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Between care and control

Interaction between refugees and caseworkers within the Norwegian refugee integration programme

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Abstract

This dissertation is a case study from Norway focusing on social interaction between refugees and caseworkers within the framework of a recent integration programme, the so-called Introductory Programme. The main objective of my analysis is to illustrate how the relation between the refugees and caseworkers is influenced by the policy, and to describe some of the challenges they face. My central argument is that both the refugees and the caseworkers have adopted more complex tasks and roles under the programme, and I discuss what impacts this appears to have on the relation between the two parties.

Introduction

In many western democracies faced by immigration 'integration' has become a catchword. Politicians, bureaucrats, the media and the public are all concerned with how to *integrate* the immigrants into mainstream society in a most satisfactory manner. In the Nordic states immigrant incorporation has been highly regulated through the formation of integrationist policies and welfare schemes. Yet in the 1990s the Nordic welfare states' integration philosophies became subject to fierce criticism, and were accused of being unsuccessful and causing passivity. The aura of criticism has in the course of recent years been diverted by a discourse of activation and a pursuit to place stronger demands on the newcomers.

This paper is a case study of the Norwegian Introductory Programme, a recently implemented policy programme aimed at newly arrived refugees. The two-year long programme is compulsory and consists of full-day education and language training. The study considers the practical aspects of the programme by focusing on the interaction between refugees and caseworkers. Thus, I ask: what are the practical implications of integrationist policies? How does integration come about on the local level? By this, I also seek to find out how social interaction is affected by policy. How does policy influence individuals' conduct and their social relations? Ultimately, it is a study of social roles and role behaviour; how individuals endeavour to fulfil ideal roles, and the tendency to take on more informal and unwitting roles. Worded differently; how do caseworkers and refugees perceive each other's actions? And, what roles do the refugees believe the caseworkers to hold?

My empirical material is collected through a one month fieldwork at a local introduction centre situated in the Western part of Norway. My central methods were participant observation and in-depth interviews. In addition, I have looked into policy directives, information brochures and training manuals worked out by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

With respect to my theoretical approach I am inspired by political anthropology and Shore and Wright's (1997) assertion that policies are inherently anthropological events. Arguably, my examination of the relation between refugees and caseworkers, and the interplay between their behaviour and written policy materials, makes it an anthropological study of policy. Furthermore, in order to place my analysis into a larger context I have applied theoretical contributions of three

categories. First, theory of social work, second, studies considering the encounter between frontline bureaucrats and their clients, and third, analyses of the interface between caseworkers and immigrants. Ultimately, to get a comprehensive grasp of how the subjects of my study inhabit various social roles, I have employed role theory pioneered by the role theorists Goffman (1959) and Kahn (1964) in addition to more recent contributions.

Immigration and integration in Norway

Immigration to Norway commenced with modesty in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Contrary to most other European countries Norwegian authorities did not explicitly encourage labour immigration. Some large enterprises did invite foreign labour, but most immigrants came of their own accord, mainly in search of labour. In this first period there were rather few restrictions on immigration. However, as numbers of immigrants gradually increased, the authorities introduced an immigration stop in 1975. The prime argument for the stop was the consideration of the immigrants who already had arrived to Norway and the limited capacity of the welfare state. One had to ensure social equality among immigrants before one could ease the restrictions. Although this stop was far from absolute¹, this political act indicated a new and more reserved line in immigration politics, which to a large extent has remained. Paradoxically, although the initial temporary stop became permanent, immigration rose after 1975. Throughout the 1980s refugees and asylum seekers arrived in increasing numbers. In the 1990s the authorities accepted large groups from Bosnia and Kosovo and a number so-called UNHCR 'quota refugees'² (Hagelund 2002).

Between 2003 and 2004 the number of asylum applications was nearly halved³. As a result the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (henceforth

¹ There were several exemptions to the stop comprising specialists employed by large enterprises, refugees, family members of legal immigrants, and students (Hagelund, 2002:11).

² In 2005 Norway received 1,000 UNHCR quota refugees (KRD 26.08.04).

³ In 2003 there were 15,600 people seeking asylum in Norway, whereas in 2004 the number was 7,900 (*Dagsavisen* 20.01.05).

UDI) closed down 45 out of a total 100 reception centres, and in 2005 further closures are being carried out (KRD 26.01.05, KRD 09.06.05). According to UDI this is a consequence of the directorate's 'success in restricting the influx of people without any need of protection' (KRD 26.01.05). Other plausible causes include the fact that there have been fewer conflicts close to Europe, and the realisations of the Dublin Convention and the Eurodac register as part of a general European harmonisation and, arguably, deterrence process. In 2004 the people who seek Norwegian asylum were mainly from Afghanistan, Somalia, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Iraq (*ibid.*).

As for labour migration the Norwegian authorities have in recent years changed their attitude, presently encouraging foreigners to come and work in the country. They preferably call for qualified labour using decreasing population rates as one of the prime arguments (*Aftenposten* 21.09.04). Immigration from Central and Eastern Europe has increased considerably after the European Union enlargement of 2004 through Norway's membership of the European Economic Area (EEA). The largest immigrant groups in Norway today, listed in order of size, originate from Pakistan, Sweden, Denmark, Vietnam, Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (SOPEMI 2004).

With reference to immigrant incorporation the term 'integration' has constituted the key concept that central authorities and the public repeatedly have referred to, and still do. When immigration became an issue in the 1970s the authorities viewed integration as a clear counterpart to assimilation, and they tended to emphasise immigrants' rights to preserve their identity and cultural traditions⁴. Accordingly, they implemented special measures such as mother-tongue teaching and subsidies of immigrant organisations. In the 1980s, a period marked by increased immigration, the ethnic distinctiveness approach gradually became less visible in policy papers

In the early 1990s and onwards, immigrants' position in society has been a contested topic in the Norwegian public debate. Increasingly more attention has been directed to the marginalised

⁴ As for the term 'assimilation' it was conceived of as highly negative, inhabiting associations back to the period of the 1940s and 1950s when Norwegian authorities exerted strong assimilation pressures on the indigenous Saami population.

socio-economic situation of the immigrants compared to the remaining population. They were generally depicted as unemployed and dependent on social benefits, thus draining the welfare state's coffers (*Aftenposten* 31.10.2004). Consequently, there were several moves in both the public and academic field attacking the allegedly excessive and often mistaken moral decency of the welfare state towards immigrants. Among these was the book of Ottar Brox *I'm not a racist, but...* (1991), introducing the critical concept of 'moral championship', and that of the social anthropologist Unni Wikan *Towards a New Norwegian Underclass* (1995) attacking the integration philosophies of Norwegian authorities. Similarly, Rune Gerhardsen from the Labour Party provoked his own party when he launched the term 'kind-ism' [*snillisme*]. With this, he claimed that the welfare state's approach to immigrants had been overly 'kind' and misguided, entailing unforeseen negative outcomes. Simultaneously, the media frequently referred to appalling cases about forced marriages, genital mutilation, and maltreatment of minority women which climaxed in the tragic story of the 'Fadime killing' (honour killing)⁵ in Sweden in 2002 (Hagelund 2002). In this new and critical discourse it was usual for politicians from all different parties to acknowledge that previous integration policies had deeply failed. Likewise, there seemed to be a consenting will to think in new terms and to reform integration policies alongside a more offensive line (Hagelund, forthcoming).

One of the clearest affirmations of the new approach is the so-called Introductory Programme drawn up by the recent centrist/right-wing coalition government. The programme is based on the Introduction Law that became operative in September 2004 basically stating that all recognised refugees⁶ have 'the right and duty' to attend a two-year full-day education and training programme. According to the law the objective is 'to enhance newly arrived immigrants' opportunities to participate in work- and community life and to become economically self-reliant' (*Introduksjonsloven* 2003). The main components

⁵ A Swedish-Kurdish young woman, Fadime Sahindal, was murdered by her father and brothers in a so-called 'honour killing', because she had a Swedish boyfriend.

⁶ More specifically the target group comprises newly arrived refugees, quota refugees, persons of collective protection in a mass-influx situation, and persons having obtained residence on humanitarian grounds between the age of 18 and 55 (KRD 2005).

of the programme are language and social studies classes, and forms of work placement. In return for participating in the programme the refugees receive a monthly introductory allowance that is supposed to replace the previous social benefit. All of the country's municipalities in which newly arrived refugees reside have implemented the programme, having led to extensive re-organisation on the local level. Overall, local authorities attempt to find more 'neutral' arenas for refugee affairs as alternatives to the traditional social security office. Akin to Norwegian policies in general the introductory programme is of top-down character. The central authorities mould the ideological and political contents, whereas the local authorities are to put the policy into practice. UDI serves as an intermediary player issuing a number of guidelines and training manuals coined at local authorities and caseworkers. Despite the relatively detailed documents of UDI, the local authorities are nonetheless left with a high degree of discretion encouraged to be innovative in their practical forming of the programme.

Integration and policy in the welfare state

The concept of integration inhabits a myriad of connotations and applications. There is a wide consensus in most liberal states that newcomers should be *integrated* into mainstream society and *integration* tends to be viewed as a normative opposite to the rather poorly reputed notion of *assimilation*. However, the question of *how* and to *which degree* minorities should be incorporated has remained a contested topic, and in some arenas it has become subject to profound debate.

Within academia some commentators have proclaimed their scepticism towards what they regard a prevailing uncritical approach to the concept (Favell 2003; Brochmann 2003; Joppke & Morawska 2003). Some have questioned the degree of its actual presence in liberal states arguing that if we strip the concept down to its formal and practical conditions, language acquisition and commitment to values is all that is left in practical terms (Joppke & Morawska 2003). In a similar vein, scholars hypothesise that what has been extensively perceived as 'integration' across western democracies is now turning into a new, though less arrogant, form of assimilation (Brubaker 2001; Joppke and Morawska 2003).

Notwithstanding critical stances in the academic realm, in most modern welfare states integrationist

policies have evolved more or less without constraint. In Norway the authorities embraced the integration concept virtually concurrently with immigration becoming a topic. The immigration and integration discourse of the 1980s was characterised by politicians' decent pursuit of 'aiding the truly needed' and an ambition to maintain the image of a country of humanitarian and egalitarian traditions (Hagelund 2002). As for egalitarian traditions, the universalistic model upon which the Norwegian welfare state rests holds as its core value the principle of equality. Hence, the welfare state intends to take care of all who need support within the national boundaries (Brochmann 2003). Consequently, the principle of equality can be seen as the 'nerve centre of the welfare state's integration project'. According to Brochmann this notion of equality comprises several dimensions involving economic/political, cultural, social and ideological spheres of the society. The degree of equality in the various spheres has traditionally been measured through frequent surveys that to a large extent have served as a general indicator on 'integration' (Hagelund, forthcoming). In addition to the principle of equality the Norwegian authorities have since the outset of the country's immigration aimed to make room for policies of positive diversity, thus facing a rather challenging and blurry balancing act of the two intrinsically contrasting principles.

Brochmann (2004) argues that as for integration modern welfare states are inherently impatient. Contrary to previous times when the newcomers gradually adjusted to the majority society, modern welfare states do not have the time for letting history do the job. In order to avoid a scenario of immigrants sinking into deprivation, the authorities aim to steer the incorporation. Concurrently, they have to ease their impatience in consideration to established human and minority rights. In spite of this, the Nordic welfare states have precisely faced a scenario whereby non-western immigrants come out worse than the remaining population in the fields of employment, health and living standards. Or perhaps one could argue that this propensity has enhanced the welfare states' impatience. In any case, throughout the 1990s there has been an intensification of so-called activation policies as alternatives to traditional income support schemes (Drøpping et al 1999).

Inasmuch as the Nordic social democratic states hold a remarkably close relation between the state and its population (Eriksen and Sørheim 2003), the concept of integration has logically been connected to the domain of policy-making. But what exactly

constitutes 'a policy'? The political anthropologists Shore and Wright (1997) ask this question and discuss how researchers can approach the concept. They refer to a number of manifestations such as language, rhetoric, political speeches, party manifestos, decision-making, and people's experiences with street-level bureaucrats. Subsequently, they suggest that when there is an intention behind these fragmented activities, and when they are organised in order to appear coherent, we may speak of a policy. An important aspect of policy is according to the authors what entails the term 'governance'. That is, the processes by which people's original norms of conduct and their "way of doing things" are influenced by policies, and how people more or less consciously contribute to a government's ideal of social order (1997:5). By highlighting these social aspects they assert that policies are inherently anthropological events.

The policy of concern in this paper, the Norwegian Introductory Programme, is a form of activation policy aimed at allegedly one of the most vulnerable groups of society. According to Djuve et al (2001) the programme has clear normative contents given the central authorities' ambition to manoeuvre the refugees' behaviour in a certain direction. In order to achieve this they employ a combination of motivation and sanctioning. The motivation is economic support, and in order to obtain the support the refugees are to participate in the programme. If they refrain from participating (not attending the daily activities of the programme) they are not entitled to the economic support. Djuve et al regard this motivation/sanction nexus as a substantial instrument of power, although in terms of ethical concerns they argue that it can be defended under the correct circumstances⁷.

In the realm of policy-making as well as in the public there are differing stances as to the ideological and practical moulding of the integration agenda. However, Hagelund (Forthcoming) argues that in the case of the introductory programme there appears to be an overall agreement across several fractions concerning the programme's basic objective; to 'activate' and 'make demands' on the immigrants through strong emphasis on learning Norwegian and becoming self-reliant. Moreover, in Hagelund's case study of a local introduction centre

⁷ As long as the instruments of power seek to improve the refugee's life conditions through placing strict demands on the programme's contents, sanctioning can be legitimised (Djuve et al 2001).

she shows how the introductory programme has brought about a new and more animated discourse on the local level characterised by a pursuit to rationalise, institutionalise and professionalize integration. For instance, the focus has shifted from the old and negatively associated notion of *passive reception* to *active qualification* wherein the refugees are referred to as 'participants' rather than 'clients'.

The interaction between the refugee and the caseworker

The relation between caseworkers and immigrants is crucial in a welfare state integration programme. In a sense it is precisely in the interaction between the two parties that the policy is being materialised. Within the fields of public policy, integration, and social work several scholars have reflected on this particular relation.

Schierenbeck (2003) describes the encounter between caseworkers and immigrants as a 'meeting of cultures'. The bureaucratic culture is influenced and reshaped by both the mainstream culture and the culture of the immigrant client. She further points out that in such an interaction between individuals holding different points of reference there is a chance of increased misunderstandings. When such misunderstandings are of cultural character they may evolve into so-called 'shallow' culture conflicts (Eriksen 1991)⁸.

One of the most prominent features of the relation between the caseworker and the refugee appears to be its affirmed asymmetry⁹. The asymmetry harbours various dimensions of which the most persistent are those of power, information and knowledge. Firstly, in terms of power, the sanctioning aspect inherent in many policies (among them the introductory programme) involves an element of control (Lipsky 1980; Djuve et al 2001; Schierenbeck 2003). The caseworker controls desired benefits and has the opportunity to withhold support if the client does not satisfy the set requirements. Related to the element of control is the paternalism that allegedly has been an overt inclination in the welfare state (Ylvisaker 2004). In

⁸ Eriksen (1991) distinguishes 'shallow' and 'deep' culture conflicts. Shallow culture conflicts are defined as conflicts owing to misunderstandings and ignorance. Deep cultures are of more serious character, evolving when the different norms and values of groups are irreconcilable.

⁹ Lipsky 1980; Djuve et al 2001; Schierebeck 2003; Ylvisaker 2004.

Djuve et al's (2001) discussion of the introductory programme they recognise the difficulty to completely avoid some degree of paternalism. Other factors that cause the imbalance of power between the caseworker and the refugee are the refugees' lack of command of the native language and their rather limited economic resources. In addition they have not themselves chosen their location of residence (Djuve et al 2001). With respect to information and knowledge, the caseworker has access to first hand data about the refugee and is familiar with the available organisational opportunities in order to meet the needs of her client (Schierenbeck 2003). Ultimately, the fact that the refugee finds herself in a more or less involuntary situation has a considerable affect on their relation (Schierenbeck 2003, Lipsky 1980).

In order to gain a better insight in the two parties, I will look more closely at what marks each of their situations:

The caseworker as a frontline bureaucrat

The position of the caseworker as a frontline bureaucrat is marked by the notion of being in a 'double role' (Lipsky 1980, Schierenbeck 2003). The caseworker is situated in between the demands of both the client and the bureaucratic organisation. Lipsky characterises this double role as an intrinsic contradiction that the frontline bureaucrat is bound to grapple with.

'On the one hand, service is delivered by people to people, invoking a model of human interaction, caring and responsibility. On the other hand, service is delivered through a bureaucracy, invoking a model of detachment and equal treatment under conditions of resource limitations and constraints, making care and responsibility conditional'

(Lipsky 1980:71).

That is to say, the caseworker is to allow for the client's desires and needs, whereas the organisation requires her to categorise the individual clients into cases and matters. She also has to bring about the organisation's objectives of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Schierenbeck (2003) examines the double role of frontline bureaucrats by constructing a typology based on two stereotypical roles, namely the 'fellow-being' and the 'authority person'. The 'fellow being' is characterised by mainly orienting herself towards the client, finding the double role problematic. On the contrary, the 'authority person' identifies herself with the organisation, viewing the

double role as a natural part of her work position. In her study of Swedish and Israeli caseworkers she concludes that in the Swedish context the 'fellow-being' is most prevalent, whereas in Israel the 'authority person' is most dominant.

The frontline bureaucrat enjoys considerable discretion in determining the nature, amount and quality of the services she provides, distinguished by administering benefits, sanctions, and policy instructions. As a consequence, the services and the overall policy the frontline bureaucrat carries out are often influenced by her personal demeanours and attitudes (Lipsky 1980).

Furthermore, with regard to the caseworkers' perception of immigrant clients Ylvisaker (2004) refers to two different images; the essentialist and the contextual. The former she describes as a tendency to have a 'narrow' view of the immigrant and to take on a missionary-like stance. This view is often based on stereotypes that may have connections to the prevailing media discourse. The latter represents a more complex understanding of the immigrant and a refusal to classify the individual into cases.

The refugee experience

Although refugees constitute a highly diverse group, they have in common the fact that they have fled their country of origin due to having experienced some form of serious threat. Their expectations of the new host country, often romantic and unrealistic, tend to be different from what they actually encounter. Thus, there is reason to believe the individual refugee's expectations have an impact on his behaviour during the period of settlement (Stein 1981). For the first few months refugees are likely to be faced with a reality of immense loss; of family, friends, job, property, and most actions that used to be habitual or routine. However, during the next period of one or two years refugees commonly endeavour to convalesce from their loss. Moreover, refugees tend to strongly believe that someone owes them something. What arguably used to be demands towards the persecutors are instead directed towards the government and the advocacy agencies. And since these instances are incapable of satisfying their demands they tend to become suspicious and bitter (*ibid.*). Cambridge and Williams (2004) refer to the refugee experience as one of dislocation and destruction of trust. They maintain refugees are inclined to develop what they call 'survival-oriented distrust', obscuring their relations to service

providers, as well as neighbours, local communities and fellow refugees:

'Given the background of mistrust, the confusion and disorientation of most new arrivals are magnified when they enter official systems that use alien language, concepts and rules. Even asking for help and support is fraught with complications of how to judge the relative value of the advice and information received'

(Cambridge and Williams 2004:99)

Besides, as a client of the bureaucratic system the refugee has a lot to gain in finding out how he can best present himself towards the caseworker. The manner he presents himself and his needs can determine others' perceptions of him and the kind of help he receives (Ylvisaker 2004). In a case study of refugees' encounters with the social security office Ørvig (1999) shows how her informants express a feeling of not being seen as individual persons with individual backgrounds. Likewise, when examining refugees' communication with caseworkers, Ørvig refers to the common reaction among people who lack skills in a foreign language; namely to pretend that you understand. In other situations people may remain passive and silent for fear of not finding the right words in the foreign language (Ørvig 2000).

Theory of social roles: challenges of role behaviour in multiplex relationships

In social theory a lot of attention has been drawn to the concept of social roles. Goffman (1959) demonstrated how each individual occupies various roles in their everyday lives. Further, he pointed to the different expectations that are tied to each of the roles and to the several efforts that characterise the performance of them. Since Goffman's studies a number of role theorists have developed and elaborated on these ideas making it a rich theoretical framework. I have found that role theory makes up a meaningful device to better comprehend the interaction between refugees and caseworkers. Therefore, I will present the central concepts that I later use in my analysis.

A *role* consists of the typical behaviours that characterise a person in a specific social or organisational context (Kahn et al. 1964). In my study the organisational context is the introductory programme and other places where the caseworkers and refugees interact with each other inhabiting roles as 'caseworkers' and 'refugees'. The refugee is likely to have different expectations of

how a 'caseworker' will behave. Similarly, the caseworker has his assumptions as to the conduct of a 'refugee'. The interaction between the two groups can be referred to as a *role set* which is defined as 'a person in role and all other persons in roles directly related to it' (Kahn et al. 1964). However, my analysis shows that caseworkers and refugees are attached to multiple roles simultaneously. For instance, the refugee can be viewed as a 'programme participant', 'student' and 'worker', and the caseworker can appear as both 'advisor' and 'provider'. Hence, their common role set contains *multiplex relationships* (Valcour 2002).

The roles are established by communicative action; other actors communicate role expectations that delineate an individual's role. Concurrently, by performing a role an individual communicates to others how to act in a situation (Kahn et al. 1964). In this sense, roles are the outcome of a *negotiating process* between the focal person and those with whom he interacts. As an example, a caseworker might want to emphasise his role as 'advisor' towards the refugees. If a refugee tells about a dilemma and asks for help, the caseworker may ask the refugee what *she* is thinking of doing in order to solve the problem. This can be a way for the caseworker to demarcate the advisor role from a less desired helper role. A 'helper' would in contrast be more inclined to assist the refugee by doing things for her. On the other hand, the refugee may have another understanding of the caseworker's conduct depending on the communicative conditions (i.e. language skills, culture differences). Thus, she may believe him to have another role than the one he seeks to perform. Communication is therefore a crucial factor for the establishment of roles and for the maintenance of the *boundary* them (Schumate & Fulk 2004). My understanding of a 'boundary' is 'lines of demarcation between domains defining the point at which domain-relevant behaviour begins or ends' (Clarc 2000 in Schumate & Fulk 2004:63).

Likewise, when I speak of *domains* I refer to the various activities of the introductory programme as well as the caseworkers' general municipal responsibilities towards the refugees. For instance, one of the caseworkers' tasks is to 'act as an advisor for the individual participant' (UDI 2003a), while another is to provide housing including necessary furniture and equipment. The UDI training manuals implicitly suggest that the caseworkers apply (slightly or substantially) different conduct in each of the domains. As a result, the caseworkers behave differently consistent with what they regard as proper

behaviour in each of the domains. Accordingly, the caseworkers seek to perform distinct roles in the various domains. For instance, when working with the refugees' individual qualification plans the caseworkers may appear as 'advisors', whereas in instances when they arrange housing they appear as 'providers'. When a person goes from one role to another like this, it is referred in the role theory as *role transitions*, and more specifically *micro-role transitions* (Schumate & Fulk 2004, Valcour 2002).

By the same token, we may say that the roles implicitly presented in the training manuals and programme guidelines are based on *ideal standards*. According to Goffman (1959), when an individual bases his role on ideal standards he tends to incorporate and demonstrate 'the officially accredited values of the society' (1959:31). I think this statement fits well into my analytic context as I consider the introductory programme to manifest some of the Norwegian society's 'accredited values'. However, Goffman points out that divergence between appearance and actual activity often occurs. In my analysis I am particularly concerned with this divergence, and I refer to some of the challenges refugees and caseworkers face in terms of role performance.

Firstly, an individual may lack information about the roles she is expected to perform or does not have the knowledge or resources to fulfil those roles. According to Kahn et al. (1964) the person then experiences *role ambiguity*.

Secondly, in reality the domains are not clearly separated. In the daily interaction between the caseworkers and the refugees the different tasks and activities seem to flow into each other. Concurrently, an individual may have difficulties combining his multiple roles. Such conditions are apt to generate conflicting expectations for behaviour, inducing forms of role conflicts. For instance, a refugee may expect to achieve significant assistance from a caseworker in domains where the caseworker attempts to let her sort things out herself. Hence, there is discrepancy between the caseworker's own expectations about his role behaviour and the expectations about that caseworker's behaviour held by the refugees. This is an example of a *person-role conflict* expressed as 'pressures associated with each of the different roles the person occupies within a single role set'¹⁰

(Valcour 2002:1165). Similar to Tsui et al. (1995) I will also be referring to this phenomenon as *discrepant expectations*.

Thirdly, in an environment of inconsistent expectations, new and more informal roles are likely to emerge. For instance, while the caseworkers intentionally perform the ideal advisor role, the refugees may view this as a helper role. Consequently, the caseworker has adopted a helper role, a role that is not presented in the programme guidelines. I will refer to this notion as *role diversions*. That is, situations when an individual is believed by others to have another role than the one he seeks to perform.

According to our example, we may say that the ideal and formal advisor role becomes diverted by a more informal role, namely the helper role. The way I see it my concept of role diversion is related to that of role transitions. The resemblance lies in the outcome that individuals cross boundaries between roles. However, role transitions come about deliberately; an individual intentionally goes from one role to another. Role diversions, in contrast, are unwitting in the sense that the individual does not explicitly deliberate to change roles. Besides, role diversions are much more relative and subjective as they are crucially contingent on how an individual's role is perceived by others.

Lastly, after having touched upon some challenges related to role behaviour, I will focus on the concept of *setting*. Goffman (1959) underlines the importance of the setting of social interaction as it influences individuals' role performance and expectations. In my analytic context the introduction centre constitutes the most important setting. Furthermore, Goffman states that in many social settings there are commonly two interacting *teams* whereby one of them, the so-called *performing team*, assembles and manages the setting. It 'contributes the more activity to the interaction, or plays the more dramatically prominent part in it, or sets the pace and the direction which both teams will follow in their interactive dialogue' (1959:80). Goffman points to the advantage of having control of the setting as it allows the performing team to employ 'strategic devices' for shaping the information the other team is able to obtain (1959:81). The scenario Goffman describes has clear similarities to my analytical context. As an obvious consequence of the bureaucratic structure the caseworkers are in charge of the introduction centre and the offered activities. Accordingly, they shape the information they pass on to the refugees.

¹⁰ Valcour (2002) uses the term 'intra-role conflict' in this regard, but I prefer to use the term 'person-role conflict' similarly to Tsui et al. (1995).

Design and methods

The starting point of my study was a desire to learn how refugees perceived the introductory programme. I deliberately chose to start out with a general and open research question, wanting to have the opportunity to discover new elements in the field (Silvermann 1997). In order to explore my elected topic I chose to do a case study based on an ethnographic fieldwork and a smaller set of policy publications. There are still a rather limited number of studies on this particular topic, arguably as a natural consequence of the introductory programme's relatively short duration in Norway. The studies and reports conducted so far have either tended to focus solely on the caseworkers (Hagelund Forthcoming) or have been policy-oriented using mainly quantitative methods (Djuve et al. 2001; Lund 2003; Kavli 2004).

I decided to carry out a case study because my research question was of a "how" character and I aimed to focus on a 'contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (Yin 1984:13). Besides, I consider the method to be effective and so far rarely used in relation to the given topic. Hence, given my aim to look into and narrate a relatively new area I regard my case study to be *exploratory* and *descriptive*.

Furthermore, I carried out my four-week ethnographic fieldwork at a municipal introduction centre with the purpose of collecting primary data. My choice of municipality was determined by the practical convenience of the location as well as my wish to select a place in a relatively non-urban area at a small-sized centre¹¹. During the field period I spent virtually every day at the centre, in average seven hours per day. I was allocated a room where I could sit and work on my laptop when I did not do other research activities.

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews primarily with the refugees as a result of my initial aim to focus exclusively on them. However, after some time I had drawn my attention to the interaction between refugees and caseworkers, so I decided to adjust my focus accordingly. Altogether I

had 12 informants, eight refugees and four caseworkers. In the interviews with the refugees I invited them to reflect on the different components of the programme. I also referred to situations asking the interviewee what he/she would normally do and think in those situations. Having said this, it is necessary to highlight some of the limitations of the interview method. Firstly, and most obviously, there are the language barriers. Naturally, the extent of Norwegian/English language proficiency varied according to educational background and the time-span of their stay in Norway, and I did not have access to a proper interpreter. It was easier for me to get in contact with participants who had reasonable command of Norwegian and English, and consequently there is a bias in my informant group in terms of knowledge of the two languages. All the interviews took place at the centre except one that was carried out in the refugee's home. To begin with I was hoping to do the interviews in a more neutral location, but I realised it would have cost a lot of energy and resources to do this. Notwithstanding these limitations, I was concerned with representing myself in the least threatening way by appearing as a humble listener seeking to establish an informal interview atmosphere. I also attempted to tone down my knowledge of the introduction programme expressing my desire to learn more about it (the so-called apprentice role).

In addition to listening to what people had to say (or did not have to say) in a prearranged interview setting, I found it very useful observing how people behaved and interacted on a more informal and intuitive basis. In personnel meetings and language classes I did direct observation, whereas otherwise I applied participant observation (Yin 1984). I talked to people in their offices, the lounge, the internet room, and I also had the opportunity to join a school excursion and a regional seminar for caseworkers. I believe these informal conversations gave me rich data and made up a substantial supplement to the interviews.

My *positionality* as a researcher has an impact on the way I perceive and analyse my data (Mullings 1999). The same goes for how I was perceived by people in the field. The refugees and the remaining immigrants initially seemed to have some difficulties placing me in a single category, as there tended to be some misunderstandings regarding my role (most likely because of linguistic matters and to a certain extent culture differences). Before I finished my presentation visits to the various classes I was asked whether I was a new student or a teacher. Some people also thought I was British since they had heard I came from a British university.

¹¹ A large amount of case studies revolving immigration and integration in Norway tend to be carried out in the urban areas and in particular the Oslo region. Yet as refugees are dispersed across the country's many municipalities I believe it is important to widen the scope of focus.

Consequently, I spent a lot of time explaining to people the purpose of me being there -representing myself as a 'student' that was going to write a paper about the introductory programme.

What is more, my mingling with both the caseworkers and the refugees certainly involved some challenges, probably causing some confusion as to "where I actually belonged". I attempted to balance my involvement with the two groups by spending most time with the caseworkers during the refugees' daily classes, and socialising with the refugees before and after classes, and in their lunch breaks. As a result, I sometimes had an unusual feeling of being a 'social butterfly' trying to be everyone's 'friend'. At the same time, I may have been perceived as a somewhat curious element, primarily among the refugees, in the sense that that I was a young woman apparently having lots of time, and being more than willing to talk to people. I believe my relatively young age and my perceived student role may have made me less "threatening" and arguably made it easier to get in contact with people. However, the fact that I was in a cross-cultural context further challenged my social interaction with the informants. Accordingly, I tried to sometimes reserve and adjust my role as a 'friend', being sensitive to how individuals could perceive it. These efforts describe some of my attempts to maintain 'the marginal position of simultaneous insider-outsider' that an ethnographic researcher should pursue (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983).

In order to retain confidentiality of my informants I use fictitious names for the place and the persons. Besides, in some cases I have changed the informant's sex and certain attributes such as work placement, profession, and education.

Ultimately, it is necessary to underscore the exploratory aspect of my study. An ethnographic fieldwork of four weeks constitutes just a "shallow dive" into the complex reality. My data are therefore limited and not as rich as they could have been if there was more time available. Consequently, my study comprises tentative observations and sketches and no extravagant conclusions.

The analytical context

Skogdal Introduction Centre

The institution where I conducted my fieldwork is situated in a town of approximately 10,000 inhabitants in a rural region of the Western part of Norway. Henceforth I will call the institution

'Skogdal Introduction Centre' and the town and municipality 'Skogdal'.

Skogdal Introduction Centre serves as a Norwegian language-training centre for adult immigrants living in Skogdal as well as the neighbouring municipalities. Two years ago the local authorities implemented the introductory programme, and Skogdal Introduction Centre became the natural location for the programme. Hence, the centre is in charge of all refugee affairs in the municipality of Skogdal. Currently there are approximately seventy students attending the centre whereby one third have obtained refugee status and are thus enrolling the programme. The refugees' places of origin are mainly Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Chechnya, and Palestine. The personnel consist of two groups; the teachers and the caseworkers. The caseworkers are in charge of the introductory programme and at the same time they constitute the administrative staff.

The organisation of the introductory programme

Before the introductory programme was implemented the local social assistance centre in Skogdal was the obvious and necessary place for refugees to visit in order to obtain their social benefits and other related services. As they had the right to language training some of them, more or less sporadically, attended classes at the local language-training centre. When the introductory programme was to be implemented the local authorities delegated to the language training centre the administrative and practical responsibility. In this manner some of the tasks previously in the domain of the social assistance centre were transferred to the language centre, thus resulting in the 'new' Skogdal Introduction Centre. A caseworker explained to me that if a refugee enrolled in the programme goes to see the local social assistance centre, their staff will refuse to dispatch the person instead sending her over to the introduction centre. The caseworkers have resolved the new situation by dividing the new tasks and responsibilities among themselves. Recently the centre moved out of their rather poor offices into newly renovated rooms of a shared building embodying a modern and light atmosphere. The personnel and users of the centre all seem to appreciate their new locality in contrast to the previous one.

Among the caseworkers and the participants some express a sense of uncertainty towards being in the middle of a re-organisation process caused by the introductory programme. Some of the participants

referred to a guinea-pig feeling saying they did not know exactly what the object of the programme is. Hence, they express a need for more information. Besides, some of them worried about what will happen to them after the two years of the programme are over. The caseworkers time and again face challenges as to the framing of the programme, and on my first day at the centre a caseworker pointed out to me that they were still in the formative stages. 'You have not come to the right place if you expect everything to be perfectly organised' he said apologetically.

Interaction in a new context

Both the personnel and the users of the centre seem to primarily conceive of the centre as a 'school'. The caseworkers and the teachers spoke of the immigrants as 'students' and similarly to a regular Norwegian school they would occasionally arrange excursions, ski days and similar social events. The school identity is not indeed surprising as this used to be the original and sole function of the institution. However, the caseworkers attempt, in compliance with the programme guidelines, to create a new and expanded institution identity vis-à-vis the refugees, namely as a 'job and qualification centre'.

For instance, they explicitly compare the refugees' daily attendance at the centre, combined with work placement, as their 'work days', and sometimes they use the word the word 'salary' instead of 'benefit' when referring to their monthly payments. Furthermore, when the teachers recently had their regular summer holiday the caseworkers filled this vacuum period by setting up a 'job club'. To which extent the refugees have accustomed to this attempted identity appears indeed to vary. All the same, the refugees seem to have a somewhat closer relation to the centre than the remaining immigrants in the sense that they spend virtually every weekday there. After their daily classes are over some of them commonly stay a bit longer with the purpose of using the centre's computers or going to see any of the caseworkers. In the interviews with the refugees the majority said they usually did not have any fixed appointments with their contact persons, being up to themselves when to approach them. There can also be periods when for different reasons they need to see their contact person more frequently. The administration offices where the caseworkers are based are easily accessible as they are located near the classrooms and the lounge. While some of the refugees do not hesitate to enter the personnel section being rather eager to see their contact person, others look more

reserved. When the two parties come across one another in the lounge or go on excursions together the tone is often quite informal between them.

In the caseworkers' frequent meetings they were often discussing the current situation of the participants, attempting according to each case to analyse the person's situation in terms of e.g. progression in the programme, future desires, family situation, and potential mental sufferings:

Jan is telling his colleagues about Osman who he has visited in his home: *"He seems to be in a good period now. He's been a lot of sick, but now he seems to have more courage. He's begun to talk about things he wants to buy for his apartment like normal people would do. He barely has anything there"*

(Staff meeting 27.05.05)

Jan who is Osman's contact person has kept an eye on Osman and his situation for a while, and he now informs his colleagues that there are indications he is in a 'good period'. Apparently he feels a responsibility for the mental state of Osman and he is relieved to see he is showing some signs of improvement. Jan's reflections on Osman's situation illustrate an interest and insight in the participant's well being.

Roles and expectations of the refugee

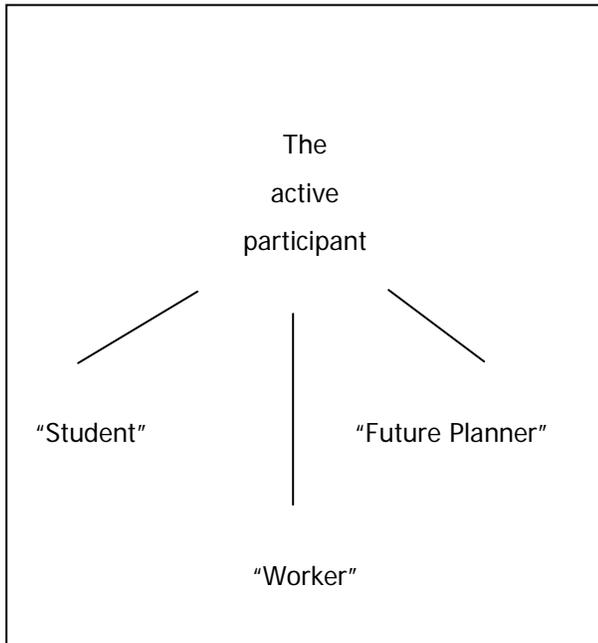
The caseworkers and the refugees at Skogdal Introduction Centre are assigned a number of tasks within the framework of the introductory programme. Some of these tasks are to a varying extent specified in official guidelines brought out by UDI, while others are outcomes of the local division of work. Altogether they form basis for various roles.

In the official programme guidelines the refugee is referred to as the 'programme participant'. The participant is portrayed as the main actor of the programme, especially in the development of the so-called individual qualification plan. Further, she is expected to take an active part in this work by providing relevant information, finding possible education or professional certificates, and if necessary being involved in the revising of the plan (UDI 2003a). In a brochure aimed at the participants this role is presented as follows:

'The introductory programme helps you make plans for the future (...). It is mainly your responsibility to ensure that this is a good plan, and you must take an active part in the planning. This plan will form the basis for what

will become your introductory programme' (UDI 2004)

The programme guidelines together with the social and organisational character of Skogdal Introduction Centre provide the refugees with a cluster of roles. These can predominantly be said to be 'student', 'worker', and 'future planner'. Together they form the overall role as an 'active participant':



The expectations attached to the roles can be organised into two categories, namely direct and indirect expectations:

Direct expectations:

- Attend daily mandatory language and civics classes
- Learn Norwegian within a satisfactory timeframe (ideally 300 hours)
- Attend language and work practice when available
- Take an active part in the drawing up the individual qualification plan
- Be an active job applicant when language skills have reached an adequate level

Indirect expectations:

- Have relatively clear ideas about the desires for the future in terms of job and education
- Obtain a comprehensive grasp of the rules and workings of the Norwegian welfare state and bureaucracy

- Accommodate to prevalent norms and behaviour patterns of the Norwegian society
- Be in a relatively good physical and mental condition

Considering the indirect expectations, these can be regarded as implicit extensions of the direct roles and expectations. More concretely, in order to succeed in fulfilling the direct expectations, the refugee, indeed to varying extent, has to achieve the indirect expectations. For example, it might be difficult for a participant to play an active role in the development of her individual qualification plan if she does not have clear ideas about her desires for the future job-wise. Furthermore, in order to actively plan one's own future it is a strong advantage to have knowledge about opportunities in the Norwegian society and to know one's way through the bureaucratic system. In some instances it can also be necessary for the participant to reconcile with prevalent norms and behaviour patterns in order to comply with the guidelines. One example is refugees in a family situation in which both the man and the woman (or the single parent) are expected to participate in the programme. In order to manage this, the caseworkers suggest that the parents enrol their children aged 1-5 for the kindergarten. Ultimately, to be able to regularly attend the mandatory activities it is advantageous to be in a fairly good physical and mental health. Having said this, the UDI guidelines expressly allow for individual adjustments in the programme, stating that the caseworkers should take into account the refugee's limitations in terms of age, health, family situation, and repercussions of war experiences and escapes (UDI 2003b). The direct expectations are based on concrete activities constituting the programme's central components. Further in my analysis I refer to these activities as domains.

Roles and expectations of the caseworker

The caseworkers at Skogdal Introduction Centre are assigned various areas of responsibilities. These mainly comprise settlement of new refugees; payment of the monthly introduction allowance and other economy-related tasks; managing the work placement scheme; and carrying out the contact person system. All of the caseworkers, apart from the centre's manager, act as contact persons for about 5-7 refugees each. The contact person job takes up much of the employees' working time and covers a number of tasks. Towards other

responsible actors¹² the contact person is to coordinate their collaboration and to 'ensure the progression and quality in the refugee's programme' (UDI 2003a).

In relation to the refugee the UDI guidelines specify among others the following tasks:

- 'Act as an advisor for the individual participant (...)
- Be a support on the participant's path into the Norwegian society
- Give information about rights, duties, and opportunities in the local community
- Map the individual's background and competence
- Assist in the drawing up of an individual plan
- Follow up the individual refugee and his/her family
- Motivate the participant to take part in leisure activities
- Prevent and if possible assist in conflicts
- Be accessible and open for guiding conversations'

(UDI 2003a)

The caseworkers' interpretations of the above guidelines and the suggested programme activities constitute the premises for their work. However, in order to get a more complete understanding of the caseworkers' roles, the above described premises should be seen in light of the caseworkers' interaction with the refugees as well as the participants' perceptions of their actions. If we do this, we can summarise their roles as follows:

'The advisor'

The caseworkers are in accordance with the UDI guidelines concerned with the agreed need to act as an 'advisor' in their encounters with the refugees. This involves teaching the refugees how to sort things out themselves.

'The helper'

Among the caseworkers and in the UDI guidelines the role as a 'helper' is largely considered as an opposite of the advisor role and it is associated with

the 'bad old days' of the past. A helper is understood to do things for the refugees, thus allegedly the refugee risks becoming passive.

'The provider'

The caseworkers provide the refugees with monthly payments, housing and other housing-related goods (basic furniture, equipment, etc). Yet, as will be shown, 'the provider is also apparent in other contexts than this specific area of responsibility.

'The career counsellor'

Given the programme's strong focus on qualification and job acquirement together with the employees' endeavours to identify their institution as a 'job and qualification centre', they hold a role that resembles a career counsellor.

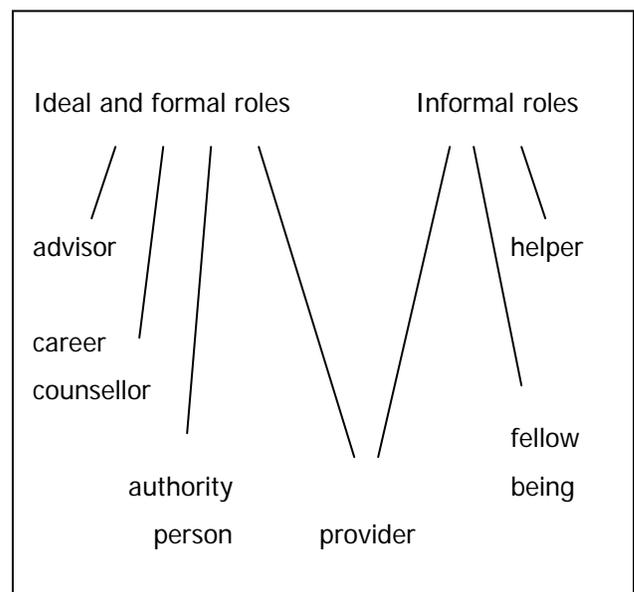
'The authority person'

As a representative of the state the caseworker is expected to carry out the central directive rules and balance the motivation/sanction intersection inherent in the programme. This leads to situations in which the caseworkers exert control vis-à-vis the refugees.

'The fellow-being'

At times the caseworker is more focused on the personal situation of the individual refugee (often motivated by a sense of empathy) rather than the directive rules of the programme policy. The role tends to be associated with the helper role, thus giving allusions to the era of 'kind-ism'.

The described cluster of roles can be illustrated like below:



¹² The teachers, the local job centre [Aetaf], and municipal health personnel.

The roles portrayed in the policy guidelines make up the formal premises for the daily social intercourse between the refugees and the caseworkers. In Goffman's terms they delineate an idealised view of the interaction as they set some ideal standards for the individuals to achieve. Yet at a closer look we see that the roles hold different and sometimes contrasting interests. Hence, the task of fulfilling and combining the multiple roles may not be as straightforward as the guidelines paint it. Below I will further examine some of the implications of the multiplex relationships that characterise the role set of the refugee and the caseworker.

Managing the roles in an uneven scenario

The refugee as 'the active participant'

The refugees are portrayed as 'students' in terms of attending daily language and social studies classes. The majority of the refugees I interviewed seemed relatively comfortable with this role. When they were asked to reflect on the programme they tended to immediately focus on the language training, seeming to be proud of what they had achieved. Radjab describes his relation to learning Norwegian as follows:

'I think it's good. Short time ago I couldn't speak. It's good for the programme. In order to live in Norway one has to speak Norwegian (...). I like coming to school. I'm in Norway now, so I have to learn Norwegian.'

(Interview 13.06.05)

Another informant, Ismael, explains how he has learned about Norway:

'I have learned many things, for example about typical Norwegian culture. Or about Norwegian history like Norway being under Denmark or Sweden, for example 1814 and 1905, and also some periods when Norway was in war. That was very amusing for me because I needed a lot of information about Norway. And I'm going to continue living in Norway, so I need a lot of *information about Norway*.'

(Interview 27.05.05)

In addition to the student role the refugees are partly considered as 'workers', in the manner the programme emphasises its reference with working life mainly through the arrangement of work placements. Some of the informants had not had any work placement yet, so they were rather

unfamiliar with this role. Among the informants who did have such practice there were varying opinions about the activities they performed and to which degree it had any positive effect. Some did not find their job relevant enough to their aimed profession, while others appreciated the opportunity the practice gave to get in contact with Norwegians. Yet most of these informants seemed to value the opportunity of doing something significant apart from the somewhat theoretical language classes. Particularly those who were more practically disposed had the chance to use other sides of themselves. Despite this, the role as a worker appeared to be vague for the informants.

Furthermore, the central guidelines of the introductory programme portray the refugee as 'the active participant'. In particular this regards the refugees' relation to the development of their individual qualification plan that remains one of the programme's prime components. In my interviews with the refugees few of them were familiar with the term 'individual qualification plan'. Nonetheless, after I gave them some hints all the informants recognised the contents of it and began telling how they had talked about the matter with their contact person. Regarding their future prospects related to job and education there tended to be variations as to individual attitudes and the clarity of the ideas they had been able to establish on the matter. The different cases of Sayed and Hoda can illustrate some of the variations:

Sayed used to work as a pilot in his country of origin, and his strongest desire for the future is to be able to work as a pilot in Norway. He recognises that in order to achieve his goal he has to go through a long and laborious process. Still he is very determined and spends most of the days learning Norwegian in addition to arranging the applications for relevant schools. Whenever he has queries regarding the application process and related matters he talks to his contact person who willingly assists him.

(Field diary 27.05.05)

Hoda tells me she is not sure what she wants to do in the future. "I don't know exactly what to do... It's a bit difficult. Maybe I will try to study for becoming a nurse. I think... I'm afraid it will be difficult. It's not certain it will work out. Since you're not Norwegian there are not so many opportunities". I ask her what she would like to do presuming there were more opportunities. "I'd like to work in an office. For us now it's perhaps dish washing, kinder garden and so on. I'd rather like to work in an office".

Hoda's contact person says he finds it difficult to collaborate with her in the working out of her individual qualification plan, seeming to have the impression that Hoda avoids the whole issue

(Interview and field diary 08.06.05)

Since Sayed has clear ideas regarding what he wants to do in the future, he can actively take part in the development of his individual qualification plan by applying for schools and doing other necessary preparations. With that, he appears as a 'future planner' and consequently also an 'active participant'. His contact person, attempting to comply with the programme guidelines, is ready to assist him as she wants Sayed to succeed in his career plans. Hoda, however, who finds it difficult to stake out her future instead being focused on the many obstacles, does not pay much attention to the work of her individual qualification plan. Her contact person, who suspects her not to be interested in job-related matters, is resigned since Hoda's attitude complicates the execution of the programme instructions. Hence, in this case, Hoda does not have the exact premises of fulfilling the projected roles of the programme.

The majority of the refugee informants said they found it somewhat difficult to plan their future. This applied to both the ones who had pronounced goals and those who were more hesitant. The main reason seems to be an expressed scepticism towards what they regard as limited job opportunities. Similarly to Hoda, several referred to their poor chances of getting a desirable job because they were 'foreigners', and some pointed to how even Norwegians face difficulties on the current labour market. Other spoke with resignation of the long process it would take to complete possible re-training and higher education. In summary, the refugees appear to have an ambiguous relation to the future planner role, and the reason seems to be rooted in factors outside the scope of the introductory programme. As a result, the vagueness of the future planner role is likely to curb the overall role as 'the active participant'.

The caseworker: grappling with the boundaries between 'the advisor', 'the helper' and 'the provider'

If we examine the advisor role, there is a tendency among the caseworkers to accentuate the importance of pursuing this particular role. In a conversation I had with the caseworker Hilde she described it like this:

'I don't want to help them too much. You see there is a difference between helping and supervising someone. I'm not interested in smothering them. For example if they don't have enough money to pay the electricity bill or the TV license I tell them they have to call the company themselves and ask them to rather split the bill. I don't do this for them. At least this is the way I do it.'

(Conversation with caseworker 23.05.05)

Here we see that Hilde, similar to the programme guidelines, makes a clear distinction between helping and supervising a person, underlining that she does not aim to 'help' the refugees. By so doing, she seems to implicitly resonate that helping a person will have negative consequences. The example she uses to illustrate her attitude boils down to *not* taking a phone call, rather asking the participant to do this himself. The way she uses her example indicates that avoiding making the phone call for the participant makes a significant difference. Hilde, still in her conceived advisor role, says she would suggest to the participant how to solve the inconvenient situation. She finally underscores that this is the way *she* works, thus implying that her colleagues have different views on the matter.

In the personnel meetings there appeared indeed to be some dissension between the caseworkers regarding the extent to which they should assist the refugees.

Nonetheless, as I will demonstrate below, the caseworkers' intended roles become in different ways "distorted" through their interaction with the refugees that occasionally entails misunderstandings and crossed communication. When the refugees refer to the caseworkers as contact persons they tend to be referring to the help-aspect rather than the advice-aspect that Hilde speaks of. For example the participant Sarah describes her relation to the caseworkers as follows:

'My husband and I took contact with our contact person whenever we needed help. We didn't have any regular appointments. Especially right after we got the residence permit we talked a lot to her. We needed help to translate our educational certificates and so on, since we didn't have any papers when we came (...). They were extremely helpful, and they've never said no. Especially in the beginning it was good to receive help, but now

we don't need it that much anymore. We're not so dependent anymore.'

(Interview 06.06.05)

When Sarah speaks of her contact person and the other caseworkers she immediately refers to the notion of help, and in her view the help is far-reaching. Accordingly, she does not seem to experience or take considerable notice of the advisor role Hilde and other colleagues (indeed to varying extent) seek to uphold.

In the interviews with other participants there was the same tendency to emphasise the help-aspect when they talked about the caseworkers. However, some of the informants were more concerned with talking about the alleged *lack* of help, complaining about the caseworkers for not helping them enough. Nassir portrays his experience like this:

'I don't talk that often to my contact person. It was more often in the beginning. It's a bit... There are some problems in between. The contact person... it's not clear enough when someone is talking to you. But first time I came there were a lot of problems. A lot of letters... So many misunderstandings... They just send you the letters - and a few problems and misunderstandings. I'm sure if the contact person was clearer and could tell us more about the introductory programme it could have been better. For example when we arrived we had only one table, two chairs and a sofa. They were bad furniture. I find this a bit difficult, because we cannot understand or we don't get any information about what we can do and about the rights and so on. Later I learned that in one of the letters it said that I had the right to complain within the first month. If they could have known... If I had the right to complain I would have done that. "Why don't you buy me a better sofa?" And the contact person says "go to that person". It seems like no one is ready to help you. (...). A friend of mine she's alone and she lives in another municipality. In her flat there is different furniture... I think it depends on the municipality, but there are also differences inside the municipality, it depends on the contact person.'

(Interview 08.06.05)

Nassir's description reveals a frustration towards the caseworkers comprising various aspects. He speaks of communication problems resulting in perceived absence of information concerning the programme as well as rights. Interestingly, however, if we consider the examples he refers to, they are

stripped to chiefly concern material goods. By saying his contact person should have provided him with more and better furniture, he implies that he should have been offered more help than he actually has. In this sense, Nassir apparently believes the caseworkers key roles to be 'providers' and 'helpers' and complains about the fulfilment of their tasks.

If we compare Nassir's and Sarah's utterances they seem to speak of two different forms of help. While Sarah refers to help in terms of caseworkers doing services (more specifically related to education and job acquisition), Nassir is more concerned with help as provision of material goods. We may call these two forms of help *service help* and *material help*. Which one of the two types the refugees were mostly focused on when talking about their relation to the caseworkers seemed indeed to vary according to each individual. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice how some of the misunderstandings arising from the interaction between the refugees and the caseworkers appear to be grounded on confusion around these two notions of help. In a conversation I had with the caseworker Peter this issue implicitly came up:

Peter tells me that one day a participant he is contact person for approached him. "He showed me a driver's licence bill and expected me to pay it for him. He claimed that some (...) [nationality] friends of him in (...) [a neighbouring town] have their driver's licence covered. But that's just nonsense"

(Conversation with caseworker 24.05.05)

The participant, Ahmed, who Peter is here referring to, began telling about the same incident in an interview I had with him:

I ask Ahmed how often he sees his contact person and he briefly answers my question. He then goes on telling me he has got the driver's licence and that he went to his contact person because he "needed help". "It costs 10 000 kroner¹³ and I certainly can't afford to pay this myself" Ahmed says resigned.

(Interview 26.05.05)

These two descriptions illustrate a divergence between the caseworker's and the refugee's perception of what is the caseworker's primary role. Peter is appalled how a participant could have the guts to ask him to pay his driver's licence bill,

¹³ Approximately £ 850.

expecting Ahmed to understand this is his own responsibility. Ahmed, on the other hand, who is convinced he is not in a position to pay the bill himself, assumes Peter will be able to help him out. The example of Ahmed and Peter indicates that a refugee may view the caseworker as 'the provider' in contexts exceeding the domain of housing arrangement and monthly payments. Thus in this case Ahmed has high expectations as to what Peter can achieve as a provider.

Role ambiguity, discrepant expectations and role diversions

In the programme guidelines an ideal scenario is depicted where the suggested roles match the various domains. However, the above illustrations show that in a real scenario, roles and domains do not match as neatly. The individuals' role interpretations and behaviour tend to be rather subjective, and their images of each other's roles do not always coincide.

As for the refugees, the role they seem most familiar with and accustomed to is the student role. In contrast, their relation to the 'worker' and 'future planner' roles is more remote and ambiguous. The case of Sayed's and Hoda's relations to the future planner role demonstrates some of this ambiguity. Accordingly, in the cases where the refugees lack familiarity and comfort with the ideal roles of the programme, there is a tendency of role ambiguity.

With respect to the caseworkers, the examples show that they do not always have the complete command of the way the refugees perceive their work. Consequently, they are prone to be attributed roles with which they in principle do not want to identify themselves. Hilde and her colleagues wish to act as advisors in their interface with the refugees, although the boundary between advising and helping remains relative and thus fuzzy. Notwithstanding, Sarah speaks of the caseworkers as kind helpers offering service, whereas Nassir, complaining about his furniture, seems to see them as providers of material goods. Similarly, Ahmed who has obtained his driver's licence appears to view Peter as a provider.

What we see here is a role set of multiplex relationships generating conflicting expectations for behaviour. Diverging expectations evolve as there is a mismatch between the caseworkers' own expectations about their role behaviour and the expectations held by the refugees. As a result, new and informal roles emerge in form of role diversions. That is, the refugees tend to believe the

caseworkers to have other roles than the ones the caseworkers seek to perform.

Given the programme's strong focus on future planning and job acquirement, the caseworkers tend to be particularly preoccupied with this specific field appearing to spend a good deal of time and energy on encouraging and assisting the participants on the matter. In the other domains, however, they seem more reluctant to offer assistance, preferring to perform their advisor role by encouraging the participants to sort out things themselves. Accordingly, they place varying emphasis on each of the roles they occupy in the respective domains. From the refugees' point of view the boundaries of the different domains, each entailing different degree and form of assistance, do not come out as clearly as the caseworkers find them. In such a context there seems to be a short step to the caseworkers being conceived of as a helper or a provider. Hence, the boundaries between the domains and likewise the roles become blurry and porous. In light of this, a continual process of negotiation as for where the role boundaries are drawn marks the communication between the refugee and the caseworker.

Interaction in an asymmetric relation: Balancing 'the authority person' and 'the fellow-being'

The examples presented so far illustrate some crucial aspects of the encounter between the refugees and the caseworkers with reference to role behaviour. I will expand on these accounts by focusing on the fated asymmetry that characterises the relation and on what implications it has for the individuals' role behaviour. Here I will concentrate on the caseworkers and how they deal with the necessity of exercising authority vis-à-vis the refugees.

At Skogdal Introduction Centre the caseworkers had to continually cope with the practical implications of the motivation/sanction nexus inherent in the introductory programme. In general they aimed in different ways to make the participants realise the serious economical consequences of not attending the activities of the programme. As means of argumentation they mainly referred to the programme's resemblance to a regular workplace as well as to the Introduction Law. Arguably, the caseworkers view the Introduction Law as an extra device that can help them to emphasise the solemnity of the sanction principle. While the majority of the refugee informants seemed to agree to the principles of the programme, there were also a few exceptions:

At a meeting the caseworkers are talking about Quadir who they find problematic because he has had unjustified absence for a longer period.

Hilde: "Quadir he worries me..."

David (Quadir's contact person): "Yes... He still hasn't returned his income tax form, it's just lying there. He's a sluggard. He doesn't even check his post"

David is telling the others about everything Quadir could have accomplished given his significant talent in drawing. "I told him 'on Friday the shops are night open, so now you have the opportunity to earn a bit of money'. But no... (...). I've done what I can do now. How can we withdraw him? We can't withdraw for all his absence, you know, because then he simply has to pay...!"

David and his colleagues are discussing how to sort this out and they decide to give him a minimum amount per day in addition to money for his house rent. They also agree on suggesting that he arranges a drawing class for the other participants as part of the summer activities.

(Staff meeting 14.06.05)

The conversation between the caseworkers illustrates their efforts to balance the two principles of motivation and sanction. David has made several attempts of encouraging Quadir to participate in the programme, feeling he has done whatever he could. His colleagues and he re interested in Quadir's involvement and talent in drawing knowing it means a lot to him. Therefore they employ this as a motivation factor for participation by suggesting he can make use of his qualifications in the programme activities. Such an appreciation of personal qualifications is also something that is encouraged in the UDI training manuals. Notwithstanding, since Quadir has not shown any sign of compliance, the caseworkers face the necessity to sanction him by withholding his introduction allowance. They avoid, however, completely cutting off the economic support, seeming to find this option rather drastic. At the same time as they are aggravated by Quadir's resistance, they worry about Quadir's situation. Accordingly, they try to find a middle way. The unease apparent in their efforts of finding achievable solutions seems to be rooted in a 'kind-ist' desire, haunting from earlier days, to want the best for the refugee.

In other words, the authority role they seek to uphold as a result of the sanctioning principle

appears to be diverted by the 'fellow being'. From this we see another example of role diversion, this time provoked by the caseworkers' fated 'double role'.

From the refugee's stance, Quadir, by not complying with the rules of the programme, rejects the role of 'the active participant' and remains in a kind of rebel role:

Quadir is at the centre today and I run into him in the lounge. We have met once before, so he knows I am here to write 'a paper about the introductory programme'. "I don't like the introductory programme" he says. "I don't have the time. Besides I don't learn any Norwegian by hanging out here where there are only foreigners who speak Somali and Arabic. I learn Norwegian when I talk to you and other Norwegians". Quadir hands me a fancy folder which he says is his CV, and with enthusiasm he tells me about his interest in drawing. He says he has recently made some contacts in a magazine, and he hopes this can help him finding a job soon.

(Field diary 14.06.05)

Quadir's attitude to the programme constitutes a slight paradox. He says he does not approve of the programme because he 'doesn't have time' and that he would rather spend time looking for job contacts and mingle with Norwegians. The very aims of the introductory programme are, as pointed out earlier, precisely to make the participants self-reliant through job acquirement. Still, despite the assumption that these aims should correspond with Quadir's agenda, he rebels against the ground rules of the programme thus becoming an outsider.

Furthermore, in the caseworkers' pursuit of balancing the motivation/sanction intersection situations occur when they assess the need to interfere in the refugees' private sphere.

After discussions in the recent personnel meetings the caseworkers have agreed that Shirvani and Elina should enrol their children in kindergarten from August. Shirvani already participates in the introductory programme, and allegedly the family was accepted into the municipality on the condition that Elina began the programme when their two children were old enough to begin in kindergarten. Grete who is the couple's contact person has hinted about the issue before, but now it is time to try and convince Shirvani and Elina.

Grete and Shirvani are sitting in Grete's office. Grete clearly and gently presents the issue for Shirvani. When Shirvani understands what Grete's aim is he responds: "But they're still too young. They can't make it on their own". Grete, who soon realises this will be a difficult task, calls on Peter who speaks the native language of Shirvani to help her with some translating. She goes on trying to mention the positive sides of sending their children to kindergarten emphasising Elina's apparent interest in learning Norwegian.

"To begin with it's only a visit, just to see how it is" she tries. After some discussion to and fro Shirvani seems more lenient. "I just have to talk to Elina first" he assures. "Talk to Elina, sure..." Grete says resigned. The conversation ends and Shirvani leaves the centre. After about an hour Peter approaches Grete: "Elina just called me. And she was not going to send her children to any kindergarten. That was for sure!"

(Field diary 14.06.05)

The described situation shows how Grete attempts to motivate Shirvani to sign up his and Elina's children for kindergarten so that Elina can start the programme. As a consequence Grete has stepped into the refugees' family sphere seeking to exert influence on their behaviour pattern. Given the couple's reluctance to obey Grete's proposal, it is arguable that Shirvani and Elina regard the contents of the proposal as unfamiliar and perhaps conflicting with their established norms on the matter. In this sense the dispute may be a 'shallow' culture conflict. What is more, there is also an economic dimension to the issue. If Shirvani and Elina register their children in the kindergarten they will lose their monthly 'Cash Benefit' [*kontantstøtta*]¹⁴, thus risking ending up in a less favourable economic situation than they are currently in¹⁵. Consequently, this dimension further challenges the caseworkers' efforts to achieve the set objectives.

In this example Grete seeks to perform the authority role vis-à-vis Shirvani. However, in her

¹⁴ The 'Cash Benefit' is a controversial benefit ensured parents of children aged 1-3. Its stated purpose is 'to help families to have more time to take care of their own children themselves' (Trygdeetaten 2004).

¹⁵ To which extent it actually leads to a less favourable situation depends on several factors such as whether or how much the refugees pay for enrolling their children in the kindergarten.

approach she appears to appease the role by focusing on what the participants can personally gain by adhering to her proposal rather than on what will happen if they object to it. Worded differently, she seeks to focus on the motivation principle rather than that of sanction.

Another role that is closely linked to the motivation principle is the career counsellor role. As we have seen, the work involving the refugees' individual qualification plans constitutes a central task for the caseworkers, and the caseworkers therefore consider it important to be familiar with the participants' interests, wishes and plans for the future in terms of job and education. Yet as demonstrated, not all the participants have clear aims for the future. In these cases the caseworkers sometimes encourage them to contemplate on the matter.

Today's language class is over and caseworker Hilde and the participant Dalmar come across each other in the lounge. Hilde asks Dalmar how it is going with his work placement at the fish farm. Dalmar tells her he likes it there, but the practice period is soon finished and he asks what will happen further.

Hilde: "You and I have to go to Aetat [job centre] together. But then you have to write a CV first. You're supposed to have that. Do you know what a CV is?"

As Dalmar hesitates Hilde starts explaining to him what it is.

Hilde: "But it depends on what you want to do in the future. This becomes a part of your individual qualification plan".

Dalmar: "My teacher (...)"

Hilde (does not quite understand what Dalmar is saying): "Do you want to become a teacher?"

Dalmar replies no and tries to straighten the misunderstanding.

Hilde: "What's important is: What do you want to become? What do you want to do with your future? (...) I don't know what goals you have?"

Dalmar: "Maybe become a prime minister...!" Rafik laughs reservedly.

Hilde (jokingly): "Yes, prime minister, or president! (...). But you have three semesters of aquaculture from (...) [country]?"

Dalmar: "Five semesters"

(Field diary 06.06.05)

Hilde attempts here to eagerly motivate Dalmar to think through his desires and plans for the future, and by so doing she enters into a career counselling role. Apparently, Dalmar is not exactly sure of his future plans and responds to Hilde's questions in a somewhat insecure manner, resorting to wittiness. The above examples show how the caseworkers cope with the motivation/sanction intersection and the programme's control aspect. There is a tendency to emphasise the motivation principle, although even motivation risks involving a touch of more or less unintended control.

Conclusion

On an overall level the introductory programme can be viewed as a sign of the Norwegian welfare state's impatience towards integrating the country's newcomers. It is a device for steering the incorporation of the immigrants on a preferable course. The programme can also be seen as a response to the 'anti-kind-ist' critique of the 1990s as it aims to make stronger demands on the immigrants through creating preconditions for receiving state benefits. Likewise, it falls into line with a range of activation policies implemented in the Nordic welfare states as a consequence of increasing costs of their cash benefit systems. The central authorities mould the ideological and normative contents of the programme aspiring that in the longer term it will result in improved statistics and a well-functioning and integrated multi-cultural society.

On a local level, caseworkers interpret and carry out the programme directives in their encounters with the refugees. In this way the programme directives influence the caseworkers' and the participants' behaviour and their "way of doing things" (Shore and Wright 1997). My study shows that the allegedly new discourse that has evolved along with the implementation of the introductory programme (Hagelund 2005) also is at Skogdal Introduction Centre. The caseworkers are inspired by the new approach in the sense that the introductory programme allows them to focus on other things than merely payment of benefits. Besides, they seem to appreciate the new elements comprising work and educational training. They also appear to agree with the activation aspect of the programme tending to speak of 'the earlier days of social benefit dependence' in a negative sense. As for the refugee informants they express a general positive attitude to the programme, primarily emphasising their achievements in language training. Further, they convey a feeling of being of use and 'contributing' when they talk about their experience

with work placements. Several of them also mention the social aspects of participating in the programme activities. Furthermore, by looking into various facets of the interface between the caseworkers and the refugees my study describes a 'meeting of cultures' (Schierenbeck 2003). The refugees, mainly non-western, encounter an official system qualitatively different from what they are used to. The Norwegian society's close relationship between the state and its citizens is likely to be unfamiliar to them, and they may have a very different attitude to the state than what the introductory programme anticipates. For them the programme arguably represents a larger body of rules and concepts expressed in an unknown language that they need to learn and adjust to. On the other hand, as representatives for the official body the caseworkers reflect the bureaucratic traditions as well as prevalent Norwegian norms. Some of my refugee informants spoke with resignation about all the letters and information they received, saying that they did not always understand the contents of it. Besides, we can argue that the programme's key elements - language training, work practice and qualification plans - embody one of the most established norms of the Norwegian society, namely the concept of competence. In the general society discourse there are many references to the notion of competence as it is considered important for a person or institution to possess some form of skills (Berg 2001). In view of this, and as my examples point to, the meeting of the two cultures, characterised by different points of references, is prone to face some dissension.

One of the organisational outcomes of the introductory programme is that the traditional social assistance centre is no longer the obvious arena for interaction between the caseworker and the participant. With reference to my data there is reason to believe that the physical and organisational changes the introductory programme has brought about have had a certain impact on the relation between the refugees and the caseworkers. The fairly cold and bureaucratic environment of the social security office, in which the caseworkers are placed behind their desks and the refugees come to receive their social benefits, now belongs to the past. Instead, the refugees daily attend a centre where they see the caseworkers on a frequent basis. Hence, I will argue that that the frequent encounters in more than just one setting have led to a more subtle relation between the two parties. As stated earlier, the identity of Skogdal Introduction Centre is mainly that of a Norwegian

language training school and to a certain extent a 'job and qualification centre'. The current identity of the centre possibly harbours a more informal atmosphere than what prevailed in the social security office. In previous studies that have examined the encounter of caseworkers and immigrants the social security office has been referred to as the obvious setting (i.e. Ørving 2000, Ylvisaker 2004). Likewise, Scandinavian researchers in social work have found that immigrants describe their meeting with the social security office as painful and derogatory (Ylvisaker 2004:36).

These findings do not, however, concur with my depiction of Skogdal Introduction Centre. My refugee informants did not express any feeling of being degraded in their meeting with the centre. On the contrary, they tended to speak positively about the centre. These utterances indicate that the refugees have a more balanced relation to the introduction centre than what has been the trend with the social security office.

In regard to the caseworkers I believe the new setting of Skogdal Introduction Centre in combination with the programme components made better premises to obtain more differentiated impression of the refugees than what has been described in the literature on the social security office (i.e. Ørving 2000, Nilsen & Quereshi 1991). Put differently, we may say that the new framework has created a better basis to see the individual behind the refugee label and to obtain a more contextual image of the client.

Notwithstanding, my arguments require two reservations. Firstly, I base my arguments solely on my data from one municipality, that of Skogdal. And since the local authorities in the country's many municipalities are assured a fairly high degree of autonomy as for the programme's framing, there are differing organisational outcomes. The introductory programme's setting in other locations may have developed other identities and other environments than that of my case study. Secondly, caseworkers' views of the refugees are highly contingent on individual attitudes. Therefore, the caseworkers are likely to have diverse and at times contrasting images of the refugees within one single setting.

Moreover, in this paper I have examined the interaction between the refugee and the caseworker by focusing on role behaviour. In my analysis I consider them to constitute a single role set of multiplex relationships. My assessment of the programme guidelines and training manuals assumes that both the caseworker and the refugee

have adopted new, and arguably more demanding, tasks and roles compared with previously. In the guidelines the refugee is portrayed as an active participant and future planner, while the caseworker is described as a coordinator, career counsellor, and advisor. However, my analysis shows how the two parties face some challenges in fulfilling these formal and ideal roles. As a consequence, more informal roles emerge. In this regard I have concentrated on the caseworkers and how both themselves and the refugees perceive their work. My analysis assumes that the refugees see the 'the helper' and 'the provider' when the caseworkers on the other hand try to perform their ideal roles. As a result of the two parties' different expectations, the ideal roles become diverted by other less desirable roles. These unwitting transitions across role boundaries manifest that the boundaries are prone to be porous. As for the refugees, the extent to which they are familiar and comfortable with the ideal roles, vary according to the roles. Consequently, among those who lack the required familiarity and comfort with the roles, there is a tendency of role ambiguity. Likewise, the participants do not seem to be in a good position to distinguish the several domains which each involve different degree and form of assistance carried out by the caseworkers. With that, the interaction between the refugee and the caseworker remains a continual and more or less implicit negotiating process of role boundaries, entailing some gaps and overlaps.

What is more, I have reflected on the unavoidable asymmetry that characterises the relation between refugees and caseworkers in terms of power, information and knowledge. As newcomers the refugees are legally required to participate in the introductory programme, and it makes up the only way of achieving economic support. The caseworkers have on their side the know-how about rules and demands the refugees are to abide by in order to obtain the monthly allowances. In view of this, my analysis considers the double role of the caseworkers; the reality that they must take into account the needs and desires of the refugee as a client at the same time as they are to be true to the policy of the organisation. At Skogdal Introduction Centre the caseworkers continually assessed, more or less explicitly, how to balance their in-between role. In their meetings they often talked about the difficulty they felt in wanting to treat the refugee as a unique individual person whilst simultaneously adhering to the programme directives and the central demand of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. With respect to discretion my case suggests that

the caseworkers are left with considerable autonomy as to the interpretation of the programme directives as well as the manner of tackling the participants' queries, needs and desires. This was also something that came to the fore in their meetings. For instance, when they discussed a participant's situation they tended to have differing perspectives on the degree to which they should assist a participant.

Finally, my study demonstrates how the motivation/sanction intersection of the introductory programme involves an element of control. Arguably, the caseworkers exert control vis-à-vis the refugees as a means of following the programme principles. In different ways they seek to motivate the participants to attend the programme activities whilst simultaneously attempting to emphasise the consequences of absencing the activities. In cases in which the participant does not comply with the rules the caseworkers discuss the necessity of resorting to sanctioning. However, they seem to resist taking the full step to sanction, choosing instead to spend time and energy on motivating the participant. In terms of role behaviour the caseworkers apparently perform the authority role when they seek to exert control.

Yet, the authority role tends to be diverted by the 'fellow-being' as they seem to have some empathy for the participant and his personal situation. As earlier shown, Schierenbeck's (2003) employs the same two roles - the authority role and fellow-being - in her analysis of Swedish and Israeli frontline bureaucrats. Even so, I find her analysis somewhat rigid in the way she attempts to distinguish the two roles. On the basis of my own research I prefer a more flexible notion of the role pair as my examples indicate that the caseworkers are continually shifting between the roles, resulting in a delicate balancing between them. Having said this, on the whole there is a tendency among the caseworkers to verge towards the fellow-being role in the way they ostensibly struggle their 'kind-ist' instincts (Hagelund, forthcoming).

With that, we may conclude that there is a subtle balance between care and control within the frames of the introductory programme.

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