



# Inclusive citizenship of people with mild intellectual disabilities

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# Motivation

- Increasing demand for support *(SCP: 'A better understanding of care', 2014)*
- 'Handling life', 'complexity', 'too demanding'
- People with MID: mild?
- Digitalisation, fewer suitable jobs, education fails to lead to work
- Citizenship is more than rights, work and housing
- Daily life, taking care, enacting in the public domain
- Lived experiences in daily activities

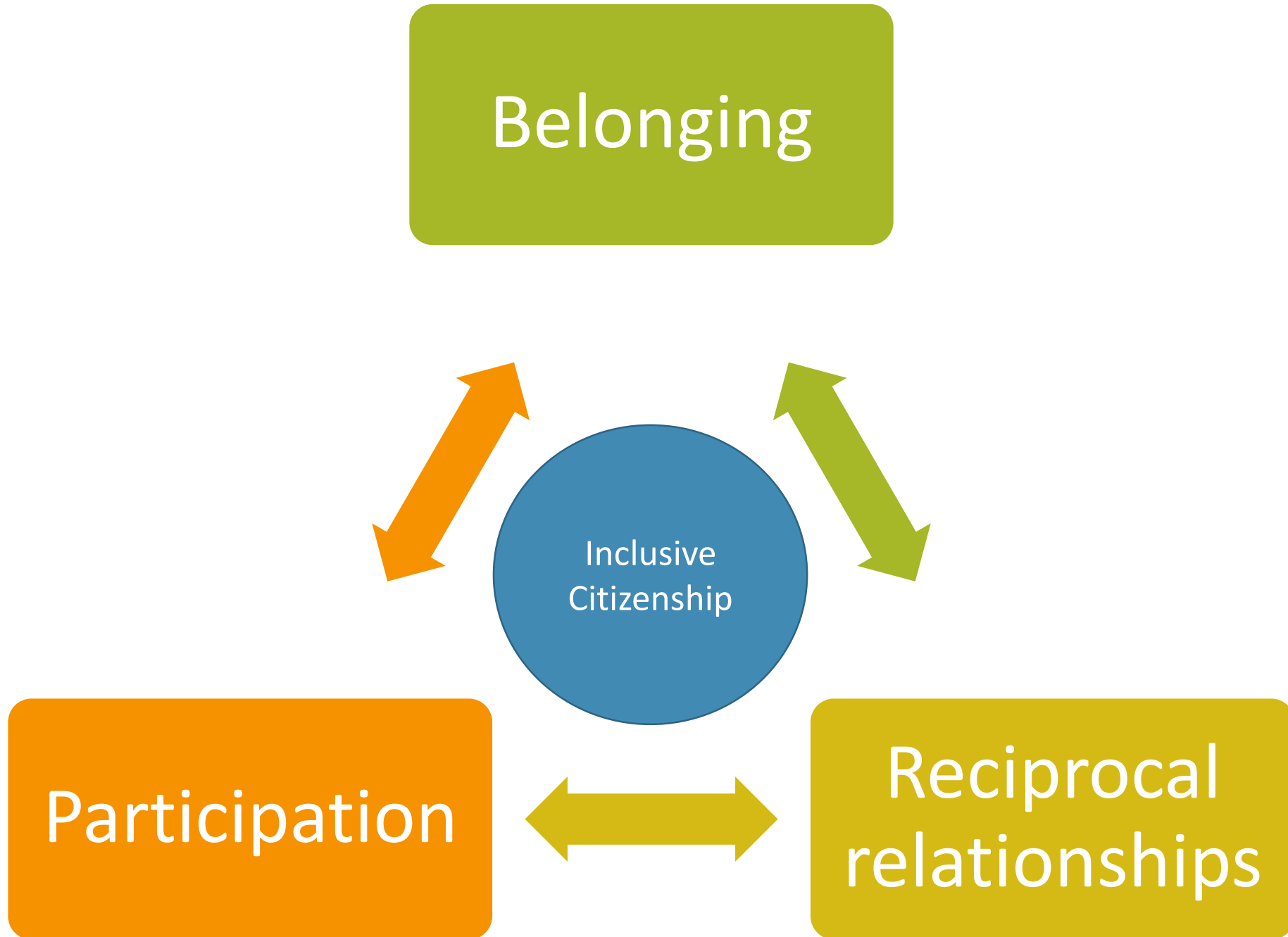
‘Inclusion is about more than just placing people in neighborhoods, schools, family homes, places of worship, regular recreation activities, and so forth. It is about supporting people to become connected and to be a part of the place or activity. (Gomez, 2013 p2)

Belonging

Inclusive  
Citizenship

Participation

Reciprocal  
relationships



# Methodology

- Intellectual disability is socially constructed
- Ethnography
- Different perspectives: but mainly that of people with MID.
- Giving meaning to citizenship (symbolic interactionist approach)
- Variety of daily activities
- co-researcher with MID / People's First group 'LFB Wolvega'.

# Data collection

- Topic lists related to prevailing definitions of inclusion.
- In-depth interviewing and observation: all three aspects but mainly **participation** in daily life situations
- Photovoice: reflection on feelings of **belonging**,
- Drawing and eco-mapping: insights in **relationships** and networks.
  
- Additional interviewing: network members and social professionals

# Sample

- 18+, taking intersectionality in account
- three categories of respondents based on the degree of received guidance
- Different scaled communities, several organisations
- In total 33 persons diagnosed with MID, slightly more men than women
- 22 professionals and 20 family members/friends
- Data analysis through Atlas.ti: preliminary results

# Let's jump to conclusions

- Pathways to citizenship are dynamic, messy and unpredictable.
- Inclusive citizenship is not a product but rather series of parallel processes.
- Policies on activation and inclusion should take in account the dynamic character of these processes.
- Future research should employ a micro-sociological, relational approach to intellectual disability.



# Let's jump to conclusions part 2

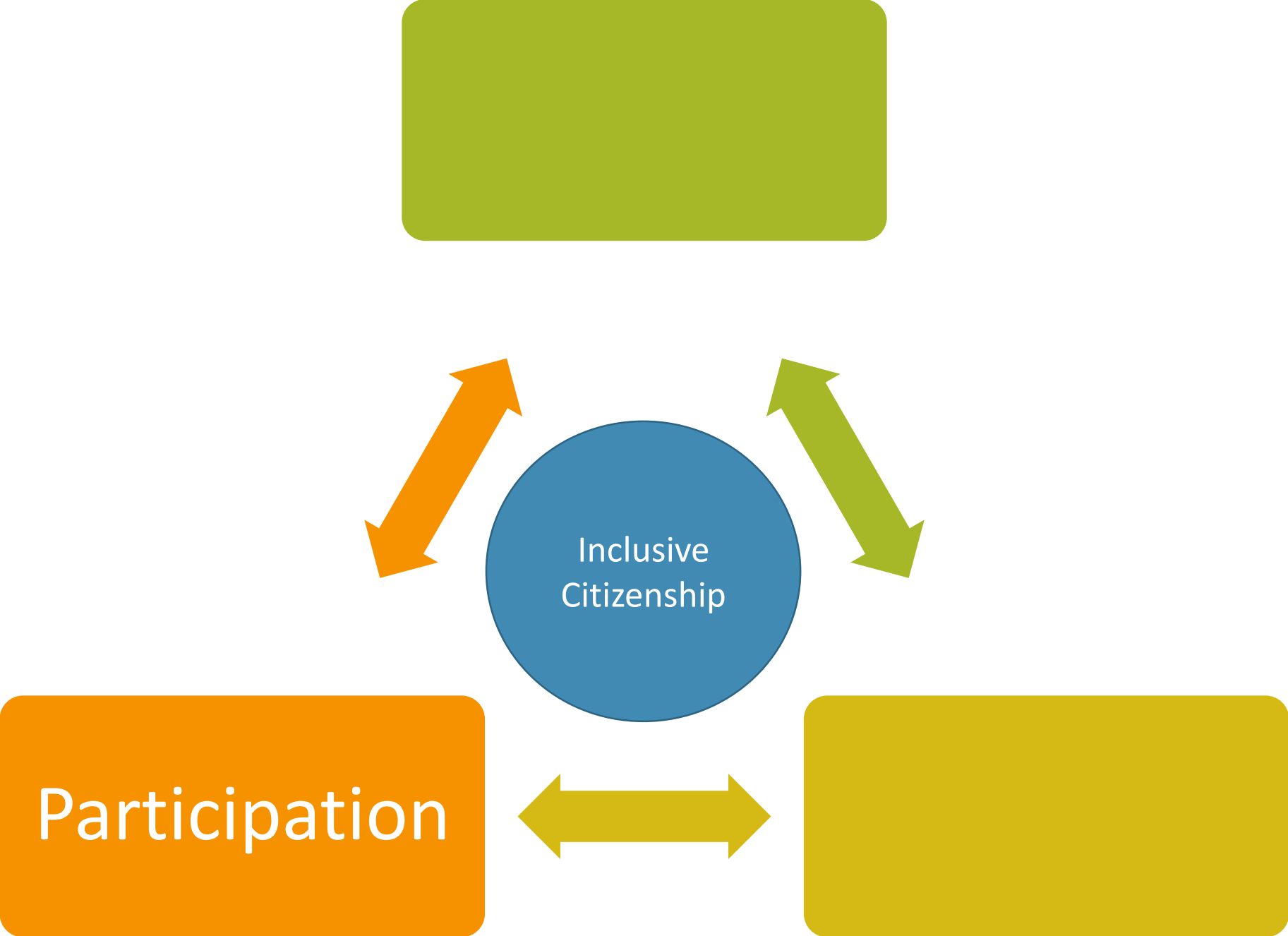
- The use of labels (MID) is often directly stigmatizing and excluding from participation and causing feelings of not belonging. It is important to consider when and if to use labels.
- Everyday participation in the public domain of society constitutes an important form of participation where fits and misfits (Garland-Thomas, 2011) exist beside each other.
- In researching relationships and networks there should be more attention directed to 'functional' aspects of ties. Besides interesting strenghts of weak ties there should be taken in account certain weaknesses of strong ties of people with MID.

Belonging



# 1. Belonging: Dealing with label and stigma

- Accepting the label? Accepting disability?
- Becoming stigma: it's in the name (negative association) and use
- People acting according to preassumptions of labels
- Resistance on several dimensions but specially how it influenced other people's reaction/view
- Ways out: make use of your label



## 2: Participation

- Not static. Renegotiating in social interaction
- Living in societies margins; ID not the only explanatory variable.
- Experienced barriers vary from person to person and are found in very different settings
- Social barriers are enacted through organisations, companies and groups.



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### 3. Relationships: strong and weak ties

- Although family often is an important party in the social networks of people with MID they certainly don't have to be so.
- Family members (and other network members) can patronize, belittle, control, exploit or be abusive. It's important to state that networks of people with MID are sometimes very unsafe.
- Short and fast daily meetings and greetings do not have to be regarded superficial. Although moments of contact may be short and without much exchange or reciprocity, these moments of contact definitely contribute to feelings of belonging.

# Understanding policy effects on the lives of people with MID

- Universal design as a solution?
- Do people feel less 'disabled' when the welfare state steps in stronger?
- Which role does labeling (and stigma) play in inclusive citizenship in Norway?
- In which ways are people (with MID) invited/obliged to participate in Norwegian society?
- Which roles do family and friends have in the daily lives of people with MID?





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