Addressing youth unemployment: what role for social work?

Policy responses to youth unemployment in Sweden and Europe

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Abstract
Unemployed youth are a heterogenous group facing varying and sometimes complex problems. Being young and unemployed can have a negative impact on future life chances and quality of life. Studies on youth unemployment have mostly focused on education and labour market responses, leaving the involvement of social work aside.

This thesis aims to explore policies for unemployed youth in three key policy areas: social work, education and labour market, in Europe and Sweden. The thesis consists of four separate studies highlighting how policy ideas are translated into agendas, and how responses are administered and organized at national and local level. Applying an institutionalist theoretic framework, the results are analysed with consideration to the structure of state and welfare state.

Study I explored the ideas inherent to the social policy concept ‘social investment’, outlining three central dimensions of the concept: temporal-perspective, principles of distribution and policy coherence. A key result of study I is that social investment ideas are nuanced, and that social investments can take different forms. In the following three studies, the dimensions of social investment are used as heuristic tools to examine policy responses for unemployed youth.

Study II examined how the EU recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee (YG), was translated in national YG plans. The results were analysed using tentative regime-types based on the structure of social work, the education system, and the social insurance system. The results showed that outreach as an early intervention was marginal across countries and regime types, and the involvement of social work was largely absent.

In study III, the coordination within and between policy areas was analysed between Sweden and the UK, over time. Policy documents on national labour market programs in both countries between 1998-2011, were analysed. The results showed that coordination between labour market programs and social security benefits/social assistance had strengthened over time in both countries. How authority to regulate and administer different policy areas, was also linked to the occurrence of coordination between different policy areas.

Study IV examined if and how specialization and coordination were part of organizing local level work with NEETs in Sweden. This was explored through structured interviews with local professionals in social work, education and labour market. The results showed a pattern of coordination and specialization among education and labour market actors. The involvement of social work was instead marginal, and primarily concerned social assistance.

In conclusion, the results of this thesis show that the agenda, content and administration of policy responses to youth unemployment consists mainly of wide, universal and reactive responses. They are also characterized by coordination between labour market measures and social insurance/assistance, in line with an activation trend. An important finding is also the very limited involvement of social work, as noted in national policy agendas and programs, and in local level work. Both activation and social work involvement did however vary somewhat with administrative levels and between different policy areas. The results thereby indicate that institutional aspects such as organizational structure and administration, matter for the involvement of different policy areas in responses to youth unemployment.

Keywords: social investment, social policy, ideal types, policy regulations, youth unemployment, social work.
ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: WHAT ROLE FOR SOCIAL WORK?

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Lisa Andersson
Till Hjalmar & Astrid.
Förord


Det finns också ett flertalet personer som i olika sammanhang har läst och kommenterat mina texter, diskuterat upplägg och bollat idéer, och på så vis bidragit till arbetet med avhandlingen. Redan då jag skrev på mitt PM hade jag möjlighet att diskutera upplägget för mitt avhandlingsarbete med Yuri Kazeppov, som hjälpte mig att hitta fokus och riktning. Jag vill också ge ett stort tack till Tommy Lundström, Rebecka Strandell och Therese von Braun för era kloka synpunkter och er läsning under PM-seminarium och artikelseminarium vid institutionen. Tack också till Lars Brännström och Daniel Fredriksson för värdefulla synpunkter kring min första artikel som presenterades vid höstmötet i Lund 2015. Jag vill också tacka Tomas Korpi som läst mina texter, hjälpt mig att komma runt flertalet felmeddelanden i Stata, och överlag bidragit med klokskap och goda råd. Ett stort tack också till Mattias Strandh som åtog sig

Ett stort tack också till Lotten Cederholm, Ingrid Tinglöf, Josefin Sterzenbach, Rickard Högberg och Ulrika Engström. Ni har under åren varit behjälpliga på så många sätt, från att lösa it-haveri, svara på otaliga frågor om anställning, doktorandtid och undervisning, till stöd och hjälp i allt som behöver ordnas inför själva disputationen.

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Stockholm, maj 2022
Lisa Andersson
The thesis is based on the following studies, referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


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Introduction

To be young and unemployed is to be particularly vulnerable, both in terms of one’s current life circumstances and in terms of the prospects of becoming an independent adult who is socially integrated into society (Hjeds-Löfmark & Eriksson, 2014). Both in Sweden and in a wider European context, unemployed youth are a diverse group that includes students looking for work, youth who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET), the short- and long-term unemployed, and young people facing health and social problems. For those in this group who are furthest from the labour market, unemployment threatens to have long-term scarring effects, such as lower pay, fewer employment prospects, and a negative impact on health and well-being (Hvinden et al., 2019). In both the national and international literature, a number of individual and structural background factors have been found to be associated with youth being or becoming long-term unemployed. These factors include family poverty, unemployed parents, belonging to an ethnic minority, having a chronic illness or disability and having poor mental health (Forslund & Liljeberg, 2020; ILO, 2013). Part of the complexity and heterogeneity of this group comes not only from the multitude of separate problems that its members face, but also the fact that these problems may overlap. Many of these problems also correspond with problem areas that are addressed through social work (Dulmus & Sowers, 2012). The involvement of social work in responses to youth unemployment is therefore a relevant issue. Particularly so, since the bulk of scholarly literature on policy responses for unemployed youth deals primarily with the involvement of education and labour market actors.

Policy agendas and responses to youth unemployment are embedded in wider ideas and agendas outlining a direction of policy development. Such idea streams are manifold and can occur both nationally and internationally. In the European context, EU agendas and policy pressure continually prompt responses from EU member states. Because of the principle of subsidiarity,¹ policy agendas, concerning for example youth unemployment, are advanced via different “soft law” measures (Trubek & Trubek, 2005). Recent decades have seen the EU put forward such social policy agendas as the 2008 recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market

¹ The principle of subsidiarity in the EU implies that policy matters should be dealt with at the lowest level of governance, ensuring the decision-making authority of individual member states in the majority of policy areas.
and the social investment package of 2013 (Marchal & Van Mechelen, 2015; Umbach & Tkalec, 2021). Active inclusion was presented as a route to the provision of adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to affordable and quality services. Similarly, the social investment package aims to redirect the social policies of member states toward human capital investments throughout the life course (de la Porte & Natali, 2018). It is presented as a broad agenda for social policy, developing cohesive policies directed toward preventive and early policy responses, investing in childcare, education and training, and developing more inclusive labour markets and sufficient income support (European Council, 2013). Research shows that these agendas, and the ideas inherent in them, are being adopted around Europe, and that the means of adoption differ (Garritzmann, Häussermann, Paliér & Zollinger, 2016; de la Porte & Natali, 2018; Hemerijck, 2018; Künzel, 2012; Heidenreich & Rice, 2016). Social investment and active inclusion are thus two examples of both the diffusion of ideas through EU-level agendas and divergence in how these ideas are received and translated into national policy responses. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of which ideas are intrinsic to national policies for unemployed youth, it is therefore useful to look to European as well as national agendas and responses.

At the European level, youth unemployment has been treated as an urgent problem for which a general direction of policy responses is sought. Through the application of soft law measures and financial incentives, member states have been encouraged to engage with the problems of unemployed youth in accordance with a general framework agenda. In Sweden, responses to youth unemployment involve a range of policy areas and actors, such as employment policies, education, social insurance, health, and social work. Swedish labour market policy is mainly the responsibility of national legislators and the Public Employment Services (PES), a national executive agency that implements measures ranging from job-search support to training and subsidized or time-limited employment. Administrative responsibility and the possibility to design and implement responses, however, have shifted during the twenty-first century. In the 1990s, responsibility for delivering labour market measures for youth was transferred first from the PES to the local municipal governments, and then back again to the national level some years later (Minas et al., 2012). Responsibility for education is likewise a municipal task. The municipalities responsibility for keeping track of upper secondary school dropouts is established through national legislation. More specifically that municipalities are responsible for staying informed on young people who are not attending upper secondary school and either motivating them to resume their education or of-

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2 European Council (2013). Recommendations on establishing a Youth Guarantee; European Commission (2020), Youth employment support package; European Commission (2021), The reinforced Youth Guarantee.
fering other support and services aimed at helping them find occupation (Swedish National School Board, 2015). Municipal social services consist of multiple specialized units that each may include youth services to varying extents. Beyond the child and family services and social assistance units, there are disability services, substance abuse units and psychiatric social work units, all of which may come in contact with young people, including unemployed young people.

Youth unemployment can evoke many different policy responses which can also occur in different periods of a young person’s life, ranging from preventive efforts in the early school years to quickly identifying school dropouts and finding and helping unemployed or inactive young people. Responses to youth unemployment are also encouraged to involve actors from the policy fields mentioned above, in order to address the issues these young people are facing. These actors may be dispersed among different administrative levels, and may differ in scope and in terms of where the boundaries around them are drawn. In Sweden, policies for unemployed youth are not subsumed under a single umbrella of youth policy. Rather, policy responses are administered in various policy areas, where labour market and education efforts are common (Swedish National Youth Board, 2009). Several factors underlying youth unemployment, however, are connected to areas of social work and the social services (Forslund & Liljeberg, 2020). But the role of social work in policies and initiatives for unemployed youth rarely figures in the literature, much of which concerns the activation requirement for social assistance recipients.

The group of unemployed youth is one with sector-crossing, sometimes complex problems. This poses a challenge for policy makers, as responses to complex problems are often organized according to different policy areas. However, we lack knowledge about the overall content and administrative arrangements of policy responses toward unemployed youth, such as what ideas and solutions are inherently implied by different policies and programs (for example, policy coordination, proactive efforts, targeting, etc.). We also lack knowledge about which policy areas or actors are involved in and responsible for helping this group, particularly when it comes to the role of social work. These are important aspects of policy responses, as they provide insight into both how the problem is perceived and who is responsible for providing which solutions. This also helps us to see what problems are not being addressed and which actors and policy areas remain uninvolved.

Unemployed youth and the ideas and administrative arrangements of policy responses lie at the centre of this thesis. The overall question is how key, contemporary social policy ideas are translated into policy agendas and organizational arrangements of policies for unemployed youth. Given the problems described for unemployed youth in the previous section, the thesis focuses on three policy areas of particular importance to this group: social work, education, and the labour market. The theme is researched from the big to the small: from understanding policy ideas at the supranational level, to translating them
in national policy agendas, to the organization of national programs and local-level work with this group.

Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to gain further knowledge about policy responses for unemployed youth, and more specifically how key policy ideas are translated and arranged among three policy sectors: social work, education, and the labour market. Four central research questions are studied in the four papers outlined below, beginning with understanding the ideas inherent to social investment³, then applying these ideas as a heuristic tool to help uncover how policy responses for this group are translated into national agendas, and finally examining the administrative arrangements of policies at the national and local levels. Taken together, the studies shed light on which problems for this broad and heterogenous group are being addressed through which (type of) policies.

1) How can we conceptualize the ideational content of social investment in the context of policies for unemployed youth?
2) How are EU recommendations on early responses for unemployed youth translated into national policy agendas?
3) How does coordination within and between policy areas relate to state structure in programs for unemployed youth, and how has this evolved over time?
4) How is local-level work with NEETs administered when it comes to the organizational principles of specialization and coordination?

Outline of the thesis

This introduction, which outlines the aim and research questions of the thesis, is followed by a section reviewing the literature in the field of youth unemployment research. It begins by describing unemployed youth and their inherent problems and moves on to policy responses in Europe and Sweden, with a specific focus on the role of social work. This is followed by a chapter presenting the theoretical framework for the thesis, which combines an institutionalist perspective and theories with the ideas of social investment. Thereafter, methodological perspectives and procedures are outlined, both for the thesis as a whole and for each of the individual studies. The main findings of the

³ Broad and early investment in human capital, such as education and childcare, and coherence between policy areas and efforts.
four studies are then presented. In the final section, I discuss the results and their implications for unemployed youth.
Prior research

This chapter reviews areas of the literature dealing with policy responses to youth unemployment in Sweden and Europe. The first section provides an overview of how the problem of youth unemployment is understood and framed as a consequence of new social risks. This includes a description of how youth unemployment can be categorized and measured, as well as how the problems among this group are presented in the literature. The second section outlines the role of welfare state institutions and gives a recap of policy responses to youth unemployment in the fields of labour market, education, and social work, in both Europe and Sweden. The chapter closes with a section on the role of social work for unemployed youth in Europe in general and in Sweden in particular.

Youth unemployment and new social risks

Youth, as a phase of life, is often described in relation to a number of transitions: from completing education to entering the labour market and leaving home (Biggart, Stauber & Walther, 2011). In the literature on welfare state development and social policy, periods of transition are sometimes described as times of increased vulnerability, making the youth phase of a person’s life particularly volatile (Hemerijck, 2018; Woodman & Wynn, 2013). Young people are also particularly vulnerable to so-called “new social risks”, used in the literature as an umbrella term for socio-economic vulnerabilities of the post-industrial welfare state. New social risks are related to both individual and structural changes, including changes in family patterns, the entry of women into the labour force, the de-industrialization of the labour market, and a rise in non-standardized employment. Some of these risks may be particularly likely to affect youth; these include lacking education or skills; lacking work experience; combining work and family; and not having contributed to, or not being eligible for, social protection schemes (Chevalier & Loncle, 2021; Knijn & Plantenga, 2012). Old social risks, by contrast, refer to the loss of income for workers (typically the “male breadwinner”) during spells of unemployment, and have been addressed through different forms of unemployment protection, pensions, and social protection schemes (Leoni, 2015; Ferragina, Seeleib-Kaiser & Spreckelsen, 2015). New social risks are thus said to require
new policy responses (Erjnäs & Boje, 2011). In comparison to the old social risks, primarily directed toward male industrial workers, new social risks affect a wider range of social groups, such as young people, the low-skilled, single parents, women, and carers. This implies a need for a broader scope of responses. For instance, the risks of poverty and social exclusion that stem from being young and having a low skill/education level may require more than the economic alleviation of immediate poverty, if a low-income position is not to become permanent. To see youth unemployment solely through the lens of new social risks, however, would be to take a limited view of the problem and potentially restrict responses to it.

EU statistics show that youth unemployment has been on the rise since 2008, and it is not expected to decrease over the next few years. The lack of occupation among unemployed youth may vary greatly, however, and there are different ways of measuring the extent of this group and who belongs to it (Wadensjö, 2014; Maguire, 2015). Applying the Eurostat and ILO definition (see footnote on p.1), the youth unemployment rate includes persons without any occupation, who are actively looking for and/or able to work. The youth unemployment rate is, however, subject to some critique, particularly as a tool for cross-country comparison. For example, young people in full-time education are only categorized as part of the labour force if they are also employed or registered as unemployed and looking for part-time work. In addition, systems for vocational training and apprenticeship programs vary among European countries: youth in these programs are categorized as employed in some countries, and not in others. This means that how a “student” is defined is important for interpreting youth unemployment numbers. (Wadensjö, 2014).

A sub-group of unemployed youth who have received much attention over the past decade are youth who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training, (NEETs). In Sweden, NEETs are widely defined as young people between the ages of 16 and 29 who, for the past calendar year, have not had an income over the price base amount, have not received an education allowance, and have not been enrolled in any educational program. The NEET category is, however, a contested one. For one thing, it is composed of many diverging trajectories; thus, some argue that developing policies and services based on NEETs as a category may very well fail to identify specific vulnerable groups (Kazepov & Ranci, 2015). While it is wise to be aware of the diversity of the NEET category and the inherent problems this implies, there are also evident advantages to using the category. In comparison to youth unemployment statistics, the NEET category is more inclusive as a measurement, as it includes youth who are inactive and not registered with public employment services,

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4 Eurostat applies the ILO definition of unemployment as persons without work during the reference week, unable to start work over the two following weeks and who has actively sought employment during the past four weeks. Youth unemployment is measured by this definition for all persons under 25 years old.
or in social security or social service systems. Studies on social, education, and health status, however, show similar issues facing the category of NEETs and unemployed youth as a whole, including low education levels, disabilities, being young carers, having unemployed parents, or being a minority. Additional risk factors for becoming NEET include poor mental health and being involved in criminal behaviour (Maguire & Thompson, 2007). In Sweden, results show that first or second-generation immigrants, disabled persons, and women with children were not only overrepresented among NEETs, but also constituted groups at an increased risk for becoming NEET (Niknami & Schröder, 2014). This variety in problems and groups of youth at risk of becoming NEET has, in Sweden, prompted a reaction about how to categorize these youth. Essentially, the claim is that responses should focus on labour market-related problems instead of simply the status of being unemployed (Engström & Forslund, 2016). Recommendations from international and supranational organizations often highlight the multitude of problems that are present among unemployed youth, particularly those furthest from the labour market (Carcillo et al., 2015). The need to involve actors and stakeholders from different policy areas, with different kinds of expertise, is therefore often emphasized (OECD, 2014; Corbanese & Rosas, 2017; EC, 2013). However, as underscored in the literature, the characteristics of unemployed young people and the issues facing them vary between countries in Europe (Dvouetly et al., 2019). The specific arrangements and involvement of actors and policy areas in responses to youth unemployment will therefore almost certainly vary with national (and possibly sub-national) contexts.

Welfare states & youth unemployment

Institutional structures of welfare states are an important factor influencing both emerging new social risks as well as policy responses to them (Woodman & Wyn, 2013). The EU is highly involved with setting agendas and directions for policies concerning new social risks. Some suggest that the EU’s agenda with regard to social inclusion, advocating for labour market flexibility, and human capital investments reflects a hybrid of liberal and universal regime-type approaches (Viebrock & Clasen, 2009). Others describe it as policymakers in different countries being at a crossroads between two regime types: a social right regime (Börner, 2020), where the welfare state is to ensure equal income distribution and protection against income loss, and a social investment regime (Giddens, 1998) with a focus on providing human capital investments or childcare (Erjnäs & Boje, 2011). There is, however, a consensus in the literature that welfare state types differ in how well they (already) fit the type of policies required to address new social risks. The Nordic, or Social Democratic, welfare states are deemed most in line with policies for addressing new social risks; such policies include minimum wages, developed
schemes of childcare and parental leave to support women in the labour market, and active labour market policies to mobilize the workforce (Ferragina, Seeleib-Kaiser & Spreckelsen, 2015; Erjnäs & Boje, 2011). In the literature, responses to new social risks affecting youth are largely exemplified by Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) and vocational education and training, i.e., labour market efforts based on “mutual obligations” and education efforts tied to the labour market sector. The wave of activation policy witnessed during recent decades is seen by some as an essential part of a new policy agenda to address new social risks (Lödemel & Moreira, 2014; Garritzmann et al., 2016). By others it is understood as the expression of a shift from societal and collective responsibilities toward an increasing individualization (Olofsson, 2014). Efforts regarding earlier, preventive efforts directed at youth at risk, addressing their lack of access to unemployment benefits or early detection of and support for social problems via social and support services, have been less extensively studied. This is true despite descriptions of social problems among sub-groups of unemployed youth and the increased risk of long-term reliance on social assistance for youth (Mörtvik, 2014). Some concerns that have been raised in the field of comparative social policy and the literature on policy responses to youth unemployment in Europe involve how the problems of the unemployed are seen and addressed in different contexts. What ideas and content in policy responses can be observed, and which patterns emerge in different European welfare states?

Responding to youth unemployment in the areas of social work, education, and labour market

Policies for unemployed youth can be described and delimited in a myriad of ways. There are many international and supranational organizations that work toward common guidelines and principles for policies aimed at youth, from the OECD and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to the European Union (Olofsson, 2014). As mentioned, when it comes to their agendas and recommendations for unemployed youth, a common denominator for all of these organizations is the promotion of activation policies (Haikkola, 2018; Lahusen, Schultz & Grazziano 2013). Activation schemes for the unemployed in general became increasingly common in Europe during the 1990s (Olofsson, 2014). Although activation schemes are categorized in the literature in slightly different ways, for the most part the initiatives are divided along similar lines, including labour market training, job search assistance, monitoring and sanctions, wage subsidies, and public sector work programs (Caliendo & Schmidt, 2016). Over the course of the past decade, the ILO has promoted broad education efforts for unemployed youth, including apprenticeship and
training programs to be developed in cooperation with the business sector (Olofsson, 2014). The activation agenda of the OECD has for a long time emphasized the mutual obligations inherent in activation policies (Immervoll & Scarpetta, 2012). The EU’s activation agenda is partly based on the flexicurity model, where weakened employment protection is paired with relatively generous unemployment protection (Graziano, 2012). Both the OECD and the EU have moved over the years from a “work first” approach toward “work first and training”, thus putting more emphasis on the importance of work including guidance and capacity building. This approach is meant to address the issue of young people getting stuck in low-paying entry-level jobs with no opportunity for stepping up (Immervoll & Scarpetta, 2012; Olofsson, 2014).

While the EU does not hold any formal power to decide the national social policies of their member states, it does attempt to impact and steer national level policymaking. Soft law instruments, such as the OMC, are thus applied to try to align policies, for instance regarding young people and their entry into the labour market. In 2013, the EU presented a recommendation that every member state develop and implement a Youth Guarantee (YG) that followed a certain format in terms of policy content and direction. The YG-recommendation is focused specifically on early efforts for youth (NEETs, and vulnerable youth in particular), working toward education or employment via either early responses to, or preventive efforts against youth unemployment. Additional guideposts in the YG recommendation are assuring adequate income protection and social inclusion, thus emphasizing a focus on financial security, poverty alleviation, social participation, and well-being (EC recommendation to YG, 2013). The ideas implicit in the YG recommendations are described by some scholars as inherently social investment-oriented (Dheret & Roden, 2016).

In terms of their content, youth unemployment policies naturally vary across the European countries in relation both to differing characteristics of the problem and to the different contexts. The literature, however, suggests a common trend occurring during the twenty-first century whereby European countries are increasingly focusing policy efforts for these young people on education and employment (Chevalier & Loncle, 2021). To a large degree, literature reviews of policy responses to youth unemployment have evaluated the effectiveness of labour market interventions on employment status; such interventions include job search and employment services, subsidized employment, and temporary jobs (Forslund & Liljeborg, 2020; Eichhorst & Konle-Seidl, 2016; Kluve, 2018). Early evaluations of ALMPs for young people in both the US and Europe have shown that they were not substantially

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5 Open Method of Coordination: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html#:~:text=The%20open%20method%20of%20coordination,introduce%20or%20amend%20their%20laws.](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html#:~:text=The%20open%20method%20of%20coordination,introduce%20or%20amend%20their%20laws.)
effective for increasing employment rates (Heckman et al., 1999; Kluve et al., 2002). Later evaluations drew similar conclusions, namely, that ALMPs, and training in particular, are less effective for young people than for adults (Kluve et al., 2017; Kluve, 2018; Card et al., 2010). As far as monitoring and sanctions go, these may even have adverse effects if applied too harshly (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). In a cross-national evaluation of ALMPs in Europe, Kluve (2018) found that while job search services combined with sanctions for non-compliance appear to be the most effective type of ALMP in general, for unemployed youth in particular, no clear evidence exists of markedly positive effects from any specific type of ALMP. Instead, Kluve argues, either youth may not be a viable, specific target group for labour market policies, or the design and content of policies for this group must be entirely rethought (Kluve, 2018). Concerning the access and scope of various labour market measures, tailored, targeted efforts addressed to marginalized groups appear to show somewhat better results than efforts with a broader, more general scope (Kluve et al., 2017; Forslund & Liljeberg, 2020).

Among the most commonly recommended type of policy responses to help youth out of unemployment are efforts to keep youth in school or help/motivate them back into education (Mörvik, 2014). Educational attainment, and particularly tertiary education, has positive effects on income, unemployment-risk, health, and even life-expectancy (Müller, 2005). At the European level, the discussion is focused largely on programs for the transition from school to work, such as apprenticeship education, vocational education, and training programs (Mörvik, 2014; Matsumoto & Elder, 2010). Some education efforts that aim to increase young people’s chances of succeeding in school have shown positive, although uneven, results; specifically, these include smaller classes, special education, and mentoring (Carcillo, 2015). Other, curative efforts include motivating efforts to encourage dropouts to go back to school, individual placement support, and second chance education (Löfström, 2014; Korpi et al., 2015).

In Sweden, policies and responses aimed specifically at unemployed youth (or unemployed youth and others) are integrated into different policy sectors (Swedish National Youth Board, 2009). Early policies for unemployed youth (during the 1980s) were essentially national public sector work programs, such as work placement or workplace introduction programs. During the 1990s, national youth programs with a legislated framework-type structure were developed, and then implemented by the municipal governments, who received great freedom to design their content and delivery (Edin et al., 2010). In 2007, the Job Guarantee for youth replaced the earlier youth programs and was centralized along with the national PES, providing a much stricter structure in terms of content and creating an emphasis on “mutual obligations” (Hall & Liljeberg, 2011). Since then, a number of more short-lived programs (with a small number of enrolled) have been introduced and then dismantled without having been properly evaluated. The efforts over time reflect a focus
on labour market policies, from introductory employment to subsidized employment and job search support, and moving toward an ALMP approach (Olofsson, 2014; Wadensjö, 2014). There has also been an organizational evolution from a division of responsibility between the state and the municipalities for youth labour market programs, toward an increased national responsibility for the administration of such policies (Minas et al., 2012). While the national PES today is responsible for the bulk of labour market policy provision in Sweden, we do know that there are numerous municipal labour market programs being offered to unemployed youth around the country. Unfortunately, comprehensive scholarly evaluations of the effects or organization of such efforts are still lacking (Vikman & Westerberg, 2017).

Sweden has long had an ambitious education policy featuring a tuition-free educational system, from primary school to tertiary education. In recent decades, expansive reforms to the Swedish educational system have taken place. These reforms include a shift toward municipal governance (away from state-governed education), the introduction of school capitation grants, and the privatization of both primary and secondary education (Löfström, 2014). The twenty-first century has also seen a postponement of labour market establishment among young people, and today, dropping out of school or leaving without a degree is a clear risk factor for youth unemployment (Korpi, Bäckman & Minas, 2015). In terms of education efforts to target unemployment, the labour market education efforts that were developed during the 1960s are not as common today. There are second-chance programs for those without a secondary education degree, though the participants are mostly older adults. In 2005, a municipal activation responsibility was legislated (MAR) in Sweden in order to address the unemployment risk associated with a lack of secondary education. It states that municipalities have a responsibility to keep track of young people leaving, or not entering, secondary education, and to offer them appropriate measures with the primary aim of motivating them to get back into education (Löfström, 2014). It is, however, entirely up to the municipalities to organize this responsibility, and helping youth into employment or an ALMP is also accepted as an appropriate response (National School Board, 2015). In other words, the efforts resulting from this legislated responsibility may end up being labour market-oriented rather than education-oriented.

For young people, meeting the requirements for unemployment insurance is tough, given their limited or entirely lacking labour market experience and attachment. Until 2007, regulations for unemployment insurance were in place to adjust this inequality by allowing youth up to 20 years of age to receive unemployment insurance without fulfilling the regular requirements. In 2007, this regulation was abolished and young people’s access to unemployment benefits is now largely conditioned upon their participation in ALMPs (von Buxhoeveden, 2019). Unemployed youth up to 20 years of age can qualify for a smaller benefit, called a development benefit, if they participate in a labour market program. The benefit rate is two-tiered, with a higher compensation
rate for those who have completed secondary education. For youth who are over 25 or who fulfil the requirements for unemployment insurance, a higher level of compensation, called an activation benefit, is paid. Social assistance payments, meanwhile, are granted and administered by the local social services and may be conditioned upon participation in some form of activation program.

Unemployed youth and social work

In both the European and the Swedish context, the responses to youth unemployment that have been evaluated and debated in the literature are largely labour market and education policies. As previously outlined, the literature on policy responses for unemployed youth shows that labour market efforts consist largely of different forms of ALMPs. Education efforts often consist of vocational education and training, i.e. types of education with clear links to the labour market and a “transition focus”. Meanwhile, in both the European and the Swedish literature, social work efforts are only marginally present. They are often treated separately from policy responses involving the labour market and the education sector, both in the literature and in terms of the specific social work efforts. A body of research does exist on the activation and workfare direction in policies for the unemployed, including youth. The area of social work treated in this literature is mainly that of social assistance. Research on social assistance in Sweden shows that youth are one of the groups that to a greater extent remain dependent on social assistance in the long term (Nybom, 2016; Angelin, 2009). Beyond this strand of literature, there are some claims of a lack of clarity in the distribution of responsibilities among actors and social policy sectors working with unemployed youth, including the role of social services (Olofsson, 2014).

The Swedish social services are highly specialized, and similar units working with specific problems or target groups can be found across the country (Perlinski, Blom & Morén, 2012). Beyond education deficits, and lacking employment and work-experience, social problems that young people face include truancy, family problems, poor mental-health, abuse, substance use, and crime (Andersson, 2009). These are types of problem typically addressed by units or departments within the social services, such as substance abuse units, social assistance units, disability services, individual & family services and psychiatric social work.

In summary, the literature on policy responses to youth unemployment primarily pertains to either labour market responses, such as ALMPs, or education efforts. This is in line with how new social risks facing young people are described. It is, however, less congruent with the description of the problems facing unemployed young people and NEETs. The problems described among
this group, and not directly addressed through education or labour market efforts, are typically in the domain of social work. The role of social work in specific agendas, programs, and support for this group therefore warrants further exploration.
This thesis is a policy study, theoretically embedded in the field of institutionalism and in welfare state theory. The first basic theoretical assumption is that the organization of authority and the responsibilities and roles of different actors and policy sectors in states and welfare states constitute institutional structures. The second is that these institutional structures have an impact on how policy ideas are translated into agendas and administered in the form of policy responses for youth. Applying these theoretical lenses to the study of policy responses for unemployed youth sheds light on how the problem of youth unemployment is framed and how the responsibilities for helping this group are dispersed.

The role and theoretical understanding of ideas in policy studies

Ideas are a key component of the political realm. In the processes of forming and organizing policy, ideas are produced, developed, and disseminated (Beland & Cox, 2011). This is a suitable starting point for understanding the framing of problems and solutions in policy responses for unemployed youth. (Vivien Schmidt, 2011 in Beland & Cox, 2011). Drawing on Beland’s (2005) definition, in this thesis, “ideas” refer to specific policy alternatives and the organized principles in which they are embedded. Kingdon (1995) suggests a way to structure the role of ideas in policies using the notion of different streams. In the problem stream, problems are defined and redefined, taking on different meanings. As Béland & Petersen (2017) point out, the identification of “new social risks” is an example of this process. Thus, defining new social risks and the connected problem of youth unemployment means determining how this particular phenomenon and group should be understood in terms of what problems are inherent to them. In turn, this means that this stream is unfailingly connected to what policy responses will be prescribed. The policy stream is where problems are linked to solutions and prescriptions for policy responses (Kingdon, 1995). Often drawing on existing approaches, the choice(s) of policy responses to a defined problem may well be constructed as a mosaic. This would seem to apply to the perhaps most salient approach to “new social risks” as a whole, namely, social investment.
Social investment is presented in both the political and the scholarly literature as an agenda for new welfare state policy, combining proactive policies with human capital investments. It is described as a response to emerging new social risks such as precarious employment, reconciling work and family life, single parenthood, and youth unemployment (Bonoli, 2007). Policy responses to new social risks differ from responses to old social risks (such as unemployment, sickness, etc.), and are described as aiming to provide protection against risks materializing at all. This has put pressure on welfare states to adapt and even expand (Bonoli, 2007; Busemeyer et al., 2018). As a response to such pressure, the social investment concept and agenda draw largely on Keynesian welfare state ideas; however, to some extent, it also borrows from a neoliberal agenda (Jenson, 2009; Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2003). The Keynesian and neoliberal welfare states differ regarding timeframes as well as perspectives on equality, coherence, and social expenditure. While the Keynesian perspective focuses on the present, aiming to reduce inequalities in the here and now, the neoliberal perspective is focused on limiting social spending to avoid deficits in the future (Jenson, 2009).

When it comes to the ideas inherent in social investment, the latter can be said to follow a separate track alongside these two predominant twentieth-century perspectives on social policy. In the early days of social investment, scholars were divided on the role of social protection in a social investment agenda. While Giddens (1998) proposed a very limited role for spending on social protection, Esping-Andersen (2002) advocated somewhat more generous social investment, including the protection of risks or their consequences in the here and now. The interest in combining proactive efforts with existing protective systems has thus been described as a more social democratic interpretation of social investment, as opposed to a more restrictive, neoliberal oriented version (Jenson, 2009).

This connects to diverging perspectives on equality. While social protection addresses unequal outcomes, aiming to diminish manifest inequalities, proactive efforts often proclaimed as social investments rather aim for an equal starting field through high-quality, universal education (Morel, Palier & Palme, 2012). Thus, social investment as a solution to new social risks facing unemployed youth is contingent upon how youth unemployment is understood. Which aspects of these young people’s challenges and problems are included and excluded from the problem description and the solution?

Social investment dimensions

One of the dominating ideational perspectives in European social policy of the present century is social investment (Morel, Palier & Palme, 2012). There is a point to be made here about distinguishing between an academic and a political social investment (Nolan, 2013; Sergi et al., 2017). Academically, the
social investment concept has primarily been treated as a strategy useful to make sense of a possible emerging new policy paradigm. Increasingly, however, it has also been treated as substantial policy development. This highlights the process of progression from idea to real policies, which is reflected in this thesis.

There have been several attempts in the literature to identify the central dimensions of social investment. One of its recurring features concerns the nature of investments, with an emphasis on a turn toward investing in human capital. This means investing in people’s capabilities, often exemplified as broad efforts in education, training, and childcare (Busemeyer et al., 2018; Garritzmann et al., 2016). These examples of human capital investments also reflect a focus on preparation: on equipping individuals for different transition periods in life, such as entering the labour market.

The question of which types of investments should be made thus concerns both distribution – to who(m) policies are directed – and timing – at what stage in life. Social investment is often referred to as a policy which precedes and mitigates social risks. Regarding time, therefore, its direction is mainly proactive. It has also been suggested, therefore, that compensatory policies should be included as a necessary complement. This implies a certain role for policies that are reactive, and are distributed to marginal groups or during particularly trying circumstances, in other words targeted toward those most in need (Hemerijck, 2018; Garritzmann et al, 2016). The bulk of social investments are nonetheless described in the literature (and policy agendas) as encompassing, equipping efforts to provide a majority of citizens more equal opportunities in life (Esping-Andersen et al, 2002; Vandenbroucke et al., 2011; Hemerijck, 2015). The proactive nature of social investments is also clearly linked to the idea of long-term investments throughout the life cycle, as opposed to short-term episodes of repairing efforts (Kvist, 2015). The life-cycle perspective of social investment, combined with social investment itself being a broad new agenda for social policies, implies policy responses that cut across policy areas. This makes it imperative that policies and programs complement one another: in other words, that there is a striving for policy coherence. Some policies may even be of an integrated nature in terms of the sectors and actors involved (Corbett & Noyes, 2008). This brief sketch of the ideational content inherent in social investment reflects the three central dimensions illustrated in the first paper of this thesis; time, distribution, and coherence.

From the perspective of new institutionalism, the administration of policy ideas and agendas vary with diverging institutional settings. It is thus to be expected that translating the policy ideas of social investment, prescribing proactive/early measures, creating equal opportunities, and assuring coordination between policy actors and areas will all vary with the institutional context, such as state structure and welfare state type (Ellison & Fenger, 2013).
The institutions of state and welfare state

An overarching premise of institutional theory is that institutions dictate the behaviour of modern economies. This implies, crudely put, that institutions impact the design and delivery of policies (Peters, 2005; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). The architecture of state and welfare state comprise rules and structures for welfare provision, as well as the capacity of the state to establish and enact such welfare policies. Welfare state and state capacity thus constitute institutional structures, in which policy agendas and arrangements at all levels are embedded. The premise of this thesis is, therefore, that the arrangements of the welfare state (expressed in terms of ideal types) and the capacity of the state to regulate policy will have bearing on the content and administrative arrangements found in policies for unemployed youth.

Comparative social policy research often makes use of different welfare state regimes, or ideal types. Such typologies constitute pure theoretical arrangements, organizing rights, benefits, and services (Orosz, 2017). Among the predominant welfare state theories is Esping-Andersen’s (1993) theory of the three worlds of welfare capitalism. It distinguishes three regime types according to their degree of decommodification of labour: the liberal regime, the conservative regime, and the universal regime. Decommodification means the degree to which citizens can make a living without working (Johansson, 2008). These regime types are thus anchored in the old welfare state settlements, detailing responses to “old social risks” (Antonucci, 2014). Since its publication, additional, expanded versions of Esping-Andersen’s typology have been developed. In terms of the division of countries into clusters, scholars have introduced further typologies such as the rudimentary type (southern European countries), the radical type (UK, Australia and New Zealand) and the Confucius type (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore) (Leibfreid, 1993; Castles & Mitchell, 1992; Lin, 1999). Other reformulations have instead focused on a typology for the inclusion of a specific group or category, as in Sainsbury’s (1999) contribution, Gendering Welfare States, which uses the concept of defamilization as a way of including the experience of women.

The complexity of new social risks and the multitude of vulnerabilities faced by young people imply that there may also be a need for typologies with a specific focus on youth. In this thesis, based on the description of the risk factors and underlying problems associated with youth unemployment, the role, structure, and comprehensiveness of educational systems, social insurance systems, and social work are all considered important in the development of policy responses to unemployed youth, beyond labour market programs. Wedding variables from Pohl and Walther’s (2007) school-to-work (STW) typology with Swärd and Meeuwisse’s (2007) social work typology, the thesis outlines tentative regime types for youth unemployment responses. Both Pohl and Walther’s and Swärd and Meeuwisse’s typologies build on Esping-An-
dersen’s. Pohl and Walther (2007) have developed a typology of youth transition regimes based on approaches in education and training systems, access to and scope of social security systems, and open or closed employment regimes. In addition, their typology includes the prevailing attitude toward youth, the ways in which they are disadvantaged, and the direction of transition policies. The variables concerning education, training, and social security are of particular interest to this thesis and its focus on youth unemployment responses (beyond STW transitions and activation responses).

Pohl and Walther (2007) outline five different transition regime types: universalistic, employment-centred, liberal, sub-protective, and post-communist. Education is a crucial determinant for the risk of unemployment among youth (Kluve et al., 2014). The structure of a country’s school system is therefore highly relevant. Compulsory and upper secondary education structure can range from encompassing to stratified. A more encompassing structure provides education equally, and a more stratified education system sorts and distributes students early on along diverging educational paths toward different employment sectors (Müller, 2005). The encompassing school system can most clearly be seen in the universal regime type, where primary and upper secondary education is non-selective and provides access to higher education for the vast majority of students. The sub-protective and post-communist regimes also have encompassing school systems, although these vary substantially. The sub-protective regime provides comprehensive primary school (up to the age of 15); there is, however, a high degree of early school dropout. In the post-communist regime, compulsory school is generally comprehensive, although this varies among countries (Pohl & Walther, 2007). The employment-centred regime type deviates markedly from the others when it comes to education, having stratified compulsory education and dual-track vocational education and training (VoE) programs. The VoE programs are standardized, with a close connection between employers/firms and the education sector, designed to provide a smooth transition into employment after the completion of education (Müller, 2005).

Limited access to social security schemes has been found to contribute to long-term social exclusion of young people (Lahusen, Schultz & Grazziano, 2013). Scope of and access to social security is therefore of particular importance to unemployed youth, who lack the means to support themselves. Young people’s access to social security, and particularly unemployment benefits, is generally made difficult by their lack of labour market attachment in comparison to the older unemployed. In the universal regime, social security is universal, although benefit levels are lower for young people who have made few or no contributions. The employment-centred regime, by contrast, is characterized by an insider/outsider system that to a great extent is connected to occupational category. For insiders, benefits are rather generous, while for outsiders, benefit levels are low and access is limited (Pohl & Walther, 2007). In the liberal regime, social security is generally limited in scope.
and benefit levels, and especially so for youth. Access often requires activation, entailing sanctions if the requirements are not met. Young people in a sub-protective regime also have little or no access to benefits and often have to rely on their family and/or work in the informal sector. Across the post-communist countries, social security varies in both scope and access, and young people with limited access to benefits often rely on their families, much as in the sub-protective regime.

Given an understanding of youth unemployment as more than exclusively a labour market and education problem, the potential role of social work forms a key component of this thesis. Social work systems and organizations are thus treated as institutions whose structure is important to understanding policy responses toward unemployed youth. In their typology of social work regimes, Swärd and Meeuwisse (2007) detail how social work is administered and provided and its role in the welfare state. Social assistance is perhaps the area of social work most often noted as being involved in measures for unemployed youth lacking access to (sufficient) social security benefits. As previously stated, however, other areas of social work could also be relevant. Social work systems and functions vary not only between different regime types, but also between different areas and providers of social work. In the universal regime type, social work is typically comprehensive and highly specialized. Social services are mainly provided by the public sector, and the function of social work is both helping and controlling. In the liberal and the employment-centred regimes, social work is instead divided between public and NGO/private welfare organizations. Where public social work has a controlling function, the NGO/private sector instead provides in-kind benefits and carries out preventive work. In the employment-centred regime, social work is also often highly specialized. Social work in the sub-protective regime is generally weakly organized, and there is a strong tradition of relying on family (and NGOs/churches) for the provision of welfare. While the post-communist regime has seen the emergence of social work legislation and the introduction of private providers, the systems of social work are still under development, and varying in their progress among countries in this regime type.

How policy ideas and agendas are adopted and administered varies not just with welfare state regime type. A basic assumption in the polity literature is that policies are mediated by different state structures (Lindvall & Teorell, 2016). This offers a valuable theoretical perspective from which to examine how institutional aspects relate to variations in policy responses, both within countries and within welfare state clusters. A central concept in the polity literature is state capacity, referring to the resources and authority of the state over particular policy areas (Skocpol & Amenta, 1986). Variations in state capacity are tied to the state’s legislative authority, the scope of which is directly related to the decision-making power of the state (Skocpol & Amenta, 1986). This authority may vary across the different levels and policy areas.
inherent to a country’s state structure. When decision-making authority is divided, vertically and/or horizontally, this can obstruct the state’s ability to adopt the policies it wishes to. This phenomenon is referred to in the polity literature as institutional fragmentation. Institutional fragmentation and its counterpart, concentration, affect the state’s ability to succeed in enacting welfare state reforms (Rauch, 2005). However, polity structures in terms of concentration of authority are not black and white. The relationships between the different administrative levels of a state can be altered to some degree through actions that impact on institutional fragmentation. Examples of such actions are decentralization or (re)centralization between national level and lower levels of government, and discretion, where sub-national actors are awarded significant authority to implement policies (Rauch, 2005; De Vries, 2000). By increasing or restricting decision-making authority at lower administrative levels, fragmentation within and between policy areas may shift. This means that state capacity can differ between countries with different state structures, and it can alter within a single country over time. Traditionally, in the polity literature, legislative fragmentation has been in focus. There are examples, however, of analyses of other kinds of fragmentation of state capacity. Rauch’s (2005) extended view of fragmentation uses the concept of implementative institutional fragmentation, referring to the vertical division of legislation and service delivery and the horizontal division of implementing actors. Similarly, in this thesis, I view the fragmentation of state capacity from a wider perspective that I call regulatory authority. By this I mean that authority to design and administer policies also considers non-legislative authority to enact such tasks. Thus, regulatory authority is also a form of authority that may impact on the content, delivery structure, and overall translation of legislated policies, or policies that are not adopted through legislation. Regulatory authority, combined with the concepts of decentralization, centralization, and discretion presented above, thus constitutes an institutional tool, and state capacity an institutional perspective, in this thesis. Study III highlights diverging coordination in labour market programs for youth, both between two states and within the states over time, through the analysis of regulatory authority. As study IV shows, organizational variations among Swedish municipalities are made possible partly through the level of discretion afforded to them. This is most evident in the fields of social services and education, but it may also be seen in labour market efforts for persons not eligible for PES programs, or for those receiving social assistance. State capacity and the theoretical tools related to it thus complement the institutional perspective of welfare state regime types by also focusing on institutional variations in authority, within countries.

A central assumption of this thesis is that a number of institutions matter for policy responses toward young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, unemployed. This chapter has outlined theoretical perspectives and tools with bearing on what policies are adopted and how they are administered. Together,
they contribute different perspectives on institutions, from the role of ideas such as social investment, to the welfare regimes and state structures through which such ideas are mediated (see Table 1). Combining different institutional perspectives with varying focal points has advantages when shifting from a broader European perspective to the national and local levels.

### Table 1. Overview of theoretical perspectives by study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim of study</th>
<th>Theoretical perspective</th>
<th>Theories/tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Operationalizing the Ideational content of social investment</td>
<td>Ideational analysis</td>
<td>Ladder of abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The translation of outreach in national agendas on youth unemployment</td>
<td>Institutionalist perspective Welfare state theory</td>
<td>School to work transition regimes Social work regimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Comparing coordination patterns in youth unemployment programs over time in Sweden and the UK</td>
<td>Institutionalist perspective State capacity</td>
<td>Regulatory authority Discretion Centralization Fragmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Patterns of coordination and specialization in Swedish local level work with NEETs</td>
<td>Institutionalist perspective Organization theory</td>
<td>Specialization Coordination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method

This thesis proceeds from a broad European context to the national and finally the local level, each level nested within the prior one. Each level is treated separately in the papers that make up the thesis. Methodologically, this has required the use of different data as well as different methods of analysis for each study. This chapter begins by outlining the overall study design for the thesis and for the separate studies. This is followed by a section on the empirical material used in each study. Next follows a description of the different analytical methods used, and the chapter concludes with a section on methodological considerations.

Study design

A key assumption of this thesis is that institutions matter for the development of social policy, and that institutions vary with contexts. The overall methodological approach applied is therefore one of comparative social policy, comparing policy responses both across and within different contexts in the form of countries in Europe, municipalities in Sweden, and over time. Comparative social policy is here understood as an approach to or method for scientific research. One key aspect that distinguishes studies on social policy from studies on public policy is a focus on the paths of policies that have an impact on citizens’ well-being, and how these policies are implemented (Clasen, 2014).

The boundaries around comparative studies are not entirely clear-cut. As used in this thesis, comparative studies involve the comparison of one or more specific phenomena in two or more contexts, applying a common framework for analysis (Clasen, 2014). While divergences in time or place are part of the basis for comparison, for the researcher it is imperative that the functional equivalent criterion is fulfilled. This means that the entities compared must have enough in common that they are actually comparable. All the studies making up this thesis also apply, to varying degrees, a case study approach. This is perhaps most pronounced in study III, where the countries of Sweden and the UK, as well as the points in time for each program, serve as cases. The comparative case study design is also considered fitting for analyzing changes over time from an organizational perspective (Mills et al, 2012).
The choice of the unit of analysis – whether different periods of time, different countries, or even regional or local level areas – is directly related to the aim of the study. Therefore, as Clasen (2004) emphasizes, any comparative policy study must be transparent about how the units of analysis are conceptualized. In this thesis, the units of analysis range from national agendas and programs to local-level work with unemployed youth. For study II of this thesis, the aim was to understand the translation of ideas into national agendas, and what might make these agendas diverge or converge. A broad national-level comparison was therefore an appropriate choice. The different EU member states are conceptualized as different welfare state regime types, building on systems and structures of policy areas relevant to youth who are, or are at risk of becoming, unemployed, namely: access to and level of unemployment insurance for youth, comprehensiveness of and selection within the education system, extent and establishment of vocational education/training, and the organization and role of social work. Building on pre-existing welfare state typologies, the countries were subsumed under the categories of different regime types. For an analysis of agendas on youth unemployment, EU member states were a straightforward choice as the unit of analysis, as there was an EU-wide call for national agendas in precisely this area.

The aim of study III was to understand if and how coordination might take place under varying configurations of regulatory authority; therefore, two individual countries were compared over time. The unit of analysis is thus dual: two different countries as well as different points in time. The countries are conceptualized as two different state types, but with a number of common denominators. The primary difference in state type that is important for this study regards the dispersal of regulatory authority. Using time as a unit of analysis allowed us to study responses over 16 years, analysing trajectories in program direction and content alongside changes in regulatory authority. The points in time under study are thus the duration of the programs in question and the state of regulatory authority for the policy areas of interest during this time.

In study IV, the aim was to find out how coordination and specialization are part of local-level work with NEETs. The units of analysis are thus municipalities, which are categorized as extreme cases of particularly high or particularly low NEET rates, compared to expected NEET rates. The use of these extreme cases was fitting, given that part of the aim was to try and understand NEET rates when both common structural and individual explanatory factors were accounted for. Our extreme cases were those municipalities where NEET rates were substantively higher or lower than expected based on individual and structural aspects, thus indicating that other aspects (also) matter for explaining the presence or absence of NEETs.

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6 The calculated expected NEET rate is explained further in the next section of this chapter, and outlined in detail in Appendix A.
The first study of this thesis deviates somewhat from the other in terms of methodological approach and study design. As observed by Sartori (1970), concepts can be understood as tools for gathering information; in other words, they function as methodological instruments. Defining central concepts is crucial in comparative research, where conceptual tools need to be well defined and outlined to avoid misgathering of data and assure valid comparisons. In study I, the policy agenda and concept of social investment is therefore thoroughly outlined in terms of its central ideas, and three dimensions of the concept are presented: the temporal perspective, the distributional approach, and policy coherence. Each dimension is also operationalized, exemplifying how the dimensions may be used for comparative case studies. The operationalization presented is therefore broad, requiring adapting and narrowing down in order to be applicable when carrying out a specific case study. The dimensions thereby serve as a tool for comparison in the following studies.
Table 2. Overview of methods per study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim of study</th>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>Empirical material</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Operationalizing the ideational content of social investment</td>
<td>Concept formation</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Ladder of abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The translation of outreach in national agendas on youth unemployment</td>
<td>Comparative case study</td>
<td>YG plans of 19 EU member states</td>
<td>Corpus analysis and quantitative content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Comparing coordination patterns in youth unemployment programs over time in Sweden and the UK</td>
<td>Comparative case study</td>
<td>Policy documents on youth unemployment programs in Sweden and the UK between 1995 and 2011</td>
<td>Document analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV Patterns of coordination and specialization in Swedish local level work with NEETs</td>
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*For study I, there is no empirical material in the traditional sense. Rather, the material being processed is scholarly literature on the content of the concept being studied.*
Empirical material

The type of empirical material in this thesis varies with each study. Given the overall design of the thesis, different data was required for the specific level and policy idea in focus in each of the studies.

In the first study, two different types of data were used. The first pertains to theoretical and conceptual research on social investment and its underpinning ideas. The second was data on programs for unemployed youth in different European countries, used as exemplifying cases for the operationalization of social investment. The cases were selected based on data-gathering from the European research project INSPIRES\textsuperscript{7}, on labour market responses for different groups (including youth) in several European countries.\textsuperscript{8} The cases were also selected to represent a variety of welfare state types, to reflect different types of programs in terms of the policy areas represented, and to capture the varying dimensions of social investment. The cases used to illustrate the variations in social investment come from Sweden, Switzerland and the UK in the areas of social insurance, education and labour market.

For studies II and III, the empirical material consists of national policy documents. Policy documents constitute a particular type of data source, as they are by their very nature political texts. As such they are not subject to any control by researchers in terms of what content they contain and which questions they may answer. Instead, they are written with a specific political intent and with certain recipient(s) in mind. Study II analysed Youth Guarantee implementation plans from 14 EU member states. The implementation plans represent the responses of each member state to the European Council’s recommendation for all member states to develop a Youth Guarantee, and subsequently produce an implementation plan for such a guarantee (European Commission, 2013). The Council recommendation outlined several aspects that the implementation plans were supposed to consider, for instance early efforts such as outreach. A call from the European Council to adopt a specific agenda or implementation plan places significant pressures on member states to adhere. It was therefore necessary to consider to what degree these agendas were substantive implementation plans and to what degree they were not much more than descriptive statements. As it was impossible to ameliorate this issue during the process of data collection, it was dealt with at the analysis stage (see Appendix B). The final sample of 14 national YG implementation plans was made up of the plans from all those countries that had submitted a plan in English. The implementation plans were submitted between the years 2013

\textsuperscript{7} INSPIRES is an EU-funded research project focused on innovative policies for inclusive and resilient labour markets: \url{http://www.inspires-research.eu/home}

\textsuperscript{8} The programs are: the New Deal for Young People in the UK from 1999, the Activity Compensation in Sweden from 2003, the Federal Act on Vocational Education and Training in Switzerland from 2007, and the Job Guarantee for Youth in Sweden from 2007.
and 2016. While the plans differed in length, this was controlled for in the process of analysis, as outlined in the following sub-section of this chapter.

Study III examined national policy documents on programs for unemployed youth. These policy documents outline the regulations, possible legislation, and other guidelines of importance for the administration of these programs. What type of policy documents were relevant, and how many, differed between the two countries. The Swedish programs were the result of legislation, including a bill proposal detailing the aim of, content of, and access to each program. In contrast, the UK only legislates centrally on certain issues, such as unemployment benefits. Labour market programs, on the other hand (as was the case here), were regulated and provided with guidelines for administration and implementation under the purview of the minister of the responsible department (the Department for Education and Employment [DEE], later replaced by the Department for Work and Pensions [DWP]). The empirical material thus consisted of formal guidelines and non-legal regulations for the programs.

The selection and collection of empirical material for study IV used a multimethod approach, with case selection built on a previous, quantitative study. The quantitative study, which used population registry data for the entire Swedish population\(^9\), served as a basis for the selection of extreme cases in the form of 20 Swedish municipalities. Each of these cases was extreme in the sense that its NEET\(^10\) rate deviated from an expected NEET rate for that particular municipality. The expected NEET rate was calculated in the quantitative study.\(^11\) The use of extreme cases in study IV provided us with a sample of municipalities that may have been particularly successful/unsuccessful in their work with NEETs, and could thereby be especially informative. Through a systematic comparison of these extreme cases, we also hoped to gain knowledge that could be of value in considering more typical cases (Patton, 1990). The final sample consisted of 60 interviews in total: 3–5 interviews per municipality from social service units,\(^12\) education administration units and guidance counsellors at upper secondary schools, local labour market units, and local Public Employment Service (PES) offices. While we aimed for each policy area to be represented in at least one interview in each municipality, for some municipalities, an actor from the education or social work area was not identified. This divergence does, however, reflect the variations in the composition of actors working with NEETs in each municipality. Using a snowball-sampling procedure, respondents were located by surveying municipal

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\(^9\) The quantitative study made use of annual anonymized register data from Statistics Sweden on Swedish residents in all 290 municipalities. The data covered the years 2013–2016.

\(^10\) The definition of NEETs is based on established register-based definitions, such as the National Public Employment Service (PES) (2013) and Forslund (2016).

\(^11\) For a more detailed description of the quantitative study, see Appendix A.

\(^12\) The interviews with social services included child/family services, social assistance units, culture and leisure units, and disability services.
websites and contacting actors or units working specifically with NEETs. Then, in 2019, interviews were performed using a semi-structured interview guide. Part of the interview guide focused on the organization of work with NEETs, including questions about the following topics: the main responsibilities of the unit or department, whether there were specific sub-departments or groups within the department or unit, responsibilities and coordination with regard to the municipal activity responsibility, and different forms of cooperation with other actors.

Analysis

In study I of this thesis, the ideas inherent to social investment were operationalized according to Sartori’s (1970) ladder of abstraction. This entails operationalizing a concept in three different steps, or levels: superordinate, medium, and low. The superordinate level departs from the widest scope of the concept, establishing less specific attributes. At the medium level, key dimensions are established, and at the low level, empirically observable attributes are defined. In the study, the attributes established at the lowest level are related to actual cases of programs for unemployed youth in different European countries, with diverging welfare state contexts.

In study II, a corpus linguistics analysis was combined with a quantitative content analysis approach. Corpus linguistics is a form of linguistics analysis that makes it possible to rapidly process large amounts of text, as well as specific sections of large texts, to search for key words and specific terms. It can therefore be particularly useful in the study of policy documents, which are often vast, with one text sometimes covering many different policy areas (Meagher & Wilkins, year; Baker, 2008). Using “outreach” as our target term (meaning the term that we searched for in the policy documents), we performed a concordance analysis using the corpus analysis software WordSmith (Scott, 2016). This meant that outreach and other similar terms were searched for in the YG implementation plan of each country. We then performed a collocation analysis by adding context words indicating the policy areas of social work, education, and the labour market. This meant searching for terms indicating these policy areas within a predefined range of any outreach term (Meagher & Wilkins, 2018). The selected range for study II was quite wide, in order to capture possible involvement of actors and policy areas of interest. In order to assure the validity of the collocation analysis, we thoroughly read through each hit in order to avoid including instances where outreach and any of the policy terms occurred close to one another but were nevertheless unrelated. For a more detailed description of the concordance and collocation analyses, including our selection of search terms and how we distinguished relevant from non-relevant findings, see Appendix B. Due to the variations in length of the YG plans, we calculated a normalized word count, adjusting the
frequency of the term “outreach” to the word count for each plan. The normalized word count did not indicate that the frequency of the term “outreach” increased with the word count of the plans. The results of the corpus analysis were then further categorized and thematized through quantitative content analysis, a method that analyses manifest components of some source of communication (Rose et al., 2015). We categorized the results according to two theoretical categories of outreach: individual/social outreach and service/system outreach. The outreach described for each category was then thematized with the different policy areas in mind, as well as the approach described in the policy documents. The patterns emerging from the content analysis of each country were then analysed in clusters, relating to the tentative youth regime types that served as a theoretical tool for the analysis.

In study III, a quantitative comparative analysis was applied, drawing on the most similar systems design (Anckar, 2008), which means comparing two cases where the dependent variables are similar to a high degree. In the two countries analysed in this study, the level of regulatory authority is quite similar for the policy areas in focus. The regulatory tools differ, however, ranging from legislation to implementation guidelines. The analysis consisted of comparisons along two lines: first, analysing policy documents detailing labour market programs for youth over a period of 16 years, and second, comparing trajectories of coordination within and between the two countries. All policy documents were read in detail, and multiple times, categorizing instances of coordination within or between policy areas for each program. Drawing on recommendations from the OECD, EU and the ILO,13 intra- and inter-coordination were chosen as central categories. Any part of the program content that included efforts with education or social work actors/units was considered inter-coordination. Social assistance or unemployment benefits tied to participation in programs, however, were considered intra-coordination, as were all employment, work, and/or labour market efforts in the program content. Labour market education for example, was categorized as intra-coordination. In addition, any changes in regulatory authority during the years studied were categorized in terms of decentralization/centralization as well as fragmentation of levels of regulatory authority among the three policy areas studied. Coordination type in each program was then analysed in relation to the outline of regulatory authority during that time. The trajectories of coordination over time in each country were also compared and analysed using the theoretical concepts of decentralization, discretion, and fragmentation.

In study IV, the empirical material was analysed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Factor analysis assumes that there are underlying factors responsible for those instances where certain independent variables correlate more strongly with one another than with the other variables in the set. Using

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13 Richardson and Patana, 2014.
an exploratory factor analysis approach enabled us to see patterns or underlying constructs of how and when coordination and specialization were part of the organization structure in local level work with NEETs (Kline, 1994). For the analysis, variables (referred to in factor analysis as items) were selected based on developed indicators of coordination and specialization, grounded in theory. The items selected constituted the model for the factor analysis. To ensure that the model was appropriate for an EFA, the Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistical test was applied. The KMO test measures the proportion of variance that can be explained by one or more underlying factors (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). The KMO test gave a value of 0.672, which indicated that the model was adequate for an EFA. The cut-off point for indicating relevance of a factor was set at 1.0, and the loading threshold for relevant items per factor at 0.4. The analysis provided two relevant factors that together explained 86% of the variance in the model. In the second part of the analysis, the commonalities for each factor were interpreted. This was done based on the relevant items for each factor, leaning on theoretical understandings of coordination and specialization. Part of this process of examining the factors and validating one’s conclusions is to go back to the data set to confirm or reject conclusions drawn based on underlying factors (Kline, 1994). This was done by examining responses for other items in the data set that strengthened the conclusions drawn, or indicated that other conclusions should be drawn.

Central concepts

In this thesis, the concepts unemployed youth and NEETs are used. They have international and supranational definitions. The EU member states have largely adopted ILO definitions for both categories, facilitating comparisons and cross-national understandings of youth unemployment. There are, however, some differences in usage among European countries worth mentioning. They have to do with how the ILO definition of unemployed youth is translated within the national context. For instance, the minimum age for youth unemployment varies somewhat between countries; it is typically the minimum age for leaving school (ILO, KILM, 10th edition). Another issue is whether training at job sites is to be considered employment or not when the trainees are part of a Vocational education and Training (VET) program.

For study II, the term “unemployed youth” is defined in accordance with the ILO definition. This definition has been adopted by the EU and is therefore directly related to the EU recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, which is the focus in study II. According to this standard, unemployed youth

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14 A KMO value over 0.5 is sufficient for a model to be adequate for factor analysis.
are defined as persons aged 15–24\(^\text{15}\) who are not employed, who are able to start work within the next 15 days, and who are actively seeking employment. Since 2006, the definition also includes young people who are part- or fulltime students and looking for work. In study III, youth unemployment, in both the UK and Sweden, is also defined in accordance with the recommended ILO definition (see above). Study III analyses labour market programs spanning the period 1995–2011. During this period (in 2004), Sweden changed its age range for unemployed youth from 16–24 to 15–24, in line with the ILO definition adopted by the EU. In study IV, the focus is work with NEETs in Sweden. NEETs in this study, following the EU definition, are young people aged 16–25 who are neither employed nor participating in any programs of study, whether part- or fulltime (Statistics Sweden, 2021).

**Limitations**

Regarding both the empirical material used for each study and the choice of analytical methods, some limitations need to be addressed. The first study, which serves as a basis for the following three, is not an empirical study in the traditional sense. It aims at a synthesis of the scholarly literature on social investment into three central dimensions, and thus, by necessity, is an interpretive exercise. To demonstrate the relevance of these dimensions and their operationalization into variables, in the study, four empirical cases of policy responses for unemployed youth are chosen to illustrate the variations inherent to the concept. These cases come from different countries and welfare state contexts and represent different types of responses to youth unemployment. They are, however, neither exhaustive in their representation of national contexts and policy areas, nor sufficient in number to draw any general conclusions on what social investment likely looks like in policy responses for unemployed youth. While this can be seen as a shortcoming, the chief purpose of study I was to outline the ideas inherent to a central social policy concept, and to describe how it may be used as a tool in the study of specific policy responses. The cases serve merely as examples of such an exercise regarding policy responses for unemployed youth.

In study II, an apparent limitation in terms of data is that the data set does not include member states that did not submit a Youth Guarantee implementation plan in English, or at all.\(^\text{16}\) This limitation impacts on the usefulness of classifying member states as belonging to a regime type cluster, something that is most evident in the case of Ireland. Being the only country classified as belonging to the Liberal cluster, Ireland was treated as an outlier, given that a

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\(^{15}\) With the following exceptions: 16 or older in Spain, Italy, the UK, Sweden (until 2001) and Norway (until 2005).

\(^{16}\) The UK did not submit a Youth Guarantee prior to its exit from the EU.
single country is not sufficient to draw conclusions of a liberal regime-type agenda. Since then, however, the UK has exited the EU, and so the only member state in the liberal cluster is, in fact, Ireland. This raises questions about how to address issues of representation in further studies concerning EU policies and welfare state types.

In study III, the data consists of policy documents on youth unemployment coming from different countries that have different structures and procedures for regulating such policies. This results in comparing policy documents with different judicial statuses, which also diverge in the precision and detail of the policies they delineate. This divergence, however, is also a consequence of the diverging polity structure of the countries, and as such is an expression of the institutional differences being studied.

Part of the aim in study IV was to analyse the effect of coordination and specialization on NEET rates. The size of the data set did not permit drawing conclusions on causality, which infringes on the ability to fully answer this question. The study does, however, point out relevant correlations in need of further study, which is valuable given the lack of studies that apply an organizational perspective to local-level work with this group. Regarding the analytical method, the use of factor analysis on data with binary variables is not ideal. To ensure the validity of this approach, a polychoric correlation matrix for the selected variables in our model was therefore performed. The matrix was then used for a factor analysis, with the results being roughly the same as the EFA results presented in study IV.

Methodological reflections

The point of departure for each study and for the thesis as a whole is deductive, testing assumptions grounded in theory and prior research. The thesis overall, however, also adopts an exploratory approach, reflected primarily in studies I and IV. In study I, the aim is to better understand the ideational content of social investment: how it can be operationalized and measured, but also how example empirical cases can provide us with tentative ideal types of what different social investment approaches might look like for unemployed youth. In study IV, the organizational principles of specialization and coordination are analyzed through factor analysis, with the aim of exploring possible patterns of these principles in local level work with NEETs. This means that the epistemological stance is not clear-cut, as the deductive approach also has some features that lean toward the inductive. Similarly, the use of qualitative empirical materials such as policy documents and interviews stand somewhat in contrast to the quantitative analysis applied. The focus of this thesis, as reflected in its central research questions is policy ideas and responses, for which policy texts constitute very useful sources of information. They are however, typically considered to be qualitative in nature, as they are texts with
political aim and purpose over which I as a researcher have little control. The
thesis also makes use of varying analytical methods. However, given its wide
scope and the focus on different administrative and government levels, the
analytical methods have been selected to fit the varying focus of each study.
For this thesis, the variations in empirical material and methods of analysis
are pragmatic choices, aimed at strengthening the validity of each study and
of the thesis as a whole.
Main findings

Study I: “Operationalizing social investment: From policy dimensions to ideal types”

Most evaluations of the presence or absence of social investment as a new policy agenda, or even paradigm, rely on expenditure data for certain policy areas treated as fixed categories of social investment, such as education and ALMPs. By contrast, the assertion of this paper is that to understand if and how social investment ideas are present, we first need to delineate the ideational content of social investment and the possible varieties thereof. Many of the policy areas considered to be social investments, such as proactive efforts, quality education, and active labour market policies, are important to the group of young unemployed. In the face of many of the new social risks of a post-industrial society, the design and content of such policies matter greatly. The aim of study I is therefore to unfold the ideas inherent to social investment, and from there operationalize the concept in a way that considers its possible nuances.

In outlining the central ideas of social investment, the study applies the ladder of abstraction and its three levels of operationalization, high, medium and low, as a methodological tool. Leaning on scholarly literature on the concept, including its original developers, the study first defines the overarching concept (high level), then its central dimensions (medium level), and finally the type of variables that could be applied to measure those dimensions (low level). Juxtaposing social investment with the welfare state paradigms of Keynesianism and neoliberalism, the study finds that social investment can be narrowed down to three central dimensions: time, distribution, and coherence.

The first dimension, time, relates to the proactive nature of social investments. Social investment proposes that investments and efforts made now will help pre-empt new social risks, and their consequences, in the future. Developing variables for the time dimension means considering not only when in relation to a social risk a measure enters in, but also whether the measure is short- or long-term. The time dimension can thus be proactive, pre-empting social risks; reactive-bridging, entering in to repair social risks for a short period of time; or simply reactive, entering in to repair social risks without a time limit.
The second dimension, distribution, refers to whether the policy has a wide or narrow scope in terms of whom it is directed toward. This relates to whether the idea is to create equal opportunities or compensate for unequal outcomes. Distribution can be universal, implying equal access criteria for all; compensatory-targeting, where policies are aimed specifically at marginalized or worse-off groups; or non-compensatory targeting, where access is limited but not specifically aimed at marginalized groups/to achieve more equal outcomes.

The third dimension, coherence, regards the breadth of the social investment agenda and the ensuing need for policies that are harmonious and do not create obstacles for one another. The coherence dimension ranges from separation, where policies or actors are split up, or coordination requirements are absent in policy prescriptions; to cooperation, where cooperation is required or encouraged; to integration, where agencies or policies are joined under the same leadership.

Based on these dimensions and their variables, the study posits three ideal types of social investment for youth: strict social investment, where policies are proactive, universal, and coherent; targeted social investment, where policies are reactive-bridging, compensatory-targeting and have a cooperation approach; and reactive social investment, where policies are bridging-reactive, universal in scope, and have a cooperation approach. These results demonstrate not only the inevitability but also the necessity of variation in social investment policies. While strict social investment can be of value given that it equips young people to withstand social risks leading to unemployment, for those who are already unemployed, policies targeted toward this group and policies that support them after social risks materialize are absolutely vital.

Study II: “Reaching without outreaching: A comparative policy study of EU member states policy agenda on youth unemployment”

In 2013, the EU put forward a recommendation for all member states to develop a youth guarantee (YG) that would outline an agenda to ensure all young people a good-quality offer of employment, education, or training within four months of leaving school. Among the guidelines in the recommendation was to ensure outreach as a type of early effort, particularly toward NEETs and young people facing multiple barriers to employment. In this paper we examine how the different member states translated this specific recommendation into policy responses in national YG-agendas. Focusing on three key policy areas for youth, namely, social work, education, and the labour market, we also highlight which policy areas are included in the proposed outreach policy responses. Youth guarantees from 19 countries are analysed and assigned to
five different tentative “youth regimes”: universalistic, employment-centred, sub-protective, post-communist and liberal. These regime types are based on the function and organization of social work, the use of street work, the structure of education and training systems, the state of vocational training, and social security coverage for young people. Our analysis combines corpus linguistics with quantitative content analysis to uncover how the idea of an early effort, such as outreach, is translated into policy responses for unemployed youth.

The results of our corpus analysis show that the mention of outreach in the YG policy agenda was generally quite low, with the exception of Finland, which was a clear outlier with a high degree of outreach work toward youth. When outreach was described, we found that it mainly reflected a so-called “service/system” type of outreach focused on guiding young people who are unemployed, or at risk of becoming unemployed, toward suitable services. By contrast, outreach of the “individual/social” type is characterized by individualized support and taking the young person’s whole life situation into consideration. This type of outreach was only marginally present. Aside from the case of Finland, such outreach occurred in a handful of cases in single countries, rather than within one specific regime type. Our analysis shows the following primary outreach patterns: information-focused outreach, involving social work actors or systems without a “social focus”; community outreach pilots; and the absence of outreach. Information-focused outreach was found in all five regime types and is, as such, the strongest general trend. It mainly involves providing information on labour market, training, or education services through campaigns, online platforms etc. Involving social work systems and actors without a social focus, for example using social insurance-register information to identify young people, occurred primarily in post-communist or southern European countries. Local community outreach pilots and projects occurred (outside of Finland) in a few single cases and in countries within the employment-centred and post-communist cluster. Institutional structures appear to explain much of our results; however, outliers and variations within clusters might be explained by traditions and cultures around outreach and youth work. An inclusion of social work or developing social and individualized outreach have not been effects of these recommendations. Rather, outreach is interpreted quite similarly to other labour market and education efforts for this group.
Study III: “Coordination patterns and institutional settings: A comparative study of labour market programs for unemployed youth in Sweden and the United Kingdom”

Research in the field of social policy coordination has asserted that institutional settings are a contextual factor that impacts on the degree and type of coordination. For groups where multifaceted problems occur, as among unemployed youth, policy efforts from different policy areas may be necessary. Supranational organizations such as the OECD and EU have also emphasized the need for coordination over administrative and policy boundaries. This paper examines the impact of regulatory authority on patterns of coordination over time. Coordination in labour market programs for unemployed youth was studied over a ten-year period in social work, education and labour market policies for unemployed youth in Sweden and the UK. The selection of countries for this case study draws on the literature of comparative federalism. Sweden represents a unitary centralized state, characterized by a central state with law-making power combined with local-level authority to administer and deliver services. The UK represents a regionalized state, also characterized by a central state with law-making power, but combined with devolved regions who also have law-making power, varying between regions and policy areas. Drawing on the concept of legislative authority in the polity literature, territorial levels and instruments of regulatory authority are applied in the analysis of coordination patterns in labour market programs.

The results show that labour market programs in Sweden went from decentralized to centralized at the national level, simultaneously reflecting less coordination between policy areas and strengthened coordination within a policy area. In the UK, intra-coordination was present throughout the time period studied; however, coordination within a policy area was strengthened. Our analysis thus reveals two coordination patterns: one regarding coordination within a policy area (intra-coordination) and one regarding coordination between policy areas (inter-coordination). Concentration of authority is found to coincide with intra-coordination. By contrast, inter-coordination requires similar regulatory authority across policy boundaries, which may be achieved through decentralization or “fragmentation” of authority in the sense that authority is dispersed across several administrative levels. Regulatory authority may in fact be more relevant than power to legislate. An additional implication of our results concerns how unemployed youth are framed as a group. Given that different coordination patterns imply differences in policy areas and actors involved, they may influence how we understand the problems faced by unemployed youth and the appropriate way to address them.
Study IV: “Organization of local level work with NEETs: Specialization and coordination in Swedish municipalities with high or low NEET-rates”

This study analyses the organizational principles of specialization and coordination in local-level work with NEETs. NEET rates in different regions and municipalities in Sweden display substantial variation, as does the character of the underlying problems among this group of unemployed youth. Problems among NEETs are not only diverse but may also be overlapping. Given this complexity, coordination appears as a key aspect in policy responses toward this group. Coordination has been of interest for both policy makers and scholars during the twenty-first century, and often described as a necessity within increasingly specialized public policy organizations. Yet we know little about whether these two organizational principles are part of local-level work with NEETs. We also lack knowledge about the impact of these organizational aspects on varying municipal NEET rates in Sweden. Thus, study IV analyses the occurrence of coordination and specialization in the organization of local-level work with NEETs in Sweden. Theoretically defined types of horizontal specialization and coordination are analysed in the policy areas of education, the labour market, and social work.

The municipalities selected for the study represent extreme cases in which the NEET rate is markedly higher or lower than expected after a number of structural and individual factors are accounted for.17 By surveying municipal websites, actors working directly with NEETs were identified and contacted. Using a snowball-sampling procedure, it was possible to find and contact other relevant actors working directly with NEETs in each municipality. Semi-structured interviews were then performed with actors from the policy fields of social work, education, the labour market, and culture and leisure, and from regional associations for the coordination of rehabilitation measures (FINSAM).

Based on theoretical definitions of coordination and specialization types, indicators for these types were identified, and variables were selected and created from our data set to capture them. The types of specialization and coordination were: coordination across policy areas, coordination through shared workspace, coordination with specialized actors, specialization according to a specific function/task, person-based specialization, and problem-based specialization. Using an exploratory factor analysis, the occurrence of these different coordination and specialization types was analysed with the aim of finding underlying patterns in the occurrence of these organizational features in local-level work with NEETs.

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17 The expected NEET rate was calculated using a quantitative regression analysis. For further details on this analysis, see Appendix A.
The factor analysis results show two patterns of coordination and specialization, connected to the specific policy areas of education and labour market, respectively. While both factors displayed a functional specialization in terms of the legislated responsibility to keep track of and help school dropouts, they diverged in their coordination with social work actors. The education factor displays cross-policy coordination with a range of different social work departments, including disability services, child and family policies, and social assistance. The labour market factor, by contrast, displayed coordination with social work to a much lesser extent, and exclusively with social assistance case workers. Regarding the relevance of specialization and coordination patterns for NEET rates, municipalities with low NEET rates displayed the coordination pattern associated with the education factor to a greater extent.
Discussion

In this chapter, the main results of the thesis are discussed further: first in relation to the ideas of social investment, and then in terms of the relevance of institutions to policy responses. Two emerging themes are also presented: the role of social work and the activation approach. The chapter concludes with a section considering the implications of the results for young people and the thesis’ contribution to the field.

Agendas and responses

This thesis has examined how youth unemployment is responded to, using key ideas from a contemporary and broad social policy agenda (social investment). The dimensions of social investment thus function as a tool for understanding the content and direction of policies for this group. In this section, the three dimensions generated in study I are discussed in relation to the results of the following three studies and what they can tell us about the framing of and responses to youth unemployment, in Europe in general and Sweden in particular.

A reactive timeline

The timeline of social investment is generally described as having a long-term, future-oriented perspective. Through human capital investments in the present, future social risks are at best avoided, or at least people are made better equipped to face them. It is not farfetched to imagine that this could mean very different things depending on what group of citizens and which problems are being addressed. For youth, such investments would reasonably include education efforts, which are also among the most frequently stressed in the social investment literature. As argued in study I, however, this does not suffice as a specific category of policy responses; also, defining all education efforts as social investments is an overly simplistic view of its central ideas. Hypothetically, proactive education measures could be either universal or targeted. In fact, education measures are not necessarily proactive. Results from the empirical studies in this thesis all point toward education efforts for this group being (with a few exceptions) reactive. Targeting education efforts toward
dropouts is demonstrated in the outreach efforts in study II, where the involvement of education in outreach was either targeted toward dropouts or toward NEETs with the aim of guiding them back to education or into work. Similarly, in study IV, local-level work with NEETs in the education sector was mainly focused around the legislated responsibility of the municipalities to keep track of youth not attending upper secondary school. In study III, however, the municipal labour market programs of the 1990s opened the door to the involvement of efforts in regular education and labour market units simultaneously. This disappeared with the centralization of labour market programs for youth in 2007, and the most prominent type of program in Sweden appears to be labour market efforts for youth who are already unemployed.

It is not surprising that labour market efforts generate reactive approaches, as they are an answer to a problem that has already occurred. Even so, the lack of outreach toward at-risk youth focusing on education and/or social problems is troubling, especially given the stated social and education problems among youth who become unemployed. Providing high-quality proactive policies on a broad front, targeting different problems and the groups most at risk, would, however, likely require substantial costs. In line with the ideas of social investment, such costs are described not as increased expenditures, but as investments that will actually be financially beneficial in the long run. But any return on such investments may take a long time. It may also be the case that investments in one policy sector imply benefits in another. In practice, these aspects constitute potential obstacles to broad spending on such policies, particularly where the organization of social policy areas is divided, with separate budgets and relatively short cycles for getting returns on investments. It is also the case that social investments for youth may entail more substantial restructuring and/or further development of different welfare systems in different social policy areas. This would likely be the case for countries that have selective education systems of varying quality and have a weakly organized social work system and/or lack a tradition or history of preventive work toward this group. What this means is that proactive efforts may be costly even when limited to a targeted group or problem, and in spite of the notion of expenditure as investments.

From standardized programs to wide targeting: Variations from the national to the local level

The focus on broad investments, equipping citizens on a broad front, is an aspect of social investment that can be understood as closely connected to the idea of preventive efforts. In the case of youth unemployment, however, targeted responses have been found to be an effective approach, at least regarding (reactive) labour market efforts (Forslund & Liljeberg, 2020).
Youth unemployment as a social problem is extensive and tangible for the wider population and economy. As such, the choice of broad, standardized programs for unemployed youth is to be expected. The question is whether, and to what extent, broad programs are complemented with targeted responses to different sub-groups and related problems? It is reasonable to assume that the presence of such efforts will vary with contexts, as regards both the contextual variation in the type and extent of problems, and the resources available. In all three case studies in this thesis, targeting toward sub-groups of unemployed youth with specific problems was absent. In study III, labour market programs in the Swedish context evolved away from more tailored solutions toward broader, standardized solutions, in line with the equality of opportunity approach of universal policies. Similarly, study II found that the information/service type of outreach dominated, primarily providing information through web pages or service and information centres. This demonstrates efforts to create more equal opportunities through making information and knowledge about services and support widely accessible and available. By contrast, the individual/social type of outreach defined in theoretical terms in study II could be considered a form of more specific targeting. However, it occurred in only a very few instances, in the form of pilots or time-limited projects. The most common type of targeting, evidenced in study II and even more so in study IV, was targeting toward NEETs in the policy areas of education and the labour market. Using NEETs as a category for targeting efforts, however, could be considered somewhat problematic. The added value of the NEET category, including unemployed and inactive young people who are not part of the regular youth unemployment statistics, broadens the group rather than focusing it. We know that NEET as a category includes groups of young people with social problems. However, those problems are quite diverse. In order to facilitate more fitting targeted responses, the NEET category might benefit from further division, or even from being replaced altogether with other categories better reflecting the issues confronted by different groups of NEETs.

Coordinating within or crossing boundaries?

In the literature on public policy and administration, coordination between administrative levels as well as over policy boundaries is portrayed as a necessity in modern, specialized public policy organizations. Likewise, the Swedish government’s official report on inactive youth encourages the involvement and coordination of actors from different policy areas (SOU: 2018). In terms of how feasible coordination is in practice, there may be obstacles to coordination between actors from different policy areas when it comes to setting common goals as well as establishing routes to achieve them. Coordination between actors in the same policy area or as part of a common, established policy path is likely easier (Laegreid et al., 2015). This is illustrated in the
results of study III and IV, where labour market actors coordinated with the social insurance agency (SIA) or municipal social assistance rather than with education or social work actors. It is similarly seen in the amendment to the national legislation on social assistance, making it possible for municipalities to enforce activation for social assistance recipients. However, there were also some results indicating broader coordination across policy areas. Study IV demonstrated coordination across policy areas, including areas of social services beyond social assistance. In Study III, the results showed a somewhat broader design of content in programs for unemployed youth during the 1990s, when the programs were being implemented and delivered at the municipal level. While these results pertain to the Swedish context, they raise the question of whether coordination across policy levels is more attainable at the local level. A related question is whether coordination is always preferable. The trend toward the coordination of labour market programs and unemployment benefits shown in study III indicates an increasing trend toward activation for unemployed youth, the effects of which have been quite discouraging (Kluve et al., 2017). As such, calls for increasing coordination between actors working with unemployed youth would arguably benefit from a distinction between different forms of coordination. Such distinctions could also facilitate an important discussion regarding which constellations and directions of coordination are most important for which groups of unemployed youth.

What institutions matter and how?

The results of this thesis show that some patterns exist in policy responses for unemployed youth according to state and regime type structure. However, the results also reveal great commonalities across regime clusters, and irrespective of state types. Activation and the absence of social work involvement are two patterns that recur in the policy responses studied. While institutional structures and welfare state systems do not seem to impact on these patterns, there is some variation to the patterns. Regarding the absence of social work, the discretion and regulatory authority of local-level actors appear to increase the likelihood of social work involvement in local responses. By contrast, the national labour market responses studied in this thesis lack social work involvement. Social work in European countries is often provided at lower levels, by regions or municipalities (Wollmann et al., 2016). Whether labour market or education actors are active at the local level may thus be important for whether social services are involved or not. In Swedish local NEET work, however, the coordination of social services and labour market units was shown to primarily involve case workers from social assistance units. This indicates that culture and history of work with unemployed youth likely also matters. On the other hand, the municipalities’ legislated responsibility for
dropout in Sweden has involved the education sector in NEET work to a high
degree, along with other social service actors. This may be an indication that
such history and culture also vary with social policy area, and possibly with
administrative level.

Another approach that appears to be more frequent at the local level is tar-
geting. The policy agendas from study II could be considered as an indicator of
targeting, given that individual/social outreach can be understood as a form
of more individualized response. This type of outreach was hardly visible,
with the exception of the outlier Finland. Targeted outreach was found in sin-
gle projects or pilots for local community outreach problems, dispersed among
the different countries and welfare state types. These results suggest that the
administrative level of implementation, and what this implies in different state
types, has some bearing on targeted responses (at least to date). Local-level
targeting of efforts toward youth thus deserves further attention.

The absence of social work

In each of the case studies, the results suggested an exclusion of social work:
from agendas, national policies, and local-level work with unemployed youth.
The exclusion of social work in the national policy plans and programs studied
in this thesis crossed both regime types and state types. One example is in the
translation of outreach in national YG agendas, as examined in study II. Out-
reach as a term is connected to prevention and early response to social prob-
lems and is strongly related to social work practice (Grymonprez, 2016). Re-
sults from study II, however, show an understanding and translation of out-
reach that is detached from the practice of social work, with patterns mainly
involving either education efforts or labour market efforts or both. The focus
on labour market and education efforts is also demonstrated in the later devel-
opments of national policies (in study III) and in local-level work with NEETs
(in study IV). This suggests that youth unemployment is being understood as
a problem of labour market attachment and education level/type, caused by
structural factors such as poor macro-economic performance and strict em-
ployment protection legislations, as well as individual factors such as lack of
experience, mismatch between supply and demand, and low education/skill
levels (Görlich et al., 2013).

As described in Pohl & Walther’s (2007) study of youth transition, re-
sponses to disadvantaged youth (i.e., youth not transitioning easily from edu-
cation to employment) can express one of two opposing assumptions: that
youth are disadvantaged due to their unemployment status, or that they are
unemployed due to their disadvantage. One could argue that policy responses
focusing mainly on raising/redirecting education level and creating new routes
into the labour market for youth are driven by the notion that social problems
are caused or at least exacerbated by unemployment. Concerning social problems as a consequence of unemployment, there is a large body of literature on the scarring effects of long-term youth unemployment: they include family poverty, housing problems, and poor health (Hvinden, 2019). Conversely, there are also young people with social problems who are overrepresented among those who become unemployed (Maguire & Thompson, 2007). This lends little support for the assumption that social problems among unemployed youth, whether they are caused by or are themselves a cause of unemployment, will sort themselves out when a person becomes employed. The lack of involvement of social work actors and efforts beyond financial aid is therefore noteworthy.

It is worth mentioning, however, that while the studies found only marginal involvement of social work beyond social assistance, such involvement as existed was found mainly at the local level, in study IV. As stated in the previous section, the compiled findings rather indicate that aspects of the organizational structure, such as discretion, centralization, and decentralization, are of importance to the involvement of social work. This implies that the organization of social work, and other key policy areas, matter for how they relate to one another, as well as their role in responses for unemployed youth. In addition, a conceivable explanation worth exploring in further studies is whether the lack of social work involvement is part of an institutionalized tendency of youth unemployment policy responses being developed in a certain direction (Pierson, 2000; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). Youth unemployment in Europe has been treated primarily as an employment problem, with the involvement of social services being limited to the provision of social assistance. This implies that reframing and redirecting responses to youth unemployment may require restructuring systems, as well as changing well-established methods and procedures.

The activation trend

The twenty-first century has seen a wide distribution of activation policies in Europe, including efforts aimed at unemployed youth (Clasen & Clegg, 2003; Panican & Ulmestig, 2017). Indeed, in this thesis, activation and individualization appear as recurring features of responses to youth unemployment, from the European to the national and local levels. Similar to the absence of social work, this trend was found to hold true across both state and welfare regime types. Activation policies, however, include a broad spectrum of measures: these can range from supportive services aimed at helping people find employment, to financial incentives such as sanctions or making unemployment benefits conditional, to investing in human capital through education and training (Bonoli, 2010). In studies II and III, employment assistance was a
dominating trend; study III also showed an increasing use of incentive reinforcement. This rather uniform activation pattern is, however, limited to the national level. Between different administrative levels and policy areas within the same country, notable differences can be found.

As shown in study III, the evolution of Swedish labour market policy has been toward increased incentive reinforcements combined with employment support. At the local level, however, study IV shows a greater variation in activation forms. In work with NEETs, local labour market units coordinate with social assistance units, tying together benefits and support for employment. Alongside this development, labour market and education units work together in efforts to help school dropouts find paths back to education or toward employment. This variation highlights differences in activation type according to policy area. In addition, education units coordinate with other social service units such as disability services, childcare services, and social support units. While occurrences of such coordination were limited, they demonstrate a social component to local work with NEETs that is found only in cooperation with education actors. They indicate that there are directions beyond activation in measures and services provided at the local level for unemployed youth.

While regime types seem to have little explanatory value regarding activation, the findings point yet again to the importance of organizational structure. Defining policy problems, as well as designing and establishing policies, commonly take place at higher administrative and governance levels, both national and supra-national. The local level is often (as in the case of Sweden) where social policy is practised. However, depending on what possibilities exist for local levels to interpret and influence the implementation and delivery of social policies, part of the “policy stream” may be somewhat reinterpreted at sub-national levels. In Sweden, for example, the discretion and authority to implement social policies in several areas falls under the purview of the Swedish municipalities. This organizational structure allows local-level actors to further interpret national policies through local guidelines and praxis. Supranational ideas and widely dispersed national activation agendas may thereby vary in practice at lower (regional/local) levels. Given this, there could be substantial diversity surrounding activation in policies for youth within European countries, depending upon the organization of social policies. Studying the organizational structure of social policy areas is therefore important when attempting to understand the range and direction of policy responses toward youth. This is not to dismiss the role of national activation trends, however, particularly in cases where labour market policies are mainly (or wholly) a matter of national policy. In attempts to understand this cross-national pattern, other institutional factors than regime or state type may prove useful. Studying the history and tradition of policies toward unemployed youth might be one way of discovering possible policy paths of responses toward this group and
problem, and could possibly help account for the similarities across regime clusters.

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to gain knowledge about how social policy ideas of the twenty-first century are translated into policy agendas and responses for unemployed youth. Based on studying three social policy sectors, social work, education, and the labour market, youth unemployment appears to be framed and responded to mainly as a labour market problem. It is a catch-22 situation: young people have trouble entering the labour market because they lack work experience. In the policies studied, the solutions offered to this problem are labour market-focused, reactive, broad programs. These broad and standardized labour market responses are examples of policies that mainly lend extra support in what could be considered a standard transition process from education to work. This could be an indicator of so-called “creaming” (Bonoli & Liechti, 2018), whereby responses to youth unemployment are geared toward those young people who are close to the labour market and do not face complex problems and barriers to employment. For youth with complex problems, the studies in this thesis suggest that there exists little in the way of specific, targeted responses or the involvement of actors from other policy areas than the labour market and education. Rather, the results indicate that policy responses are sectorized, and coordination across policy areas is limited.

This brings us to an additional and important conclusion: the lack of social work responses to the specific problem of youth unemployment. The results of this thesis show a consistent absence of social work responses across different state and welfare state types. In the Swedish context, social work is highly specialized, focusing largely on problem areas and groups, such as disability services, substance abuse units, and child and family services. One key issue that prompts contact with social services is when young people (up to age 15) fail to attend legally mandated primary education. The results from study IV, however, did not indicate any coordinated or specialized systematic efforts in the social services for unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 18 (the age of majority). This is in line with the literature on social work organization in Sweden. As a consequence, young people may be left with few options to address social problems connected to their unemployment status. The lack of cooperation with, and involvement of, social work also means that young people are left to be their own case workers: seeking out information, judging their own needs, and tying together responses from different policy areas. It is a demanding task and hard to succeed at for those unemployed young people who are already burdened with complex problems. The lack of organized, coordinated work in social services to address social problems
among unemployed youth may very well stand in the way of their gaining employment. This possible gap deserves further attention in the scholarly literature, in terms of the involvement of social services and how it relates to labour market and/or education responses for unemployed youth, particularly when problems are complex.

Contribution to the field

In this thesis, policy responses for unemployed youth are studied first as ideas, then as practice, from the supra-national to the national and local levels. By studying responses with a broad focus on different policy areas, it provides a perspective on the composition of responses as well as the role of each policy area contrasted against one another. By highlighting several policy areas, including social work, and studying the ideas reflected in responses, the thesis also contributes knowledge about the involvement of social work. By moving from the EU level to national agendas and programs to local level work, the thesis also illustrates the differences and similarities across different welfare state contexts and administrative levels. The results highlight the importance of the organization of social policies, prompting further studies with this perspective in mind.

Another contribution of this thesis is its analysis and use of a contemporary social policy agenda, social investment, as an ideational tool to better understand policy responses for youth. Using the ideas inherent to social investment as an analytical tool allows for a more nuanced understanding of the social investment concept. It also brings up alternative ways in which it may be used as a measurement tool, taking the complexity of the agenda into consideration. Finally, it contributes to a debate on whether social investments are necessarily beneficial for all groups or problems, such as unemployed youth.

The thesis also makes contributions with more practical implications. As highlighted in this chapter, the lack of preventive targeted measures for unemployed youth implies that shifting and/or redirecting policies will entail significant costs. This contributes to a much-needed debate regarding when and where such costs are possible and preferable. Relatedly, there is the question of what categories are most useful in studies of and policies for unemployed youth. Some have questioned the usefulness of the NEET category, for example, in both measuring and designing policies for unemployed youth. With this thesis, I hope to contribute to a debate and further studies on the issue of how policy responses for unemployed youth can better consider the complexity of the issues within this group.
Svensk sammanfattning


Denna avhandling handlar om policys för arbetslösa ungdomar, i Europa generellt och i Sverige specifikt. Syftet är att synliggöra hur policyidéer förstas och organiseras, samt involveringen av policyområdena socialt arbete, utbildning och arbetsmarknad. Detta undersöks genom fyra delstudier, från policy-idéer och agendor på europeisk nivå, till nationella arbetsmarknads-program och slutligen det lokala arbetet med unga arbetslösa i svenska kommuner.

I studie I utforskades policyidéerna i den breda policyagendan ”social investment” som förordats inom EU. Tre centrala dimensioner definierades: Tidperspektivet, fördelningsprincipen och policy-harmonisering. Dessa tre dimensioner förstas som skalar där policys och insatser kan ligga närmre eller längre bort från en social investment agenda. Dimensionerna operationaliserades för att kunna användas som verktyg i avhandlingens följande delstudier av policysvar för arbetslösa unga.

Studie II undersökte hur EU:s medlemsländer uttolkat EU:s rekommendationer för en Ungdomsgaranti, i sina nationella policyagendor. Mer specifikt undersöks hur man översatt EU:s rekommendation om uppsökande verksamhet, vilket i studien förstas som en potentiellt proaktiv insats. Implementeringsplaner för 19 länder analyserades genom corpus-lingvistisk analys samt kvantitativ innehållsanalys. Resultaten visade att medlemsländerna i stor utsträckning uttolkade ”uppsökande verksamhet” som tillhandahållande av lättillgänglig information om stöd och insatser för redan arbetslösa unga. Insatserna var fokuserade på arbetsmarknad eller utbildning, medan socialt arbete var nästan helt frånvarande.

eller lokalt, samt om olika policyområden organiserades liknande i det avseendet. Över tid påvisades också en utveckling i bågge länder, mot ökad koordinering mellan arbetsmarknadsprogram och bidrag. Förekomsten av koordinering med socialtjänst var också begränsat till ekonomiskt bistånd.

I studie IV undersökte specialisering och koordinering som en del av organiseringen av arbetet med unga som varken arbetar eller studerar (UVAS), i svenska kommuner. Detta studerades genom intervjuer med professionella som arbetar med UVAS inom socialt arbete, utbildning och arbetsmarknad i 20 kommuner. Resultaten påvisar ett mönster av koordinering och specialisering i organiseringen av arbetet med UVAS bland utbildnings- och arbetsmarknadsaktörer. Inget sådant organisationsmönster förekom bland intervjuade aktörer inom socialt arbete. Dock visade resultaten att utbildningsaktörerna koordinerade med aktörer från flera olika områden inom socialtjänsten, medan arbetsmarknadsaktörerna endast koordinerade istället med ekonomiskt bistånd.

Genom denna avhandling ställs det sociala arbetet bredvid arbetsmarknad- och utbildningsinsatser och undersöks som potentiellt likvärdigt i sin relevans för detta arbete. Sammanfattningsvis påvisar resultaten att innehåll och administration av policy för unga arbetslösa främst utgörs av insatser som är reaktiva snarare än förebyggande, breda och universella, samt präglade av en koordinering mellan arbetsmarknadsinsatser och bidrag, såsom ekonomiskt bistånd. Ett viktigt och centralt resultat för avhandlingen är frånvaron av socialt arbete. Detta var genomgående i varje studie, och obberoende av institutionella faktorer som välfärds-regim och statstyp. Förekomsten av socialt arbete varierade dock mellan nationell och lokal nivå, där socialt arbete bortom ekonomiskt bistånd framförallt förekom lokalt. Detta tyder på att organisatoriska villkor och strukturer bör behandlas som centrala institutionella förutsättningar när man studerar åtgärder mot ungdomsarbetslösheten och för arbetslösa unga.
References


Appendix list

Appendix A: Multilevel regression analysis for predicted municipal NEET-rates

Anonymized register data for the whole population covering the years 2013-2016, obtained from statistics Sweden was used. NEETs in the data-set were defined as persons aged 16-24, who are Swedish residents and not employed or in education or training, or working or studying to a very limited extent. This definition of NEETs is based on established register-based definitions, for example, The national Public Employment Service (PES) (2013).

The likelihood of being NEET was regressed on a set of independent variables, applying a 2-level random intercept logistics regression model. An analysis was made for each of the four years covered by the data. The independent variables cover: composition of the local youth population, level and structure of labour market demand, and the level and structure of the local supply of education and health services. The random intercepts produced, were the basis for the selection of our extreme-case municipalities. For a more detailed account of the regression analysis, see online appendix for the paper Effective local governance assisting vulnerable groups. The case of youths not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in Sweden (Korpi, Mellberg, Minas & Andersson, 2022)
Appendix B: Definition of search-terms and differentiating between relevant and non-relevant hits

Outreach

Hits for the terms indicating outreach are coded as existing or planned substantial hits, or excluded hits (rhetorical or non-relevant).

**Relevant hits:** Relevant hits are defined as: programs, interventions, methods, collaborations, projects, pilots, and are coded according to whether they are described as existing or planned.

**Non-relevant hits:** Hits are excluded where the context terms: refer to something different than outreach, refer only to cash benefits, occur in different non-related sections/sentences/sub-clauses. Rhetorical descriptions will also be excluded. These are all hits not defined as substantial and non-running-text.

Outreach and social work/education/labour market

Three separate concordance analysis with context-words indicating the policy areas: social work, education & labour market. Non-relevant hits are excluded. Relevant hits are coded according to whether they focus only on the specific policy area or several policy areas including the specific policy area.

**Relevant hits:** Limited to instances where the policy area is represented in a measure/program/policy/policy-package. Instances where the context word refers to what is obviously outreach work, without mentioning the term “outreach”, will be counted.

**Non-relevant hits:** Hits are excluded where the context terms: refer to something different than outreach, refer only to cash benefits, occur in different non-related sections/sentences/sub-clauses. Rhetorical descriptions will also be excluded. These are all hits not defined as substantial and non-running-text.