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A Glass House of Care: Sheltered Employment for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Based on data from ethnographic fieldwork in Norway, we explore relationships of care between workers with intellectual disabilities (ID) and staff in the context of sheltered employment. Care relations in a sheltered workshop are analysed using Annemarie Mol's (2008) 'logic of care', which we combine with the concept 'the logic of the market'. In this context, relations of care enable persons with ID as workers, but tensions between care and market logics influence the operation of the workshop and its workers. We argue that processes of care transform market logics, and at the same time, market logics also transform processes of care. The logics are found to support each other, but the balance between them is fragile. This results in unstable conditions for care in the sheltered workshop.

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INTRODUCTION

For many people, employment is an important aspect of life. In the context of disability, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN 2006) defines a human right to employment 'on equal basis with others' (article 27). Hence, it is no surprise that research on employment for persons with intellectual disabilities (ID) has emphasised work situations in the open labour market (Gjertsen, Hardonk & Ineland 2021). Researchers have often been critical of sheltered employment, tending to associate it with marginalisation (Tøssebro & Olsen 2020) and as a barrier to social inclusion (Kefallinou, Symeonidou & Meijer 2020). In Norway, sheltered workshops have received criticism for not doing enough to support workers to transition to open employment settings (Tøssebro & Olsen 2020).

On the one hand, disability studies scholars have often associated relationships of care with the subjugation and social oppression of disabled people (Shakespeare 2000; Thomas 2007). On the other hand, many researchers refer to the ethics of care, including theorists such as Eva Feder Kittay (Mladenov 2021; Winance 2016). Studies show that care relations in the lives of people with disabilities can result in freedom (Bostad & Hanisch 2016) and can be necessary for labour market participation and citizenship for persons with cognitive disabilities (Aydos & Fietz 2017). When combined, the available research suggests that disability studies should interpret care processes as multifaceted and fraught with tensions (Hennion & Vidal-Naquet 2015; McKearney 2020).

Having a job in a sheltered workshop is the most common form of employment for persons with ID in the Nordic countries (Gjertsen, Hardonk & Ineland 2021), as well as in Ireland (McConkey et al. 2019) and Australia (Tuckerman et al. 2012). In Norway, workers in sheltered workshops take part in the production of goods and services that are sold on the market (NOU 2016:17 2016). In a study of employment for persons with ID in Norway, Olsen (2009) argues that sheltered workshops are filled with 'inner contradictions' (216); in these places persons with ID are positioned as workers who participate in market relations, which underlines their self-sufficiency and independence, but they are also positioned in relations of care and thus cast as dependent on others. Seeing this mixing of care and work as contradictory, Olsen calls into question whether the activities that take place in sheltered workshops can be understood as proper work. While Olsen explores the concept of work, he leaves the concept of care unexplored.

In this article, we investigate relationships of care that persons with ID are part of in sheltered employment. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a sheltered workshop in Norway, we show how a logic of care and a logic of the market can be mutually supportive in this setting. The aim of the study, moreover, is to supplement previous research by arguing that relations of care both transform and are transformed by market logics.

THE LOGIC OF CARE AND THE LOGIC OF THE MARKET

The concept of care is contested in disability studies, as it is often associated with the positioning of persons with disabilities as passive and dependent second-class citizens (Kröger 2009). A total dismissal of the concept of care, however, might conflate notions of dignity with notions of autonomy, thereby promoting seemingly 'universal' notions that could be insensitive to the lives of people with ID (Bostad & Hanisch 2016). To avoid these pitfalls, this study draws upon the work of Annemarie Mol, which has already been utilised in critical disability studies (van Trigt 2019), including in research on employment and cognitive disability (Aydos & Fietz 2017). In her book *The Logic of Care* (2008), Mol contrasts the logic of care with the logic of choice. According to Mol, care practices cannot be reduced to instrumental provisions:

> The logic of care suggests a different way of opening up the monopoly of professional groups over expertise. Let us, somehow, share the doctoring. Let us experiment, experience and tinker together—practically. … Those who share doctoring must respect each other's experiences, while engaging in inventive, careful experiments. They must attune all variable variables to each other, while attending to everyone's strengths and limitations. (2008: 56)

This focus on attunement and tinkering allows Mol to theorise care as something less instrumental; rather than viewing recipients of care as passive objects, she sees them as

persons with agency who actively participate in the process of care. She also criticises Western 'clichés' (2008: 4) of autonomy and independence, and argues that care practices are context-sensitive and change according to need.

The logic of choice, conversely, envisages practices that 'celebrate rationality, autonomy and choice' (2008: 4). In contrast to the logic of care, this logic is 'embedded in market capitalism' (Karlin 2022: 85) and organises health care as if in a market situation. In the logic of choice, moreover, care practices are cast as transactions between sellers and buyers:

> A market requires that the product that changes hands in a transaction be clearly defined. It must have a beginning and an end. In the logic of care, by contrast, care is an interactive, open-ended process that may be shaped and reshaped depending on its results. (Mol 2008: 20)

Sheltered employment, which constitutes the empirical context of this study, is a setting where capitalism and care interact: professional care practices also amount to the production of goods that are later sold in a market. To shed light on these interactions, we extend Mol's analysis by introducing the concept 'the logic of the market'. While Mol's concept 'the logic of choice' refers to relations between patients and health care services, the concept 'the logic of the market' refers to how such services operate as if they were agents in a market. Although the tension between care and the market is well known in welfare services for persons with ID, it is seldom theorised. In this article, we combine Mol's concept 'the logic of care' with 'the logic of the market' to offer a more theorised understanding of this tension.

Mol's descriptions of care practices might resemble insights from the ethics of care. However, Kittay (2020) emphasises the logic of care, positioning it as fundamental in response to dependency. Mol, in contrast, emphasises how the logic of care interacts with other logics: 'while the various logics that inform our practices clash with one another, they are also interdependent' (2008: 92). Also, Mol's terms *shared doctoring* and *active patients* allow for terminological development; based in this specific ethnographic context, we translate Mol's terms to *collaborative care* and *care participants,* respectively.[1]

METHOD

Data for this study was collected through ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographic methods can be suitable when some of the interlocutors have limited capacity to verbally describe their activities and experiences (Kulick & Rydström 2015; Vehmas & Mietola 2021), as was the case in this study. The first author, who conducted the fieldwork, had prior experience interacting with persons with ID through a close family member and friends with ID. This experience shaped how interaction between her and interlocutors with ID unfolded, and being open about these biographical aspects also facilitated trust and access during fieldwork.

RESEARCH SETTING

In Norway, 20.3% of persons with ID work in sheltered workshops (3576 of 17650 persons), and only 0.4% work in open employment (Tøssebro & Olsen 2020; Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2018).[2] Some persons with ID (2.4%) also have specially adapted jobs in open employment settings (Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2018). Equivalent to workers in sheltered workshops, these workers rely on a disability benefit from the state rather than regular wages (Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2018).

Norwegian policies and regulations state explicitly that the purpose of sheltered employment is to provide work to participants to develop resources through qualification and adapted work tasks (Tiltaksforskriften 2015). Individuals get a job in a sheltered workshop through the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), a public welfare agency responsible for administering welfare services and benefits. To become a worker, one must have been allocated a disability benefit from the state, been found to require special adaptations and continuous

1 We have chosen to modify Mol's terms as the sheltered workshop is not a clinical setting.

2 The numbers are from public registers of persons who receive a welfare benefit on the basis of a diagnosis of ID from diagnostic manuals ICD-9 and 10.

observation and other employment measures must have been deemed inappropriate (Tiltaksforskriften 2015).

Persons with ID used to constitute the largest group of workers in sheltered workshops in Norway. The increasing inclusion of other groups, however, has made them into a minority: in 1994, persons with ID made up 71% of workers (Reinertsen 2012), but in 2018 this number was approximately 35% (Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2018). According to an official Norwegian report, sheltered workshops reveal that increased demands on productivity and the production of revenue have resulted in the prioritisation of other groups over persons with ID (NOU 2016:17 2016).

According to the regulation on labour market measures (Tiltaksforskriften 2015), sheltered workshops must be organised as stock-based companies, usually with the municipality as principal shareholder. This means that sheltered workshops are required to produce revenue (NOU 2016:17 2016). They also receive funding from the state in the form of a set monthly sum per worker from the federal budget and local funding from the municipality (Tiltaksforskriften 2015), altogether amounting to about 190,000 NOK (16,500 EUR) annually per worker (NOU 2016:17 2016). As workers receive a disability benefit from the state, they are not entitled to a salary (Tiltaksforskriften 2015), but sheltered workshops often pay a small remuneration of at least 25 NOK (2.2 EUR) per hour (Fellesforbundet 2022).

The sheltered workshop in this study is located in Norway and consists of two sections of similar size and operation. The workshop has about 50 workers (*arbeidstakere*) in total and about 10 members of staff, consisting of supervisors (*arbeidsledere*), who lead and look after workers, and a manager (*daglig leder*) responsible for the day-to-day operation of the workshop. Some of the workers have ID, while the remainder of workers are there for other reasons such as mental illness.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork consisted of 21 days with workers and staff in the sheltered workshop over a period of 9 months, amounting to 131.5 hours of participant observation.[3] Access to the workshop was gained through personal contacts of the first author. In addition to the time spent in the workshop, the first author also joined workers and staff at a couple of events outside the workshop and met the mother of one of the workers with ID outside the workshop.

The first author participated in various work tasks and other activities and had conversations with workers and staff. She would also sometimes observe conversations and activities without direct participation, depending on the circumstances. Sometimes, she would eat lunch or spend the break time with workers, and other times she ate lunch with supervisors or sat in at meetings with supervisors. Conversations took place during work situations and breaks, and sometimes in staff offices. Most fieldnotes were written as soon as possible after leaving the field, and conversations were reproduced as close to verbatim as possible in the fieldnotes.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Research participants in this study include two workers with intellectual disability (Sofie and Mats), four supervisors at the workshop, the manager (Rolf), and Sofie's mother (Eva). The study focuses on the work situation of Sofie, a woman in her thirties with an intellectual disability and schizophrenia. She has worked at the workshop for 10 years, and she usually works three to four days a week. Sofie was sometimes absent from work because of symptoms related to her schizophrenia or physical health issues.

ETHICS

The research project was conducted in accordance with guidelines for research ethics (NESH 2016). Written informed consent was collected from all interlocutors, and interlocutors with ID were given easy-to-read consent forms. The capacity to consent was not only assessed on an individual basis, but also upon the advice of staff; if they doubted an individual with ID would understand what participation in the project would entail, additional consent was

3 This study is part of a larger ethnographic study of persons with ID in Norway, conducted over a period of nine months in 2018 and a few weeks in 2019–2022.

collected from a parent. The first author strived to be attentive to signs that interlocutors were uncomfortable with participation throughout the project. All names used in the article are pseudonyms. The project was reported to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (ref. no. 235262).

FINDINGS

PRODUCTIVITY AND WELL-BEING

The sheltered workshop provided a variety of work tasks, many of which involved the assembling, labelling and packaging of various products that would later be sold in a store or mailed to customers by other businesses. Examples of such products were drinking bottles, lunch boxes, faucet parts, and plumbing equipment. Other common jobs included putting together packages with brochures or information leaflets to be mailed to members of different associations. The sheltered workshop also served as an external storage space for other businesses, and jobs associated with this function included receiving, storing and mailing parcels. Additionally, workers could work with the production of objects in glass or ceramics. The following excerpt from fieldnotes illustrates a typical work task one morning at the workshop, with the participation of the first author:

> Sofie and another worker were sitting together at a table, assembling drinking bottles. I asked Sofie if I could sit down on the empty chair next to her. She replied: 'Yes, go ahead and sit.' I sat down, and she said: 'I'll give you a work task.' A cardboard box filled with plastic lids was placed in front of us. Some of the lids had an appendage in plastic attached to it, a remnant from factory production. Sofie demonstrated to me how to remove the appendage from the lid, and put the appendage and the lid in separate cardboard boxes. Sofie herself would do the next step, which was to attach a silicone ring around each lid. There was a stack of silicone rings on the table in front of her. I got to work.

Most of the work took place in a large, open space inside the workshop. Small tables were evenly dispersed around the space, and one or two tables together with chairs around served as workstations for a few workers each. A separate, smaller space inside the workshop called 'the glass house' was dedicated to the production of objects in glass and ceramics. Members of staff also had their own offices, and there was a small meeting room mostly used by staff. Glass walls separated the main workspace from a kitchen, where workers ate their lunch and often had their breaks during the workday.

When the workshop took jobs from other businesses, it had to produce a specified end product by a deadline. However, considerations other than the productive demands of the market also shaped the work at the workshop. The primary objective of the work done by staff was to support the well-being of workers, as stated by Rolf: 'What is important is that workers are doing well, that comes first.'[4]

When asked if she likes to work at the workshop, Sofie replies that she does. Eagerly embarking on work tasks on her own initiative or when asked by supervisors, she also enacted a fondness for her job. She preferred to wear clothing with the workshop's logo, even though there was no requirement for her to do so, and the persons who knew her well, such as her mother, the manager, and her supervisor all had a clear understanding that she was very fond of her job. According to her mother, Sofie felt a sense of belonging while at the workshop and was proud of working there. Her supervisor, Solveig, explained that while some of the other workers could try to duck out on work tasks, Sofie really liked to work, and she sometimes even exclaimed, 'I love my job!'[5]

The focus on the well-being of workers meant that workers should experience being seen, have opportunities for personal development, and feel that they were part of a social community. Rolf expanded on this:

4 'Det sentrale er at arbeidstakerne skal ha det bra, det kommer først.'

5 'Jeg elsker jobben!'

> The most important thing we do here isn't the job. What is most important is that the workshop is a place that is good to be in socially, and that we develop the persons who are here in ways that will be of benefit to them in their lives outside the workshop. We are a breathing space for those who are here.

Although they described the workshop as a 'breathing space', staff did not perceive all production-related stress as bad for the well-being of workers. According to Rolf, moments of stress and urgency could add energy and excitement to the work. Such situations also required collaboration, which was perceived as good for the social community at the workshop.

Achieving the right balance, seen as crucial for workers to thrive, nevertheless required continuous attention and effort from staff and management. Over many years, the workshop had experienced continuous pressure from the municipality to expand in size. The municipality wanted to combine the two sections of the workshop into a larger unit to increase production and revenue. In addition, members of the board of the workshop, responsible for financial oversight, argued that the workshop should put greater emphasis on marketing and productivity to increase profit. Over the years, several members of staff also argued that the contracts Rolf had entered into with other businesses were not benefiting the workshop, as they believed the workshop could get more money for the jobs they performed.

Rolf emphasised how keeping the work environment limited in size was essential to maintaining an environment where workers could thrive. This related to the possibility for everyone to get to know each other and how the work tasks would be carried out. Emphasising the stability of the work situation, Rolf also prioritised continuity in relationships with other enterprises over marketing, sales and contract negotiations. Further, he believed it more important to spend time on the persons inside the workshop and their work environment, rather than being too concerned about the outside. According to Rolf, staff eventually came to see that he had a point. Rolf also highlighted how increased pressures to be market-oriented affected sheltered workshops more generally:

> The fact that Sofie has been here at the workshop for as long as she has should have been impossible. And it is unlikely that she would get a job at other sheltered workshops because they often demand higher productivity. Sofie is actually a symbol of the workshop.

The workshop's dedication to the well-being of workers can be illustrated by a situation that took place about a year prior to the fieldwork, which was recounted to the first author by Rolf and Eva, Sofie's mother. Sofie had just moved to a municipality located adjacent to the one she had been living in. The new municipality refused to finance her place at the workshop, however, and wanted to place her in a day activity centre for elderly persons with disabilities and dementia instead. Sofie's parents spent a whole year opposing the municipality so that Sofie could keep her job. With the help of the workshop, Sofie's physician, a habilitation team and a lawyer, Sofie was allowed to continue to work at the workshop, but her new home municipality refused to pay the full rate for her place. The workshop nevertheless kept Sofie as a worker, for the sake of her well-being, even though this had a negative impact on the budget.

CAREFUL ENACTMENT OF WORK TASKS

When the workshop set out to produce end products defined by others, consideration for the well-being of workers inflected the entire process. Rolf explained what they thought about when they took jobs for other businesses: 'The most important thing is that we take jobs that everyone can participate in. That there is something for everyone to do.' When Rolf made deals with other businesses about potential jobs, these had to be the sort workers were able to carry out, either in their entirety or if broken down into smaller steps.

Supervisors assigned work task according to delivery requirements and deadlines at the particular moment. Beyond this, supervisors used their knowledge about the preferences, competencies, sensitivities and vulnerabilities of workers when shaping and assigning work tasks. When the workshop took on new jobs for other businesses, this could involve some additional adaptive work for supervisors. Tove, one of the supervisors, described how she usually 'got to know' work tasks before assigning it to a worker: 'When we get a new work task at the workshop, I try to do it myself first to see how it is done before giving the task to a worker.' As she spoke, she moved her hands to show how she finds out what skills a work task would require.

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Several members of staff had worked at the workshop for more than a decade, and some had joined in the last few years. Most of the supervisors and workers knew each other well after having worked together for several years, and supervisors had accumulated knowledge about the skills, support needs and personal preferences of individual workers. Some work tasks required certain skills, such as motor skills or advanced cognitive skills, and supervisors used their knowledge about the competence of individual workers in the assignment of work tasks. Tove explained what this process could look like:

> One of the workers tends to work intensely on his work tasks. If, for instance, his task is to glue something on a piece of paper, he does that task really well, gluing lots and lots of sheets in a row. But if some of the sheets are facing the wrong way, he doesn't do anything about it, but continues to glue regardless. … So it's important that we prepare the work task for him, so that we don't end up with the wrong result.

Some workers were particularly sensitive to things like stress or noise, and supervisors found ways to adjust the work tasks accordingly in collaboration with the workers. Sometimes, the work situation of an individual worker was also accommodated more comprehensively to enable participation in work tasks. Sofie's occasional episodes of psychosis, for example, brought about a need for structure and opportunities to withdraw from social interaction. An accommodation to this end was a writing desk by one of the walls in the main space of the workshop with colouring books, pens and other personal items, at which Sofie could sit down to cope with auditory hallucinations. The writing desk was a specific accommodation that none of the other workers had.

As staff at the workshop considered it important to involve workers in the assignment of work tasks, with room to make changes, they entered into dialogue and negotiations with workers. A situation that began when Rolf asked Sofie and the first author if they wanted to make something in the glass house the following week illustrates the interaction that could take place between workers and staff around the assignment of work tasks. Sofie and the first author both said yes, but the week after Sofie changed her mind and went into negotiations with supervisors about what her work tasks would be:

> When Sofie arrived at the workshop, the morning routine in the kitchen where supervisors assign work tasks to workers had just finished. She approached me, stating: 'I can't work in the glass house today.' She seemed determined, and I told her that it was fine with me. The supervisors and most of the other workers were nearby and had overheard our exchange. Sofie said she wanted to pack faucet parts and sat down between two other workers. Sitting like that looked cramped, and Solveig told Sofie that it would be difficult for her to work with faucet parts today, as they had already allocated work tasks before Sofie arrived. Solveig suggested that Sofie could sort some parts in the boxes along the wall behind them. Sofie said that sitting there wouldn't be comfortable. Solveig showed her how it was possible to be more comfortable, but Sofie said: 'No, I don't want to do it.' For a while it was uncertain what would happen next. Sofie looked over at another table with bowls containing different types of screws. She told one of the supervisors who was close by: 'I want to work with the screws.' The supervisor said: 'Do you want to bag screws?' Sofie said: 'Yes.' The supervisor said: 'Ok, that's fine.' Sofie said: 'Yes!' and sat down on the chair at the table with screws.

While the workshop was required to maintain a certain level of productivity, staff did not emphasise the productive output of individual workers. Rather, workers could regulate the pace at which they worked themselves, as long as the workshop was able to finish the jobs it committed to. Rolf described the flexibility they granted workers in a conversation with the first author:

> 'To a great extent they [workers] can do whatever they want'. I mentioned to Rolf that I've seen that several workers spend a lot of time hanging out in the kitchen. 'Yes, things like that,' Rolf said. 'We don't nag about it, but let them do it. … But sometimes there is a rush to meet the deadlines that we have because we do jobs for other businesses,' he added.

THE GLASS HOUSE

'The glass house' was a separate space located inside the workshop where workers could make objects in glass, such as figurines, bowls, and vases, as well as ceramics. The glass objects were made by placing sheets of glass in casts or cutting them into various shapes before they were burned in an oven. Activities in the glass house were usually supervised by staff, and only a few persons were there at any one time. Some of the objects made in the glass house were given as gifts to visitors to the workshop, and some were sold to family members of workers during the annual open house event. The income from this was insignificant to the financial situation of the workshop, however.

This space provided workers with a larger diversity of work tasks, and in contrast to most other work tasks, the production of glass and ceramics was dissociated from the supply chain. As the activities here did not have to result in end products predefined by other businesses, there was more room for creative expression and for staff and workers to shape work tasks. This can be illustrated by a conversation between Tove and the first author:

> Tove said: 'But it's the market that decides what we do, what kinds of jobs we have.' I said: 'And then there is the glass house?' Tove said: 'Yes, it [the glass house] is pretty much the only thing we control completely on our own.'

While Rolf had some leeway to choose what kinds of contracts he made with other businesses, the workshop had to select jobs that were available on the market; they could not define end products themselves. In the glasshouse, however, the situation was different. Despite the dissociation of the glass house from the supply chain, the activities in the glass house were still referred to as 'work' by workers and staff at the workshop, and these work tasks were not devalued in comparison with those that generated revenue. For some of the workers, furthermore, the creative opportunities in the glass house were very important. Rolf described how a female worker only wanted to work in the glass house:

> She is just there [in the glass house]. Before we got the glass house, she was very difficult to deal with. She soured the atmosphere. But when we got the glass house and some clay, she fell into place. Working with clay in the glass house worked really well for her.

The situation above shows how staff went to great lengths to adapt the work situation for workers, in this case, by coming up with completely new work tasks that better matched the worker's preferences.

A CARING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Creating a safe and stable social community was emphasised as very important by staff at the workshop. One way to achieve this was through taking trips to different destinations together to yield common experiences and stories for workers and staff. Another was the collaboration with families of workers, who were invited to come along on trips and to the annual open house event. This event was also an opportunity to connect with others in the local community of the workshop, such as persons working in businesses nearby, as well as with staff from group homes of the workers who lived in such facilities. The caring environment of the workshop also extended beyond the premises of the workshop, as exemplified by a fund set up to enable workers to take part in activities outside work hours that they could not afford on their own.

The workshop was an important social arena for Sofie, whose social life did not extend beyond the relationships she had with her colleagues at the workshop and her immediate family, consisting of her parents and her brother. According to her mother, Eva, many of the settings Sofie had been in previously, such as the group home she used to live in and various leisure activities, worsened her condition due to a lack of structure. And while Sofie had experienced bullying in several of the adapted leisure activities that she had tried, this was not an issue at the workshop.

While the environment at the workshop was adapted to the well-being of individual workers, it was also intertwined with market logics. The wishes of workers who wanted to work in the glass house could not always be accommodated, as jobs for other businesses had to be prioritised.

Sometimes, demands were put on workers so that the workshop could keep up its productivity, as shown by an urgent job that interrupted Mats, one of the other workers, as he was making glass ornaments:

> Mats and I were sitting at a table in the main workspace of the workshop, making Christmas ornaments in glass for the upcoming open house event. Mats was mixing small bits of differently coloured glass in a bowl, when a woman from one of the local businesses dropped into the workshop. She approached Heidi, one of the supervisors, saying that they had several boxes with DAB receivers that had not been parcelled up the right way. The order was going out today, and the woman asked Heidi if they could repack the receivers right away. Heidi told the woman that they could and said to Mats that he had to do this job.

Staff considered the specific situation of individual workers before assigning work tasks, and in this case, the supervisor assigning the task of repacking the DAB receivers to Mats knew from previous experience that he liked this type of task. In contrast to most situations where work tasks were assigned, however, less room was provided for negotiation and dialogue. Whereas Mats was considered to be a person on whom staff could frequently place various demands, Sofie was considered to be a person more in need of shielding from such demands. In other words, caring for Mats entailed the placement of demands on him, while caring for Sofie to a larger degree meant adapting to her initiative and meeting the demands that she placed on supervisors.

DISCUSSION

COLLABORATIVE CARE

The ongoing adjustments to the work tasks and work environment for the sake of the well-being of workers shows the relevance of Mol's (2008) theory of care. As the work processes in the workshop involved extensive collaboration between workers and staff, we suggest that these processes can be understood as *collaborative care*, a term we adapt from Mol. In collaborative care, the roles and responsibilities between different actors can shift for the sake of the well-being of the individual and according to what is required in the specific situation. The person towards whom the care is directed, whom Mol calls an *active patient* but whom we call a *care participant*, takes on an active role in this process and sometimes takes responsibility themself. Workers in the workshop can be understood as care participants, as they influenced and at times determined what work tasks they would be doing, how they would do them, as well as actively performing them. This shifting of responsibility between staff and workers depended on the specific situation of the worker; while Mats was frequently told to do various work tasks, staff had come to understand that caring well for Sofie entailed giving her more responsibility to decide what her work tasks would be.

Kittay's work, and particularly *Love's Labor* (2020), is sometimes taken to suggest that care receivers are merely passive. While we disagree with such interpretations of Kittay, we agree that her work leaves us with little vocabulary to interpret the agency of care receivers within care relations. The crucial supplement in our theoretical framework, the drawing-in and extending of Mol's work, allows us to describe the workshop as a place of collaboration, where tasks are shared between the person who needs care and others. In line with Zoanni (2018), who demonstrates that persons with ID take on roles as caregivers to others, careful responses to the needs of people with ID, such as the professional work taking place in the workshop, seem to engender many different relations of care. Hence, we can also hopefully bring forth the careful multidirectionality that Kittay indicates in her recent book title *Learning from My Daughter* (2019).

Winance (2016) points out that while Kittay's thinking highlights how persons with severe disabilities can be included in a moral community through emotional and affective possibilities in relationships of care, it doesn't explain how people can be made capable through relations of care. We argue, however, that Mol's theorisation of relations of care as collaborative and with space for active contributions from the person towards whom the care is directed, makes it possible to explain how abilities can be produced through care. This is a configuration of

care that contrasts dominant understandings of care in disability studies, where care relations are understood to make disabled people passive, infantilised and oppressed by others (Kröger 2009).

Unlike Kittay, Mol's logic of care delineates situations of care comprising both human and non-human objects as agents of care. At the workshop, processes of care encompassed various material objects such as screws, plastic bags, bottles, glass, clay, and Sofie's writing desk. Different arrangements between workers and these objects had important consequences for the well-being of workers, and specific arrangements also made it possible for workers to enact their role as workers. As described by Winance (2010), the shaping of different arrangements between persons and material objects can furthermore produce abilities for those involved; at the workshop, some arrangements provided better opportunities for agency than others.

Moser (2000) has pointed out that our surroundings are constructed based on the features of individuals with a 'standard' body and abilities. This leaves 'gaps' for people with ID, for instance in open employment settings. This study supports findings by Aydos and Fietz (2017)—that practices of care, understood as specific relationships that can involve persons or objects, can enable productivity and access to work. What is more, we follow these authors in their reflection that while such processes are not unique to persons with disabilities, they can be especially important to persons who fall into this category.

MUTUALLY TRANSFORMING LOGICS

The sheltered workshop in this study strove first and foremost to ensure the well-being of workers. However, the well-being of workers is neither mentioned as an objective of sheltered workshops in the regulation on adapted work measures (Tiltaksforskriften 2015), nor in the related circular (NAV 2013). These emphasise the development of personal skills of relevance to employment in sheltered workshops and to possible employment elsewhere as being the objective of sheltered workshops.

While the state does not mention well-being as an objective, this does not mean that it considers the well-being of workers to be unimportant, nor that the sheltered workshop studied was not concerned with the development of worker skills. However, there is nevertheless a divergence in emphasis, reminding us that the interaction between the logic of care and the logic of the market is worth careful interpretation.

In his study, Olsen (2009) argued that practices of care directed at workers in sheltered workshops 'collide' with a logic of work that deals with revenue, production and the market. He did not see relations of care between workers and staff as enabling work performance in the workers studied, but understood practices of care to call into question and undermine the roles of individuals with ID as workers. To supplement the notion that the logics of care and work are contradictory, we offer a different analysis where the logics of care and work can be understood as transforming each other.

MUTUALLY ENABLING LOGICS

Although Mol is known for theorising the contrast between the logic of care and the logic of choice, her emphasis on collaboration and interactions is still very relevant:

> For care is not a (small or large) product that changes hands, but a matter of various hands working together (over time) towards a result. Care is not a transaction in which something is exchanged (a product against a price); but an interaction in which the action goes back and forth (in an ongoing process). (2008: 18)

At the workshop, we see exactly these kinds of ongoing processes: staff and workers work together over time, towards the well-being of workers. While they take part in production, staff also shape and alter work tasks to fit individual workers. This way, consideration for the well-being of workers alters the relations of production at the workshop. The market logic is still present but transformed to conform to a logic of care.

In addition, productive activities also scaffold relations of care. The collaboration and relationships required in the production process provide possibilities for situations where workers are active care participants and put their productive agency to use. Taking part in the

production of goods for the market was thus good for the well-being of workers, when done in the right way.

These examples also show that the different logics can depend upon each other. On the one hand, the careful definition of work tasks did provide the possibility of productivity. On the other hand, numerous findings presented in this article demonstrate that productivity of the workshop entailed caring relations that otherwise would not have taken place. While work is a way of being together, this being together also relies on a process of production. Hence, we argue that the different logics not only transform but also enable each other.

THE GLASS HOUSE OF CARE

On the one hand, the work in the workshop is first and foremost organised to produce well-being rather than revenue. On the other, the workshop nevertheless needs to produce products that generate sufficient revenue. Thus, the workshop functions as a shelter from the productive pressures of the mainstream labour market, by way of meeting market-defined requirements.

The complexities are particularly apparent in the glass house: unlike other processes, such as the production of products for other business, the work involving glass or clay did not contribute to the workshop's revenue. Hence, the work in the glass house offered greater opportunities for creative agency and personal expression. On the one hand, this demonstrates that a revenue-driven market entity, the workshop, can provide shelter from productive pressures. On the other hand, the revenue requirements also curtailed the time that workers and staff could afford to spend in the glass house. Moreover, it was never certain if the funding would allow the work in the glass house to continue.

We propose, therefore, that 'the glass house of care' can serve as a useful analytic metaphor for sheltered employment. With the strong presence of a logic of productivity, the open labour market tends to be an unwelcoming place for persons with ID. As the term 'sheltered' suggests, workplaces like this shelter or protect persons with ID from a social estrangement that otherwise would have taken place. With the presence of both care and market logics, however, this sheltering is not total; but as the balance between these logics is fragile, the sheltering also remains fragile.

What is more, similar situations where care and market logics are mutually supportive but intertwined in fragile ways can be recognised in other areas in the lives of persons with ID, such as in residential settings. We therefore propose that the metaphor 'the glass house of care' be extended to other welfare services for persons with ID.

CONCLUSION

We have adapted the concepts *collaborative care* and *care participants* from Mol (2008) to theorise the specific and collaborative relationships taking place in the workshop as relationships of care, in which workers play active roles. The practices of care at the workshop facilitate the agency of workers and also enable them as workers. This collaborative conception of care contrasts with the type of care relationship envisaged by Kittay (2019; 2020), which suggests a more asymmetric relationship between a caregiver and the dependent who is cared for.

In the context of intellectual disability, the logic of care transforms the meaning of work. As we have seen, relations of production are adapted to create highly individualised work processes that facilitate the well-being of workers. Care can thus be understood to transform the logic of the market.

The logic of work and productivity also transforms the meaning of care. The jobs that the workshop carried out for other businesses entailed materialities and responsibilities, which generated opportunities for cooperation and shifting responsibilities between workers and staff, as well as expectations and demands. For this group of workers, the presence of a logic of production facilitated good caring practices in the workshop, as long as it did not become too strong.

Both the practices of care and the transformation of logics are fragile, however, and the environment in the sheltered workshop was at risk due to pressures to be more productive. There is, furthermore, the risk that either the logic of care or the logic of productivity would come

to dominate. While a dominating logic of productivity may reduce the workers to their value as labour market supply, a dominating logic of care may devalue the workers as collaborators, thereby inhibiting personal and social growth. The various configurations of logics that take place in the workshop can inform many other contexts, but they remain fragile.

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