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Katariina Mertanen

Not a Single One Left Behind
Governing the 'youth problem' in youth policies and
youth policy implementations

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Governing the 'youth problem' in youth policies and youth policy implementations

Abstract

In this dissertation, I scrutinise how the 'youth problem'—young people's unemployment, social exclusion, and marginalisation—is governed in the European Union's and Finland's youth policies and youth policy implementation in Finland. The 'youth problem' as well as young people 'at risk' are constructed as a threat to the unity and prosperity of future life in the workforce and social cohesion. To tackle the 'youth problem', both the EU and Finland have launched multiple policy initiatives and implementations such as short-term projects to get young people 'back' into the workforce and undertake in education and training. These ranges of implementations include EU-wide policy measures, such as the Youth Guarantee and calls in Finland for centralised services for youth guidance and counselling.

In my dissertation, I have analysed both national and EU policy documents along with interviews and observations produced with teachers, other employees, and young people in short-term education programmes in a closed prison, and in two One-stop Guidance Centres for young people. I ask how the 'youth problem' is governed in youth policies and their implementations, and what rationalities are involved in the governing of the 'youth problem'.

This dissertation includes three research articles and a summary report.

As the methodology of this study I developed a discursive reading of policies and their implementations as problematisations. Reading discourses as problematisation draws inspiration from Carol Bacchi, that policies are simultaneous representations of desired futures from the policy maker's point of view and representing a 'problem' that disrupts this desired future. By applying Michel Foucault's theorisations about discourses, power, subjectification, and governing I have been able to study youth policies and their implementations as discursive practices. In youth policies, these discursive practices are legitimised in normative discourses based on political rationalities. Similarly, these discursive practices can be found in policy implementations by offering certain types of subjectivities for those young people they are targeting. Furthermore, these discursive practices in policies and their implementations produce several different 'problems' of young people that carry inherent assumptions about young people's situations, properties, and abilities.

In my results, I suggest that young people are produced as 'at risk' of social exclusion and marginalisation with discourses of employability, precariousness,

and therapisation in youth policies and their implementations. The label ‘at risk’ produces a well-intentioned response, in which governing takes shape in skill-based behavioural training derived from employability and therapisation of youth formal and informal education. These skills include emotional and life-management skills. Discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapisation have a common premise: not being excluded or marginalised are synonymous with signs of visible and measurable activities, such as participating in education and training.

Discourses in youth policies and their implementations both rely on and produce neoliberal political rationality along with paternalistic rationality, which promotes care and control of young people. Although seemingly contradictory, these rationalities work together in a plethora of ways. The arrangement and governing of youth policies and their implementations are constructed in a way in which vast networks of governmental, private and non-governmental organisations come together in short-term programmes and projects offered to young people, and in which young people are positioned as customers and expected to choose ‘right’ options for their situations. Yet, the ways in which young people are governed in these programmes rely on paternalistic rationality through which young people are seen not to be mature and insightful enough to know what is best for them and their future, and thus need strict discipline and guidance to move ‘forward’ in life.

Finally, I conclude in this dissertation, that the whole notion of the ‘youth problem’ is based on the ideal of an economically productive citizen, who through a measurable input during their working life or from education provides continuity for the society as a whole. The notion of young people as a future is not only attached to the future hopes of young people themselves, but rather to the hopes and predictions of a range of governing bodies, such as the European Commission or the Finnish Government. In this way, multiple societal issues including poverty and unemployment are channelled to be young people’s ‘problems’, which can be solved by guiding those young people as individuals. In the governing of the ‘youth problem’ in youth policies and their implementations, young people have mainly instrumental value – their lives and futures are measured in relation to the narrow view of ‘good life’ as productive, obeying, and tax-paying future citizen.

Keywords: youth policy, governing, discourse, ‘youth problem’

Katariina Mertanen

Ketään ei jätetä

”Nuoriso-ongelman” hallinta nuorisopolitiikassa ja nuorisopolitiikan implementaatioissa

Tiivistelmä

Nuorten syrjäytymistä ja nuorisotyöttömyyttä pidetään julkisessa keskustelussa usein yksinä suurimmista yhteiskunnallisista uhista. Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa kysyn, millä tavoin tätä niin sanottua ”nuoriso-ongelmaa” pyritään hallitsemaan Euroopan Unionin ja Suomen nuorisopolitiikassa ja Suomen nuorisopolitiikan toimijoiden säätelemissä implementaatioissa. Näillä implementaatioilla tarkoitan sekä EU:n että Suomen nuorisopolitiikan toimijoiden käynnistämää projekteja, joilla pyritään ohjaamaan, valmentamaan ja kouluttamaan nuoria ”takaisin” yhteiskunnan jäseniksi. Esimerkkinä tällaisista nuorisopolitiikan implementaatioista käytän mm. nuorisotakuun myötä käynnistettyjä Ohjaamo -palvelupisteitä, joissa nuorille tarjotaan moniammatillista ohjausta yhden luukun periaatteella. Kysyn, miten ”nuoriso-ongelmaa” nuorisopolitiikassa ja politiikan implementaatioissa hallitaan, ja minkälaisiin poliittisiin rationaliteetteihin, siis siihen, mitä politiikassa pidetään järkevänä, tämä hallinta kiinnittyy.

Väitöstutkimukseni teoreettisena viitekehyksenä on ranskalaisen filosofin Michel Foucault’n hallinnan analytiikka. Tarkastelen sekä nuorisopolitiikkaa että nuorisopolitiikan käytäntöjä hallintana, jossa diskursiivisesti tuotetaan erilaisia subjektiviteetteja sekä nuorille että nuorten kanssa työskenteleville. Tarkastelemalla tätä hallintaa kriittisesti ja tuomalla esille, mitä yhteiskunnassa pidetään tavoiteltavana ja ”normaalina”, on mahdollista haastaa kyseistä ”nuoriso-ongelmaa”.

Tutkimusaineistoni koostuu nuorisopoliittisista dokumenteista sekä haastattelu- ja havainnointiaineistosta. Keräämäni asiakirja-aineisto koostuu Euroopan neuvoston ja komission asiakirjoista, Suomen lainsäädännöstä, strategioista, mietinnöistä, raporteista ja pöytäkirjoista. Haastattelu- ja havainnointiaineiston tuotin vankilakoulutuksessa ja nuorten Ohjaamo-palvelupisteissä. Analyysimenetelmänä olen soveltanut diskursiivista lukutapaa, jossa luen sekä poliittisia asiakirjoja että haastattelu- ja havainnointiaineistoja ”ongelmien” rakentumisen kautta. Pysin siis tarkastelemaan sitä, kuinka nuorisopolitiikka ja politiikan implementaatiot itse asiassa tuottavat ”nuoriso-ongelmaa”, eivät pelkästään ratkaise olemassa olevia ongelmia.

Väitöstutkimukseni koostuu kolmesta tieteellisestä kansainvälisestä julkaisusta ja yhteenvedosta.

Tuloksissani esitän, että ”nuoriso-ongelma” tuotetaan nuorisopolitiikassa ja politiikan käytännöissä työllistettävyyden, prekaarisuuden ja terapisoitumisen diskurssien kautta. Nimeämällä nuoret ”syrjäytymisvaarassa oleviksi”, voidaan heille kohdistaa erilaisia hyvää tarkoittavia toimenpiteitä, joissa parannetaan nuorten työllistymistaitoja ja itsetuntemusta, jotta nuoret pärjäisivät prekaareilla ja epävarmoilla työmarkkinoilla. Yhteistä edellä mainituille diskursseille on se, että niillä pyritään hallitsemaan nuoriso-ongelmaa yksilöllistämisen kautta: vastuu ”nuoriso-ongelman” ratkaisusta on yksittäisen koulutettavan ja valmennettavan nuoren vastuulla.

Työllistettävyyden, prekaariuden ja terapisoitumisen diskurssit uusintavat uusliberalistista rationaliteettia. Tämä rationaliteetti perustuu markkinaehtoisuuteen: siihen, että sekä nuorten palveluiden järjestäminen että nuorten kouluttaminen, ohjaaminen ja valmentaminen tapahtuvat markkinoiden ehdoilla. Nuoren rooli näissä palveluissa on aktiivinen ja riskitietoinen kuluttaja, joka ikään kuin vapaasti valitsee omaan tilanteeseensa sopivat palvelut. Samanaikaisesti näissä samoissa diskursseissa nuorista tuotetaan ongelmallisia ja impulsiivisia subjekteja, jotka eivät kykene rationaalisesti hallitsemaan itseään, ja joita tulee tämän vuoksi valvoa ja kontrolloida. Tämä paternalistinen rationaliteetti toimii tulosteni mukaan yhdessä uusliberalistisen rationaliteetin kanssa ”nuoriso-ongelman” hallinnassa.

Väitänkin, että ”nuoriso-ongelma” on lähtökohtaisesti kiinnittynyt ajatukseen taloudellisesti tuottavasta kansalaisesta, joka turvaa yhteiskunnan jatkuvuuden. Työelämän ja koulutuksen ulkopuolella olevat nuoret uhkaavat tätä jatkuvuutta, ja tällä uhkalla legitimoidaan tukijärjestelmien verkosto, jossa nuoria valmennetaan, ohjataan ja kontrolloidaan toimimaan ”oikealla” tavalla. ”Nuoriso-ongelman” ratkaisua ei siis haeta yhteiskunnallisista ja rakenteellisista seikoista, vaan sen ratkaiseminen jää yksittäisten nuorten ja heidän kanssaan toimivien hyvää tarkoittavien ohjaajien, opettajien ja valmentajien vastuulle.

Avainsanat: Nuorisopolitiikka, hallinta, diskurssit, syrjäytymisriski

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Helsinki, 21st October, 2020

Katarina Mertanen

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List of original publications

This dissertation is based on following publications:

- I Mertanen, K. & Brunila, K. (2018). Prison Break. Education of young adults in closed prisons—building a bridge from prison to civil society? *Education Inquiry* 9 (2) 155-171.
- II Mertanen, K., Pashby, K. & Brunila, K. (2020). Governing of young people ‘at risk’ with the alliance of employability and precariousness in the EU youth policy steering. *Policy Futures in Education* 18 (2) 240-260.
- III Mertanen, K., Mäkelä, K., & Brunila, K. (2020). What’s the problem (represented to be) in Finnish youth policies and youth support systems? *International Studies in Sociology of Education*.

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1 Introduction: The 'Youth Problem'

Here Beneath the Northern Star

Here beneath the Northern Star
on the highest hill
I look far into the distance
you appear in my dreams again.

Here beneath the Northern Star
the sky is filled with purple
of the sky I create a blanket
to cover myself.

And beneath the Northern Star
I arrive
I depart
and only seen by the Northern Star
I shed a tear for you.

Here beneath the Northern Star
a singer has sorrows
here the melancholic moon
is depressed.

Here beneath the Northern Star
a frost creeps into soul
and by killing feelings
it rips apart one's heart.

And beneath the Northern Star
I arrive
I depart
and only seen by the Northern Star
I shed a tear for you.

Here beneath the Northern Star
on the highest hill
I look far into the distance
you appear in my dreams again.

Here beneath the Northern Star
the sky is filled with purple
of the sky I create a blanket
to cover myself.

(Here Beneath the Northern Star by
Petri Laaksonen, translator un-
known)

The screen is dark, and everything is silent. Slowly, a melancholic folk song “Here Beneath the Northern Star” starts to play, and a vague light appears in the middle of the screen. The scene of a black and grey bog filled with young people stuck in its depths opens to viewers’ eyes: one young man there, holding a bicycle, one young girl holding a baby on her arms. All the young people stare towards the wet and muddy soil with grim and solemn faces. The singing grows louder as a hand appears and pulls a young man in the middle up. He starts to smile while he is pulled out from the swamp, and oversaturated colours fill the screen, then the camera turns towards the blue sky as text runs on the screen: “65 000. Not a single one left behind – Young people’s social exclusion touches the future of all.”



Figure 1. Screenshot from a Youtube video: For Youth, Now!

Above are a description and a screenshot of a video that Finnish National Broadcasting Company YLE launched in 2013 as a part of a national campaign “For Youth, Now!” (Yle Arena, 2013) promoting job creation, especially for unemployed young people, or so-called socially excluded and marginalised young people. The campaign also reinforced a familiar premise that young people’s social exclusion was costly, an imminent threat to society, and thus needed to be taken seriously. It repeated the narrative about young people in need of help and support—stuck, desperate, passively waiting for a hand to reach out and pull them up. Finland as a nation was ‘called in arms’ to prevent this phenomenon of 65 000 young people’s social exclusion, often by using nationalistic scenes such as wide bogs, and national-romantic music and imagery, such as the song “Here Beneath the Northern Star¹”.

¹ “Beneath the Northern Star” is a phrase that is a nationalist staple in Finnish culture. Here Beneath the Northern Star is a book trilogy written by Väinö Linna, describing the Civil War of Finland in 1918, which was one of the most brutal civil wars Europe has ever witnessed. It is also the name of a folk song describing the harsh and cold living conditions of Finland. Also, the Northern Star plays a central role in a fairytale written by one

This video and campaign are commonplace examples of the public perception of the *youth problem* – by which I’m referring to young people’s unemployment, social exclusion, and marginalisation. In this PhD (later referred to as ‘this research’), I researched how in both youth policies and their implementation, the ‘youth problem’ is produced, and how young people labelled as ‘at risk’ of social exclusion and marginalisation are governed. The context of this research is both Finnish and European Union’s (EU) youth policies and Finland’s youth policy implementations.

Youth policy can be defined in various ways. In its wider definition, it generally refers to every branch of policy, including social, education, health, and labour policy, that targets young people with a common goal of promoting and enabling active citizenship among young people (Nieminen & Honkatukia, 2017). However, my research focuses on a narrower definition of youth policy. I understand youth policy as something that both constructs young people as a problem requiring policy and offers policy that then serves to govern youth as a specific group. Through my research, I seek to define a clearer understanding of how the ‘youth problem’ is governed in youth policies. By focusing on this narrower definition, I have analysed those EU and Finnish policies targeting marginalised and socially excluded young people between 15-29 years of age, and in which active citizenship is defined in relation to labour markets (see Fergusson & Yeates, 2014; SWD, 2018).

The context of this research is a situation where in both EU and Finnish youth policies, the ‘youth problem’ began to resemble a public panic after the recession following the 2008 global financial crisis (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020). In the EU, youth unemployment was declared to be a Union-wide emergency, and youth policies in general were brought under more centralised decision-making (Mertanen, Pasbhy & Brunila, 2020a). One example of an EU-wide youth policy initiative which gained a lot of publicity especially in the Finnish press, was the Youth Guarantee (see Chapter 2).

With *policy implementations* in the context of this research, I am referring to various short-term education and training projects and programmes that are put in motion, regulated, or enabled through youth policies governing the ‘youth problem’ (see Brunila et al., 2019a). In the EU, these implementations are put into motion through the EU Commission’s recommendations and the European Social Fund’s (ESF) funding initiatives (see Mertanen et al., 2020a). In Finland, policy implementations include youth services regulated by legislation (Youth Act,

of the main proponents of Finnish Language and Finnish Nationalistic movement in the late 1900th century, Zacharias Topelius. In the fairy tale, Russian soldiers kidnap two children, who find their way back home after years of following the Northern Star every night. Thus, the Northern Star has special significance in Finnish folklore and is often described as the star that is leading Finnish people home since it points always towards North.

1285/2016), such as youth workshops and outreach youth work. In addition, I consider ESF funded services such as One-Stop Guidance Centre Ohjaamo's (literal translation: Steering Cabin) (Määttä, 2018; see also Chapter 2) as youth policy implementations.

What is distinct in both youth policies and their implementation is the sturdy belief that education, guidance, and training of young people would provide a convenient solution for the 'youth problem' and should be both resourced and supported (see Brunila et al., 2016; Lundahl, 2011). Also, in implementing youth policies, young people are referred to mainly in relation to their possible futures (see France, 2007; Nikunen, 2017). Public discussions about young people seem to avoid their present situations: either young people are a source of future worry for 'rest of the society' if they fail, or a valuable future resource worth investing in if they succeed (Wallace & Bendit, 2009). Governing the 'youth problem' examined in this research is thus governing young people's possible futures by simultaneously investing in young people and controlling them.

The abovementioned campaign slogan – 'Not a single one left behind' – has worked as an inspiration and the starting point for this research, initially by raising questions such as *how is it possible to 'leave someone behind' from society*, and *who decides and upon what criteria what it means to belong to society*. Finland is often referred to as an example, a 'model member state' in the EU, both in striving towards to working as a strong influencer in policies for other EU member states, and also executing all the recommendations by the book. Consequently, Finnish youth policy is often raised to the level of 'best practice' in the handling of the 'youth problem' (COM, 2018). Hence, I have studied Finland as a case, because youth policy and its implementation has rarely been scrutinised from a critical standpoint.

I have researched youth policies and their implementations with the theoretical framework of *governing with problematisations* (see Chapter 3). I scrutinise, how the 'youth problem' is produced in policy documents and the everyday interactions in policy implementations. My research questions are:

RQ1: How is the 'youth problem' governed in youth policies and their implementations?

RQ2: Which rationalities are involved in the governing of the 'youth problem' through youth policies and their implementations?

To answer these questions, I conducted three sub-studies published in three research articles, from which this report works as an extended summary. In the first sub-study (Sub-study I) conducted during 2013-2014 as part of the *Youth on the Move* research project, I studied young people's education and training in closed prisons in Finland with my supervisor Kristiina Brunila, who also led the research project. In the sub-study, we analysed both policy documents concerning

education in prisons, and ethnographic and interview data we jointly produced in a prison education programme in Finland. In Article I, in which we reported our findings, we asked what subjectivities were produced for young people in prison education and prison education policy documents. Article I provides the answer to RQ 1.

The second sub-study (Sub-study II) was conducted with Karen Pasbhy and Kristiina Brunila as part of the *Interrupting Youth Support Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability (CoSupport)* research project led by Brunila, during 2016-2018. We studied EU youth policy steering in the European Council's and European Commission's policy documents concerning the 'youth problem'. We analysed policy documents between 2000 and 2016 and published our results in Article II. We argued in that article that financial crisis enabled the implementation neoliberal political rationality as a hegemonic and unquestioned basis in current EU youth policy steering. Article II answers RQ1 and RQ2.

Sub-study III was conducted in 2018-2020 as part of *CoSupport* research project as well. Here, with Kalle Mäkelä and Kristiina Brunila we analysed Finnish youth policies and youth support systems, namely outreach youth work and One-stop Guidance Centres. By analysing policy documents, and ethnographic and interview data from previously mentioned support systems, we asked how the 'youth problem' was produced in Finnish youth policies and youth support systems. We argue in Article III, that the youth problem is produced as part of the conflicting ways of governing: neoliberal and paternalistic. Article III answers RQ1 and RQ2. All research articles are described in detail in Chapter 5.

The variety of the data sets analysed in this research has posed multiple challenges. Thus, formulating a coherent methodological approach has been both vital and challenging in order to 'make sense' to how governing the 'youth problem' happens in various contexts. Researching various contexts and various data sets required me to formulate a methodological framework I have named *discursive reading of problematisations*. Because methodological challenges, considerations and experimentations have become central in the execution of this research, in reporting across the studies I decided to include the following additional research question:

RQ3: What opportunities does discursive reading of problematisations give concerning analysing governing in youth policies and their implementations?

The structure of this summary report is as follows: In Chapter 2, I describe the context of this PhD research, Finnish and EU youth policies, and youth support systems established because of these policies. In Chapter 3, I describe the theoretical framework of governing with problematisations. Chapter 4 describes in detail, the data collection/production, analysis, and questions about research ethics.

Chapter 5 consists of descriptions and summaries of each research article. Conclusions and the results of this research are reported in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 works as an epilogue, in which I summarise my research with suggestions for future research and final thoughts.

2 An Overview of Youth Policies and Youth Policy Implementations in the EU and Finland

To understand and look further into youth policies, it is vital to understand the context in which this research has taken place. Youth policies in Finland and the EU are a result of many policy initiatives and programmes that have evolved over a long period. Youth policies and their implementations are a unique establishment, since they overlap a range of policy areas including social policy, employment policy and education policies (Brunila et al., 2019a,b; Nikunen, 2017; Wallace & Bendit, 2009). Also, the implementation of these policies is executed in multiple projects in networked collaborations and constellations, compared to education systems or social security systems, which are centralised and well-regulated by legislation (Brunila, et al., 2020b; Kurki, Masoud, Niemi & Brunila, 2018; Paju, Näre, Haikkola & Krivonos, 2020).

In the field of youth policy, Finland is working in tandem with global organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the United Nations (UN). Although all these organisations have their youth policy plans and suggestions (see Mertanen et al., *in review*), in this research I have focused on the two most influential and prominent ‘players’ that have affected how Finnish youth policies have been organised. These players are the European Union (EU) and the Finland’s policy making system.

I chose the Lisbon Strategy from 2000 as my starting point for this research, since it introduced Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as the main tool in youth policies. In implementing youth policies, it is difficult to point out one ‘field’ in which youth policies are executed. What is also distinct in youth policies is how they are organised and governed not only as a result of legislation, but as vaguer and hard-to-catch ‘soft governing’. In this chapter, I will map the context(s) of this research – to examine how youth policies are regulated and what their implementations have been in both the EU and Finland.

2.1 Neoliberalisation of youth policies

There is widespread consensus, that the Finnish welfare system is shifting (or has already shifted) from universalistic ideas of redistributive social security towards a market-oriented and neoliberal arrangement (Brunila & Ylöstalo, 2020; Julkunen, 2017; Kantola & Kananen, 2013). I have contextualised this neoliberal arrangement of youth services as *neoliberalisation of youth policies*. In the neoliberalising of youth policies and their implementations, young people ‘at risk’ are considered to be individual customers choosing between services arranged via

networks of multiple public, private and non-governmental organisations (Brunila et al., 2019a, see also Oksala, 2013).

The neoliberalisation of youth policies has its basis in neoliberal political rationality. According to Wendy Brown:

Political rationality is thus the term Foucault uses to capture the conditions, legitimacy, and dissemination of a particular regime of power-knowledge that centers on the truths organizing it and the world it brings into being. But which truths? Not those that it carries on the surface—not, for example, liberty, equality and universality, or even reason d'état, or a free market, or the rule of law. Rather, for Foucault, political rationalities posit ontological qualities and relations of citizens, laws, rights, economy, society and states—qualities and relations inhering in orders of reason such as liberalism, Christianity, Roman law and so on, which may combine awkwardly, nonetheless all become salient parts of that by which worlds are ordered, humans act, and governments rule. (W. Brown, 2015, p. 116.)

Brown (2015) points out that rationalities in policies are not stagnant, and that they cannot be reduced to the surface level of political speeches or outspoken values and goals. In her interpretation of French philosopher Michel Foucault, she suggests that a much more profound understanding of political rationality is something that is so embedded in knowledge and value systems of policies and policy making that it is almost impossible to trace, recognise or even notice. In the case of youth policies and their implementations, it becomes important to ask what are the rationalities that enable and make values and norms in youth policies understandable. Yet, it is also important to note that political rationalities are not unmovable entities. There is not only one rationality at one time. Rather, in youth policies and their implementations there are multiple different and possibly conflicting rationalities in effect, and they often work as hybrids (Bacchi, 2009; see also Dean, 2010; Rose & Miller, 2008).

Neoliberal political rationality has become a global rationality attached to a range of political realms, including youth policies and education, as Fazal Rizvi explains:

The neoliberal imaginary extends this claim [of education's importance as an investment for both individuals and societies] to the requirements of the global economy, as well as to the competitive advantage of individuals, corporations, and nations within the transnational context. In its popular form, it imagines all human behavior to be based on the economic self-interest of individuals operating within free competitive markets. It assumes economic growth and competitive advantage to be a direct outcome of the levels of investment in developing human capital. It suggests

that, in a global economy, performance is increasingly linked to people's knowledge stock, skills level, learning capabilities, and cultural adaptability. Therefore, it demands policy frameworks that enhance labor flexibility through the deregulation of the market, as well as through reform to systems of education and training designed to better align them to the changing nature of economic activity. (Rizvi, 2009, p. 11.)

As Rizvi explains, education is connected to neoliberal imagination through ideas about education as a prerequisite for acquiring human capital, and thus enabling economic growth not only for individuals, but also for society as a whole. Also, in neoliberal political rationality, education is not only seen as a way to simply add human capital for those perceived as being disadvantaged, but also as *an investment* that will both increase profits and reduce costs for society (Sellar, 2013). In relation to Finnish youth policies and their implementation, this idea about social investment is quite prominent, and adding human capital is evident in services provided for young people 'at risk' (see Paju, et al., 2020).

However, youth policies, and especially how they are implemented in Finland, are organised as part of the Finnish welfare state, and they follow some of the main principles of the Nordic welfare state, such as care and equality (Esping-Andersen, 2013; Julkunen, 2017). Yet, their arrangement is more reliant on the vast networks of multiple actors following a tendency in which the public sector arranges itself according to the logic of the markets, individualisation and business-oriented thinking (Brunila et al., 2019b). Following this logic, youth policy implementations as youth support systems are arranged as short-term interventions such as projects and preparatory programmes that are funded by public, private, and third sector (non-governmental organisations: NGOs) (Brunila, 2011; Kurki & Brunila, 2014; see also Ball, 2013a).

The networked structure of different organisations forming (and formed) around specific 'insidious problems', such as the 'youth problem', have been analysed as network governance. In network governance, free, un-hierarchical and innovative collaboration between different sectors, with a special focus on nation-states role as a 'facilitator,' is seen as a way out of rigid, slow, and inflexible forms of 'traditional' policy-making (Ball & Junemann, 2012). However, network governance has also been criticised for shifting responsibility from public actors to the private sector, and dividing responsibility to such intricate and complex networks, that in the case of mishaps and mistakes, responsibility is ambiguous (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Brunila & Ryyänänen, 2017).

These networks of multiple actors and multiple projects have been built upon both EU youth policy steering, and national policy making. Next, I examine in detail how youth policy steering has been formed in EU, and how Finnish youth policies and policy implementations are arranged.

2.2 ‘Soft’ European Union youth policies

Youth policies in the EU have a long history – one of the first youth policy initiatives was formulated in 1988 (Wallace & Bendit, 2009). From the beginning, the EU’s main role in youth policies has focused on enabling mobility through different exchange and student programmes, and youth policies have been mainly tied to education. Notably, the EU has defined its role and mandate with member-states quite narrowly, as Claire Wallace and René Bendit (2009, p. 454) point out: “It is important to remember that the European Commission has no mandate to create a European youth policy replacing national policies – it can only complement them. Youth policy remains essentially a national task.”

This does not mean that EU youth policies cannot influence national policy-making in member states. The policy steering in youth policies works not through parliamentary decision-making or so called ‘hard’ legislation, but rather by so called ‘soft law’ (Alexiadou, Fink-Hafner, & Lange, 2010). Specifically, I am referring to the governing mechanism introduced in the Lisbon strategy called Open Method of Coordination or OMC (CEU, 2000; COM, 2016b). OMC is a governing mechanism that operates outside transnational parliamentary legislation and works by setting mandatory and binding goals for member states. These goals are presented as recommendations, communications and circulations, and each member state can define how these goals are going to be met. In this way, member states are in constant competition and comparison with each other, and some countries (like Finland or Germany) are described as having ‘the best practices’ or as warning examples for others (e.g. Spain or Portugal) (COM, 2018; Simons, 2014). Bettina Lange and Nafsika Alexiadou (2007, pp. 322-323) have described this ‘soft law’ as follows:

Soft law can be distinguished from hard law, the latter being the traditional form for exercising governmental powers. While hard law, such as EC and EU Treaty articles, directives and New Forms of European Union Governance regulations, creates legally binding obligations for member states and individuals, EU soft law, such as recommendations, opinions, reports, joint communications of the Commission and the Education Council, and action plans, is only persuasive. It does not create enforceable legal rights and obligations for EU institutions or citizens.

OMC is the epitome of the ‘soft law’ in the EU. OMC works through specific protocols, which are divided into distinct steps. First, the European Council and European Commission set specific goals for member states. Second, the Council and Commission create tools for evaluating how these goals have been met within a given time frame. Third, some form of platform to disseminate information and experiences is created. In EU youth policies, one of these platforms is the *Youth Wiki* (EACEA Youth Wiki) which collects all European member states’ youth

policies in the same place. Fourth, the Council and Commission draw together so-called best practices based on experiences from member states which are further disseminated. Finally, the OMC recommendations are updated according to past experiences (Lange & Alexiadou, 2007; Rasmussen, 2014).

In the Lisbon Strategy, the decentralised role of the OMC was stressed:

A fully decentralised approach will be applied in line with the principle of subsidiarity in which the Union, the Member States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society, will be actively involved, using variable forms of partnership. A method of benchmarking best practices on managing change will be devised by the European Commission networking with different providers and users, namely the social partners, companies and NGOs. (CEU, 2000, §38.)

Decentralisation is a key feature in OMC and in policies that are disseminated through it. OMC promotes deregulation and bringing public, private and NGOs together to inform and execute decision making (Klatt, 2014). The first sign of youth policies conducted through OMC was the first European Youth strategy launched by the European Commission in 2009 (COM, 2009). In the Youth Strategy, issues such as early school leaving, youth unemployment and social exclusion were named as main concerns for young people in the EU.

Yet, the full force of the OMC was delivered after youth unemployment numbers continued to grow after 2008. The crash of global markets led to a long recession, during which unemployment, especially among young people, skyrocketed in Europe to nearly 23 per cent (EUROSTAT, 2020). The recession and global tendencies of moving low-skilled jobs especially in manufacturing and agriculture to global south and countries with lower production costs, such as India and China, formed a combination in which it became increasingly hard to find employment. This was the case especially for those young people who did not have the qualifications or education necessary to get into blue- or white-collar jobs (Powell, 2019; Waquant, 2008).

This lack of low-skilled jobs also contributed to a situation whereby the formal education sector gained an increasingly significant role in determining routes into labour markets. Not continuing mandatory education was described as ‘early school leaving’ (see COM, 2009; Lundahl, 2011). These ‘early school leavers’ became part of the group of young people labelled as ‘at risk’. The label ‘at risk’ was especially attached to young people not in education or training, or the EU policy lingo, NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) young people. The acronym NEET is commonly used synonymously with ‘at risk’ and interchangeably with labels such as socially excluded or marginalised (Yates & Payne, 2006). The proportion of NEET young people was near 10 per cent at the peak of the crisis (EUROSTAT, 2020). In the EU youth policy, the high number of NEET

young people sparked multiple policy initiatives in the European Council and European Commission intending to reduce the number (CEU, 2008; COM, 2009).

During 2012 and 2013, at the peak of the ‘youth crisis’, the European Commission and European Council introduced the *Youth Guarantee* as the main youth policy initiative directive in every member state (CEU, 2013; COM, 2012). With the Youth Guarantee, the European Commission took the concept of NEET as a way to measure the number of young people seen as ‘at risk’ or as socially excluded and marginalised (Yates & Payne, 2006). To reduce this number, a key premise provided a simple solution: promising, or in this case, guaranteeing, a place in education, employment or training for every young person under 25 years of age who had been unemployed for four months (COM, 2012).

The Youth Guarantee was followed up with ways to direct funds to the countries and regions where youth unemployment rates were especially high. To make this possible, the *Youth Employment Initiative* was introduced as a funding tool for the Youth Guarantee (EU 2016). The purpose of the initiative was to earmark funds for projects that helped individual young people’s participation in training, apprenticeships and employment (COM, 2016a; EU, 2016). The Youth Employment Initiative was especially important in the Finnish context, since it made it possible to establish a network of One-Stop Guidance Centres.

Finland is often referred to as a ‘model country’ in the EU due to its strong record of implementing EU policies ‘by the book’. This includes that Finland was one of the first countries to fully implement the Youth Guarantee to both youth policy implementations and legislation. Although it would be an oversimplification to say that the establishment of the Youth Guarantee in Finland was only due to the EU’s recommendations (as I will explain in more detail in the next chapter), Finnish youth policies are strongly influenced by EU soft governing through the OMC. This forms an interesting contrast to predictions Wallace and Bendit offered in 2009 about the importance of the EU youth policies. They suggested that youth policies would remain an important topic at the EU level, while its relevance in member states’ policies and local policymaking would be insignificant. As they declared: “Whilst not offending any established interests this [soft policymaking] has also meant that European youth policy remains unspecific and ineffectual” (Wallace & Bendit, 2009, p. 456). In Finland this has not been the case and it is an outlier in this sense.

2.3 Youth policy developments in Finland

The history of youth policies in Finland is varied and is influenced by multiple overlapping policy areas. During the early 20th century, youth policy focused mainly on developing and institutionalising youth work as a part of the welfare state’s wider platform of services (Nieminen & Honkatukia, 2017). During the 1970s, youth policy was considered to be the municipalities’ responsibility, and

after the 1980s, an increasing youth representation in public decision making developed in the form of municipal youth committees. During the 1990s, Finland went through a deep depression which elevated youth unemployment to the centre of youth policies (Paju, 2007).

Since joining the EU in 1995, Finland has taken pride in being a small but influential member. The case of the Youth Guarantee is especially interesting, because it showcases the dynamics of national and EU policymaking, and how they are entangled. In Finland, the preparations for the Youth Guarantee started during 2011, after the Finnish Government led by former Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen suggested it as a way to react to the financial crises and youth unemployment (TEM066:00/2011). This model promised a place in employment, education or training after three months of unemployment for everyone under 25 years of age *and* every recently-graduated young person under 30 years of age (Gretschel, Paakkunainen, Souto & Suurpää, 2014). It is no coincidence that the Finnish model was taken as part of the basis in the EU's formulation of the Youth Guarantee (see COM, 2020, p. 6), but with changes in the scope and length of the guarantee (four months instead of three, and applied only to the young people under 25 years of age) (CEU 2013).

Yet, the establishment of the Youth Guarantee is not the only way in which EU youth policies can be seen in the national context. In addition, the EU's 'soft' governing has influenced renewing youth legislation and changing the landscape of youth work and youth support systems. One of the major changes in Finnish youth policies was the renewing of the Youth Act of 2016. The previous (and first) national Youth Act, enacted by the Finnish Parliament ten years earlier in 2006 to replace the Youth Work Act from 1998, focused on ensuring resources for youth work in municipalities. The Youth Act 2006 did not give a detailed description about different forms of youth work, but rather provided municipalities with autonomy to arrange youth services according to local situations. Also, the first Finnish Youth Council (Nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta) was assigned on 1 September 2007 with a goal of producing information about young people's situation and giving suggestions and statements for new legislation concerning young people (Youth Act 72/2006).

The renewed Youth Act of 2016 changed not only the definition of *youth work* from 'strengthening young peoples' active citizenship, social strengthening, supporting independence and growth, and supporting communication between generations' (Youth Act 72/2006, §2) to 'supporting young peoples' growth, independence and participation in society' (Youth Act 1285/2016, §3), but also the recognised forms of youth work. Youth workshops and outreach youth work were taken under legislation. The former is so called workplace simulation, through which young people can practise their skills in a work-like environment and under the supervision of teachers and youth workers. On the other hand, outreach youth work (also known as street youth work) occurs when young people who are seen

as ‘dropped’ or ‘lost’ are searched out and brought ‘back’ to the range of support systems and services (Juvonen, 2014; Vilen, 2018). Also, the Youth Act of 2016 added rights for outreach youth workers to access confidential information from education, healthcare, social, and child protection services. Another notable distinction between these two acts is how the mandatory drug tests in youth workshops can be arranged (Youth Act 1285/2016, § 11, §12, 13, §15).

The governing structure of youth work was also changed. The Youth Act of 2016 replaced the Finnish Youth Council with a multi-professional working group called the National Youth Council (Valtion nuorisoneuvosto) to organise youth work and youth policy implementations in Finland. By writing and establishing nationwide youth strategies every four years, following the measures introduced in the Youth Act 2016, the Youth Council made youth workshops and outreach youth work mandatory parts of municipalities’ youth work. The shift from municipal autonomy to more managed and centralised policy control has been notable.

Changes in national youth policies have not happened in a vacuum but rather occurred as a complex and tangled process through which both the EU’s ‘soft’ governing and ‘hard’ national policy have worked in tandem. The latest example of this is a project that has established One-Stop Guidance Centre Steering Cabins (Ohjaamo), as a part of the national network of youth work initiatives (Määttä, 2018). As a part of the EU’s Youth Employment Initiative (Nuorten työllisyysohjelma) (EU, 2016), Steering Cabins provide individualised guidance and counselling to every person under 30 years of age. Under the same roof multi-professional teams of social workers, youth workers, public employment service agents, public healthcare services, Social Insurance Institution of Finland agents (KELA) and social creditors help young people applying for education or employment and to access the services they need (Määttä, 2018).

As well as in the implementation of the *Youth Guarantee*, Steering Cabins have been built on a model in which several organisations come together to implement policies and practices with a multi-stakeholder model (Gretschel et al., 2014, p.9; MAEA, 2015.) In this research, I have studied this multi-stakeholder model in the framework of neoliberalisation of youth policies and their implementation, or to summarise, as a market-oriented attempt to introduce networks of public and private actors into political institutions’ decision-making processes (see Ball 2013a; W. Brown, 2015; Brunila et al., 2016)

3 Governing the ‘Youth Problem’ – Problematizations, Discourses and Subjectification

The population can only be the basis of the state’s wealth and power in this way on condition [population as a way to ensure economic strength and competitiveness], of course, that it is framed by a regulatory apparatus (appareil) [...]. In short, it requires an apparatus that will ensure that the population, which is seen as the source and the root, as it were, of the state’s power and wealth, will work properly, in the right place, and on the right objects. (Foucault, 2007, p. 69.)

The ‘youth problem’ is depicted in both public and policy discussions as an immediate threat to endangering society’s future. Foucault’s notion about the need for regulatory apparatus ensuring the prosperity of population has been my starting point in researching how the ‘youth problem’ is governed in youth policies and their implementations described in the previous chapter. The regulatory apparatus of networked arrangement of both youth policies and their implementation forms a unique and complex research context calling for a nuanced understanding of how governing of the ‘youth problem’ functions. This governing, as noted in Foucault’s quote, not only aims to ensure that young people are “in the right place, and on the right objects”, but also towards ensuring the continuity of society as a whole.

In this chapter, I will examine how this ‘regulatory apparatus’ works, in the context of this research, and also how it forms the theoretical framework used later in the analysis. First, I will describe the dynamics of governing young people with problematisation. From there, I will move on to describe in more detail the discourses through which the governing of young people takes place—discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapisation.

3.1 Governing of young people with problematisations

I have analysed youth policies and their implementation *as a way of governing young people*. Governing here does not refer to the organisation of government, but rather to multiple ways in which young people *as a population* are controlled (Bacchi, 2009; Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2007). The governing in youth policies is attached to *the normalisation* of certain ways of being and acting in society (see Foucault, 1982; 2010). Norms are upheld and reproduced in part with *disciplinary* power, through which young people are compared and measured against the normative state of being, and are either rewarded or punished for their actions and

behaviours (see Alhanen, 2007; Foucault, 1975), and in part through *governing* with self-governing (see Foucault, 2010; 1982; Rose, 1999).

The ‘normative way of being’ examined in this research is based on a view of ‘productive’ future life for young people as tax-paying and working citizens (see Brunila, Mertanen & Mononen Batista-Costa, 2020a; Paju et al., 2020). There are strong indications that the neoliberalisation of the Finnish welfare state (see Chapter 2) has indeed promoted investing in ‘human capital’ in services targeting young people: Young people are expected to be constantly investing in ‘proper’ skills, proper self-knowledge, proper emotions, and proper physical appearance (Paju et al. 2020, pp. 25-26, see also Sellar 2013). In the context of Finnish youth policies and youth support systems, I consider power as evident in the ways policies establish a set of norms that encourage, push, and seduce people into desired directions—not always through force, but through making people conduct themselves and seemingly ‘choose’ for themselves the ‘right’ way of living and being (Ball, 2013a; 2013b; Brunila & Ylöstalo, 2020; Foucault, 2010; Rose, 1999).

Governing requires knowledge and works through established knowledge about the ‘right’ way of living and being. In other words, to make something governable, that something must be placed in the centre of knowledge production. In policy, this knowledge production is usually focused on the notions of different phenomena and information by the population (Bacchi, 2009; Foucault, 2007). By following the thoughts of Foucault (2010; 1982; 2007), developed further on governing and governmentality by Mitchell Dean (Dean, 2010), and Nicolas Rose and Peter Miller (2008), it can be suggested that governing happens not only through knowledge production per se but through making this knowledge something that people can use in self-governing and self-conducting. This is often described as *conduct of conduct* (see Rose & Miller, 2008). As Carol Bacchi describes: “[...] due to self-regulation, the arm of the government can rest lightly” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 29).

It is important to emphasise here, that young people are not only a target of a vague oppressive regime but rather their identity as members of society and their agency becomes recognisable only within the power relations described above. From this, it follows that young people are not marionettes whose strings are pulled by some malignant governing conspiracy. Rather, in my thinking, governing young people is inherently attached to the idea of freedom. (see Foucault, 2010; Rose, 1999.) By freedom I mean that governing always requires a choice to either accept or reject the ‘normative’ way of behaving, doing, and being to *be* governing (Foucault, 1975). Rose (1999; p.4) describes the relationship between governing and freedom as being elementary: “To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one’s objectives“.

The governing of young people is based on knowledge production *about* young people and about the good and beneficial ways of living for young people to secure their place in future society (Bacchi, 2009; Brunila et al., 2019b; Kelly, 2000).

Knowledge about the issues relating to young people, such as young people's immaturity, unemployment, or dangerous and disturbance-causing behaviour, has been established as an unquestionable and self-evident set of 'truths' (see Brunila et al., 2019b; France, 2007; Kelly, 2000). Realising this aspect is important because it enables us to scrutinise how young people are constructed as *part of the population* in need of specialised support, with their perceived properties, problems, and issues. As Bacchi (2009, p. 25) points out, governing happens through knowledge, through which rules, regulations, and policy implementations happen.

To understand youth policies and their implementation in the context of this research, the analysis of governing as the conduct of conduct is only partially useful since there are multiple modes of power working in a hybrid with governing in policy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Dean, 2010). Although most young people abide by the 'rules' of society, the governing researched in this dissertation is mainly targeting those young people deviating from the norm, and thus are subjected to more disciplinary forms of governing (Bacchi, 2009; Haikkola, 2019). This emphasis on discipline derives from the perception that some sections of the population, such as young people, are just not able to self-govern in a way that is required to keep the population in order and safe. These young people form 'a problem' policies and their implementations are aiming to solve.

In this research, I am scrutinising the governing of young people as *governing with problematisations*, meaning that I have focused on governing that gains legitimisation by depicting young people as 'problematic'. To put into other words, young people are labelled as being in need of guidance and discipline, or as 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'. I have looked more closely into how young people are labelled as 'at risk', 'deviant', or 'vulnerable' in youth policies and their implementation, and how that labelling has become the basis and legitimisation for a plethora of policies and policy implementations I described in Chapter 2.

Constructing 'governable' categories— 'at risk', 'deviant' or 'vulnerable'?

One important aspect of governing young people with problematisations in this research is how 'young people' are constructed as a governable part of the population with certain properties, issues, and problems. Young people are subjected to a plethora of labels, such as 'at risk', 'deviant', or 'vulnerable'. The deviations from a 'normative' life course – finalising education and then transitioning in a straightforward way to employment (see Brunila & Lundahl, 2020; Lundahl, 2011)—is produced as problematic. This risk of young people's unemployment and social exclusion has resulted in labelling young people being 'at risk' and constitutes 'youth problem' policies and their implementation are aiming to solve.

Problematisations that form the basis of governing young people in my research have been threefold. First, how young people are depicted as being 'at risk',

and how this ‘risk’ is managed plays into constructing young people as a governable category. The main source of ‘at risk’ or ‘youth problems’ in the literature is often detected as the mutual issue of a lack of education and ‘having nothing reasonable to do’ (France, 2007; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011). Second, there is a constantly growing demand for special control against youth delinquency drawing the picture of young people as difficult and dangerous, and as a threat to the society that needs to be managed (see Honkatukia, Nyqvist & Pösö, 2006). Third, views of young people as immature, uncertain, and unable to face difficulties and turmoil produce the view that young people are especially vulnerable, and thus in need of governing (Bacchi, 2009; Brunila et al. 2019a; 2019b; K. Brown, 2015).

The first problematisation, a depiction of young people ‘at risk’, is based on the idea of making the ‘youth problem’ a phenomenon that can be detected and measured in a numeric, rational, and seemingly neutral way (see Sellar, 2015). The main tool for constructing young people ‘at risk’ is the statistical category of the NEET young people (see Chapter 2). The use of NEET as a category has been criticised for reducing complex social phenomena into easily defined numeric categories that can be measured and translated into statistics without taking seriously the consequences for young people who are labelled within this category (Kiilakoski, 2016; Yates and Payne, 2006). What I see as important to note when talking about young people ‘at risk’ in a policy context is that NEET young people are often considered to be a homogenous group of individuals so that societal differences such as gender, social class, and ethnicity are neglected (Thompson, 2011, see also Mertanen, Mäkelä & Brunila, 2020b). For example in Great Britain, the Social Exclusion Unit defined ten risk factors for NEET young people: "offending behaviour, substance misuse, health problems and/or disabilities, learning difficulties and/or special educational needs, emotional and/or behavioural problems, school resistance, academic underachievement, being looked after or homeless, being an asylum-seeker or refugee, and having parental and/or caring responsibilities" (Yates & Payne, 2006, p. 337). NEET young people and young people ‘at risk’ are thus used synonymously in the policy context, when young people’s ‘normalised’ way of being in society is to participate to education and swiftly transition to labour markets (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020; see also Välimäki, Kivijärvi & Aaltonen, 2019). Consequently, young people ‘at risk’ form a ‘problem’ for the continuity of economic success in society as well as a problem for young people themselves.

The ‘youth problem’ is not only connected to issues of labour markets or prospects of society. The second problematisation central to the theoretical framework of this research relates to the perceived ‘dangerousness’ and ‘deviance’ of young people (Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Waquant 2008). The worry and fear about the crime and disturbance conducted by young people is not a new phenomenon (Harrikari, 2008; Honkatukia et al., 2006).

Young people, especially young men from either poor or discriminated backgrounds, are often named as a risk for public safety and social cohesion, especially in Anglo-American youth studies (Waquant, 2008). To consider this further, the idea about young people's 'deviancy' is often thought to be a part of 'natural' process belonging to a young age—young people's criminal or otherwise problematic behaviour is viewed as a sign of immaturity that will correct itself due to the process of maturation or 'growing up' (see Honkatukia et al., 2006). This aspect of young people as 'deviant' or 'dangerous' has had varied responses stretching from increasing calls for punitive zero-tolerance policies for so-called anti-social behaviour to the management of young people's behaviour through different rehabilitation programmes (Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017; Wallace & Bendit, 2008). In this research, however, I have focused on how young people's 'deviance' is mitigated and controlled as a part of these rehabilitation and training programmes in prison education.

It is important to note, that youth delinquency is not a major focus in Finnish youth policy (see eg. Harrikari, 2008), which focuses strongly on prevention and early intervention. Young people's criminal actions are dealt with in collaboration with the police, child protective services and social services (Satka, 2011). Punitive criminal sanctions are the 'last resort' evoked when either nothing else has helped, or the illegal act is so severe that other forms of sanction are seen as impossible (see Honkatukia, et al., 2006). Yet, prevalence of youth delinquency in the Anglo-American literature and lack of attention in Finnish policy invites questions about young people in prison in the Finnish context.

As a research context, young people in prison offer a context of the projected worst case scenario for youth at the 'end result' of the 'youth problem'. The main ways of 'rehabilitation' in prisons happen through working², but different education and training projects and programmes are also offered (Brunila, 2013; Koski & Miettinen, 2007; Mertanen & Brunila, 2018). As with other parts of the 'youth problem', education in prison is given high expectations and is proposed as a universal solution for rehabilitation, reducing recidivism and gaining a place 'back' in civil society after incarceration (Koski & Miettinen 2007; Maculan, Ronco & Vinello, 2013; Strategy for Prison Education 2006-2012).

The third problematisation attached to young people is the idea that young people are especially psycho-emotionally vulnerable due to their lack of life experience and perceived personal deficiencies (see K. Brown, 2015; Brunila et al., 2019a; 2016). As a concept, vulnerability refers in its most literal sense to the possibility of being wounded (K. Brown 2015). In our research in the CoSupport

² Most of the prison population in Finland participate into a range of activities during their sentence. These activities consists of work places where inmates perform simple tasks such as maintenance, laundry, or cleaning, and education and rehabilitation projects and programmes (see Koski & Miettinen, 2008).

project, led by Brunila, we have developed a theorisation of *the ethos of vulnerability* in which the vulnerability of young people is taken for granted and works as a basis and legitimisation for the services that young people ‘at risk’ are directed towards (Brunila et al. 2016; 2019a; b; 2020a; b).

Kate Brown describes the concept of vulnerability in the context of British youth services and youth work as follows:

A slippery idea loaded with moral and ethical connotations about deservingness and entitlement, vulnerability is under-researched and highly relevant concept in debates about citizenship and the relationship between individuals and the state. (K. Brown, 2015, p.4).

The idea about the vulnerability of someone as a threshold for deservingness of help and services can be also found in Finnish youth policies and youth support systems (see Mertanen et al. 2020b). In her research with young people’s unemployment services, Lotta Haikkola (2019) noted that those seen as vulnerable in one way or another were taken into the much closer grip of control and surveillance through various support systems targeting young people. This can also be seen in the results of our CoSupport research group:

Based on our results, once young people have been categorised as psycho-emotionally vulnerable, they are expected to absorb how to belong to that particular category, and thus to become submissive to these vulnerabilities. When young people targeted by the support activities act as expected, yet remain unemployed, the problem can easily be reflected back on them. Thus, policies and practices of support systems form a circle where activities can be repeated endlessly because the problem is always to be found in the young person both through legacies from the past and not absorbing the right psycho-emotional orientation for the present and future. Furthermore, the orientation towards psycho-emotional vulnerabilities tends to ignore young people’s capability, political agency, and citizenship. (Brunila et al. 2019b, p. 115-116.)

All aforementioned problematisations – producing young people as ‘at risk’, ‘deviant’ or ‘vulnerable’ form a basis and legitimisation for governing young people. These problematisations enable youth policies and policy implementations to be organised around shared perceptions, or ‘truths’ about young people. These ‘truths’ are produced as a result of discourses circulating in youth policies and their implementations.

3.2 Discourses and subjectification of young people

In my research, I have utilised the concepts of discourse and subjectification in examining the governing of young people. The problematisations attached to young people I examined in the previous section are not ‘neutral’ or ‘natural’, but rather are produced in how young people are talked about and described in policy texts and in the everyday speech of policy implementations. I have studied this use of language with Foucault’s theorisations of discourses and subjectification as a way to produce the said problematisations.

Foucault’s connection between governing and discourses has been essential in my thinking because it has enabled me to look at language as a constitutive and powerful force. Power and language are inherently and inseparably intertwined (Foucault, 1972; 1982). Within the language used in both youth policies and their implementations, it is possible in theory to form an infinite number of statements within the rules of that particular linguistic system:

...a language (langue) is still a system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite [sic] number of performances. The field of discursive events, on the other hand, is a grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated; they may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory, or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping. (Foucault 1972, p. 27)

Language allows the formulation of statements that have a ring of ridiculousness such as “young people should be retired” or “babies can fly before they can walk”. The connection between power and language comes to life in the realisation that only some statements are given a status of ‘the Truth’ (Bacchi & Bonham, 2009; W. Brown, 2015; Foucault, 1972). I am looking at language as a constitutive force in this research, because it arranges how it is even possible to speak about young people. In other words, previously described problematisations about young people ‘at risk’, ‘deviant’, or ‘vulnerable’ have been established as ‘the Truth’ about young people’s social exclusion and marginalisation.

In this research, I have focused on how these ‘Truths’ are produced with *discourses* in youth policies and their implementations. Carol Bacchi (2009) notes that policies are responses to issues that in one way or another disrupt the normative course of life, and in the case of young people those issues are established in part with the understanding and knowledge produced about young people. Discourses are constitutive and normative practices produced in language, and attach to both norms and issues that are breaching those norms, and thus legitimise certain solutions that are understandable in a certain historically and socially constructed situation (Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 2013b; Foucault, 1972). Jean Carabine (2001, p. 274) defines discourse as “...historically variable ways of speaking,

writing and talking about, as well as practices around, an issue. They have outcomes/identifiable effects which specify which is morally, socially and legally un/acceptable at any given moment at a culture.”

Yet, it is important to note that discourses, power, and language cannot be divided into neat reductionistic categories that ‘explain’ the world. Discourses are not simple categories that ‘have power’ nor do they hold identical functions and meanings in different times and contexts (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014; Foucault, 1982; 2010). Therefore, discourses concerning and constituting young people cannot be understood as simply a reflection or mirror for what young people ‘really are’, nor do they determine how ‘authentic’ power relations attached to young people are constituted. Rather, they produce young people as *subjects* with certain properties. This production of young people as subjects I have examined with the help of the concept of *subjectification*.

By subjectification I refer to the process through which young people in various policy texts and everyday speech in policy implementations are produced as *young people* (see Davies et al., 2001). Yet, the process of subjectification does not constitute young people as passive objects. Rather, while discourses simultaneously produce young people as subjects, young people themselves learn to utilise these discourses actively. In other words, in subjectification, young people participate in the production of the same discourses that constitute young people as *subjects* (see Davies et al., 2001; Ikävalko, 2016). Hence, discourses not only constitute and reinforce power relations, but they disturb them as well (Foucault, 2010; Ikävalko & Brunila, 2019).

3.3 Discourses of employability, precariousness and therapisation

In this research, I have analysed how the ‘youth problem’ is produced with overlapping discourses about employability, precariousness and therapisation, and how young people are produced as subjects with these discourses. Next, I will briefly summarise how these discourses have been utilised and studied in previous research, and thus worked as an essential part of the theoretical framework I have applied in my analysis. Later, in Chapter 6, I will explain how my research has contributed to these discussions.

Employability

In youth policies and their implementations relating to the ‘youth problem’, one of the focuses is on enabling and enhancing the ways in which young people find employment. The key discourse in this regard is the discourse of *employability* of young people (Brunila & Lundahl, 2020; Masoud, Holm & Brunila, 2020; Yates & Payne, 2008). Because the ‘youth problem’ is in part constructed as lack of

employment, I have scrutinised how the discourse of employability is produced in youth policies and policy implementations.

Employability can be defined as an ability to move in and within labour markets and is often described as a set of individual properties and skills that enable this movement (Belt & Richardson 2005; Brown, Hesketh & Williams 2003). Employability can be used in the wide or narrow definition. The wide definition of employability refers to a systemic condition that takes both labour market and an individual's situation into account (McQuaid & Lindsey, 2005). This wide definition is often used in research that explores the societal conditions that unemployed young people are navigating. The wide definition of employability is thus rather nuanced. The 'narrow' definition, on the other hand, is referring to employability as an individual's property. In this definition, employability is defined as an individual responsibility, as a character or quality of being employable. This character of being employable is defined in a range of ways, but the things in common seem to be the focus on skills and individual characteristics (see Fejes 2010; Brown et al., 2013).

In youth policies and their implementations, employability is produced as a discourse in relation to employability's 'narrow' definition, since it is the one that is used and is most influential in education policies and practices (e.g. Fejes & Nicoll 2014; McQuaid & Lindsay 2005). For example, in the latest EU youth strategy (COM, 2018), increasing young people's employability is a key goal. The same thing is true with *The OECD Youth strategy*, and the *UN sustainable development goals for youth* (see Mertanen et. al., *in review*).

In this way, employability is used as almost a one-size-fits-all solution to a range of political problems, especially ones concerning marginalisation, unemployment, and social exclusion (see McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Notably, the skills needed and required to work in today's society are not as clear-cut as would seem at the first glance. These skills often include communication and social skills, skills to apply for employment, punctuality, and so on. In addition, these so-called employability skills are vaguer and more related to how individuals are perceived, such as personal hygiene, likability, good attitude, positivity, and willingness to be flexible (see Brown et. al, 2013; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016).

To summarise, the discourse of employability is a rather scattered and complex discourse, that refers to both systemic conditions and individual skills that enable one to enter the workforce. As a discourse, it produces a vague 'employable' subject that is not only skilled enough for the job one applies to, but is also flexible, has good social and communication skills, good attitude, and likability.

The precariousness of young people

In addition to the employability discourse, the 'youth problem' is constructed as a result of the inherent *precariousness* of young people in labour markets. Precariousness here refers to the inherently insecure position of young people in labour

markets, where they are depicted as the ones who have difficulties to get hired and are the first ones let go when difficulties arise (see COM, 2016a; Standing, 2011).

Precariousness as a concept has its origins in religious texts, especially in Catholicism. Its original meaning is ‘received by the grace by prayer³’. Precarity refers from this point of view to the lived insecure existence that is given on the grace of other people. Judith Butler has written about precariousness as a shared ontological condition, that in a similar way to vulnerability, unites all people living on this planet (Butler, 2004). Butler and Athena Athanasiou also consider precariousness as an important concept with the ability to describe hardships and situations certain parts of populations are facing:

[Precarity and precarization] describes that process of acclimatizing a population to insecurity. It operates to expose a targeted demographic to unemployment or to radically unpredictable swings between employment and unemployment, producing poverty and insecurity about an economic future, but also interpellating that population as expendable, if not fully abandoned. (Butler & Athanasiou 2013, pp 43)

This quote from Butler and Athanasiou suggests analysing precariousness as a process from the point of view of governing and power relations (see also Kurki & Brunila, 2014). Donatella della Porta with her colleagues describes precariousness as “connected insecure, volatile or vulnerable human situations that are socio-economically linked to the labour market dynamics.” (della Porta, Hänninen, Sisiäinen & Silvasti, 2015: p. 1). In a similar vein, Guy Standing (2011) has suggested, that precariousness of the workforce is nowadays paving the way for an emerging social class, that is inherently different from ‘traditional’ labour politics. He claims that precariousness in the labour markets is an insidious arrangement affecting all but very narrow and very privileged and highly educated part of the labour force.

Important to note in relation to this research is that young people’s precariousness in labour markets is depicted as more or less a ‘natural’ phenomenon, because young people make their living through part-time and temporary low-skilled jobs to fund their studying (Doherty, 2017; Standing, 2011). But in the same breath, the global financial crisis in 2008 increased the number of young people living in precarious conditions on a global scale (Doherty, 2017; della Porta et. al., 2015; Standing, 2011). After the crisis, the risk of unemployment was re-defined in employment policies from both employee and employer sides (Standing 2011). This risk of unemployment in the post-crisis and post-recession era has affected espe-

³ The etymological origin of precarious or precariousness is derived from Latin *precarious*, “obtained by the grace of others, obtained by prayer”, lat. *Prex* -prayer

cially young people to the point where young people's precariousness in the labour market is taken for granted in a completely new scale and scope (see Mertanen et. al. 2020a).

In the theoretical framework of this research, I looked at the precariousness of young people as a discourse that produces precariousness not only as an individual experience but as a wider societal change and transformation of work in the post-recession world (see Doogan, 2015). In the context of especially EU youth policy, the precariousness of young people is produced *as the risk* that constitutes the 'youth problem', and works as a legitimation for multiple different interventions, policy initiatives, and implementations (see Brunila et. al., 2019a; Doherty 2017). Like the employability discourse, precariousness is premised on the idea that subjects lacking employability are precarious in one way or another in relation to the labour markets and need some type of intervention.

Therapisation of education and training of young people

The third discourse that produces young people as governable subjects in my theoretical framework is the *therapisation discourse*. Therapisation refers to the ways in which language and techniques originating from psychology and psychiatry have become widespread outside their use in a therapeutic setting in Western countries (see Brunila, 2014; Cabanas & Illouz 2019; Rose, 2018; Wright, 2011). In relation to governing the 'youth problem', the therapisation discourse is evident in the way that young people are often referred to not only as precarious or in need of employability skills, but as also needing various psychological interventions (Brunila, Mertanen & Mononen Batista-Costa, 2020a). In this discourse, the focus on young people is from the perspective of defining and enhancing young people's self-esteem in tandem with emotional and social skills, with the premise that problems in these issues are the cause for their distress (Brunila, 2014; Brunila, et. al., 2020a; 2020b).

At the centre of the therapisation discourse is reasoning that to function as a member of society, young people need not only to have enough knowledge and skills to execute and function in the labour markets, but also to have also ability to regulate and monitor self and emotions (K. Brown, 2015; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015). In relation to the 'youth problem', therapeutic interventions, such as projects and programmes aimed at enhancing the emotional skills and self-esteem of young people, are presented as one of the most effective solutions (Brunila & Lundahl 2020; Brunila, 2014).

In the therapisation discourse, the aims and goals are to enhance young people's well-being and capabilities (see Wright, 2011). At face value, these aims and goals are hardly anything that anyone would oppose. In spite of these well-intended aims, this approach to youth policies is criticised for carrying multiple issues, such as making a framework of knowledge produced with psychology and psychiatry dominant in assessing social issues (see Rose, 1998). On this account,

therapisation discourse enables societal and structural issues to be shifted to the shoulders of individuals. As Ecclestone and Brunila claim:

In a context where disengagement, exclusion, and alienation are recast simultaneously as causes, outcomes, and manifestations of psycho-emotional vulnerability, mainstream therapisation presents emotional well-being as a form of social justice in its own right. This updates traditional forms of psychologisation that present societal problems as individual psycho-emotional deficiencies and then offer therapeutic pedagogies to address psycho-emotional aspects of the self and its learning. (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015, p. 601.)

The therapisation discourse offers me a framework, through which it is possible to look at youth policies and their implementations not only through issues of employability and precariousness, but also by detecting how employability and precariousness of young people are depicted in the terms of psychological issues. It enables me to question the assumption behind the subject produced in the therapisation discourse, that the ‘youth problem’ *originates from individual young people’s psychological deficiencies*.

4 Researching Youth Policies and their Implementations

In this chapter, I will outline the methodology and data production of this research. I will describe how I have analysed the ‘youth problem’ in youth policies and policy implementations. Youth policies and their implementations are entwined with multiple areas—to name a few, social policy, education, labour markets, and youth work. At the same time, when I was constructing my analytical apparatus, I used theorisations and tools introduced in youth research, education sociology, and critical policy research. In this chapter, I will first clarify what I understand as *methodology* in more general terms and clarify how the research process itself unfolded. Then, I will describe the data production of policy documents and interview and ethnographic data, including ethical considerations relevant to this research. After describing the data production process, I will describe how I applied a methodological approach of *discursive reading of problematisations* in the analysis.

4.1 ‘Thinking with theory’ as methodological approach

The ‘field’ of youth policies and their implementations is highly scattered, networked, influenced, and guided by a plethora of governing bodies in both the EU and Finland (see Chapter 2). Therefore, it is no surprise that pinpointing one ‘field’ or ‘source’ for acquiring and producing data to analyse is virtually impossible. These challenges are reflected in how the specific topic foci and research contexts have shifted and changed during the seven years of doing this research.

My initial interest in questions of young people’s societal situation and social exclusion originated from my master’s thesis research into an education programme in a closed prison (see Mertanen, 2013). It opened up questions about marginalisation, social exclusion, and especially the focus on young people’s education, guidance and rehabilitation to society from prison. While beginning this research, the prison education context was a familiar starting point, and I explored how getting ‘back’ to society was constructed and with what discourses, both in policy documents and in the prison education settings (Article I). After Article I, I started to work towards researching various types of short-term educational programmes and projects helping young people seen as ‘at risk’ outside prison. However, when doing the initial literature review for this follow-up, I soon realised that in order to understand how different youth education and rehabilitation programmes ‘worked’, I needed a better understanding about how policies regulating these programmes were formed, and that soon became a new focus of the research

(Article II). Finally, after a detour of analysing EU youth policy steering, I got back to my original intention for analysing both policies and their implementations in the Finnish context, but the extensive policy analysis had shifted my perspective from analysing individual discourses towards more nuanced reading (Article III).

As I explained in Chapter 3, the governing of young people is constructed with problematisations of young people ‘at risk’, ‘deviant’ or ‘vulnerable’, and with discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapisation. This conceptual background guided how I approached reading the policy documents, how I analysed the interviews and how I contextualised the ethnographic observation in different policy implementations. This process of doing analysis by reading the theory with the data closely reassembles what Alecia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei (2018; see also Salo, 2015) describe as ‘thinking with theory’. In their formulation, an essential part of conducting analysis is ‘plugging in’ the theory—meaning an ongoing and perpetual practice of reading data with and through the theory, and where knowledge is produced within the limits and interaction between data and theory.

According to this methodological stance follows, it is impossible to separate ‘theory’ and ‘method’, and ‘data’ from each other. Rather, they are intertwined and integrated, and together form a situation where theory enables interpreting the data, and reading the data deepens the understanding of the theory (see Jackson & Mazzei, 2018, p. 1236). Hence, I am not aiming to make a clear separation between data and theory, although later in this chapter, I will proceed to describe the *how* in the analysis in detail.

To conclude, ‘thinking with theory’ takes seriously Foucault’s (1982) notion (and caution) that theory does not provide a clear-cut methodological tool which can be applied to a set of data, and which as an algorithm delivers ‘knowledge’ about the data. To put it simply, data is not a puddle, and the theory is not a bucket. Rather, a theoretical framework highlighting how discourses serve to subjectify young people presents conceptual tools. These tools have enabled the researcher to carve out a partial knowledge about the construction of the ‘youth problem’. In this way, the theoretical framework becomes a practice (Foucault, 1984). Thus, with methodology I am referring to the combination of the theoretical framework and working *with* the data and reading the data through and alongside theoretical framework (see Jackson & Mazzei 2018).

4.2 Multiple data in multiple contexts – policy documents, interviews and ethnographic observations

To scrutinise the production of ‘the youth problem’ in youth policies and their implementations, in my three research articles I developed a methodology I named *discursive reading of problematisations*. Drawing on the theoretical framework I presented in Chapter 3, I scrutinised i) education and training offered to young people in prisons in Article I, and ii) development of youth policy steering by the EU Council and Commission in Article II. And, finally, I asked what problematisations are produced in iii) Finnish youth policies and their implementations (outreach youth work and One-Stop Guidance Centre Steering Cabin’s) in Article III. In all articles, I have analysed policy documents, and in Articles I and III I have also utilised interviews in my analysis. Interviews were produced as part of ethnographic observations, which I have utilised as a background.

The focus in my research articles has been analysing policy documents, but I have also utilised interviews and ethnographic observations to analyse the ways in which policies are put in ‘action’ and how they translate into the everyday lives of young people in different institutional contexts (see Määttä & Erikson, 2018). Next, I will describe in detail the data production, starting with policy documents, then proceeding to the interviews and ethnographic observations.

Table 1. Data analysed in research articles

Article	Policy documents	Interviews	Observations
Article 1	Legislation and preparatory documents (9) Criminal Sanctions Agency’s reports and strategies (5)	3 Group interviews with teachers (2), students (12) and guidance councillor (1) (Mertanen & Brunila) Young adults with criminal backgrounds (50), youth workers (15) (Brunila ⁴)	Two groups in preparatory vocational education programme in closed prison (Mertanen & Brunila)
Article 2	EU Commission policy documents (36) EU Council policy documents (25)	N/A	N/A
Article 3	Finnish youth legislation (7) Finnish Youth Strategies (5) ESF documents (2)	Interviews with youth workers in One-Stop Guidance Centres (4) (Mertanen) Interviews with employees in outreach youth work (Mäkelä ⁵)	2 One-Stop Guidance Centres (Mertanen) Outreach youth work (Mäkelä)

⁴ A detailed description of Brunila’s data production has been published elsewhere (eg. Brunila, 2011; 2013; 2014).

⁵ A detailed description about Mäkelä’s data production has been published elsewhere (eg. Mäkelä & Brunila, *in press*; Mäkelä, Unpublished PhD manuscript: *Neoliberal governing of young people in Finnish youth support systems -Crafting selves in Outreach youth work and Workshop.*)

4.2.1 Policy documents

In all my research articles, policy documents have formed the main body of the data. By *policy documents* I am referring to legislation, preparatory documents attached to legislation and strategies, and surveys that are utilised as a basis for legislation. I also consider the documents produced in EU policy steering, such as the European Council's Conclusions of Presidency and European Commissions communications, recommendations, and staff working documents that are important in the field of youth policies and their implementations. Finally, I have added institutional strategies and curricula to be part of the document data.

In Sub-study I, I focused on both international (UN, EU) and national policy documents regulating prison education. In Sub-study II, I analysed a vast body of EU youth policy documents from the European Council (CEU), European Commission (COM), and the European Social Fund (ESF). In Sub-study III, policy documents consisted of Finnish youth legislation, and documents regulating youth policy implementations.

The reason for choosing policy documents as my main source of data originates from the early realisation, that in order to examine and understand what was done in the training and education programmes targeting young people, I needed to gain an in-depth understanding about the ways in which those same programmes and projects were regulated, shaped and enabled by youth policies.

In this research, policy documents have three 'functions' in relation to analysis. First, in policy documents regulating youth support systems as their implementations, the 'problems' that these implementations are supposed to solve are defined, often in great detail (see Bachhi, 2009). Second, by scrutinising the language used in policy documents to describe both the 'youth problem' and young people, it is possible to detect what discourses were produced (see Foucault, 1982; Youdell, 2010). Third, by analysing policy documents, it has become possible for me to gain more in-depth interpretation from the empirical data, by offering a valuable context about the power relations that both enable and limit the subjectification of young people in 'practice' in youth education and guidance programmes as policy implementations (see Davies et. al., 2001; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Policy documents regulating prison education

In Sub-study I, I found prison education had some unique features compared to 'traditional' education settings. Prison activities are highly legislated and regulated both by international treaties, such as Mandela rules (UN, 2006) and Council of Europe's rules for the treatment of prisoners in Europe (CEU, 2006) and national legislation (Prison Act 767/2004). To understand how the education of young people in prison was presented and legitimised in these documents, I included previously mentioned documents, as well as preparatory documents of the

Prison Act, The Government’s Proposal for Prison Act (HE 263/2004), Constitutional Law Committees answers to this proposal, and Finnish Parliament’s plenary sessions minutes.

Yet, since education in prison is not arranged by the prisons, but as part of the national education establishment (see Article I), I decided to include strategies, surveys, and memos specifically addressing education in prisons. These documents included the Criminal Sanctions Agency’s “Strategy for prison education 2008-2012” and reports, such as “Prisoners in Education” (Koski & Miettinen, 2007). Another report included in the analysed documents was “The Plan of Action for Vocational Education in Prisons”.

In total, these documents included around 500 pages of text. The full list of documents utilised in Article I can be found in Table 2.

International policy documents	National policy documents
Council of Europe’s rules for the treatment of prisoners in Europe (EU) Mandela Rules - The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UN)	Prison Act 767/2004 Government proposal for Prison Act HE 262/2004 vp Government proposal for Prison Act HE 263/2004 vp Parliament minute PTK 149/2004 vp Parliament minute PTK 150/2004 vp Judiciary committee report LaVM 10/2005 vp Committee for Constitutional Law report PeVL 20/2004 vp Parliament minute PTK 78/2005 vp Parliament minute PTK 80/2005 vp Government degree on incarcerations Plan of Action for Vocational Education in Prisons [Vankien ammatillisen koulutuksen kehittämisen toimenpidesuunnitelma] Women to be seen – report [Naiset näkyviksi - työryhmän mietintö] Strategy of Criminal Sanctions Agency [Rikosseuraamustoimen strategiat 2008-2012] Prison Education Strategy [Vankilaopetuksen strategiat] 2008-2012 Prisoners in education -survey [Vangit koulutuksessa -selvitys]

Table 2. Policy documents analysed in Article I

Not a Single One Left Behind

European Commission Communications (COM) and Staff Working Documents (SWD):	Year
Memorandum of Lifelong Learning	2000
Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality	2001
Resolution on Lifelong Learning	2002
Investing Efficiently in Education and Training	2003
Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth: evaluation of activities conducted in the framework of European cooperation in the youth field	2004
Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society	2007
An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities	2007
The council Conclusions on Adult Learning	2008
Strategic Framework fo European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020)	2009
Youth, Investing and Empowering	2009
Social Dimension of education and training	2010
Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: European Contribution Towards Full Employment	2010
Youth Opportunities Initiative	2011
Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe	2011
Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning	2011
2012 EU Youth Report	2012
Results of the first cycle of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field	2012
Joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European Cooperation in the youth field (EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018)	2012
Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes	2012
Recommendation for Establishing a Youth Guarantee	2012
Status of the situation of young people in the European Union	2012
Practical support for the design and implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes	2013
Working together for Europe's Young People	2013
Youth Employment Initiative	2013
EU measures to tackle youth unemployment	2013
Evaluation Toolkit for Youth Guarantee Projects	2014
The Youth Guarantee - an essential investment for the future	2014
Frequently Asked Questions about the Youth Guarantee	2014
The Youth Guarantee - Making it Happen	2014
Memo: The EU Youth Guarantee	2014
Joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European Cooperation in the youth field (EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018)	2015
EU youth Report	2015
No time for business as usual	2015

The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employers Initiative three years on	2016
Investing in Europe's Youth	2016
New Skills Agenda for Europe. Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness	2016
European Council (CEU)	
Council presidency conclusions 2000-2016	2000-2016
Council Recommendation for Establishing a Youth Guarantee	2013
Resolution on Adult Learning: it is Never Too Late to Learn	2008

Table 3. Policy documents analysed in Article II

EU policy documents

In Sub-study II, I analysed the European Council’s and the European Commission’s policy documents focusing on youth policies. Documents from the European Parliament were outside my sample because, as I pointed out in Chapter 2, youth policies in the EU are mainly executed through soft governing, not through transnational ‘hard’ legislation (see Rasmussen, 2013). In 2016, I conducted a search of EURLEX—the public archive of EU policy making and law—with search terms such as ‘youth’, ‘youth policy’, and ‘young people’.

From the results of the EURLEX search, I included all Presidency Conclusions written after the Lisbon strategy 2000 from the European Council. Similarly, from the European Commissions’ policy documents, I included all communications and staff working documents mentioning young people as a part of my sample. I have gathered all the documents I used in the analysis of this sub-study in Table 3. The document page count totals around 4 000 pages.

Finnish youth policy documents

Policy documents in Sub-study III published in Article III consisted of Finnish Youth Acts (72/2006; 1285/2016) and their preparatory documents. I also collected reports from both assemblies of the Finnish Youth Council’s from the years 2007-2015, including Youth Strategies and meeting memos from the years 2006-2018. I included two communications from the Ministry of Employment and Economy (MEE) related to the One-stop Guidance Centres, and the European Social Funds’ (ESF) reports . All these documents can be found in Table 4. All documents were acquired from FINLEX databases, Youth Council’s reports were acquired from ministries public archives, and ESF documents were accessed from [ESF’s public archives](#).

Legislation	Strategies and reports
Youth Act 72/2006 Government proposal for Youth Act HE 28/2005 Youth Act 1285/2016 Government proposal for Youth Act HE 111/2016 Government degree on youth work and youth services 103/2006	Finnish Youth Strategy 2007-2011 [Lapsi- ja nuorisopolitiikan kehittämissuunnitelma LANUKE 2007-2011] Finnish Youth Strategy 2012-2015 [Lapsi- ja nuorisopolitiikan kehittämissuunnitelma LANUKE 2012-2015] Finnish Youth Strategy 2016-2019 [Lapsi- ja nuorisopolitiikan kehittämissuunnitelma LANUKE 2016-2019] Finnish National Youth Strategy 2017-2019 [Valtakunnallinen nuorisotyön ja -politiikan ohjelma 2017-2019] MEAE guidelines for One-Stop Guidance Centre [Ohjaamon perusteet, TEM esitteet 6/2018] ESF-reports of Kohtaamo-project

Table 4. Policy documents analysed in Article III

4.2.2 Interviews and ethnographic observations

In addition to policy documents, I produced interviews and ethnographic data that I analysed in two of the sub-studies. In Sub-study I, about prison education, published in Article I, I conducted semi-structured group interviews with my supervisor Brunila. In Sub-study III, I included semi-structured interviews with personnel from Steering Cabin One-Stop Guidance Centre's to generate my data.

By 'plugging in' the theoretical framework of discourses and knowledge production presented in Chapter 3, I have considered these interviews not as a 'window to 'truths'', but rather as an additional source of knowledge production and discourse tracing in addition to the policy texts. The interviews were not intended to identify 'real' thoughts of individual teachers, youth workers or young people interviewed because from my theoretical standpoint it is impossible to get to 'know' the 'authentic self' of the interviewee (see St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Youdell, 2010). Rather, I followed Bacchi's and Jennifer Bonham's elaboration about analysing interviews in Foucauldian framework:

This particular approach to "subjects" as "in process" makes it possible to treat interviews—or more precisely interview transcripts—as texts. The procedure to deal with these texts involves a form of "de-personalization", or—to put it more positively—a form of politicization of "personhood". To reiterate, we are not concerned with understanding why the interviewee says what s/he says or analyzing the kind of "subject" an interviewee has become. Rather we are interested in mapping the kinds of "subject" it is possible to become. A major purpose of the analysis is to

consider the particular kinds of “subjects” produced within interview settings, while also reflecting on how subject status can be questioned and disrupted. (Bacchi & Bonham 2016, p. 115)

In addition to the interviews, I also conducted a short-term ethnography both in prison education and in the Steering Cabin Guidance Centre. By ethnography, in this research I am referring to the practice of producing multi-sited and multi-voiced data with participant observation (see Lahelma, et. al., 2014; Hakala, 2007). This has meant participating in the activities both in prison education and One-Stop Guidance Centres, taking notes, and having informal conversations with young people, teachers, guidance counsellors, and youth workers. Short-term ethnography works in this research as a way to separate my rather short periods of observation from the more ‘traditional’ ethnography, which usually takes a long period (see Falzon, 2009).

The reason for including data produced with short-term ethnography in prison education is how participating and experiencing the practices in educational settings elaborate and give insight to power relations within the context of the research. Observing and participating in both education and leisure time with students in prison helped with interpreting and noticing how different discourses were ‘materialised’ as everyday interactions and material conditions within the prison as an institution. As Deborah Youdell puts it:

Ethnography is a well-established approach to education research drawing on a range of methods – from observation and interview to the collection of documentary data and surveys – to develop detailed accounts of life inside the context of study. [...] ethnography underpinned by the sorts of post-structural theory [...] has moved away from a concern with authenticity and reciprocity to the foreground the circulation of discourses and their constitutive force, including the ways they constitute particular sorts of subjects, in research encounters, representations and analyses. (Youdell, 2010, p. 75)

By using data produced in short-term ethnography, I have been able to analyse not only interviews as discourses but to gain understanding about how the power relations within those discourses constituted young people as subjects (see Davies et. al., 2001; Lather, 2007). Without seeing, participating in, and experiencing the opportunities and limitations set out by both formal and informal rules and regulations of the institutions I visited, I probably would have interpreted the interviews from a completely different point of view (see Bacchi & Bonham, 2016; Youdell, 2010). My purpose next is to describe the data production in prison edu-

cation and in One-stop Guidance Centre's in a way, that both elaborates the interview process, and provide the reader a better idea about the context of this research, and ethnographic observations.

Interviews and ethnography in prison education

To understand how young people's education in prison was arranged and executed, with my supervisor Brunila we jointly conducted group interviews and participated in classes for two days in a preparatory vocational education programme in closed prison⁶ in southern Finland, during 2012-2013. In the programme we visited, the aim was to offer skills and abilities to apply for vocational education either during the prison sentence or after release. We conducted three group interviews, one with the prison guidance counsellor and teachers of the programme, and two interviews with students.

Access and research in an institutional setting such as prison, is highly regulated both by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019) guidelines and the Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency's policies. To get into a closed prison without committing a crime can be quite challenging—one does not just simply walk to the gates and knock. Permission to conduct any kind of research in a prison must be applied for from the Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency, and to receive the permission, a researcher needs to get an official recommendation from both education administrators and the warden of the prison in question.

We interviewed the prison's guidance counsellor and two teachers from the preparatory education programme in a semi-structured group interview (N 3). We asked open-ended questions about the contents, purpose, and goals of the education programme. We also discussed in detail the student admission process, the role of education in rehabilitating inmates 'back' to society, and challenges and difficulties teachers and guidance counsellor had experienced.

We also conducted two group interviews, one an all-female (N 5) student group and the other with an all-male (N 7) student group, attending the preparatory vocational education programme. Students were aged from nineteen to thirty years, and their educational background was mainly primary education. Some of the students had started vocational secondary education but had not finished it. We asked open-ended questions about their experiences in the education programme, about

⁶ Finland follows the Nordic model of crime prevention and criminal sanctions. This means the commitment to the idea of humane criminal policy, where most criminal sanctions are a different form of fines, house arrests, and community service. Sentencing to prison is rather rare, and Finland has one of the smallest prison populations compared to the rest of Europe (Maculan et al 2014). Also, most prisons in Finland are so-called open prisons, where inmates are allowed to work and study, but must return to the facility every day in an agreed fashion. Closed prison, the prisons we often have in mind with guards all over, high walls topped with barbed wire, metal detectors at the doors, and closed small yards constitute only a small percentage of the whole prison population in Finland.

their plans and about the challenges they had faced during incarceration and in the education programme. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Ethnographic data were produced through observations and writing field notes that were later transcribed into a field diary. For two days, we participated in lessons with students and participated in exercise and outdoor activities with them as well. As an example of the notes I took during those visits, here is a short excerpt from notes after entering the classroom to participate in all-male -groups lessons:

I step into a small classroom. The guard closes the door behind us, and I hear a key turning in the lock. Seven young men are sitting behind their small desks, few of them tattooed from the top of their head to their very fingertips. All are wearing the greenish-grey sweatpants and shirts—prison aesthetic at its best. I have just stepped into a budget version of the tv-series OZ, where the harsh metal cages and bulletproof glass doors are replaced with flaking plaster on the ceiling and grey curtain draping on the top of the barred window. Classroom walls are covered with paintings and pictures, some of them are cars and planes cut from magazines; some of them are painted with bright finger paints. Next to the door is a cupboard, almost covered under a bright green cardboard sheet. On the sheet, I see a grid drawn with a black Sharpie, with names and dates and colourful glittering flower stickers. I'm later told, that these stickers work as a form of reward for good behaviour" (Excerpt from field notes)

Interviews and observations in One-stop Guidance Centre's

Interview and ethnographic data for Article III were produced in two Steering Cabin service points during spring 2016. One Steering Cabin was situated in Southern Finland, in a large city in the Helsinki metropolitan area, and another was in a semi-large city in Northern Finland. Both Steering Cabins were located in the central parts of their cities, and both emphasised that their location was essential for their work. Guidance Centres needed to be situated in places where young people already moved, so that the threshold to 'pop in', as one employee told me, would be as low as possible. Both places offered services in public healthcare, social work, public employment office, local youth work, and in the case of the northern city, an outreach youth work was also present. In addition to these services, both Cabins ran a small café for young people.

Interviews and ethnographic observations were conducted during spring 2016. To gain access, I contacted the directors of these Guidance Centres via email and presented my research overview and asked if I could conduct research in their establishments. I got swift responses from both places giving me permission to visit, and conduct interviews. The Southern Steering Cabin allowed me to have a full access to interview staff members and young people and to make general observations. The Northern Steering Cabin on the other hand did not want their staff

and especially young people to be disturbed with interviews, so we agreed to a tour around the place, and then for conducting an interview one of their staff members.

I interviewed three staff members from the Southern Steering Cabin, and one staff member from the Northern Steering Cabin. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions about the practices of the Guidance Centres, issues that they helped young people with, and the purpose and goals of their work.

In addition to interviews, I followed and observed the guidance conversations with young people in the Southern Steering Cabin. I originally would have liked to record the conversations with a tape recorder, but the employees did not see that as a preferable idea, so I recorded them in shorthand instead. At the Northern Guidance Centre there was a policy of not permitting outsiders in guidance situations to protect young people and ensure the confidentiality of the conversations, so there I was only able to interview an employee.

Ethical considerations

‘Thinking with theory’ or ‘plugging in’ is not only a methodological stance towards research, but it is also a profoundly ethical choice. In my research, I have approached ethical issues not only as a procedural measure to protect the people participating in my research, but rather as a communal consideration, in which I as a researcher am as much a part of the production of the ‘youth problem’ as any policy text or guidance programme (see Cannella & Lincoln, 2018, pp. 176-177). By taking seriously Foucault’s claim about language as constitutive, as a researcher, I am part of the power relations and knowledge production. In my analysis, I have taken inspiration from Clifford Christians’s notion about *ethics of being*, where research subjects are not abject information sources or biological mass, producing talk for me to record, transcribe, and then to analyse (Christians, 2018, p. 161). This has meant in practice that I have taken into account power relations between me and people I have interviewed and observed, power relations intertwined and reproduced in the institutional settings I have entered, and power relations carried by me being a researcher with the legitimisation of the university and research community behind me (see Foucault, 1982; Honkatukia, Nyqvist & Pösö, 2003; Lather, 2009).

Researching with young people, especially in institutions such as prisons raises multiple ethical dilemmas, and considerations. Young people ‘at risk’ are often considered to be especially ‘vulnerable’ (see Brunila et. al., 2019b) and in need of a special kind of protection. Also, institutional settings such as prison can be seen as a totalising institution that is structured around strict rules, timetables and hierarchies (see Foucault, 1975; Ward & Bailey, 2013). Ethics of being in the context of this research has meant sensitivity to power relations within the interviews and observations and being sensitive towards the people participating in the research

(see Christians, 2018). The main ethical dilemmas with interviews and observations conducted in this research include questions of voluntary participation and consent to the research; confidentiality and anonymity; and power relations between researchers, teachers, and students.

Regarding the procedural point of view for Sub-study I, we followed guidelines of researching institutions by the *Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK; 2019)*. We applied for proper research permission, and to ensure the voluntary participation and consent, we signed data consent forms with all interviewees. In the One-Stop Guidance Centres, the permission to conduct interviews was received by directors beforehand, and I received verbal consent from participants. Both in prison and the Steering Cabins, the purpose of the research was carefully explained, and the participants' ability to either decline to be interviewed or observed or to excuse themselves from the interview was emphasised.

A more complex question about the consent to conduct the research concerns the prison as a totalising institution with social hierarchies, historically formed conventions, and power relations (see Foucault, 1975; Honkatukia, et. al., 2003). Even though we stressed the voluntary nature of participating in research, and the opportunity to withdraw at any given moment, it is possible to question whether the consent to participate in the research was voluntary. Prison as an institution relies on constantly monitoring and controlling the movements of people (see Foucault, 1975; Ward & Bailey, 2013), and according to my understanding, the young people who participated in the education programme did not have the option to leave the classroom. This restriction of movement and sense of helplessness was something that I also experienced very strongly during the participation in classes in prison. I had a sense of complete inability to control movement inside the prison. All doors were locked, and even using the bathroom without someone opening the door, then locking it and opening that back up afterward was impossible.

The second ethical question concerning confidentiality and anonymity, was not that much of an issue in Steering Cabin Guidance Centres since I chose not to ask for personal details from the young people I interacted with. I asked the Guidance Centre employees about their positions and their fields of expertise. For both young people and to employees I gave my personal information if they wished to contact me later. However, the issue with confidentiality and anonymity in prison was a lot more difficult and nuanced question. Difficulties derive from the fact that the prison population in Finland is very small, around 3000 people per year, from which only around 300 are women (Statistics of Criminal Sanctions Agency, 2015). To protect the anonymity of the students, we were mindful of asking detailed questions about students' personal information, background, or schooling history. We also were very careful when publishing excerpts from interviews in Article I and categorised or deleted any information that could have made students recognisable. Restraining from collecting detailed background information was a

conscious decision to both ensure the confidentiality of the interviews and observations, and to create an atmosphere in which students could trust that we were not interested in sensationalising their lives or experiences (see Lather, 2009).

The third ethical issue with our data production was power relations. In both prison and the Guidance Centres, interviews and observations were produced as a guest. This was tangible especially in prison, because it is an extremely hierarchical organisation, in which everyone has their 'own' place in the everyday functions (see Foucault, 1975; Ward & Bailey, 2013). As researchers, we did not 'fit' into existing structures, but soon realised that we were positioned to being in the somewhat awkward position of authority: Teachers asked us about our views and treated us as if we were aware of everyday issues and practices in prison, and students reacted to us and our questions with understandable friendly suspicion. We found ourselves at the same time treated as evaluating and monitoring eyes and also were constantly monitored by both teachers and prison staff who were always present in the classroom for security reasons. The only times we were able to talk with young people in prison without guards or teachers present were during breaks in the prison's inner yard. In the Steering Cabins, there was a similar dynamic, but due to the more open structures and atmosphere, it was not as notable as in prison.

Power relations in both interviews and ethnography have been widely analysed and problematised (see Ikävalko & Brunila, 2019; Hakala, 2007; St. Pierre & Pillow 2000; Youdell, 2010). By 'plugging' in the theoretical framework to data production, I cannot claim a position of 'knowing better' or 'giving voice' for anyone (Alcoff, 2009; Lather, 2009). By refraining from the search for 'authenticity' in interviews and observation, it has become possible to focus on *what is said* instead of asking *who is speaking* or *what do the speakers 'truly' mean* (see Bacchi & Bonham, 2016; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). This does not mean that I consider interviewees to be unwitting or non-autonomous actor at the mercy of different discourses or power struggles. It is important to note here, as Rose (1999) emphasises, power relations and governing does not render its targets powerless. In the case of the interviews conducted during this research, interviewees not only expressed the discourses (see Foucault 2010), but indeed questioned and disrupted them as well.

4.3 Discursive reading of problematisations

My formulation of the methodology developed in this PhD is line with analysis as *thinking with theory* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2018). This means in practice, that I have scrutinised the abovementioned data through and with the theoretical framework of governing with problematisations presented in Chapter 3. Here, following Foucault's (1982) notion, I want to emphasise that a theoretical framework is not

something I apply to practice as a researcher, but rather it *is* practice (Jackson & Mazzei, 2018, p. 1236).

I have analysed youth policies and their implementations with a *discursive reading of problematisations*. The aim of the discursive reading I have applied in my work is, as Stephanie Taylor explains, to

[...] identify patterns of language and related practices and to show how these constitute aspects of society and the people within it. Ultimately such an analysis draws attention to the social nature and historical origins of the world ‘out there’ which is generally taken for granted. Controversy is basic to this form of discourse analysis because it involves the study of power and resistance, contests and struggles (Taylor, 2013, pp 9).

In short, discursive reading of problematisations has enabled me to ask what options and constraints are embedded in discourses in both youth policy texts, interviews and observations, and in what systems of thought these discourses can become ‘the truth’ about young people and their conditions (see Foucault, 2010; Ikävalko & Brunila, 2019; Taylor, 2013).

In practice, I have analysed how young people are described in policy texts and talked about in the interviews and observations produced in policy implementations (see Bacchi & Bonham, 2014; 2016). As Taylor (2013; p. 9) writes: “It is through language, for example, that certain things or people are either categorized together or separated out as different, and through language that value is attributed or denied. This is particularly evident when language is used to classify and categorize for official purposes.”. Here Taylor (2013) is elaborating in plain terms Foucault’s notion of the constitutive nature of discourses (Foucault, 1972).

Approaching discursive reading of problematisation from three directions

During this research, I have applied discursive reading(s) in all three sub-studies: scrutinising prison education in Article I, analysing EU youth policy steering in Article II, and analysing Finnish youth policies and their implementations in Article III. Although discursive reading connects all three sub-studies of this dissertation, the approaches and application of discursive reading of problematisations have changed and evolved. In this section, I will both elaborate on how discursive reading of problematisations was applied in each sub-study, and also offer a view into how this reading has developed over time.

In Article I, Kristiina Brunila and I asked how young people studying in prison were governed through discourses of employability and therapisation. We scrutinised how these discourses constituted power relations and subjectivities in prison education. In other words, we were interested in the kinds of language used in

describing the prison education system in policy texts, and what kinds of subject were available for young people in prison education practices.

In practice, this meant first reading the policy documents through several times and collecting together sections describing education in the context of prisons, descriptions of the aims and goals of prison education, and depictions of inmates as students. After this, we repeated this process with our interviews, after which we started the actual analysis. During the analysis, we read chosen pieces of text while keeping in mind the literature about the discourses of employability and therapeutisation, and we started to collect together the ways in which these discourses were present (articulated in the same way or differently or challenged) in our data. Finally, we analysed what the differences and similarities were between the ways in which the aforementioned discourses were produced in policy documents, and in our interviews.

To summarise, in our analysis we paid special attention to where distinctions between prison and so-called civil society were drawn (see Foucault 1975). We identified how both documents and interviews described the measures that enabled students in prisons to get ‘back’ to ‘civil society’. By doing this, we looked at the prison as the representation of ‘the other’, of the place that was used to define the qualities and borders of society.

For Article II, with my other supervisor Karen Pashby and Brunila, we analysed how discourses of young people’s precariousness and employability were produced and had developed in EU youth policy steering. The starting point in this sub-study was a realisation that occurred during a preliminary reading of the latest EU policy documents written in 2016: in both the EU Council and EU Commission policy documents discourses of employability and precariousness of young people were an unquestioned assumption behind the ‘youth problem’.

To understand how the ‘youth problem’ was constructed in EU policy documents, we needed a way of discursive reading that enabled us to trace how discourses of employability and precariousness of young people had become ‘the Truths’. We took inspiration from Foucault’s formulation of genealogy as a way of studying and tracing how discourses emerge and evolve through time (Foucault, 1984). We followed Carabine’s (2001, p. 276) suggestion of becoming interested in searching for the emergence and legitimisation of discourses at particular historical moments—in this case with changes and shifts in the political arrangement in EU due to the Lisbon strategy in 2000, and global financial crises in 2008 and the mass unemployment and recession that followed.

Our analysis started, as mentioned earlier, by defining that discourses of employability and precariousness of young people as ‘taken for granted’ in the latest policy documents. We also were aware, due to extensive literature reviews, that the Lisbon strategy and the introduction of the OMC worked as a changing point in EU policy steering in general (see Chapter 2), forming a practical beginning for

our actual analysis. The analysis itself required extensive reading of the documents and collecting together all sections in which young people were mentioned. During this process, we also conducted word searches in policy documents with queries such as “young people”, “youth”, and “youth policy”. This helped us to ensure that we had captured all occasions mentioning young people in the text.

After this initial collection, we narrowed down our data by including only the sections that described the ‘youth problem’. After this, we built a timeline from sections that were left in our data, and the actual tracing of the discourses could begin. During this process, we noted how discourses of employability and precariousness were produced in the Lisbon strategy and how they quite drastically changed from being marginal discourses, to becoming much wider in scope after the 2008 crisis. Also, during our analysis we noticed how discourses shifted again in around 2014. To summarise, this way of discursive reading of the construction of the ‘youth problem’ enabled us to show changes in discourses in terms of how they became constructed as a response to an uncertain and volatile period of global financial turmoil.

In Article III, with my colleague Kalle Mäkelä and supervisor Brunila we analysed both policy documents and interview and ethnographic data produced in outreach youth work by Mäkelä (for Mäkelä’s data production, see Mäkelä & Brunila, *in press*). Conducting analysis similar to that used in Article I could have been possible, but during the analysis in Article II it was clear, that by following and tracing only a few discourses in the data, many nuances and issues were left unexamined. To resolve this issue, we started to formulate a new kind of discursive reading inspired by Carol Bacchi’s (2009) WPR (What’s the Problem Represented to Be?) policy analysis. We applied Bacchi’s approach not only to the inquiry about policy texts, but also to the analysis of both policies and their implementations. Consequently, in this sub-study we decided to focus on both policies and their implementations as *problematizations*.

In the analysis, similar to that in the previous two sub-studies, first we collected all sections in text describing young people from the policy documents. After that, we also looked at how young people were described in the data produced in our interviews with employees at the outreach youth work and One-stop Guidance Centres. Narrowing down the interviews in this fashion was done separately. I focused on the data from the One-stop Guidance Centres and Mäkelä looked at his data from outreach youth work. We decided to focus on the interviews with youth workers and employees at the Steering Cabin service points because they were the ones making decisions about what constituted problems worthy of intervention in their work.

After this, we brought our data together, and started the analysis. During our reading of the data, we asked what the issues that *stated as problems* in policy texts were, and *what solutions* were offered to solve these problems. Then we asked *what was assumed about young people* in these problem representations.

From the interviews, as we did with policy texts, we looked at the sections of the interviews in which youth workers and employees described the problems young people faced, and the societal meaning of their work. We then scrutinised the offered solutions and assumptions about young people as well. In this way, we were able to conduct a discursive reading of *both* policy text and the interviews without ‘locking’ ourselves into a pre-determined discourse.

5 Research Articles

In this chapter, I will briefly present and summarise the three research articles that constitute this research. In all of the research articles, I am looking at the construction of the ‘youth problem’ from several contexts and points of view.

Article I, written as a report of Sub-study I, focuses on the education of young people in prison and examines how discourses of employability and precariousness produce employable citizens who can get ‘back’ to civil society after incarceration. In Article II, discourses of employability and precariousness in EU policy steering are scrutinised. Article III focuses on how the ‘youth problem’ is produced in Finnish youth policies and youth policy implementations.

5.1 Education of young people in closed prisons

In Sub-study I, published in Article I, my supervisor Brunila and I scrutinised young people’s education in prison. Prison is often described as the ‘final station’ of social exclusion of young people, and education is given a special role in ‘solving’ this problem through teaching life management, employability, and emotional skills (see Koski & Miettinen, 2008; Maculan, et al., 2013).

In this article, we studied education and training of young people in closed prisons in Finland. We took Foucault’s (1975) notion about prison as something seen outside ‘civil society’ as a starting point in our analysis. Education in prisons is often presented as a universal solution to bring people in prison ‘back’ to society, enabling inmates to continue their life as full citizens (Maculan et. al., 2013). Thus, education is seen as something, that reduces recidivism and helps with issues such as unemployment, marginalization, and social exclusion (Costelloe & Langelied, 2011; Koski & Miettinen, 2007).

In Finland, prison education consists mainly of vocational education, short term courses and programmes aimed at teaching narrowly-defined sets of skills, and the most relevant in terms of our study is preparatory vocational education (Koski & Miettinen, 2007). Unlike most European countries, in Finland, local educational institutions are responsible for arranging education, not the prisons (Holford, Milana & Špolar, 2014; Koski & Miettinen, 2007). Due to economic austerity policies, reduced resources in both prisons and education institutions have led to a situation in which education in prisons in Finland is arranged more and more with different NGOs and short term projects funded with both public and private funding, alongside EU funding from programmes such as Leonardo da Vinci, and Lifelong Learning (Costelloe & Langelied., 2011; Hawley, Murphy, & Souto-Otero, 2013; Kurki & Brunila, 2014).

We looked at how discourses of employability and therapisation were produced in both policies and practices regarding prison education. By analysing both ethnographic and interview data with both national and international policy documents regulating prison education, we argued that discourses of employability construct prisoner-student subjects as flexible and adaptable individuals who can enter the workforce after release (see Dahlstedt, Fejes & Schönning, 2011). Employability refers to individuals' responsibility to make oneself *employable*—or in other words, enabling them to move in and within labour markets. In the context of prison education, we defined employability as a discourse that focused on constructing individual characteristics and skills of being employable (Brown et. al., 2003; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005, see also Chapter 3.2.1).

In addition to the concept of employability, we scrutinised prison education from the viewpoint of therapisation. We defined therapisation as a set of practices that originated in psychiatry and psychology, which were used to enhance self-esteem, emotional skills, and learning, and social skills (Brunila & Rynnänen, 2017; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; Siivonen & Brunila, 2014). We connected both therapisation and employability discourses to the construction of an individual who can flexibly and aptly move in labour markets and regulate their feelings and emotions.

We applied the ideas of Michel Foucault about discourses, power, and governing (see Chapter 3) in our analysis. By applying discursive reading that emphasised the analysis of power relations in policies and practices in prison education, we were able to ask *what kind of subjectivities were available for young people in prison education*. In more detail, we were interested in *how these power relations shaped subjectivities that enable young people in prisons to transition 'back' to 'civil' society*. Data analysed (described in more detail in Chapter 4) in this article included policy documents, interviews with prison educators and staff, and ethnographic data produced in both female and male study groups (Mertanen & Brunila, 2018).

In our findings, we were able to track how discourses of employability and therapisation both in prison education policies and in prison education produced specific subjectivities for young people studying in prison. We concluded that when considering prison education, these discourses reproduced the idea of prison and its inmates as something outside 'civil society', and that education's purpose was to promote the inclusion. This view was produced both in the policy documents and the interviews with teachers and students. Subjects constructed in employability discourses especially emphasised self-responsibility and acquiring formal educational qualifications; the therapisation discourse focuses on emotional literature and 'the right' ways of thinking. As we wrote in our conclusions:

In conclusion, the alliance of employability and therapisation in education enables one to look at prisoner-students as citizens in-the-making.

Through education, work, and training they have to embrace the ideal subject of the ‘free’ citizen who walks through life with a basket filled with choices made without the annoying inconvenience of everyday material realities, inequalities, and obstacles. But somehow surprisingly the education made possible for them is not about mathematics or literature, but is an ambivalent combination of goal-setting, freedom of choice, and self-responsibility mixed with self-esteem enhancement, and thinking and emotional skills. In practice, the result for an individual seems to be a ‘vicious circle’ where the young person is constantly obliged to improve their ever-fragile and vulnerable selves in perpetual competition with others and thus the risk of not achieving what is expected is ever present. (Mertanen & Brunila, 2018, p. 168)

In this article, we were able to answer the questions about what the ideal subjectivities are that people in prison education are *educated towards*, and what was seen as vital and important in the context of getting *back to civil society*.

5.2 Governing of young people in the EU youth policy steering

In this article, authored with Karen Pashby and Kristiina Brunila, we analysed how the ‘youth problem’ was produced with discourses of employability and precariousness in EU youth policies, and asked how they had been established as hegemonic discourses, especially after the year 2008 global financial crisis and following mass youth unemployment. Our starting point was the vast number of policy initiatives introduced by the European Union to tackle this insidious problem, where at its worst around 23 per cent of young people between 15-25 years of age were unemployed (EUROSTAT, 2020). Especially in youth policies, the main concern was directed towards the so-called NEET young people (see Chapter 2).

As I described in Chapter 2, the European Union’s youth policies are mainly executed through so-called soft governing, mainly through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). As soft governing, the goals and initiatives are not presented as binding transnational legislation, but rather as suggestions, goal setting, benchmarking, budgeting, and communications (see Alexiadou et al., 2010; Lange & Alexiadou, 2007). The most prominent youth policy initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment in the EU, as mentioned in Chapter 2, are Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative (CEU, 2013; COM, 2016b; 2016a).

In the article, we gave a short description of the developments in EU youth policies and the main issues starting from the Lisbon Strategy, which marked a change in the arrangement of previously mentioned soft governing by the introduction of the OMC (Rasmussen, 2014). In the Lisbon strategy, young people

were mentioned as members of other population groups which were seen as ‘challenging’ from the perspective of labour markets, such as the unemployed and older people (CEU, 2000). Since the goal of the Lisbon Strategy was to enhance the EU’s position in the globalising economy and provide full employment for all its citizens, the focus was aimed at IT, multicultural, and language skills that were seen as essential to achieving these goals. Young people and early school leaving, vulnerable groups and social exclusion of young people emerged as a policy issue shortly after 2003 due to slowing economic growth. After the 2008 financial crises resulted in the fast decay of entry-level jobs throughout Europe, and as a result, many young people were left unemployed. To mitigate the effects of this mass youth unemployment, European Council and Commission proposed mechanisms such as Youth Guarantee to be implemented throughout Europe.

By following Lange and Alexiadou (2007), we attached the soft law and soft governing in youth policies to the legitimisation of neoliberal political rationality (see Chapter 2). Following Wendy Brown (2015) we defined neoliberal rationality as a mode of governing through which policy is based on the ideals of competition, free markets, deregulation, and freedom of choice. In the context of youth policies, this manifests as a promotion of individual competence building to function as an economically-productive member of society. Therefore, we suggested that this apparatus of youth policies we named *youth policy steering* should be scrutinised as governing through *neoliberal political rationality*.

We defined governing as the hegemonizing of discourses, in this paper, namely the discourses of employability and precariousness (see Chapter 3). Following Bacchi and Bonham (2014) we defined discourses in this context as practices that made certain truths and knowledge possible and essential to certain policies, and that were thus connected inseparably to power. We also noted that the discourses were based on certain kinds of rationalities, that ‘made sense’ of the discourses – in this case, neoliberal political rationality functioned as the background from which discourses became possible and almost unquestionable (Ball, 2013b; W. Brown, 2015; Foucault, 1982). As we argued in the article: “This rationality can be traced, [...] by identifying how certain discourses emerge in policies and become entwined to both policies and practices aimed to reduce risks, such as youth unemployment” (Mertanen et. al., 2020a, p. 244). We claimed that the current situation was a place where discourses about the precariousness of young people and the need to enhance their employability were entwined in a way that presented both discourses as hegemonic and promoting and reproducing neoliberal political rationality.

To ‘trouble’ this hegemonic position, we analysed how these discourses had come to be self-evident and unquestioned in EU youth policy steering. To achieve this, we traced their emergence and development in the European Council and European Commission published documents from 2000 to 2016. As we claimed in the article: “In this study we focus on 1) identifying the discourses that are

evident in the EU policy steering, 2) tracing how these discourses construct a particular truth about young people, and 3) detecting how they start to be taken for granted and ultimately hegemonic in current policy as part of an encompassing neoliberal political rationality” (Mertanen, et al., 2020a, p. 246). As a result, in our analysis, we were able to distinguish three periods in EU youth policy steering – pre-recession, recession and post-recession era– when discourses of precariousness and employability surfaced and developed in accordance to wider societal changes.

To summarise, during the pre-recession era from the year 2000 to 2007, the discourse of employability was visible in documents from both the European Council and the Commission, but it was tied specifically to those young people seen to be most ‘at risk’ of social exclusion, with a focus on marginalised groups and early school leavers. Employability was linked with the growing demands of the knowledge economy and ITskills, and it was seen as a rather narrow set of skills that could be acquired through training. During the second period, the recession era between 2008 and 2013, growing numbers of youth unemployment put more focus on solving this problem. During this period, employability discourses shifted from separate and narrowly defined skills towards more exhaustive tendencies, through which attitudes and the self-esteem of young people were often mentioned.

Along with the widening discourses of employability, as a response to volatile and insecure labour markets for young people, discourses of precariousness also emerged in youth policies. Through this establishment of inherent precariousness of labour markets in the current economic recession, multiple initiatives such as Youth Guarantee were presented and legitimised, since precarious conditions did not involve only those seen as especially vulnerable or marginalised, but as a condition that applied to all young people.

This inherent precariousness of young people did not abate during the third established period in our analysis – the post-recession era during 2014-2016. According to our analysis, although the economic situation gained momentum towards a more hopeful direction, the worry about youth unemployment got ‘stuck’ to policy discourses, although in a more nuanced way than during the recession era. As we wrote:

In one sense, the interpretation of some of the youth policy seems to have moved back towards the ways in which it was executed in the pre-recession era—to focus on unemployed young people and developing different employability and life management skills to mitigate the effects of their precariousness in labour markets. Yet, the ideas about all young people being in inherently precarious life circumstances stays and seems to have gained prevalence that was not visible in the youth policy discourses of previous eras (Mertanen et al., 2020a, pp 254-255).

In conclusion, we suggested that discourses of precariousness and employability had been established as hegemonic in youth policies after the Lisbon strategy. Further, we argued that this development has established neoliberal political rationality as an inseparable way in policies that used to rely on ideals of welfare state and care. In this sense, we claimed that youth policies within this rationality are reduced to risk management of individual behaviour, through which solutions for structural issues such as employment situation and global economics became individualised. We argued that discourses of employability and precariousness seem to form a double helix, a mutually reinforcing discursive practices, both rely on producing each other to become recognisable and legitimate.

5.3 Problematisations in Finnish youth policies and youth support systems

In Article III, written with Kalle Mäkelä and Kristiina Brunila, we focused on youth policies and their implementations in Finland. We applied a framework of policy analysis developed by Carol Bacchi (2009) to interrogate and problematise the self-evident and taken-for-granted nature of youth policies and policy implementations aimed at reducing young people's social exclusion, and youth unemployment. In Finland, the situation of the position of young people in the labour market does not differ much from the European situation. As I described in Chapter 2, after the financial crisis the effects hit young people the hardest, leading to skyrocketing youth unemployment rates. Following in the European Union's footsteps, Finland developed policies to tackle youth unemployment, such as Youth Guarantee (Gretchel et. al. 2014). Finnish youth legislation was rewritten to include measures like youth workshops and outreach youth work as legitimised ways to tackle young people's social exclusion and increase their participation in society (MAEA, 2015).

The aims, and goals vary among these different *support systems* regulated with legislation. The youth workshops are a workplace-like environment in which young people can learn and practise the skills they will need in their future careers. Outreach youth work, on the other hand, refers to youth work in which finding young people seen as 'at risk' is the priority (Bamming & Waldén, 2019). The latest addition to services for young people was provision of One-stop Guidance Centre Steering Cabins (Ohjaamo), which collected multiple actors under the same roof—social workers, public employment office agents, healthcare workers, youth workers, and actors from private and non-governmental organisations (Määttä, 2018).

All the above-mentioned support systems are built as a part of the Finnish welfare state and function according to principles of equality, strong public sector and

generous social benefits (see Esping-Andersen, 2013). Yet, as elaborated in Chapter 2, these support systems also function according to a more neoliberal logic, and responsibility for arranging these services is shared between multiple a range of actors from public, private, and third sectors (see Brunila & Ylöstalo, 2020). In the article, we connected this to the privatisation and marketisation of education (see Ball & Youdell, 2009; Brunila, 2011).

To analyse Finnish youth policies and youth support systems, we developed the concept of *governing with problematisations* in our theoretical framework (see also Chapter 3). We combined Bacchi's (2009) theorisation on policies as problematisations with Foucault's (2007) ideas about controlling and governing populations. We suggested that governing young people in Finnish youth policies and their implementation was legitimised by producing 'problems' with discursive practices producing norms and values towards which young people were steered (see Foucault, 2010; Kelly; 2000).

We analysed three datasets: i) policy documents concerning young people, ii) interviews and observations I produced at two One-Stop Guidance Centres, and iii) ethnographic and interview data in outreach youth work produced by Mäkelä. We asked what was the problem representation produced in Finnish youth policies, and in what rationalities these problem representations made sense. Based on our previous research and the research literature about youth policies in Finland, we had already established that neoliberal political rationality was evident in youth policies. In addition to neoliberal rationality promoting competition, individuality and independence, rationalities attached to traditional Nordic welfare state were mentioned in the literature (see W. Brown, 2015; Haikkola, 2019; Juvonen, 2014). These included discourses about young people as vulnerable, as someone that society needs to both control and care for (see Brunila et. al., 2019a; K. Brown, 2015).

As a result of our analysis, we were able detect two distinct yet overlapping discourses produced by problematisations: young people's lack of participation in society, and young people's perceived immaturity and irresponsibility. These two discourses were produced in all analysed data sets, and included young people's unemployment, difficulty finding places in labour markets, 'not knowing their own situation', passivity, and lack of independence and growth. In interviews with youth workers in both outreach youth work and Steering Cabins, the 'problems' they were aiming to tackle in their work were slightly more nuanced and wider than in legislation, which presented a simplified generalised view of the problematisations. Issues repeated in both were young people's unemployment and lack of knowledge about how societal structures worked. Yet, one characteristic that was named as a problem was the lack of self-knowledge and lack of realistic picture about their situation among young people. It became the employees' responsibility to 'lure the real situation' out of young people to help.

In the first discourse, young people's lack of participation in society, 'participation' was defined in a rather narrow sense in policy documents: participation was either education, employment, or participating in publicly-recognised productive and helpful activities such as youth workshops. As we stated:

We suggest that the first discourse, lack of young people's participation in society, produces membership of society as employment, or participation in other economically recognised activities such as education or training. Similarly, the 'youth problem' in this discourse is produced as synonymous with unemployment (Mertanen, et al., 2020b, p. 14).

The second discourse, young people's lack of maturity and experience were produced in many ways. In the policy documents, as we interpreted them, young people are described as lacking the skills, independence and maturity needed to function as 'full' members of society. Also, youth workers recognised their position as 'responsible adults' who needed to care for young people, since they had more knowledge and experience than their young clients. This responsibility was shared with youth workers in outreach youth work, to where the 'hard cases', those who could not benefit from the services of Steering Cabin, were directed. In outreach youth work finding young people who were hiding 'below the societal surface' and bringing them back to society and its services was the main goal. In outreach youth work the 'problem' of young people was simultaneously their insulation from society, and passive drifting away. Lack of self-esteem and self-efficacy in young people were mentioned as the causes of the 'problem'. As we stated in the article:

The young people produced in this discourse do not have the skills to exist in the 'adult' world of independence and responsibilities because of a lack of experience and knowledge, and they are either not being informed enough, or 'passive', 'dependent', or 'lost' about their own situation. Both in legislation and in the practices of both Steering Cabins and outreach youth work this can be seen in the ways in which young people are describe as 'not knowing their situation' or at its worst, as 'hiding behind pizza boxes' (Mertanen et. al. 2020b, p. 15).

We finally concluded in the article, that both of these aforementioned discourses produced and 'made sense' through two political rationalities: neoliberal and paternalistic rationality. These rationalities have major contradictions, as well as similar issues. Similarities include the view of young people as a separate segment of the population, having specific issues such as lack of self-awareness, or immaturity (see Bacchi, 2009; Dean, 2010; France, 2007). The main differences in neoliberal and paternalistic rationality are about whose responsibility it is to

tackle these ‘problems. Whereas in neoliberal rationality, young people are understood to be customers with choices, in paternalistic rationality the responsibility for caring and controlling young people ‘at risk’ is in the hands of ‘responsible adults’. These contradictions form a difficult position for young people in the midst of different support systems:

The consequences of this uncomfortable alliance put young people in an impossible situation – on the one hand they need to function as free individuals aiming for success in life, but on the other they are not to be trusted due to being irresponsible and immature. What both modes of governing have in common is that young people’s needs, characteristics and problems are defined by people who ‘know better’ about the lives and experiences of young people than young people themselves (Mertanen, et. al., 2020b, p. 16).

To be recognised as a full-fledged member of ‘grown-up’ adult society, young people must learn to be self-regulating and self-enhancing who participate in the economic activities or activities preparing for economic productivity. At the same time, young people are perceived as being in between childhood and adulthood, and thus as people lacking the necessary skills, knowledge, and emotions—as someone incapable of fully controlling or caring for themselves. The purpose of youth policy then becomes to facilitate measures of control and care aiming to provide skills and knowledge needed to reach the hoped future adulthood.

6 Constructing Governable Young People in Youth Policies and their Implementations – Key Findings and Discussion

Governing ‘the youth problem’ is inherently connected to the idea about young people as part of the population seen as an invaluable resource for the success of society (Nikunen 2017). In this research, I have analysed youth policies and their implementations as a way of governing young people through discourses of precariousness, employability, and therapisation. I have connected these discourses to neoliberal political rationality, in which the normalised way of being a member of Finnish society is to become an economically active citizen, and paternalistic rationality which seeks to control and care for those young people seen as incapable to care for themselves.

In the first two sections of this chapter, I will draw together the key findings from this research published in the articles presented in Chapter 5, and answer research questions 1 and 2:

RQ1: How is the ‘youth problem’ governed in youth policies and their implementations?

RQ2: Which rationalities are involved in the governing of the ‘youth problem’ through youth policies and their implementations?

In the last section, I will elaborate the methodological contributions of this research, and answer research question 3:

RQ3: What opportunities does discursive reading of problematisations give concerning analysing governing in youth policies and their implementations?

6.1 Governing the ‘youth problem’ in youth policies and their implementations

Governing of the ‘youth problem’, as I explained in Chapter 3, works through controlling young people as part of the population (see, Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2007). In this research, I have analysed how the aim of both EU and Finnish youth policies and Finnish youth policy implementations is to govern young people towards a normalised way of being a member of society. Normalised membership of society—being an economically active citizen—is a central goal in both youth policies and their implementation, and young people are guided towards this goal by teaching them the skills needed in the workforce (see Brunila et. al., 2020a;

Kurki & Brunila, 2015; Mertanen & Brunila, 2018). In youth policy implementations, young people are taught skills seen necessary to enable them to become self-regulating and self-governing (see Rose, 1999). Policy implementations are targeted at those young people who in one way or another are deviating from the ‘normative’ life course of young people, in this context the normative ideal of transitioning from education to the workforce in a straightforward manner (see Brunila & Lundahl, 2020). From this it follows that the young people ‘at risk’, who fail to succeed in this smooth transition, who are unemployed, in prison, or otherwise marginalised, are seen as in need of careful and meticulous control and care.

Hence, young people in youth policies and their implementations are governed through problematisations—by producing either young people themselves or young people’s situations as ‘problematic’. By depicting these young people as a ‘problem’ for future society, labels such as NEET, ‘at risk’, or vulnerable, function as legitimisation of the plethora of youth policies and their implementations. In my research articles, I scrutinised how these problematisations were produced with discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapeutisation.

In Article I, reporting on our research about young people’s education in prison, we were able to show how young people were educated to become productive and employable members of society. In our results, we argued, that acquiring ‘full membership’ of society produced in prison education was tightly attached to the ability to get into employment after release. In both policies regulating prison education, prison education strategies, and in the interviews with teachers and young people in prison, employability was produced as flexibility, ‘thinking skills’, punctuality, and ‘good attitude’. I suggest, based on the results reported in Article I, that the employability discourse produced in prison education is very similar to the ‘narrow’ employability discourse, where employability is considered as an individual property or as a set of skills (see McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

In EU youth policies, which we studied in Article II, the employability discourse was not only a way to promote teaching skills for individual young people. Rather, lack of employability was produced in European Council’s and Commissions policy documents as something threatening *all* young people due to their young age, especially right after the economic situation following from the 2008 financial crisis. Consequently, after the peak of the crisis, enhancing young people’s employability, with a special focus on ‘NEET’ young people became of the main goals in EU youth policy steering. Perceived lack of employability was produced as a ‘problem’, and that problematisation worked as a legitimisation for EU-wide youth policies and policy implementations, such as the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative (see COM, 2018; CEU 2013).

We also concluded in Article I that the employability discourse was not only attached to young people’s skills but young people’s emotional awareness and self-esteem. This attachment was also evident in the results of Article III, in which

we analysed how the ‘youth problem’ was constructed in Finnish youth policies and policy implementations. In both youth policies and policy implementations, similar to the EU policy steering, the main ‘problem’ attached to young people was unemployment. This was especially visible in how employees in One-Stop Guidance Centres described how young people came in with the same hope – finding employment. In our results, employees at One-Stop Guidance Centres constantly evaluated the young people’s potential employability and were often hesitant about their skills or maturity, which employees attached to the ability to enter the workforce.

Governing of the ‘youth problem’, according to the results of Article II and Article III, also happened through the discourse of young people’s precariousness in labour markets. In both EU and Finnish youth policy documents, the precariousness of young people in labour markets was taken for granted (see Doherty, 2017; della Porta et al. 2015). The most concrete illustration of the discourse of young people’s precariousness can be seen in the way in which NEET young people are targeted in youth policies and their implementations (see Mertanen et. al. 2020a; Kiilakoski, 2014). The precariousness of young people in the labour markets, especially after the global financial crisis, fuelled fear and anxiety for the entire society, which legitimises governing young people ‘at risk’ or NEET as meticulously as possible (see Foucault, 2007; Standing, 2011).

An interesting and important issue in our findings in the way in which labels, such as ‘at risk’ or NEET are increasingly used synonymously with ‘precariousness’, with implications that by governing those labelled ‘at risk’ or NEET overall precariousness can be reduced. As we explained in our findings in Article II, the assumed inherent precariousness of young people ‘at risk’ forms a view of society and the workforce filled with constant competition and uncertainty young people as individuals are responsible for overcoming. To contrast this with results about Finnish outreach youth work published in Article III, where we claimed that the main ‘problematization’ produced was young people’s exclusion and isolation from society, the ‘at risk’ or NEET label was not attached to precarious conditions of young people, but rather to young people’s personal properties. Therefore, the purpose of the outreach youth work was described as ‘finding’ and ‘guiding’ these young people, who had ‘drifted’ towards exclusion.

Both employability and precariousness discourses were attached to therapisation discourse. In Article I, young people’s education in prison was inherently connected to terminology and therapeutic techniques familiar from psychology and psychiatry (see Rose, 2018; Wright, 2011). In the prison education setting, learning difficulties, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and poor emotional skills and self-esteem were often raised in connection to the workforce in the future as something young people had a responsibility to overcome. Psychological interventions were also presented as an important solution for the

‘problems’ of unemployment in Finnish youth policies and their implementations in the results of Article III (see also Brunila, et al. 2020a).

To summarise, the findings from this research show some unique aspects in discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapisation in both youth policies and how they are implemented. Even though the employability of young people, on the surface, is produced in youth policies as a relationship between individual young people and labour markets (see McQuaid & Lindsey, 2005), the employability discourse in policy implementation is produced more as a *qualifier*, or put into other words as a young person’s willingness to conduct themselves towards normative citizenship (see Dean, 2010; Rose, 1999). This subtle distinction between employability as a relation and employability as a qualifier of a young person is important, because it connects the employability discourse to the idea of self-governing. With the employability discourse, the ‘youth problem’ is not governed only through teaching young people skills needed in the workforce, but also through attaching young people’s properties, such as self-knowledge, self-esteem, psycho-emotional well-being, and maturity, to willingness to strive towards the becoming the ideal *employable subject* (see Davies et al., 2001; Foucault, 1982).

The ideal employable subject produced in the employability discourse is closely linked with the precariousness and therapisation discourses in an important way—the membership of society requires not only adequate skills, but also abilities to recognise, name, monitor, and control one’s emotions and psychological state. This is significant because by producing young people as potential employable subjects, possibilities for young people’s participation to society shifts from political and civil action towards self-centred and self-regulating ways of becoming a productive and ‘unproblematic’ citizen. Although young people’s democratic participation is mentioned in both EU and Finnish youth policies, in policy implementations examined in this research young people’s participation in society is quite strictly attached to future labour markets.

The discourse of young people’s precariousness in labour markets seems to throw petrol on the flames around discourses of both young people’s employability and therapisation. *Both* employability and therapisation discourses rely on and produce the premise that young people’s position in labour markets is insecure, volatile and connected not only to young people’s personal properties, but also to structural issues such as overall unemployment rates and global economic situation (see della Porta, et al 2015, Standing 2011). This is significant because it forms an insidious cycle for young people; young people are required to accept these conditions as inevitable and unmovable, and strive towards survival through education, training, and self-regulation with therapeutic practices. At the same time, the success and/or failure in present material conditions are also laid upon young people’s shoulders, and they are made responsible for these seemingly inevitable conditions due to perceived or assumed deficiencies. Lack of employability, inherent precariousness of young people, and therapeutic measures aiming

to ‘overcome’ difficult situations in young people’s lives form a powerful way of governing young people towards abstract ‘ideal citizenship’ or ‘ideal adulthood’. If young people ‘overcome’ their psycho-emotional vulnerabilities, ‘gain’ enough employability to find a job, or otherwise ‘tackle’ their precarious situations, they are celebrated and raised up as an example that these ‘best practices’ indeed are a way to solve the ‘youth problem’. If (and more often when) young people fail in a situation, especially because entry-level jobs are scarce, young people *become* the ‘problem’.

6.2 Neoliberal rationality in governing of the ‘youth problem’

At first glance, discourses of employability, precariousness, and therapisation appear quite different. In the employability and therapisation discourses, the focus is on young people’s properties, skills, and psycho-emotional deficiencies, while the precariousness discourse is more connected to structural issues such as labour market scarcity. Yet, these discourses form a neoliberal trifecta that results in a reduced provision for young people that can constrain their opportunities for action. In my results, I have conceptualised this trifecta as *neoliberal rationality*, within which all aforementioned discourses come together and ‘make sense’. In neoliberal rationality, young people in youth policies and their implementations are measured and evaluated based on the market-based language of risk evaluation and investment (see Ball & Youdell, 2009; Nikunen, 2017; Rizvi, 2009).

According to the results outlined in Article I, neoliberal rationality can be seen in prison education in a way that education is both promoted as an investment at both individual and societal levels. Policies regulating and enabling education in prisons carry a promise of profitable results of education through the cultivation of working citizens in future labour markets. In prison education practices, the promise of education’s profitable results were also stressed, and the focus in the contents of education were different ways in which young people could find employment.

In Article I, we also concluded that the organisation of prison education was an example of marketisation of education, in which education targeted at marginalised groups was arranged through short-term projects. This finding confirms previous research about marketisation of education in Finland, especially with projects and programmes targeting young people ‘at risk’ (see Brunila 2014; Kurki & Brunila, 2015; Masoud et. al. 2019). The neoliberal rationality could also be detected in the way in which access to education in prison was subjected to competition between individuals—only the young people who showed properties of becoming ‘realistically’ employed were accepted into the education programme. This austerity caused by budget cuts following from Finnish welfare reforms (see Brunila & Ylöstalo, 2020; Julkunen, 2017) was visible at both prisons,

and education providers of prison education formed a gaping contradiction between public policies about the importance of education and the practical arrangement of education.

In the results from Article II, we detected that the discourses of precariousness and employability in EU youth policy steering were built around neoliberal ideals about measuring and managing young people ‘at risk’. By determining the ‘youth problem’ to be synonymous with statistical tools such as NEET, it was possible to pinpoint both the ‘youth problem’ and youth policies and their implementation as a solution for the ‘problem’ in a seemingly rational, measurable and objective fashion (see Sellar, 2015; Yates & Payne 2006). Through this ‘translation’ of the complex societal issue of young unemployment into statistics, it was possible to declare that young people should be educated and trained to increase their employability and reduce their precariousness in labour markets, no matter what situation young people faced. We suggested in Article II, that even though policy steering based on market logics such as OMC was introduced as early as in 2000, the financial crisis enabled, facilitated, and cemented the arrangement of young policy steering according to neoliberal ideals of benchmarking, ‘soft’ policy, and so-called ‘best practices’.

Yet, as we showed in Article III, governing the ‘youth problem’ cannot only be reduced to neoliberal rationality. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, governing often happens with multiple political rationalities working as hybrids. Governing young people in Finnish youth policies and their implementations ‘made sense’ within not only a neoliberal, but paternalistic rationality. This rationality is more attached to the perceived vulnerability and immaturity of young people, and more stress is given to the immaturity and lack of sufficient skills of young people to function as members of ‘adult’ society. In this political rationality, much stress is given to an alliance of control and care. This confirms Bacchi’s (2009) argument that policies and their implementations are framed as caring for those who are not able to care for themselves.

To summarise, based on the results of the three articles, it is evident that in youth policies, the ‘youth problem’ is governed by contradictory presumptions of freedom to pursue one’s own path, and the need for control and care. In youth policy implementations such as in prisons and One-Stop Centres, there is a strong ethos of meeting young people as individuals and helping with specific issues a young person may have at that moment. However, the ‘problems’ these implementations aim to solve are in line with youth policies: providing young people with skills and abilities to function as productive members of society. If and when young people fail to gain a place in employment or education due to structural conditions, such as absence of vacancies in labour markets, the full force of governing and control is imprinted on young people’s failures and deficiencies.

6.3 Opportunities of discursive reading(s) of problematisations

Methodological consideration and development have had a key role in the course of this research, and as I pointed out in Chapter 4, I experimented with various readings in the three sub-studies. In Article I, we analysed prison education with a discursive reading and asked what subjectivities were available to young people. In Article II, we applied discursive genealogical reading to the EU Council and Commission policy documents regulating youth policies. Article III, on the other hand, is an experimentation with combining Bacchi's WPR (What's the Problem Represented to be) methodology with discursive reading I have named *a discursive reading of problematisation*. In this section, I will consider the limits and options of the discursive readings used in the research articles and examine what possibilities discursive reading of problematisations bring to the research of youth policies and their implementations.

Discursive reading used in Article I allowed an in-depth dive into the norms and ideals in a specific institution, such as prison, school, or a single classroom in prison. In Article I, analysing only the two discourses, while limiting a more comprehensive analysis, enabled us to define what the *ideal subjectivities* produced in these discourses were, and how people in the institutional setting both *strived towards these ideals* in some parts and resisted them in others. Discursive reading made visible how discourses *inside an institution* reflect and repeat certain wider societal tendencies and disregard others. When looking at the discourses in the wider societal context, it becomes apparent who is made responsible for the realisation of the ideals attached to discourses, and who is to blame if they fail. By tracing the employability and therapisation discourses, the research revealed how an institutional context, such as prison education, enables cutting people away from their material conditions and making them somewhat abstract beings with no strings attached to the world that waits outside the institution.

While Article I treated discursive reading as a way to analyse how discourses were produced and circulated in a specific institutional setting, in Article II we utilised a genealogical reading of discourses in our analysis. This approach enabled us to call into question the 'inevitability' of the discourses of precariousness and employability in EU youth policies. Just like analysing discourses in a certain institutional context, analysing the 'family tree' or emergence of discourses in a certain branch of policy-making apparatus, the knowledge is highly situated and is a reconstruction of only a narrow slice of time. The value of genealogical reading lies in the ability to question the discourses that are often taken for granted and are self-evident at a certain point in time. It also enables us to show how certain discourses have slowly turned into self-evident assumptions. Genealogical reading adds *a historical perspective to the formation of the ideals promoted in youth policies*.

The limits of genealogical reading applied in this research are also notable. By focusing on specific discourses produced in a specific branch of policy texts written by specific governing bodies, possibly relevant discussions were left untouched. Also, the scope of this research left questions of conflicts, discussions, and debates that are at the heart of policy making unexamined (see Mertanen, et al., *in review*). In this sense, there is a danger that genealogical reading cemented policies into a collection of public texts that are taken to represent the complex and complicated processes with different interest groups and people.

Because the analysis focuses on certain discourses and their emergence, it is tempting to write a narrative in which discourses are presented as ‘progressing’, ‘developing’ or, on the other hand, as very negative and a result of some malignant, purposeful conspiracy concocted in the deep chambers of an evil government. Although understandable due to the linear nature of our language and the great progressive story of enlightenment and humanism, these tendencies form a risk that the multiplicities and contingencies of policies are lost. Policies themselves (as texts) have no agency or purpose, and the discourses that we take as the tools of governing of populations at this very moment have generally formed accidentally and haphazardly—usually as a hasty reaction to sudden and profound changes to material conditions, such as global financial crisis during this research. Genealogical reading applied in this research can only answer *how something came to be as a result of these accidental events* and does not give us any further answers.

In Article III, we used Bacchi’s formulation of policy analysis to overcome some of the abovementioned limitations (see Bacchi, 2009). Our focus was not on the individual discourses produced by policies per se, but on how policies and their implementations produce problematisations. We were able to draw a rather complex picture of different sets of values, norms, and rationalities that were attached to young people and their troubling situations. Differing from analysing the policy texts in Article II, the problem representations in Finnish youth policies and their implementations varied and were often contradictory and filled with tensions.

Asking about ‘problem’ representations in both policies and their implementation shows that young people are not an unproblematic or a coherent category of people. It opens a profound crack in the rather homogenous picture that policies themselves draw about their targets. The value of this type of analysis is increasing understanding that the things that are often presented as self-evident of ‘natural’ crumble under closer inspection. Looking at young people and issues they are facing under different contexts enabled us to question how youth policies present young people as a homogeneous and uncontested category. In the assumptions of the young people in both policy texts and the interviews with youth workers, ech-

oes of multiple different rationalities form a mosaic that expands from the neoliberal belief in individual competence building to the core values of the Nordic welfare state, such as control and care.

Yet, this way of doing the analysis is yet again limited by two main issues. First, it does not consider young people's views about themselves or their situations. This forms a problem if you want to ask them questions about 'what works' in youth policies or get to know what the young people 'authentically' think, experience, or feel. The second issue is that instead of offering somewhat concise conclusions about the core issues in policies, it fragments and complicates the whole field and adds an inherent complexity to how it is even possible to speak about 'young people' or 'policy'. Still, the insight gained from this 'troubling' of policies and the people policies aim to govern is essential to unpacking any question of their efficacy.

Although the knowledge that is produced within this approach to policy analysis differs from analysing discourses in a specific institution or tracing discourses and their emergence in policy texts, they all share the same core: questioning the things that are often taken for granted, self-evident, and natural. By following the development of reading discourses as problematisations, my research has not focused on identifying single discourses and their effects, but rather has enabled a multitude of problematisations produced in policies and their implementations. As I wrote earlier, it makes visible the multiple discourses and rationalities that are produced in youth policies and their implementations. As a methodology, its strengths are its multi-modality by being able to analyse different datasets side-by-side, and its ability to help the research answer questions of *what discursive practices exist as problem representations in a certain branch of policies and policy implementations at a specific time and place.*

7 What Does it Mean to *not* be ‘Left Behind’?

In uncertain times, when youth looms large in community and policy spaces there exists a warrant to problematize the processes of intellectuality which tell the truths of youth; truths which promise to exterminate uncertainty and ambivalence with regard to the behaviours and dispositions of certain expertly identified populations of young people. What is it that we do as producers of intellectually grounded knowledge when we take youth as our objects? What might be the consequences of these institutionalized processes of knowledge production for the regulation of the young people who are the objects of these processes? Does the increasingly sophisticated nature of these processes render youth knowable in ways that promise increasingly sophisticated processes of individualization and normalization? What might it mean for the practice of youth studies if we take seriously the proposition that the governmentalization of youthful desires, bodies, thoughts and actions which emerge as a result of the practice of youth studies may have profound, if unintended, consequences for the regulation of youth? (Kelly, 2000, p. 313.)

If we go back to the beginning of this dissertation, to the young people stuck in the bog, alone, isolated, helpless, and cold, we can see a very particular representation about the ‘youth problem’. YLE’s ‘call for action’ depicts young people as passive and isolated, and most importantly, unable to get away on their own. Young people in this representation need someone with the strength to reach out to a helping hand that can pull them out from harm’s way.

Although this representation of the ‘youth problem’ is constructed as a banal way to affect viewers, and aims to conjure pity and nationalistic sense of ‘saving Finnish society’ by helping young people in need, it strikes a chord with representations of ‘the youth problem’ examined in this research. According to the results of this research, the governing of the ‘youth problem’ in youth policies and their implementations is built upon discourses producing young people ‘at risk’ as immature, as in need of a bridge ‘back’ to society. In the video I described earlier, there was a statement at the end, that I chose as a part of the title of this dissertation: *Not a single one left behind*. But what does it mean when it is chosen to say, “not left behind”? What does that imply?

In the results of this research, young people’s membership of society is constructed with a strong economic imperative. ‘Belonging’ to the society is defined as participation in the activities deemed as profitable for the overall society, and

especially in economic terms. Market-oriented rationality, or in other words neoliberal rationality, is attached to governing the ‘youth problem’ from three perspectives.

First, youth policies in the EU and Finland produce and promote arranging youth services, education, guidance, and counselling through marketised fashion. What this means in practice, is that implementations of youth policies are funded and arranged in loose networks of public, private and third sector actors as short-term projects, that (according to neoliberal logic) are constantly competing for resources and building up the ‘best practices’ to be disseminated nationally and internationally. In future research, these networks should be explored and analysed in more detail to gain valuable insights into power relations in the governing of the young people (see Ball & Junemann, 2012).

Second, in the contents of these policy implementations, such as One-Stop Guidance Centres or in prison education programmes, the focus is on building young people up as employable citizens ready to compete in precarious labour markets. Employability here does not refer only to external qualifications, such as degrees or diplomas, but is also attached to the ‘inner state’ of young people. To become ‘employable’, young people need to become self-aware, self-conducting, more mature and less ‘young people’ This realisation opens multiple questions about the role of affects, combining both ‘right’ emotional states and proper self-care of one’s physical health and appearance, in youth policies and how they are implemented (see Paju, et. al., 2020).

Third, young people in both youth policies and their implementations are seen as either rational and competent customers choosing between ‘right’ services, or as immature, or (in the worst-case scenario) as deviant and dangerous people in need of control. In this insidious ‘trap’, any sign of uncertainty, immaturity, or hesitation is riddled with the chance of being labelled as ‘at risk’ and directed towards care and control. Meanwhile, young people are expected to compete with each other to get into education or employment, gain skills, and to become so-called ‘best versions of themselves’. In neoliberal rationality, being the ‘ideal good citizen’ includes the proper amount of self-care and self-governing, which makes individual life profitable. It would be interesting to scrutinise in detail how young people themselves navigate within these contradictory expectations (see Honkatukia & Lähde 2020).

What follows from all three abovementioned dimensions of governing the ‘youth problem’ within neoliberal rationality, is that young people are referred to in youth policies and their implementations mainly through their *potential* of becoming *future citizens* who are capable of managing themselves through societal and economic changes. As mentioned in Chapter 1, young people are *an investment*, a valuable asset that needs to return enough interest to hold future society together. Although in both youth policies and their implementations, buzzwords

such as well-being and empowerment (see COM, 2018) are applied to young people, in the governing of the ‘youth problem’ young people are measured according to their *extrinsic value* for the future society. Governing the ‘youth problem’ is not about young people, but about values, norms, and beliefs about what it means to be a citizen. The discourse of employability, precariousness, and therapisation produce young people ‘at risk’ as a problem, and research on these discourses tells us more about the ideals of the society in general than about young people.

From this follows the caveat Kelly (2000, p. 313) draws attention to in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, that I need to address as a researcher. It would not be ethical of me to declare young people *as* something, nor to construct them as helpless victims in the midst of suffocating governance. Even though the description of governing the ‘youth problem’ reported in this research might read as insidious or malignant ploy to crush young people’s possibilities to act, I would be cautioning against this reading. Also, it would not be an ethical of a researcher to declare youth policies and their implementations as failures, nor to imply that the work done by educators and youth workers only focus on more efficient governing.

How young people navigate amid youth policies and youth implementations examined in this research, and how they are making choices, rationalising and utilising the aforementioned structures, projects, and programmes to their advantage, how they are building up spaces for democratic action with their terms should be researched in the future. Also, questions about the global tendencies of youth policies should be examined further.

It is impossible to predict the future, but I will be curious about what effects the current global COVID-19 pandemic shifting and shaking the world will have on global, the EU, and Finnish youth policies. At the time of writing⁷ in Finland, a two-month nation-wide lockdown has dramatically changed how youth services are reaching out to young people when face-to-face contact valued as essential in youth work is deemed to be impossible. There is also a vivid public discussion and worry about a new ‘lost’⁸ generation of young people ‘at risk’, and about the ways in which this generation could be ‘saved’ before it is too late. Time will only tell how governing the ‘youth problem’ is going to shift in the future.

Here beneath the Northern Star there is always room for accidents, contingencies and surprises.

⁷ May 2020

⁸ ”Corona-virus strikes especially hard on young people’s economic situation – Are we facing yet another lost generation? [Korona iskee erityisesti nuorten talouteen – uhkaako meitä jälleen yksi menetetty sukupolvi?]]” Taloustaito 7.5.2020

“‘Lockdown generation’ of young workers will need extra help after COVID-19, urges UN labour chief” UN News 27.5.2020

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