



# **The challenges and potentials of organizing and managing integrated and client-centered employment services**

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## A LITTLE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Two examples of research-practice collaboration within CUBB as well as concrete ways of experimenting with new ways of organizing and managing services
  1. The **integration of social and employment services** to coordinate and deliver services more responsive to the cross-cutting needs of the most vulnerable clients
  2. The **redesign the local performance management system** to better capture the voice and experience of the clients (and thus increase downward responsiveness)
  
- ... But also examples of the continual challenges facing such organizational changes

## I WILL (PRIMARILY) BE DRAWING ON TWO PUBLICATIONS

- Andersen, N.A. & Breidahl, K.N. (2025). “Caught in a Standstill—The Unresolved Challenges of Integrated Service Delivery in Public Organizations.” *Public Administration*. 103(1), 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.13>
- Andersen, N.A. (forthcoming). “Arrested Development – The lock-in mechanisms of performance regimes.” *International Public Management Journal*.

# Agenda



The goal of integrated and client-centered services



Recurring challenges to these goals



Current possibilities and pitfalls

# THE GOAL OF INTEGRATED AND CLIENT-CENTERED SERVICE DELIVERY

1. For employment services to be effectful and legitimate, they need to address **the needs of clients!**
2. Such needs are **seldom confined to one service area or –organization** - especially for the most vulnerable clients.
3. **Service fragmentation** continue to constitute a significant barrier to citizens' progression
  - Burdensome experiences, red tape, administrative limbo....
4. Therefore: We need greater **integration, coordination and/or collaboration** between the different services targeted the most vulnerable unemployed!

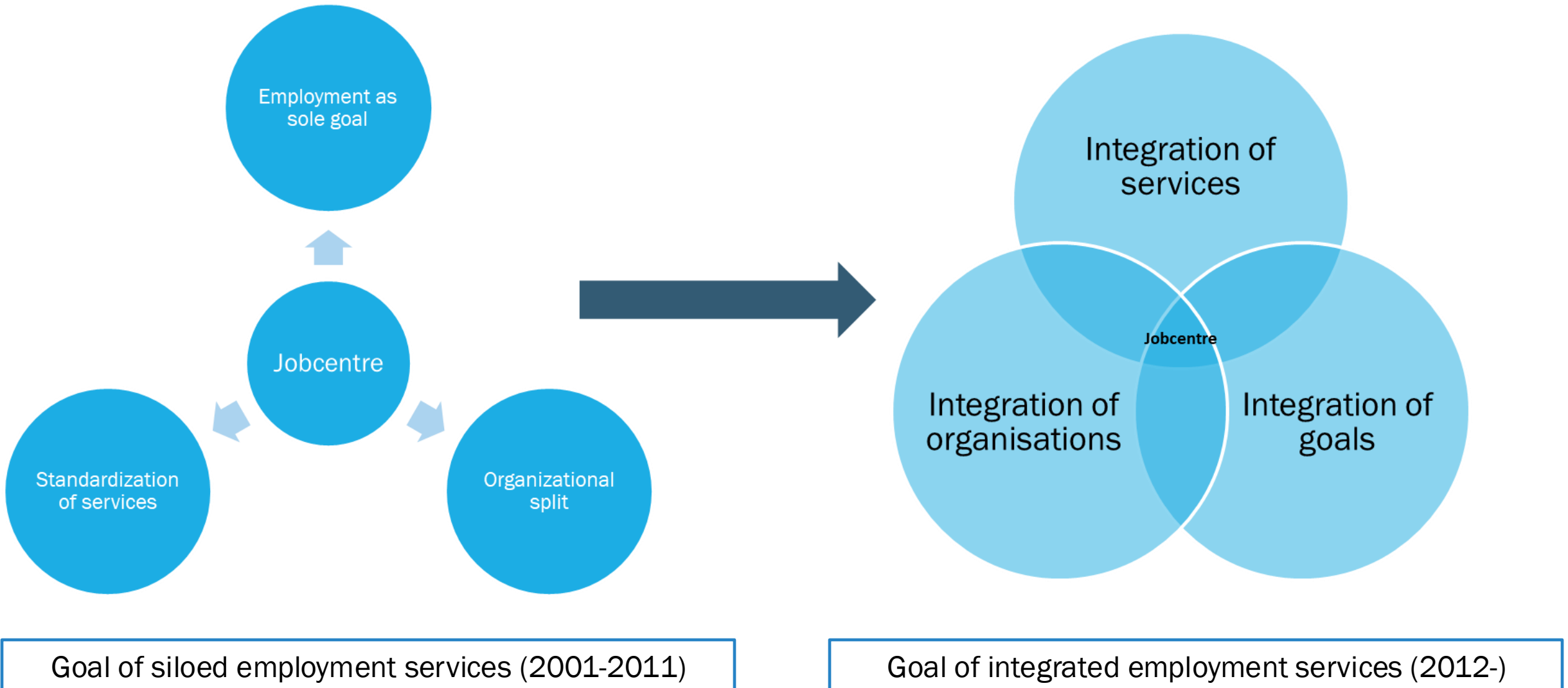
# THE GOAL OF INTEGRATED AND CLIENT-CENTERED SERVICE DELIVERY

- Much research centered on attempts at service integration from the frontline perspective
- But the problems of service fragmentation cannot (solely) be solved, at the level of the frontline
- Changes to **policies, governance, management and organizational** boundaries are also necessary
- This is also increasingly acknowledged at the level of policymaking:
  - Public governance transitions – **From NPM to NPG**
  - Expansion of target group – **One size does not fit all**



**... ALSO WITHIN THE DANISH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

# POLICY GOALS: FROM A FRAGMENTED TO AN INTEGRATED APPROACH



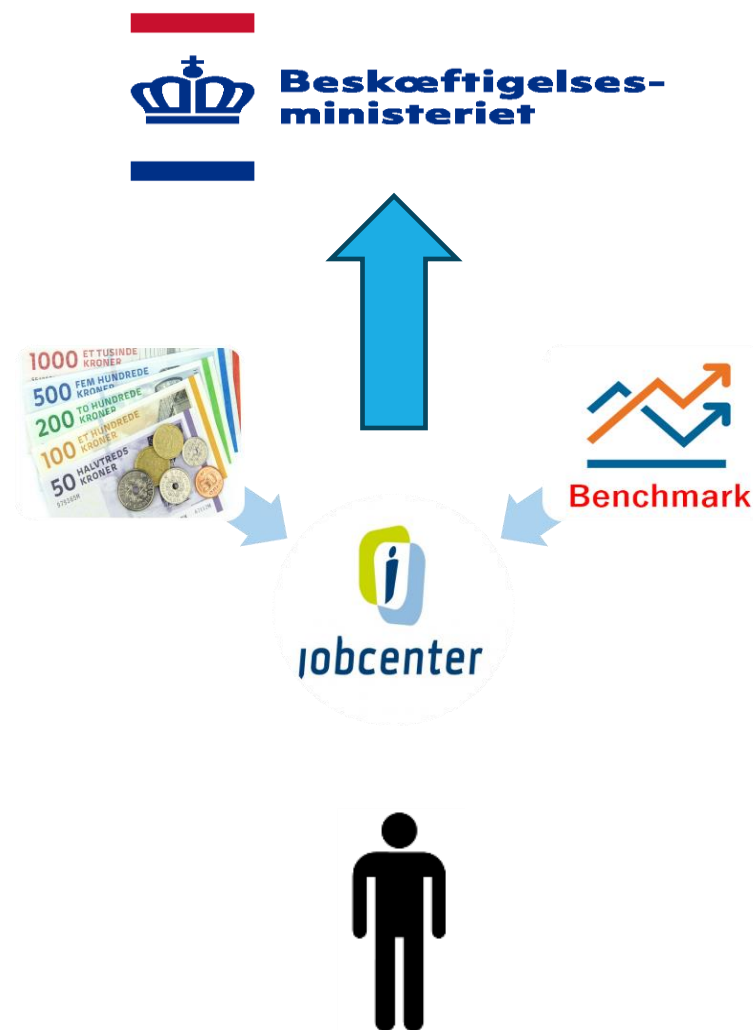
# POLICY GOALS: FROM UPWARDS TO DOWNWARDS

## RESPONSIVENESS



I don't know how many bad social workers there are. But I know that it is a great problem, whenever a client is met with "social smothering". Too much social understanding causes social disadvantage"

(Ministry of Employment – Claus Hjorth Frederiksen – 2003)



# POLICY GOALS: FROM UPWARDS TO DOWNWARDS

## RESPONSIVENESS

Well-documented that governance arrangements succeeded in closing (perceived) compliance-gap between political intentions and policy implementation was (Larsen 2011; Bredgaard 2011; Larsen & Andersen 2018).

But not without costs....

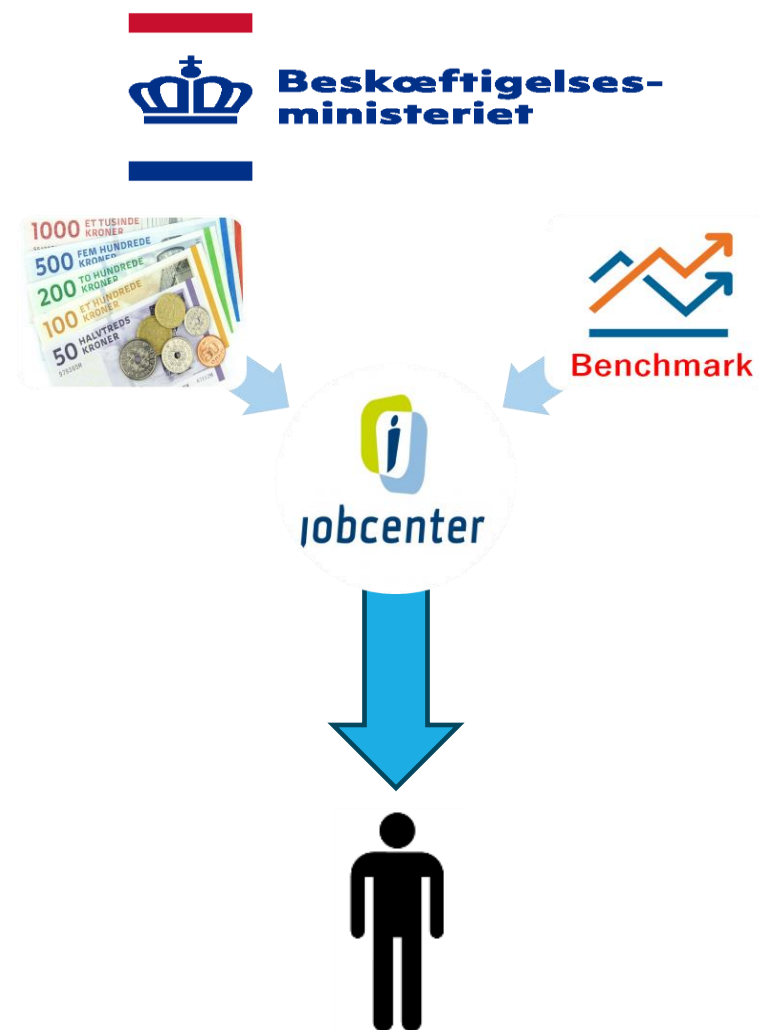


# POLICY GOALS: FROM UPWARDS TO DOWNWARDS RESPONSIVENESS



*It is a clear priority for me that people are treated with dignity no matter whether you need a job or is sick.*

(Minister of Employment – Peter Hummelgaard 2020)



# POLICY GOALS: FROM UPWARDS TO DOWNWARDS

## RESPONSIVENESS

Aftale om reform af beskæftigelsesindsatsen  
Mere værdighed, større frihed og færre regler

April 2025



## SIMILAR CHANGES AT THE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Two examples from our municipal partners in CUBB:
  1. The **integration of social and employment services** to coordinate and deliver services more responsive to the cross-cutting needs of the most vulnerable clients
  2. The **redesign the local performance management system** to better capture the voice and experience of the clients (and thus increase downward responsiveness)

# MANY GOOD INTENTIONS

## Integration of services

- Attempts at creating a “**collaborative-model**” to further integration of social and employment services
  - Shared work-procedures, learning forums and cross-organizational goals

## Downward responsiveness

- Attempts at **redesigning their local performance information system** to better measure the level of client co-creation and the responsiveness of services
  - New ways of registering/documenting client-progression and client-caseworker interactions, greater use of “qualitative” sources of information

## ... BUT A DIFFERENT REALITY



- Collaborative model abandoned – In favor of looser and more “vision”-based coordination
- Changes to performance measurement system abandoned – In favor of ad hoc client-satisfaction surveys

## WHY IS THIS SO?



- Collaborative model abandoned – In favor of looser and more “vision”-based coordination
- Changes to performance measurement system abandoned – In favor of ad hoc client-satisfaction surveys

## GAP BETWEEN POLICY GOALS AND POLITICAL REALITY



- A lot of **political signaling** – less actual policymaking
- More changes to policy content than **governance arrangements**
- Changes are **layered** on top of rather than superseding existing policies and arrangements

## ... WHICH CAUSES DOUBLE BIND AND INSTITUTIONAL LOCK-IN



Double binds = Public organizations are simultaneously confronted with contradictory demands from the same authoritative source.



Material



Regulatory



Behavioral



Discursive

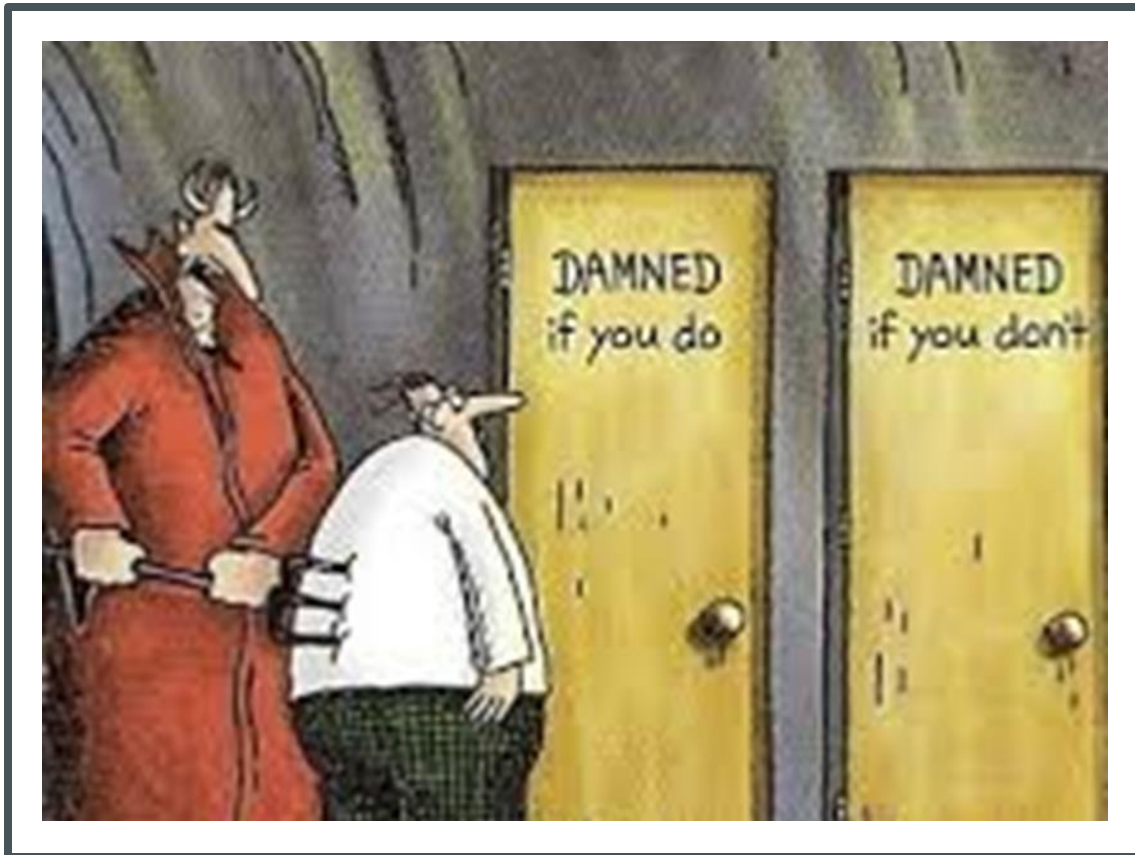
Lock-in mechanisms = Self-reinforcing positive feedback loops which fix future actions along specific paths

# HOW DOUBLE BINDS CHALLENGE THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

**TABLE 3** The contradictory and layered demands of service separation and integration.

	<b>Layered double binds facing job centers</b>	<b>Initial demands of separation (2001–2011)</b>	<b>Added demands of integration (2012–2022)</b>
<b>Goals</b>	Generate positive societal outcomes while still efficiently producing organizational outputs	Focus on the primary output goal of producing employment-related activation schemes	Focus on both the primary outcome goal of getting benefit recipients into work and intermediary social or health-related outcomes
<b>Actors</b>	Facilitate multi-actor collaboration while still being the only agent held accountable for the results of said collaborations	Keep responsibility for service provision within the job center and its individual units and employees	Share responsibility of service provision with other welfare services (municipal and/or regional)
<b>Instruments</b>	Integrate and coordinate a wide range of services into a holistic and tailored whole for clients while still fitting these services within the narrow definitions of the performance monitoring system	Provide standardized work-first activation schemes	Provide personalized and holistic services tailored to the needs of the individual client

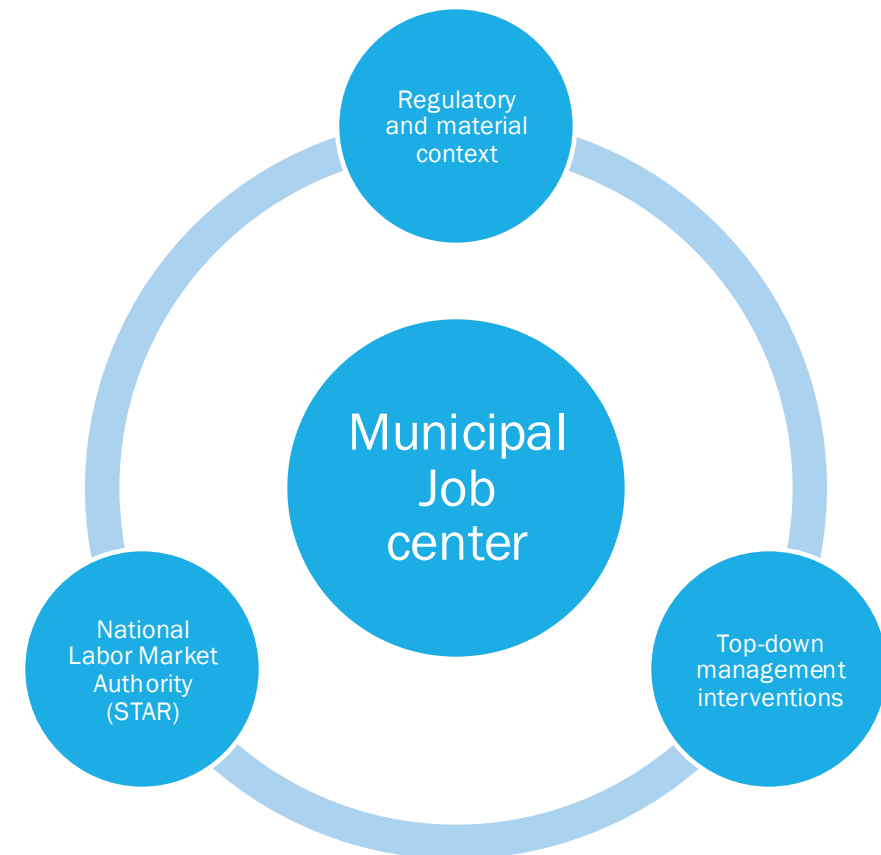
# HOW DOUBLE BINDS CHALLENGE THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



1. Strategies for service integration are often **reversed**
  2. Constant **oscillation** between opening up and retreating into own organization
  3. Cross-Organizational trust needs continual **rebuilding**
- Caseworkers and managers feels caught in a **“frenetic standstill”** (Rosa 2013) – Constant movement but never getting there.

# HOW INSTITUTIONAL LOCK-IN CHALLENGE DOWNWARD RESPONSIVENESS

- **Regulations** upholding a sharp discrepancy in power over who gets to define and measure performance
- **Technologies and data** for performance measurements need to align with ministerial standards
- **Behavior** of municipal job centers tied to compliance rather than learning



# ... TOWARDS GREATER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN INTENTIONS AND REALITY?



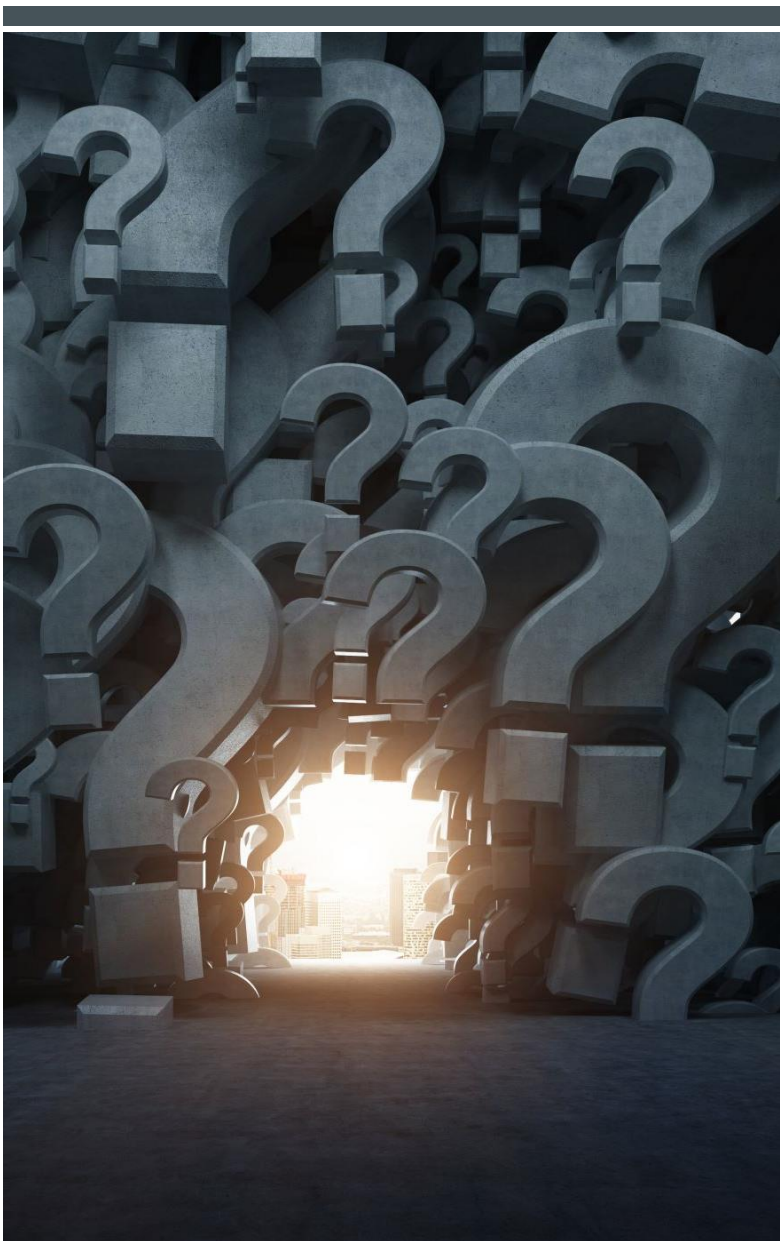
# TOWARDS GREATER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN INTENTIONS AND REALITY?

ftale om reform af beskæftigelsesindsatsen  
lere værdighed, større frihed og færre regler

April 202



- Complete organizational autonomy to merge social and employment services
- Loosening of regulations on the content and frequency of activation measures
- Suspension of all sanctions tied to performance measures
- Promise of a new performance measurement system focused on downward responsiveness



## DISCUSSION

- Many institutional **barriers** to services integration are removed but which institutional **drivers** should replace these?
- Can the responsiveness of services towards clients be measured?
  - What are the potentials and pitfalls of this?
- What is the right balance between upward and downwards responsiveness of employment services?