

# Welfare to Work and the construction of a workers' identity

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# WTW and Neoliberal government

- **Governmentality-Discipline-Sovereignty** (Foucault 2007, 2008)
  - Dean (1995, 1999, 2007): The construction of the active forward-looking self-responsible worker
- **Macro level governance** of the labour market and social security: Enabling and encouraging the development of individual choice and agency (the '**positively entrepreneurial subject**')
- **Micro level governance** of the unemployed worker: punishment and restriction of agency (the '**negatively entrepreneurial subject**', **hard paternalism**).
  - Withworth (2016): policy mismatch/fractures

# Aim of the paper

- The extent to which the work programmes fosters a workers' identity (e.g. work ethic; a work ready, self-responsible and forward looking worker (i.e. micro level government of the unemployed worker).
  - The role of sanctions in these policies.
- Relationship between the micro level government of the recipient of social assistance and the macro level government of social security and the labour market.
- Ethnographic research instead of analysis of policy documents

# Data and methods

- Municipality A: more than 300.000 inhabitants
- Municipality B: 50.000-100.000 inhabitants (near to the Randstad)
- Municipality C: 50.000-100.000 inhabitants (far away from the Randstad)
  
- Interviews (50 recipients, 20 work supervisors, 20 case managers)
- Observations (conversations with case managers and participative observations in work programmes)

# Work programmes

- Goal: to prepare for the labour market (i.e internalizing work ethic, remaining active and work ready)
- Type 1: work programmes for recipients who are almost work ready
- Type 2: work programmes for recipients who are expected to be work ready within two years' time
  
- Municipality A: Type 1 and 2, harsh sanctions
- Municipality B: Type 1 and 2, but focusing on 2, medium-harsh sanctions
- Municipality C: Type 1 and 2, but focusing on 1, mild sanctions

# Fractures within WTW instruments

- Intake/training: Discovering who one is and what one wants, life plans, etc.
- Work programmes: Individual preferences do not really count, emphasis on basic work abilities, discipline

# Constructing a work ethic and/or remaining active ?

- A. People were already active/work ethic was already there
  - All municipalities
- B. Developing/sustaining a work ethic, but not for a regular job
  - Municipality B in particular
- C. Playing the role of an ethical worker
  - Municipality A in particular
- D. Work ethic or pastoral care?
  - The case of Work Basic

## Relationship between macro and micro level government

- Fractures
  - Between the government of recipients and the government of the labour market
    - Maintaining basic workers' skills, listening to authority vs. creativity, enterprising selves
    - Security vs. deregulation and insecurity.
- Alliance:
  - Financial benefits for municipalities and private employers
  - Municipality C: WTW = business model



# Conclusions

- Participants were already active in other ways.
- Production of a defensive entrepreneur.
- Roleplaying subjects and pastoral care.
- Both fractures and fit between work programmes and macro neoliberal governance.