a manager refuses to set a vacancy up for the reserved system, he or she is obliged to wait an additional six months before hiring.

The choice for reserved jobs is explained by referring to the (unintended) exclusionary effects of hiring procedures that allow ablebodied and disabled candidates to compete for the same job:

The only thing we do extra is enhance their opportunities for success. Because if you take a few candidates, and put them next to a disabled candidate, he will very rarely get picked. People will focus on what a person cannot do, and the others will be more successful in hiding what they cannot do. However, when you assemble a line of all disabled applicants, then people will focus on the qualities and positive characteristics of the persons. (Wim, disability HR expert)

In LocGov's regime of truth, the inclusion of disability represents a social responsibility. Starting from a social model of disability, the organization considers its duty to help redress discrimination against disabled individuals in wider society:

It's just the reality. You can look at it any way you want, and wrap it up in a bunch of nice words, but the reality remains harsh. I always compare it to women in politics. If those measures were not put into practice, of changing gender on the electoral list, then... I assume women would have reached those places within the political parties eventually, but it would have taken much longer. I am sure of this. [...]. If you have to choose between two candidates and one is in a wheelchair and the other is not, then I think that in 99.9% of the cases, the person without the wheelchair will get picked. It's as simple as that. (Patrick, disabled manager)

Within this truth, positive discrimination becomes a necessary step to get the balance right.

Recently, LocGov has also started using the wage subsidies that the organization receives for its disabled employees to contract an external disability expert organization for guidance, so that "LocGov can quickly offer support when problems emerge" (Patrick, disability expert) and before they escalate. As specialized guidance offered by the public services stops after the first six months of employment, the organization has to come up with its own solutions. Through this practice, the organization invests resources generated by wage subsidies to foster a disability-friendly work environment, in line with the understanding of disability as a shared responsibility. This commitment is also reflected in LocGov's premises: almost all of LocGov's business is located within a building which is the most accessible architectural infrastructure in the region and which is often used as venue for events for disabled people.

Within this regime of truth, disabled employees are offered a subject position of workers whose disability is a collective responsibility of the organization, and who therefore should be included in and cared for. The following excerpts from the interviews with two disabled employees are illustrative:

I am bound to my current job because of the autism. I know this, I know the colleagues, naturally I'm bound to this place. I hate changes and secondly, there is a place for me in this department with my disability. It is taken into account in the tasks that are given to me, in the evaluations that I get, so I'm really happy here. I really feel as if there is space for who I am, even if I sometimes perform less. And that's why I would really like to stay here. (Robin, disabled employee)

Actually, I also had a conflict with a colleague and I relapsed... I was confined to the psychiatric hospital, again, but I have to admit, my line manager then came and visit me there twice! While I was in the hospital. And then he said, because I thought I would certainly lose my job again, and then he said: "Your desk is still there, it will be ready for you for when you return". And that actually really gave me a boost. And with him, I can always go see him when I have a question or when I, for instance, receive an angry phone call from a client and become nervous and anxious... (Katherine, disabled employee)

These excerpts show that disabled employees could construct subjectivities as 'whole' individuals whose disability represents an important aspect of who they are. The organizational truth allows the naming of disability, rather than requiring disabled workers to fit into an able-bodied norm. Conversely, it offers able-bodied employees subjectivities as caring subjects, in line with the overall organizational mission of caring for citizens. Hereby, it defines a truth that shifts the responsibility for accepting difference from the disabled to the able-bodied workers.

Whereas most disabled respondents constructed subjectivities in line with the truth of the LocGov's regime, few rejected the subject position of 'object of care' offered to them:

They have tried to give me tasks as much as possible in line with my knowledge and talents. They are indeed very flexible in that regard. I can't complain about that really. But I have to admit, I have been very flexible towards them too in the past and do believe I reap the benefits of that now. (Ann, disabled employee)

On the one hand I am happy about having been able to participate in the reserved job selection system, so yeah, but I'm also like "I would also have been selected through the normal application procedures", but I think, because for me I don't really have a disability but when I look at others who participated in the reserved job selection with serious disabilities, they don't stand a chance in normal procedures (Katrien, disabled employee).

These disabled workers do not construct identities as objects of care, in line with LocGov's regime of truth. Ann stresses that she has personally earned the care from the organization by virtue of her own commitment in the past, Katrien rather suggests that she was hired because of her skills rather than due to the reserved job system, which she actually did not need. Both fragments hint that this regime enforces ableism by casting the disabled person as someone who is inherently lacking, powerless and needing help from able-bodied colleagues. The confinement of lower performance to the disabled person is further functional to concealing the lower performance of able-bodied workers:

They [heads of department] often assume a person [with a disability] will perform less. While out of experience we know that you have to call a spade a spade. There are civil servants here that have been around for a long time and whose performance is often much lower, to put it in a polite way. And that issue is never discussed. (Alexander, disabled project manager).

LocGov's ableist regime is characterized by practices and meanings emphasizing the organization's moral and social responsibility for the employment of disabled employees. It is imbued with care and centered on a holistic perspective on individuals. The combination of progressive hiring practices, the employment of individuals with a broader range of impairments and the recent expenditure of the wage subsidies to foster

disabled employees' workplace experience consistently express a notion of disability as a collective social responsibility rather than an individual problem.

The organizational mission and vision on accessibility and sensitiveness to social issues played a key role in the production of a truth offering to disabled employees a subject position of care object inherently deserving good treatment and to able-bodied employees one of care givers. Indeed, diversity practices were cast as fostering the employment of disabled individuals but also as educating and correcting managers to become caring of disabled personnel. Different from the other two organizations, at LocGov employees are rarely cast as instrumental to achieve organizational goals, and performance (loss) is downplayed. The organization attempts to correct injustice occurring in society, taking on an exemplary role by implementing highly inclusive practices that redress historical oppression (Noon, 2010). Disability appears to stand here for a lesser human state (Campbell, 2009), which should be embraced and cared for. Constitutive of the disabled subject, disability cannot simply be abstracted from that subject. This fosters the construction of identities by disabled people who are centered on disability and express appreciation for the received opportunities and care. Less frequent are identities that are centered on one's skills and commitment as entitling one to a full subject position as organizational members, independent of one's disability.

4.7 DISCUSSION

Our analysis has unveiled the simultaneous pervasiveness of ableism and the heterogeneity of ableist organizational regimes of truth, which constitute "the disabled" and the able-bodied and the terms of their inclusion in clearly distinct ways. Disability is domesticated into the first organization by realigning it to a bureaucratic regime, to a neo-liberal meritocracy regime in the second organization and to a care regime in the third organization. At EmployOrg the medical model view for disabled clients, in which they individually need to be helped through enhancing their attractiveness for employers by retraining them, offering them courses, etc. forms a cornerstone of their business. This conception of disability as a problem and lack is drenched in their internal regime as well. In the neo-liberal regime of BankCorp, the disabled employee is someone whose potential needs to be unleashed so that he or she can compete in the meritocracy and, increasingly, someone whose potential lies in the disability itself, as an organizational asset to maximally respond to diverse clients. And at LocGov, the organizational mission of caring for citizens corresponds with the care ethos abided in their regime with specific regard to disabled personnel and their ideal able-bodied counterparts. So in sum, it seems as if the mission of each organization is congruent with the lens through which disability is behold. The ideal (able-bodied) employee and its (disabled) antonym are constituted in specific ways yet ableist norms infringe in all regimes.

This study contributes to the current disability studies literature in a number of ways. First of all the ableist lens allows to deepen the social model understanding of the relation between the disabled subject and social barriers. It gives us another understanding of how disabled employees are marginalized. The social model would see the subject as disabled by social barriers. The solution (aim of research) then is removal of barriers and creation of a barrier free world. However, many have questioned the feasibility of such a utopia. In this study that departed from an ableist lens, we saw the disabled subject as constituted by its binary opposite: the able-bodied subject. The solution is then the breakdown of strict binaries and a search and widening of the conditions and terms of inclusion of disabled people. The analysis here has thus shifted from looking for an ideal, non-disabling environment to the (relational) terms and conditions of inclusion of the disabled. In addition, the ableist lens has allowed us to portray disabled employees not mere as victims of social barriers, but also as agents who can resist negative subject impositions. Subjects comply and resist to different degrees, yet both compliance and resistance are aligned with the specific regime of truth in the organizations.

Secondly, our study qualifies ableism in the work sphere. It shows how one important characteristic of an ableist worldview, namely equating disability to a state of lesser humanity and seeing it as inherently negative, is not deterministically translated in work organizations. Rather it seems that businesses tolerate the existence of disability, rather than celebrate it as a part of human diversification (Campbell, 2009). By comparing three regimes, we have illustrated the social nature of "the ideal employee" and how it differs along the organizations, and to what degree disabled employees are implicitly considered as the opposite thereof.

Future research might benefit from embracing a similar non-dualistic mode of thinking such as characteristic of the ableist lens. It should remain wary of how ableist norms and ideals infringe organizations and their knowledge constructions, thereby (subtly) discriminating against disabled people. A further focus on disabling and enabling discourses could bring more information on effective mechanisms of widening the terms of inclusion for those workers deemed 'different'. In addition, research needs to continue on researching general HR and specific disability-related practices in order to reveal 'best practices' and make organizations conscious about the opportunities for including those in their current diversity management plans, as disability is still too often left out of these, or seen as "a difference too far".

5 ACTIVATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROFESSIONALS IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Stefan Hardonk, Patrizia Zanoni, Eline Jammaers

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Labor market statistics in the industrialised world have repeatedly documented the underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the open labor market in terms of labor market participation and employment rates (WHO, 2011). Even when professionally active, persons with disabilities experience particular difficulties in obtaining sustainable work and building enduring careers (Lindstrom, Doren, and Miesch, 2011). Increasing the participation rates of this group in the open labor market represents today a key policy goal of many governments at regional, national and supranational levels (OECD, 2010). To this end, many countries, including the Flemish region of Belgium, have passed specific legislation and implemented policies that target persons with disabilities, including financial incentives to workers and employers and services that provide support to persons with disabilities entering the labor market, developing necessary skills, obtaining and maintaining jobs.

This study investigates the employment support programs with a focus on how professionals make meaning of their interventions. Research into the experiences of employees with disabilities has demonstrated that such meaning influences the day-to-day implementation by employment support programs practitioners (e.g. Corbière and Lanctôt, 2011) and thus their effectiveness in the short and long term, both in terms of empowerment of the clients and varying degrees of impact in terms of improving the inclusive character of the labor market and reducing the unfit worker-stigma.

Yet to date, surprisingly little is known about these qualitative aspects of supported employment programs and, specifically, how professionals make sense of their employment support practices, because researchers have mostly taken the meaning of the core principles for granted (e.g. Corbière and Lanctôt, 2011). One attempt to clarifying how meaning is made of program principles can be found in a scenario study by Donnelly and Given (2010) in which an open employment support program is analysed from the perspective of a professional person with a disability. Their study points to a number of issues in the implementation of an employment support program in relation to core program principles, such as negative and essentialising representations of the client and a lack of attention for the client as the knowledgeable key actor.

Corker and French (1999) and Yates (2015) have demonstrated the potential of an analysis of discourse for analysing meaning-making and uncovering empowering as well as oppressive forces that disempower persons with disabilities. The discourses that employment support professionals may draw upon in their daily practice to give meaning to their activities can be enabling and empowering, or reinforcing the stigma of the unfit worker. They are in turn related to the socio-political context that sets the targets and evaluation criteria for public programs. Uncovering the assumptions behind employment can advance our understanding of how practices of support provision affect unequal power relations on the labor market, reducing or reproducing them. In doing so we contribute to the critical disability studies literature which is concerned with questions about how oppressive ways of meaning making may permeate organising principles not only of workplaces, but also of programs that are aimed at strengthening the position of persons with disabilities on the labor market. This could also contribute to explaining diversity in the implementation and long-term effectiveness of such programs.

Empirically, we draw on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with professionals of employment support services that are officially recognized and subsidized by the Flemish regional government of Belgium. These services provide free-of-charge support individuals who are willing to work and who have been identified as a person with a disability that affects work. Participants were purposively sampled from so-called GTB- and GOB-services and questions were asked regarding their views on disability, their role as service providers and the roles of the clients and the employers. The analysis was conducted with a focus on how the support professionals make meaning of disability, employment and employment support.

5.2 SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Supported employment programs were introduced to provide more individualized and flexible services that operate close to the labor market. These programs rest on an approach to guidance and support for persons with disabilities that questions the boundaries of traditional vocational guidance. Traditional approaches are characterized by their long trajectories in which a person is prepared for labor market participation through functional rehabilitation and improvement of skills. These step-wise efforts to increase the labor market value of persons with disabilities were situated largely outside the labor market in a “train, then place”-approach and they have not yielded enough success to close the disability gap in employment, for example for persons with psychiatric disabilities (Bond, 1992). By contrast, employment support services that depart from the “placement first”-principle are developed around empirical evidence in favor of a more comprehensive approach (Bond, 1998). Such type of support prioritizes a quick transition into work, with much of the training and skills improvement taking place on the job, e.g. through traineeships. In addition, different vocational services such as skills training, development of competence profiles and job coaching are provided in a flexible manner that is sensitive to individual needs and demands.

The most standardized model of support was developed in the US and is called Individual Placement and Support (IPS). This is essentially a formally described interpretation of supported employment and derives directly from its basic concept (Drake and Becker, 1996). It was originally focused on persons with severe mental illness, however it does not preclude a limitation to a certain category of impairments. IPS as a standardized approach to supported employment features a set of basic principles that should underpin a support program. Drake and Becker (1996), Drake et al. (1999) and Bond (2004) defined these principles and in the course of the past 20 years this list has been slightly extended. All principles depart from empirical evidence in terms of successful practices (Bond, 1998). The basic principles of IPS are (1) that supported employment is aimed at achieving competitive employment, i.e. employment in the open labor market; (2) that the job search is rapid, i.e. placement is pursued shortly after the client’s entry into the program – which overhauls the approach of traditional vocational rehabilitation which focused on training first, then placement; (3) support collaborates in an integrated manner with health services; (4) eligibility is based on self-selection, i.e. persons with disabilities who decide to work may enter the program; (5) assessment is continuous and comprehensive throughout the support trajectory; (6) attention is given to client preferences, i.e. the client is given autonomy to steer the course of the support trajectory; (7) support is offered in a time-unlimited manner; and (8) clients receive counseling with regard to social security and other benefits. In sum, these principles clearly show how IPS is discursively framed as aiming to support the individual to achieve higher labor market value, while at the same time developing collaboration with employers.

There is relatively strong international evidence that IPS programs are effective (Bond, 2004; Latimer et al., 2006) and have positive psychosocial effects (Cramm, Finkenflugel, Kuijsten, and van Exel, 2009), although the evidence appears to be somewhat weaker outside the US (Heffernan and Pilkington, 2011). According to Corbière et al. (2010), a crucial element for its success is the “philosophy of the program” -- building on the client’s strengths, needs and preferences (client-centeredness) and focusing on rehabilitation and practical work experience – see also (Vandekinderen, Roets, Vandenbroeck, Vanderplasschen, and Van Hove, 2012).

5.3 COMPETING LOGICS UNDERLYING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The increasing efforts to activate the disabled professionally should be understood against the background of the changing relation between citizens and the state and the key role paid work has gained in this relation. This evolution is informed by two distinct logics.

First, the chronic crisis that Western welfare states have been facing since the 1970’s has resulted in social security benefits for professionally inactive individuals as becoming increasingly framed as temporary and conditional on the individual’s efforts to participate in the labor market (Immervoll and Scarpetta, 2012). Social security benefits are no longer welfare state citizen’s right but rather a burden to the limited resources of an indebted state. In this perspective, in the UK, persons with disabilities’ entitlement to benefits has become conditional upon the enactment of job seeking behavior such as participation in work interviews (Grover and Piggott, 2005). In the Netherlands, this activation discourse increasingly finds its way to persons who receive disability benefits, however with more emphasis on support and voluntary choice compared to other

disadvantaged groups (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2015). The Flemish region of Belgium has adopted activation policies for the general population at working age since the 1990s. This also holds true for persons with disabilities who are receiving unemployment benefits, however it does not extend to persons who receive disability pension.

Labor market participation is portrayed as good not only for the state but also for the individual, and even more so for persons with disabilities (Yates and Roulstone, 2013) by emphasizing the positive psychosocial aspects of employment, i.e. casting formal work as the major source of self-fulfillment, self-realization and welfare (Szymanski, Enright, Hershenson, and Ettinger, 2003). In the active welfare state logic, every individual is held responsible for selling his/her labor to an employer and to obtain work. It is assumed that the open labor market will eventually decide if that labor is economically attractive. In terms of policy, this entails individually aimed interventions that strive to increase the market value of persons with disabilities, for example through training, rehabilitation and education, but also favorable financial arrangements such as wage subsidies. This logic of fitting the individual into the labor market is associated with a medical perspective of disability, in which a focused is placed on an individual's impairment. Consequently, measures such as rehabilitation, skills mapping, job-training, and use of assistive devices are employed to make the individual as "normal" as possible. Within this perspective, the labor market is not expected to be inclusive, because the individual is brought as close as possible to existing requirements and ways of working. The role of employment support professionals then is to focus on clients' competencies, labor market value and attractiveness to employers.

Coeval to this evolution towards an active welfare state is the growing international attention for persons with disabilities' right to work, which finds its origin in the social model of disability that was developed during the 1970s and 1980s by disability activists and scholars (Shakespeare, 2006). The social model of disability focuses on the interaction between the competences and limitations of a person on the one hand, and the accessibility of the labor market – i.e. work and workplaces – to give way to the notion of work as a right. This right has been formulated in article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - UNCRPD (UN, 2006):

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labor market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The article further states:

[States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to...] Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labor market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment. (UNCRPD, article 27, paragraph 1, e)

In this right-based approach, States Parties are considered as a major responsible actor for ensuring that persons with disabilities can realize their fundamental right to work. Different from the previously described activation logic, obtaining and maintaining work is not framed as merely a persons' individual responsibility.

In relation to the person-work environment fit this can be illustrated using the UNCRPD, which may be considered a major discursive resource within the social model perspective. According to the UNCRPD States Parties have to ensure that "reasonable accommodations" be provided in the workplace (article 27, paragraph 1, i) as part of their responsibility to ensure that the workplace is accessible and that a person's limitations do not result in exclusion from the workplace in a direct or indirect way. Under reasonable accommodations we understand technical solutions, but also organizational arrangements, assistance, qualification measures and awareness-raising measures (Heckl and Pecher, 2008).

By considering reasonable accommodations as a fundamental right, the discourse of the UNCRPD places responsibility for the person-work environment fit – at least in part – on the employer. States Parties then are expected to ensure this right is realized through different measures, such as supported employment programs.

On the level of the implementation of the programs this implies that support professionals should not only give attention to job coaching, skill building and training, but also to the initiatives that an employer can and should take to make the workplace and the organization more accessible, to allow the person with a disability to become an equal member of the organization.

This perspective on labor market participation of persons with disabilities emphasizes the importance of inclusive labor markets and inclusive organizations. Whether or not an individual succeeds in selling his labor to an employer is not his/her sole responsibility, but a shared responsibility of different actors in society. Opportunities to work represent a right and society is responsible for doing everything that is needed to allow persons with disabilities to enjoy this right.

This is supported by an important body of research that points to the role and responsibilities of other actors than persons with disabilities themselves in achieving higher participation rates in the labor market. Individuals with disabilities are confronted with inadequate levels of support and multiple institutional and organizational barriers (Stone and Colella, 1996; Williams and Mavin, 2012). Hughes (2007) has also argued that the assumption of non-disablement underlies disabling cultural practices that exclude in different domains of society. Therefore some scholars have questioned the appropriateness of assigning responsibility to the individual, based on existing barriers to inclusion in the labor market (Patrick, 2011).

The rights-based discourse gives employment support professionals a different framework to operate within, placing emphasis on negotiating personal characteristics with accessibility of the workplace, accommodations and efforts from co-workers and managers/employers. A different language is created that provides a space for demanding that existing barriers be removed and persons with disabilities be given opportunities. Instead of increasing individuals' market value this discourse promotes interventions to eliminate discrimination, provide reasonable accommodations and work towards inclusive workspaces. It also points to employers and co-workers for taking responsibility.

5.4 METHODS

1 THE CASE

The empirical study focuses on employment support services that are officially recognized and subsidized by the Flemish regional government of Belgium through the public employment agency, the VDAB (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling). To account for the role of this latter, also agency staff members were included. The specialized services are the GTB ("Gespecialiseerde Trajectbegeleiding en -Bepaling"), or "specialized guidance", and the GOB ("Gespecialiseerd Opleidings-, Begeleidings- en Bemiddelingscentrum") or "specialised training, support and mediation". Whereas GTB centers place most emphasis on supporting persons with disabilities in determining employment goals and searching for jobs on the open labor market, GOB centres mainly provide training in specific job skills, support to engage in traineeships and external training/education, and mediation to obtain employment. The public employment agency VDAB finances all GTB and GOB services in Flanders. To be recognized and financed, services have to comply with a number of general criteria such as "offering quality and client-centered support" (Flemish Government, 2008).

Professionals employed at these services include social workers, occupational therapists, and psychologists. Guidance and support are provided to persons with motor disabilities, psycho-social and intellectual disabilities. Most clients arrive at GTB and GOB through referral by the VDAB, after being identified as a person with a medically certified impairment affecting their capacity to carry out paid work. Most referrals are directly to the GTB, which helps clients to the most appropriate support. This may imply referral to GOB-services. GTB also provides support for official recognition and assessment of one's disability. Clients entering the supported employment program therefore do not follow a standard-trajectory, as it is the task of GTB to establish which type of support is most adequate. It is worth noting that persons with disabilities who arrive at GTB may be redirected to other, non-competitive types of employment (e.g. sheltered workshops), which in effect terminates their participation in the supported employment program. Official statistics show that paid employment is pursued for around 70% of the clients, preferably in the open labor market (GTB-Vlaanderen, 2014) – with around 30% being directed towards non-competitive employment. Support trajectories last on average for 1 year and employment is achieved at the end of the trajectory for around 40% of the clients. More

than half of the clients is still employed six months after conclusion of support, although this proportion has decreased over the past years. This is important as the financial support is largely determined by the number of successful job placements. Official VDAB-standards limit support to clients to a six-month period after job placement.

The GTB employment support model departs from the Individual Placement and Support model, although supported employment in general and IPS in particular are considered first of all as an approach, more than an instrument (Gailly, De Herdt, Vandermarliere, Uytterhoeven, and Henau, 2012). In its introductory white paper GTB states:

We cannot reduce these streams to an instrumental methodological tool. We have to regard them as a broader vision that always centers the client and builds bridges to colleagues working from healthcare and employers. They are important actors in a societal model of inclusion. (Gailly et al., 2012)

Employment support initiatives are a key aspect in the Flemish regional government's activation measures to raise the employment rate of disabled people to 43% by 2020. The employment rate for disabled people is historically significantly lower than the European average (Samoy, 2014) and when professionally active, disabled people are often employed in state-subsidized sheltered workshops (Samoy and Waterplas, 2012). Since 1965, a system of wage subsidies has provided financial incentives for businesses to employ disabled people. Wage subsidies commonly consist of a down payment by the state of the wage of persons with disabilities up to a certain percentage. Some systems are permanent, others decrease over time, and a variation in percentages exists across Europe (Greve, 2009). Besides being presented as a financial incentive these subsidies are officially framed as a means of compensating for "estimated productivity loss caused by impairments" and "higher risk incurred by the employing organization" (Samoy and Waterplas, 2012). Currently in the Flemish region of Belgium the measure compensates wage costs ranging from 40% in the first year of employment to 20% in the third, fourth and fifth year. Extension beyond the fifth year are conditional upon a proven loss of productivity.

2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Our study sample was composed through purposive sampling aimed at employment support professionals in GTB and GOB-services, who are key actors in the implementation of the supported employment program. Furthermore, we aimed for the inclusion of participants from services in different regions. Sometimes services differ in terms of their client profile (e.g. educational background and skills), leading to regional services historically giving different priority to placement in manual work (industrial employment), non-manual work (administrative and service employment) or both.

Participants were recruited through direct contacts with certified GTB and GOB centers as well as the VDAB. The researchers asked for permission to interview staff members knowledgeable about the organization of employment support. This resulted in the participation of a total of 11 respondents: 7 from GOB services, 3 from GTB services and 1 from the VDAB. Some participants were active in guidance and support of clients of the program, while others coordinated and supported the services, or combined these tasks. Data collection was aimed at acquiring rich information about the views of the participants with regard to the nature of their service provision, the framework in which they operate, the goals of their support, the clients and other relevant stakeholders. We accordingly opted for conducting semi-structured face-to-face interviews guided by a list of topics and questions. At the onset of the interviews, participants were asked to describe his/her position and role in the organization, the profile of the clients of the service and the structure of the service. Subsequently, they were asked to elaborate on the ways in which they provide employment support, why support is organized in a specific manner and what they expect of their clients. With regard to support professionals' interactions with employers, specific questions were asked in relation to responsibilities of the different stakeholders, the role of policy measures such as wage subsidies and public funding for reasonable accommodations, and the types of barriers to inclusion in the labor market. Finally, participants were also asked about their collaborations with other stakeholders, such as trade unions and other services, and their views on reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, productivity and their interrelatedness.

Each interview was concluded with an open question allowing the interviewees to add anything they might deem relevant.

The interviews lasted between 54 and 85 minutes. They were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. The anonymized transcripts were then analyzed on the levels of content and discourse through identification of text fragments that are reflective of employment support professionals' assumptions and views related to employment of persons with disabilities.

To achieve this, the first step of the analysis was to broadly classify the content of the interviews which resulted in the four main themes presented in Table . Next, within each theme we analyzed how the stakeholders – i.e. clients, employers and support professionals – are discursively constructed by the interviewees and how responsibility is allocated to them in these constructions. We then analytically connected these discursive constructions to the two competing logics of work as a condition for receiving support from the welfare state, and work as a right.

TABLE 5: THEMES IN RESULTS

Meaning-making about → Themes ↓	<i>Role and responsibility of the client/person with a disability</i>	<i>Role and responsibility of the employer/management</i>	<i>Role and responsibility of support professionals</i>
1. Initial placement and traineeships	Identifying own strengths and weaknesses Willing to train and develop skills Willing to prove/demonstrate competence to employers through	Employers as biased towards clients' competencies Employers as unwilling to make any formal commitment to clients before traineeship	Educate/raise awareness of employers to reduce their bias Training clients Find opportunities for traineeships for clients to prove their value Find opportunities for traineeships for clients to gain work experiences and self-confidence
2. Wage subsidies	Client as cheap employee Disability as risk Client as an opportunity to make the organization more inclusive	Employers as rational, calculating economic actors Employers as biased towards clients' competencies Employers as afraid of risks associated to disability Employers as allergic to bureaucracy	Explain financial benefits of hiring clients Explain compensation for lower levels of performance Explain other opportunities to reduce the disability (<i>exceptional</i>) Find perfect fit between individual and employer to make disability disappear (<i>impossible</i>)
3. Advocating for clients towards employers	Client as talented/competent Client as docile and grateful Client as motivated Client as unwanted in certain organizations	Employers as unknowledgeable and biased about disability Employers as happy with grateful and loyal employees Employers as in need of employees (supply-side shortages)	Explain strengths of clients Normalize clients Promote business case for disability Client-centered work Advise clients on which potential employers to avoid due to strong negative bias
4. Accommodations	Client in need of specific accommodations to do the job Client permanently settled when accommodations have been given Client as learning opportunity to improve working processes (<i>exceptional</i>)	Employers making efforts to make accommodations needed to do the work Employers as rational economic actors: limitations to what can be expected from them	Support professional as knowledgeable about accommodations and subsidies Assess employers' potential to make accommodations Support for revising organizations (<i>exceptional</i>)

5.5 RESULTS

In this section, we interpret the narratives of professionals in Flemish employment support services along four key themes in their accounts: initial placement and traineeship, wage subsidies, advocating for clients towards employers, and accommodations. For each theme, we discuss how disability is given meaning in relation to work and how the roles and responsibility of persons with disabilities (the clients of the service), employers and support professionals themselves in achieving employment for individuals with disability. The narratives of employment support professionals provide us with a perspective on how their interventions both reflect and reproduce competing logics of work for persons with disabilities.

1 INITIAL PLACEMENT AND TRAINEESHIPS

One of the core principles of employment support that fits with the goals of the Flemish government is that it should be aimed at achieving competitive employment. In other words, the program should help persons with disabilities to obtain and maintain work in the open labor market, which basically rules out sheltered employment. Traineeships emerged from the interviews with support professionals as a key practice to work towards clients' placement. Most interviewees stressed traineeship as beneficial to the person with a disability as well as the employer. Although a traineeship is not a true job, because it is unpaid, without formal contract and limited in time and scope, it was considered as providing opportunities for learning and skill development, which positively affect the attractiveness of the person on the labor market:

We also do internships that we guide. Those are not internships in schools because we assume that everyone who comes here obtained a degree. The courses that we give there, they also come without a degree. They do obtain a certificate, but it is mainly about obtaining skills.

Some participants also emphasized that through traineeships their clients avoid competition with non-disabled persons in hiring procedures, which is often to their disadvantage. Some participants talked about a protective approach:

Those internships are really a good way to provide our people with work experience and also to give them a little but more self-confidence by entering the labour market in a "protected" way.

Nevertheless, elements of prejudice and stigma in the employer-perspective more broadly informed the way in which the main benefits of traineeships were expressed by our participants. Employers who are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities, because they consider them to be less productive, less reliable or a potential burden for the organization, get the opportunity through a traineeship to experience that persons with disabilities are not necessarily different from other workers. Our participants also stressed the importance of the absence of any long-term commitment that is involved in these arrangements, which they represented as attractive to employers.

Sometimes it occurs that a 'work experience-traineeship' will lead to a real job, and we evaluated recently how often this is the case. And we saw that this occurred in 30% of the cases [...]. So that means that, at the start of that internship the relationship is very optional. The person just want to gain an experience. And so we ask the employer if he is fine with that and we follow-up on the person and we'll see where we land.

In other words, negatively biased employers get a learning opportunity to see the value of the person with a disability for the organization, but if s/he is not convinced after this period, there is no further commitment expected.

Only one participant openly represented traineeships as an easy way of achieving the employment-goal of the program. In this representation it is not the need for skills development on the part of the client or an attempt to convince employers of a client's skills that drives the decision to start with a traineeship. Instead, the client is perceived to have limited labor market value, which is then problematized in relation to the labor demand in the sector of employment that support is aiming at:

If someone want to go and work in a certain sector or domain, where there are a lot of possibilities for employment, than yes, a more 'vacancy-directed traineeship' is plausible. But that's just not that easy to find and this is something we learned along the way.

One of the participants framed the loose arrangement of a traineeship in different terms, i.e. as an opportunity for persons with disabilities to regain self-confidence in work:

They also learn like, 'where are my limitations situated, can I manage things and is the job not too hard on me?' The employee can get to know himself a bit as well and see for himself what goes well and what doesn't. We've had a lot of people that assume they won't be able to do many things, but then through the traineeship learn that they are more able than they figured.

Other participants placed emphasis on the client's indirect gain of internships, because these provide support professionals with an opportunity to get to know their clients better. A discourse that emphasizes the importance of tailor-made support based on a thorough assessment of the individual is what emerges here:

To put it bluntly, the coach sometimes neither knew what was important for the person and how he could further help that person. And then that only became apparent through the internship.

Several participants pointed out that through traineeships their clients receive an opportunity to demonstrate to employers their value as an employee. They get the chance to prove themselves and to show that they can be a valuable asset to the organization. Even if the traineeship does not lead to employment in the organization – which is sometimes known at the start due to a lack of job openings – support professionals argued that such an experience is valuable and helps to increase the person's chances for obtaining work in the future.

We organize those internships actually to convince companies of the qualities of people. We only have short internships. One month, two, sometimes three months. It depends on whether we feel someone should gain some more experience. So we sometimes want to give additional experience to people but also we want to sensitize companies, show them what our people can do. We follow-up on those internships closely and see if there is possibility of future employment.

Traineeships appeared as an „offer that cannot be denied“ by the clients and clients can only be legitimate participants in the program if they agree to a traineeship. Although this does not entirely fit with the IPS-principles of self-eligibility and client-centeredness, this was used as a proxy to assess whether the client has the right mindset to be a participant in the program:

A while ago, about two or three years, we decided that we demand from our all of our clients this willingness [to take on an internship position]. If people are not willing to take on an internship, well then there's more to it and then we can talk about it and clear things out.

One participant pointed out that in cases where the client denies a traineeship, s/he should be redirected to general vocational support:

Yes, that is what we decided a couple of years back. That we ask a certain engagement from our clients to take on an internship position. If people are down for it, than that's not a problem, but then we are not the right partner for them... Then they are referred to GTB again.

This is discursively intertwined with a focus on clients' motivation to work that was expressed by several participants.

We do notice that, even if people have a serious disability, as long as they are really motivated, there is still rather much they can accomplish. I think that's one of the most important requisites.

A few participants connected motivation in turn to social security benefits by pointing out that some clients were not really interested in finding work.

If we see that someone is not motivated, and just drops by to get his papers in order... Then that's the end of that. We don't even start the service then. [...]. We just had someone come by who received a monthly payment of 1900 euros from social security... Well then, good luck convincing someone like that to start working, right...

From our findings traineeships emerge as an instrument for simultaneously achieving multiple goals of the supported employment program. Our participants generally talked positively about the prominent role of traineeships in their support, describing them as a way to identify training needs of the client, as an opportunity and as an important – maybe the most important – instrument that they utilize to help persons with disabilities obtain jobs. They were mostly represented in terms of success, self-awareness, opportunities for learning and demonstrating to employers the value of the client for the organization. Furthermore, traineeships were presented as a strategy or instrument to obtain competitive employment through a step-wise approach. With regard to the roles of clients, employers and support professionals our analysis indicates

that traineeships are centered on enhancing the low value of persons with disabilities on the labor market – as perceived by employers – by intervening first and foremost on the individual level. While employers remain uncommitted through traineeships, the responsibility for convincing the employer of one's value as a worker rests mostly on the trainee. The support professional acts as a person who creates the opportunities that the client should utilize.

This pragmatic support may at the same time contribute to strengthening persons with disabilities' competencies and self-esteem, and reinforcing the stigma of persons with disabilities as less preferable workers.

The results demonstrate that the way in which traineeships are represented by support professionals constructs clients as lacking necessary skills and being unattractive to employers, which is in line with an individual approach of disability and with the logic of activating individuals to work. Traineeships as they are presented here assign much responsibility to the client, i.e. to become competent and attractive to employers. At the same time the employer is only expected to consent to „try out the client for a while“ before committing to anything. The role of the support professional consists of offering traineeships to employers and meticulously analyzing the (lack of) skills on the part of the client that may be trained during the traineeship. This distribution of responsibilities may be dehumanizing because it puts persons with disabilities in a subject position of lower labor market value and deficit. The worst imaginable outcome of a traineeship for the employer is neutral, while for the employee getting a real job is of utmost importance. The clients are also expected to consent to traineeships, because they are thought of by support professionals as an indicator for clients' motivation. Denial would mean the client is not interested in strengthening his/her labor market position. It is interesting to note that failure was not often used as a term to describe possible outcomes of traineeships, instead regardless of any short term success they were portrayed as an investment in the future for which the client is responsible. This does not reflect the logic of work as a right that should be achieved by all stakeholders taking up responsibilities in creating inclusive work and work spaces. Even in the many reported examples where traineeships did help persons with disabilities to become more competent and more self-confident, potentially increasing their labor market value, the client remains represented as solely responsible for his/her success on the open labor market.

2 WAGE SUBSIDIES IN THE SEARCH FOR COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

All participants agreed on the importance of wage subsidies as a tool in their work. Some represented the wage subsidies as a measure to compensate for persons with disabilities' lower levels of performance.

You sort of make a little backpack to compensate the employer for the things he [worker with a disability] is unable to do, a slower work pace for instance can be compensated through that wage subsidy, or if colleagues have to take over some tasks...

Although several participants talked about more positive employer attitudes, a bottom line representation of the measure was that wage subsidies are also an important general incentive in a strategy to convince employers:

'The employer' doesn't exist. Some... Last week I received a phone call from an employer asking me whether I could look up a file of one of our clients who was going to change contracts in order 'to check the discounts'. Well than yeah, that employer is very sensitive to it [financial incentives]. Other employers will say they don't mind so much but do want an assurance that the client will be able to do his bit, and then the wage subsidy is just a partial reimbursement of the wage cost.

Some participants had developed practices that discursively confirm the position of employers as calculating, rational actors in a competitive environment:

We have developed a device, which accounts for several financial incentives, in order to simulate the potential cost of an employee to the employer. And then we can say 'well look this person is going to cost you this much'.

Frequently participants nevertheless told about how they regret employers' focus on negative and cost-related perceptions regarding workers with disabilities:

It is sometimes disappointing to have to conclude that the system [of wage subsidies] is pretty well-known and subsequently employers will focus on that sooner than we would like them to.

This lead one participant to consider resistant practices:

Our coaches usually only show the simulation of the wage cost 'till after the internship has occurred, so when both parties already have a good image of who they are dealing with.

Another participant portrayed the wage subsidy as an important instrument to reassure potential employers that there is no direct problem when their client cannot achieve full productivity immediately, and considered this to be a process:

In fact, in the first year, the wage subsidy that the employer is entitled to for a person is huge. And so in that sense, I feel like things will be compensated for, and the person will pay off in time. I think it's important to tell the employer that the beginning might be more difficult, but that it will pay off in time.

Although the participant did not mention it literally, this way of representing the wage subsidy implies that during the first period the employee and the organization get the opportunity to find ways to optimize the work and the working environment. Exceptionally participants did talk about this relation between wage subsidies and accommodations in the workplace. For example, one participant talked about how wage subsidies may attract the wrong kind of attention for workers with disabilities, negatively influencing the sustainability of their work:

It's a promotion device. And that has its advantages and disadvantages. It is not regulated, that's a disadvantage. Because the wrong employer could every now and then hire a person who entitles him to a wage subsidy, but at first sight doesn't pose any issues. That might result in an employment but not in a good one, nor a durable one. And with that aspect, I am really displeased.

A few participants talked about their preference to represent wage subsidies not only as a way of financing goodwill, but also to stimulate employers to acquire disability-related expertise and make accommodations in the organization. This is an indication of a discourse that places social responsibility with employers. The organization is treated as an entity open for adaptation in order to become more inclusive to diversity in terms of dis/ability. As such, the resources of the state in the form of wage subsidies are not used as a mere incentive, but instead they require a level of commitment of the employer to make efforts to adapt the workplace including working processes.

After the first year of employment, the employer can ask for a deviation, so an increment or a prologation. [...]. As of this moment, there is a personal evaluation. We can really steer the process, and set or conditions, and we really listen to the client and see what works well and what doesn't. And then we can come to an agreement with the employer and see what financial support we will give for adaptations.

Other participants however highlighted that individualized approaches are difficult because they were convinced that employers are allergic to the burden of administrative negotiations and obligations:

If employers have to also arrange that, the wage subsidy, then I'm afraid employers would be like 'well guys, you see, all that talk, all that negotiation, for me that's unnecessary, just give me an employee that doesn't cause so much fuss.

This may be considered a normalizing discourse that aims to make look workers with disabilities similar to non-disabled workers.

Looking at their own role a few participants repeatedly talked about their work as match-makers. The logic being that their job is to market the best possible match between workers and jobs, thus minimizing any work disability.

It's even the purpose to somehow... a good match is a match where there is barely any problem with productivity.

At the same time, the discourse of lower productivity among workers with disabilities remained, which is illustrated by the following conversation between two of our participants:

P1: On the other hand, when the jobs really matches the participant, then I don't think the wage subsidy is needed any longer...

P2: How many times does that happen?

P1: Well it just doesn't happen, not in the normal labor market at least.

Despite differences in their accounts, wage subsidies were considered by all our employment support professionals as one of the most important tools in their work. Some referred to wage subsidies as an incentive that merely helps to achieve employment in the open labor market. Others pointed out that wage subsidies may compensate for lower levels of productivity of persons with disabilities. Regardless of the intention of the strategy this way of increasing the client's labor market value attributes to clients a subject position of lack and inferiority compared to able-bodied employees. It reflects an approach to disability as an individual trait that signifies a less-than-ideal worker who cannot attain performance levels similar to non-disabled workers due to his/her impairment, and for which compensation is needed. This is related to the description by Grover and Piggott (2005) of persons with disabilities as a "reserve army of labor", which results from a shift to neo-liberalism aimed at creating a larger labor supply for entry-level jobs – neglecting the rights and needs of persons with disabilities.

In these fragments, employers are conversely conceived as rational actors who need to be compensated for this perceived lack of performance, for which they cannot be expected to take responsibility. In the relation with employers the employment support professional takes on a subject position of limited power over stigmatizing ideas about persons with disabilities and his/her role is then mainly centered on informing employers about the benefits of the wage subsidies. Some participants tried however to avoid placing their clients in a subject position of lack to early in their approach to the employer by delaying information about the wage subsidies in order to avoid placing the emphasis on the client's lack.

Other participants more radically diverted from the individual discourse of disability by carefully framing wage subsidies as a first incentive providing an entry point to eventually work at making the organization more inclusive to workers with disabilities, thereby supporting sustainable employment through shared responsibility. As such the responsibility for successful employment is shared between the employer – who is expected to make accommodations – and the client. The ideal support professional's role then would become that of an expert who assists in shaping the work environment – with the ultimate goal being the „perfect match“ of the client with the job. Meanwhile, this position recognizes that making organizations more inclusive and open to diversity may require additional resources that the company may not have. The state then plays its role by financially supporting these companies. As such the stigma on workers with disabilities is discursively offset against the responsibility of employers – to adapt their organizations – and of the state – to support employers in this process.

3 ADVOCATING FOR CLIENTS TOWARDS EMPLOYERS

A recurrent theme in support professionals' accounts described their work in terms of supporting persons with disabilities and combatting prejudice and at the same time reaching out to employers. In their narratives, employers are represented as difficult to convince about the worth of hiring persons with disabilities. For example, because of prejudice and a lack of knowledge about the heterogeneity of the population. Therefore, when discussing ways of advocating for their clients many participants focused on strategies to convince employers to hire and explaining for them the specific strengths and needs of the clients. Most support

professionals positioned themselves in a discourse that revolved around a demanding and highly competitive labor market in which their role is to make all efforts to convince employers of the value of their clients and at the same time of the limited risk that they will run when hiring persons with disabilities.

The importance of making potential employers aware of clients' competencies was explained by our participants by pointing at employers' lack of knowledge and their ignorance for the subject. Employers who have hired a client are considered to have proven their willingness to give opportunities and are as a result often asked more than once if there are willing to hire another person with a disability. In this context that clients are discursively situated as members of the group of persons with disabilities. Support professionals would try to convince the "willing" employers to hire a client by referring to their positive experiences with employees with disabilities:

That's how these GOB's often work, they offer a first successful experience, and the week after that sort of speak, the employer will be on the phone asking if there's anyone else like that in offer...

It is worth noting that the Flemish regional government provides resources to the services based on the number of support trajectories and the successful completion of these trajectories. This was invoked by our participants as they employed discourses of economic efficiency when they talked about their strategies. More specifically, most support professionals would quickly give up when they felt that an employer was not receptive to the idea of hiring persons with disabilities. Although some participants said that it would make them angry when they were confronted with employers who denied any collaboration, they felt it was necessary to approach this from a pragmatic point of view.

I recently experienced that when I call a certain department,... you encounter so much resistance, well then I'm not going to call them again in the first months, even if you call for someone else with a different problem, because they argued for instance that the people our clients would have to work for 'counted on them being there'. So they doubted the continuity and presence that my clients could offer. I told him 'does not every employer want his staff to be there?'. And it was one argument after the other, I could feel myself get more and more angry and so now I know I won't be calling those people again in the first months to come.

In criticizing unwilling employers one participant referred to economic rationality to counter some employers' objections. The participant mentioned shortages on the supply side of the labor market thus implicitly also referring to the business case of disability, which upholds a pragmatic discourse of inclusion because companies cannot afford to lose competent workers if they wish to remain competitive:

There are those that systematically ignore their responsibilities. But then they don't have to come cry on my shoulder because they don't find enough staff.

Especially in economic sectors with a relatively low average tenure and supply-side issues on the labor market, loyalty may be an appealing characteristic to employers.

Support professionals also made the value of their clients clear by emphasizing the qualities and competences that s/he has developed through education, training and/or work experience. In their conversations with employers many support professionals would explicitly avoid to talk about the client as a person with a disability or as someone who is not able to perform certain tasks, avoiding "disability group membership". They considered this to be a negative approach that would distract employers from the qualities of the person:

No, we don't talk about disability, we will say "this he can do and for that he will need some support", so that's how we go about thing.

Instead, participants preferred to talk about competencies and talents and as far as limitations are concerned they emphasize what the individual needs to be able to do the work:

The word 'work-related disability' in itself is difficult, because it implies something negative while you're actually trying to say we are providing you with someone with talents, who might have a

few troubles that bring along this and that. But we mainly bring you someone who can do this and that, but it is someone with a work-related disability.

This approach of selling the client based on skills and talents – not as a persons with a disability – is rooted in support professionals’ representation of clients’ employment trajectories as difficult, risky and loaded with disappointment and failure:

Of course if someone has had a history of disappointments... they are really happy to get a chance. If they then are in a good place, there is no need for them to leave anymore. It would be taking another risk again to look for something else

Another strategy to counter a discourse of risk and cost relies on referring to group characteristics of workers with disabilities and connecting this to economic benefits. Diversity was mentioned by some participants as positive to work organizations, representing the responsibility for creating opportunities as shared between the client and the employers.

Well of course that's not just the responsibility of the client but of every organization. Every organization should be balanced and have a representation of different views, and that's only possible when you employ different people. But if you have many disabled people working for you, or other vulnerable people, in need of care, then you're unbalanced as well.

Support professionals who employed the “business case for disability” strategy, when talking about the value of persons with disabilities for employers, focused not only on the personal characteristics of the client, such as competencies, limitations and preferences. They combined a discourse of “grateful employees” with an emphasis on persons with disabilities as an asset to the organization because they are assumed to be generally more loyal, punctual and motivated than the average non-disabled employee.

These people are super happy when they get a job and they are in it for the 100%. Even if there is a small loss of productivity, they are so motivated, always on time, I think, with a standard employee, that could not always be the case.

Although it is presented as a positive element to the benefit of the client and the company, it does relate to a discourse in which persons with disabilities are portrayed as a group of people who are grateful when they are given an opportunity to work by others. Discourses of strong, non-disabled workers who change jobs regularly are usually expressed in terms of challenges, learning and career development. In contrast, the discourse that we find here behind clients’ perceived loyalty carries a logic of ableism, in which challenges and career opportunities are implicitly reserved for non-disabled persons. Persons with disabilities are first of all expected to be passive receivers of work opportunities and changing jobs is seen as risk taking.

Employment support professionals highlighted the difficulty of convincing employers to hire individuals with disability. The most common positioning among our participants was the one of advocate for one’s clients, whom they represented as talented, competent and attractive employees. When attempting to place a client through conversations with potential employers, many support professionals strategically provided limited information about impairments and to keep their focus on his or her competencies and talents. This strategy is one of normalization of their clients as employers are often biased and prejudiced about workers with disabilities. Some participants rather deployed strategies leveraging the business case for diversity. This includes assigning certain attitudes to persons with disabilities and stressing them as beneficial to the organization, for example the higher motivation and loyalty of workers with disabilities or, more rarely, by pointing to the organizational benefit of multiple perspectives.

Although these approaches differ in the representation of how the client may contribute to the organization – by being „normal“ or by being „exceptional“ – both are centered on disability as an individual issue de-emphasizing the role of the work environment. To create goodwill with the employer, the support professional adopts individualized approach to client-centeredness, in which most responsibility is placed with the client and employers are not expected to make specific efforts.

Finally, as far as the choice of possible employers is concerned, client-centeredness appeared to be interpreted by our participants in function of expected success. In other words, clients' preferences for certain employers in responding to vacancies or making proactive contacts were not always followed, because some participants wanted to prevent foreseeable failure. This was represented as detrimental to the clients' motivation and it was also linked to an economic logic of effective support, in which reference was made to the way in which employment support services are financed by the government. The latter is a limitation of the structure in which our participants work and which is frustrating to some of them, nevertheless it results in meaning-making of employment of the client in terms of goodwill of individual employers, not of social responsibility to support the right of freely chosen work in the open labor market (United Nations, 2006). It seems that the financial and organizational structure of employment support services supports sharing responsibilities in a way that expects the client to be a „valuable asset“, while the support professional looks for employers who are willing to collaborate. Their appears to be limited incentive for support professionals to assume a role of game-changers in how employers perceive employees with disabilities.

4 ACCOMMODATIONS

Finally, a fourth important theme concerned reasonable accommodations at work. Most of our participants described how they advised employers regarding possible measures that may increase comfort and performance of the client, availability of materials and consultants, and expected results. Generally, reasonable accommodations were thought of as centered on the individual worker and less attention is given to the role of co-workers and trade unions:

We request the accommodations when they need them. We have a lot of materials they can borrow. [...] We go and install the materials in advance. Sometimes some tests have to be run to see which programs fits the computer, which software packages are being used and what is compatible. It can be quite a search.

Exceptionally, participants did approach their support provision in a proactive way with a long-term perspective:

So we mediate, we offer materials or install changes to computers, but also when there is a new employer for instance because the boss has changed, or new colleagues come in, and there is less understanding, we will step in and see, what is the problem, what's happening and we will go and have a look.

However, although most other participants recognized the importance of proactive follow-up to avoid drop-out from work, they took a reactive position and gave it less priority in their role as employment support professional.

Our motto is "guide throughout your career" and we try to some degree always look after that employee, also when he's finally employed he can count on us. That ofcourse only happens in situations where there is something off.

Participants talked about their role in supporting not only the clients, but also the employers to make accommodations.

Up untill' now, we have mainly focused on the person [with a disability]. But in our new project of care and work, we also include the employer. And there are many more possibilities as well, but one has to know them of course, be aware of them. Say coworkers would feel a need to know a bit more, why not make up a full diversity plan. And then they can be trained through the subsidy for a part. But we are not at that stage yet I'm afraid...

It is interesting to note the emphasis on finding the right information and training workers, which indicates an emphasis on the technical dimension of accommodations and less focus on aspects such as the organizational culture and the importance of adaptations in the organization. This discursive position of reasonable accommodations as revolving around the individual gives meaning to client-centeredness in terms of meeting the needs of a person and his/her employer.

In this regard some participants referred to the possibility to formalize the engagement of organizations to the benefit of the client and without putting the client-centered character of the support at risk. One example is making explicit all requested and granted modifications of the work and work environment in a document that could act as a frame of reference for future evaluation and intervention. This idea was placed in a discourse of sustainability of employment:

I guided someone a few years back, and I received a phonecall last week telling me he got fired because he got another supervisor. And that new supervisor did not know anything about the situation, he did not understand it, know no history... And that employee decided for himself not to talk about it [the disability]. He the result is he got sacked. The problem is, nothing had been written down, there was no communication about it either, and so that information went lost.

One participant inscribed himself into a discourse of inclusive labor markets by referring to an intervention in which he made an employer aware of the fact that certain accommodations for the client were also beneficial to other workers and thus to the company.

A very nice thing, but of course an extreme one as well, occurred when one of our firms had to open a new production unit. At the time, they had someone with autism working with them through an internship. And the employer figured, I'll use him [the person with autism] as a guideline to write out the instructions in a clear manner. "If he can't understand them, the others won't either". And now every time a new student comes in our an interim worker, they can get to work much faster thanks to those instructions.

Note that the participant describes such an achievement as an "extreme case", placing it discursively outside the mainstream of the support activities. Nevertheless, this expression constitutes reasonable accommodations as being more than an individual matter or a one-way relation in which the organization gives and the individual receives. Instead the organization also benefits from developing and implementing accommodations and the client's needs become framed as a learning opportunity for the whole organization. Vice versa the discourse of inclusive work places responsibility with organizations for modifying the work environment to fit diverse states of being and to reduce stigma.

Two other participants placed such inclusive practices under a discourse of "optional, but nice to have because it is also – but separately – subsidized":

Some companies have diversity plans and then we inform them that if they do certain things for their staff with disabilities, they can be reimbursed for that and then we refer them to Resoc.

The inclusive work discourse gives meaning to organizations as bearing part of the responsibility for persons with disabilities' access to work by demonstrating that they are competent to design fitting jobs. Client-centeredness is as such not only defined in the more generally accepted terms of proving clients' individual competency, but also in terms of activating employers to make arrangements to provide access to the organization. One example of this appears from the interviews when a participant remarked – admitting that it had never occurred to him before – that it may be a good idea to not only formalize the client's responsibility for achieving specific goals through a traineeship, but to also do this for the employer.

Some participants however discursively placed formalization of accommodations as part of a wider diversity and inclusion policy as the symbolic opposite of the client-centeredness that they saw as crucial to their role as support professionals:

If we feel there is a possibility and willingness[of the company] to step into a bigger plan, we will elaborate on it. But there is a lot of unfulfilled potential in that regard. Our people are sometimes afraid to take things to the next level, because it could be at the cost of the individual client, and I mean, making our clients keep their jobs is still the number one priority here.

All participants framed their support regarding reasonable accommodations in terms of placement and less attention was given to the continuation of the employment in the longer term. Accommodations were mostly centered on the individual as a way of making it possible for the client to start doing the job, taking into

account current parameters in the working environment. Most participants did not provide active follow-up to anticipate possible changes in the future at the level of the client or the organization – which some explained to be a result of the fact that the services are not funded for such support. Most participants represented accommodations as a technical matter from which the client benefits and which does not affect co-workers or others in the organization. Support professionals assume an expert-role in this approach, informing clients and employers about possible accommodations and funding schemes for accommodations. These findings indicate that our participants draw in part upon a social approach of disability as far as the direct working environment is concerned. Interestingly, the support professionals also saw opportunities to take up a role in supporting the employer in making the organization more inclusive, although this was less frequently mentioned, giving priority to accommodations that affect the client directly. Nevertheless, a few participants did display a more radical social model discourse when they pointed out that they played a role in making organizations more inclusive. This approach assigned more responsibility to the employer and a more proactive role for the support professional. It also entailed that not only their client, but also the employers and the organization benefit from accommodations and inclusive practices. In other words, these support professionals considered it to be their role to inspire organizational change, instead of focusing on immediate accommodations that appear to be a privilege for their client. Interestingly, some felt that this threatened the principle of client-centeredness in their support.

5.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study we examined the narratives of employment support professionals active in Flanders to uncover aspects of meaning-making that underlie interventions of activation of individuals with disability. Based on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, four major themes regarding the implementation of support emerged: traineeships, wage subsidies, advocating for clients towards employers, and accommodations. Within each theme, we show how the participants made sense of their own role in support interventions as well as the roles of their clients and (potential) employers, and how they attributed responsibility for achieving employment. Specifically, we re-connect identified instances of meaning-making related to support practices and expectations towards the stakeholders with the logics of work as an individual responsibility and work as a right that society should help persons with disabilities to enjoy. The analysis also revealed how support professionals' discursive practices take the macro-structure in which they operate – i.e. rules, financial regimes and available measures – into account.

From our findings we learn that employment support professionals frequently position themselves within a discourse of disability that focuses on the individual and his/her characteristics as a starting point for explaining success or failure on the labor market. This is sometimes done by referring to specific talents of the client, but also by pointing out persons with disabilities may be an asset to any company – thereby it is assumed that the client possesses the qualities of the group and will display them as an employee of the organization. When it comes to the specific talents of the client, traineeships emerged as a vehicle to improve and prove competencies in an employment relationship characterized by minimal levels of employer commitment.

While these support actions fit within IPS-principles of client-centeredness and rapid placement, and are framed by support professionals as part of advocating for their clients, the meaning-making around these actions implies that potential employers and their organization are to a large extent perceived as an unchangeable reality in which the support professional should help the clients to demonstrate their value. The client him-/herself then is responsible for grasping the opportunity and “making it happen”. For the way our participants represented government measures at their disposal this means that they would use these in an argument to reduce employers' fear of productivity-losses and other economic risks associated with disability. Wage subsidies in this perspective are helpful to convince employers to hire the client, but they also provide a subject position that associates him/her with lack of performance and risk.

Only exceptionally did employment support professionals position themselves in a discourse of inclusive labor markets, and considered one of their task also to convince employers to change the organization to attain higher inclusion. In these cases, existing support measures were presented as a connected set of opportunities for the organization to become more inclusive and benefit from the diversity that comes with hiring persons with disabilities.

The logic of work as an individual responsibility and – to a lesser extent – the logic of work as a right provide a framework for meaning-making in support practices. Traineeships for example were represented by participants as a way to provide opportunities to clients, while at the same time the client does not get the role of a full and regular employee to whom the employer is formally committed. They also served to identify unmotivated and thus undeserving clients – those who refuse to start a traineeship. In line with Donnelly and Given (2010) we conclude that support professionals give meaning to clients' competencies, educational achievements and work experience, thereby providing them with more or less legitimate claims towards potential employers and hence employment opportunities. Their meaning-making contributes to the subject positions of persons with disabilities and employers, shaping the context of what may be expected and the conditions for participation in the labor market. Although supported employment programs revolve around bringing persons with disabilities quickly into the labor market, support practices may paradoxically end up stigmatizing clients, comparable to traditional vocational rehabilitation outside the labor market. This may in fact create a frame of reference for disability and work that is not favorable to providing sustainable employment opportunities and acknowledging shared responsibility in creating these opportunities.

In their discursive practices support professionals connected their actions to the government's support policy, social security arrangements and the measures that their clients are entitled to, for example wage subsidies or the criteria for funding of support services. The main principle of supporting the individual to a rapid placement in the open labor market comes with a set of possible actions aimed at the individual. Although there are other measures aimed at supporting organizations in become more inclusive, these are structurally separate from the employment support services. This creates a position for support professionals in which they are stimulated to intervene at the level of the client in the first place. In other words, the structure of support measures comes with a discourse of fitting individuals into the labor market, which in turn limits available subject positions for the support professionals, who are in the first place expected to be experts in individual guidance and support to achieve such 'fit'. Against this structural background it should not be surprising when they use all their expertise to make their clients more attractive for employers and increase their labor market value. As far as employers are concerned, many participants talked about how they could only rely on employers' willingness to hire persons with disabilities. This points to what Loja et al. (2012) have called „the charitable gaze“, i.e. contrary to the logic of work as a right it is approached as a gesture of goodwill when employers are willing to offer opportunities to persons with disabilities, who are implicitly characterized by lack – not as an asset to the organization. Thus the client risks ending up in a position of dependence and the charitable gaze may conceal ableist practices.

Interestingly, our findings show that most participants were aware of the risk of employment support that brings persons with disabilities closer to the labor market, but also places much responsibility for „fitting in“ on the individual. Some talked about their frustration over employers' prejudices and the fact that they have to rely on their goodwill. However, only a few participants showed instances of resistance against the discourse of lack and charity. The business case for disability (Andreassen, 2012) was sometimes made in terms of higher motivation, although most participants position fits with Woodham's and Danieli's (2000) finding that disability is altogether too 'different a difference' to be successfully turned into a business case. Others resisted by more radically shifting attention to the responsibility of employers and questioning the representation of employers as rational-economic actors. It appears that support professionals are in a difficult position as advocates of their clients within a structure that expects them to place much responsibility with the client – not with organizations in the labor market. Structural arrangements limit the discursive resources available to them and hence the type of actions that they may take.

The critical disability studies lens allows for understanding the multiple and dynamic ways in which meaning is made of disability (Goodley, 2010). Focusing on support professionals' narratives we were able to contribute to the literature on disability and employment by providing insight into the assumptions behind their support practices, and the way in which they discursively relate to macro-societal elements. The critical approach gives ground to the importance of service professionals' discursive practices and their pivotal role in creating a context of meaning for social practices within the supported employment program. Towards their clients and potential employers the service professionals give meaning to what may be expected of employment, the importance and role of traineeships, the use and goal of various support measures and the responsibilities and requirements of all parties involved. The logics of work as an individual responsibility and work as a right became evident in this study through a diversity of representations of disability and work, and contradicting

discursive practices. It is important to note however, that our results also demonstrated the difficult position service professionals find themselves in. They are in a sense entrenched between macro-societal structures and the micro-context of work. While they play a crucial role in giving meaning to disability and work, the structure in which they work encourages some discourses more than others.

In their analyses of success of supported employment programs scholars like Bond (2004) did not take support professionals' meaning-making into account, although it may provide an explanation for observed differences in program outcomes as well as long-term program effectiveness in terms of job tenure and quality of work (Drake et al., 1999). Corbière (2011) and Donnelly and Given (2010) did point to the importance of service professionals' implementation practices and our study builds on this by providing new findings related to support professionals' discursive practices in particular. These findings provide insight into supported employment programs beyond formal principles and implementation strategies/methods, which may support further development of studies that aim to describe and explain the quality of such programs. By showing how support professionals' meaning-making distributes responsibilities and provides subject positions to the clients – which may be empowering or stigmatizing – our findings help to understand how professionals' support contributes to the long-term labor market position of the clients.

For governments, support services and other actors involved in labor market policy aimed at persons with disabilities, this means that it is necessary to consider macro-societal structures and support professionals' practices in terms of their meaning-making. This will enable assessing the degree to which supported employment programs contribute to achieving inclusive labor markets. With regard to the Flemish region of Belgium in particular our findings suggest that an individually focused approach needs to be accompanied by interventions aimed at making work organizations more inclusive in order to distribute responsibilities for the 'fit' and provide sustainable employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. The supported employment principle of rapid placement combined with the government funding scheme for employment support services appears to inspire support professionals to concentrate their efforts on achieving placement, giving less attention to long-term support or guiding the organization in becoming more inclusive. A more comprehensive implementation of labor market support may facilitate sustainable employment for persons with disabilities by giving more opportunities to support professionals to employ discourses of inclusive organizations. While recent policy notes of the Flemish government (Muyters, 2015) suggest that less attention will be given in the future to practices aimed at providing expertise and support to make organizations more inclusive, our findings provide a ground for strengthening this type of support and integrating it with employment support to achieve more sustainable labor market participation of persons with disabilities.

6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this section, we reflect on the implications of the three studies included in WPD2 – which all adopt ableism as a theoretical lens to understand the (re)production of power inequality through language in workplaces and the labor market – for current and future policy on disability at work. Hereunder, rather than advancing specific policies, we discuss seven policy interventions at the level of individuals, employing organizations and the state/society at large, in the light of our analyses. We highlight that the effects of these policy interventions partially depend on their joint implementation, as they simultaneously affect the balance of responsibility among actors for achieving higher levels and a better quality of employment for people with disability. This section should therefore be read in its entirety.

The subsidized wage system

In all three studies of WPD2, the current system of subsidized wage featured as a cornerstone of the relation between the employer and employees with disability. The different analyses did not only confirm how such subsidy provides, despite its temporal nature, an important financial incentive to the organization, but also unveiled how it can be used by individuals with disability as a resource to claim the legitimacy of their membership in the employing organization despite their impairment and to affirm their right to be supported through state intervention. At the same time, the wage subsidy represents a material arrangement which supports the assumption of lower productivity, which shapes the workplace experiences of individuals with disabilities. As wages are individual, the wage subsidy tends to re-inforce the idea of individual deficit, although lower productivity is not located in the individual, but rather results from the relation between the individual and the specific work environment, as illustrated by our empirical evidence.

In order to de-emphasize individual deficit wage subsidies could be embedded within broader packages of ‘concentric interventions’ also including interventions to adapt the micro-work environment (e.g. through reasonable accommodations) and organizational change initiatives which remove barriers, enhancing inclusion and productivity. Taken together, these initiatives would aim at enhancing individual-job/organizational fit by adapting both, shifting the focus from the individual to the relation between him or her and the work environment. Although this approach does not fundamentally question wage subsidies, it might help to re-cast it more specifically as ‘residual’ (yet perhaps unlimited in time), complementary to other types of interventions foreseen by the law which simultaneously adapt the work context to enhance the fit and reduce productivity loss.

Strategically deploying the business case to bend stereotypes

The business case emerged as a powerful discursive resource used by various types of actors to construct positive representations of disabled people as valuable human resources in the workplace. The business case lens is namely conducive to casting disability as a source of competence (e.g. specific business knowledge, specific soft skills, motivation, loyalty and commitment) rather than as a ground of incapacity. Although the business case has been harshly criticized in the critically oriented managerial and sociological literature for its instrumentality, based on the insights of our research, we would like to take a more nuanced and pragmatic stance towards this discourse. Namely, in as far as all individuals are considered ‘resources’ in work contexts, representations that cast individuals with disabilities as lesser resources or even risks and liabilities represent particularly high hurdles to overcome. It is telling that even in ‘best case’ organizations like our three case studies, the business case for disability was certainly not central in the construction of the meaning of disability. Only in one case, the bank, this discourse had recently emerged. In this sense, policy initiatives which promote an understanding of disability as a difference with economic value are conducive to reducing barriers to employment. At the same time, it should be stressed that if implemented in isolation – that is, in absence of other types of interventions that foster inclusion through other mechanisms such as, for instance, legislation, support measures and financial incentives – the business case is highly unlikely to substantially enhance the position of individuals with disability on the labor market and in organizations (Woodhams and Danieli, 2000; Thanem, 2008).

Reasonable accommodations

Our studies reveal that reasonable accommodations should not be taken for granted, as a number of respondents indicated that they experienced difficulties when trying to obtain them and/or were ultimately denied them. Thanks to our multiple-case research design, we could show how organizations can adopt a variety of approaches in administering reasonable accommodations, ranging from an internal concerted and documented procedure, to an individually directed action, and externally supported procedure. Given the importance of reasonable accommodations for individuals' workplace experience, we would like to stress the opportunity of advancing practices that enhance individuals' control over the accommodations they need and which reduce their dependence on managers' and co-workers' goodwill to obtain them. In terms of policy, it could be envisioned to offer accommodations through a user-friendly intranet application to reduce to a minimum the dependency on supervisors. Furthermore, the Dienst Arbeidshandicap (VDAB) could maximally carry out the (administrative and procurement) work for the employing organizations, enhancing (cost) effectiveness of the procedures, as well as reducing inter-organizational differences in accessibility to accommodations through enhanced external surveillance. It would potentially transform accommodations from ad hoc, reactive measures to a generalized, if individually tailored, provision. Clearly, the judgement on the reasonableness of accommodations remains context-bound and thus always (legally) requires organizational approval. However, ensuring maximal accommodations for all disabled workers across workplaces is an important first step to help raise the substantially lower scores disabled worker obtain today on 'workable work' (Bourdeaud'hui and Vanderheaghe, 2015) and to enhance the (voluntary) inter-organizational mobility of disabled workers, which is important to build careers in the contemporary labor market, yet which remains structurally hampered by their vulnerable position.

Supporting organizational change towards inclusion and promoting 'best practices'

The research design of WPD2 was not set up to investigate (the prevalence of) discrimination, as we looked at relatively well performing organizations in terms of employment of employees with disabilities and which have (voluntarily) installed multiple practices to support their employment. Nonetheless, even in these organization, sampled as 'best cases', we found instances of practices in work allocation and promotion that appear to discriminate individuals with impairments. More precisely, by unveiling the social micro-practices through which discriminatory behavior is enacted by (potential) employers, the adopted sociological perspective invites to envision policy interventions that proactively fosters non-discriminatory behavior (next to and on top of sanctioning discriminatory behavior by enforcing existing legal provisions). In particular, these instances speak to the difficulty for organizations to re-organize themselves (in terms of practices, procedures and jobs but also meanings and norms) in order to enable qualified individuals with disability to fill them. In this sense, these individuals are, similar to other disadvantaged groups of the labor market, a revealing "test group" of the multiple (implicit) assumptions on which jobs are built, and which go beyond the mere knowledge-related or technical aspects, with the effects of excluding many individuals on arguably non-essential criteria of the job. Revising organizations to be more inclusive is an essential aspect of policy as it structurally enhances the fit between the organization/job and a broader pool of workers, structurally reducing the discrimination based on the association between competencies and identities. In the light of the extensive literature documenting the difficulties of implementing structural change, yet also indicating that such structural change is essential to improving workplace experience of individuals with disability, public intervention in support of organizations to achieve this aim should be foreseen. Examples are removing physical barriers, by placing elevators or automatic doors, translating websites in sign language or obtaining the AnySurfer label, installing inclusive HR policy practices and work-life balance practices that meet the needs of multiple groups (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Vermaut, 2016).

At this historical moment in time, while individuals with disabilities have increasingly gained access to various forms of public support to build their careers, organizations receive little or no stimuli to become more inclusive beyond a legal duty not to discriminate. Yet especially study 3 evidences the strong limitations of policy limited to supporting individuals with disabilities which leaves the gatekeeping role of employers unaddressed, and which de facto tends to put responsibility for employment solely on the individual himself or herself. Examples of alternative organizing and their underlying mechanisms have been documented (Doyen et

al., 2002; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, 2014; Vermaut and Zanoni, 2011; Vermaut, 2016) and might further be drawn from practices from social economy organizations, which have unique expertise in creating inclusive work contexts. Policy intervention might provide stimuli for structural collaboration between companies, public organizations, and social economy organizations with the aim of transferring specific (sets of) practices across fields, a transfer of knowledge that would be fully in line with the ambition to make the Flemish economy more inclusive.

Especially study 2, providing an in-depth analysis of specific sets of organizational practices has unveiled the key role organizations play in casting individuals (with a disability) as valuable or less valuable members of the organization. In particular, our analysis revealed the positive effects of specific practices, which appear, from this preliminary analysis, to represent 'best practices'. For instance, LocGov's practice of using the wage subsidies to employ an external specialist office to guide disabled people in their careers or whenever issues arose in order to guarantee a professional, high-quality advice. At BankCorp, the wage subsidy policy was 'translated' internally by counting disabled workers as ½ FTE, providing an incentive to teams to hire a disabled person and facilitating disabled employees' internal mobility. Also EmployOrg's practice of discussing the status of the disability periodically and documenting it, might, if implemented in a logic of empowering the disabled employee, represent a best practice in terms of guaranteeing communication and reducing arbitrariness in first-line management. Given the importance of these practices in shaping the workplace experiences and careers of these individuals, policy interventions should foster the inter-organizational sharing of such practices and promote them by showing their advantages for both the employing organization and individuals themselves.

Expanding grounds for citizenship and more flexible social security protection

Although this research projects focused from its inception on people with disabilities in paid work and we subscribe to the principle of the right to voluntary work for people with disabilities, we also have become increasingly aware through the research process, that both activation policies (study 3) and the terms on which individuals with disabilities are employed (studies 1 and 2) often include them in subordinate terms and place much responsibility for their participation in paid work on their shoulders. To the extent that workplace equality between people with and without disabilities might be an ideal that is in practice unrealizable, it might be ethically problematic to 'force' these individuals into paid work. In other words, paid work should remain, in essence, a choice of individuals. To guarantee this freedom, the possibility of expanding bases of citizenship beyond participation in paid work, to include other forms of societal participation that have (indirect) social and economic value as they are essential to the functioning of society and even the market should be seriously considered. In this sense, the notion of 'activation' could be expanded to include such broader variety of activities, acknowledging their social function and considering them as legitimate bases of citizenship.

An essential condition for fostering disabled individuals' 'entrepreneurial' behavior in terms of the management of their lives, including paid work and non-paid activities through which they participate in society, is to reduce the risk they incur in trying out paid employment. There is general consensus that the inflexibility of current social protection 'locks' individuals in situations of dependency from state support which they might themselves not prefer. Future policy should redress the terms of protection to facilitate individuals' 'entrepreneurial behavior' without however diminishing protection itself and, by preference, acknowledge that individuals might make valuable contributions to society through multiple activities and not solely paid work.

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