What activation practitioners do:

An ethnomethodological study about activation as it is accomplished in practice by activation practitioners

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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

What activation practitioners do:
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Introduction

The start of an unfolding picture

Rudy checks his watch. “It’s time” he says to me, “I will have a look if Patrick is already waiting”. He walks towards the waiting area in order to check if Patrick is sitting there. After a couple of minutes Rudy walks back to me. He tells me that Patrick has not yet arrived, but that Jeremy, who has an appointment after Patrick, is already there. Rudy tells me that Jeremy cancelled his previous appointment and that he did not show up at all at the meeting before that one. Rudy and I talk a little bit more about his work. In the mean time Rudy keeps checking his watch. After 5 minutes Rudy says “Ok, let’s start with Jeremy and see if Patrick shows up later”. Rudy gets up from his chair and walks to the waiting area. He comes back in with a man wearing a baseball cap. I watch them talk as they approach me. Jeremy shakes my hand and introduces himself. We all sit down. Rudy explains to Jeremy what I am doing here and asks if Jeremy agrees to my presence. Jeremy says: “Yes of course it is fine by me”. Forty minutes later a delayed Patrick also agrees to my presence.

Rudy is an activation practitioner. His job is to activate citizens who receive welfare benefits. Patrick and Jeremy are citizens who are unemployed and receive welfare benefits.[1] The illustration provided above describes the situation right before the client meeting between Rudy and Jeremy takes place and the moment before the delayed client meeting between Rudy and Patrick. In these client meetings it is Rudy’s job to activate Jeremy and Patrick. The fact that Jeremy did not show up for two previous appointments and that Patrick shows up late for this appointment raises a number of interesting questions. How should Rudy deal with this? Should Rudy sanction Jeremy for not showing up? Should Rudy sanction Patrick for being late? Would a sanction motivate Jeremy and Patrick to show on time for future appointments? Or should Rudy perhaps try to find out why Jeremy did not show up and why Patrick is late? Or can Jeremy and Patrick just fail to show up for appointments on time, since these meetings take place for

[1] In order to guarantee the anonymity of all the participants (activation practitioners as well as citizens) pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis. To further protect the privacy of participants, identifying details, such as the names of the settings where the research was conducted are not mentioned/made anonymous.

their sake and by not showing up on time Jeremy and Patrick only bring disadvantage to themselves?

How activation practitioners deal with these types of situations as part of their daily work is the subject of this thesis. This thesis will describe what happens after Jeremy, Patrick and other citizens, who receive welfare benefits, agree to the researcher's presence. It describes what happens when an unemployed citizen who receives welfare benefits, referred to as 'citizen' in this thesis, steps into the UWV[2] or Social Service[3] and sits down with his work coach or client manager, referred to as 'activation practitioner'.

Since the 1990's the idea of 'new welfare' that citizens need to be activated gained attention in many Western European welfare states, including the Netherlands. However, for activation practitioners while activating citizens it is not clear what results are expected from them, except from slogans such as 'the participation society', 'work before income' and 'everybody back to work' (RWI, 2012, p. 18). Besides the use of vague slogans and extensive vocabularies (Trommel, 2013a, p. 162), multiple diverging activation measures have been introduced. For example, measures which aim at enhancing the skills of citizens and other measures which aim at the creation of new jobs and reduction of wage costs (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001; Van der Aa, 2012, p. 18). Together, the vague slogans used and the wide array of available measures result in vague policy goals. For example, it can be the goal of activation policies to reduce passiveness and social assistance dependence of citizens, or to enhance their skills (RWI, 2012; Thorén, 2008, p. 14).

Parallel to these vague policy goals, three disparate 'philosophies'[4] regarding the way citizens can be activated can be distinguished in the literature (for example, Askheim, 2003; Clarke, 2005; Dean, 2007; Gilbert, 1998; Newman & Tonkens, 2011). One philosophy argues that the state activates its citizens by empowering them. A second philosophy argues that the state's efforts to activate its citizens should be understood as a responsibilization project and a third philosophy considers the activation of citizens a mere example of domination. These three philosophies provide us with interesting view points on thoughts about the activation of citizens. Using Aristotle's terminology the three philosophies provide us with 'sophia', which is the dedication to contemplation and translates as 'theoretical wisdom' (Burger, 2008, pp. 116, 119). However, each philosophy presents us with its own view and there is no agreement on what practiced activation actually entails.

[2] Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen in Dutch or Employee Insurance Schemes Implementation Body in English.
[3] Sociale Dienst in Dutch.
[4] The term 'philosophies' is used here in order to refer to the general and theoretical nature of the ideas of empowerment, responsibilization and domination.

Furthermore, various studies show that the practice of activation is not (yet) fully professionalized and that bureaucratic standards are not fully in place (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Van der Aa, 2012). Paul van der Aa (2012), for instance, finds that activation practitioners combine bureaucratic and professional ways of service delivery. However, he notes that when activation practitioners adopt a professional way of working they do so based on professional standards that should be "… interpreted as pre-professional (Jorgensen et al. 2010) because they lack a general professional legitimacy that transcends local practices. They draw on local, and sometimes individual, experiences with activation as well as personal norms about effective activation" (Van der Aa, 2012, p. 354). Van der Aa suggests that further professionalization of the practice of activation is desirable (Van der Aa, 2012, pp. 292, 357). The study of Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) also concludes that Dutch activation "lacks a shared body of knowledge" and that there is neither a shared understanding about what the trait of activating citizens entails, nor about what the effective practices of activation look like. Eikenaar *et al.* wonder to what extent style differences between activation practitioners are acceptable (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 142). Finally, Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) characterize activation practitioners as "professionals without a profession" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, p. 462). The authors argue that Dutch activation runs the risk of being arbitrary and non-transparent, since frontline workers such as activation practitioners, make decisions in the "absence of clear criteria - which may be professional, bureaucratic or otherwise" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, pp. 461-462).

In essence, new welfare's extensive vocabulary, the wide array of available measures and vague policy goals, in parallel to the three disparate philosophies about activation, leave it open to interpretation what is done when citizens are activated. Furthermore, this thesis argues that the lack of fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, that can be characterized as 'institutional empty space'[5], leaves activation practitioners with even more freedom to determine in practice how to go about doing their work. This makes it necessary to study the practice of activation.

In this thesis a practice is defined as the *interactions* between people (Garfinkel, 1967; MacIntyre, 1981). In the case of activation, the practice of activation consists of, on the one hand, the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens and, on the other hand, the interactions between activation practitioners as colleagues. In this thesis

[5] Maarten Hajer (2003) talks about an 'institutional void' in which 'there are no generally accepted rules and norms according to which politics is to be conducted and policy measures are to be agreed upon' (Hajer, 2003, 175). Vivian Lowndes (2005) talks about 'creative spaces' where institutional entrepreneurs 'exploit emergent ambiguities in the 'rules of the game' in order to respond to changing environments (Lowndes, 2005, 291)' (Durose, 2011, 4).

multiple examples of the interactions between Rudy and various citizens as well as interactions between Rudy and, for example, his colleague Linda are presented and analyzed. It is considered to be valuable to study the interactions among these people because it can provide us with insights about the used approach(es) to activation and the potential orderliness of practiced activation as well as the practically accomplished meaning of activation policy.

The question '*What do activation practitioners do?'* forms the backbone to this thesis. Without studying what activation practitioners do, we don't know how citizens are activated. For example, citizens can be told what to do (domination) or given the freedom to determine themselves how they want to live their lives (empowerment). Also, we don't know if we live in a society that responsibilizes citizens, trying to get its citizens to behave in desired ways or whether we live in a society in which citizens are empowered to take independent life choices. Furthermore, we don't know if the activation of citizens is a random process in which activation practitioners are 'just doing something'. Or if the practice of activation, while lacking fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, does actually follow some implicit guidelines that emerge from within the practice.[6] It may be that activation is characterized by a new logic in which bureaucratic standards or professional norms may no longer be the guiding principles. Instead, implicit guidelines and practically accomplished order may be the guiding principles for activation.

In order to study *'what activation practitioners do'*, this thesis is based on three bodies of literature: to a small extent street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), but most importantly practices (MacIntyre, 1981) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967).

First, Michael Lipsky's work (1980) is used to point out that in the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens the image of activation policies is created. However, in this thesis activation practitioners are not considered to be traditional Lipskean bureaucrats. Authors, like Catherine Durose (2011), suggest that some of today's policy problems are so complex that they require creative input from practitioners. It can be argued that activation policies address one of those complex problems contemporary societies face. The people who receive welfare benefits and who are the target of activation policies vary in their backgrounds, needs and capabilities. This diversity of people, in combination with the activating ambitions may make it impossible to define

[6] Els Sol *et al.* (2011) ask a similar question when studying how reintegration companies (RIBs) organize reintegration. The authors wonder if reintegration is based on a systematic, well-thought approach or if people are just doing something (Sol, et al., 2011, p. 8). The authors assume that activation practitioners do not randomly go about doing their work, but that they base their approaches to activation on 'theory in use' that results from years of experience. This 'theory in use', Sol *et al.* explain, is the mostly implicit "rational proposition that a particular approach or method results in higher changes for re-integration" (Sol, et al., 2011, p. 9).

goals, means and approach in policy documents. It may be impossible to pre-determine what Rudy should do in the example provided in the beginning of this Chapter.

According to Catherine Durose, contemporary front-line workers have to 'accommodate mess (Lowndes, 2005, 1997)' (Durose, 2011, p. 2). Durose considers contemporary front-line workers to be 'civic entrepreneurs', a term coined by Sue Goss (1998), who have to find their way in a system that is no longer organized hierarchically and bureaucratically, but rather by a mixture of bureaucratic, market and network mechanisms (Durose, 2011, p. 15). This thesis argues that not only can activation practitioners determine what activation looks like in practice, they can also, and this is beyond Lipsky, to an extent co-determine what the standards or norms are that will guide their practice. Due to the lack of fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, that is the institutional empty space, this thesis considers activation practitioners to have more, and a different kind of, freedom in accomplishing their work than Lipskean bureaucrats. Precisely because the bureaucratic standards are not fully in place and because activation practitioners can co-determine what the standards or norms are that will guide their practice, Lipsky's study about bureaucrats' reasons to deviate from the standards while they are coping with work pressures, is not part of this thesis. For an interesting study that did pay attention to bureaucrats' reasons to deviate from policy see, for example, the article of Trudie Knijn and Frits van Wel (2001).

Second, Alasdair MacIntyre's work (1981) makes us focus on the internal workings of a practice. According to MacIntyre (1981), practices are the social establishments of practitioners and it is only by being part of a practice that it becomes clear to practitioners what they should do. The 'standards of excellence' of a practice are only visible for those who participate in the practice. Practitioners who newly enter into a practice have to adjust their personal views to the standards prevailing in the practice. However, at the same time, standards of excellence are not static. Rather, they are formed and reformed in the day-to-day (inter-) actions of practitioners. These standards of excellence potentially guide a practice. In this thesis, MacIntyre's work is used to obtain insights in the possible ordered nature of practiced activation.

Third, Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (1967) is the main body of literature this thesis is based on. Ethnomethodologists study how members (that is the activation practitioners in this thesis) accomplish an ordered reality with each other. Ethnomethodologists explore how members demonstrate to each other, via their behavior and the use of specific language, that they possess specific reservoirs of common

knowledge[7]. It is important to note that practitioners' demonstration of order is (often) an un-conscious process. Practitioners do not deliberately and consciously discuss order as, for example, suggested by Donald Alan Schön's (1983) idea of the reflective practitioner. Instead, ethnomethodologists are interested in uncovering the un-conscious ways in which daily life obtains its ordered character. For example, when crossing a zebra crossing we all know how to do so in a normal way (that is without walking into each other and possibly making way for older people so that they can cross in a straight line). We don't have to actively discuss the issue of crossing a zebra crossing with our fellow pedestrians because it is in our behavior that we demonstrate to each other how to do so.

Common to these three bodies of literature is the emphasis on the productive role of actual activation practitioners and the attention paid to 'practical wisdom', using Aristotle's terminology again, 'phronesis' (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5; Burger, 2008, p. 6). Practical wisdom, according to Aristotle, is a "true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to things that are good or bad for man" (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5). In order to apply this general idea of things that are good for man in particular cases, "we must acquire, through proper upbringing and habits, the ability to see, on each occasion, which course of action is best supported by reasons. Therefore practical wisdom, as [Aristotle] conceives it, cannot be acquired solely by learning general rules. We must also acquire, through practice, those deliberative, emotional, and social skills that enable us to put our general understanding of well-being in practice in ways that are suitable to each occasion" (Kraut, 2012). Since it is in practice that people acquire practical wisdom, studying practical wisdom means that "we must be able to see it in action" (Halverson, 2004, p. 94). Michael Polanyi (1962), quoted in Davide Niccolini, Silvia Gherardi and Dvora Yanow (2003), provides the following example of 'practical wisdom', when discussing learning how to drive a bicycle:

> "He asks: Does an analytical description of how to keep one's balance on a bicycle suffice as instruction to someone wanting to learn how to ride a bicycle? And he answers: "[R]ules of art can be useful, but they do not determine the practice of an art; they are maxims, which can serve as a guide to an art only if they can be integrated into the practical knowledge of the art. They cannot replace this knowledge" (Polanyi, 1962, 50). In this, says Polanyi, we "know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1962, 4)." (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003, p. 10)

[7] Ethnomethodologists use the term 'common knowledge'. Since this thesis is an ethnomethodological work, this term will also be adopted in this thesis. However, it is interesting to note that Davide Nicolini, Silvia Gherardi and Dvora Yanow (2003) differentiate between 'knowledge' and 'knowing', between institution and process. The authors argue that 'a practice-based approach emphasizes that tradition, institution and culture – like knowledge and organizations – are verbs, not nouns' (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003, 27). Hereby referring to 'a world that is always in the making' (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003, 21).

In sum, it is this 'practical wisdom', this 'more-than-we-can-tell-knowing' of activation practitioners that this thesis aims to unravel. This thesis should therefore not be read as a classical study of policy. Since there are no clear bureaucratic procedures that can be followed or deviated from by activation practitioners this thesis does not take the 'bureaucracy perspective' to study activation. The 'professionals perspective' is also not adopted since leading scholars classified activation practitioners as 'professionals without a profession' (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). As mentioned before, activation of citizens is a complex problem that may not allow for pre-determined standards or norms. However, something effective is happening and citizens are being activated in the Netherlands. In order to study how citizens are activated and if practiced activation follows an internal logic or not, this thesis adopts a 'practice perspective' to study activation. In this practice perspective, activation approach and potential orderliness of activation are seen as resulting from interactions between activation practitioners and citizens and the interactions amongst activation practitioners.

In line with the aforementioned bodies of literature, this thesis explores the work of activation practitioners as they 'do it' in practice. As mentioned before, special attention is paid to how social order is accomplished by activation practitioners. This adopted approach to research is also referred to as an ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research design (Crabtree, Nichols, O'Brien, Rouncefield, & Twidale, 2000; Rouncefield, 2011) that falls under the broader category of practice-based-research (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003, p. 12). In order to generate the required data, the researcher studied activation practitioners during their daily work. For this thesis three research instruments were used: observations, interviews and video recordings (Coleman, 2000; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005; Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008; Rouncefield, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Fifteen activation practitioners were observed during their work for a combined period of 145 hours. The activation practitioners were observed during their interactions with citizens and during their interactions with each other as colleagues. In addition to these observations, formal interviews were held with eight of the observed activation practitioners and numerous informal interviews were held with all fifteen activation practitioners throughout the course of the observations. Finally, video recordings of interactions between an 'activation entrepreneur'[8] and various citizens were observed. The use of multiple research instruments made it possible to triangulate the generated data, thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the findings (Maso, 1984, p. 156). Finally, the generated data were analyzed following the principles of 'Framework' (Green, 2005).

[8] In this thesis an activation entrepreneur is somebody who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently.

Based on the insights of the three bodies of literature, further supported by the generated data, this thesis makes a distinction between activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*.

Activation practitioners' accomplishment of the task of activating citizens is in this thesis referred to as activation practitioners' *first doing*. This thesis will show that activation practitioners each adopt different approaches to their work. Rudy uses a different strategy than his colleague Linda when activating citizens. It will further become clear that each activation practitioner adopts a personal 'main approach' and that activation practitioners will continue to use this main approach as long as it produces 'normal' results. That is, activation practitioners will use a particular approach as long as results are in line with the various reservoirs of common knowledge that are shared in practice (Garfinkel, 1967). However, when required by the situation, activation practitioners can and will revert to one of the 'subsidiary approaches' or alternatively they will transfer the citizen to a colleague with a different approach to activation. In short, the following pattern is observed when activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens: activation practitioners adopt a main approach, that they will use as long as it produces 'normal' results and they can and will revert to a subsidiary approach, or transfer the citizen to a colleague with a different approach, when required by the situation. This pattern in activation practitioners' approach to the activation of citizens supports an understanding of activation in which the activation of citizens can simultaneously be responsibilizing *and* empowering *and* dominating.

Activation practitioners' accomplishment of order, based on implicit guidelines, is what this thesis refers to as activation practitioners' *second doing*. This thesis will demonstrate that the variety of main approaches as well as subsidiary approaches follows 'implicit guidelines' that enable activation practitioners to do their work in an orderly fashion. The implicit guidelines, 'accomplished' by activation practitioners in practice, are based on shared reservoirs of common knowledge (Garfinkel, 1967; MacIntyre, 1981). Activation practitioners' possession of these reservoirs of common knowledge is demonstrated to each other in their behavior and via their use of specific language. This thesis argues that the existence of implicit guidelines and shared reservoirs of common knowledge among activation practitioners results in practiced activation that is less *chaotic*[9], and as we will see later, more protective than sometimes suggested. While there may not be "a shared body of knowledge" (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 142), or "clear criteria" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, pp. 461-462), this thesis shows that together activation practitioners indeed manage to accomplish order in their

[9] *Chaotic* is a term used in this thesis to emphasize that the current literature on activation points out that the practice of activation is not (yet) fully supported by bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms and that activation may be arbitrary and non-transparent. It has to be noted that the other authors who studied the practice of activation do not use the term 'chaotic' to refer to the current practice of activation.

daily work. Activation practitioners have to activate citizens (*first doing*) in ways that are in line with their implicit guidelines, thereby accomplishing order (*second doing*).

This thesis is organized as follows: *Part One* presents the three 'philosophies' about activation: the philosophy of empowerment, the philosophy of responsibilization and the philosophy of domination. It will be argued that each philosophy presents us with its own view and there is no agreement on what practiced activation actually entails. The philosophies do not tell us what real life activation looks like, nor do they take into account the productive role of those who actually have to do the work, in effect the activation practitioners. So what will we find when studying the actual work of activation practitioners? *'What do actual activation practitioners do?'*

Part Two presents the technical underpinnings of this thesis. Part Two consists of two Chapters. In the first Chapter it will be argued that without studying *'what activation practitioners do in practice'* it is difficult to understand what the activation of citizens actually entails. As mentioned before, this argument is based on three bodies of literature that will be presented: to a small extent this thesis is based on the idea of street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), but most importantly this thesis is based on the ideas of practices (MacIntyre, 1981) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). This first Chapter in Part Two also introduces the research questions. To answer these questions, empirical research about the practice of activation is required. The second Chapter in Part Two presents the research method applied in this empirical study of the practice of activation. Furthermore, this second Chapter also presents the three research instruments, namely observations, interviews and video recordings, used in this thesis to generate data.

In *Part Three* the research questions will be answered. Part Three consists of two Chapters that each present an actual *doing* of activation practitioners. The first Chapter presents how activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*). The second Chapter presents how activation practitioners accomplish the orderliness of activation (activation practitioners' *second doing*). Also the implications of activation practitioners' two *doings* for the shape of practiced activation are discussed. The two Chapters in which activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* are presented are the only two Chapters in this thesis that are numbered. Normally one would expect that every Chapter in a thesis is numbered. However, alternatively it can also be considered 'normal' to only number the core Chapters of a thesis. The importance given to practices and practical wisdom in this thesis may make it 'normal' that only the Chapters in which insights in the practice of activation are given are numbered. The other Chapters are considered preparatory or concluding Chapters. The decision to only number the Chapters in which activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* are presented may make one reconsider, in line with Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, the normality of numbering Chapters.

Part One

Activation

Activation of citizens: vague policies and disparate philosophies

Introduction

As introduced in the previous Chapter, under 'new welfare' states aspire to become *active* societies. Various multi-interpretable slogans (such as 'everybody back to work') can be found throughout policy documents (RWI, 2012, p. 18; Trommel, 2013a, p. 162). One policy domain in which new welfare's vocabulary is used extensively is that of labor market policy. In order to activate citizens, various diverging activation measures have been introduced (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001; Van der Aa, 2012, p. 18). The extensive vocabulary used and the wide array of measures available under activating labor market policies, result in vague policy goals (RWI, 2012; Thorén, 2008, p. 14). These vocabularies and the resulting vague policy goals leave it open to interpretation what is done when citizens are activated. Parallel to these vague policy goals, three disparate philosophical perspectives on the activation of citizens can be distinguished in the literature.

This Chapter presents these three 'philosophies' about activation: the philosophy of empowerment, the philosophy of responsibilization and the philosophy of domination. The philosophy of empowerment argues that citizens are activated by the state enabling them to control their own lives. The philosophy of responsibilization argues that citizens are given responsibilities by the state that have to be executed in an appropriate manner. Finally, the philosophy of domination argues that citizens are directly told by the state what to do. These three philosophies provide us with 'theoretical wisdom' (Aristotle, 350 BC; Burger, 2008). However, each philosophy presents us with its own view and there is no agreement on what practiced activation actually entails.

The organization of this Chapter is as follows: Section 1 addresses society's current focus on activation and Section 2 presents the three disparate philosophical perspectives on how states can activate citizens.

1. Society's focus on activation

In European countries that adhere to the idea of 'new welfare' (also referred to as 'positive welfare', 'enabling welfare' or the 'social investment state') social participation has become a main policy objective (Giddens, 1998; Gilbert, 2002; Engelen, Hemerijck, & Trommel, 2007). Authors discussing the idea of new welfare argue that the current new welfare states are characterized by a focus on activation, individualization, prevention, preparation, investment in citizens and rights that are made conditional upon the fulfillment of responsibilities. New welfare stands in contrasts to old welfare that is considered passive, collective, curative, repairing and protective over its citizens while focusing on citizen's rights (Bonoli & Natali, 2012; Hemerijck, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Taylor-Gooby, 2008). Willem Trommel (2013) summarizes the main idea behind the notion of new welfare as follows: "… income protection has become an obsolete policy principle in late-modern societies. Not social protection but social participation is now seen as the central policy objective" (Trommel, 2013, p. 9).

Following the logic of the New Right, it is argued that the traditional Keynesian welfare state reduced citizens to "passive dependants who are under bureaucratic tutelage" (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 356). Instead of encouraging them to take care of themselves the welfare state made it possible for citizens to passively live on welfare, thus creating a culture of dependency. Citizens, it is argued, are caught in, or at least in risk of falling into, the dependency trap. The dependency trap refers to a situation in which "a move from welfare dependency to salaried work does not result in any, or any significant, increase in household income and material welfare. This is then reflected in a lack of demand for low-paid jobs and the persistence of unemployment" (Heikkilä, 1999, p. 7). Margo Trappenburg (2009) points out that the shift from passive to active welfare goes hand in hand with a shift from 'passive' to 'active solidarity'. Passive solidarity means the paying of taxes and contributions. While under active solidarity, taxes and contribution still need to be paid but to a lesser extent and in combination with the expectation that the 'average, capable, physically and mentally healthy man and woman … provides assistance to older, less able neighbors and colleagues' (Trappenburg, 2009, p. 12).

Whether there is a complete shift from old to new welfare can be debated (Bonoli & Natali, 2012, p. 4; Häusermann, 2012). However, it is important to note that in policy documents new welfare's vocabulary of activity, active citizenship, investment, participation, individual responsibility, reciprocity and conditionality is used (Bonoli & Natali, 2012, p. 12). One policy domain in which new welfare's vocabulary is used extensively is that of labor market policy. As other western European countries, the Netherlands has introduced activating labor market policies. These policies emphasize the

"activation, participation and integration of people excluded from labor-market participation" (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001, p. 27).

In the Netherlands in 2002 the Work and Income Implementation Structure Act (SUWI) was introduced. SUWI proposed an organizational change in the landscape of Dutch social security (Van der Aa, 2012, p. 115; Van Gestel, De Beer, & Van der Meer, 2009). Under SUWI the execution of social security and activation was decentralized. At the time the research for this study was conducted (January 2011 - May 2012) the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementation Body (UWV), municipalities (the Social Service (*Sociale Dienst*)) and private reintegration companies (RIBs) were the main places where the activation of citizens was to be executed. Due to SUWI the UWV was responsible for the execution of, amongst others, the Unemployment Benefits Act (WW). The WW is an insurance against unemployment. Municipalities, via their Social Services, were responsible for, amongst others, the execution of the Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB). The WWB (replacement of the Public Assistance Act (ABW)) is the social security provision for citizens who are unemployed "guaranteeing some minimum income in the Netherlands" (Van der Aa, 2012, p. 349). With the introduction of the WWB in 2004, municipalities could financially gain from low expenditure on social security (RWI, 2012, p. 5). In other words, "insufficient performance with respect to re-employment and the prevention of benefit dependency directly determine the financial condition of a municipality" (Bannink, Bosselaar, & Van der Veer, 2013, p. 142). Furthermore, UWVs and Social Services could buy reintegration services from private reintegration companies if deemed necessary. Since January first 2006 it was no longer compulsory to spend a part of the budget on private reintegration and the use of private reintegration services declined (RWI, 2012, pp. 5 - 6).

At the time when the research for this study was conducted (January 2011 - May 2012) the WW and WWB were *general* legal frameworks offering freedom to organizations (the UWV and Social Service respectively) and its employees (amongst others the activation practitioners), at the local level to determine what the content of activation was (Van der Aa, 2012, pp. 109, 119). Central control mainly consisted of budgetary control (Van der Aa, 2012, p. 119). What the content of activation of citizens looked like was predominantly decided by the UWVs, Social Services and its activation practitioners.

Furthermore, in the Netherlands, a wide range of measures can be distinguished that are supposed to have an activating impact (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001; Van der Aa, 2012, p. 18). Rik van Berkel and Jan de Schampheleire (2001) distinguish four types of measures: measures aimed at reducing wage costs, measures that create new jobs, measures that aim to educate and guide unemployed citizens and finally measures that aim for participation outside paid labor (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001).

In summary, activation in European countries, amongst them the Netherlands, uses extensive vocabulary, follows a general legal framework and provides a wide array of activation measures. This, in turn, results in vague policy goals. For example, is it the goal of activation policies to reduce passiveness and social assistance dependence of citizens, or to enhance their skills? Or, is it the goal to let citizens make their own decisions or to get them back into the paid labor market as quick as possible? (RWI, 2012; Thorén, 2008, p. 14; Van der Aa, 2012, pp. 69, 73). These vague policy goals are in parallel to three disparate philosophies about the activation of citizens.

2. Three philosophies about activation

In the literature on activation three philosophies about the activation of citizens can be distinguished.[10] First, there is the philosophy of empowerment. The philosophy of empowerment argues that in order to activate its citizens the state needs to elevate its citizens to a level at which they are capable to control and master their own lives. Second, there is the philosophy of responsibilization. This philosophy argues that the state tries to activate its citizens by transferring responsibilities to its citizens that have to be executed in a predetermined, appropriate manner. Third, there is the philosophy of domination. The philosophy of domination argues that the state activates its citizens by directly telling them what to do. This philosophy views the activation of citizens as a paternalistic project. As we will see, the three philosophies approach activation as a theoretical concept about which one can think, logically construct an argument and philosophize. This results in rather general and static views of activation.

2.1 The philosophy of empowerment

Over the last three decades the idea of empowerment has gained academic attention (Eklund, 1999; Samoocha, 2011; Zimmerman, 1995). The philosophy of empowerment focuses on the enhancement of the power of previously powerless actors. By enhancing the power of previously powerless actors, these actors will become more capable of performing certain tasks and of taking control over their lives and environments.

Julian Rappaport (1981) gives the following definition of empowerment: “Empowerment means aiming at enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives” (Rappaport, 1981, p. 15). Leena Eklund (1999) adds that it is not just about people’s control over their own lives but also about their control over their environments. Eklund

[10] Parts of this Section have been presented before in Schonewille, A. (2013), Activated and Autonomous? pp. 67 - 70.

further argues that it are not just the possibilities that are offered to citizens that are of importance but also the ways citizens are enabled to make use of these possibilities. Eklund writes: "if power is the ability to predict, control, and participate in one's environment (see e.g. Pinderhughes, 1983), then empowerment is the process by which individuals and communities are enabled to take such power and act effectively in changing their lives and their environments (Minkler, 1992; Robertson & Minkler, 1994)" (Eklund, 1999, p. 41). These empowerment processes "might include opportunities to develop and practice skills, to learn about resource development and management, to work with others on a common goal, to expand one's social network, and to develop leadership skills" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 584). As such, these learning opportunities help citizens gain "mastery over issues of concern to them" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 581).

When looking at empowerment as a relational concept, the enhancement of power takes place via the transfer of power. In this approach "higher levels within a hierarchy share power with lower levels within the same hierarchy" (Matthews, Diaz, & Cole, 2003, p. 297). Power in this approach is interpreted as "the possession of formal authority or control over organizational resources" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 473). There is an alternative way to approach the idea of empowerment, namely as a psychological concept (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 472; Matthews, Diaz, & Cole, 2003, p. 297). Empowerment as a psychological concept perceives enhancement of power as an increase in the actor's own perception of his powerfulness. Empowerment is seen as the process in which actors shift from feeling powerless to feeling powerful. For researchers who adopt this approach empowerment is achieved when "psychological states produce a perception of empowerment within the employee [or citizen/person]" (Matthews, Diaz, & Cole, 2003, pp. 297-298). Here power refers to "an intrinsic need for self-determination (Deci, 1975) or a belief in personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986)" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 473).

In sum, according to the philosophy of empowerment, the state can activate its passive citizens by enabling them to take (back) control (in the form of recourses or psychologically) over their own lives and environments. Passivity and dependency merely reflect the lack in capacity of citizens to control their own lives. Once citizens are empowered they can make their own decisions and they are capable of becoming active again.

2.2 The philosophy of responsibilization

The philosophy of responsibilization first appeared in the social science literature in the 1990's (Burchell, 1996; Garland, 1996). The underlying assumption is that there are processes going on in society that imply a shift in the division of responsibilities among

various actors. The philosophy of responsibilization argues that responsibilities that used to belong to the central state are devolved on other actors outside the state (Garland, 1996, p. 452). Individuals and collectives are offered "active involvement in action to resolve the kind of issue hitherto held to be the responsibility of authorized governmental agencies" (Burchell, 1996, p. 29).

The idea of responsibilization does not stop with devolving responsibilities on other actors. There is also the demand of appropriateness as the responsibilized actors have to be persuaded to act appropriately (Garland, 1996, p. 452). In this context, Graham Burchell (1996) talks about 'the price of involvement'. The price of involvement refers to the fact that individuals and collectives "must assume active responsibilities for these activities, both for carrying them out and, of course, for their outcomes, and in doing so they are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the appropriate (or approved) model of action" (Burchell, 1996, p. 29). According to John Clarke it would therefore be wrong "to mistake this independence for freedom, since autonomy must be exercised responsibly" (Clarke, 2005, p. 451).

Foucauldian scholars concern themselves with the subtle forms of power that are imbedded in these claims of 'appropriateness' and 'responsibly'. They look at how citizens become the subjects of practices of governmental constitution and at how governments seek to create "subjects who understand themselves as responsible and independent agents" (Clarke, 2005, p. 452). Therefore, responsibilization should not be seen as the state merely 'passing the buck', 'getting off the hook' or 'taking the backseat', instead the state is "experimenting with ways of acting at a distance, of activating the governmental powers of 'private' agencies, of coordinating interests and setting up chains of cooperative action" (Garland, 1996, p. 454). Suzan Ilcan and Tanya Basok (2004) state that it can be said that "the task of government today is no longer engaged in traditional planning but is more involved in enabling, inspiring, and assisting citizens to take responsibility for social problems in their communities, and formulating appropriate orientations and rationalities for their actions" (Ilcan & Basok, 2004, p. 132). The coercive power of the state becomes dispersed and the state's role becomes that of a "facilitator and educator towards 'good' risk choices" (Kemshall, 2002, p. 43).

With this desire to act from a distance a whole new set of governmental technologies, which Nikolas Rose (2000) calls 'technologies of freedom', have been invented. These "technologies of freedom… govern… through, not in spite of autonomous choices of relatively independent entities" (Rose, 2000, p. 324). Rose goes on to explain:

> "As far as individuals are concerned, one sees a revitalization of the demand that each person should be obliged to be prudent, responsible for their own destinies, actually calculating about their futures and providing for their own security and that of their families with the assistance of a plurality of

> independent experts and profit-making businesses from private health insurance to private security firms." (Rose, 2000, p. 324)

Governments could try to create citizens who act in the appropriate way and who also understand themselves in the desired way by "binding individuals into shared moral norms and values… governing though the self-steering forces of honor and shame, of propriety, obligation, trust, fidelity, and commitment to others" (Rose, 2000, p. 324). Hazel Kemshall quotes Rose (1996) stating that "direct state driven controls are then replaced by 'a plethora of indirect mechanisms that can translate the goals of political, social and economic authorities into the choices and commitments of individuals (p. 58)'" (Kemshall, 2002, p. 43). Governing takes place "through the regulated and accountable choices of autonomous agents" and "through intensifying and acting upon their allegiance to particular communities" (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 25).

In sum, according to the philosophy of responsibilization, the state activates its citizens by allocating responsibilities to citizens that have to be executed by them in an appropriate manner. Citizens need to internalize the idea that it is their responsibility to be active and independent. According to the philosophy of responsibilization, the idea that the state activates its citizens by enabling them to realize their capacity to determine the terms on which they live their lives, i.e. the philosophy of empowerment's view, is an illusion, since the choices that citizens make have to be appropriate in the eyes of the state (Newman, 2007, p. 367; Rose, 2000, p. 324). The philosophy of responsibilization argues that empowerment strategies that are designed to create powerful citizens, who direct their own lives, should actually be viewed as efforts of the state to create easily governable subject citizens (Rose, 1999). As such, scholars who adhere to the philosophy of responsibilization do not at all agree with the philosophy of empowerment.

2.3 The philosophy of domination

The idea of domination describes relationships between people (or groups of people) in which one party has control over another party. According to Karl Emil Maximilian 'Max' Weber (1864 - 1920), domination is "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber, 1978, p. 212). In a dominant relationship there are two parties in which the dominating party can determine, control or alter the behaviour of the dominated party. The dominant party can give specific commands that will be followed by the dominated party.

However, according to Weber a relationship that is characterized by domination does require a minimum of voluntary compliance by the dominated party. Weber notes that "every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is,

an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (Weber, 1978, p. 212). This interest can stem from belief, tradition or from economic calculations. According to Weber, it is this voluntary compliance that makes processes of domination "not include every mode of 'power' or 'influence' over other persons" (Weber, 1978, p. 212).

The relationship that emerges between dominating and dominated party is much like that between a parent and a child, a teacher and a student or an employer and an employee. Children, students and employees have compelling reasons to comply with specific or all commands that are given by their parents, teachers or employers. In a similar way, citizens may have reasons to comply with specific or all commands that are given to them by the state, thus following the activation trajectory as it is laid out for them by the state. The state in turn may have its own reasons for choosing a more paternalistic and enforcing approach towards activation (Borghi & Van Berkel, 2007, pp. 413-414). It for example "might be afraid that when customers are in the driver's seat they will take completely different direction than the ones policy makers want them to take" (Borghi & Van Berkel, 2007, p. 422).

To summarize, according to the philosophy of domination the state activates its citizens by directly telling them what to do. No new subtle forms of creating ideal active citizens are used (as argued by the philosophy of responsibilization). Neither are citizens enabled by the state to make their own decisions and to take control over their own lives (as argued by the philosophy of empowerment). The activation of passive citizens by the state is seen as a paternalistic project in the philosophy of domination.

Conclusion

This Chapter argued that the vague policy goals of activation leave it open to interpretation what is actually done when citizens are activated. In parallel to the vague policy goals three disparate philosophies about the activation of citizens exist in the literature on activation. This Chapter presented these philosophies: the philosophy of empowerment, the philosophy of responsibilization and the philosophy of domination. The three philosophies approach activation as a theoretical concept about which one can think, logically construct an argument and philosophize. This results in rather general and static views of activation. The state is argued to activate citizens either by enabling them to control their own lives (philosophy of empowerment), or by giving citizens responsibilities that have to be executed in an appropriate manner (philosophy of responsibilization) or by directly telling the citizen what to do (philosophy of domination). The three philosophies do not agree with one another about how states' efforts to activate citizens should be understood.

Furthermore, philosophizing about states' efforts to activate citizens does not tell us what real life activation looks like, nor does it take into account the productive role of those who actually have to do the work, in effect the activation practitioners. So what will we find when studying the actual work of activation practitioners? *'What do actual activation practitioners do?'* How are actual citizens in the Netherlands activated? Are citizens possibly treated in more harsh or lenient ways depending on the activation practitioner they face?

Part Two

This thesis

Practices matter

Introduction

As discussed in the previous Chapter, the activation of citizens is characterized by vague policy goals and a parallel philosophical debate about the activation of citizens among academics. The richness of new welfare's vocabulary, variety of available measures and vague policy goals as well as the disparate philosophies are all part of the context in which activation practitioners have to do their work. This creates a situation in which it is not clearly formulated what activation practitioners are supposed to do. For example, when activating citizens, activation practitioners can choose to reduce citizens' passiveness and their dependence on social assistance, or activation practitioners can choose to enhance the skills of citizens. Furthermore, activation practitioners can choose to let citizens make their own decisions, or to get citizens back into the paid labor market as quick as possible (RWI, 2012; Thorén, 2008, p. 14). In other words, the vague policy goals provide activation practitioners with freedom to determine what new welfare means in practice.

This Chapter argues that without studying *'what activation practitioners do in practice'* it is difficult to understand what the activation of citizens actually entails. In order to explore the actual *doings* of activation practitioners, the studies performed in this thesis are based on three bodies of literature: to a small extent street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), but most importantly practices (MacIntyre, 1981) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). These three bodies of literature emphasize the productive role of actual activation practitioners and they pay attention to 'phronesis', which translates as 'practical wisdom' (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5; Burger, 2008, p. 6).

The organization of the present Chapter is as follows: Section 1 presents the three bodies of literature this thesis is based on. Section 2 presents the two *doings* of activation practitioners. The research questions are outlined in Section 3.

1. Empirically studying activation

This Section presents the three aforementioned bodies of literature as well as its function in this study. The literature on ethnomethodology is presented most extensively, as this body of literature forms the core of this thesis.

1.1 Street level bureaucracy

Activation policies' vague goals provide activation practitioners with the space to activate citizens according to different views and in different ways. Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) note that Dutch activation practitioners "exercise considerable discretion in activation" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, p. 454).

The idea of discretionary space has been discussed before by others (Dworkin, 1977; Lipsky, 1980). Most notably, in his book *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, Michael Lipsky (1980) addresses the discretionary space of street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky discusses what happens when policies are translated into practices. According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats, the front line workers, play a crucial role in this process. When street-level bureaucrats implement policies, they experience discretionary space. In this space, street-level bureaucrats decide what to do and by doing so, they show what policies look like in practice. Lipsky explains: "the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the public policies they carry out" (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii). As such, street-level bureaucrats "make policy" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13).

Teachers, police officers, legal aid workers and social workers are all seen as street-level bureaucrats by Lipsky. Street-level bureaucrats have in common that they "interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs" and that they "have substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 3). For example, "policemen decide who to arrest and whose behavior to overlook. Judges decide who shall receive a suspended sentence and who shall receive maximum punishment. Teachers decide who will be suspended and who will remain in school and they make subtle determinations of who is teachable" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13).

This does not mean that street-level bureaucrats do not have to follow any rules or norms. It means that there is a certain degree of discretionary space in which they can decide what to do (Lipsky, 1980, p. 14). Ronald Dworkin (1977) describes discretionary space as the hole in a doughnut. He says: "discretion, like the hole in a doughnut, does not exist except as an area left open by a surrounding belt of restriction" (Dworkin, 1977, p. 31). In the empty space between the normative and legal restrictions, street-level bureaucrats can decide what to do.

Lipsky's work on street-level bureaucrats points out that bureaucrats are more than mere implementers of policies. He challenges ''top-down' analyses of public policy implementation and front-line work' and shows that while implementing policies, these same policies are made (Durose, 2011, p. 991). However, as Catherine Durose (2011) points out, Lipsky's study is still based on a bureaucratic and hierarchical organization of the system. Street-level bureaucrats have reasons to deviate from policies and while deviating from the policy they make policy. Durose argues that with the shift towards local governance the system is no longer organized in a bureaucratic and hierarchical manner. Rather the organization of contemporary society is characterized by various mechanisms, namely bureaucratic as well as market as well as network-based mechanisms. This new organization of the system places different demands on front-line workers. According to Durose, contemporary front-line workers act as 'civic entrepreneurs' building relationships with various actors and basing their work on 'local knowledge' (Durose, 2011, p. 992). Durose argues that "'civic entrepreneurship' is a form of front-line work taking place in the spaces of local governance where traditional organizational structures are breaking down and have not yet been firmly replaced".

This thesis argues that, based on Michael Lipsky's work (1980), it is in the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens that the image of activation policies is created. Dutch activation practitioners, i.e. client managers and work coaches, interact directly with citizens and they experience substantial discretion in the execution of their work (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Polstra, 2011; RWI, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Van der Aa, 2012). For example, as quoted before, Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) noted this, and also Marieke Blommesteijn *et al.* (2012) note that case managers have ample space when guiding clients (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012, p. 22). The Council for Work and Income[11] (2012) notes that in the Netherlands work coaches and client managers have discretionary space when doing their work and taking decisions (RWI, 2012, p. 16) and that it is not clear what results are expected from activation practitioners (except from slogans such as 'everybody back to work') (RWI, 2012, p. 18). Whenever an activation practitioner interacts with a citizen, the activation practitioner chooses what to do. For example, the activation practitioner chooses to be more enforcing or to be more lenient. By making these decisions, activation practitioners determine what activation for citizens entails.

Furthermore, this thesis argues in line with the work of Durose (2011) that, due to the situation in which bureaucratic standards and professionals norms are not (yet) fully in place in activation work activation practitioners experience more freedom than traditional Lipskean discretion. In this regard, Durose talks about the 'spaces of local governance' (Durose, 2011) and other authors write about the 'institutional void' (Hajer, 2003) and

[11] *Raad voor Werk en Inkomen* in Dutch. From 2002 up to 2012 the *Raad voor Werk en Inkomen* (RWI) was the advisory body and expertise center for employers, employees and municipalities (RWI, 2013).

'creative spaces' (Lowndes, 2005). This thesis argues that not only can activation practitioners determine what activation looks like in practice, they can also, and this is beyond Lipsky, to an extent co-determine what the standards or norms are that will guide their practice.

1.2 Practices

For people working at the UWV and the Social Service activating citizens is (part of) their work (Van der Aa, 2012). In the literature, activation practitioners' work is often studied using a professionalism vocabulary (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). However, this thesis adopts the practice vocabulary. This Section explains why this thesis talks about practitioners and practices, and not about professionals and professions.

The professionalism vocabulary is not used in this thesis because researchers who studied the work of activation practitioners concluded that activating citizens is not (yet) a profession. Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) studied the work of frontline workers (activation practitioners) working in Dutch Social Services. They conclude: "In the current situation, frontline workers are professionals without a profession: there is no officially recognized body of knowledge that activation frontline workers can rely on, there are no vocational associations, there is no occupationally controlled labor market, there are no systematic processes of professional accountability" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, p. 462).

Furthermore, Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) conclude from their research on Dutch reintegration (activation), that Dutch reintegration is not yet professionalized. They argue that professionalization of the field of reintegration is required in order to improve the quality of service provided to clients, prevent arbitrariness and improve efficiency (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, pp. 140-143).

Finally, the RWI (2012) notes that at this point in time professional standards and action frames are not always present in Dutch reintegration (activation). The reason for this absence, they argue, is the lack of a shared vision on goals of reintegration (RWI, 2012, p. 3).

Even though Dutch activation might not (yet) be a profession, something effective is happening. Dutch activation practitioners are activating citizens even though their practices may not be based on an officially recognized, explicit body of knowledge, they are not supported by an official vocational association and no official systematic and explicit processes of professional accountability are in place (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, p. 462). As such, it may be the case that Dutch activation practitioners

are in fact producing these types of knowledge, vocational associations and systematic controls themselves, unofficially and tacitly from within their practice. By using the practice vocabulary it becomes possible to pay close attention to the productive role of activation practitioners in the process of accomplishing their work field.

Since this thesis is interested in finding out what activation practitioners do, and how activation practitioners' *doings* shape the image of activation, this productive role of activation practitioners has to be taken into account. Using the practice vocabulary makes this possible.

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981) is an important work for understanding practices. In this book MacIntyre defines a practice as follows:

> "By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended." (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 175)

Important elements in this definition are that practices are 'socially established', that they possess 'internal goods' and that there are 'standards of excellence'. According to MacIntyre, a practice develops over time in the interactions among practitioners. If people enter into a practice this implies they enter "into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have preceded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 181). The goods and goals of the practice are established over time in the relationships that practitioners have with each other. Current practitioners are influenced by what has been done in the past. The past environment influences their current actions, and in turn, their current actions influence the environment they work in (Balstad Brewer, 1997, p. 828). It is within the practice that it becomes clear to activation practitioners what they should do and what the internal goods of the practice are.

An 'internal good' is generally "an intrinsic good or something that is valued for itself without respect to other ends" (Balstad Brewer, 1997, p. 829). MacIntyre uses the example of teaching a child to play chess when discussing the idea of internal goods (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 175-176; Sellman, 2000, p. 27). MacIntyre describes the image of teaching a child how to play chess, while the child has no particular desire to learn the game. In order to get the child's interest, the child will be given some candy in return for a game of chess and if the child wins the game he will be rewarded with another portion of candy. "Thus motivated the child plays and plays to win" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 175).

According to MacIntyre, the external reward of receiving candy does not stop the child from winning by cheating. However, once the child discovers those goods internal to the game of chess (for example, particular analytical skills, strategic imagination and competitive intensity) a new set of reasons for playing and trying to excel emerges. If now the child cheats "he or she will be defeating not me, but himself or herself" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 176). According to MacIntyre, internal goods can only be identified by those participating in the practice. In his words, "those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 176).

Within each practice 'standards of excellence' exist. For example, in portrait painting there is the "excellence of the products, both the excellence in performance by the painter and that of the painting itself" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 177). Standards of excellence emerge over time through historical processes. Practitioners always mirror their own performance to those of predecessors who excelled. All practices have aims, standards of excellence that one wants to achieve. If one enters into a practice this means that he or she accepts the standards of excellence. MacIntyre says: "To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards that currently and partially define the practice" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 177).

This thesis argues that, based on Alasdair MacIntyre's work (1981), it is only by being a part of the practice that it becomes clear to activation practitioners what they should do. In this thesis, the practice of activation consists of the *interactions* between activation practitioners and citizens and the interactions among activation practitioners as colleagues. By participating in the practice, 'standards of excellence' (that is *implicit guidelines*) become visible and 'practical wisdom' is obtained (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5; Burger, 2008, p. 6). MacIntyre's work is used in this thesis to obtain insights in the possible ordered nature of practiced activation.

1.3 Ethnomethodology

Particularly important in this thesis (and therefore presented in more detail) is the third body of literature: Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology. In his book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967) Garfinkel, the founding father of ethnomethodology, provides a detailed account of what ethnomethodological research entails. According to Garfinkel, ethnomethodologists are interested in finding out how ordinary events are practically accomplished and they study the methods that 'members' use to make their daily activities understandable and recognizable to themselves and to each other (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 1, 4; Rawls, 2006). Paul ten Have (2004) explains, ethnomethodology is

"dedicated to explicating the ways in which collectively members create and maintain a sense of order and intelligibility in social life" (Ten Have, 2004, p. 14). The empirical study of how members act during their everyday activities is central to ethnomethodological work.

The work of Garfinkel is a step removed from traditional sociological views on social order. To Garfinkel, social order is the accomplishment of members' practices. This view offers an interesting, not often used[12], perspective to study the practice of activation. Using a specific vocabulary of key terms such as accomplishments, members, accountability, reflexivity and indexicality, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology becomes a distinctive approach.

In order to understand Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, Garfinkel's vocabulary needs further elaboration. As mentioned before, Garfinkel's sociology sees social order as the 'accomplishment' of the actors involved in this social order. In their daily activities members accomplish a reality that is understandable and recognizable to each other. Garfinkel summarizes his point as follows: "In short, *recognizable* sense, or fact, or methodic character, or impersonality, or objectivity of accounts are not independent of the socially organized occasions of their use. Their rational features *consist* of what members do with, what they "make of" the accounts in the socially organized actual occasions of their use" (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 3-4). Members, according to Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks (1970), accomplish social facts (Coulon, 1995, p. 16). As a result of this, there is "locally produced orderliness" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii).

According to Garfinkel, 'members' are those people who speak the language of the group (Coulon, 1995, p. 26) and who have demonstrated their competency with regard to the accomplishment of a normality of the activities (Maso, 1984, p. 182). Alain Coulon refers to a joint article by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) in which the authors clarify the notion of member by saying:

> "We do not use the term to refer to a person. It refers instead to mastery of natural language, which we understand in the following way. We offer the observation that persons, because of the fact that they are heard to be speaking a natural language, *somehow* are heard to be engaged in the production and objective display of commonsense knowledge of everyday activities as observable and reportable phenomena." (Coulon, 1995, p. 26)

[12] An exception is the work of Janne Solberg (2011). In her study Solberg analyzes the responsibility of clients to make a proposal during their encounters with counselors. She adopts an ethnomethodological conversation analysis, which basically implies a focus on language.

This focus on members as competent speakers of the natural language does imply that ethnomethodologists are not interested in the person *as such*, but in the person as an actor (Maso, 1984, p. 27).

While conducting their everyday activities, members somehow manage to make their daily activities seem normal and ordered. It is here that Garfinkel uses the concepts of accountability, reflexivity and indexicality. Concerning 'accountability' Garfinkel writes: "Ethnomethodological studies analyze everyday activities as members' methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., "accountable", as organizations of commonplace everyday activities" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). The meaning that Garfinkel attributes to 'accountability' is different from the way this term is commonly used. As Ten Have explains: "While 'accountability' in ordinary talk is often associated with liability, here it is closer to intelligibility or explicability, in the sense that actors are supposed to design their actions in such a way that their sense is clear right away or at least explicable on demand" (Ten Have, 2004, pp. 19-20). Moreover, through their daily activities members find ways to make their actions visible, rational and reportable to other members. This, according to Garfinkel, defines accountability.

While making sure that their actions are accountable, members count on the 'reflexive' relationship between the known normality and the demonstration of normality. During his studies Garfinkel noticed that members demonstrate the normality of their activities and that the normal character of these activities in turn demonstrates the normality of the normalizing practices (Maso, 1984, p. 29). According to Garfinkel, "members take for granted that a member must at the outset "know" the setting in which he is to operate if his practices are to serve as measures to bring particular, located features of these settings to recognizable account" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 8). There is thus a reflexive relationship between cause and effect, between the account of normality and the known normality. The existence of this reflexive relationship is known to members. Garfinkel writes: "Members know, require, count on, and make use of this reflexivity to produce, accomplish, recognize, or demonstrate rational-adequacy-for-all-practical-purposes of their procedures and findings" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 8).

Garfinkel distinguishes the idea of 'indexicality' as a second element in the methods of members. By 'indexicality' he means that the eventual meaning of a practical activity depends on the context in which the activity takes place (Maso, 1984, p. 182). In linguistics, words such as 'I', 'she' and 'they' are words that only become meaningful within the context that they are used in (Maso, 1984, p. 29). Similarly, the meaning of a particular action or use of language can only be understood if one has knowledge about the context in which the action takes place and knowledge about the context in which the language is used. For example, in Chapter 2 of this thesis we will see that activation

practitioners know what is meant when a colleague says: *"Should I be tougher?"* 'Tougher' refers to the activation practitioner's approach to activation. In a different context, for example in a gym, the question 'should I be tougher' can get a totally different meaning. Possibly, in a gym 'tougher' refers to the amount of exercise a person wants to do or it may refer to the strictness of the diet to follow. Members' capacity to understand "what is 'meant' rather than what is 'said'", helps them to accomplish a normal situation in which normal interaction can take place (Ten Have, 2004, p. 22). In order to put some flesh on these theoretical bones, boxes one to three present examples of ethnomethodological studies.

Combining Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (1967) with the work of Alasdair MacIntyre on practices (1981), presented in the previous Section, to the study of activation practitioners, makes this thesis focus on activation practitioners' possible accomplishment of order. Together activation practitioners may be involved in the process of making their actions understandable for themselves and for each other. Therefore this thesis argues that it may be possible that practiced activation is more ordered than sometimes suggested (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010).

Box 1. What do you mean?

In Garfinkel's 'What do you mean?' experiments students were told to engage in a normal conversation with an acquaintance or a friend. However, the students had to "insist that the person clarify the sense of his commonplace remarks" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 42). "By refusing to accept clear colloquial usage without explanation" a 'breach' is created (Handel, 1982, p. 60). A 'breach' aims at "upsetting our routines" (Coulon, 1995, p. 42). This resulted in, for example, the following conversation:

"(S) Hi, Ray. How is your girl friend feeling?

(E) What do you mean, "How is she feeling?" Do you mean physical or mental?

(S) I mean how is she feeling? What's the matter with you? (He looked peeved.)

(E) Nothing. Just explain a little clearer what do you mean?

(S) Skip it. How are your Med School applications coming?

(E) What do you mean, "How are they?"

(S) You know what I mean.

(E) I really don't.

(S) What's the matter with you? Are you sick?" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 42)

These experiments demonstrated that if you continue to ask a person to clarify the meaning of every day events or objects, thereby signifying a lack of understanding, this person will eventually become angry and suspect that something is seriously wrong with you. People do not just expect that what they say will be understood by others, they hold the other person accountable for understating what is said (Handel, 1982, p. 60). By asking to clarify what is meant peoples' expectations of the possession of common knowledge become visible.

Box 2. Agnes

It is not always necessary to set up an experiment in order to create a breach. Sometimes breaches occur naturally as is the case with Agnes. Agnes, born with male genitalia and developing breasts during puberty, underwent reconstructive surgery in order to obtain female genitalia as an adult. Garfinkel was interested in how Agnes managed her gender transition. What did she do and say to be a woman?

Based on approximately 35 hours of interview material, Garfinkel found that Agnes was constantly occupied with demonstrating that she was a naturally born female. For example, in her talk Agnes disregarded the parts of her body that where masculine. She referred to her male genitalia as abnormal growth and occasionally as a tumor (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 131). In her behavior, Agnes learned from her boyfriend's mother what clothes to wear, where she should shop, and how she should do the housework (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 146). With her roommates and girlfriends Agnes engaged in gossiping, analyzing men and evaluating dates (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 147).

Garfinkel refers to Agnes as a 'practical methodologist', because of her "continuing studies of everyday activities as members' methods for producing correct decisions about normal sexuality in ordinary activities" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 180). In other words, Agnes studied how natural born men and

natural born women demonstrated that they were natural men and women. She studied what common knowledge natural men and women possessed and how they demonstrated (via conduct and talk) that they possessed this knowledge. “In association with members, Agnes somehow learned that and how members furnish for each other evidences of their rights to live as *bona-fide* males and females” (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 180-181). The knowledge Agnes obtained via her own study of naturally born men and women helped her to be the natural female she felt she was.

Garfinkel’s study shows that it is possible to uncover members’ demonstration of common knowledge by conducting interviews. Through interviews members are provided with a platform where they can continue to accomplish normality and order (Ten Have, 2004, p. 76).

Box 3. Record keeping

Don Zimmerman (1969) studied how employees of a social service in Lakeside demonstrated that particular pieces of paper can be considered documents (for example, a passport) while other pieces of paper cannot (for example, a date written down on a random piece of paper).

Zimmerman observed the daily activities in a public social service starting from the moment a person stepped into the office to ask for assistance. He found that social workers constructed the normality of particular documents by looking at the way the document was produced (standardized and without mistakes) and by the general acceptance of these documents by authority figures. For example, the control register of the reception was considered a document because the information it held was obtained following a standardized procedure. Furthermore, the normality of particular documents was sustained if supervisors, sociologists, governments, journalists et cetera accepted these documents without asking further questions (Maso, 1984, pp. 38 - 41).

Zimmerman’s study shows that it is possible to make apparent the common knowledge that people possess by observing the actions of, and interactions between, people.

2. The two *doings* of activation practitioners

Thus far, the literatures on street-level bureaucracy, practices and ethnomethodology have been presented. The three bodies of literature emphasize the productive role of actual practitioners. First, in the street-level bureaucracy literature the argument is made that practitioners have discretionary space while implementing policies. In this discretionary space the practitioner can decide what to do. The result is that practitioners determine, on the street-level, what policies look like. It is argued in this thesis that activation practitioners have more, and a different kind of, freedom in accomplishing their work than traditional Lipskean bureaucrats because bureaucratic standards and professional norms are not fully in place in activation work. As a result of this, activation practitioners not only determine what policies look like, they also, to an extent, (co-) determine what the standards and norms are that guide their practice. Second, the practice literature argues that practices are the social establishments of practitioners. Practitioners obtain knowledge about the practice (Aristotle's 'practical wisdom' (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5; Burger, 2008, p. 6)) by participating in the practice. At the same time, practitioners shape the practice by participating in it. Third, the ethnomethodological literature argues that practitioners are constantly involved in the process of accomplishing the orderliness of their daily activities. Practitioners accomplish order by demonstrating to each other that their actions are in line with particular reservoirs of common knowledge.

Based on the insights of these three bodies of knowledge, this thesis makes an analytical distinction between activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*. Michael Lipsky's work on street-level bureaucracies emphasizes the importance of the actual actions of practitioners while interacting with citizens in practice. Based on this, this thesis studies activation practitioners' *first doing*. Activation practitioners' *first doing* refers to the accomplishment of the task of activating citizens. How do activation practitioners activate citizens? What happens when activation practitioners and citizens interact with each other? What image of activation policies are activation practitioners creating?

Both Alasdair MacIntyre's work on practices and Harold Garfinkel's work on ethnomethodology emphasize that practitioners can collectively accomplish standards/ order by interacting with each other and from within the practice. Based on this, this thesis studies activation practitioners' *second doing*. Activation practitioners' *second doing* refers to the accomplishment of the orderliness of activation citizens. How do activation practitioners understand the practice of activation? Do activation practitioners manage to make the practice understandable for themselves and for each other and if so, how? What happens when activation practitioners interact with each other? What does practiced activation actually entail? More precisely, the research questions presented in the next Section are answered in this thesis.

3. Research questions

With regard to activation practitioners' *first doing* the following questions are answered:

1a How do activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (*first doing*)?

1b What does the *first doing* of activation practitioners imply for the shape of practiced activation?

For the *second doing* of activation practitioners the two following questions are answered:

2a Do activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how (*second doing*)?

2b What does the *second doing* of activation practitioners (or its absence) imply for the shape of practiced activation?

A short word about the two types of questions seems appropriate. Questions 1a and 2a aim at providing empirical knowledge about the practice of activation. Over the course of the observations it was observed that activation practitioners adopt 'main approaches' and 'subsidiary approaches' to activation while accomplishing the task of activating citizens and that activation practitioners (most of the time) accomplish order and normality in their daily work. The question now is: *How exactly do they do this?* The answers to these questions are descriptions/reconstructions of the two *doings* of activation practitioners.

Questions 1b and 2b analyze the consequences of activation practitioners' *doings* for the shape of practiced activation. *How should we understand practiced activation?* Should we understand practiced activation as something general and static, as is implied by the three 'philosophies' about the activation of citizens? Or should we perhaps understand it as something more diverse and dynamic? Furthermore, does this then mean that practiced activation is a *chaotic* and capricious activity? Or is practiced activation perhaps more ordered than one might think?

By answering these four research questions a picture emerges of the two *doings* of activation practitioners and of activation as it is practiced.

Conclusion

This Chapter argued that to understand what the activation of citizens entails we have to study what activation practitioners do in practice. This argument is based on three bodies of literature that were presented in this Chapter. First, according to Michael Lipsky's street-level bureaucracy, activation practitioners determine on the street-level (that is in

practice) what policies look like. Once activation practitioner and citizen interact, meaning is given to the idea of activation and activation practitioners' accomplish their task of activating citizens (*first doing*). Due to the lack of fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, this thesis argues that the studied activation practitioners have more, and a different kind of, freedom than traditional Lipskean bureaucrats while executing their work. Not only can activation practitioners determine what policies look like in practice, they can also (co-) determine the framework within which they have to do their work.

Second, according to Alasdair MacIntyre's practice literature, it is only by participating in the practice that activation practitioners know what to do. While participation in the practice and interacting with each other activation practitioners may create and follow particular 'standards of excellence' (that is implicit guidelines). Third, Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology suggests that activation practitioners may, collectively, be involved in the accomplishment of the orderliness of activation (*second doing*). The order that may be accomplished by activation practitioners is also supported by activation practitioners' possible creation and following of implicit guidelines in practice, suggested by MacIntyre.

With regard to activation practitioners' *first doing* the following questions were posed in this Chapter:

1a How do activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (*first doing*)?

1b What does the *first doing* of activation practitioners imply for the shape of practiced activation?

For the *second doing* of activation practitioners the two following questions were posed in this Chapter:

2a Do activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how (*second doing*)?

2b What does the *second doing* of activation practitioners (or its absence) imply for the shape of practiced activation?

To answer these questions an empirical study about the practice of activation is required. The next Chapter presents the research method adopted to conduct this empirical study.

Doing the research

Introduction

Relatively little is known about the actual practice of activation. Therefore an explorative research approach was followed to study what activation practitioners actually do and to answer the questions posed in the previous Chapter.

This Chapter describes the research method applied in this empirical study of the practice of activation. The type of research done in this thesis falls in the category of an ethnomethodologically informed ethnography (Crabtree, Nichols, O'Brien, Rouncefield, & Twidale, 2000; Rouncefield, 2011). This approach means that the focus lies on the actual *doings* of activation practitioners, "on work in the raw, work as it is done, and in the ways in which it is done in actual practice, as opposed to work in idealized form as presented in organograms and process models" (Rouncefield, 2011, p. 47).

In order to uncover the work as it is done by activation practitioners, observations were conducted from the beginning of January 2011 until the end of May 2012. Fifteen activation practitioners were observed for a combined period of over 145 hours. In addition to these observations formal interviews were conducted with eight of the observed activation practitioners and numerous informal interviews were held with all fifteen activation practitioners during the time of the observations (Bernard, 2002). Furthermore, video recordings of interactions between an 'activation entrepreneur'[13] and various citizens were observed. The use of multiple research instruments made it possible to triangulate the generated data, thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the findings (Maso, 1984, p. 156).

The organization of this Chapter is as follows: Section 1 presents the ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research approach. Section 2 describes the method adopted for this thesis. Section 3 presents the three instruments (observations, interviews and video recordings) that were used to generate data. Finally, Section 4 presents the 'Framework' principle, according to which the generated data were analyzed.

[13] As mentioned before, in this thesis an activation entrepreneur is somebody who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently.

1. An ethnomethodologically informed ethnography

The overall methodology of this thesis can be described as an ethnomethodologically informed ethnography (Crabtree, Nichols, O'Brien, Rouncefield, & Twidale, 2000; Rouncefield, 2011). Ethnography is "a qualitative orientation to research, derived from anthropology that emphasizes the detailed observation of people in naturally occurring settings" (Rouncefield, 2011, p. 45). Ethnographers study "social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities" (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, p. 512) and as they study the social world, they do so from the standpoint of the participants (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 84).

The observed data play a crucial role in an ethnomethodologically informed ethnography. Andy Crabtree *et al.* (2000) note that: "Ethnomethodology refuses to theorize practice in that, and precisely because, members' real-world practices are *only* discoverable" (Crabtree, Nichols, O'Brien, Rouncefield, & Twidale, 2000, p. 6). Mark Rouncefield (2011) explains:

> "In an ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research the understanding of any setting is derived from the study of that setting itself, rather than from any highly structured model or theory of work organization or work processes; it ties itself closely to the observed data, it is 'data-driven'… [it] … is an atheoretic approach to this analysis where a member's methods for accomplishing situations in and through the use of local rationalities become the topic of enquiry." (Rouncefield, 2011, p. 46)

In other words, this thesis studies activation from the standpoint of those participants who actually do the work, that is, from the standpoint of the activation practitioners. The activation practitioners are studied in their 'naturally occurring settings' (ethnography). Furthermore, this thesis studies how these activation practitioners, who are referred to as 'members' by ethnomethodologists, accomplish an ordered and normal situation (ethnomethodology).

This ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic approach to research falls in the broader category of practice-based-research that consists of 'a number of research traditions and scholars connected by a common historical legacy and several theoretical family resemblances' (Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003, p. 12). As such, this thesis focuses on the actual *doings* of activation practitioners, in contrast to the previously discussed theoretical nature of the philosophies that deal with the state's efforts to activate its citizens.

2. An ethnomethodological method

The term ethnomethodology seems to refer to a clear idea of a method. However, 'method' in ethnomethodology refers to the methods that members use to give their activities a normal outlook (Garfinkel, 1967; Hilbert & Collins, 1992). This does not leave the researcher with a clear method (yet) of how to go about uncovering those normalizing activities.

As a result, various researchers who applied ethnomethodology did so according to their own liking (Maso, 1984, pp. 54-60). Ilja Maso (1984) writes that in the early stages of using ethnomethodology a symposium was held where ethnomethodological researchers (Garfinkel, Sacks, Cicourel and Sudnow) and sociologists (Anderson, Becker, Gold, Hill and Tittle) came together. One of the central questions during this symposium was: *How do you actually go about doing the research?* (Maso, 1984, p. 54).

In *Explaining in daily life* (*Verklaren in het dagelijks leven)* Maso (1984) formulates a method for doing ethnomethodological research. Maso starts by distinguishing four assumptions of ethnomethodology and the implications these assumptions hold for a research method (Maso, 1984, pp. 54-71). The first assumption Maso mentions is that the constitution of normality is hidden. Members only see the normal results (a normal way of doing grocery shopping, a normal way of making a phone call), but not the practices through which these normal results come about. The same is true for the researcher. This implies that the researcher has to take normal activities as his starting point for research in order to later on question how the normality came about (Maso, 1984, p. 60).

The second assumption holds that normality is directly connected to membership. Only to those who are members do the actions have a normal outlook. For ethnomethodologists this implies that they can only take the normality of actions as a starting point if they in fact become, to some extent, members of the situation under research. Researchers who are not a member of the researched situation can adopt a cultural-anthropologic research approach. Maso quotes Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) and says that cultural anthropologists try "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of this world" (Maso, 1984, p. 61).

The third assumption states that the recognition of normality is identical to the demonstration of that normality. Maso exemplifies this with a situation in which a question is asked. The member who answers the question will do so with reference to 'what-is-known-to-be-the-case-in-such-situations' (common knowledge). The question asker will only interpret this answer as normal if he recognizes that this answer indeed refers to 'what-is-known-to-be-the-case-in-such-situations'. Both parties use the same method (reference to common knowledge) in order to demonstrate or recognize the normality of the given answer. For ethnomethodological researchers this implies that if

the researcher is a member of the situation under research he does not have to differentiate between the methods that members use to demonstrate the normality of activities and the ways in which he himself recognizes the activity as normal (Maso, 1984, p. 62).

The fourth assumption holds that normality arises because somehow there is a reference to what-members-know-typically-is-the-case-in-these-types-of-situations. According to Maso (1984) ethnomethodologists assume that members refer to reservoirs of common knowledge when they demonstrate that their activities are normal (Maso, 1984, p. 63). This assumption leaves the researcher with two steps that can be followed. As a first step researchers need to identify the content of the common knowledge to which members refer when they constitute the normality of their actions. As a second step the researcher can investigate the ways in which members refer to this knowledge while constituting the normality of their actions (Maso, 1984, p. 63).

This thesis adopts Maso's method for ethnomethodological research. This means that a researcher firstly needs to familiarizes herself with the research subject. In this thesis the researcher became familiar with the activation practitioners and their practices by studying them in their naturally occurring work settings, i.e. the UWVs and Social services (ethnography). By doing so, the researcher learned who members of the situation under study were. Secondly, the researcher takes the normality of the actions as the starting point for research. In this thesis activation practitioners' experienced normality of the activation of citizens was taken as the starting point. During the observations and interviews the activation practitioners seemed to implicitly know what a normal way of activating citizens was. Every day activation practitioners went to work they met citizens and talked with their colleagues. They did so without continually questioning what the right approach to activation is. The researcher then needs to ask herself how this normality comes about: *Do activation practitioners [indeed] collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how?* Thirdly, she studies cases in which members demonstrate that the activities are normal. In order to do so in this thesis, interviews with activation practitioners were conducted and interactions between different activation practitioners, as colleagues, were studied. Finally, the researcher analyses her material by following two steps: identifying what knowledge members refer to when they make their activities normal and determining *how* members do this (Maso, 1984, p. 63).

Maso's method is adopted because it makes it possible to make 'invisible' common knowledge visible, without too much intervention in the situation. The creation of 'breaches', another method for doing ethnomethodological research (see box one in the previous Chapter for an example), would require active intervention in the situation, while this thesis is interested in exploring how activation practitioners actually activate

citizens in practice. Furthermore, breaching experiments would most likely result in irritation. However, whenever possible, activation practitioners were asked to clarify what they meant by particular words. The main reason for not choosing to create breaches is that the normality and orderliness of practiced activation is still in the making. This makes it difficult to determine beforehand what a possible 'breach' would be.

3. Research instruments

In this thesis the instruments of observations, interviews and video recordings were used to generate data about the practice of activation and activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*. Three instruments (observations, interviews and video recordings) were used to generate data about activation practitioners' *first doing*, two instruments (i.e. observations and interviews) were used to generate data about activation practitioners' *second doing*. By generating data through different instruments, instrument triangulation is used in order to increase the credibility and validity of the findings on activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* (Maso, 1984, p. 156).

3.1 Observations

Since this research is interested in finding out 'what activation practitioners do', how they activate citizens (*first doing*) and how they make sense of what they are doing (*second doing*), "an obvious way to discover this is to watch them do it" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 288). The instrument of observation is useful when trying to find out "what is going on in a particular setting" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 299).

By observing the actions of people in their natural environments, observations contribute to the richness of the research data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 288). Each episode of observation offers opportunities to observe a great variety of things, such as the physical lay-out of the place, the range of people involved, a set of related activities that occur, the physical objects that are present, the single actions people undertake, the activities that people carry out, the sequencing of events that occur, the things that people are trying to accomplish and the emotions felt and expressed (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, p. 337; Spradley, 1980). On top of this, observations have the advantage that "data pertains to the interaction itself, rather than to someone's rendering and recollection of what occurred" (Simmons & Elias, 1994, p. 11). In other words, observations make it possible to obtain primary data.

However, the introduction of a third party, the researcher, into the setting causes a concern for potential bias. The presence of a third party may for instance elicit 'best behavior' (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 293; Simmons & Elias, 1994, p. 11). Spending a sufficient amount of time in the setting and creating rapport and familiarity with the participants can attenuate best behavior (Simmons & Elias, 1994, p. 11). At some point, participants (are hoped to) act the same in the presence of the researcher as they would normally.

The numbers

Observations for this study took place from the beginning of January 2011 until the end of May 2012. During this time observations were conducted of the actual *doings* of fifteen activation practitioners working in two UWVs and two Social Services. No observations were conducted in August 2011, December 2011 and January 2012. During the remaining fourteen months a range of interaction types was observed every second / third week and sometimes every week.

First of all, twenty-nine individual meetings were observed. These individual meetings consisted of individual talks between one activation practitioner and one citizen. In addition, twenty-two courses were observed. These courses consisted of interactions between one activation practitioner and multiple citizens. Furthermore, numerous interactions between activation practitioners and citizens or interactions amongst activation practitioners (as colleagues) before or after the individual meetings and/or courses were observed. On one occasion a spontaneous lunch attended by citizens participating in a course as well as by the activation practitioner who led the course was observed. The researcher would also regularly join the activation practitioners for lunch, sit in the sun with them or take a walk during their breaks.

In total a little over 145 observation hours were completed. This included approximately 110 hours of individual meetings and courses and 35 hours of observations of practices before or after the individual meetings and courses.

Of the fifteen activation practitioners who were observed, nine activation practitioners were observed multiple times during individual meetings and/or courses as well as multiple times before or after the individual meetings and/or courses. Four activation practitioners were observed only once during a course and multiple times before or after individual meetings and/or courses. Two activation practitioners were observed multiple times only before or after individual meetings and/or courses.

During the courses 190 citizens were observed. Some citizens were observed during multiple courses (forty-three) and others (seventy-two) were observed only once during a

course. During the individual meetings twenty-nine citizens were observed. Two of the twenty-nine citizens observed during an individual meeting were observed a second time, during a course.

Selection of observed activation practitioners

Fifteen activation practitioners, working at four settings, were observed directly. The size of this sample was determined by saturation. Saturation means "stopping data collection when the results start to become redundant" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 108). However, it has to be noted that "real saturation never occurs because each new respondent has something unique to contribute to the study [Josselson and Lieblich, 2003]" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 108). The possibility that new respondents contribute something new to the study has to be accepted, because it is close to impossible to study everyone. Stopping data collection when findings became redundant and when it was possible to answer the research questions was practically the most viable strategy.

The activation practitioners studied during the observations were selected using a 'snowball method' and via 'purposive sampling'. Natasha Mack *et al.* (2005) explain the snowball method as follows: "In this method, participants or informants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study" (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 7). For this study contact was first established with the manager of a particular setting. After this initial contact, a written request for activation practitioners to participate in the study went out in a weekly news bulletin. After the first contacts with activation practitioners were established the snowball method, also known as chain referral sampling, was used in order to come in contact with additional activation practitioners (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 7).

In this study both activation practitioners and their managers were asked whom to contact next. The benefit of asking activation practitioners whom to contact next was twofold. First, it made it possible to ask activation practitioners to arrange introductions with activation practitioners who used a similar or different approach to activation. This made it possible to include participants with similar as well as different approaches to activation. Second, it made it possible to study what activation practitioners thought about their colleagues' approaches to activation as well as to study interactions within groups of activation practitioners. This provided insights in how activation practitioners made sense of what they were doing.

The benefit of asking managers to arrange introductions with other managers was that this provided contacts with activation practitioners who worked at different settings. Some newly approached activation practitioners had previously been in contact with the activation practitioners who had already been observed, but others had not. By observing activation practitioners who had not been in contact with the previously observed activation practitioners it was possible to study new groups of activation practitioners.

The final sample of fifteen activation practitioners was selected via purposive sampling. Purposive sampling means that "the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006)" (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). Purposive sampling makes it possible to study activation practitioners with desirable characteristics. Simply put, the researcher selects those activation practitioners who she believes will be able to provide valuable information. It is a non-random selection strategy. In this study activation practitioners with the following three characteristics were chosen to be studied during the observations:

First, in order to find out what activation practitioners do when activating citizens, it was necessary to observe the activation practitioners engaging in face-to-face (activating) interactions with citizens.

Second, activation practitioners had to work in various settings. In total two UWVs and two Social Services were selected. In each of these settings multiple activation practitioners were observed and interviewed. By selecting activation practitioners that worked in various settings it was possible to explore and develop a rich image of the ways activation practitioners actually went about activating citizens.

Third, activation practitioners had to be willing to participate in order to make it possible to observe them.

The researcher's role during the observations

There are various roles a researcher can adopt while conducting observations. "Gill and Johnson (2002) develop a fourfold categorization … of the role the participant observer can adopt. The roles are: complete participant; complete observer; observer as participant; participant as observer" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 293). These roles differ from each other with regard to whether the researcher's identity is revealed or concealed and whether the researcher takes part in the activity or whether the researcher merely observes the activity. The 'complete participant' conceals his identity and takes part in the activity. The 'complete observer' conceals his identity and merely observes the activity. The 'observer as participant' reveals his identity and merely observes the activity. Finally,

the ‘participant as observer’ reveals his identity and takes part in the activity (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 293).

Depending on the aim and nature of the research a particular role may be more or less suitable. Ethical and practical considerations might also play a role. Given the personal details discussed during the observed situations, the activation practitioners and citizens who participated in this study were believed to have the moral right to be aware of the researcher’s aim. As a consequence, the researcher always disclosed her objectives, to the activation practitioners as well as to the citizens.

By revealing the researcher’s role it was possible for the researcher to focus on this role and to take notes or ask questions whenever necessary (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 293). Possible disadvantages of revealing the researcher’s role are that the awareness might elicit ‘best behavior’ or that altered behavior becomes more salient (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 293; Simmons & Elias, 1994, p. 11). In order to minimize the problem of altered behavior (this study aims to find out how activation practitioners behave in their naturally occurring setting), five measures were taken to ensure that the researcher’s influence on the situation was minimized.

First, the same activation practitioners were observed on multiple occasions over time. By being present multiple times over a prolonged period of time the activation practitioners (and the citizens) could get used to the researcher’s presence, thereby making the situation less unnatural. Second, the researcher dressed appropriately; decent and not too formal. Mostly jeans with a jacket or blouse, boots or sport shoes and a simple watch were worn by the researcher. Third, the researcher’s positioning, next to but slightly behind the activation practitioner during individual talks and amongst the citizens during group interactions, was specifically chosen to minimize the influence of the researcher’s presence. Fourth, the decision was made not to use voice recordings, since this would add an additional unnatural element to the situation. Instead, field notes were written down in a little notebook. As the activation practitioners and the citizens all used paper (for example official documents, job advertisements and résumés) during the interactions, the researcher’s notebook did not stand out too much. As a fifth measure, the researcher was sincerely interested in the activation practitioners and she socialized with them. They talked about their work but also about other, more personal topics, and as a result a relationship could develop.

The roles adopted by the researcher can be further specified. In this study the researcher adopted either a role of ‘participant as observer’ or of ‘observer as participant’. Sometimes the researcher participated in the activity while at other times the researcher only observed the activity. Which role was adopted depended on the observed situation. Three distinctive situations occurred.

First, interactions between one activation practitioner and one citizen were observed during twenty-nine individual meetings. During these individual meetings the researcher only observed the interaction. This was practically the most suitable role as it gave the researcher the opportunity to take detailed field notes and it made it possible to study the interaction without any explicit interference.

Second, interactions between one activation practitioner and multiple citizens were observed during various courses (twenty-two observations). During these interactions the researcher sometimes participated in the activities and sometimes the researcher only observed the activities. By participating in the activities the researcher was able to gain firsthand experience of how the activation practitioner approached her, thereby "really knowing what it feels like to be on the receiving end of the experience" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 294). By only observing the interactions on other occasions the researcher was again able to take detailed field notes and to study the interaction without explicitly interfering in it.

Third, interactions between activation practitioners were observed. Usually, these interactions were only observed. This made it possible to see how activation practitioners interacted with each other in their naturally occurring settings. However, sometimes the researcher was asked to join in on a conversation and her role shifted from observer to participant. The activation practitioners for instance would ask the researcher's opinion about a particular situation. Table 1 summarizes the observed situations and the adopted researcher roles.

Table 1. Observed situations and adopted researcher roles

Observed situation	**Researcher role**
Individual meetings	Observer as participant
Courses	Observer as participant and participant as observer
Collegial interactions	Observer as participant and sometimes participant as observer

Now that the researcher roles adopted in this thesis have been clarified, an important question is: *What exactly was observed?* In other words, *how were the observations structured?*

Observational dimensions

During each observation there is the opportunity to observe various aspects of the situation under study (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, p. 337; Spradley, 1980). James Spradley (1980) distinguishes nine observational dimensions, namely: space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal and feelings. Tony Whitehead (2005) refers to the work of Spradley and says that Spradley suggests these dimensions because they "might be observed in any specific social setting" and any of these dimensions "may carry (cultural) meanings for the participants in the setting" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 12). Using these dimensions Spradley developed a Descriptive Question Matrix (Spradley, 1980). The matrix is constructed by the convolution of the nine dimensions with themselves resulting in 81 questions for the observer. These are questions such as: 'Can you in detail describe all the actors?', 'When are feelings evoked?', 'How do acts vary over time?' (Spradley, 1980, pp. 82-83).

Whitehead reworked Spradley's list. He combined the dimensions 'act', 'activity' and 'event' into one dimension labeled 'behavior'. Furthermore, Whitehead added the dimensions 'language', 'interactive patterns', 'discourse content', 'actor groups', 'expressive culture', 'ideational elements', 'broader social system' and he paid extra attention to various dimensions of 'human need'. By doing so, Whitehead created a list of fifteen dimensions that can be observed during interactions (Whitehead, 2005, pp. 12-13).

Since little is known about the two *doings* of activation practitioners and practiced activation, the decision was made to focus on multiple dimensions in as much detail as possible. Out of Spradley's list of nine unique dimensions and Whitehead's reworking of Spradley's list, a selection of seven dimensions was used to structure the observations in this study: behavior, language, goals, time, objects, actors and space. Some of these dimensions form the core of the observations, since they provided valuable data towards answering the research questions. Other dimensions were primarily observed to obtain situational information. Each of the selected dimensions and their function for the research with regard to providing information about activation practitioners' *first doing* or *second doing*, or to providing situational information, are presented in the following paragraphs.

1. Behavior

By observing the behavior of the activation practitioners, valuable data providing insights regarding the actual *doings* of activation practitioners are generated. Activation practitioners' behavior towards citizens (for example, mostly talking, or mostly listening and letting the citizen talk, or discussing something together) can be interpreted in order

to make reconstructions about how activation practitioners activate citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*). Activation practitioners' behavior towards colleagues (for example, transferring a citizen to a colleague) can be used to reconstruct ways in which activation practitioners normalize their work (i.e. activation practitioners' *second doing*). More examples of observations on all seven dimensions are given in the table below.

2. Language

By observing what is said during interactions between activation practitioners and citizens as well as during interaction between activation practitioners and their colleagues the two *doings* of activation practitioners can be better understood. What activation practitioners say to citizens demonstrates how the activation practitioner activates citizens (i.e. activation practitioners' *first doing*). For example, one activation practitioner said, *"I am here to execute a law"*, while another activation practitioner said, *"It is your life, you are the expert of your own situation"*. Furthermore, the use of shared vocabularies makes it possible for activation practitioners to understand each other. For example, activation practitioners refer to certain approaches to activation as 'law enforcers versus softies', thereby expressing an understanding of what the other activation practitioners do. By observing this vocabulary use amongst activation practitioners it becomes possible to reconstruct how activation practitioners normalize what they are doing (i.e. activation practitioners' *second doing*).

3. Goals

By observing what the goals of activation practitioners are (this is mostly observed via language as activation practitioners talk about their goals and sometimes via behavior, for example, as activation practitioners change their facial expression if they do not like a particular suggestion) it becomes possible to further reconstruct how activation practitioners activate citizens. Knowledge about the goals of the citizen(s) and the ways activation practitioners respond to these goals of the citizen(s) (observed under behavior and/or language) can provide valuable data about how activation practitioners activate citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*).

4. Time

By observing how long the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens take and by determining how long particular actions take, more can be said about how activation practitioners activate citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*). For example, the approach to activation of an activation practitioner who briefly interacts with citizens may be characterized as 'to the points and formal, leaving little room for debate', while the approach of an activation practitioner who interacts for hours with citizens may be characterized as 'chit-chat, informal, leaving room for discussion'. In

addition, the amount of time activation practitioners or the citizens, respectively, talk can provide valuable information about how activation practitioners activate citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*). By observing if and how behavior, language and goals change over time it becomes possible to better understand the nature of the activation of citizens (static or dynamic).

5. Objects

Observations of the objects used by activation practitioners provide situational information, making it possible to sketch the 'naturally occurring setting' in which the interactions between activation practitioners (as colleagues) and the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens take place. For example, are there computers present at the setting, and how many chairs or tables are there?

6. Actors

Information about the participants involved in the interaction is used as situational information in this thesis. What is/are the name(s) of the observed activation practitioner(s), what is/are the name(s), age(s) and duration(s) of benefits of the citizen(s) being activated?

7. Space

Again, information about the space in which the interaction takes place is used as situational information in this thesis, making it possible to sketch the 'naturally occurring setting'. For example, how are the tables/chairs in a room positioned? In a u-shape or in cinema style.

Table 2 presents an overview of the seven observational dimensions used. Examples are given of possible questions that were asked and of possible observations on these dimensions. Also, the function of the selected dimensions for the research is indicated (providing information about activation practitioners' *first doing* and/or *second doing*, or providing situational information). It is worth noting that the remaining dimension of Spradley's list ('feelings') and the remaining dimensions of Whitehead's list ('interactive patterns', 'discourse content', 'actor groups', 'expressive culture', 'ideational elements', 'broader social system' and the various dimensions of 'human need') were not used to structure the observations in this study because they were believed to provide less relevant information (for example, feelings and human need) or too specific information (for example, interactive patterns and discourse content) for the purpose of this study.

Table 2. Used observational dimensions

Observational dimension	General question(s)	Examples of observation(s)	Used to observe
1. Behavior	How do the activation practitioners behave?	e.g. talking, listening, discussing things, reading, writing, typing things in the computer, filling out forms, printing something, getting coffee, making a phone call, making decisions, transferring a citizen to a colleague, asking a colleague for advice, facial expressions, et cetera.	Activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*
	How do activation practitioners say things?	e.g. repetition, volume, et cetera.	
	How do activation practitioners respond to each other and how do activation practitioners respond to citizens?	e.g. taking the other's point of view into account, pushing one's own view et cetera.	
2. Language	What do the activation practitioners say?	"….."	Activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*
	What words do the activation practitioners use?	e.g. obligation, desires, your life, chances, enforcers versus softies, et cetera.	
	What do activation practitioners talk about?	e.g. work, hobbies, laws, et cetera.	
3. Goals	What is expected of the citizen?	e.g. getting off benefits as quickly as possible, accepting	Activation practitioners' *first doing*

		any job, figuring out what is wanted (expressed via language and/or behavior), et cetera.	
	What does the citizen want?	e.g. an ideal job, maintaining benefits, getting off benefits as quickly as possible (expressed via language and/or behavior), et cetera.	
4. Time	How long does the interaction take?	e.g. 30 minutes, one hour, et cetera.	Activation practitioners' *first doing*
	How long do actions of activation practitioners take?	e.g. 5 minutes to get a coffee, 2 minutes of typing, activation practitioner talks most of the time or citizen(s) talk(s) most of the time, et cetera.	
	How do behavior, language and goals change over time?	e.g. citizens didn't show up for the third training day, activation practitioner gets more strict and talks more about sanctions, et cetera.	
5. Objects	Which objects do activation practitioners use?	e.g. table, chairs, computer, telephone, mobile phone, note book, printer, job advertisements, résumés, coffee machine, et cetera.	Situational information
6. Actors	Which activation practitioner(s) is (are) observed?	e.g. Rudy and/or Linda	Situational information
	How many citizens are observed?	None, one or multiple	

	What are the name, sex, age, duration of benefits and pervious work experience of the citizen(s)?	e.g. Jerome, male, approximately 45 years old, or when explicitly said during the conversation the exact age, used to work in construction and 14 months on benefits, et cetera.	
7. Space	What does the space look like? At which setting does the observation take place? Where do the activation practitioner and citizen(s) sit / stand? How do the activation practitioners and citizens occupy the space?	e.g. open work places, closed interview rooms, et cetera. UWV 1, UWV 2, Social Service 1, Social Service 2 e.g. they are seated opposite each other; in a circle around tables; the activation practitioner stands in front of the group; or the activation practitioner sits among the citizens, et cetera. e.g. walking to a colleague's desk, walking to the toilet, sitting in one place, et cetera.	Situational information

The seven observational dimensions made it possible to focus on relevant aspects during the observations. Before presenting how field notes were taken in the next Section, it is important to point out the difference between observations of a *first doing* and observations of a *second doing*. When do behavior and language constitute a *first doing* and when do behavior and language constitute a *second doing*? In the example of 'standing in line in a supermarket', this behavior may constitute both a *first doing* (doing grocery shopping) as well as a *second doing* (accomplishing order) (Ten Have, 2004, p. 20). However, in this thesis it is possible to clearly distinguish behavior and language as either a *first doing* or as a *second doing*. This is possible since activation practitioners' *first doing* is observed in the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens,

while their *second doing* is observed in the interactions among activation practitioners. While interacting with citizens, activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens (*first doing*) and while interaction with each other, activation practitioners may manage to accomplish the orderliness of practiced activation (*second doing*).

Note taking

During all the observations the researcher took detailed field notes in a blank notebook. During the individual meetings, the courses and the interactions between activation practitioners the note taking procedure was slightly different.

During the individual meetings between one activation practitioner and one citizen the note taking went as follows: at the top of the page some basic information was noted down (date, setting, first name of activation practitioner, first name of the citizen, gender of the citizen, (estimated) age of the citizen, (if addressed) the duration of unemployment and the starting and ending time of the interaction). Below this basic information a drawn sketch of the setting was added. During the interaction short notes were taken about what was being said and done and by whom. Sometimes a summary of the conversation or behavior was added. However, if an interaction was considered important for exploring activation practitioners' *first* or *second doing*, what was said and done were written down in as much detail as possible. Observations that were believed to be important were highlighted and the researcher's connotations at that time were written down in the margins of the notebook. For example 'teacher' or 'focus on laws', or 'citizen is expected to talk', or 'third time this is said'. Throughout the interaction the time was noted down on the side of the page.

During the courses the note taking went as follows: again at the top of the page some basic information was noted down followed by a drawn sketch of the setting. In this drawing the names of the citizens were noted together with a specific number which made it possible to either use the name or the number while taking notes during the interactions. The note taking itself was mostly similar to the procedure followed during the individual meetings. The main difference being that during the courses the researcher sometimes participated in the activity. When this happened the researcher tried to be aware of how she was approached by the activation practitioners and how the activity made her feel. After the researcher's participation, the experienced feelings were (briefly) noted down.

During the interaction between activation practitioners data was generated about activation practitioners' *second doing*. During these interactions it was noted down who were interacting and a (brief) note was made of what was being said or done. As soon as the interaction was completed the notes were supplemented with more details.

3.2 Interviews

In addition to the observations in the UWVs and Social Services, formal and informal interviews took place (Bernard, 2002). Interviews are often used in qualitative studies to generate information about people's reasons for doing things or to learn about people's experiences (Ten Have, 2004, p. 75). However, in ethnomethodologically informed research interviews are more often used as a *topic* of study than as a *resource* (Ten Have, 2004, p. 56). Ethnomethodologists will look at an interview and will study things like 'answering questions' or 'telling stories' (Ten Have, 2004, p. 75). Nonetheless, there are also ethnomethodologists who use interviews as a resource. For example, Paul ten Have (2004) refers to Jody Miller and Barry Glassner (1997) who say that interviews offer "an occasion for interviewees to work at a continuous process of maintaining a meaningful social world" (Ten Have, 2004, p. 76).

In this thesis interviews are used as a resource, both to gain insight in activation practitioners' reasons for doing things as well as to provide activation practitioners, as members, with an opportunity to continue accomplishing a meaningful social world.

An additional benefit of the formal interviews was that the activation practitioners agreed to have the interviews voice recorded. This made it possible to listen to the interviews again later and to obtain literal quotes from the activation practitioners, which is far more difficult to achieve during unrecorded observations.

The numbers

The informal interviews with all fifteen activation practitioners took place throughout the period of observation (from the beginning of January 2011 until the end of May 2012). The eight formal interviews took place between December 2011 and May 2012. Six formal interviews took place at the work places of the activation practitioners; two interviews took place at local restaurants. In addition to the eight interviews with activation practitioners, the activation entrepreneur was also interviewed.

In total, more than eight hours of formal interviews were conducted. The duration of the interviews ranged from a minimum of about 30 minutes to a maximum of about 90 minutes.

Selection of interviewed activation practitioners

From the fifteen activation practitioners that were observed, eight activation practitioners were selected for a formal interview through 'purposive sampling' (Tongco, 2007, p. 47).

This meant that the researcher selected those activation practitioners that she believed would be able to provide the most valuable information. Activation practitioners with one or more of the following four characteristics were selected to be formally interviewed:

First, the researcher selected those activation practitioners who she observed for the longest period. The long period of observations lead to the researcher becoming familiar with the activation practitioners' approach. This familiarity with the activation practitioners' approach to activation made it possible to discuss specific observations with the activation practitioners, thereby gaining insight in why activation practitioners acted the way they did. It also made it possible to hear activation practitioners' construction of what it is that they did.

Second, activation practitioners with largely contrasting ways of interacting with citizens were selected. This made it possible to gain an insight into their perspectives of: the work they do, their own approach to their work and their colleagues' approaches to their work.

Third, activation practitioners who were observed most while interacting with colleagues were selected. The researcher's familiarity with the activation practitioners' way of interacting with colleagues made it possible to ask detailed questions about these interactions. It also made it possible to gain insights in how the activation practitioners themselves talked about their interactions with colleagues.

Fourth, activation practitioners who recently started working as activation practitioner or who worked as an intern were selected, since these activation practitioner could provide information about their novice experiences in the field of activating citizen.

Semi-structured interviews

The eight formal interviews were semi-structured. Before the interviews took place several topics were selected that needed to be discussed and some questions were formulated. Depending on how the interview evolved, questions were skipped or added. As the researcher had tagged along with the activation practitioners prior to the interviews and been able to build a rapport, the activation practitioners were frank in their answers and the stories they told during the interviews.

The topics to be discussed in order to generate data about activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* were:

Internal goods of activation: *Why do you do the work of client manager/work coach? What do you like about it?*

The standard of excellence: *Can you describe an ideal client manager/work coach for me? What should he do and what shouldn't he do?*

Perception of approaches to activation (their own and of colleagues): *How would you describe your way of working? Do you see that colleagues adopt similar approaches to their work as you do? Do you adjust your approach, and can you give an example of this? Why did you decide to adjust your approach?*

Approach to and view of citizen: *What do you expect of citizens?*

Interactions with colleagues: *Do you transfer citizens to colleagues? Can you give an example? And why did you decide to transfer the citizen to a colleague? Do you discuss cases with colleagues?*

Experienced problems during work and solutions to these problems: *Are there things or situations you find difficult to deal with? And how do you deal with those difficult situations?*

Documentation: *How do you document your sessions?*

Depending on the answers given, additional questions were asked and examples were discussed.

3.3 Video recordings

In addition to the observations and interviews, video recordings of interactions between an 'activation entrepreneur' and various citizens were observed. In this thesis an activation entrepreneur refers to someone who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently. The activation entrepreneur activated citizens who experienced temporary difficulties in their job or in their personal lives, or who had recently lost their job.

A major benefit of video recorded data is that it makes it possible to study the interactions in detail. The same observation can be reviewed multiple times (Coleman, 2000, p. 423; Jewitt, 2011, p. 173). In this thesis the video recordings were used to support the data generated by the observations and interviews. The recordings made it possible to observe once more how citizens were activated (in this case by an activation entrepreneur; i.e. activation practitioners' *first doing*). However, the video recordings could not be used to support insights in the accomplishment of order (i.e. activation practitioners' *second doing*), because only one activation entrepreneur was observed.

The numbers

A total of 70 interactions between the activation entrepreneur and various citizens were observed. More than 47 hours of video recordings were made by the activation entrepreneur. The video recordings were made from March 2011 until January 2012. In August and September no video recordings were made. During the interactions 36 different citizens were observed. Some citizens were observed only once, whereas others were observed during multiple interactions.

Selection of the activation entrepreneur

'Purposive sampling' was used to select the activation entrepreneur (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). The activation entrepreneur was selected because he engaged in face-to-face interactions with citizens in which citizens were activated. The entrepreneur worked at a different setting from the activation practitioners and was willing to video record the interactions.

4. Analysis

The generated data were analyzed following the principles of 'Framework'. Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer (1994) describe 'Framework' as:

> "An analytical process which involves a number of distinct, though highly interconnected, stages… although systematic and disciplined, it relies on the creative and conceptual ability of the analyst to determine meaning, salience and connections… The strength of an approach like 'Framework' is that by following a well-defined procedure, it is possible to reconsider and rework ideas precisely because the analytical process has been documented and is therefore accessible." (Green, 2005, p. 82)

In short, 'Framework' consists of the following five stages: first, *familiarization*, that is, the researcher gets 'a feel for the whole data set' (Green, 2005, p. 82). Second, *identifying a thematic framework*. "For framework… these key themes are likely to reflect the aims of the original proposal as well as those emerging from the data" (Green, 2005, p. 82). Third, *indexing* which means that the identified 'Framework' is applied to the whole data set. Fourth, *charting*. Charting basically means cutting and pasting. The indexed data are rearranged according to their theme in charts in order for cases to be compared. Finally, mapping and interpretation. In this stage, 'these charts, and any notes made while developing the thematic framework, are … reviewed to look at patterns across the data and associations within it' (Green, 2005, p. 83).

In this thesis the generated data were analyzed as follows. The observational notes, interviews and video recordings were reviewed multiple times in order to get a thorough understanding of what the activation practitioners did and said (stage one, familiarization).

When studying the *first doing* of activation practitioners (Chapter 1) special attention was paid to fragments which provided insight in the activation practitioners' behavior, language, goals and time (see table 2 for a description of these dimensions) during their interactions with citizens in order to obtain insight in the ways in which activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (stage two, identifying a thematic framework). The whole data-set was indexed by highlighting the parts in which, for example, behavior of an activation practitioner towards a citizen was observed. This behavior was then further specified, for example, listening to a citizens, discussing something, typing things in the computer, et cetera (stage three, indexing). For each observed and interviewed activation practitioner a separate document was composed including all relevant fragments. Subsequently, these documents were compared with each other in order to find out if patterns exist in the ways in which activation practitioners activate citizens (stage four, charting). Finally, the analyzed data were interpreted and an answer to the research questions was formulated (stage five, mapping and interpreting).

The units of analysis, when studying the *first doing* of activation practitioners, are individual activation practitioners during their interactions with citizens (How does an individual activation practitioner activate citizens?) as well as activation practitioners as a group (Are there patterns in the way activation practitioners activate citizens?). The units of observation are the individual activation practitioners. As mentioned before, the work coaches working at the UWVs and the client managers working at the Social Services are referred to as activation practitioners in this thesis. Also the activation entrepreneur was observed.

When studying activation practitioners' *second doing* (Chapter 2) Ilja Maso's (1984) method for doing ethnomethodological research was followed. This method is in line with the principles of 'Framework'. As mentioned before, Maso's method means that the data were analyzed following two steps: identifying what reservoirs of common knowledge members refer to when they make their activities normal and determining *how* members do this (Maso, 1984, p. 63). In terms used in the 'Framework' principle, Maso provides us with a clear thematic framework, namely a focus on common knowledges and demonstration of common knowledges. With regard to the first part of the analysis, the generated data were reviewed multiple times in order to deduce the common knowledges that exist in practice (stage three, indexing). Once a common knowledge was discovered, the generated data were reviewed again in order to see if the rest of the data supported

this common knowledge or if adjustments needed to be made to pinpoint the exact meaning of the common knowledge (stage four, charting). This process was repeated until common knowledges surfaced that were supported by the generated data or until the moment when the generated data allowed for the conclusion that no common knowledge existed. With regard to the second part of the analysis as suggested by Maso, special attention was paid to the behavior and language (see table 2 for a description of these dimensions) that the activation practitioners, as members, displayed and used (stage three, indexing). The displayed behaviors and usages of language were copied from the data-set into a separate document consisting of all the discovered common knowledges (stage four, charting). The two steps of the analysis, as suggested by Maso, were repeated multiple times, until a picture of the common knowledges (or lack thereof) and the ways in which activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess this knowledge emerged and the research questions could be answered (stage five, mapping and interpreting).

The units of analysis, when studying the *second doing* of activation practitioners, are activation practitioners as 'members' (Garfinkel, 1967). Collectively, activation practitioners as members, make sense of what they are doing. The units of observation are both groups of activation practitioners as well as individual activation practitioners. Activation practitioners demonstrate to each other that they possess particular reservoirs of common knowledge. As individual members they also demonstrate, during the interviews, that they possess the common knowledge that is part of their group.

Conclusion

This Chapter introduced the ethnomethodologically informed ethnographic research design that falls in the broader category of practice-based-research as applied in this thesis (Crabtree, Nichols, O'Brien, Rouncefield, & Twidale, 2000; Rouncefield, 2011; Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003). This design implied that the only way to understand a setting was to study that setting in detail, rather than using grand theories to explain what was happening (Rouncefield, 2011, p. 46). It also meant that particular attention was paid to the ways in which 'members', i.e. the activation practitioners in this thesis, accomplished order in their daily work life.

In order to study how activation practitioners activate citizens (*first doing*), interactions between activation practitioners and citizens were observed and interviews were conducted with the observed activation practitioners. Furthermore, video recordings of the interactions between an activation entrepreneur and citizens were made. In order to analyze the generated data the principles of 'Framework' were followed. The principles of 'Framework' were presented in this Chapter. An analysis according to the 'Framework' principle consists of five stages, namely familiarization, identifying a

thematic framework, indexing, charting and finally mapping and interpretation (Green, 2005). Four of the observational dimensions (behavior, language, goals and time) were used to structure the analysis of the generated data when studying activation practitioners' *first doing*.

In order to study if and how activation practitioners accomplish order (*second doing*), interactions between activation practitioners as colleagues were observed and interviews were conducted with the observed activation practitioners. This thesis adopted Ilja Maso's method for doing ethnomethodological research (Maso, 1984). This method boils down to the following: the researcher becomes familiar with the research subject and she knows who the 'members' in the situation under study are. The researcher then takes the normality of the situation as the starting point for the research and investigates how this normality has been established. She studies situations in which the normality is demonstrated and she analyses this data by following two steps: first, she looks at what knowledge members refer to when they make their activities normal and second she looks at *how* members do this (Maso, 1984, p. 63). Maso's suggestion for data analysis is in line with the principles of 'Framework'. Two of the observational dimensions (behavior and language) were used to structure the analysis of the generated data when studying activation practitioners' *second doing*.

Furthermore, this Chapter presented the three instruments that were used to generate data. The primary two instruments used were observations and interviews. In addition to the observations and interviews, the third instrument of video recordings was used. The use of multiple instruments made it possible to triangulate the data to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Maso, 1984, p. 156).

For the observations fifteen activation practitioners were observed during their work and more than 145 observational hours were completed. The observations were structured using seven observational dimensions: behavior, language, goals, time, objects, actors and space. The observations made it possible to study at firsthand what activation practitioners actually do. Formal interviews (following a topic list) were conducted with eight of the observed activations practitioners. Additional informal interviews took place throughout the period of observation with each of the fifteen observed activation practitioners. Finally, video recordings were used to verify the data generated by the observations and interviews. A total of 70 interactions between the activation entrepreneur and various citizens were observed in over 47 hours of video recordings.

Part Three

Activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*

Chapter 1

What activation practitioners do: accomplishing the task of activating citizens

Introduction

Thus far, we have seen that new welfare's vocabulary can be interpreted in various ways and that disparate philosophies about the activation of citizens exist. This leaves activation practitioners with the freedom to negotiate the meaning and implementation of activation (Lipsky, 1980). The only way to understand what the activation of citizens actually entails is to study activation in practice. This raises the questions:

1a How do activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (*first doing*)?

1b What does the *first doing* of activation practitioners imply for the shape of practiced activation?

This Chapter answers these questions, based on the methodology presented in the previous Chapter. This current Chapter, for the first time presents an actual *doing* of activation practitioners. Activation practitioners' *first doing* refers to the task of activating citizens. In order to study activation practitioners' *first doing*, this Chapter analyzes the data generated via observations, interviews and video recordings. The observational dimensions (behavior, language, goals and time) presented in the previous Chapter were used to structure the analysis of the generated data.

The analysis shows that activation practitioners adopt 'main approaches' as well as 'subsidiary approaches' to their work. The main approach to activation is a personal and particular approach which the activation practitioner the most prominently and frequently

applies during his interactions with various citizens. If the main approach brings about an 'un-normal' result, activation practitioners alter their strategy and adopt a different, subsidiary, approach to activation or, as we will see later, they can transfer the citizen to a colleague with a different approach to activation. This results in a diverse and dynamic shape of practiced activation.

The organization of this Chapter is as follows: Section 1 presents what happens after various citizens agreed to the researcher's presence. A reconstruction of how activation practitioners activated citizens is presented. Section 2 looks at the implications of activation practitioners' *first doing* for the shape of practiced activation.

1. What do they do?

Before presenting the findings of this thesis, this Section first addresses some of the relevant research about the implementation of Dutch activation policies (Van der Aa, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Polstra, 2011; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Zandvliet, Gravesteijn, Tanis, Collewet, & De Jong, 2011). When studying the actual implementation of activation policies by Dutch activation practitioners, other research has shown that activation practitioners demonstrate a variety of approaches when it comes to activating citizens.

In his study of three Dutch Social Services Paul van der Aa (2012) found that client managers (activation practitioners) chose between a more coaching approach to activation and a more disciplining approach to activation. Van der Aa further found that client managers used sanctions differently and that they had varying preferences for specific external trajectories (Van der Aa, 2012, p. 201).

Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) found that activation practitioners performed their tasks based on different normative frames of reference, or fundamental attitudes (*grondhoudingen*) as they call them. According to Eikenaar *et al.* it remains to be seen whether all activation practitioners are able to adjust their fundamental attitude depending on the citizen they encounter (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, pp. 99-100).

In their research about the implementation of activation in Social Services and UWVs in the Netherlands Kees Zandvliet *et al.* (2011) found that "in practice client managers and work coaches adopt diverse styles and that they match these styles as much as possible to the situation of the client and the development of the activation trajectory" (Zandvliet, Gravesteijn, Tanis, Collewet, & De Jong, 2011, p. 15). Depending on the situation of the

citizen the activation practitioner adopted a particular style. Zandvliet *et al.* provide the following example of an adjustment in style:

> "Example 3: This case is about a client, who seemed to be cooperative, but who had unrealistic working ambitions and with whom two previous trajectories did not result in anything. During the trajectory the client manager shifted from a coaching style of activation to a more directive style of activation. Now it seems that a more realistic trajectory is chosen, one that is more in line with the person's capacities and competences." (Zandvliet, Gravesteijn, Tanis, Collewet, & De Jong, 2011, p. 32)

The findings of Van der Aa (2012), Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) and Zandvliet *et al.* (2011) sketch a picture of diversity in the approaches used by activation practitioners when accomplishing the task of activating citizens. Looking back at the philosophies discussed in Part One of this thesis it may be that practiced activation is less general and static than suggested by these philosophies. The concluding part of this Chapter will return to this point.

It is important to mention that the research conducted thus far about the practice of activation, links diversity of approaches to some problems of activation work: activation practitioners may act randomly, based on individual perceptions, without following clear guidelines about how to activate citizens, thereby possibly making the process of activation of citizens non-transparent and arbitrary. Els Sol *et al.* (2011) ask the question whether reintegration is based on a systematic approach or if activation practitioners are "just doing something" (Sol, et al., 2011, p. 8). Marieke Blommesteijn *et al.* (2012) and the RWI (2012) noted that activation practitioners may possess little understanding about the work styles of their colleagues and they may do their work based on individual insights alone (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012, p. 25; RWI, 2012, p. 13). Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) note: "the virtual absence in the Netherlands of a debate on how local welfare agencies and frontline workers can safeguard a responsible use of discretion is highly problematic, in our opinion. The risk of arbitrariness and non-transparency of decisions made by frontline workers in the absence of clear criteria – which may be professional, bureaucratic or otherwise – that guide decision-making processes, are all but theoretical…" (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, pp. 461-462). Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) also refer to the risk of arbitrariness. They argue that Dutch activation 'lacks a shared body of knowledge', that there is no shared understanding about what the trait of activating citizens entails, nor about what an effective way of activating citizens looks like (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 142) and that citizens may be treated arbitrarily (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 143). Basically, all activation practitioners, despite their best intentions, might just 'be doing something'.

The argument that use of several diverse approaches can bring about a problematic situation, in which citizens are treated arbitrarily, can be traced back to arguments that stem from two logics: first, the bureaucratic logic and second, the professional logic[14].

The bureaucratic logic tells us that all cases with the same conditions should be treated the same (Tonkens, 2008, p. 27). In a bureaucracy there is no room for "tailor made solutions, or for exemptions", if one citizen is given something, then others in the same condition are entitled to that as well (Tonkens, 2008, p. 27). The bureaucratic logic focuses on procedures and as such it is an effective system to combat corruption and arbitrariness (Tonkens, 2008, p. 28).

From the viewpoint of professional logic, on the other hand, there is room for individual treatment of citizens. Professionals want to help each individual citizen as good as they possibly can (Freidson, 2001; Tonkens, 2008, p. 29). This might mean that citizens are treated differently. In order to help each individual citizen as good as possible professionals need discretionary space. In this discretionary space professionals can make decisions and base their acts on their personal understandings. In order to make decisions, professionals need to possess the relevant knowledge necessary to help citizens. This is why the professional logic emphasizes the importance of vocational associations, vocational training and of an officially recognized body of knowledge.

If we look at activation as it is practiced by the observed activation practitioners from the perspective of the bureaucratic logic, there is the risk that activation becomes an arbitrary activity. For instance, when activation practitioners adopt different approaches or when they offer exemptions to some citizens but not to others. Furthermore, there might not be any fixed procedures that are followed in detail by all activation practitioners in the same way.

Looking at practiced activation from a professional logic, the variation in adopted approaches is less problematic. Professionals can judge cases according to their own insights (Tonkens, 2008, p. 31). However, in order for the professional logic to flourish there needs to be a professional community that keeps its members alert (Tonkens, 2008, p. 31). There is a need for a vocational association (*beroepsgroep*) as well as for vocational training (*beroepsopleiding*). Given the observation that activation is not yet a profession (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010), since there is no vocational association and no

[14] The traditional views on bureaucracy and professionalism are presented here in order to point out how these view stand in contrast to the practice approach adopted in this thesis. However, there is a fast body of literature available in which adjusted or new views on bureaucracy and professionalism are presented. With regard to the former, see, for example, the article by Catherine Durose (2011) on *civic entrepreneurship*. With regard to the latter see, for example, the article by Mirko Noordegraaf (2013) about *reconfiguring professional work* and the article by Mirko Noordegraaf, Martijn van Steen en Mark van Twist (2014) about *connective professionalism*.

officially recognized body of knowledge, it may be true that activation practitioners are simply doing something on an individual basis. Thereby, once again, running the risk of arbitrariness, as Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) and Van Berkel *et al.* (2010) pointed out.

The absence of uniform treatment of citizens, of clear procedures that are followed, of a vocational association, of vocational training and the absence of an officially recognized body of knowledge, in other words the absence of fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, might set off some alarm bells. If indeed activation practitioners activate citizens solely based on their individual insights, treating citizens arbitrarily, one may be left with the feeling that practiced activation is a *chaotic*[15] activity. However, as we will see in the following Sections the diversity of approaches does not necessarily imply *chaos*.

1.1 Approaches to activation

In line with findings of other research, the data generated for this thesis shows that activation practitioners adopt diverging approaches to activation. In their interactions with citizens each activation practitioner has his own *'main approach'*. As mentioned before, this main approach is most prominently and frequently used by the activation practitioner during his interactions with various citizens. Besides a main approach, activation practitioners can revert to a variety of *'subsidiary approaches'*. When required by the situation, activation practitioners revert to a subsidiary approach. If the use of their main approach during an activation session brings about an 'un-normal' result (we will come back to this idea of the requirement to adopt a subsidiary approach in Chapter 2), activation practitioners can apply an alternative strategy.

In order to show how actual activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens, this Section reconstructs the main approaches and the subsidiary approaches to activation of two activation practitioners: Rudy and Linda[16]. These particular activation practitioners are chosen for discussion because they display contrasting main approaches. The observations of the remaining activation practitioners also revealed a variety of main and subsidiary approaches. Three examples of the main approaches adopted by the other activation practitioners are discussed briefly in this Section and one example is given of

[15] As mentioned before, *chaotic* is a term used in this thesis to emphasize that the current literature on activation points out that the practice of activation is not (yet) fully supported by bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms and that activation may be arbitrary and non-transparent. It has to be noted that the other authors who studied the practice of activation do not use the term 'chaotic' to refer to the current practice of activation.

[16] As mentioned before, in order to guarantee the anonymity of all the participants (activation practitioners as well as citizens) pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis. To further protect the privacy of participants, identifying details, such as the names of the settings where the research was conducted are not mentioned/made anonymous.

an activation practitioner when reverting to a subsidiary approach. Also the main approach of the activation entrepreneur is discussed and an example is given of the activation entrepreneur when he reverts to a subsidiary approach to activation. The two cases that are addressed in most detail (Rudy and Linda) were not outliers. This Chapter does not claim to describe all existing approaches to activation, nor does it imply that the discussed approaches describe 'ideal types' of activation. The observations of all fifteen activation practitioners will be further used to reconstruct activation practitioners' *second doing* in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

1.2 Main approaches

In order to reconstruct the 'main approaches' of Rudy and Linda this Section uses examples from the observation and interviews. The dimensions that were used during the observations are followed when analyzing and describing what the activation practitioners do. To recapitulate, the following seven dimensions were used during the observations: behavior, language, goals, time, objects, actors and space. The latter three dimensions (objects, actors and space) are used to provide situational information. While the former four (behavior, language, goals and time) are crucial for gaining insight in how activation practitioners activate citizens (for a more detailed description of the observational dimensions, please see the preparatory Chapter 'Doing the research' in Part Two of this thesis).

Rudy's main approach

Rudy is an activation practitioner who focuses on rules and work. During his interactions with various citizens Rudy frequently talks about the duties of citizens. By doing so, Rudy tries to achieve his goal, namely, getting citizens back to work. During the formal interview Rudy said: *"I am happy about my performance if he [the citizen] has a job again"*. The following observation was made:

> 1. Rudy and participants of a course
>
> It is the second time that the citizens who participate in Rudy's course come together. Two weeks ago I met these participants for the first time, during the first session of this course. All the participants have been on benefits for more than one year. When I arrive for this second session, four of the participants are standing outside, talking to each other. I join them and five minutes later we walk towards the meeting room. We talk about the previous session, my research and about the beautiful sunny weather.

> At twelve o'clock it is time to start the session. The participants and I are seated behind tables arranged in an u-shape. Rudy is standing in front of the group in front of a flap-over. There are nine participants. During the first session there had been eleven participants. Rudy asks the group what has happened to the two missing participants. [Two weeks ago the participants were asked to be in regular contact with each other and to support each other during the course]. For one participant it does not become clear why she is absent. Rudy says: "This can be sanctioned, but ok, let's start".
>
> Rudy looks at one of the participants and asks whether he has already made some progress in getting off benefits. The citizen replies that he hasn't, but that he understands that Rudy wants to be rid of him as soon as possible. The other participants laugh. To which Rudy responds by saying to the whole group: "I am here to execute a law". Looking at another participant, Pauline (38 years old, on benefits for 16 months), he asks: "So what did you do to come off benefits quicker?"
>
> …

In this observation we see that Rudy mentions that he can sanction the citizen who did not show up for today's course session. We will see later (when other observations are discussed) that Rudy regularly mentions his authority to sanction behavior during his interactions with citizens. We also see that Rudy says that he is there to execute a law. He asks the citizens who participate in the course what they have done to come off benefits quicker, which indicates Rudy's focus on work. The interaction between Rudy and Pauline continued as follows:

> …
>
> Pauline says that she did apply for three jobs as she was told to do. Rudy asks Pauline whether she has tried to apply to a range of jobs. Pauline looks at Rudy and shrugs, saying "Huh?" "For example, by making a different type of resume? One that is based on competences" Rudy says. Raising her voice Pauline asks if this means that she has to try to hide the fact that she is an engineer, while she will still be signing with *ir.* [*ir.* is the official title that engineers can use in the Netherlands]. Rudy: "We can play this game again". Pauline: "But I do apply for all types of … jobs. How am I supposed to apply for a job in which I connect people on the phone through to engineers, while I can answer their questions myself?" Rudy: "By saying that you want to work. That you are tired of sitting at home all day". Both Rudy and Pauline get agitated, raising their voices. Rudy: "Of course you want a perfect job, but you will have to accept all different kinds of jobs". Pauline responds that at

> the moment she applies for all types of low engineering jobs. “There is still engineer in your search criteria. You have to widen your scope. But we will make a detailed agreement about this later. If you don’t do what you are told to do you can receive a sanction” Rudy ends the conversation.
>
> …

In this interaction between Rudy and Pauline we see that Rudy once again mentions that he can impose a sanction. If Pauline does not start to apply for different kinds of jobs, Rudy warns her that she can receive such a sanction. We also see that Rudy focuses on work. According to Rudy, Pauline will have to *“accept all different kinds of jobs*” and she will *“have to widen [her] scope*”. Twenty minutes after the interaction between Rudy and Pauline the following happened in the course:

> …
>
> Rudy says: “I am here to change your mind, to motivate you to accept any possible job, regardless of your background”. Margreet (52 years old, on benefits for 15 months) explains that she worked for a big company and that she really wants a similar job. Rudy responds to Margreet: “You have to let go of your dreams”.

This observation, once again shows Rudy’s focus on work. Margreet has to let go off her dream and she will have to *“accept any possible job*”. It is not just during this one particular course that Rudy focuses on rules and work. During individual meetings, other courses and during interactions with other citizens, Rudy also shows this strong focus on rules and work. For example, during the individual meeting between Rudy and Jeremy (the example with which this thesis started) the following observation was made:

> 2. Rudy and Jeremy.
>
> Rudy checks his watch. “It’s time” he says to me, “I will have a look if Patrick is already waiting”. He walks towards the waiting area in order to check if Patrick is sitting there. After a couple of minutes Rudy walks back to me. He tells me that Patrick has not yet arrived, but that Jeremy, who has an appointment after Patrick, is there already. Rudy tells me that Jeremy cancelled his previous appointment and that he did not show up at all at the meeting before that one. Rudy and I talk a little bit more about his work. In the mean time Rudy keeps checking his watch. After 5 minutes Rudy says “Ok, let’s start with Jeremy and see if Patrick shows up later”. Rudy gets up from his chair and walks to the waiting area. He comes back in with a man wearing a baseball cap. I watch them talk as they approach me. Jeremy shakes my hand and introduces himself. We all sit down. Rudy explains to Jeremy

what I am doing here and asks if Jeremy agrees to my presence. Jeremy says: "Yes of course it is fine by me".

Jeremy (49 years old, on benefits for 8 months) places a stack of papers on the table and he leaves through them. Rudy asks: "You were invited to come here in February, but I did not see you here". Jeremy explains that he was busy with other things, most of all his debts. "But if you don't show up for appointments I will stop your benefits. That won't please the debt-collectors at all. And then you also did not show up for the new appointment I scheduled. You cancelled that appointment two hours before we were supposed to meet". Jeremy explains that he was feeling sick.

Rudy sighs and says: "Ok, what did you do to find a job?" Jeremy says he has done a lot and he looks through the papers he brought with him. He selects two papers from the pile and hands them to Rudy. One is an application letter; the other is a certificate of good conduct (*bewijs van goed gedrag*). Rudy asks Jeremy questions about his job searching activities. After 25 minutes Rudy concludes that Jeremy has not done enough and that he has not properly documented what he has done. The papers that Jeremy brought with him covered a variety of topics, but almost none attested to his job searching activities. Rudy says: "Last time you received a benefit reduction, because it was not clear what you did to find a job. I can do this again. We need to be able to check. If you don't improve your behavior by the next time we meet then you will receive a reduction of your benefits".

In this interaction between Rudy and Jeremy, we see that Rudy again mentions that he can impose a sanction. If, by their next meeting, Jeremy does not properly document what he is doing to find a job, Rudy warns Jeremy, he will be sanctioned. Again we see Rudy's focus on work. Rudy asks Jeremy what he has done to find a job.

After Jeremy left, Rudy explains (in an informal interview) that he did not give Jeremy a sanction because a sanction is a severe measure. Since Jeremy already received a sanction last time, imposing another sanction would not benefit Jeremy, particularly not, given Jeremy's situation of financial debts. Rudy hopes that this warning will motivate Jeremy to become more active. Another example of Rudy's focus on rules and work is provided by the interaction between Rudy and Miriam.

3. Rudy and Miriam

It is the first time that Rudy and Miriam meet. Miriam is 35 years and her benefits will start next month. Rudy is Miriam's activation practitioner. Four minutes into the conversation Rudy and Miriam discuss what is expected of

> Miriam. Rudy types the agreement in Miriam's personal file and reads out loud what he is typing: "You have the duty to undertake three job searching activities per week. This is not just applying for jobs but also everything else that has to do with finding a job. You have to e-mail me your resume. And you will write down what you do and you will bring the list of activities with you to our next meeting".

In this interaction Rudy writes up a detailed agreement with Miriam about Miriam's duties. All these duties focus on finding work. Miriam has the duty to undertake three job searching activities a week and she has to e-mail Rudy her resume. Rudy writes up these detailed agreements for all the citizens he interacts with.

Besides Rudy's focus on rules and work, the observations also clearly show that Rudy's main approach to activation is characterized by short discussions with citizens, in which Rudy shares his expert knowledge with the citizens.

For example, in the before mentioned interaction between Rudy and Pauline, Rudy engages in a brief discussion with Pauline. Rudy tells Pauline how she will have to find a job, namely: *"By saying that you want to work. That you are tired of sitting at home all day"*. Similarly Rudy engaged in a short discussion with Margreet about her desire to work in a big company again. Rudy tells Margreet to let go off that idea. During his interactions with various citizens, Rudy frequently engages in short discussions in which he shares his expert knowledge. A clear example of this is the following interaction between Rudy and Mark.

> 4. Rudy and Mark
>
> It is 8:45 in the morning and slowly the empty chairs around me fill up with people. People talk with each other, have a drink and say hello to me and to each other. We all know each other from last week's meeting. Today is the second part of the course. At nine o'clock Rudy closes the door and walks to the front of the group. "Did you all struggle with your resumes?" One woman responds that it was difficult, but also really good and useful. The others nod. Twelve citizens take part in today's session. We are all seated behind tables that are placed in an u-shape.
>
> All the participants have e-mailed their resumes to Rudy and today we are discussing each of these resumes. The participants also had to write an application letter. Rudy hands us all a stack of papers. It contains all the resumes and application letters. People scan through the papers. One by one we address the resumes and application letters. Most of the time it is Rudy

> who provides feedback, but two women and one man in the group also offer suggestions.
>
> After the first coffee break (it is now 10:35 a.m.) Mark's application letter is up for discussion. Mark is 42 years old and has been on benefits for five months. In his application letter he writes that he is 'a go-getter full of ambition'. In the job advertisement they ask for 'a passionate person'. Rudy says: "Use the text from the job advertisement". Mark questions this advice, arguing that his twist can provoke the reader in a positive way. Rudy sighs and says: "Just leave it like this then. Ok, do it your way". Another participant says she agrees with Mark and asks Rudy why he thinks this will be less effective. Rudy says: "I already said, just leave it like this".

In this observation we see that Rudy is the one who provides citizens with feedback on their application letters and resumes and that Rudy does most of the talking. He shares his expert knowledge with the citizens. Rudy tells the participants how they should write their resumes and application letters. For example, he tells the participants to *"Use the text from the job advertisement"*.

Rudy engages in a brief discussion with Mark about whether or not to use the same language in the application letter as is used in the job advertisement. Rudy argues that citizens should use the same language, whereas Mark argues that this is not necessary. Rudy sighs and ends the discussion by saying: *"I already said, just leave it like this"*.

Summary: Rudy's main approach

So far, interactions between Rudy and various citizens have been presented. These observations can be used to reconstruct Rudy's main approach to activation. As mentioned before, the four main observational topics (behavior, language, goals and time) are used to structure this reconstruction.

Behavior

Rudy engages in discussions with citizens. These discussions do not take long, a minute or two, as the examples of Rudy's discussions with Pauline, Margreet and Mark demonstrate. Furthermore, discussions as well as interactions are ended by Rudy repeating his own view. Rudy ends the discussion with Pauline by saying: *"There is still engineer in your search criteria. You have to widen your scope. But we will make a detailed agreement about this later. If you don't do what you are told to do you can receive a sanction"*. He ends the discussion with Mark by saying: *"I already said, just*

leave it like this". The interaction with Margreet ends by Rudy saying: *"You have to let go of your dreams".* Rudy has the final say.

Besides engaging in discussions, Rudy also shares his expert knowledge with the citizens. This becomes particularly clear in the interaction between Rudy and Mark. Rudy advises the group, and Mark in particular, to use the same language in the application letter that is used in the job advertisement. Rudy says: *"Use the text from the job advertisement"*.

Also, Rudy repeats certain statements or ideas during his interactions with citizens. For example, Rudy repeats the idea that the citizens have to apply for all types of jobs.

Furthermore, Rudy makes detailed agreements with citizens in which it is written down what the duties of the citizens are. During the individual talks with citizens, Rudy types these detailed agreements in the citizen's personal file on the computer.

Language

The language that Rudy uses during his interactions with citizens focuses on rules and on work. Rudy says: *"You have the duty to undertake three job searching activities per week*" or *"If you don't do what you are told to do you can receive a sanction*". Rudy talks about: *"job searching activities"*, *"applying for jobs"*, *"finding a job"* and *"the resume"*. Furthermore, Rudy asks the citizens: *"So what did you do to come off benefits quicker"?*

Goals

To Rudy, his primary goal is to get citizens back to work again. Any job is better than no job. When Rudy is asked, during the formal interview, in which cases he feels he has done his work well, he says "*if the person has a job again…. That is what I like most for people, or when they have set up their own business*".

Time

During individual talks Rudy takes time to type information into the computer. When Rudy shares his expert knowledge with citizens, he talks most of the time, but at other times there is more interaction between Rudy and the citizens.

In sum, Rudy's main approach to activation can be characterized by a focus on rules and work. By pointing out the duties of citizens, Rudy tries to achieve his goal, namely, getting citizens back to work. According to Rudy, citizens should accept a wide variety of jobs. Working (in any job) is better than sitting at home. Besides telling citizens what their duties and options are, and making detailed agreements about this, Rudy also engages in short discussions with citizens in which he shares his expert knowledge in

order to get them back to work again. Also Rudy often mentions that he can impose a sanction if the citizen does not do what is expected of him.

Linda's main approach

Linda is an activation practitioner who focuses on the desires of citizens. According to Linda, citizens have to figure out what they want to do, and it is her role to assists the citizen in this process. During the formal interview Linda says that she would like to live in a world where *"... everyone has the right to work"*. During the observations Linda's focus on the citizen's desires also clearly shows. For example, during the interaction between Linda and Koos the following happened:

> 5. Linda and Koos
>
> During the second meeting of Linda's course, Koos (56 years old, on benefits for 7 months) says he is looking around trying to figure out what would be a nice job for him. Linda responds by saying: "Leave it really open, it is a search process. I think it is good for you to figure out where your heart lies. Is it the same type of job in another setting? Just keep thinking about it. Talking with others can possibly help you to figure it out".

This interaction between Linda and Koos shows that Linda focuses on Koos' desires. She says: "… *figure out where your heart lies"* and *"leave it really open, it is a search process".* All the other citizens participating in this course receive this same message. For example, Linda says to Janne, another participant in the course, that she really has to take it easy, that she has to take time out for herself, in order to figure out what it is that she wants to do. During individual meetings Linda focuses on the desires of the citizen. For example, during the individual meeting between Linda and Jan the following happened:

> 6. Linda and Jan
>
> Linda and Jan meet each other for the first time. Jan is 55 years old and has been on benefits for 12 months. Linda is Jan's activation practitioner. Linda welcomes Jan and she explains why I am at their meeting. Jan listens and says that what I am doing sounds interesting and that it is no problem if I stay.
>
> Two minutes into the conversation Linda says: "So, tell me how are things in the construction business? You are the expert of your own situation". Jan explains how difficult it is at the moment to find a job in construction. He also mentions that his age does not work to his advantage. Linda listens and asks "Why do you think there are not so many jobs available in construction? And why do you think your age is a problem"?

Jan explains that the economic crisis affects the construction business. There are fewer jobs than before. He says: “Before there used to be four or five vacancies a week, now I am lucky if I can find one vacancy a week. And yes, the age problem. When you are thirty then you are too young and when you are fifty then you are too old”.

Linda and Jan talk for about ten minutes about the age problem and about the lack of vacancies. Then Linda says: “A friend of mine works in construction, I can ask him if he might have any contacts for you”. Jan replies that that would be great.

Then Linda suggests: “What about working in a foreign country? Doing developmental work for a while, would that be something for you”? Jan says that he has worked abroad before. Now he just wants to stay here in the Netherlands. He doesn’t feel like submerging himself into that world of expats again. Linda nods and says that she understands.

The two of them continue their conversation. They talk about Jan’s experiences, his desires for the future and about Jan’s resume. At the end of the conversation Linda suggests that Jan might like to participate in a course that she gives. Linda prints out the flyer of the course and hands it to Jan. Jan says: “I think that it will be good for me to participate in the course. I have already been trying to find a job for a year now. It will be good to get some new input”. Linda agrees and says that Jan will be a valuable addition to the group.

At the end of the conversation Jan shakes my hand and says good-bye. Linda walks Jan to the door.

In this interaction we see that Linda tries to think along with Jan in trying to figure out what it is that he wants to do. Linda’s suggestion to work abroad can be seen as an example of this. Jan indicates that he does not feel like working abroad and Linda accepts this straight away.

This interaction between Linda and Jan also shows another element of Linda's main approach to activation, namely, that she focuses on the information the citizen provides. Linda sees the citizen as the expert of his own situation, as she explicitly states: “*You are the expert of your own situation”*.

Linda sees it as her job to get citizens to talk about their desires and to listen to the citizens she encounters. Linda asks Jan open-ended questions. For example, *“Why do you think there are not so many jobs available in construction? And why do you think your age is a problem”?* This offers Jan the opportunity to talk. During the interaction it is

mostly Jan who does the talking. Linda's main approach to activation can also be observed in the following interaction between Linda and Manon:

7. Linda and Manon

Linda and Manon have met each other before. Manon is 38 years old and she has found a job for two days a week. Linda is Manon's activation practitioner. Linda welcomes Manon and she explains my presence at their meeting. Manon says it is fine if I observe.

While Manon found a job for two days a week, she still needs additional benefits. Linda asks Manon: "How many hours of work do you need to be able to live well?" Manon says that at the moment financially everything is fine, because she still receives some benefits, but that she is not sure what will happen in the future. Manon hopes that from September onwards she will be able to work three days a week. Linda explains that Manon has to continue to apply for jobs and asks Manon if she enjoys the work she is doing at the moment. Manon says that she likes it a lot, the work as well as the brand she is working for. Linda nods and says that that is nice, but that Manon has to prepare for the situation in which her additional benefits stop. "How are you then going to manage financially?" Manon explains that a big order is about to come in and that she really hopes to get more work hours. Linda asks Manon what she will do if it does not work out the way she hopes. "Would you then like to set up your own company?" Manon says that she is not interested in setting up her own company and that she has faith that things will work out. And if this is not the case, then she will undertake action. Linda nods and says "Ok, let's write this all down in your personal file".

In this interaction we again see Linda focus on the citizen's desires. She asks Manon if she likes the work she is doing at the moment. We also see that Linda tries to think along with the citizen. Linda asks Manon if she would like to set up her own company. Manon says that she is not interested in setting up her own company, and similar to the interaction with Jan, Linda accepts this rejection of her suggestion. Also we see that Linda asks open-ended questions *("How are you going to manage financially then?"* and *"Would you like it then to set up your own company?"*), giving Manon the time to talk.

During her interactions with other citizens Linda adopts the same approach. Asking open-ended questions, offering citizens the time and opportunity to talk about their desires, thinking along with citizens and trying to find out what it is that the citizen wants to do.

Summary: Linda's main approach

So far, interactions between Linda and various citizens have been presented. These observations can be used to reconstruct Linda's main approach to activation. Again, the four main observational topics (behavior, language, goals and time) are used to structure this reconstruction.

Behavior

Linda tends to ask open-ended questions. These open-ended questions make it possible for the citizens to express their desires and to indicate what they find difficult. Once the citizen has expressed his wishes Linda thinks along with the citizen, trying to find out how to bring about the realization of the citizen's desires.

Language

Linda focuses on the desires and wishes of the citizens she faces. For example, she tells Koos: "… *figure out where your heart lies"*. The information that the citizens offer is important to Linda. She sees citizens as experts of their own situations.

Goals

Linda's goal is to make citizens see what they want to do and to assist them in the pursuit of their desires. During the formal interview Linda says she would like to live in a world where *"... everyone has the right to work"*.

Time

During the interactions with citizens Linda lets the citizens do most of the talking.

In sum, Linda's main approach to activation can be characterized by a focus on the information the citizen provides. The citizen is the expert of his own situation. The citizen has to figure out what he wants to do and Linda assists the citizen in this process.

Table 3 summarizes the observed main approaches to activation of Rudy and Linda.

Table 3. Main approaches to activation of Rudy and Linda

	Rudy	**Linda**	**Differences**
Behavior	Rudy engages in short discussions that are ended by Rudy repeating his point of view. Rudy shares his expert knowledge with citizens. Rudy types information in the computer.	Linda poses open-ended questions to the citizens she interacts with. Linda thinks along with the citizen, trying to find out how to bring about the realization of the citizen's desires. Linda sees the citizen as the expert of his own situation, she says: *"So, tell me how are things in the construction business? You are the expert of your own situation"*. Linda types information in the computer.	From telling citizens what to do (Rudy) to asking citizens what they would want to do (Linda).
Language	Rudy focuses on rules; *"You have the duty to undertake three job searching activities per week.", "If you don't do what you are told to do you can receive a sanction"*. And Rudy focuses on work; *"So what did you do to come off benefits quicker"?*	Linda focuses on the desires and wishes of the citizens she deals with. For example, she tells Koos: "… *figure out where your heart lies"*.	From talking about duties and sanctions (Rudy) to talking about desires and wishes (Linda).
Goals	Rudy sees it as his goal to get citizens back to work again. Any job is better than no job.	Linda sees it as her goal to make citizens figure out what it is they want to do and to assist them in pursuing their desires.	From wanting citizens to accept any job (Rudy) to wanting citizens to find out what they would want to do (Linda).

Time	When Rudy shares his expert knowledge with citizens, he talks most of the time, but sometimes there is more interaction between Rudy and the participants. During the individual talks Rudy takes time to type information into the computer.	During the interactions with citizens Linda lets the citizens talk most of the time. During the individual talks Linda takes time to type information into the computer.	From talking most of the time (Rudy) to letting the citizen talk most of the time (Linda).

The other activation practitioners' main approaches

It is only possible to talk about a main approach for those activation practitioners that were observed during multiple interactions. The other seven activation practitioners for whom this was the case, all adopt a personal main approach with its own combination of behavior, language, goals and time. It should be noted that in the studied settings, activation practitioners with various main approaches were observed. In order to illustrate the adopting of main approaches by other activation practitioners, without being wordy, this Section briefly presents three of these approaches. In addition, the main approach adopted by the observed activation entrepreneur[17] is also briefly presented.

Megan's main approach

It is Megan's 'goal' to make citizens see the realistic working opportunities that lie ahead of them in the future. With realistic Megan means that jobs are available, but also that the citizen wants to do the job. In the informal interview Megan said: *"I see it as my job to help people to find a new way to live their lives, for themselves"*. Citizens should not look at the past. Instead they should look at their future and what it is they want to do, and can do, in that future. During the interaction between Megan and Romana the following happened:

> 8. Megan and Romana
>
> While tagging along with other activation practitioners, I got introduced to Megan. Megan offered that I could also tag along with her. Later that morning she had a talk with Romana, a 45 year old woman who is on benefits for a

[17] In this thesis an activation entrepreneur is somebody who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently.

> little over twelve months. I took the offer and at 11 o'clock Megan, Romana and I were sitting around the table. Megan told Romana what I was doing there. And Romana agreed to my presence.
>
> Megan started by explaining to Romana what her rights and duties at this moment are and that in principle all work is suitable. Romana nodded and said that she looked for a job in elderly care. Megan asked if this is what Romana wants to do. "Do you want to work in elderly care"? Romana said that this is not really her ambition but that it is the only place where she could perhaps start working straight away. Romana also told Megan about her previous job in the music industry and that she really liked this. To which Megan responds: "Imagine now that the path towards being a musician is closed off completely, what is it then that makes your heart beat faster"? The two of them talk a bit about Romana's ambitions, trying to figure out what it is that Romana wants to do.
>
> After a couple of minutes Megan suggests a competence test. "Would you like to do a competence test in order to figure out what you want to do? It will give you insight in your opportunities, your chances". Romana is interested in doing a competence test. She thinks out loud. Maybe I can teach? Megan suggests that Romana does the competence test first, and that they make another appointment when the results are in. Megan types the agreements in Ramona's personal file on the computer.

In this interaction between Megan and Romana we can see important elements of Megan's 'behavior' that is part of her main approach to activation. When interacting with citizens, Megan gives citizens detailed information. In the interaction described above, Megan informs Romana about her rights and duties. Furthermore, Megan asks citizens questions about their desires. For example, Megan asks Romana: *"Do you want to work in elderly care"?* and *"Would you like to do a competence test in order to figure out what you want to do?"* Megan gives Romana time to answer these questions. Finally, Megan often uses the possibility to offer citizens a competence test (as Megan said during the informal interview).

With regard to the 'language' that Megan uses in her main approach the following observation was made: in her language Megan focuses on opportunities: *"It will give you insight in your opportunities, your chances"*. Megan also talks about the desires of the citizens: *"Do you want to work in elderly care"?* and *"Would you like to do a competence test in order to figure out what you want to do?* and "*… what is it then that makes your heart beat faster"*. Finally, with regard to 'time', Megan gives citizens time to talk, but if she needs to explain something Megan takes her time to talk. Megan also takes time to type agreements in the citizen's personal file.

Nicolette's main approach

Nicolette focuses on rules and on work during her interactions with citizens and describes her task as having to be there to execute a law. When asked what she likes about her work, she says: *"[That] you are constantly trying to get people back to work, and at the same time you are there to execute a law. It is that combination that I enjoy*". Nicolette sees it as her 'goal' to get citizens back to work. At some point during the interview Nicolette classifies herself as an activation practitioner who works according to the principle *"Hey, now you [the citizen] are going to do something, now you are going to work*".

Furthermore, Nicolette's 'behavior' during her main approach is characterized by explaining citizens their rights and duties and discussing citizens' options to work. The 'language' that Nicolette uses focuses on work and on rules. During one of the observations Nicolette tells a citizen the following: *"Wait one second, I have to make something clear here. You get money, so you will have to go [to the training]. You are not in the position now to make demands… everybody who receives benefits has to be available for work"*. Finally, with regard to 'time', Nicolette takes time to explain to citizens what their rights and duties are and to make clear that they have to actively search for work. Citizens are expected to briefly inform Nicolette about their situation. Also Nicolette takes time to type information in the computer.

Bernard's main approach

Bernard classifies his own approach to activation as 'social' (*maatschappelijk*). He says (during the formal interview) that he believes that activation is not just about work and income. Instead, activation is about the bigger social picture, including the citizen's desires. He explains: "*When people are feeling sad or they don't want to work, there is always a reason behind this. I can't believe that people just sit at home and do nothing and that they feel happy about this. This is why you have to take the [citizen's] social situation into account and why you should focus on the person*". When Bernard adopts his main approach to activation it is his 'goal' to focus on work as well as on the citizen's social situation (this includes the citizen's desires) and on the citizen as a person.

While focusing on the person Bernard does not regard the citizen as the expert of his own situation. Instead Bernard says: "*I like it [my work] because I can make a plan for people. I look at what we are going to do and how we are going to do this*". Bernard's 'behavior' when he adopts his main approach is characterized by his active participation in the activation of the citizen: Bernard makes a plan for the citizens and when required he does make phone calls to relevant agencies. At the same time, Bernard also expects from

citizens that they undertake action themselves. For example, Bernard suggested to a citizen's question about his eligibility for additional benefits that the citizen himself should obtain information about this at another organization. Furthermore, Bernard's behavior is also characterized by providing citizens with the space to discuss personal topics and by listening to citizens.

The 'language' that Bernard uses during his interactions with citizens is personal. For example, Bernard asks citizens: *"How is the relationship with your ex-husband?"*, *"Do you have a social network?"* Besides discussing personal topics, Bernard also talks about the citizens' trajectory towards work, for example, he says: *"I am going to make a plan"*, *"I am going on holidays and you know that before that things will be arranged for you"* and *"You know what your rights and duties are during your trajectory towards work?"* With regard to 'time', Bernard gives citizens time to talk and when explaining the plan towards work Bernard takes time to talk. Also Bernard takes time typing information in the computer.

Activation entrepreneur's main approach

Finally, as a last example of the other activation practitioners' main approaches, the activation entrepreneur's main approach to activation is briefly discussed. It is the activation entrepreneur 'goal' to provide citizens with insights in their personality.

With regard to the 'behavior' of the activation entrepreneur, when adopting his main approach, the observation was made that the activation entrepreneur asks questions such as: "*Who are you as a person?*" or "*What do you want to achieve?*" These questions offer citizens with the opportunity to talk and reflect on who he is and what he wants to do. The activation entrepreneur also gives the citizens assignment that can help them to find out what it is that they want to do and who they are as a person. For example, the citizens are asked to make a list of activities that they undertake during a week. Things such as grocery shopping, meeting friends and cleaning the house can be on that list. Subsequently, the citizens are asked to indicate how these activities make them feel and if these activities are considered fun and energizing or if these activities only cost energy. Once the citizen knows which activities provide energy and which activities cost energy (for example listening to a friend who always complains), the citizen can adjust his weekly schedule in such a way that more things appear on it that provide energy. This can also assist the citizen in finding work that fits his personality. However, the activation entrepreneur also advises citizens about what it is that they should do. For example, citizens are advised to attend appointments and to exercise in order to maintain a daily routine.

The ‘language’ that the activation entrepreneur uses during his interactions with citizens focuses on how citizens are feeling and on what they would want to do. For example, a citizen tells the activation entrepreneur that he had a really nice weekend, going out with friends. After which the activation entrepreneur asks *“How did you feel afterwards [after meeting your friends]?”* The activation entrepreneur also asks citizens what they like about their life or about their work, for example, the activation entrepreneur asks a citizen: *“What do you like about your work?”* To which the citizen responded that he likes trying out new things. *“Do you do that often?”* the citizen says that he does not to which the activation entrepreneur asks: *“Why not?”* With regard to ‘time’ this activation entrepreneur typically leaves most of the time to the citizens to talk. Sometimes the activation entrepreneur takes time to talk, for example when explaining an exercise to citizens.

In sum, the observations and interviews conducted for this study suggest a picture of activation in which each activation practitioner adopts his own personal ‘main approach’ to activation. Activation practitioners apply their personal main approach to activation during most of their interactions with citizens. Rudy, Linda, Megan, Nicolette, Bernard, the activation entrepreneur as well as the other activation practitioners all adopt their own main mix of specific behavior, language, goals and time when activating citizens.

1.3 Subsidiary approaches

Besides adopting their own personal main approach to activation, sometimes the activation practitioners were observed doing something different. In these cases, this thesis argues that the activation practitioners revert to a ‘subsidiary approach’ to activation. This Section offers examples of Rudy and Linda when they reverted to a subsidiary approach to activation. In addition, examples of situations in which Nicolette and the activation entrepreneur reverted to a subsidiary approach are briefly presented.

Rudy’s subsidiary approach

The following interaction between Rudy and Cathy shows that Rudy reverts to a subsidiary approach because the situation requires this.

> 9. Rudy and Cathy
>
> Cathy (37 years old, on benefits for 3 months) participates in a course that is led by Rudy. At 12:30 the course finishes. The participants walk out, except for Cathy. She stays behind and walks up to Rudy asking if she can talk with him about some personal issues. I decided to give them some privacy and join

> the other participants outside. Ten minutes later all the participants have left so I decided to wait for Rudy at his desk. At one o'clock Rudy and Cathy walk towards me. Cathy's eyes are red; it looks like she has been crying. She says hello to me, thanks Rudy and leaves. Rudy tells me that Cathy has been having a difficult time and that he gave her an exemption (*een vrijstelling*). For the next month Cathy will not have to apply for jobs.

In this observation Rudy only interacted with Cathy. While Rudy leads the course in which Cathy participates, Rudy is also Cathy's activation practitioner and the two of them have met before. After the course Cathy asks Rudy if they can talk for a moment. During the interaction between Rudy and Cathy the researcher is not present. After the interaction Rudy and Cathy are observed again.

Cathy's eyes are red and it seems likely that she has been crying. Rudy does not explain what happened during the interaction or what Cathy has told him, he only says that he gave Cathy an exemption so that she can take some time to herself and that for the next month Cathy does not have to apply for jobs.

When Rudy adopts his main approach to activation, he focuses on the citizen's duties (for example the duty to apply for jobs). He also focuses on getting citizens back to work as quickly as possible. According to Rudy, citizens have to be willing to accept a wide range of possible jobs. However, this time, Rudy decides that Cathy needs some time off. Rudy reverts to a subsidiary approach to activation and offers Cathy an exemption, because of her personal circumstances.

Next, a different situation in which Rudy reverts to a subsidiary approach is discussed.

> 10. Rudy and the participants of a course
>
> It is the ninth time that the citizens who participate in Rudy's course come together. After today's meeting there will only be one more session. Today's session is about what to do in the future and about what the participants have learned during the course.
>
> At twelve o'clock eight participants are present. Two participants will show up late and after the last meeting Pauline is no longer welcome to join the group. As Rudy explains "It did not work".
>
> One by one the participants have to stand in front of the group and present how they see their future and what they have learned from the course. The other participants listen and add to each other's stories. For example, by saying: "And you have also learned how to work on a computer" or "I think you should try to get your driver's license".

After Joni's (42 years old, on benefits for 16 months) presentation, the group offers feedback with regard to the way she presented herself. They suggest that she should speak up and she can definitely show more confidence. Rudy adds to this: “It is up to them [your group members] to help you now. We will receive the bill later”. Laughter follows.

Analyzing the interaction between Rudy and the participants we see that in this particular situation Rudy has taken a step back from his role as expert. Rudy offers the group more space to come up with suggestions. Rudy’s familiarity with the citizens makes it possible for him to ask the stronger group members to assist those group members who need some more help.

Linda’s subsidiary approach

The following interaction between Linda and Koos shows that Linda at times reverts to a subsidiary approach to activation.

11. Linda and Koos

During the fifth meeting of Linda’s course, Koos (56 years old, on benefits for 9 months) tells the other participants that he has no idea what he wants to do. He has been thinking about it, but after working for a big company for thirty-five years, Koos says that he really does not know what to do now. He also says that he hates receiving benefits. He says that his father used to say that he would break the legs of his kids if they ever had to go to the assistance office (*de steun*). Linda suggests that Koos can do a competence test in order to figure out where his options lie.

This interaction between Linda and Koos shows that Linda sidesteps her main approach to activation (in which she approaches the citizen as the expert of his own situation and in which she lets the citizen provide information). Because Koos really does not know what to do, Linda has reverted to a subsidiary approach and as a result offers a competence test in order help Koos figure out his options. Instead of letting Koos discover for himself what he wants to do, the competence test might possibly do a little bit of that work for him by suggesting possible options to Koos.

The following interaction between Linda and Ferdinand provides an additional example of Linda adopting a subsidiary approach to activation.

12. Linda and Ferdinand

Ferdinand walks into the meeting room, wearing a training suit and a bandage around his arm. Linda is Ferdinand's activation practitioner. Ferdinand is 55 years and has been on benefits for over a year. Linda asks Ferdinand what has happened to his arm. The two of them talk about the accident Ferdinand had and about the need to call in sick, since Ferdinand is not realistically able to work at the moment.

Twenty minutes into the conversation, Linda and Ferdinand talk about volunteer work. Ferdinand has applied for volunteer work but it turns out that there is a waiting list. Ferdinand says that this is a demonstration of how difficult it is at the moment to find a job. Linda brings to table that there are some guaranteed job placements (*baan garantie plekken*). Linda explains: "For example, you can work at customs, checking papers. Or you can drive a bus. There are some trajectories that can eventually lead to a regular job. I don't know, but did we discuss this before already?" Ferdinand nods and says that last time there were places available as a driver as well. He adds to this that it only makes sense to apply for these positions if you actually have the ambition to drive a bus. Linda smiles and walks away to print the list of available jobs.

The two of them look through the list. Linda says that some positions would really suit Ferdinand even though Ferdinand is overqualified. According to Linda, some of these positions are actually more challenging than suggested on the list. To which Ferdinand responds that he prefers to do some challenging volunteer work, instead of a boring regular job.

Linda hands the list over to Ferdinand.

Analyzing the interaction between Linda and Ferdinand we see that Linda adopts a subsidiary approach to activation. Ferdinand indicates that he is not interested in driving a bus. He said that *"it only makes sense to apply for these positions if you actually have the ambition to drive a bus*". It is likely that Ferdinand is in fact not interested in any of the guaranteed job placements, since he says that *"he prefers it to do some challenging volunteer work, instead of a boring regular job*".

Despite Ferdinand's objections to the guaranteed job placements, Linda still discusses listed options with him and she hands Ferdinand the list. By doing so, Linda steps away from her main approach to activation in which she sees the citizen as the expert. She makes a suggestion and instead of accepting Ferdinand's refusal of her proposal, she persists to discuss the list with Ferdinand.

Afterwards Linda explains during an informal interview that she does not expect Ferdinand to do anything with the list, but that she feels he needed a bit of a push. In the conversations they have had so far, Linda feels that she has not managed to motivate Ferdinand to look for a regular job. Linda does not want Ferdinand to start seeing his benefits as his normal income and therefore she decided to do try a different approach.

The other activation practitioners' subsidiary approaches

The other activation practitioners also revert to a subsidiary approach when this is required by the situation at hand. For example, Nicolette, the activation practitioner who sees herself as an executer of the law and who normally focuses on rules and on work, was lenient with a citizen with a sick child, as the following observation demonstrates:

> 13. Nicolette and Nina
>
> Nicolette asks Nina (25 years old, on benefits for 5 months) if she has taken the competence test that was planned for her. Nina responds that she has completely forgotten about the test, as she is in the middle of moving house and suddenly her baby had to be hospitalized. Nicolette asks: "Is everything ok now?" Nina responds by saying that her baby is still in hospital. The two briefly discuss the baby's health and continue by discussing Nina's thoughts about possibilities for work. After a while Nicolette suggests that they can have a look if there is another possibility for taking a competence test.

After the interaction Nicolette explains during an informal interview that she can understand that Nina forgot about the competence test, since her baby was in hospital. Nicolette explains that under these circumstances she sees no need to sanction the citizen for failing to show up for the competence test.

Also the activation entrepreneur was observed in situations where he adopted a subsidiary approach. As mentioned before, most of the time and during interactions with various citizens the activation entrepreneur wants citizens to obtain insights in their personality. The activation entrepreneur asks questions such as "*Who are you as a person?*" or "*What do you want to achieve?*" This strategy offers the citizen with the opportunity to talk and reflect on who he is and what he wants to do. However, a situation occurs in which a citizen finds it really difficult to indicate who she is and what she wants to achieve. When asked to indicate if the activities that she undertakes over the course of a week (meeting her boyfriend, going to work, going out) give her energy or cost her energy, she does not know where to start. In order to help the citizen, the activation entrepreneur suggests that during an earlier interaction the citizen has indicated that sometimes she finds it exhausting to be in a bar. The citizen nods, but does not know what to say next. The

activation entrepreneur and the citizen end up making a list together, while the activation entrepreneur does most of the talking. So, while typically this activation entrepreneur leaves most of the talking to the citizen he interacts with, he changes his strategy in this session and instead did most of the talking himself. Given the citizen's situation (not knowing where to start or what to say) the activation entrepreneur opted for the use of a subsidiary approach.

In sum, the observed and interviewed activation practitioners not only adopt a personal main approach to activation but they can also revert to one of the 'subsidiary approaches' when this is required by the situation at hand.

1.4 Summary

So far, analysis of the data shows that when activation practitioners actually activate citizens they adopt a personal 'main approach'. Approaches differ with regard to observed behaviors, use of language, perceived goals and ways of spending time. For example, Rudy shares his expert knowledge with citizens, whereas Linda sees the citizen as the expert of his own situation. Instead of behaving as an expert, Linda asks open-ended questions that make it possible for the citizen to talk and express his desires. Rudy, on the other hand, engages in short discussions with citizens, which are concluded by Rudy once more presenting his own point of view.

However, in line with the findings of Zandvliet *et al.* (Zandvliet, Gravesteijn, Tanis, Collewet, & De Jong, 2011) the data generated for this thesis also show that sometimes activation practitioners do not adopt their main approach but instead do something different: they revert to a 'subsidiary approach' to activation. For example, Rudy, who normally focuses on rules and who tries to get citizens back to (any type of) work as quickly as possible offers an exemption (*een vrijstelling*) when a citizen experiences temporary personal difficulties. Linda lets go of her approach of seeing the citizen as the expert of his own situation when the citizen has no idea what he wants to do. Instead, she offers the citizen a competence test.

2. With what result do activation practitioners do what they do?

By observing the actual actions of activation practitioners, the following pattern in activation practitioners' interactions with citizens became visible: activation practitioners adopt a 'main approach' when activating citizens. However, when required by the situation, practitioners can and will revert to a 'subsidiary approach'. The question can be

raised what this particular accomplishment of the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*), with its specific pattern, implies for the shape of activation.

This thesis argues that the *first doing* of activation practitioners results in a diverse and dynamic shape of activation. There are two reasons for this argument. First, diversity between activation practitioners occurs with regard to the adopted main approaches. Second, the occurrence of subsidiary approaches in addition to a main approach makes the activation practitioner's approach to his work more dynamic. These two reasons are further discussed in detail below.

First, there is difference *between* activation practitioners. As the observations have made clear, there is a wide variety of possible approaches from which activation practitioners adopt a main work approach. For citizens this means that it certainly matters whether they are activated by Rudy, Linda or some other activation practitioner. When facing Rudy, the chances of receiving a sanction at some point during the trajectory are greater than when dealing with Linda. Similarly, the chance that the citizen is required to do some soul-searching is greater if they deal with Linda than when they encounter Rudy. However, it has to be noted that the observed variety was not limitless. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners activated citizens within the boundaries of a framework of implicit guidelines, as shown in the next Chapter.

Second, besides the differences between activation practitioners, individual activation practitioners may also adopt subsidiary approaches in addition to their main approach. They can revert to a subsidiary approach when the situation calls for an alternative. The observations, as discussed before in this Chapter, suggest that the activity of activating citizens is not a static activity. Rather, it appears to be a dynamic activity in which fine-tuning and adjustments might be required at all times.

Empowerment, domination and responsibilization in practice

With regard to the three philosophies about the activation of citizens the aforementioned findings can be interpreted as follows. Activation, as it is practiced, does not only follow one philosophy. Instead, elements of the three philosophies are combined in practice. Rudy's main approach can be characterized as a form of domination, that is telling citizens what to do. Whereas Linda's main approach can be characterized as a form of empowerment, that is letting citizens decide themselves what they want to do. Furthermore, Linda reverts to a more dominating approach to activation when offering Koos (an unemployed citizen who, after multiple meetings, has no idea what he wants to do) a competence test. And Rudy sometimes responsibilizes citizens, that is making citizens behave in the desired manner, by telling them that they want to work and that

they are tired of sitting at home. Similarly, Linda responsibilized Ferdinand by giving him the list of guaranteed job placements, since Linda hoped that this would make Ferdinand stop seeing his benefits as his normal income from now on.

Besides making the interpretation that various philosophies exist simultaneously in practice, a second interpretation can be made, namely that by adopting a dominating approach to activation, the result can be that a citizen is empowered. By telling Koos to do a competence test, Linda may have pushed Koos to a stage after which it becomes possible for him to determine by himself what he wants to do. Hence, (periods of) domination may result in an empowered citizen. Similarly, empowerment can result in a responsibilized citizen. This is, for example, the situation when an activation practitioner tries to empower a citizen, giving him the freedom to determine what he wants to do, while the citizen interprets the given freedom as a limited freedom since he feels pushed to find work.

Furthermore, because each citizen has his own feelings, capabilities, problems and desires, it is possible that the same approach to activation, for example letting citizens find out what they want to do (empowerment) results in one citizen actually feeling empowered, another citizen who feels responsibilized and a third citizen feeling lost and forlorn, longing for a more directive approach. In other words, we need to distinguish between the approach to activation and the result of activation. An empowering approach to activation does not necessary result in an empowered citizen.

Since the practice of activation partially takes place in the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens (the other part takes place in the interactions among activation practitioners as colleagues as discussed in the next Chapter), an *effective* practice has to be diverse and dynamic, taking into account the differences among citizens as well as the various stages in which citizens can find themselves during an activation trajectory. In line with the work of Michael Lipsky (1980) and Catherine Durose (2011) who argued that street-level bureaucrats / front line workers make policy, the observed diverse and dynamic nature of practiced activation can be considered activation policy as it is created by activation practitioners in practice.

As mentioned before, the other authors who studied the practice of activation pointed out some of the problems related to diverse and dynamic activation in a situation of partially developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). The main problem being that practiced activation may be arbitrary and that activation practitioners may act randomly, based on their individual insights.

However, the finding of the current Chapter that activation practitioners adopt a personal main approach may be interpreted to suggest that the actual practice of activation is less problematic than sometimes suggested in the relevant literature (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). Because activation practitioners adopt a main approach, citizens can expect to be treated in a similar fashion throughout the activation trajectory by their activation practitioner.

Furthermore, it can also be argued that adopting both a main approach and subsidiary approaches to activation does not necessarily mean that activation is a chaotic activity. As mentioned before, it may be that there are some *implicit guidelines* (in Alasdair MacIntyre's terminology 'standards of excellence') on which activation practitioners base these strategy changes. Implicit guidelines that are created by activation practitioners while participating in the practice. In other words, diversity of main approaches and subsidiary approaches in a situation where bureaucratic standards and professional norms are not (yet) fully developed may result in practiced activation being chaotic and arbitrary. However, diversity may as well be the result of practiced activation that is more ordered than sometimes suggested.

Conclusion

This Chapter explored the ways in which activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens, thereby answering the two questions raised in the introduction of this Chapter.

1a How do activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (*first doing*)?

1b What does the *first doing* of activation practitioners imply for the shape of practiced activation?

Analysis of the data generated via observations, interviews and video recordings made the following pattern in activation practitioners' interactions with citizens visible: activation practitioners indeed adopt a 'main approach' when activating citizens. However, when required by the situation, practitioners can and will revert to a 'subsidiary approach'. It became clear that activation practitioners adopt a personal 'main approach' when activating citizens. Different activation practitioners do different things when they are activating citizens. This Chapter showed that Rudy (an activation practitioner) focuses on rules and on work. He wants the citizens to get back to work (any work) as quickly as possible. Linda (another activation practitioner) instead chooses to focus on the

information the citizen provides. She sees the citizen as the expert of his own situation. She wants every citizen to find a job he likes.

It also became clear that activation practitioners sometimes revert to a 'subsidiary approach'. This happens when the situation requires a change in strategy. When the activation efforts of the activation practitioners no longer bring about a normal result (Chapter 2 presents the idea of a normal result in more detail), the activation practitioner may revert to a subsidiary approach. Alternatively, the activation practitioner can transfer the citizen to a colleague. For example, in this Chapter we saw that Linda offered a competence test to Koos when he seemed lost and forlorn. By doing so, Linda let go of her perception of the citizen as the expert of his own situation. Instead of asking Koos to do some more soul searching by himself the competence test could do some of this soul searching for him.

It was argued that by acting the way they do, activation practitioners accomplish a diverse and dynamic shape of practiced activation. Two reasons for this argument were given. First, there are differences in adopted main approaches between activation practitioners. This makes practiced activation diverse. Second, the use of subsidiary approaches in addition to main approaches appears to make activation practitioners' approach to their work more dynamic. This diverse and dynamic shape of practiced activation challenges the philosophies about the state's efforts to activate its citizens presented in Part One. For example, this Chapter argued that practiced activation entails elements of all three philosophies. Elements of domination, responsibilization and empowerment are all found when studying activation in practice. Furthermore, this Chapter argued that a dominating approach to activation may result in a citizen feeling empowered. A dominating approach to activation does not necessarily result in a dominated citizen. Furthermore, in line with thoughts of Michael Lipsky (1980) and Catherine Durose (2011), who argue that street-level bureaucrats / front-line workers make policy, this observed diverse and dynamic nature of practiced activation can be considered activation policy as it is created by activation practitioners in practice.

The observation that activation practitioners adopt a main approach and subsidiary approaches may make activation a *chaotic* activity. However, as this Chapter argued, it may also be that practiced activation is more ordered than it may appear. First, activation practitioners' adopting of a main approach enhances the consistency within one activation trajectory. Once the citizen knows who his activation practitioner is, he knows what he can expect. Second, as this Chapter has argued, the use of subsidiary approaches as well as the variety of main approaches may follow some implicit guidelines. The analysis conducted in the next Chapter shows that indeed practiced activation is more ordered than sometimes suggested.

Chapter 2

What activation practitioners do: accomplishing the orderliness of practiced activation

Introduction

The previous Chapter showed that activation practitioners adopt a variety of main approaches to their work. Furthermore, in certain circumstances, activation practitioners adopted subsidiary approaches. It was also argued that the variety of main and subsidiary approaches does not necessary imply *chaos*. Instead, activation practitioners may follow some implicit guidelines in selecting their approaches. These implicit guidelines might suggest that activation may be more ordered than it may appear. The only way to understand if practiced activation does indeed follow a particular order is to study activation as a collective activity in practice (Garfinkel, 1967; MacIntyre, 1981). This raises the questions:

2a Do activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how (*second doing*)?

2b What does the *second doing* of activation practitioners (or its absence) imply for the shape of practiced activation?

This Chapter again uses the methodology presented in Part Two to answers these questions. This Chapter again presents an actual *doing* of activation practitioners, this time looking at activation as a collective activity. Activation practitioners' *second doing* refers to activation practitioners' collective accomplishment of the orderliness of activation. In order to study activation practitioners' *second doing*, this Chapter analyzes the data generated via observations and interviews following Ilja Maso's (1984) method for doing ethnomethodological research. Maso's method involves analyzing the generated

data by following two steps: looking at what knowledge members refer to when they make their activities normal and looking at how members do this (Maso, 1984, p. 63).

The analysis shows that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners possess at least seven reservoirs of common knowledge. An example of a reservoir of common knowledge is that activation needs to respect the minimal needs of citizens. By demonstrating that they possess these reservoirs, activation practitioners manage to make their daily actions ordered to a large extent. Therefore, while accomplishing the task of activating citizens (*first doing*), activation practitioners have to work within the order as collectively accomplished by themselves (*second doing*).

The organization of this Chapter is as follows: Section 1 presents how activation practitioners together accomplish an ordered reality (*second doing*). Section 2 presents the implications of activation practitioners' *second doing* for the shape of practiced activation.

1. What do they do?

Harold Garfinkel distinguishes two ways in which members can demonstrate that they possess particular reservoirs of common knowledge, namely "through actual witnessed displays of common talk and conduct" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 181). Behavior (witnessed displays of common conduct in Garfinkel's words) and language (witnessed displays of common talk in Garfinkel's words) are two of the seven dimensions used during the observations.

First, behavior can be used to demonstrate the possession of common knowledge. By behaving in the 'normal' way activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess a particular type of common knowledge. Let us first clarify this point with an illustration of being in a supermarket. If you walk to the counter to pay, you position yourself at the end of the queue. By doing so, you demonstrate via behavior that you possess the common knowledge that you are supposed to wait for your turn (Ten Have, 2004, p. 20). To give another example, Agnes, the woman who was studied by Garfinkel and who was born with male genitals but who developed breast during puberty, engaged in gossip with girlfriends and she discussed what happened on dates, because this is what natural women do (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 147). Similarly, activation practitioners' transfer of citizens to colleagues demonstrates (amongst others) that the activation practitioners studied in this thesis possess the common knowledge that when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation can be functional (common knowledge 2).

Second, language is used to demonstrate the possession of common knowledge. For example, Garfinkel found that Agnes emphasized feminine elements and minimized

masculine elements when she discusses her childhood. Agnes told Garfinkel that her biggest problem during childhood was having to play boy's games and that she instead played with dolls and cooked mud cakes for her little brother (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 128-129). Examples of how language is used to demonstrate the possession of common knowledge among activation practitioners in this thesis are found in the way activation practitioners talk about differences in main approaches to activation. Activation practitioners talk about 'creative activation practitioners' and 'strict activation practitioners' or about 'enforcers' and 'social workers'. By adopting this vocabulary, activation practitioners, via language, demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that the world of activation is a continuum between enforcing and being lenient (common knowledge 1). In short, this Chapter will show that activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess seven reservoirs of common knowledge via their behavior and/or the use of language.

Before presenting the findings of this thesis in the next Section, it is important to address some of the other relevant research about the implementation of Dutch activation policies (Van der Aa, 2012; Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012). This other research did not pay attention to the demonstration of order by activation practitioners. However, they did find that activation practitioners talk with each other at the coffee corner (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012, p. 27), that activation practitioners, sometimes, formally discuss cases with each other (Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012, p. 47; Van der Aa, 2012, p. 232), that activation practitioners talk about trusting and checking citizens (Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012, p. 47), that activation practitioners talk about their work as 'working with people' (*mensenwerk*) (Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012, p. 41) and that activation practitioners are, most of the time, careful about imposing sanctions (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 82; Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012, pp. 46, 53, 57; Van der Aa, 2012, pp. 172, 176, 180). Moreover, these authors do pay attention to the behavior and language that activation practitioners use.

Some of the other research, occasionally, does link behavior of activation practitioners and language used by activation practitioners to shared common knowledge. For example, Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) connect the careful attitude of a group of activation practitioners towards sanctions to their shared opinion that the citizens they encounter find themselves in a marginalized position (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 82). Patricia van Echtelt and Maurice Guiaux (2012) connect the way activation practitioners talk about their work as 'working with people' (*mensenwerk*), to a shared understanding among activation practitioners that each citizen is different (Van Echtelt & Guiaux, 2012, p. 41).

However, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there is no other research in which the behavior of activation practitioners and the use of language by activation practitioners, are structurally seen as demonstrations of possessed reservoirs of common knowledge, as is done in this thesis with its ethnomethodological approach to activation.

1.1 Common knowledge and demonstration of common knowledge

As mentioned before, following Ilja Maso's (1984) method for doing ethnomethodological research, the researcher analyzed the generated data by following two steps: looking at what knowledge members refer when they make their activities normal and looking at how members do this (Maso, 1984, p. 63). What follows is a detailed account of each of the seven reservoirs of common knowledge that the activation practitioners studied in this thesis demonstrated to possess. These seven reservoirs are deduced from the observational and interview data. This thesis does not claim to describe all the possible reservoirs of common knowledge of activation practitioners. Instead this Section is a reconstruction of the seven reservoirs of common knowledge that activation practitioners demonstrated to possess and that surfaced through the analysis of the data generated for this thesis. It may well be that future ethnomethodological research on activation finds additional or alternative reservoirs of common knowledge.

It also has to be noted that the various groups of activation practitioners that are observed and interviewed emphasize different reservoirs of common knowledge. Despite this variation in emphasis placed on particular reservoirs of common knowledge, together activation practitioners demonstrated the possession of these seven reservoirs of common knowledge.

Common knowledge 1: The world of activation is a continuum between enforcing and being lenient

The first reservoir of common knowledge that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners possess is their understanding of the world of activation as a continuum between enforcing and being lenient. As an activation practitioner your behavior can be anything between enforcing and being lenient. During their work and during interactions with each other activation practitioners demonstrate possession of the first reservoir of common knowledge by behaving accordingly and via language. How they do this is discussed next.

Transferring citizens to colleagues

In their daily work activation practitioners demonstrate possession of the first reservoir of common knowledge by transferring citizens to each other. By transferring citizens to each other, the observed activation practitioners show that differences in adopted approaches do occur. If every activation practitioner would act the same (like a group of robots), there would be no use to transfer citizens.

During the observations the situation occurred that an activation practitioner did not feel that he was getting any further with a particular citizen. He wrote the following e-mail to his colleague: *"Hey Rudy, I have a citizen here who will soon be eligible for his pre-pension (in 3 years) and who tells me openly that he only applies for jobs for me. Something for you!*". Rudy showed this e-mail from his colleague to the researcher. This e-mail and Rudy's immediate understanding of the e-mail show that Rudy and his colleague share a common understanding. They both understand what is meant with the phrase: "*who tells me openly that he only applies for jobs for me*", namely a citizen who lacks the motivation to search for work. The statement "*Something for you!*" has a particular meaning in the context of activating citizens. Rudy's colleague tells Rudy that he believes that Rudy, with his particular approach to activation, is better suitable (at this moment) to activate this particular citizen. In Garfinkel's terminology, Rudy and his colleague, who are members, use indexical expressions in order to understand each other.

During the formal interviews various activation practitioners discussed situations in which citizens were transferred to a different activation practitioner. To quote two activation practitioners:

> *"It is good to be aware of the fact that sometimes you don't get further with a citizen. You have to ask yourself the question 'is there something else I can do?' If not, then you have to transfer the citizen to a colleague".*

> *"There are colleagues, and sometimes I think 'well this citizen would be better off with this colleague'. I find it difficult to be strict and direct… I prefer it to work together with the citizen".*

Both quotes show that activation practitioners believe that sometimes the activation process may benefit from a transfer of a citizen from one activation practitioner to a colleague. This might be because the activation practitioner does not know what to do anymore, as the first quote shows. It might also be that the activation practitioner believes that his colleague's approach to activation *"strict and direct"* in this example, may be better suitable to activate a particular citizen. In the latter quote the activation practitioner also refers to his own approach to activation as *"together with the citizen"*. As we will see later, the other activation practitioners, as members, refer to differences in their

adopted approaches to activation. Members understand what is meant by being *"strict and direct"* and by *"working together with the citizen"*, thereby once again making use of indexical expressions. Using indexical expressions, members also know what it means to not *"get further with a citizen"*. Next, it is presented how activation practitioners' activity of tagging along with each other, can be seen as a demonstration of the possession of the first reservoir of common knowledge.

Tagging along with colleagues

Once in a while activation practitioners tag along with each other, in order to observe, and possibly learn from, each other's approach to activation. By doing so, activation practitioners demonstrate the possession of common knowledge that activation is a continuum between enforcing and being lenient, and that different approaches to activation exist. As one activation practitioner explained during the interview:

> *"When I see that a citizen is not doing well, then I feel the urge to intervene. I think that the citizen is incapable to sort things out. I want to phone the relevant agencies and I want to arrange everything for the citizen. And actually, I should not do that. In such situations it can be useful to tag along with a colleague who does not arrange everything for the citizen, but who instead lets the citizen himself make the phone call. A colleague who leans back and who passes the phone to the citizen and says 'come on, make the call'. From those observations I learn… You learn all the time".*

This quote shows that different activation practitioners do different things when activating citizens. As the activation practitioners says: *"it can be useful to tag along with a colleague who does not arrange everything for the citizen, but who instead lets the citizen himself make the phone call*". This interviewed activation practitioner is aware that he sometimes does too much to help citizens and that this is not necessarily the best thing to do. When he observes how colleagues approach citizens differently (in this example letting the citizen do things instead of doing things for the citizen) the activation practitioner learns from this. Being a member, this activation practitioner knows what different approaches to activation entail. By talking about his work in this way, the interviewed activation practitioner demonstrates that various approaches to activation indeed exist. Next, it is discussed how activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the first reservoir of common knowledge when they are talking with each other.

Talking with colleagues

When in doubt, activation practitioners talk with each other. One activation practitioner explains during the formal interview:

> *"Every time when I have a citizen with whom I don't know what to do, I discuss the situation with colleagues… But then every activation practitioner does his work in a different way. If I ask advice from one colleague he gives me different advice then when I ask advice from another colleague".*

This quote shows the activation practitioner's knowledge that different approaches to activation occur, or as the interviewed activation practitioner says: *"every activation practitioner does his work in a different way*".

During the observations Linda and a colleague discussed a case with each other.

14. Discussion between Linda and colleague

Linda: I don't know if I should be tougher.

Colleague: What happened?

Linda: An older man with no motivation to work.

Colleague: Hmm, but that is not what we do.

This observation shows that Linda asks herself and her colleague the question if she should be *"tougher"*. By doing so, she indicates that she possesses the first reservoir of common knowledge, namely that the world of activation is a continuum between enforcing and being lenient. Linda has the option to be a bit more lenient or tougher. The colleague's response indicates that he also possesses this reservoir of common knowledge. Instead of asking Linda what she means by being tougher, he knows that Linda refers to the continuum of approaches to activation. The interaction continues and the colleague asks Linda why she considers an adjustment in approach, by asking her *"What happened?*". Linda's brief response that she has to activate an older, unmotivated man is enough for the colleague to know that in those situations 'we' are not getting really tough on the citizen. Once again, the two members make use of indexical expressions and they are able to understand each other without having to ask: What do you mean 'Should I be tougher'?

In two of the settings under study a system was set up to facilitate the exchange of experiences. In one setting, the activation practitioners meet every day for ten minutes. During this meeting the activation practitioners discuss how they work en what type of problems they encounter. In a different setting, activation practitioners can discuss a case

or problem with each other during a weekly meeting. As an activation practitioner explained during the informal interview, the idea behind these meetings is that other activation practitioners may have different views on the case which can be helpful. These meetings are a demonstration of the common knowledge that different approaches to activation exist. Next, the particular vocabulary that activation practitioners use is presented.

Adopting a particular vocabulary

In the four studied settings, activation practitioners use a particular vocabulary. They talk about enforcers (*handhavers*) and softies or about those practitioners who focus on the law (*op de wet*) and those practitioners who are social workers (*sociale werkers*). Other activation practitioners talk about strict activation practitioners (*de strikten*) and creative activation practitioners (*de creatievelingen*). Divosa, the branch organization for managers of Social Services, distinguishes between the so-called Debbie approach (*aanpak van Debbie*) and the Bruno approach (*aanpak van Bruno*) (Goosen, 2011). They do so based on the documentary *Stand by Me* from Monique Lesterhuis and Suzanne Raes (2010).

Despite the differences in terminology, the activation practitioners seem to refer to a similar situation in which the enforcers, those who focus upon the law, the strict activation practitioners (from now on referred to as the enforcers *et al.*) focus on efficiency, rules (rights and duties) and sanctions, while the softies, social workers, creative activation practitioners (from now on referred to as the softies *et al.*) focus on helping and assisting citizens to sort out their lives.

During the interviews the vocabulary of enforcers *et al.* and softies *et al.* was also used. For example, during the interview an activation practitioner talked about the difference between social workers and colleagues who focus more upon the law.

> *"Well before social workers used to work here. But recently the laws have changed so much, and more and more colleagues are hired who have a juridical background. You can really see a change. The colleagues who work here for a long time are still very social, but the colleagues who are new are a bit harder and they focus more upon the law".*

The terminology that the activation practitioners, as members, use is indexical. It is only in the context of activating citizens that particular terms obtain meaning. By using these indexical expressions it becomes possible for the members to understand each other, and thereby to experience their work as ordered and normal.

To summarize, activation practitioners, as members, behave in accordance with the common knowledge that activation is a continuum between enforcing and being lenient. They transfer citizens to colleagues, they tag along with each other and they talk with each other about their work. All these activities only make sense if there is a shared understanding that there are differences in approaches to activation. As mentioned before, if the activation practitioners would do exactly the same (like robots) it would make no sense to transfer citizens, to tag along or to discuss cases with one another. Besides behaving in accordance with the first reservoir of common knowledge, activation practitioners also use language to demonstrate that they possess this first reservoir of common knowledge. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners talk about differences in approaches.

Furthermore, because all the members understand indexical expressions, such as *"Something for you!"*, *"I am naturally more inclined to help the citizen"*, *"Sometimes you don't get further with a citizen"* and *"Should I be tougher?"*, it becomes possible for the members to understand each other and to experience their interactions as normal and ordered. They do so, by linking the indexical expression to the shared reservoir of common knowledge. As Ten Have explains, "by 'hearing' what was 'meant' rather than what was 'said' the orderliness of everyday life is accomplished" (Ten Have, 2004, p. 22). In the example of *"Should I be tougher?"* the indexical expression *"tougher"* is linked to the common knowledge that approaches to activation range between enforcing and being lenient. Both Linda and her colleague are able to link the expression to the shared common knowledge and a normal interaction occurs.

Not only indexical expressions are linked to the shared reservoirs of common knowledge. Behavior is also linked to common knowledge. By linking the transfer of a citizen to the common understanding that there are differences in approaches to activation, the transfer of citizens becomes normal and understandable.

Furthermore, activation practitioners' behavior and use of language demonstrates that they possess common knowledge and simultaneously, the possession of this common knowledge makes it possible for activation practitioners to understand their behavior and use of language as normal. This is what Garfinkel refers to as reflexivity.

Common knowledge 2: Differences in approaches to activation can be functional when activating citizens

The second reservoir of common knowledge which activation practitioners possess is that, when activating citizens, differences in approaches to activation can be functional. This functionality of differences in approaches has already been hinted at when

discussing activation practitioners' first reservoir of common knowledge. There are similarities between activation practitioners' demonstration of the first reservoir of common knowledge and their demonstration of the second reservoir of common knowledge. In order to avoid being too repetitive, activation practitioners' demonstration of the second reservoir of common knowledge is presented less extensive than their demonstration of the first reservoir of common knowledge. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the second reservoir of common knowledge through their behavior and via language. How they do this is discussed next.

Transferring citizens to colleagues

As mentioned before when discussing activation practitioners' demonstration of possession of the first reservoir of common knowledge, activation practitioners transfer citizens to each other. When a colleagues' approach is believed to be more effective the citizen is transferred. As one activation practitioner said during the interviews:

> *"This [the transfer of a citizen to a colleague] happens when you think that you tried everything but that nothing that you do does work. I can't do anything with this citizen anymore. I don't know what to do anymore. When this is the situation, then the citizen is transferred".*

In this quote the activation practitioner says *"I don't know what to do anymore*". When this is the case he will transfer the citizen in question to a colleague. Because the expression *"I don't know what to do anymore"*, is an indexical expression, all members understand that given the activation practitioner's approach to activation he does not know what to do anymore, and that a colleague with a different approach to activation, may have other ideas on how to approach and activate the citizen. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, members also know what it means to not *"get further with a citizen"*. While this activation practitioner's approach to activation does no longer help him to achieve results with this citizen, it is possible that a colleague, with a different approach to activation, might still achieve something.

Tagging along with colleagues

Another way activation practitioners' behavior demonstrates that they possess the second reservoir of common knowledge is that activation practitioners tag along with each other, in order to observe, and possibly learn from, each other's approaches to activation. One activation practitioner explains:

> *"Sometimes it can be really good to tag along with a colleague. When you do that, you see that other approaches to the work exist as well. I saw a couple of times that some colleagues lean back during their interaction with the citizen. These colleagues make the citizen sweat and work.... I am naturally more inclined to help the citizen…. But sometimes it is good to lean back and let the citizen work for his money. Instead of me doing all the work for the citizen".*

As this quote shows, the interviewed activation practitioner differentiates between his own approach to activation *"I am naturally more inclined to help the citizen*" and the approaches to activation of some of his colleagues *"some colleagues lean back during their interaction with the citizen. These colleagues make the citizen sweat and work*". Being a member, this activation practitioner knows what the different approaches to activation entail. The quote also shows that the interviewed activation practitioner values both approaches to activation, he says: *"Sometimes it is good to lean back and let the citizen work for his money*". He thereby suggests that when activating citizens there are situations in which it is good to lean back, and there are situation in which it is good to help the citizen. Next, it is discussed how activation practitioners demonstrate possession of the second reservoir of common knowledge by talking with each other.

Talking with colleagues

The systems that are set up to exchange experiences in two of the settings are designed in order for practitioners to learn from differences in approaches to activation. This is a demonstration of both the existence of various approaches to activation (first reservoir of common knowledge) as well as the common knowledge that when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation can be functional (second reservoir of common knowledge). One activation practitioner explains during the interview:

> *"It happened that during a group discussion with colleagues the question was raised 'how are we going to approach this situation?'. And that the colleagues discussed with each other, should we do this or should we not do this…. During those discussions there are similarities in view, but there are also differences".*

This quote shows that when discussing cases with each other different views are presented: *"During those discussions there are similarities in view, but there are also differences*". By discussion with each other what should be done, input from members with different views and different approaches to activation is seen as a valuable contribution to the process of discovering how they are *"going to approach this situation*".

To summarize, activation practitioners, as members, behave in accordance to the common knowledge that when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation can be functional. They transfer citizens to colleagues, they tag along with each other and they talk with each other. All these activities not only demonstrate that differences in approaches to activation occur but also that differences in approaches to activation are valued as being functional.

Because all the members link indexical expressions, such as *"I don't know what to do anymore"* and as mentioned earlier *"Sometimes you don't get further with a citizen"*, to the shared reservoir of common knowledge it becomes possible for the members to understand each other and to experience their interactions as normal and ordered. In this example, not knowing what to do anymore is linked to the reservoir of common knowledge that differences in approaches to activation are functional. It is given my approach to activation that I at some point might no longer know what to do anymore. A colleague with a different approach to activation may still know what to do.

Once again there is a reflexive relationship between activation practitioners' demonstration of common knowledge (for example, the transfer of a citizen demonstrates that differences in approaches to activation can be functional) and the experienced normality of the demonstration due to the possession of this common knowledge (for example, the transfer of a citizen is considered normal, because activation practitioners share the common knowledge that when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation are functional).

Common knowledge 3: Activation is about the balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen and checking up on the citizen

Activation practitioners refer to a precarious balance they need to establish in their work, namely that they have to find a balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen on the one hand and checking up on the citizen on the other hand. The possession of this third reservoir of common knowledge is demonstrated by activation practitioners via behavior and language. Inspecting bank statements of citizens is an example of how activation practitioners demonstrate that checking up is part of their work, as is discussed next.

Checking bank statements together with colleagues

During the observations it became clear that citizens were checked up on. The following observation offers an example of this procedure:

15. Luke and Justine

Justine (38 years old, recently applied for benefits) walks towards the table and says hello to both Luke and me. We all sit down and Luke explains to Justine what I am doing here and asks if she agrees to my presence. Justine agrees to my presence and Luke explains what the purpose of today's meeting is, namely to check Justine's eligibility to receive benefits. This basically involves filling out forms and Justine has to provide the required documents.

After this brief introduction Justine places a couple of papers on the table: tax forms, insurance cards and insurance forms, passport, documents regarding her car and bank statements. Luke looks at the forms and starts typing on the computer. Luke asks Justine various questions regarding her financial situation. Does she have a job? Does she receive a salary? Did she inherit money? There are also questions about Justine's work qualifications, desires, debts, possible addiction problems and social situation. Justine answers and Luke enters the information into the computer.

One hour into the conversation Luke takes the papers that Justine brought with her and tells her that he will make copies of the documents. Luke and I walk to the copy machine. After having copied the documents Luke takes a closer look at Justine's bank statements. How much money is in her accounts? Did she receive any money and if so from whom? Does Justine spend her money close to home or in other parts of the Netherlands or even in foreign countries? In order to be sure that everything is in order, Luke shows the documents to the people from the fraud prevention department. Jurrian, from fraud prevention, checks the documents and says that everything seems fine and legitimate. Luke and I walk back to Justine.

Luke hands the documents back to Justine. He also hands her a leaflet about her rights and duties while being on benefits and he hands her his business card, in case she wants to contact him. Justine signs a document saying that she has received the information about her rights and duties. The two of them conclude their meeting by agreeing that sometime in April Justine's application will be dealt with and by saying goodbye. We all shake hands.

In this observation Luke interacts with Justine. Justine is 38 years old and she recently applied for benefits. Luke is Justine's activation practitioner. This is the first time the two of them meet. During the interaction Luke and Justine sit opposite of each other. They are separated by a table with a computer on it. The researcher sits slightly behind Luke on his left hand.

Analyzing the interaction between Luke and Justine we see that in order to receive welfare benefits, Justine has to present a range of documents. Particularly interesting is the observation that Justine's bank statements are checked closely by Luke as well as by Jurrian, who works at the fraud prevention department. Luke inspected what money came into Justine's bank account, and how much money she spent and where she spent her money.

By asking the citizen to disclose their bank statements, activation practitioners check the story that the citizen offers them. Does the citizen really live where he says that he lives? Are groceries done in the supermarket close to home or elsewhere? Does money come in, and if so from where and how regularly? What does the citizen spent his money on?

In the interaction between Luke and Jurrian, his colleague from fraud prevention, we see that Luke and Jurrian share a common understanding. Luke shows Jurrian the documents, and without asking any questions, Jurrian looks through the documents and says that everything seems fine and legitimate. Jurrian's observation that *"everything seems fine and legitimate"* signifies the end of the check. Luke understands this answer to be normal (indexicality in Garfinkel's terminology) and walks back to Justine. Both Luke and Jurrian consider it normal to check a citizen's bank statements. They do so by referring to the common knowledge that activation is a balancing act between trusting and checking citizens. Next, it is discussed what the activation practitioners talked about during the interviews.

Talking during the interviews

The interviews offered activation practitioners a platform to continue their process of accomplishing normality and order. During the interviews activation practitioners talked about finding the balance between trusting and checking citizens. To quote one activation practitioner:

> *"You have to trust the citizen, but you also have to check things. You are not to be pushed around. If I don't trust the citizen, I can't have a good interaction with him. But if I don't check anything, then people will use me. So I have to find a balance in that".*

As this quote shows, the interviewed activation practitioner considers checking and trusting both important aspects of his work. He explains that if he does not check up on the citizens he interacts with, he will be "*pushed around*" and *"people will use*" him. On the other hand, if he does not trust the citizen he interacts with, he *"... can't have a good interaction with him*". Both checking and trusting are important and the two have to be balanced.

To summarize, activation practitioners, as members, behave in accordance with the common knowledge that activation is about finding a balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen and checking up on the citizen. Activation practitioners inspect bank statements of citizens and they talk about finding this balance during the interviews.

When checking the bank statements of citizens, the observation was made that Luke handed the bank statements of the citizen to Jurrian, who works for fraud prevention. Jurrian, without being explicitly asked to do so, inspected these documents. Also, the observation was made that the activation practitioners make use of indexical expressions. When Jurrian told Luke that *"everything seems fine and legitimate*", Luke understood this answer as normal.

By checking the bank statements of citizens, activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that activation is also about checking citizens. Because activation practitioners possess this common knowledge, the checking of bank statements is understood and considered normal by the activation practitioners. In other words, because of this reflexive relationship, the behavior of checking citizens becomes normal.

However, as indicated in the interviews, activation is not only about checking citizens. Activation is about the balance between trusting citizens and checking up on citizens. When there is no trust between the activation practitioner and the citizen, it is not possible to *"...have a good interaction with him*". However, if the activation practitioner does not check the citizen, the activation practitioner may be *"pushed around*" or used.

Common knowledge 4: Activation is citizen specific. Citizens vary in their needs and capabilities and they may require different activation approaches

The fourth reservoir of common knowledge that activation practitioners possess is that activation is citizen specific. The citizens that activation practitioners encounter vary in their needs and capabilities and as a result they may require different activation approaches. During their work and during interactions with each other activation practitioners demonstrate possession of this fourth reservoir of common knowledge via their behavior as well as via their language use.

<u>Transferring citizens to colleagues</u>

As discussed before, activation practitioners transfer citizens to a colleague when a colleague's approach to activation is believed to be more effective. To quote one activation practitioner:

> *"It happened that I was working with a citizen for half a year, but I really did not get any further. I did try a lot of different things, but nothing worked…. I did transfer this citizen to a colleague, because I knew I should not continue working with her".*

This quote shows that activation practitioners transfer citizens to colleagues when they do not know what to do anymore. As this activation practitioner explains: *"I did try a lot of different things, but nothing worked*". Thus the activation practitioner *"did transfer this citizen to a colleague"*. As explained before, activation practitioners understand that, if given an activation practitioner's particular approach to activation, the practitioner no longer knows what to do, a colleague with a different approach to activation may have different ideas on how to approach and activate that particular citizen. However, it is not just the activation practitioner's approach to activation that is important. Also, the citizen's needs have to be taken into account. Sometimes an activation practitioner with a particular approach to activation should not continue working with a citizen because of his particular needs.

During an informal interview Rudy said that he wanted to take over a citizen from a colleague, because he believed this citizen would be better off if he would activate him. Rudy believed that his colleague did not approach the citizen in a way that met the citizen's needs at that moment. The understanding that citizens are different and that they may need to experience different approaches to become activated can also be observed from the practice that the activation practitioners ask citizens for some basic information. This is discussed next.

Asking for basic information

During the interactions the observation was made that regardless of the setting or practitioner, particular questions needed to be asked of the citizens during the first encounter with an activation practitioner; for example, name, age, duration of unemployment, family situation, debts, possible addiction problems, et cetera. Through the answers provided to these questions, differences and similarities between citizens' needs became apparent.

Asking citizens for basic information is of course also part of activation practitioners' *first doing*, since this behavior takes place during the interaction between the activation practitioner and the citizen. However, since activation practitioners also experience that their colleagues ask this basic information (for example, when a citizen is transferred), this behavior is also seen as a *second doing*. By asking this information from citizens, activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that there

are differences among citizens and that these differences are important when determining how to activate citizens. Next, it is discussed how activation practitioners talked about differences between citizens during the interviews.

Talking during the interviews

During the formal interviews various activation practitioners described their jobs as 'working with people' (*mensenwerk*). In this context, the activation practitioners talked about the diversity of citizens. These are quotes from two activation practitioners:

> *"Every individual is a different person. Every time you meet someone you have to look who the person is whom you are facing".*

> *"There is a great diversity of people you get to interact with during your work".*

Furthermore, the activation practitioners talked about the need for citizen-specific activation during the formal interviews. To quote three activation practitioners:

> *"I try to figure out, who are you? What is your story?... Where are you at this moment? Where do you want to go? And how can you get there… What people need is really diverse. Someone who is autistic and you tell him to work in a shop, while he finds it difficult to have contact with people… that does not work… How can you make sure to match things?".*

> *"How to get citizens involved again is very personal. You can reach somebody by being provocative and by saying 'you will never find a job in your life'. Saying this is of course really shocking, but it works for some citizens. It makes these citizens think 'hey, it will never work like this'. And this motivates them to become active. While to other citizens you need to say 'hey, make sure that you don't lose confidence in yourself. It is not your fault, it is just that the labor market at this moment is really though'…. It is a matter of feeling, feeling, feeling, feeling*".

> *"You have to assess what the situation is like. What are the needs and capabilities of the citizen? How motivated is the citizen? Based on this information you have to decide how to activate the citizen. It would be a pity if you would only have one way of activating citizens and that you would adopt this way with all the citizens that you face…".*

These quotes show that the activation practitioners normalized differences in approaches to activation by referring to the varying needs of citizens. For example, you do not

suggest to somebody who is autistic to go and work in a shop where he has to interact with people. During the interviews activation practitioners demonstrated their possession of the common knowledge that activation is a citizen-specific process.

To summarize, activation practitioners, as members, behave in accordance to the common knowledge that activation is citizen specific. Activation practitioners transfer citizens, they ask for basic information during initial interactions and they talk about the differences between citizens during the formal interviews.

When transferring a citizen, activation practitioners demonstrate that sometimes a colleague's approach may be better suited. When an activation practitioner does not know what to do anymore, he may transfer the citizen to a colleague with a different approach to activation. The transfer of a citizen to a colleague demonstrates that the activation practitioners possess the common knowledge that sometimes a different approach to activation can be functional to match the citizen's needs. In turn, by referring to the common knowledge that different citizens may require different approaches to activation, the transfer of citizens becomes normal and understandable for the activation practitioners. Once again, there is a reflexive relationship.

There is also a reflexive relationship between the observation that activation practitioners ask citizens for basic information (their demonstration of the fourth reservoir of common knowledge) and the experienced normality of asking basic information from citizens by referring to the common knowledge that citizens vary in their needs and capabilities.

Finally, during the formal interviews, which are considered situations where activation practitioners can continue their process of accomplishing their normality and order, the activation practitioners talked about the differences between citizens. The activation practitioners also talked about the different requirements these differences between citizens place on the adopted approaches to activation. Activation needs to be citizen specific and *"it would be a pity if you would only have one way of activating citizens and that you would adopt this way with all the citizens that you face*".

Common knowledge 5: Activation is targeted towards citizens who often have become marginalized

The fifth reservoir of common knowledge that activation practitioners possess is that activation is targeted at citizens who often have been marginalized. Activation practitioners regard being on benefits as indicative of holding a marginalized position. They share the understanding that these citizens often have to struggle to make ends meet. This reservoir of common knowledge is mostly used in the Social Services and less in the

UWVs. Activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the fifth reservoir of common knowledge via their language.

Talking during the interviews

As discussed before in Chapter 1, Rudy refrained from imposing a second sanction on Jeremy, even though Jeremy failed to properly document his attempts to come off benefits. Instead of sanctioning Jeremy's behavior, Rudy decided to hand out a warning. After the interaction with Jeremy was finished, Rudy explained during an informal interview that imposing a sanction is a severe measurement. Jeremy's behavior would qualify for a sanction. However, when sanctions are used too often the financial situation of the citizen will deteriorate. Rudy hoped that the warning would motivate Jeremy to become more active.

By providing this explanation Rudy, in Garfinkel's terminology, makes his behavior 'accountable' (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). Rudy accounts for his behavior, in part, by referring to the common knowledge that citizens are often marginalized through his statement that when sanctions are used too often the financial situation of the citizen will become worse. Since the researcher understood Rudy's explanation as normal, it is likely that Rudy's colleagues will do so as well (Maso, 1984, p. 62).

During the formal interviews the activation practitioners also talked about the marginalized position of the citizens they encounter. To quote two activation practitioners:

> *"It is a vulnerable group of people that comes here. Often they face other problems as well, like addictions and such… You are constantly confronted with sad cases. Because people who need benefits don't have it easy at the moment. They come with an history".*

> *"I start from the assumption that we are two adults facing each other. Each of you has a different role. You know that the citizen needs something from you. And that he is dependent upon you. He really needs something and it is normal to take that into account".*

These quotes show that activation practitioners share the common knowledge that citizens who receive welfare benefits find themselves in a marginalized position, they *"don't have it easy at the moment"* and *"the citizen needs something from you… he is dependent upon you*". Activation practitioners understand what is meant by these expressions. In Garfinkel's terminology, these expressions are indexical. While doing their work, activation practitioners are aware of this marginalized position that citizens may find

themselves in. They also know that quite often the citizens that they face have *"other problems as well, like addiction and such*".

To summarize, by explaining why a sanction was not imposed and by talking about the difficult positions in which citizens who receive welfare benefits often find themselves, activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that citizens who receive welfare benefits often have become marginalized. It was possible for the activation practitioners to consider it normal to talk about the difficult position in which citizens find themselves, because they possess the common knowledge that citizens on welfare are often marginalized (reflexivity in Garfinkel's terminology).

Common knowledge 6: Activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens

The sixth reservoir of common knowledge that activation practitioners possess is that activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens. Activation practitioners refrain from pushing people (towards independence from benefits) to the extent that they might for instance experience a substantial deterioration of their financial situation or a burn-out. Activation practitioners' possession of this sixth reservoir of common knowledge is demonstrated by activation practitioners via the use of language.

Talking during the interviews

The aforementioned example of the interaction between Rudy and Jeremy can also be used here. To recapitulate, during the interaction it was observed that Rudy did not sanction Jeremy for failing to produce the required documents. Instead, Rudy offered a warning. After the interaction Rudy explained that he offered this warning because Jeremy had already received a sanction at their previous meeting. Punishment by imposing two sanctions shortly after each other was considered too severe by Rudy. As mentioned before, since the researcher understood Rudy's explanation as normal, it is likely that Rudy's colleagues will do so as well (Maso, 1984, p. 62). Rudy's explanation is normal because it is in line with the common knowledge that activation is targeted towards citizens who are often marginalized (common knowledge 5) as well as in line with the common knowledge that activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6).

During the formal interviews the activation practitioners expressed that they consider it part of their job to protect the material and psychological needs of the citizens they deal

with. The following quote from an interview with a practitioner who had to decide whether to stop or to continue the benefits of a particular citizen, demonstrates this:

> *"I figured that if I stop his benefits he will get money problems for those two months during which he won't receive his benefits. And besides this, after those two months he will come back to us and apply for benefits again".*

This quote shows that activation practitioners take the financial situation of a citizen into consideration when deciding how to activate the citizen. In the example described above, the activation practitioner decided to continue the citizen's benefits, even though he had the possibility to stop them for two months. Stopping benefits for two months, however, would only cause *"money problems"* for the citizen and this was something the activation practitioner did not want to see happing given the citizen's specific situation. Furthermore, after two months the citizen would have come back, applying for benefits again. At that point his financial position would have been even worse. It is not only the financial but also the psychological position of the citizen that is taken into account when practitioners activate citizens. Activation practitioners do not want to force citizens to the point of a nervous breakdown or burn-out as the following three quotes demonstrate:

> *"The difference between the front office and the back office is that we actually interact with the citizen. If you only know a citizen 'on paper' then it is easier to say 'you did not meet your requirements so you receive a sanction'. However, if you know the citizen and he is always on time, he is working really hard to find a job and at this one time he does not show up… And then later you hear that he forgot about the appointment because his wife was admitted to the Intensive Care. Yes then I think 'hello'. But the back office does not see this and they would give him a sanction".*

> *"When I was young and new to this job, I once gave a sanction to a citizen who was completely depressed. He did not respond to the sanction at all. Looking back on this, I would never do this again, because you don't achieve anything by that".*

> *"Once I had this woman who just came out of a relationship. She lived elsewhere with her husband, but after the break-up she moved back here. So she was in the middle of moving house. On top of that she was a single parent and there were many things she had to arrange. And everything had to be arranged within two months. On top of this she was supposed to look for work during those two months. I can imagine that that is impossible. If you just moved to another city and you are on your own, then I can imagine that you don't have the space in your head to arrange everything and to look for a job. Actually, you are too busy working through everything that has happened…*

> *I gave her time to sort things out mentally… because if that does not happen then she will fall back at some point. You can push people to find work, but if they are not ready, even if they want, it won't work".*

As these quotes show, activation practitioners do take the psychological position of citizens into account. When citizens experience personal difficulties (for example, a wife taken into Intensive Care, a depression or a marital break-up) activation practitioners take this into account when deciding on their approach to activate the citizen.

To summarize, by explaining why a sanction was not imposed, by talking about the difficulties citizens experience and about how activation practitioners take these difficulties into account, activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that activation needs to respect the material and psychological needs of citizens. There is, once again, a reflexive relationship between activation practitioners' accounts of the difficulties that citizens face (their demonstration of the sixth reservoir of common knowledge) and the experienced normality of talking about those difficulties during the interviews by referring to the common knowledge that activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens.

Common knowledge 7: Activation is documented by activation practitioners

The seventh reservoir of common knowledge that activation practitioners possess is that activation is documented by activation practitioners. What is discussed with the citizen, what decisions are taken and what actions are undertaken and why, all have to be documented. Activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the seventh reservoir of common knowledge via behavior.

Documenting the interaction

The observation was made that activation practitioners take time to document their dealings with the citizen, either during the interaction with the citizen or shortly afterwards. Not only could the researcher observe this, activation practitioners also see each other sitting behind the computer, typing something. Spending time on the computer is considered normal, because activation practitioners link this behavior to the common knowledge that activation needs to be documented by activation practitioners.

Talking with colleagues

However, it also happened during the time that the observations took place that an activation practitioner failed to document the reasons for imposing a sanction on a citizen. The other activation practitioners agreed that this was not proper procedure. When you sanction a citizen you have to explain to the citizen why he receives the sanction and you have to document this. They discussed with each other that documentation was an important element of their work. As one activation practitioner explained during the formal interview:

> *"It is quite severe if I take 200 Euros away from someone, who normally receives 900 Euros. You need to be able to explain to the citizen why you do that. You can't say, 'oh the money is just gone'. The other day it happened that someone gave a citizen a sanction without documenting a single thing… This happens rarely. Luckily, because everybody thought this was so inappropriate. This is not how we do our work".*

This quote shows that the interviewed activation practitioner and his colleagues talked about the situation in which a colleague failed to document his reasons for imposing a sanction. And that *"everybody thought this was so inappropriate*". According to the interviewed activation practitioner there was a shared understanding that *"This is not how we do our work*". In other words, activation practitioners share the understanding that activation is documented by activation practitioners. When a natural breach occurred, the activation practitioners responded to this situation with disapproval.

To summarize, when a natural breach occurred as a practitioner failed to document his reasons for sanctioning a citizen, the other activation practitioners disapproved of this behavior. By failing to document what happened during the interaction with the citizen, the colleague did not act in accordance with the common knowledge that activation is documented by activation practitioners. The disapproval from the other activation practitioners demonstrated that activation practitioners possess the common knowledge that activation is documented by the activation practitioner.

The observation that activation practitioners consider it normal behavior to spent time typing on the computer further shows that activation practitioners possess this common knowledge that activation needs to be documented. In Garfinkel's terminology there is a reflexive relationship.

Next, a situation in which the observed activation practitioners were unable to accomplish normality is discussed.

1.2 Non-common knowledge

As mentioned before, activation practitioners share the common knowledge that activation is documented by the activation practitioner (common knowledge 7). However, the activation practitioners did not create a shared understanding of *how* one should document. As a result, different activation practitioners document different things and in different ways: some activation practitioners take short notes, while others write longer essays explaining in detail what was done. Some focus merely on the work part, while others pay more attention to citizen's emotional state of mind. To quote three activation practitioners:

> *"I try to summarize what happened during the interaction. I write down things like: 'you tell me that…' or 'the agreement is this…'. But the agreements I make with citizens are not always SMART, while actually they should be".*

> *"I used to have a colleague, and this makes me laugh, but he had a standard report. He did cut paragraphs from his standard text and he did paste these in the files of various citizens…. I know that this is possible, but I also believe it takes the fun away from the work… I use headings, and under these heading I try to write a little section. But I only write something under all the headings if I want to be really precise, for example, when a citizen will be transferred to another agency".*

> *"I document everything. What happened during the interaction, what I did, what the agreements are. Everything that is said during the interaction, what we discussed, what has to be done. All these types of things you document".*

These quotes show that each activation practitioner has his own way of documenting the activation process. They *"summarize"*, have *"a standard report"*, *"use headings"* or they *"document everything"*.

When a citizen is transferred to a different activation practitioner or from the UWV to the Social Service, this variation in documentation style can be the cause of some irritations. For instance, if activation practitioners read the documentation of their colleagues but they say they nonetheless feel the need to ask the citizen in person to explain what has been going on in order for them to properly understand the case. To quote one activation practitioner:

> *"I document a lot. I notice that when a citizen is transferred from a colleague to me how little others document. That is really sad, because I miss that information. I only read 'did not show up', but I don't know why. I miss that*

> *information. However, this is not always the case. Other colleagues write whole essays".*

As this quote shows, this activation practitioner finds it *"really sad"* how little some of his colleagues document. When little is documented this activation practitioner misses information. However, there are also activation practitioners who are satisfied with the information they find in the system. To quote one activation practitioner:

> *"If you receive a citizen then there is a whole file in which you can read what has happened, what has been tried before, and how that person is. You can retrieve that file from the system and read what it says… This gives you a pretty good idea of the person sitting in front of you. So that is organized quite well".*

While differences in approaches to activation are seen as potentially functional, differences in documentation style are seen as annoying and non-functional. Next, a summary of the *framework of implicit knowledge*, as it is accomplished by the observed and interviewed activation practitioners, is given.

1.3 Summary

So far, seven reservoirs of common knowledge have been discussed that are used to a greater or lesser extent by the various groups of activation practitioners under study. By demonstrating the possession of these seven reservoirs of common knowledge activation practitioners accomplish a *framework* that they use in order to perceive their work as normal.

This framework can be seen as an 'anchor' in the way used by Richard Sennett (2008). Sennett writes: "In the higher stages of skill, there is a constant interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness, the tacit knowledge serving as an anchor, the explicit awareness serving as critique and corrective" (Sennett, 2008, p. 50). In other words, the framework that activation practitioners demonstrate to possess consists of tacit knowledge (the implicit guidelines or in MacIntyre's terminology the standards of excellence) that keeps activation practitioners *in place* when doing their work. When accomplishing the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*), activation practitioners have to do this in such a way that they can 'account' for their actions (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). This means that activation practitioners have to activate citizens in ways that are in line with the accomplished order and normality of activation. By doing so it becomes possible for activation practitioners to regard their daily work as ordered and normal.

In short, the accomplished framework (or anchor) that activation practitioners demonstrate to possess looks as follows:

Activation ranges between enforcing and being lenient (common knowledge 1).

Differences in approaches to activation (something between enforcing and being lenient) can be functional when activating citizens (common knowledge 2).

Furthermore, activation is a balancing-act between trusting the citizen and checking up on the citizen (common knowledge 3).

Activation is citizen specific. Different citizens may require different approaches (common knowledge 4).

Furthermore, activation is targeted at citizens who often have been marginalized (common knowledge 5).

Activation should not result in the situations where citizens are financially worse off or experience a burn-out. Citizens have needs, both financially and psychologically. Activation respects these material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6).

Because there are so many different things activation practitioners can do, it is considered to be of great importance to document what has been done and why this has been done. Activation is documented by activation practitioners (common knowledge 7).

2. With what result do they do what they do?

As mentioned before, activation practitioners experience their work as ordered and normal. Activation practitioners accomplish this order by demonstrating the possession of (at least) seven reservoirs of common knowledge. Taken together, the seven reservoirs of common knowledge provide activation practitioners with a framework (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) that they use in order to perceive their work as normal. Or to use Sennett's words, activation practitioners do their work based on an anchor of tacit knowledge (Sennett, 2008, p. 50). This raises the question what the implications are of this order, as accomplished together by activation practitioners, for the shape of practiced activation?

Four implications are distinguished. First, practiced activation is diverse and dynamic (Section 2.1). Second, practiced activation is protective (Section 2.2). Third, practiced activation is documented (Section 2.3). And finally, given the before mentioned

implications, practiced activation does not mean that *anything goes* (Section 2.4). Each of these implications will be discussed in detail in the following Sections.

2.1 Practiced activation is diverse and dynamic

Activation practitioners not only produce a diverse and dynamic image of activation (activation practitioners' *first doing* as presented in Chapter 1), they also sustain this diverse and dynamic image of activation by demonstrating possession of common knowledge that reflects an image of diversity and dynamism.

With regard to the diversity of the image, activation practitioners experience the world of activation as a continuum: approaches to activation range from being characterized as enforcing to being lenient (common knowledge 1). By referring to activation in this way the existing diversity of approaches is emphasized. By demonstrating the possession of the second reservoir of common knowledge (namely that when activating citizens these differences in approaches can be functional (common knowledge 2)) activation practitioners once again communicate an image of diversity.

This diversity can also be found in the third and fourth reservoir of common knowledge. In the third reservoir of common knowledge, activation practitioners refer to diversity in the relationship (between building trust and checking-up (common knowledge 3)) between the activation practitioner and the citizen. In the fourth reservoir of common knowledge activation practitioners refer to the diversity among citizens (common knowledge 4). By referring to this fourth reservoir of common knowledge it becomes possible for activation practitioners to accept and rationalize that differences in approaches to activation occur. Depending on the citizen's situation, the activation practitioner has to decide what to do. In other words, because citizens require different approaches, it is normal that different approaches are used.

As mentioned before, depending on the citizen's situation, activation practitioners can revert to a subsidiary approach to activation. In Chapter 1 the interaction between Linda and Koos was presented. Linda normally regards the citizen as the expert of his own situation. However, since Koos felt lost and forlorn, Linda decided to let go of her main approach to activation and instead she offered Koos a competence test. By doing so, Linda let go of the perception of the citizen as the expert of his own situation. The competence test now accomplished some of the tasks that Linda would normally assign to the citizen, namely, finding out what the citizen wants to do. Koos' specific situation (feeling lost and forlorn) was taken into account by Linda and in response Linda adopted a different approach to activation.

Besides referring to diversity, the reservoirs of common knowledge also reflect a dynamic image. Activation practitioners share the common knowledge that different approaches to activation can be functional (common knowledge 2). This makes it possible for activation practitioners to adopt a personal main approach and different subsidiary approaches when this is deemed necessary. The references to 'a balance' in the third reservoir of common knowledge also reflect a dynamic image. Where activation practitioners position themselves on the balance between building a trusting relationship and checking-up on the citizens (common knowledge 3) is not static. If, for example, a citizen has a history of lying, the activation practitioner can decide to check-up on this citizen, rather than trusting him to do what is required and expected. Depending on the situation, the activation practitioners' position can change.

2.2 Practiced activation is protective

According to the Unemployment Benefits Act (WW) and the Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB), activation practitioners are allowed to impose sanctions on citizens. However, during the observations it was noted that activation practitioners are reticent when it comes to sanctioning and none of the activation practitioners were observed imposing multiple consecutive sanctions. Even Rudy, the activation practitioner who regularly talks about sanctions and who seems most likely to use sanctions, does not impose multiple, consecutive sanctions nor does he make use of his option to impose a sanction every time this would be allowed for.

The protective nature of practiced activation is the result of activation practitioners' awareness that citizens on welfare often have been marginalized (common knowledge 5) and that activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6). Furthermore, by referring to the marginalized position of citizens and to the material and psychological needs of citizens, activation practitioners acknowledge that sensitivity with regard to the situation is required. Different citizens may require different approaches to activation in order to safeguard their needs. This makes it possible for activation practitioners to understand and account for the fact that they do adopt different approaches at different times. As such, practiced activation as explored in this thesis, is more protective than sometimes suggested (Bonoli & Natali, 2012; Hemerijck, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Taylor-Gooby, 2008).

2.3 Practiced activation is documented

Activation practitioners share the common knowledge that they document what happens during the interaction with the citizen (common knowledge 7). It is part of activation

practitioners' daily work to document what they discuss with the citizen and to report what has been done and why this has been done. However, while the activation practitioners studied in this thesis agreed that activation is documented, they did not agree on *how* to document. Some activation practitioners made brief entries in a case file, while others wrote complete essays.

The aforementioned example of the situation in which an activation practitioner did not document his reasons for imposing a sanction on a citizen was considered deviant by the other activation practitioners and as a consequence they responded to this situation with disapproval.

Furthermore, by demonstrating the possession of the seventh reservoir of common knowledge, namely that activation is documented by activation practitioners, activation practitioners acknowledge the fact that various approaches can be adopted during an activation trajectory. This, once again, makes it possible for activation practitioners to account for and understand that they do different things at different times.

2.4 Practiced activation does not mean that *anything goes*

Diversity in practiced activation does not mean that *anything goes*. While accomplishing the task of activating citizens (*first doing*), activation practitioners have to work within the order as it is accomplished by the activation practitioners as a collective (*second doing*). In other words, practiced activation has to be 'normal' and fit into the order as it has been accomplished by the activation practitioners. This means that practiced activation, as examined in this thesis, has to fall somewhere between enforcing and being lenient (common knowledge 1). That, when activating citizens, use of different approaches to activation can be functional (common knowledge 2). That activation needs to balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen and the need to check-up on the citizen (common knowledge 3). Furthermore, activation has to be citizen specific (common knowledge 4), take into account that the citizens who are activated often find themselves in a marginalized position (common knowledge 5) and has to respect the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6). Finally, the activation process has to be documented by activation practitioners (common knowledge 7).

Returning to the issue posed in Chapter 1 *When is an activation practitioner required to revert to a subsidiary approach?*, we can now conclude that this is the case when use of the main approach to activation results in an 'un-normal' situation. In other words, when adopting the main approach to activation results in activation outside the range of

normality and order as it is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners, it may be required to revert to a subsidiary approach.

For example, if Linda would continue seeing Koos as the expert of his own situation, while Koos is feeling lost and forlorn, Linda does not behave in accordance with the common knowledge that activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4). Since Koos has indicated that he has no idea what he would want to do, Linda has to revert to a subsidiary approach to activation in order to act in accordance to the common knowledge that 'citizens vary in their needs and capabilities and they may require different approaches'. By reverting to a subsidiary approach to activation Linda acts in accordance to the ordered nature of practiced activation in which activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4).

Another example is the interaction between Linda and Ferdinand. During this interaction Ferdinand indicated that he is not interested in driving a bus by saying that *"it only makes sense to apply for these positions if you actually have the ambition to drive a bus"*. Although it was likely that Ferdinand was not interested in any of the guaranteed job placements, since he said that *"he prefers it to do some challenging volunteer work, instead of a boring regular job"* Linda still discussed the list of guaranteed job placements with Ferdinand and handed him the list. By doing so, Linda moved away from her main approach to activation in which she sees the citizen as the expert. She made a suggestion, and instead of accepting Ferdinand's refusal of her proposal, she persisted and discussed the list with Ferdinand. Afterwards, during an informal interview, Linda explained that she did not expect Ferdinand to actually do anything with the list, but that she felt that he needed a bit of a push. In their conversations up to that point, Linda felt that she had not managed to motivate Ferdinand to look for a regular job. Linda did not want Ferdinand to come to see his benefits as his normal income. Therefore she decided to do something different. By adopting a different, subsidiary, approach Linda acted in line with the common knowledge that differences in approach can be functional (common knowledge 2) and that activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4).

Another example is the interaction between Rudy and Cathy. During this observation Rudy offered Cathy an exemption (*een vrijstelling*). In Rudy's main approach to activation, he focuses on the citizen's duties (for example the duty to apply for jobs). He also focuses on getting citizens back to work as quickly as possible. According to Rudy, citizens have to accept a wide range of jobs. However, this time, Rudy decided that Cathy needed some time off. Rudy reverted to a subsidiary approach to activation and gave Cathy an exemption because of her personal situation (Cathy had been crying about something). By applying a subsidiary approach Rudy protected Cathy. He acted in line with the common knowledge that activation respects the material and psychological needs

of citizens (common knowledge 6). Furthermore, Rudy also acted in line with the common knowledge that activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4).

Another example is the interaction between Rudy and the participants of a course. During the ninth session of Rudy's course the observation was made that Rudy took a step back from his role as expert. Rudy allowed the group more space to come up with suggestions. Rudy's familiarity with the citizens made it possible for him to ask the stronger group members to assist those group members who needed some more help. By differentiating between stronger and weaker group members Rudy acted in line with the common knowledge that activation is citizen specific. The citizens that activation practitioners encounter vary in their needs and capabilities and as a result they may require different activation approaches (common knowledge 4).

Finally, other activation practitioners also adopted subsidiary approaches when this was required. For example, Nicolette, the activation practitioner who described herself as an executer of the law and who normally focused on work, was lenient towards a citizen who failed to show up for a scheduled competence test because her child was hospitalized. By showing lenience (thereby reverting to a subsidiary approach to activation), this activation practitioner acted in line with the common knowledge that activation needs to protect and respect the psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6) and that activation needs to be citizen specific (common knowledge 4).

If practiced activation does not fit into the order as it is accomplished by the activation practitioners, the experienced normality of activation becomes pressurized and a possible 'breach' may occur.

A clear example of such a 'breach' was provided by the situation in which an activation practitioner failed to document his reasons for imposing a sanction. As mentioned during a formal interview, the other activation practitioners responded to this situation with disapproval. By failing to document why a sanction was imposed, this practitioner violated the common knowledge that activation is documented by activation practitioners (common knowledge 7). This behavior (not documenting) did not fit within the ordered nature of activation, in which activation is documented. By responding with disapproval the activation practitioners maintained the order as they understood it.

It is also possible to think of some fictive breaches that would upset the order of practiced activation. For example, imagine an activation practitioner who starts working at one of the settings that were studied and whose main objective it is to impose as many sanctions as possible. Every time a citizen fails to document something this activation practitioner will impose a sanction. This activation practitioner imposes sanctions regardless of the situation of the citizen. Some citizens will be sanctioned multiple times in a row. It would be interesting to see how the other activation practitioners would respond to such a rigid

sanction imposer, since this behavior does not fit into the order as it is demonstrated by the observed and interviewed activation practitioners. This fictive activation practitioner breaches the common knowledge that activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4), that activation is targeted towards citizens who often have been marginalized (common knowledge 5) and that activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6).

It is also possible to think of a fictive activation practitioner whose behavior exceeds being lenient. This fictive activation practitioner will, for example, only engage in chit-chat with citizens. He will take a full hour to talk about the weather, sports and interesting travel destinations without talking about work opportunities or job applications. He approaches the citizens as a friend, rather than as an activation practitioner. It is quite possible that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners would qualify this behavior as highly inappropriate. Activation is diverse, but being a friend instead of an activation practitioner is not regarded as acceptable practice in this diversity. An activation practitioner, who behaves as a friend, would breach the common knowledge that approaches to activation range from enforcing to being lenient (common knowledge 1).

Of course, in order to determine how stable the accomplished order actually is, we would need to conduct further research. For example by setting up the type of breaches discussed above. Instead of rejecting the types of radical behavior (not documenting, being a rigid sanction imposer, being a friend) it is also possible that the activation practitioners manage to adjust their common knowledge in such a way that the new types of behavior are incorporated. During the observations and interviews it was noted that this is not the case when it comes to not documenting the activation process. However, we do not know how the observed activation practitioners would respond to the other two fictitious breaches. At this point it is only possible to conclude that no rigid sanction imposers or friends were observed during the interactions that were included in this thesis.

An important argument made in this thesis is that practiced activation is more ordered than sometimes suggested (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010), since the practice of activating citizens typically stays within the order that is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners. Simply by working together and by being ‘members’ of the group, activation practitioners together managed to accomplish a framework (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) which comprised their shared knowledge and was applied by them in order to perceive their work as normal. This framework can be seen as a light and tacit, but clearly demonstrated, version of the “shared body of knowledge” that Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) are looking for and the “clear criteria” that Van

Berkel *et al.* (2010) are looking for (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 142; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, pp. 461-462).

Conclusion

This Chapter explored the ways in which activation practitioners collectively accomplish the orderliness of activation, despite the existence of vague policies, the lack of fully developed standards and/or norms and a variety of 'main' and 'subsidiary approaches' to activation. This Chapter answered the following two questions:

2a Do activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how (*second doing*)?

2b What does the *second doing* of activation practitioners (or its absence) imply for the shape of practiced activation?

From the observations and interviews it became clear that activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered reality by demonstrating the possession of at least seven reservoirs of common knowledge. For example, the studied activation practitioners refrain from imposing a sanction on citizens experiencing significant personal difficulties. By doing so, activation practitioners demonstrate that they possess the common knowledge that activation needs to respect the psychological and material needs of citizens.

This Chapter reconstructed seven reservoirs and presented the ways in which activation practitioners demonstrated (via their behavior and the use of specific language) that they possessed this knowledge. These seven reservoirs of common knowledge were: activation moves along a continuum between enforcing and being lenient (common knowledge 1), when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation can be functional (common knowledge 2), activation is about creating a balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen and checking-up on that citizen (common knowledge 3), activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4), activation is targeted towards citizens who often find themselves marginalized (common knowledge 5), activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6) and finally, activation is documented by activation practitioners (common knowledge 7).

Together the seven reservoirs of common knowledge provide activation practitioners with a *framework* (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) that helps them to perceive their work as ordered and normal. Following Richard Sennett, this framework can be seen as an 'anchor' (Sennett, 2008, p. 50) that keeps activation practitioners *in place* when performing their tasks. This means that activation practitioners have to

activate citizens in ways that are in line with the collectively accomplished order and normality of activation. Activation practitioners have to activate citizens in ways that are "visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e. accountable" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii).

Regarding the shape of activation, this Chapter argued that activation practitioners accomplished an order that is indeed diverse and dynamic (as also shown in the previous Chapter). Furthermore, the accomplished order was also argued to be protective in shape and documented and practiced activation does not mean that *anything goes*. It may be that when studying other settings, different locally accomplished orders (consisting of specific reservoirs of common knowledge) may result in different shapes of activation. However, since the seven common knowledges distinguished in this Chapter are derived from practice and based on the practical wisdom of activation practitioners, it is likely that the reservoirs of common knowledge reconstructed in this Chapter are part of a *framework* encompassing some of the basic requirements for the activation of citizens as discussed in the next Chapter.

Conclusion and discussion

A picture of activation as it is accomplished in practice

With the introduction of 'new welfare' in Western European countries, social participation has become a main policy objective (Giddens, 1998; Gilbert, 2002; Engelen, Hemerijck, & Trommel, 2007). In the domain of activating labor market policies, new welfare's vocabulary of participation is extensively used. Slogans such as 'the participation society', 'work before income' and 'everybody back to work' can be found throughout policy documents (RWI, 2012, p. 18). In order to achieve this active and participating society, various activating measures have been introduced, amongst others, measures that create new jobs and measures that aim at educating and guiding unemployed citizens (Van Berkel & De Schampheleire, 2001; Van der Aa, 2012, p. 18). Vague policy goals are the result of the extensive vocabulary used and the wide array of measures available under activating labor market policies.

The vague policy goals are in parallel to a discussion in the literature about the activation of citizens. Amongst academics, three conflicting and exclusive philosophies on activation have been proposed and were reviewed in this thesis: the philosophy of empowerment, the philosophy of responsibilization and the philosophy of domination. The philosophies each present their own view on activation and there is no agreement on what practiced activation actually entails.

The problem is that the extensive vocabulary, the wide array of measures available and vague policy goals that are in parallel to the conflicting literature in academics, leaves activation practitioners with the freedom to determine what the activation of citizens means. Amongst activation practitioners, the choice can be made to reduce passiveness and social assistance dependence of citizens, or to enhance their skills? Or to let citizens make their own decisions or to get them back into the paid labor market as quick as possible? (RWI, 2012; Thorén, 2008, p. 14). Therefore, without studying practice it is unclear what the activation of citizens actually entails.

This is not the whole problem yet. On top of having the freedom to determine what the activation of citizens looks like in practice, activation practitioners have to do their work in the absence of fully developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms. The lack of standards and norms provides activation practitioners with even more freedom to

determine in practice how to go about doing their work. This freedom raises concerns about the potential arbitrary nature of activation work. However, this thesis argued that it may be that a different logic orders the practice of activation. Once again, we need to study the practice of activation, this time, in order to explore if practiced activation is ordered and if so, how? In the absence of fully developed standards and/or norms will we find that activation practitioners are 'just doing something'? Or will we find that a different logic orders the practice of activation from within?[18]

This thesis studied the practice of activation asking the question: *What do activation practitioners do?* Based on three bodies of literature: to a small extent Michael Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy and most importantly Alasdair MacIntyre's (1981) practices and Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, this thesis focused on the productive role of actual activation practitioners and paid attention to 'practical wisdom' (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5; Burger, 2008, p. 6).

In order to generate data for the study of the practice of activation, this study made use of three research instruments: observations, interviews and video recordings. Observations were conducted from the beginning of January 2011 until the end of May 2012, fifteen Dutch activation practitioners were observed for a combined period of over 145 hours. In addition to these observations formal interviews were conducted with eight of the observed activation practitioners and numerous informal interviews were held with all fifteen activation practitioners during the time of the observations (Bernard, 2002). Furthermore, video recordings of interactions between an 'activation entrepreneur'[19] and various citizens were observed. The use of multiple research instruments made it possible to triangulate the generated data, thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the findings (Maso, 1984, p. 156). Finally, the generated data were analyzed following the principles of 'Framework' (Green, 2005). An analysis according to the 'Framework' principle consists of five stages, namely familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and finally mapping and interpretation.

Based on the research conducted, this thesis found that activation practitioners accomplish their task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*) in diverse and dynamic ways. The following pattern in activation practitioners' interactions with citizens became visible: activation practitioners adopt a 'main approach' to activation and

[18] As mentioned before, Els Sol *et al.* (2011) ask a similar question when studying how reintegration companies (RIBs) organize reintegration. The authors wonder if reintegration is based on a systematic, well-thought approach or if people are just doing something (Sol, et al., 2011, p. 8). The authors assume that activation practitioners do not randomly go about doing their work, but that they base their approaches to activation on 'theory in use' that results from years of experience. This 'theory in use', Sol *et al.* explain, is the mostly implicit "rational proposition that a particular approach or method results in higher changes for re-integration" (Sol, et al., 2011, p. 9).

[19] As mentioned before, in this thesis an activation entrepreneur is somebody who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently.

when required activation practitioners revert to one of the 'subsidiary approaches' to activation. This thesis also found that activation practitioners accomplish the orderliness of activation (activation practitioners' *second doing*) by demonstrating the possession of common knowledges. Despite the variety of adopted approaches to activation, together activation practitioners experience their work as ordered. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners collectively accomplished a normative framework of implicit guidelines based on which they do their work.

This Chapter discusses three implications of these findings. *First, activation practitioners' accomplishment of the task and order has implications for the kind of activation that citizens receive.* Activation, as it is practiced at the moment, means different things for different citizens. One citizen may be told what to do, while another citizen may be asked what he wants to do. The result of the diversity of adopted approaches is a different picture of activation than the one presented by the three 'philosophies' about activation. The three philosophies describe activation as either dominating, or responsibilizing or empowering. Instead of being either dominating or responsibilizing or empowering, this thesis argued that practiced activation can be simultaneously dominating as well as responsibilizing as well as empowering. This Chapter argues that such a diverse approach towards activation may very well result in *effective* activation. Section 2 presents this point in more detail.

Second, activation practitioners' accomplishment of task and order has implications for the shape of activation. Activation is not as *chaotic*[20] as it may appear (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). This thesis showed that citizens who are activated are not the subjects of a 'game of Russian roulette'. As a collective, activation practitioners share (at least) seven reservoirs of common knowledge. The reservoirs of common knowledge form a framework, based on which activation practitioners do their work. As a result, practiced activation follows implicit guidelines and it is more ordered than sometimes suggested. For example, one of the ordered features of practiced activation encountered in this thesis is that practiced activation is actually protective towards its citizens. This in contrast to suggestions made by authors who write about new welfare and activation as being participation focused instead of protection focused. It may be that in practice it is impossible to activate someone who lost everything or who is severely depressed and that

[20] As mentioned before, *chaotic* is a term used in this thesis to emphasize that the current literature on activation points out that the practice of activation is not (yet) fully supported by bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms and that activation may be arbitrary and non-transparent. It has to be noted that the other authors who studied the practice of activation do not use the term 'chaotic' to refer to the current practice of activation.

a minimum level of protection may be a necessary requirement for the activation of citizens. A point presented in more detail in Section 3.

Third, the accomplishment of task and order by activation practitioners in practice raises important questions about the governance of activation. Is it enough to know that activation practitioners accomplish their task and that they do so in a self-ordered way? Or is more governance required and if so, what kind of governance do we need? This Chapter argues that on the one hand practice, with its 'practical wisdom', is important and that it can form safeguards against unworkable or 'greedy' policy ideas (Trommel, 2009). On the other hand, however, practice should not be the sole place where activation of citizens is accomplished. When practice produces undesirable results society should be able to step in. There needs to be a system of checks and balances between practice and societal interests. Section 4 discusses the idea of a balance between what practitioners do and societal interests in more detail.

Before presenting the three above mentioned implication of activation practitioners' *doings* in Sections 2, 3 and 4, the next Section first summarizes the findings of this thesis.

1. Summary of the thesis: accomplishing task and order in practice

This Section presents the main findings of this thesis. As an answer to the question *'What do activation practitioners do?'* this thesis found that activation practitioners are involved in a *first* and a *second doing*.

Activation practitioners' *first doing*

Chapter 1 of this thesis showed how activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*). The following two questions were answered:

1a How do activation practitioners activate citizens who receive welfare benefits (*first doing*)?

1b What does the *first doing* of activation practitioners imply for the shape of practiced activation?

Analyzing the interactions between activation practitioners and the citizens they encountered it became clear that each activation practitioner adopted his or her personal, 'main approach' to activation. This main approach to activation was the approach they most frequently and commonly applied during their interactions with various citizens. It

has to be noted that the observed variety was not limitless. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners activated citizens within the boundaries of a framework of implicit guidelines. Chapter 1 discussed numerous interactions between Rudy and various citizens as well as interactions between Linda with the citizens she encountered. Rudy and Linda are two activation practitioners with starkly contrasting main approaches to activation. For example, Rudy focused on rules and on work. He wanted citizens to get back to work (any work) as quickly as possible. Linda on the other hand, chose to focus on the information the citizen provided. She regarded citizens as the experts of their personal situation. She wanted every citizen to find a job they enjoyed doing.

Chapter 1 also showed that when required by the situation, activation practitioners reverted to an alternative, 'subsidiary approach' to activation. On occasions where the continued use of a main approach would have resulted in an 'un-normal'[21] situation, the activation practitioners refrained from using their main approach in favor of a subsidiary approach (the idea of the requirement to adopt a subsidiary approach is presented in more detail when activation practitioners' second *doing* is presented). For example, Linda typically would focus on the information provided by the citizen and she would treat the citizen as the expert of his personal situation. Linda wants citizens to find jobs they like. However, during the interaction between Linda and Ferdinand, it became clear that Linda was able and willing to revert to a subsidiary approach if this was called for. Linda believed (as she explained during an informal interview) that Ferdinand had started to perceive his benefits as his normal income and as a result he had not really applied himself to the process of job seeking. Because of this situation, Linda offered Ferdinand a list with guaranteed job placements (*baangarantie plekken*). Ferdinand looked through the list and indicated that he was not interested in any of those jobs. Despite Ferdinand's rejection, Linda still handed over the list to Ferdinand to take home. By doing so, Linda sidestepped her main approach in which she treats citizens as the experts of their personal situation. She also let go of the notion that citizens should find a job they want to do. Instead, Linda handed Ferdinand a list of guaranteed job placements even though he had verbally dismissed these jobs, because of the specific situation in which Ferdinand showed a lack of motivation.

Linda was not the only activation practitioner who demonstrated the ability to adopt a different, subsidiary, approach when required by the situation. During the interactions the activation practitioners were observed using a main approach and reverting to a

[21] In this thesis an 'un-normal' situation is the situation in which the activation practitioners' approach to activation results in activation outside the normality and order as it is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners. A 'normal' situation, on the other hand, occurs when the activation practitioners' approach to activation results in activation that is in line with the various reservoirs of common knowledge that are shared and accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners in practice (Garfinkel, 1967).

subsidiary approach when required. During the interviews the activation practitioners talked about differences and similarities in main approaches between activation practitioners and their ability to revert to subsidiary approaches.

From the previous paragraph, the picture of activation that emerges when studying activation practitioners' *first doing* is characterized by diversity and dynamism. In short, the following pattern was observed in the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens: activation practitioners adopt their personal, main approach (diverse) and when required by the situation they can adopt an alternative, subsidiary approach (dynamic). Once again, it has to be noted that the observed variety was not limitless. The observed and interviewed activation practitioners activated citizens within the boundaries of a framework of implicit guidelines. As will be discussed in Section 2 in more detail, this is a rather different picture than the one that was suggested by the three philosophies about the activation of citizens.

Activation practitioners' *second doing*

Chapter 2 of this thesis showed how activation practitioners accomplished order and normality in their work life (activation practitioners' *second doing*), despite the different main and subsidiary approaches that were adopted. The following two questions are answered:

2a Do activation practitioners collectively accomplish an ordered and normal reality for themselves and each other and if so, how (*second doing*)?

2b What does the *second doing* of activation practitioners (or its absence) imply for the shape of practiced activation?

Seven reservoirs of common knowledge that activation practitioners (as a collective) demonstrate to possess were reconstructed: activation moves along a continuum between enforcing and being lenient (common knowledge 1), when activating citizens differences in approaches to activation can be functional (common knowledge 2), activation is about creating a balance between building a trusting relationship with the citizen and checking-up on that citizen (common knowledge 3), activation is citizen specific (common knowledge 4), activation is targeted towards citizens who often find themselves marginalized (common knowledge 5), activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6) and finally, activation is documented by activation practitioners (common knowledge 7).

During their work activation practitioners demonstrated that they possessed these seven reservoirs of common knowledge via their behavior and/or via the use of language. A

telling example of this was provided by the observation that activation practitioners transferred citizens to each other when they no longer felt they were able to help the citizen accomplish his goals. The transfer of a citizen to a colleague (behavior) demonstrated that activation practitioners possessed the common knowledge that differences in approach can be functional (common knowledge 2) as these citizens would be transferred to a colleague who used a different approach to activation. Chapter 2 presented various other examples of how the observed and interviewed activation practitioners demonstrated the possession of these seven reservoirs of common knowledge. By demonstrating to each other that they possessed (at least) these seven reservoirs of common knowledge, it became possible for the activation practitioners to understand their work as ordered and normal.

Together, the seven demonstrated reservoirs of common knowledge formed a *framework* (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners used to perceive their work as ordered and normal. Following Richard Sennett, this framework can be seen as an 'anchor' (Sennett, 2008, p. 50) which keeps activation practitioners *in place* when doing their work. When accomplishing the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*), activation practitioners are required to do so in such a way that they can 'account' for their actions (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). This means that activation practitioners have to activate citizens in ways that are in line with the accomplished order and normality of activation. Activation practitioners must activate citizens in a diverse and dynamic way (result of common knowledge 1, 2, 3 and 4); they must protect citizens (result of common knowledge 5 and 6) and are required to document this process (result of common knowledge 7). When continued use of a main approach would result in an 'un-normal' situation (for example, activation that was not citizen specific, or activation that did not respect the material and/or psychological needs of citizens) adopting a different, subsidiary, approach was required. Or alternatively, the citizen could be transferred to a colleague. Activation practitioners' collective accomplishment of order and normality resulted in practiced activation being diverse and dynamic, protective, documented and as such it did not imply that *anything goes*.

2. Diverse and effective practiced activation

The first implication of activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* discussed here is that activation practitioners' accomplishment of the task and order has implications for the kind of activation that citizens receive. This thesis has demonstrated that practiced activation takes different forms at different times (other research (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van der Aa, 2012; Zandvliet, Gravesteijn, Tanis, Collewet, & De Jong, 2011) also found that implemented activation is varied) and

that it is considered normal by activation practitioners that different things are done. This thesis has clearly shown that each activation practitioner adopts a personal 'main approach' to activation. Rudy uses a different approach than Linda. Also, it has been demonstrated that when the situation requires it (when continued use of the main approach would result in an 'un-normal' situation), the activation practitioners can adopt a 'subsidiary approach' to activation.

This finding is in contrast to the ongoing philosophical debate about the activation of citizens. In this debate three philosophies can be distinguished. First, the philosophy of empowerment argues that in order to activate its citizens the state needs to elevate its citizens to a level on which they are capable of controlling and mastering their own lives. Second, the philosophy of responsibilization argues that the state tries to activate its citizens by transferring responsibilities to its citizens that then have to be executed in an appropriate manner. Third, the philosophy of domination argues that the state activates its citizens by directly telling them what to do. This third philosophy sees the activation of citizens as a paternalistic project. In this philosophical debate the activation of citizens is either seen as an empowerment project, as a responsibilization project, or as mere domination. As such, the three philosophies leave little room to take into account the particularities of the activation situation.

Given activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* (activation practitioners adopt different main and subsidiary approaches and they consider it normal that different things are done) it is useful to think about the activation of citizens not in terms of either/or, but in terms of and/and. The activation of citizens can simultaneously be responsibilizing, *and* empowering *and* dominating.

This thesis showed that activation, as it is practiced, does not only follow one philosophy. Instead, elements of the three philosophies are combined in practice. Rudy's main approach can be characterized as a form of domination (that is telling citizens what to do), whereas Linda's main approach can be characterized as a form of empowerment (that is letting citizens decide themselves what they want to do). Furthermore, Linda reverts to a more dominating approach to activation when offering Koos (an unemployed citizen who, after multiple meetings, has no idea what he wants to do) a competence test. And Rudy sometimes responsibilizes citizens (that is making citizens behave in the desired manner) by telling them that they want to work and that they are tired of sitting at home.

Besides making the interpretation that various philosophies exist simultaneously in practice, a second interpretation can be made, namely that by adopting a dominating approach to activation, the result can be that a citizen is empowered. By telling Koos to do a competence test, Linda may have pushed Koos to a stage after which it becomes possible for him to determine by himself what he wants to do. Hence, (periods of) domination may result in an empowered citizen (Schonewille, 2013). Since each citizen

has his own feelings, capabilities, problems and desires, it is possible that the same approach to activation, for example letting citizens find out what they want to do (empowerment) results in one citizen actually feeling empowered, another citizen who feels responsibilized and a third citizen feeling lost and forlorn, longing for a more directive approach. In other words, we need to distinguish between the approach to activation and the result of activation. This knowledge can be considered part of the practical wisdom obtained by the observed and interviewed practitioners in practice, as demonstrated in this thesis. Taken together, this thesis paints a rather different picture of activation than the ones suggested by the three philosophies about the activation of citizens.

It can be desirable that activation means different things for different citizens, since this may make activation more *effective*. For example, telling a citizen who is lost and forlorn that he should go home and figure out on his own what he wants to do, may not be the best way to achieve results. The diversity among citizens requires a diverse approach to activation. This knowledge is obtained by the observed and interviewed practitioners in practice and it is in line with Amartya Sen's (1992) approach to welfare that is based on capabilities. According to Sen, what citizens are capable of doing is diverse therefore what citizens need and get should also be diverse.

The difficulty arises of 'How to know what is needed?' How will the activation practitioner know what to do in what situation? Practical wisdom can be important for understanding what is needed. It is in practice that activation practitioners have feeling with actual citizens and it is also here that practical wisdom helps activation practitioners "to act with regard to things that are good or bad for man" (Aristotle, 350 BC, pp. VI, 5). It is in practice that activation practitioners "acquire, through proper upbringing and habits, the ability to see, on each occasion, which course of action is best supported by reasons" (Kraut, 2012). In order to obtain this practical wisdom experience is crucial. Richard Sennett (2008) explains, "about ten thousand hours of experience are required to produce a master carpenter or musician" (Sennett, 2008, p. 20). Similarly, activation practitioners require experience (i.e. interaction with different citizens, knowledge about and use of different approaches to activation, knowledge about colleagues' approaches to activation et cetera) to be able to determine what citizens need.

3. Ordered and protective practiced activation

This Section presents a second implication of activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing*: practiced activation is more ordered than sometimes suggested. The variety of adopted main and subsidiary approaches to activation can potentially make activation a *chaotic* activity. Other authors argue that activation practitioners may simply act on

individual insights, that there is a possible lack of uniformity in the treatment of citizens, of clear procedures, of a vocational association, of vocational training and of an officially recognized body of knowledge and that no clear guidelines about how to activate citizens exist (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; RWI, 2012; Sol, et al., 2011; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). However, this thesis found that practiced activation is more ordered than it may appear.

First, activation practitioners' adopting of a 'main approach' when activating citizens increases the consistency within one activation trajectory. Once a citizen knows who his activation practitioner is and experiences how this practitioner approaches the process of activation, the citizen will generally know what to expect from this practitioner. For example, if Linda is your activation practitioner you know that you will have to do some soul searching and that you will have to talk about your wishes and desires. On the other hand, when Rudy is your activation practitioner you know you will have to make sure that you properly document your efforts to find a job.

Second, this thesis showed that practiced activation is more ordered than it may appear since the practice of activating citizens typically stays within the order that is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners. Simply by working together and by being 'members' of the group, activation practitioners together managed to accomplish a framework (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) which comprised their shared knowledge and was applied by them in order to perceive their work as normal. This framework can be seen as a light and tacit, but clearly demonstrated, version of the "shared body of knowledge" that Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) are looking for and the "clear criteria" that Rik van Berkel *et al.* (2010) are looking for (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, p. 142; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010, pp. 461-462). The capacity of activation practitioners to accomplish order is a mechanism that, along with bureaucratic standards and professional norms, can minimize *chaos*.

One theoretically and practically interesting implicit guideline within the accomplished order is that practiced activation is protective (for more thoughts about the protective nature of social service delivery see, for example, (Knijn & Van Wel, 2001, p. 248)). Even though the vocabulary of new welfare focuses on the participation of citizens this thesis shows that the collective of activation practitioners demonstrates that citizens can only participate once their basic psychological and material needs are protected. Chapter 2 of this thesis showed that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners demonstrated the possession of the common knowledge that 'activation respects the material and psychological needs of citizens (common knowledge 6)'. Activation practitioners demonstrated their possession of this common knowledge by talking about

their protective behaviors towards citizens during the interviews. In their actual interactions with citizens they demonstrated this possession through their reticence towards imposing sanctions, in particular, multiple consecutive sanctions.

The shared understanding among activation practitioners that they are obliged to protect the material and psychological needs of citizens, may be a remnant of old Keynesian welfare policies in which citizens were protected. However, if we come back to Alasdair MacIntyre's idea (1981) that practices are shaped from within the practice itself, activation practitioners' protective attitude towards citizens can also be seen as coming from within, it can be seen as 'practical wisdom' (Burger, 2008, p. 6; Aristotle, 350 BC). Together, as a collective, activation practitioners accomplished this protective attitude towards citizens, despite the widely used vocabulary of new welfare in activation policies. It seems that the protection of citizens is a central part of activation work, since it may prove impossible to activate citizens who have lost everything and who are severely depressed. The protection of citizens is part of the developing standards of excellence of activation.

The finding that the protection of citizens is part of developing standards of excellence has consequences for our thinking about citizenship. At the moment a body of literature about active or new social citizenship is emerging (Hurenkamp, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2012; Hvinden & Johansson, 2007; Newman & Tonkens, 2011). Contrary to classical citizenship ideas (such as socio-liberal citizenship, libertarian citizenship, communitarian citizenship) in which citizens have fixed sets of rights and duties, active or new social citizenship calls for a 'new, dynamic and multifaceted understanding' of citizenship (Johansson & Hvinden, 2007, p. 3). Bjorn Hvinden and Hakan Johansson (2007) studied social citizenship in times of activation. The authors found that in practice 'normative ideas conventionally associated with different models of citizenship' are 'usually combined or intertwined' (Hvinden & Johansson, 2007, p. 224). Janet Newman and Evelien Tonkens (2011) write the following about the concept of active citizenship:

> "It has to be understood as plural – as a set of notions, images and concepts that swirl around in the political landscape and in policy texts. It is a concept whose meaning is never fixed; rather it is subject to particular translations and attempts to fix its meanings as it is enrolled and mobilised in a multiplicity of political and governmental projects within and beyond the nation state." (Newman & Tonkens, 2011, p. 20)

Furthermore, Menno Hurenkamp *et al.* (2012) adopted a micro-sociological approach when studying the idea of crafting active citizenship, particularly in the Netherlands. The authors found that citizens do different things when crafting their conceptions of good citizenship (Hurenkamp, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 136). This developing body of literature about active citizenship considers citizenship under activation as plural,

dynamic and multi-faceted, meaning that citizenship rights and duties may be different for different citizens. This is in contrast to classical conceptions of citizenship, in which citizens had fixed rights and duties.

This thesis supports this developing body of literature by showing that citizens are activated in diverse and dynamic ways (*first doing*). However, this thesis also shows that this diversity and dynamism is bounded by the order that activation practitioners as a collective accomplish (*second doing*). Based on this thesis' findings it cannot be concluded that there are no stable citizen rights and duties *at all*. This can particularly be seen in the developing 'standard of excellence' of protection as a part of the order that activation practitioners accomplish. Protection of minimum material and psychological needs is still seen by activation practitioners as a stable right for all citizens. Further research may show that there may be other stable rights and duties, beyond those found in this thesis. The stable rights and duties form the base over which diverse and dynamic citizenship is being realized. Following Kees Schuyt (2013), the observation that activation practitioners are protective towards the citizens they face may actually fit very well with a possible future welfare state. Schuyt argues that the future welfare state may benefit from a distinction between 'needs' and 'desires'. According to Schuyt, in a well functioning welfare state citizens' needs have to be dealt with collectively and citizens' desires should become the matter of individual responsibility (Schuyt, 2013, p. 28).

4. Practices matter but shouldn't do it all alone

Thus far, this thesis argued that practices do matter and that what activation practitioners do has implication for the kind of activation that citizens receive and for the shape of practiced activation. The observation was made that activation practitioners accomplish task and order in practice. While doing what they do activation practitioners accomplish a type of activation that is diverse and dynamic. The diversity of approaches, it was argued in this thesis, may make activation *effective*. At the same time activation practitioners accomplish an ordered and protective nature of practiced activation. Activation does not mean that *anything goes* and citizens are not the subjects of a game of Russian roulette. The question can be raised now: Is this it? Should we leave the activation of citizens to practices alone? Should citizens, managers and politicians all step back and give activation practitioners the space to accomplish task and order by themselves? My answer to this question would be 'no', practices are definitely important but they shouldn't do it all alone. Instead, I would argue there needs to be a balance between what practitioners do and what society wants.

This Section argues that ideally practical wisdom and societal interests should form a system of checks and balances. When policy becomes too 'greedy' or when it proposes

unworkable ideas, practices should be powerful enough to provide resistance. Willem Trommel (2009) uses the term 'greedy governance' to refer to public authorities' growing intervention in the lives of citizens due to its hunger for social order. For example, if policies introduce ideas like, 'everybody back to work', 'the participation society' and 'work before income', it is valuable that there is 'practical wisdom' that ensures that citizens who lost everything or who are depressed are not caught and *crushed* by these new ideas. It may simply be impossible to activate someone who lost everything or who is severely depressed. Therefore protection of some citizens may be best supported by reason, regardless of what activation policies might say. Conversely, when practices produce undesirable results policy should be able to bring about change. For example, if activation practitioners accomplish practices that are too far out of line with societal interests, society needs to have to opportunity to step in.

In line with these thoughts, governance is not about determining bureaucratic standards or professional norms, rather it has to facilitate processes of joint order creation and interaction. Governance has to ensure that a) the conditions are met under which the self-ordering mechanism can function and b) that there is interaction between activation practitioners and the external world (for example, policy makers and citizens).

a) Conditions under which the self-ordering mechanism functions.

In order for the self-ordering mechanism to function (and to be able to provide resistance against extreme policy ideas) two conditions have to be met: first, activation practitioners need to interact with each other and second, there needs to be an open environment in which activation practitioners feel free to discuss their way of working with each other.

First, it is important that activation practitioners interact with each other. It is in the interaction between members that their *second doing* occurs. It is also in these interactions with each other that activation practitioners 'judge' if particular types of behavior comply with the accomplished order. This interaction should take place between activation practitioners who work in the same UWV and/or Social Service as well as between activation practitioners who work in different UWVs and/or Social Services. By interacting with activation practitioners who work outside one's own UWV or Social Service the risk that a group of activation practitioners becomes too rigid in their *doings* is minimized.

Practically this means that we should avoid a situation in which activation practitioners only sit behind their desk, talking with citizens, without knowing what other activation practitioners do. Therefore it is important that each UWV and Social Service makes sure that regular peer review (*intervisie*) takes place and that systems to exchange experiences

are in place in which activation practitioners are offered enough opportunities to formally and informally interact with each other. Possible ways to structure these formal interactions are provided by Divosa's workbook on 'craftsmanship' in Social Services (Goosen, 2011) and by the game about cooperation among various players in the field of activation (Van der Veer, 2013, p. 36).

In this respect, the 'redesign' of the UWVs, in which it was decided to activate the majority of citizens (90%) via electronic services (*e-dienstverlening*) rather than via face-to-face interactions (RWI, 2012, p. 7; Raad van Bestuur UWV, 2012), has to be monitored closely. This is because electronic services may bring the risk that activation practitioners activate citizens behind their desks, based on individual insight alone, without interacting with colleagues.

Second, it is important that there is an open environment in which activation practitioners feel free to discuss their way of working with each other. Activation practitioners need to feel free to frankly discuss their work approaches with one another as well as with their managers so that critical ideas can be expressed and that pluriformity of opinions and pluriformity of activation approaches can be discussed. We want to avoid the situation in which an activation practitioner approaches citizens in a particular way but does not dare to discuss his approach with others, thereby excluding his colleagues from the opportunity to know what he is doing and the opportunity to 'judge' if his behavior is still in line with the accomplished order.

b) Interaction between activation practitioners and the external world.

In order for society to be able to step in when practices produce undesirable results there needs to be interaction and dialogue between the collective of activation practitioners and the external world (for example, policy makers and citizens). Activation does not only affect activation practitioners and citizens it also influences society at large. This is why activation practitioners have to interact with the external world. In David Miller's (1984) terminology, the practice of activation can be characterized as a 'purposive practice'. A purposive practice is a practice that has a wider social purpose, contrary to "practices which have no *raison d'ètre* other than the particular excellences and enjoyments which they allow to participants" (Miller, 1984, p. 51). Purposive practices have socially constructed ends (Sellman, 2000, 30). These ends are not just constructed within the practice but possibly also by society at large. In the case of purposive practices, good practices are those practices 'whose standards of excellence are related directly to its wider purpose' (Miller, 1984, p. 52).

Practically this means that we need to create a platform in which the collective of activation practitioners can interact with the external world and vice versa. Mirko Noordegraaf *et al.* (2014) talk about 'connective professionalism' where professionals are 'wired in' and relations are managed between "strategists, … between situations, knowledge, identities, and standards, and … between strategists, organizations, and outsiders" (Noordegraaf, Van der Steen, & Van Twist, 2014, pp. 35, 36). Willem Trommel (2013) talks about a 'crafting community' that has established "durable forms of cooperation … between different groups of actors, all engaged in the project of building 'something local'" (Trommel, 2013a, p. 161). Hans Boutellier (2011) talks about the 'improvisation society' in which various actors work together in 'jazzy structures' (Boutellier, 2011, pp. 16 - 18). In the interactions between these various actors a 'sketch', rather than a 'blueprint', should emerge of what activation should entail (Sennett, 2008, p. 262).

In sum, the kind of governance that is required to ensure that there is a balance between what activation practitioners do and what society wants has to ensure that the conditions under which activation practitioners' *second doing* flourishes are met. There needs to be interaction between activation practitioners and there needs to be an open environment in which activation practitioners feel free to discuss their way of working with each other. Furthermore, in order for society to be able to step in when practices produce undesirable results it is important that there is interaction between activation practitioners and the external world. In these interactions a sketch can be constructed of what the activation of citizens should entail. This sketch is formed as a result of combining 'practical wisdom' with societal interests. Given the complexity of the task to activate citizens with their own individual preferences, problems, capabilities and needs, it may be that this 'joint sketching' and the reliance on 'practical wisdom' is a viable strategy, next to formulating bureaucratic standards or professional norms, to achieve meaningful activation. That is, activation that is effective and that respects both individual citizens as well as society at large by providing citizens with the kind of activation that they need, while simultaneously making sure that activation is not a random and arbitrary activity and by making sure that the practice of activation does not take place in a vacuum, independent of societal needs.

5. Future research

Given the complexity of the task to activate citizens with their own individualities, it may be that when activating citizens we want to rely on 'practical wisdom' and the self-order accomplishing capacities of activation practitioners. If this is the case, it is important to do more research about the conditions under which activation practitioners' *second doing*

flourishes. For example, under what conditions do activation practitioners manage to accomplish order and under what conditions do they fail to do so?

Furthermore, as this study demonstrated, ethnomethodological research is a useful instrument for uncovering the tacit common knowledge that activation practitioners possess. Future ethnomethodological research may, for instance, involve a comparative study of different settings over time. If indeed more research is to be conducted about the accomplishment of order by activation practitioners there are two possible scenarios. First, it is possible to find other or different reservoirs of common knowledge to the ones reconstructed in this thesis. These different reservoirs of common knowledge may be found by comparing different settings, since order is locally produced. However, it is more likely that future research finds similar reservoirs of common knowledge to the ones reconstructed in this thesis because the reservoirs of common knowledge are derived from practice and they form a *framework* encompassing some of the basic requirements for the activation of citizens. Understanding of the common knowledge that activation practitioners possess in different settings over time may be used to further our understanding of what the actual activation of citizens entails.

Furthermore, future research may also focus on activation practitioners' *first doing*, continuing to provide insights in how activation practitioners accomplish their task of activating citizens. This thesis found that activation practitioners adopted 'main approaches', as well as 'subsidiary approaches' to activation (Chapter 1). It may be that there are activation practitioners who do not adopt subsidiary approaches. Teun Eikenaar *et al.* (2012) point out this possibility in their research conclusions (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012, pp. 99-100). More research about activation practitioners' accomplishment of the task of activating citizens is required in order to provide more insight in activation practitioners' adoption of main and subsidiary approaches.

Final note

At the end of this thesis we have a better understanding of what activation practitioners do. However, we still don't know what happened during the interaction between Rudy and Patrick. In the very beginning of this thesis, the introduction describes the situation just before the individual meeting between Rudy and Jeremy and the delayed individual meeting between Rudy and Patrick. Chapter 1 presented the interaction between Rudy and Jeremy and now, as a final note, the interaction between Rudy and a delayed Patrick is presented: Patrick found a job.

16. Rudy and Patrick

Patrick indeed shows up, although forty minutes late for the scheduled appointment. Rudy, Patrick and I sit down, and Patrick agrees to my presence.

“So tell me, what happened?”, Rudy asks. Patrick says that he can keep it short and that he did not apply for any jobs. Rudy frowns. Patrick continues by telling Rudy that a former colleague did quit his job and that Patrick can now take on some of his tasks. “So you have your job”, Rudy says. Patrick explains that as an entrepreneur he indeed has his first client. And that he wants to quit his benefits. Rudy asks from when on Patrick wants to quit his benefits. Patrick thinks from the first of next month. The two of them continue discussing Patrick’s new job and everything Patrick has to arrange and take into consideration.

At the end of the conversation Patrick says that it was nice working with Rudy. And Rudy ends the conversation by saying “Good luck”.

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Glossary

Accomplishment

Accomplishment is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) in order to refer to members' capacity to accomplish (in their daily life) a reality that is understandable and recognizable to them all. In this thesis activation practitioners' accomplishment of task (*first doing*) and order (*second doing*) are studied.

Accountability

Accountability is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) in order to refer to the visible, rational and reportable nature of members' daily activities.

Activation entrepreneur

An activation entrepreneur is somebody who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently.

Activation practitioner

An activation practitioner is someone who works at the UWV as a work coach or at the Social Service as a client manager and whose job it is to activate citizens.

Activation practitioners' first doing

Activation practitioners' accomplishment of the task to activate citizens is what this thesis refers to as activation practitioners' *first doing*.

Activation practitioners' second doing

Activation practitioners' accomplishment of the orderliness of practiced activation is what this thesis refers to as activation practitioner's *second doing*.

Breach

A 'breach' is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) in order to refer to a situation in which upsetting of routines takes place. Breaches can occur naturally (as is the case in

Garfinkel's study about Agnes) or they can occur in the form of experiments (as is the case in Garfinkel's 'What do you mean?' experiments).

Chaos

Chaos is the situation in which activation practitioners, when activating citizens, simply act on their personal understandings, without following clear guidelines about how to activate citizens, thereby possibly making the activation of citizens non-transparent and arbitrary.

Chaotic

'Chaotic' is a term used in this thesis to emphasize that the current literature on activation points out that the practice of activation is not (yet) fully supported by bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms and that activation may be arbitrary and non-transparent (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). It has to be noted that the other authors who studied the practice of activation do not use the term 'chaotic' to refer to the current practice of activation.

Citizen

A citizen is someone who is unemployed, who receives (or who is about to receive) welfare benefits and who visits the UWV or Social Service in order to be activated by the activation practitioner.

Common knowledge

Common knowledge is the (often tacit) knowledge that activation practitioners, as members, possess.

Demonstration of common knowledge

Activation practitioners, as members, demonstrate that they possess common knowledge via their behavior and/or via the use of language.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology studies the methods that 'members' use to make their actions understandable for themselves and for each other (Garfinkel, 1967). The ethnomethodological literature argues that practitioners are constantly involved in the process of accomplishing the orderliness of their daily activities. Practitioners accomplish order by demonstrating to each other that their actions are in line with particular reservoirs of common knowledge.

Framework

Together the seven reservoirs of common knowledge, that activation practitioners demonstrate to possess, form a framework (constituting the implicit guidelines/ standards of excellence) that activation practitioners use in order to perceive their work as ordered and normal. This framework keeps activation practitioners *in place* when doing their work.

'Framework'

'Framework' is an analytical process followed to analyze the generated data (Green, 2005). An analysis according to the 'Framework' principle consists of five stages, namely familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and finally mapping and interpretation.

Implicit guidelines

Implicit guidelines (the standards of excellence in Alasdair MacIntyre's terminology) are guidelines that may exist next to bureaucratic standards and professional guidelines and that are formed and followed by activation practitioners while participating in practice.

Indexicality

Indexicality is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) that refers to the notion that the eventual meaning of a practical activity depends on the context in which the activity takes place.

Main approach

The main approach to activation is a personal and particular approach which the activation practitioner the most prominently and frequently applies during his interactions with various citizens.

Members

Members is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) in order to refer to those people who speak the language of the group and who are proven competent in the accomplishment of the normality of the activities. In this thesis, when studying activation practitioners' *second doing*, the observed and interviewed activation practitioners are seen as members.

Order

Order is the situation in which the observed activation practitioners know what a normal way of activating citizens is. For an outsider it may seem random and *chaotic* that one activation practitioner uses sanctions, while another activation practitioner offers citizens

a competence test. Or that one activation practitioner imposes a sanction in a certain situation, but that he will refrain from sanctioning in another situation. However, together, as members of a particular group, activation practitioners manage to make the variation accountable and understandable, or, in other words, ordered.

Philosophy

The term philosophy refers to the general and theoretical nature of the ideas of empowerment, responsibilization and domination.

Phronesis

Phronesis is a term used by Aristotle (350 BC), and refers to the knowledge that one acquires in practice; it translates to ‘practical wisdom’.

Practice of activation

In this thesis a practice is defined as the *interactions* between people (Garfinkel, 1967; MacIntyre, 1981). In the case of activation, the practice of activation consists of, on the one hand, the interactions between activation practitioners and citizens and, on the other hand, the interactions between activation practitioners as colleagues.

Practices

The practice literature (MacIntyre, 1981) argues that practices are the social establishments of practitioners. Practitioners obtain knowledge about the practice (for example, knowledge about the ‘standards of excellence’ of the practice) by participating in the practice. At the same time, practitioners shape the practice by participating in it.

Practitioners

Practitioners are those people who are part of particular practices. In this thesis, activation practitioners are part of the practice of activation.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a term used by Harold Garfinkel (1967) which refers to the reflexive relationship between the account of normality and the known normality.

Requirement to adopt a subsidiary approach

Activation practitioners are required to adopt a subsidiary approach to activation when use of their main approach would result in an ‘un-normal’ situation. If the main approach to activation results in activation outside the normality and order as it is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners, it may be required to adopt a different,

subsidiary approach. Alternatively the activation practitioner can decide to transfer the citizen to a colleague.

Sophia

Sophia is a term used by Aristotle (350 BC) for the dedication to contemplation and translates as 'theoretical wisdom'.

Standards of excellence

'Standards of excellence' is a term used by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) that refers to the implicit guidelines that are formed and followed by practitioners. MacIntyre argues that when people work together in a practice, they will have to subject their own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to those standards that prevail in the particular practice. These standards emerge over time by looking at the work of practitioners who excelled.

Street-level bureaucracy

In the street-level bureaucracy literature (Lipsky, 1980) the argument is made that practitioners have discretionary space while implementing policies. In this discretionary space the practitioner can decide what to do. The result is that practitioners determine, on the street-level, what policies look like.

Subsidiary approach

A subsidiary approach is an approach to activation that activation practitioners might revert to as an alternative to their main approach when this is required by the situation. If the main approach brings about an 'un-normal' result, activation practitioners alter their strategy and adopt a different, subsidiary, approach to activation.

Three bodies of literature

The studies performed in this thesis are based on three bodies of literature: street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), practices (MacIntyre, 1981) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). These three bodies of literature emphasize the productive role of actual activation practitioners and they pay attention to *phronesis* ('practical wisdom').

Three philosophies

This thesis presents three 'philosophies' about activation: the philosophy of empowerment, the philosophy of responsibilization and the philosophy of domination. The three philosophies provide us with *sophia* (that is 'theoretical wisdom').

Un-normal situation

An ‘un-normal’ situation is the situation in which the activation practitioners’ approach to activation results in activation outside the normality and order as it is accomplished by the collective of activation practitioners.

Summary

This thesis explores the *doings* of Dutch activation practitioners. In this thesis activation practitioners are the work coaches and client managers who work at the UWV or Social Service[22] and whose task it is to activate citizens who are unemployed and receive welfare benefits. Since the 1990's the Netherlands introduced activating labor market policies. Part of these policies is that citizens who receive welfare benefits need to be activated. However, what the activation of citizens should entail remains vague. Laws, such as the Unemployment Benefits Act (WW) and the Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB), offer general legal frameworks and various studies show that it is not clear what activation practitioners (should) do when activating citizens (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Polstra, 2011; RWI, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Van der Aa, 2012).

Parallel to these vague policy goals, three disparate 'philosophies' regarding the way citizens can be activated can be distinguished in the literature (for example, Askheim, 2003; Clarke, 2005; Dean, 2007; Gilbert, 1998; Newman & Tonkens, 2011). First, the 'philosophy of empowerment'. This philosophy argues that citizens should be enabled to take control over their own lives in order for them to be active participants in society. Second, the 'philosophy of responsibilization'. This second philosophy argues that the state activates its citizens by allocating responsibilities to citizens that have to be executed by them in an appropriate manner. Citizens need to internalize the idea that it is their responsibility to be active and independent. Third, the 'philosophy of domination' can be distinguished. This third and final philosophy argues that activation is imposed by the state onto its citizens. In this philosophy, activation is seen as a paternalistic project. Citizens have to do what they are told to hence they have to be active. These three philosophies provide us with interesting view points on thoughts about the activation of citizens. Using Aristotle's terminology the three philosophies provide us with *'sophia'*, which is the dedication to contemplation and translates as 'theoretical wisdom' (Burger, 2008, pp. 116, 119). However, each philosophy presents us with its own view and there is no agreement on what practiced activation actually entails.

[22] Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen in Dutch or Employee Insurance Schemes Implementation Body in English. Sociale Dienst in Dutch.

In order to get a better picture of the practice of activation, this thesis explores the *doings* of fifteen Dutch activation practitioners. The selected activation practitioners were observed during their work for a combined period of 145 hours. The activation practitioners were observed during their interactions with citizens and during their interactions with each other as colleagues. In addition to these observations, formal interviews were held with eight of the observed activation practitioners and numerous informal interviews were held with all fifteen activation practitioners throughout the course of the observations. Finally, video recordings of interactions between an 'activation entrepreneur' (that is someone who does not work at the UWV or Social Service and who activates citizens independently) and various citizens were observed. Analysis of the generated data reveals that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners, while doing their work, do two things:

> First, activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens (activation practitioners' *first doing*).
>
> Second, activation practitioners accomplish the normality of their work (activation practitioners' *second doing*).

With regard to activation practitioners' *first doing*, this thesis shows how the observed and interviewed activation practitioners accomplish the task of activating citizens. This thesis shows that activation practitioners adopt a personal *main approach* when activating citizens. This main approach is most prominently and frequently used by the activation practitioner during his interactions with various citizens. Rudy and Linda (two activation practitioners who we got to know in this thesis) activate citizens in their own way. Rudy usually focuses on rules and Linda tends to focus on the desires of the citizens she faces. Furthermore, this thesis also shows that activation practitioners can revert to a variety of *'subsidiary approaches'* when this is required by the situation. If the use of their main approach during an activation session brings about an 'un-normal' result, activation practitioners can apply an alternative strategy. For example, Rudy focuses less on rules when he notices that a citizen experiences difficulties (financial or emotional) and Linda offers a citizen possibilities for work when she believes that the citizen is not taking his search for work seriously. By doing so, Linda lets go of her idea that the focus of the interaction should lie on the citizen's desires.

This diversity (activation practitioners adopt a variety of approaches) and dynamism (main approaches as well as subsidiary approaches can be adopted) in the *first doing* of activation practitioners can potentially bring about chaos. Activation practitioners may just 'be doing something', without following clear bureaucratic or professional guidelines and with no understanding of what it is that their colleagues do (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010).

However, this thesis argues that the practice of activation may be less chaotic than sometimes suggested. Activation practitioners do their work everyday, without continuously questioning if what they do themselves or what their colleagues do is correct. Following the ideas of Aristotle (350 BC), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) and Harold Garfinkel (1967) it is possible to argue that 'practical knowledge' (*'phronesis'* in Aristotle's (350 BC) terminology) exists in the practice of activation and that implicit guidelines are formulated on the basis of which activation practitioners do their work.

With regard to activation practitioners' *second doing*, this thesis shows how activation practitioners together accomplish the normality and orderliness of their work. Inspired by Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, this thesis shows how activation practitioners collectively, as 'members' of the group, accomplish order. Ethnomethodologists are interested in the ways in which members together accomplish a normal world. A telling example is the following: when a friend, a colleague or the doctor asks how you are doing you know how to answer this question in a normal manner. No formal rules exist for answering the question 'How are you doing?'. Nonetheless do friends, colleagues and patients, as members of the group, know how to answer this question. In this thesis it becomes clear that also activation practitioners demonstrate (via behavior and use of specific language) during their daily work that they do their work on the basis of *common knowledge*, and thus in the normal manner. In particular, this thesis identified seven reservoirs of common knowledge that the observed and interviewed activation practitioners demonstrate to possess.

Due to the normality and order, as it is accomplished by activation practitioners in practice, activation does not mean that *anything goes*. This thesis argues that activation is diverse and dynamic to a certain extent, that it is protective and that it is documented. There are differences in the ways in which activation practitioners activate citizens (*first doing*), however, this does not mean that activation can be anything, since in practice activation practitioners together accomplish the order (*second doing*) within which they activate citizens.

Thus, activation practitioners' *first* and *second doing* results in activation that is simultaneously diverse and ordered. This thesis further argues that the diversity (citizens can be activated in various ways) may actually result in effective activation. Citizens differ from each other and they may benefit from different forms of activation (Sen, 1992). Activation in practice is not only empowering or responsibilizing or dominating. On the contrary, activation can be empowering for some citizens while at the same time being responsibilizing or dominating for others.

Furthermore, this thesis argues that, due to the 'practical wisdom' of activation practitioners, citizens who are activated are not the subjects of a 'game of Russian roulette'. The orderliness of practiced activation ensures that, despite the lack of (fully)

developed bureaucratic standards and/or professional norms, activation does not mean that *anything goes*. In practiced activation implicit guidelines are present that are followed by activation practitioners when activating citizens.

This thesis suggests that activation may benefit from a kind of governance that seeks to balance practical wisdom of activation practitioners on the one side and the complex of societal and political interests on the other side. This type of balance may prevent policy ambitions that are too unrealistic or 'greedy' (Trommel, 2009). It is simply practical wisdom to protect depressed citizens form a stringent policy of 'everybody back to work'. At the same time, it is also important that activation practitioners pay attention to societal and political expectations and guidelines. This kind of governance, where 'practical wisdom' and societal interests form a system of checks and balances, is called 'joint sketching' in this thesis.

An important element of 'joint sketching' is that lively interaction exists between the various actors involved. Activation practitioners will have to be able to continuously share their insights and experiences with one another, since it is only in the interaction between practitioners that the normality described in this thesis can develop. Besides this, it will also be important that there is interaction between the practice of activation and the external world. Invisibility of the practice of activation in closed office spaces is undesirable, since this provides the base for a practice that is out of tune with societal and political expectations.

Given the complexity of the task to activate citizens with their own individual preferences, problems, capabilities and needs, it may be that this 'joint sketching' and the reliance on 'practical wisdom' is a viable strategy, next to formulating bureaucratic standards or professional norms, to achieve meaningful activation. That is, activation that respects the financial and emotional boundaries of citizens and that also contributes to the social-political ambition to empower citizens, possibly (but not per se) with the politically desired increase in labor participation.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Dit proefschrift[23] verkent het *doen* van Nederlandse activeerders. Met activeerders worden de mensen bedoeld die bij het Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen (het UWV) of bij de Sociale Dienst werken en die daar de taak hebben om burgers te activeren. Sinds een aantal decennia is in Nederland het activerende arbeidsmarktbeleid ingevoerd. Dit beleid komt er onder andere op neer dat burgers die werkloos zijn en die een uitkering ontvangen, geactiveerd dienen te worden. Wat deze activering van burgers precies inhoudt blijft echter onduidelijk. De wetgeving omtrent activering, belangrijke wetten zijn de Werkloosheidswet (WW) en de Wet werk en bijstand (WWB), is breed geformuleerd en verschillende onderzoeken en rapporten laten zien dat het niet helder is wat activeerders (moeten) doen wanneer zij burgers activeren (Blommesteijn, Van Geuns, Groenewoud, & Slotboom, 2012; Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Polstra, 2011; RWI, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010; Van der Aa, 2012).

Naast het breed geformuleerde activeringsbeleid zijn er in de literatuur drie verschillende 'filosofieën' over activering te onderscheiden. Ten eerste, de 'filosofie van *empowerment*'. Deze filosofie stelt dat burgers in staat gesteld dienen te worden de controle over hun eigen leven te nemen en dat zij hierdoor actief kunnen deelnemen aan de maatschappij. Ten tweede, de 'filosofie van responsibilizering'. Deze tweede filosofie stelt dat activering een manier van de staat is om burgers via subtiele wegen ertoe aan te zetten zichzelf op de door de staat gewenste, dus actieve, manier te gedragen. Deze actieve houding dient door de burger zelf geïnternaliseerd te worden. Ten derde kan de 'filosofie van dominantie' onderscheiden worden. Deze derde en laatste filosofie stelt dat activering door de staat opgelegd wordt aan burgers. Activering wordt in deze filosofie gezien als een paternalistisch project, burgers moeten gewoon uitvoeren wat ze verteld wordt te doen, dus actief zijn. De drie filosofieën presenteren ieder hun eigen visie op activering en laten ons nadenken over wat activering nu eigenlijk is. Het blijft echter 'theoretische wijsheid' (*'sophia'* in Aristoteles (350 BC) zijn terminologie) en het is nog onduidelijk wat activering in de praktijk inhoudt.

[23] Nederlandse vertaling titel: Wat activeerders doen. Een ethnomethodologische studie naar activering zoals dat bewerkstelligd wordt in de praktijk door activeerders.

Om inzicht te krijgen in de praktijk van activering, verkent dit proefschrift het *doen* van vijftien Nederlandse activeerders. Dit proefschrift baseert zich op observaties, interviews en video opnames. De geselecteerde activeerders zijn geobserveerd gedurende hun werk voor een totale periode van 145 uur. De activeerders zijn geobserveerd tijdens hun interacties met burgers en tijdens hun interacties met elkaar als collega's. Naast deze observaties zijn acht van de geobserveerde activeerders formeel geïnterviewd. Ook hebben vele informele interviews plaats gevonden met alle vijftien activeerders voor en na de observaties. Tot slot, zijn video opnames van de interacties tussen een zelfstandige activeerder (dat is iemand die niet bij het UWV of de Sociale Dienst werkt en die burgers zelfstandig activeert) en verschillende burgers geobserveerd. Analyse van de gegenereerde data laat zien dat de geobserveerde en geïnterviewde activeerders, tijdens de uitvoering van hun werk, twee dingen *doen*:

> Ten eerste bewerkstelligen activeerders de taak van het activeren van burgers (*eerste doen* van activeerders).
>
> Ten tweede bewerkstelligen activeerders de geordendheid van hun werk (*tweede doen* van activeerders).

Wat betreft het *eerste doen* van activeerders laat dit proefschrift zien hoe de geobserveerde en geïnterviewde activeerders de taak om burgers te activeren bewerkstelligen. Dit proefschrift laat zien dat wanneer zij burgers activeren, activeerders een eigen *hoofd-aanpak* hanteren. Met de hoofd-aanpak wordt de aanpak die activeerders het meest frequent hanteren tijdens de activering van verschillende burgers bedoeld. Rudy en Linda (twee activeerders die we hebben leren kennen in dit proefschrift) activeren burgers ieder op hun eigen manier. Rudy richt zich meestal op de regels en Linda meestal op de wensen van de burgers. Daarnaast wordt het ook duidelijk dat activeerders een *plaatsvervangende aanpak* kunnen hanteren wanneer dit noodzakelijk is. Met de plaatsvervangende aanpak wordt die aanpak bedoeld die activeerders hanteren wanneer hun hoofd-aanpak niet tot het gewenste resultaat leidt. Rudy, bijvoorbeeld, richt zich minder op de regels wanneer hij merkt dat de burger het moeilijk heeft (emotioneel dan wel financieel). En Linda doet suggesties voor mogelijk werk wanneer zij het idee heeft dat de burger maar wat doet. Door dit te doen, stapt Linda af van haar idee dat de wensen van de burger centraal dienen te staan.

Deze variatie (activeerders hanteren verschillende aanpakken) en dynamiek (zowel hoofd- als plaatsvervangende aanpakken kunnen gehanteerd worden) in het *eerste doen* van activeerders leidt mogelijk tot *chaos*. Activeerders doen wellicht *maar wat*, zonder bureaucratische dan wel professionele richtlijnen te volgen en zonder besef van hetgeen collega's doen (Eikenaar, Van Groenestijn, De Rijk, & Meershoek, 2012; Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010).

Echter, dit proefschrift beargumenteert dat activering in de praktijk wellicht minder chaotisch is dan soms wordt gesuggereerd. Activeerders doen immers iedere dag hun werk, zonder zich voortdurend af te vragen of wat zij doen, dan wel wat hun collega's doen, correct is. De ideeën van onder andere Aristoteles (350 BC), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) en Harold Garfinkel (1967) volgend is het mogelijk te beargumenteren dat er in de praktijk van het activeren 'praktische wijsheid' (*'phronesis'* in Aristoteles (350 BC) zijn terminologie) aanwezig is en dat er impliciete richtlijnen geformuleerd worden op basis waarvan activeerders hun werk uitvoeren.

Wat betreft het *tweede doen* van activeerders laat dit proefschrift zien hoe activeerders gezamenlijk de normaliteit en geordendheid van hun werk bewerkstelligen. Geïnspireerd door Garfinkel (1967) zijn ethnomethodologie, laat dit proefschrift zien hoe de geobserveerde en geïnterviewde activeerders gezamenlijk, als 'leden' van de groep activeerders, orde bewerkstelligen. Ethnomethodologen zijn geïnteresseerd in de manieren waarop leden gezamenlijk een geordende wereld tot stand brengen. Een heel herkenbaar voorbeeld is het volgende: wanneer een vriend, een collega of de dokter je vraagt 'hoe het met je gaat' dan weet je hoe je op een 'normale' manier antwoord op die vraag dient te geven. Er bestaan geen officiële regels voor het beantwoorden van de vraag 'Hoe gaat het met je?', maar toch weten vrienden, collega's en patiënten, als leden van de groep, hoe ze deze vraag moeten beantwoorden. In dit proefschrift wordt duidelijk dat ook activeerders in hun dagelijkse werk aan elkaar demonstreren (middels handelingen en taal) dat zij hun werk op basis van *gedeelde kennis*, en dus op de normale manier, uitvoeren. In het bijzonder worden zeven reservoirs van gedeelde kennis geïdentificeerd.

De normaliteit en orde die bewerkstelligd wordt door de activeerders in de praktijk leidt ertoe dat de activering van burgers niet zomaar alles kan zijn. Dit proefschrift beargumenteert dat activering in de bestudeerde praktijk divers en dynamisch tot op zekere hoogte is, dat het beschermend is en dat het gedocumenteerd is. Er zijn dus wel degelijk verschillen in de manier waarop activeerders burgers activeren (*eerste doen*), maar dit betekent niet dat activering van burgers van alles kan zijn, aangezien activeerders gezamenlijk en in de praktijk de orde bewerkstelligen (*tweede doen*) waarbinnen zij burgers activeren.

Het *eerste* en *tweede doen* van activeerders leidt er dus toe dat de inhoud van activering in de praktijk tegelijkertijd divers en geordend is. Dit proefschrift beargumenteert dat de diversiteit (burgers kunnen op verschillende manieren geactiveerd worden) mogelijk tot effectieve activering leidt. Burgers verschillen nu eenmaal van elkaar en kunnen daardoor behoefte hebben aan verschillende typen activering (Sen, 1992). Activering in de praktijk is niet alleen maar *empowerend* of responsibilizerend, of dominerend. Integendeel,

activering kan *empowerend* zijn voor sommige burgers en tegelijkertijd dominerend en responsibilizerend voor andere burgers.

Daarnaast beargumenteert dit proefschrift dat, dankzij de 'praktische wijsheid' van activeerders, burgers die geactiveerd worden niet meedoen aan een potje Russisch roulette. De geordendheid van de praktijk van activering zorgt ervoor dat, ondanks de diversiteit en het niet (volledig) aanwezig zijn van bureaucratische dan wel professionele richtlijnen, activering niet zomaar *van alles* kan zijn. In de praktijk van het activeren zijn er bepaalde impliciete richtlijnen waar activeerders zich aan houden terwijl ze burgers activeren.

Dit proefschrift suggereert dat activering van burgers gebaat is bij een type *governance* dat balans zoekt tussen de praktische wijsheid van activeerders enerzijds en het complex van maatschappelijke en politieke belangen anderzijds. Een dergelijke balans kan allereerst voorkomen dat beleidsambities al te onrealistisch of 'gulzig' worden (Trommel, 2009). Zo is het simpelweg praktische wijsheid om depressieve burgers te beschermen tegen een te stringente politiek van 'werk boven inkomen'. Aan de andere kant is evenzeer van belang dat activeerders zich oriënteren op maatschappelijke en politieke verwachtingen en randvoorwaarden. Een dergelijk type *governance,* waarbij 'praktische wijsheid' en maatschappelijke belangen een systeem van *'checks and balances'* vormen, wordt in dit proefschrift 'gezamenlijk schetsen' genoemd.

Een belangrijk element hiervan is dat er levendige interactie bestaat tussen de verschillende betrokken partijen. Activeerders zullen hun inzichten en ervaringen voortdurend met elkaar moeten kunnen wisselen, want alleen zo ontstaat de normale en geordende praktijk, die in dit proefschrift is beschreven. Daarnaast zal deze activeringspraktijk in voortdurend contact moeten staan met 'het publiek' in brede zin. Langdurige onzichtbaarheid van activeringspraktijken in afgesloten kantoorruimtes is onwenselijk, want een voedingsbodem voor een praktijk die uit balans raakt met wat de sociale en politieke gemeenschap van deze praktijk verlangt.

Gegeven de complexiteit van het activeringsproces is 'gezamenlijk schetsen' een strategie die enerzijds kan waarborgen dat de financiële en psychologische grenzen van burgers niet worden overschreden, maar anderzijds bijdraagt aan het sociaal-politieke streven om burgers weerbaarder te maken, zo mogelijk (maar niet per se) met het oog op een politiek gewenste verhoging van de arbeidsparticipatie.

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