

PROJECT PLAN - UPDATED JUNE 2023

Comparing the Organization of Durable Inequalities in Childhood: Inequality in childhoods, schools and associated welfare systems (CODIC)

1. Excellence

1.1. State of the art, knowledge needs and project objectives

Policy responses to issues of inequality and social exclusion often focus on schools, which are seen as critical institutions for promoting an equitable distribution of welfare and life chances (Fusarelli & Lindle 2011; Volante 2019). Whether schools promote or limit welfare and opportunity for children and young people depend on their social organisation, the practices in which they engage, their responsiveness to local communities, and their organisational integration with other social welfare agencies (cf. NOU 2020:16, ch. 6). This is also the departure in this comparative project with three Nordic and one US city on organisational and institutional factors that reduce or increase “durable inequalities” in the childhood population (Tilly 1998; Domina et al. 2017). Rather than assuming that the reproduction of social inequality in educational institutions and other welfare systems tend to follow a universal grammar (ibid.), our interest is to examine this issue empirically through an ambitious mixed-methods comparative study.

The main aim of CODIC is to develop a deeper empirical, theoretical and methodological understanding of mechanisms that produce durable inequalities in childhood, children’s welfare, and education across different educational systems. We propose an innovative meso-level perspective on schools as organizations embedded in local, institutional, and social policy contexts, an approach that has been lacking in previous Nordic and comparative studies of education, social inequality and welfare. Taking a meso-level perspective also allows us to capture structural and institutional tensions within schools and associated welfare systems (AWSS) in more detail than either actor- or structure-focused research. Uniquely, the project includes the perspectives of numerous significant actors and groups: teachers, welfare workers, municipal administrators, parent representatives and local leadership, as well as both quantitative and qualitative data on children’s self-perception, social integration and psychosocial wellbeing. This allows us to investigate how social agents across different levels of the school system negotiate and make relevant social categories of gender, class and ethnicity, and how these categories structure problem definitions, opportunity structures and social practice. Our empirical and theoretical approach therefore puts us in a prime position for examining determinants of early life satisfaction in different socioeconomic contexts and educational systems, how children understand and deal with their subjectively experienced socioeconomic position and ethnicity, and how national and local policy regimes are translated into practices directly impacting the lives of young students directly (cf. NOU 2020:16, ch. 6).

In line with the core mission of NFR’s program, “Education and Competence” (NFR-EC), our main objective is to better understand the conditions, possibilities and constraints for a sustainable school and educational system, and how this translates into children’s health outcomes and wellbeing. Our approach to educational governance centers the relationship between childhood inequality and the organisation of primary education and early childhood services. We see these institutions as not only focused on core functions related to education, socialization and preparing children for adulthood, but also as key mechanisms of social inclusion and social integration. An important question is how robust these institutions are in the face of external crises and uncertainty. Due to our access to data drawing on detailed quantitative and qualitative data from the year immediately preceding the pandemic (2019), CODIC is in a unique position to tackle this issue, as well as the more general question of how social and organisational crises affect vulnerable groups.

In contrast to projects limited to Norwegian early education in isolation, we propose a comparative case study approach along two lines. Firstly, we will compare and contrast the Norwegian model with similar cases in Sweden and Finland, which will provide a more nuanced picture of the policies and practices that comprises the “Nordic” model of organized childhood and educational equity (Smeplass & Leiulfstrud 2020). We also compare this model with the US market-driven and liberal welfare model that is typically contrasted with the Nordic countries (Van Voorhis 2017). While there is a large degree of variation between US school districts, bringing in a US case allows us to better understand potential both tensions and continuity in the relationship between educational policies and durable childhood inequalities. This is a case study approach that allows us to go more into depth in

how different educational systems operate and prioritize “vulnerable children” in periods of high degrees of internal and external pressure.

Our theoretical approach departs from a classical welfare paradox, namely the persistence of systematic and “durable inequalities” in both Nordic and more market-oriented welfare regimes (Tilly 1998; Shavit et al. 1993). Rather than reducing this paradox to a question of class background or personal resources, as in most Neo-Weberian and Bourdieu-inspired class research, we seek to consider the social organization and integration of schools and AWSS. Thus, we go beyond current comparative research on institutional and systemic characteristics on educational inequalities by explicitly addressing the social mechanisms that drive these variations at a local and organizational level (Woessmann 2016; Domina et al. 2017). As there is considerable variability in schooling and social service systems within the United States, we ground our comparative focus in local case studies and a meso-level approach. With our focus on the integration of school and AWSS systems, we are also able to examine the interaction between the school system and the social (re)production of durable inequalities (Tilly 1998).

In sum, CODIC is based on two interrelated and reinforcing project objectives: (1) *a cross-national comparative mixed methods research project on the role of schools and AWSS in the social inclusion and wellbeing of their students in four cities (WP #1-#4)*, and (2) *a cross-national program of Ph.D. training, seminars and intellectual exchange in the comparative study of durable inequalities in educational and social welfare institutions (WP #5)*. It is also a project with an ambition to strengthen University-municipality collaboration and inform local policies (WP #6).

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses, theoretical approach and methodology

All of the four thematic areas given priority in NFR-EC are included in the seven research questions of the CODIC project:

RQ 1: What are the major social divisions and inequalities in welfare in the childhood population within each of the four cities, and how does results, including learning outcomes, compare with national results 2000-2023?

RQ 2: How do the early childhood and school systems in the three Nordic cities and the US case frame social relations and programs handling various sorts of categorical inequalities and outcomes in their day-to-day operation?

RQ 3: How do early childhood and school systems converge in the four cities with regard to their tasks and missions geared towards children at risk of social exclusion?

RQ 4: How do stakeholders and administrators understand their own roles and practices, and how do their perceptions compare to children’s narratives and perceptions?

RQ 5: How are organizational features contributing to or failing to secure social inclusion of children in vulnerable life situations?

RQ 6: What are the children's self-perceptions as agents in charge of their own lives and futures, and how do these perceptions vary according to social background, gender and disability?

RQ 7: How do various school organisations and school and early childhood systems handle state of exceptions due to the covid 19 pandemic, and how does the consequences of this handling affect children from various social backgrounds?

Preliminary analysis of data gathered before the Covid 19 pandemic indicates that Nordic childhood and education systems are surprisingly similar in terms of official core tasks and functions. However, the ways that educational policies are interpreted and practiced varies substantially between cities, as does the capacity and willingness to implement social inclusion initiatives within specific schools (Rapp 2018; Smeplass & Leulfstrud 2020). This indicates that the approaches and capacities to promoting social inclusion vary considerably in the three Nordic cities, even in seemingly similar schools and associated welfare and support systems. In addition to the three Nordic cities, CODIC will bring in a US case to provide a more in-depth understanding of how school-, welfare- and support systems in the Nordic countries and the US work to promote social inclusion of children with different family backgrounds, genders, classes, ethnicities and/or disabilities.

Our first RQ, based on analysis of register data and other available official statistics, allows us to describe and compare inequalities in level of living of the childhood population in each of the four cities. RQ2 and RQ3 are based on the assumptions that school systems have important functions beyond academic achievement, and that the traditional sociological focus on social and educational mobility

must be broadened into considering how schools and welfare services are integrated in their local environment. This approach affords analyzing how schools in low SES neighborhoods or with a high percentage of children in need of extra support must develop local welfare arrangements and practices for dealing with categorical inequalities and outcomes, allowing for a broader and more institutional perspective on social stratification (Tilly 1998; Rapp 2018).

In addition to this system-level approach, we will also examine how actors (teachers and parents) understand and negotiate their positions within socioeconomic structures and systems of early childhood and education, and how social inclusion is practiced at a local level (RQ4 and RQ5). Previous sociological research has demonstrated that the varying role and functions of parents and teachers reinforce initial class inequalities benefitting children from High SES (Devine 2003; Lareau 2011; Rapp 2016). In our project we contrast and compare the perspectives of children and those of parents, teachers and other professionals working in educational and other welfare systems. Their perspectives will be captured through a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis, allowing for a richly triangulated analysis of the narratives, discourses and perceptions that emerge from and influence practices within school and AWSS. We thereby build upon previous studies of class- and based family practices (e.g. Devine, 2003 or Lareau, 2011) by paying more specific attention to the nexus between organized childhood and how children perceive their life situations, opportunity structures, family life, and capacities as social actors (see research question 6). Comparing Nordic and US data on this issue will open up new avenues of research on childhood, social inequality, and the role and function of the school for pupils with various social backgrounds, allowing us to study how gender, class and ethnicity are understood, communicated and given different weight in various school contexts.

Recent research on educational inequality has demonstrated that childrens' subjective orientations differ in various school situations, and that psychological characteristics (such as self-efficacy, aspirations and resilience) explain persisting inequalities (OECD 2011, 2018). One important objective is therefore to highlight and relate children's perceptions and experiences to the social context and institutional environment within which they live, and to the organizational structures of the local school and welfare system. Here, we are also interested in how schools and welfare organizations may create and exhibit social resilience, referring to "the capacity of social groups or organizations to sustain and advance well-being despite of several challenges" (Hall and Lamont, 2013: 6).¹

1.2.1 Theoretical approach

Our theoretical approach follows in the footsteps of Selznik & Philip (1949), and is based on an innovative institutional perspective that sees schools and other welfare organizations as institutions embedded in broader social and educational policy contexts, local communities, and municipalities. Specifically, we draw on neo-institutional theory (Hasse and Krücken 2014) in order to develop a multi-level understanding of how individuals connect to the welfare system and of the consequences of organizational resources, practices, and cultures for marginalization.

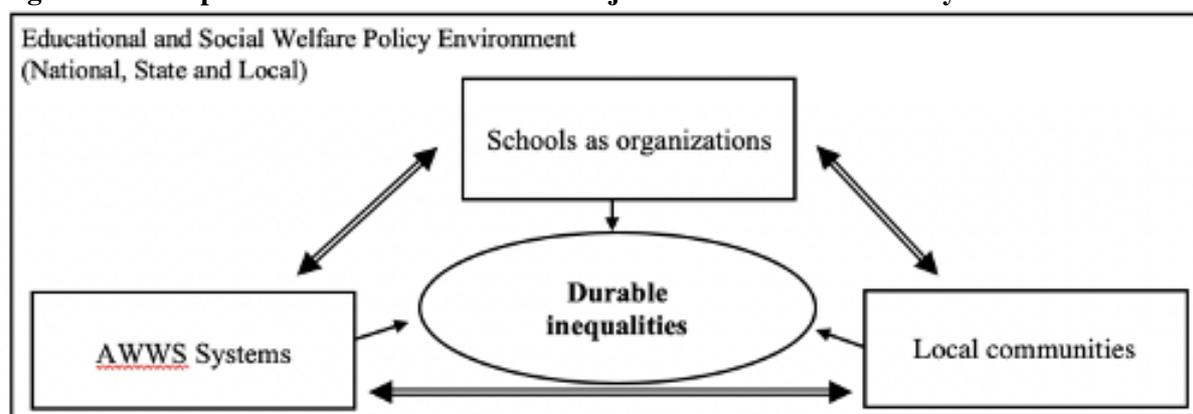
Neo-institutionalist theory tells us that organizations often direct their activities towards their institutional environment. Organizations tend to isomorphically incorporate standards and organizational practices that provide legitimacy from their institutional environment (DeMaggio & Powell 1991), which may lead to the marginalization of those of lower social status (Meyer & Rowan (2006)). The extent the AWSS in this study are organizationally isomorphic, or primarily follow programs and trends and what is believed to be best practices (Meyer 2010) of inclusive childhood, is of course an open question. Hence, by employing multiple and diverse sources of data, the project will illuminate problematic practices within existing organizations, critical points of integration between the school and other service providers, and gaps between municipal services and other systems.

Our "thick" institutional approach prompts us to pay particular attention to the encounters between individual actors, schools, and municipal social welfare services. We rely heavily on an

¹ Results from the 2020 wave of CODIC in Trondheim lend support to increased differences in children's well-being by class and ethnicity compared to the situation in 2009, where especially girls with an immigrant background are overrepresented among those at risk of social exclusion. This is a reminder that gender differences may be exaggerated in the Norwegian school debate unless it also includes intersections with ethnicity and class. It is also a result of interest in a framework of schools and their organizational resilience capacities to meet children with different background and resources (Lynum & Leiufrud 2022).

institutional approach to durable inequalities developed by Tilly (1998) and Devey et al. (2009) which highlights organizational norms, culture, and practice may empower clients, or reinforce initial inequalities in resources and life chances. Tilly operates with several basic building blocks that define “basic social configurations,” chain, hierarchy, triad, organization and categorical inequalities. Tilly’s theoretical framework is particularly relevant for understanding interactions that persist over the entire life courses of individuals, families and organizations. In contrast to highly individualized or structural approaches, Tilly argues that we have to pay attention to the social mechanisms that generate and reproduce durable inequality structures. We do not necessarily share all of Tilly’s claims framed in a language of a universal grammar of inequality, but agree in that “*durable inequalities*” *primarily are constructed within and through organizations* (Tilly 1998:9). This is of particular interest in meso-level studies of how institutions impact social relations and shared understandings that may produce differences in categories (including gender, race, citizenship, and disability) and outcomes in order to maintain stability and to establish a buffer against external pressures (Tilly, 1998: 13-14). Tilly’s theoretical framework also enables a study of how systematic inequalities in childhood arise, and how they impact the life chances of members of different socially defined categories of children.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Research Object of the Nordic-US Study



As cooperation and coordination between schools and child-serving social welfare institutions are important for capacity to implement program plans within specific schools, we pay particular attention to various consequences of “loose” and “tight” organizational couplings (Weick 1976) between these systems, as well as widely shared belief systems that may govern organizational practice and impact what is treated and given priority in handling children at risk and durable inequality (Hallett 2010). To grasp how such processes unfolds at the local level, we draw on interpretive and cultural perspectives of how agents perceive and negotiate social categories, related to ethnicity and social class through communication, and thus make relevant symbolic boundaries in processes of inclusion/exclusion (Barth 1994; Lister 2004; Lamont 2018). In line with neo-institutional organizational theory, we further explore external pressures governing schools and AWSS in terms of political pressure: pressures to adjust or change course due to discrepancies between official goals and results (“imitating pressure”); “normative pressures” due to professionalization; and struggles within or between organizations and agencies (Powell & DiMaggio 1991: 66-74). Differences in education and welfare mix (public-private) between the empirical cases is also clearly of relevance when assessing the theoretical claims referred to above.

1.2.2 Data and methodology

The Nordic part of CODIC is based on a mixed-method approach that includes (a) national and local policy documents relevant for equity, social inclusion, and school organization; (b) national and local register data on early childhood education and living conditions; (c) surveys on wellbeing and social integration answered by children age 10-16; (d) surveys on how teachers experience and recognize the needs of individual pupils; (e) semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers, principals and representatives from the municipal administration; (f) interviews with parents/guardians representatives, and (g) focus-group interviews with children. Informed by extended case methodology and reflexive sociology (Burawoy, 2009), we combine structural and organisational analysis with fine-grained and

richly textured data on social practices and perceptions. *The Nordic part of CODIC* builds on previous data collection from high SES and low SES schools in 2002 and 2009 in Trondheim (NO) and in Tampere (FI). The main focus, however, in the current project is on the period before and after the 2020 Covid 19-pandemic, as well as on the comparison between Nordic and US welfare models. Thanks to local seed money from NTNU, we already have school data (i.e. survey data and interview data, cf. c-e, above) from the same schools as in 2002 and 2009 in Trondheim and in Tampere, and new school data from 2 high SES and 2 low SES schools in Norrköping. These case studies have been supplemented with interviews with teachers, school personnel, top managers and experts in early childhood and school services in the period before the pandemic.

The cities are selected due to their differences in how early education and schools are integrated with AWWS, educational policy context and schooling practice. Within each case, we are studying and comparing schools serving relatively high SES and relatively low SES students. The cities of Norrköping and Berkeley were added in the 2019/2020 wave of the project because they include more profound social contrasts and social divisions in the childhood population than previously reported in both Trondheim and Tampere (Rapp 2018) while also possessing similar social, demographic, and economic characteristics. We have been able to carry out a small-scale pilot in Berkeley thanks to seed money from the Peder Saether Foundation, but it will require further funding to obtain sufficient information based on interviews with teachers, parent representatives, principals and representatives from the municipal administration on how they organize the school system to promote equity, in addition to group interviews with children on school culture and their childhood inside and outside of the school sphere. We will also require additional legal and policy data on equity in education and more extensive register data on early childhood education, usage of services and living conditions. Surveys of students and teachers in high SES and low SES schools are not included in the Berkeley case due to high costs, difficulties of getting the necessary permissions, and time constraints.

In summary, the CODIC project draws on a dataset consisting of both qualitative and quantitative data collected from a variety of sources. *In order to fully utilise the potential of these Nordic data our ambition is twofold: 1) to supplement the data necessary in Tampere and Norrköping to a full-scale comparison with Trondheim; 2) to do follow up investigations of how the situation of vulnerable children, schools and AWS may have changed in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic.* The first step requires more comprehensive data and analysis of how Tampere and Norrköping compare to other major cities in each of the two countries in organisation of early childhood and education, policies and level of living conditions (see a. and b. above). The second step is based on a new wave of school surveys and interviews, interviews with school personnel and students, and an assessment of measures taken to secure social inclusion of children in the participating schools and municipalities.

The project involves extensive data gathering of vulnerable groups which require experienced researchers in terms of confidentiality and practical knowledge how to approach younger students with respect. CODIC has already developed an elaborated Ethical Protocol in encounters with students and adults and in how results are analysed, reported back to the participating organisations, and published. All interviews with the students are based on consent from both from the students and their guardians. All data gathered in the Nordic part of CODIC in 2019-2020 have been approved by the research ethics committees in each country (NSD in Norway; Etikprövningsmyndigheten in Sweden and Tampere University in Finland, in addition to approval from the leader of Early Childhood and Education in each city, the participating schools, parents and the participating students.

Our main methodological advantage in the Nordic part of CODIC lies in the unique combination of in-depth interview data and survey data with children, teachers, school management, parent representatives, and municipal administration, which enables examining our research questions from a variety of contrasting perspectives. These complementary data sources provide a rich empirical picture seldom seen in prior research on schooling inequalities and social inclusion, which tends to rely solely on individual-based register and survey data. Quantitative data informing about the development of social inequality among children is rarely, if ever, combined with organizational, legal and institutional, as well as ethnographic data in cross-national comparative research. The CODIC project relies on a solid expertise in analysis of survey data and register data (Professors Leiulfstrud, Melin, Harding and Lucas). The register data analysis is mainly used to give a descriptive overview of trends in the sociodemographic composition, level of living and school and welfare measures, including academic performance, from year 2000 onwards in the Nordic cities, at the lowest possible aggregate

level (in Norway: grunnskretser). This is both an analysis between the high and low SES in each of the three Nordic cities and a comparison with nationwide statistics. School survey data will be analysed with descriptive statistics, regression analysis and exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The qualitative material will be analysed by skilled qualitative researchers with experiences in analysis of interview data, policy documents, and different types of texts (Drs. Oversveen, Rapp, Smepllass, Schedin-Leiulfstrud, and ms. Tvedten). The qualitative data analysis will be grounded in an institutional ethnography approach aimed at tracing the connections between everyday practices, organizational forms and structural factors (Smith, 2005), a perspective which our research partners Eklund Nilsen (Lund and Nilsen 2019) and Emil Oversveen (Oversveen and Forseth 2018) have substantial experience with from previous research. Interviews, documents and material informing us about the school codes and practices is also well suited for qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis (using MAXQDA-2020). The idea behind mixed data in CODIC is that a common interest in organisational and institutional aspects of durable inequality will open up for “institutionally thicker” and innovative ways of asking questions based on quantitative data, and that the qualitative analysis will be better informed with a knowledge of what is found in the broader statistical analysis.

1.2.3. Work packages

The research objective of work package #1, Models of early childhood and education, is to study similarities and differences between the ways the three Nordic cities and the US case are organizationally designed and the weight given to social inequality in legal and policy programs and in practice. The WP is both aimed at generating more in-depth empirical insights into similarities and differences between how childhood is organized in Nordic and US systems of early childhood and education and at generating theoretical assessments of similarities and differences within and between social and educational policy models. A claim often found in Nordic education and policy research is that the Nordic models have become more influenced by OECD and neoliberal ideas through an increased focus on accountability (Smepllass 2018). RQ 2 and RQ3 will aim to study this often-repeated claim empirically, asking the critical question of what “neoliberalism” means in practice and how widespread the tendency can be said to be. WP #1 is based on in-depth interviews with key informants working in the administrative bodies of early childhood, schools, and associate welfare systems; analysis of legal and relevant official documents and plans; as well as an active use of register data and relevant official statistics to give a more comprehensive picture of investments and budget models aimed at reducing social inequality in the childhood population, and assessment of relevant outcomes of measures. WP #1 is led by Håkon Leiulfstrud, David Harding and Anna Rapp in collaboration with Harri Melin.

The research objective of work package #2, led by Håkon Leiulfstrud, Eli Smepllass in collaboration with Emil Oversveen, is to study stakeholders' understanding and responsiveness to durable inequality in the childhood population. In this WP, we shift our focus from organizations and institutions to an agency perspective, considering the practices and perceptions of those acting on behalf of children's welfare, education, and wellbeing. Our US pilot study suggests a similar focus on child wellbeing and social inclusion as in the Nordic cases in policy terms, but one that is narrowly motivated by – and in the service of – accountability systems that provide the basis for legitimacy in the US educational policy context. Although primarily based on information from individuals, our interest in RQ3 is mainly to understand how the institutions and stakeholders think and act in schools located in high SES and low SES school districts and in schools with a highly socially stratified student population. RQ 4: How are attempts to link organizational features of each case to child outcomes related to social inclusion? is also included in work package #2. WP #2 is based on in-depth interviews with key informants working in the administrative bodies of schools, and associated welfare systems in each of the four cities, and on a systematic review of official statistics revealing child outcomes related to social inclusion.

The research objective of work package #3, led by Håkon Leiulfstrud and Sigrunn Tvedten is to study similarities and differences in students' perceptions, priorities, and worldviews of themselves. As in WP#2, we approach children from an active agency perspective that is also sensitive to the social relations and institutions through which inequality operates and is reproduced. In contrast to theories on class and social stratification that presuppose universal models of social reproduction, we seek to develop an in-depth understanding of how children from more privileged and less privileged family

backgrounds understand themselves in their capacities as students, children, and participants in leisure and friendship relations. This is also including information and understanding of their parents' occupational status and jobs. One of the main tasks of this work package is to adjudicate theory of social reproduction and inclusion/exclusion, or what we here refer to as “durable inequalities”.

The research objective of work package #4 is to generate innovative methodological and theoretical programs based on empirical findings, analyses and practical experiences from the work on the first three work packages. WP #4, led by Håkon Leiulfsrud and David Harding builds on a series of seminars and workshops aimed to produce two book projects. The first book project is mainly an empirical analysis of the three Nordic and the US cases in congruence with RQ1-RQ4 and the first two work packages. The second book project is mainly a response to the theoretical and methodological program previously developed by Charles Tilly (1998) and Tomaskovic-Devey et al., (2009). In contrast to Book Project I, which will summarize empirical findings on differences and similarities between the Nordic and US case, Book Project II engages in theoretical and methodological questions. As Tilly's work is based on assumptions that are rarely explored in comparative analyses of organizationally and institutionally embedded inequality, our Nordic-US empirical project is uniquely well suited to theoretical and methodological development. We will also seek to develop qualitative methods and research designs for studying the durable inequalities and reproduction of social inequality in different institutions based on extended case method and institutional ethnography (Burawoy 2009; Smith 2005). Developing new qualitative methodological and analytical techniques is necessary for understanding how social inequalities are socially (re)produced, and may contribute to the general methodological literature within sociology and other fields.

Figure 2. Work packages linked to research questions, data, outcomes and partners

| WP: | Main objective: | RQs: | Data: | Outcome: | Partners: |
|-----|--|---------------|---|---|--|
| #1 | To study similarities in how Nordic and US welfare systems are organizationally designed | RQ1, RQ2 | Qualitative interviews with welfare workers and municipal employees, analysis of pol documents and public plans, re-analysis of off. statistics | Research articles in international and national journals in sociology, edu. science and related fields, conf. papers, dissemination in media & pub. outlets | Leiulfsrud, Harding, Rapp, Melin Ph.D 1 |
| #2 | To examine stakeholders' understanding and responsiveness to durable inequality in the childhood population | RQ3, RQ4, RQ6 | Qualitative interviews with key municipal actors, systematic review of official statistics | Research articles and conference papers, dissemination through media and other public outlets | Leiulfsrud, Smeplass Melin, Ph.D 2 |
| #3 | To study similarities and differences in student's self-perceptions, priorities and worldviews | RQ5 | Quantitative survey data on wellbeing, social relations and integration, focus group interviews | Research articles and conference papers, through media and other public outlets | Leiulfsrud, Tvedten Melin, |
| #4 | To generate innovative methodological and theoretical programs based on empirical findings, analyses and practical experiences from work on the first three WPs. | N/A | Findings and experiences from WP #1-3 | Methodological and theoretical papers, two book projects, ISS-based seminars on theoretical and methodological development | Leiulfsrud, Harding, Øversveen, Sohlberg |
| #5 | To develop a platform for Ph.D. training and intellectual exchange between the Nordic countries and the US | N/A | N/A | PhD courses in Trondheim/Berkeley, training programs, seminars and infrastructure for transn. cooperation | Leiulfsrud, Harding, Eklund Nilssen & professor team from Nordic partner inst |
| #6 | Administration and dissemination | N/A | N/A | Steering group, advisory board | Leiulfsrud |

The research objective of work package #5, led by Håkon Leiulfstrud, David Harding and Ann Christin Eklund Nilsen is to develop a platform for Ph.D. training and intellectual exchange in the comparative study of educational and social welfare institutions. A younger generation of scholars will benefit from the proposed Ph.D. training program in terms of applications of theoretical framework (neo-institutional theory); research methodology in “extended case method” (Burawoy 2009); institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005), and comparative mixed-method approaches. The Ph.D. training component brings together students and faculty from different national contexts. Work package #6 (administration and outreach activities) led by H. Leiulfstrud is crucial in a large and complex project as this with a consortium of Norwegian, Nordic and US researchers and institutions, as well as a close collaboration with the cities and municipalities. This requires a well-organized steering group, and an active advisory board. For a more detailed description of outreach activities see 3.2. below.

1.3 Novelty and ambition

The project will take a cross-national and mixed-method approach to study how social reproduction through the educational system creates durable inequalities and develop novel theoretical and methodological approaches within research on social stratification. Our goal is a deeper understanding of the social (and political) dimensions of how inequalities are reproduced and reinforced in schools that goes beyond existing literature. With our system-level focus, the research design is novel in national as well as a cross-national research, and affords development of 1) new empirical insights in comparative school, welfare and inequality research, 2) in new ways of working with mixed methods in a cross-national study, and 3) new theory and models of social inequality. The partnership between Norwegian/Nordic and US professors is based on their joint and complementary academic strengths in education and stratification blended with an interest in methodology and theory development. This is both a strength that motivates the proposed book project, and a platform for Ph.D. training and intensified collaboration with a new generation of scholars in Norway and the US.

2. Impact

2.1 Potential for academic impact of the research project

The project has the potential to make a significant contribution to the fields of comparative education and policy research, early childhood and education, welfare and social inequality, and interdisciplinary childhood research in Norway and internationally. Furthermore, we seek to develop general theoretical concepts, frameworks and methodological techniques capable of contributing to the general development of sociology of education. The project builds on an already active collaboration between Norwegian, Nordic and US researchers, which has broadened our understanding of childhood inequality in childhood triggered our motivation to collaborate and share data and knowledge.

The project has received initial support from NTNU with a postdoc position (E. Oversveen) and seed money for the data collection prior to the Covid 19 pandemic in the Nordic countries. The book project, which already has an advance contract with Brill Academic Publisher/Haymarket is key in terms of academic impact. To realize the potential of already existing networks and collaborations, we are expanding our partnership also to include partners from four Norwegian university institutions in our the 5th work package (joint Nordic US Ph.D. training and collaboration).

2.2 Potential for societal impact of the research project

The potential for social impact is unusually high, especially in the Trondheim case, as official data of relevance for our project are scarce and scattered. Data and findings from the project may therefore change the official understanding of childhood inequality, and establish data resources which may be utilized by other researchers in the future. It is also a university-municipality collaboration in Trondheim that has already been strengthened by a strong commitment from the parties involved, well beyond the project period, to facilitate the project, and the opportunities offered in being part of a larger Nordic and international project and collaboration including researchers and practitioners from the participating administrative bodies and schools. In a time of surging social inequalities that are likely to be exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic, taking a fresh perspective that includes a more nuanced and critical understanding of the educational system and other welfare institutions is arguably more important than ever. A chief ambition of the project is therefore to develop new and more organisational understandings of social inequality that are also accessible to the general public.

2.3 Measures for communication and exploitation

CODIC is organized around three types of stakeholders, 1) the participating cities/municipalities/schools and what is best described as a university-city collaboration; 2) the research community; 3) Ph.D students. Measures for communication and exploitation of results and knowledge transfer back to the **municipalities and schools** are secured by joint workshops, (web)seminars and courses during the project period. Our ambition is to expand existing collaboration between the research community and the Nordic municipalities to also include partners from education, welfare and early childhood services in Berkeley. **Measures for communication of results in the national and international academic community** are partly via joint workshops and the two book-projects and partly by articles disseminated in scientific publications on a national and international level (for a more detailed description of potential journals see the main application). The results from the CODIC project and associated university partners in the Nordic countries and at UC-Berkeley will be an important platform for our ambition to arrange **two Ph.D courses** on (a) inequality in school and childhood in a cross-national perspective, and (b) on lessons learnt in carrying out cross national research related to theory development and research methodology (mixed method approaches). This is of particular relevance in a field characterized with little interest in development of theory and methodology at the meso-level. The CODIC-project will also be a flagship in the newly established GEMINI-center, *Inclusive Education and Childhood (OppInk)*, led by J. Caspersen, including stakeholders from NTNU, NTNU Social Research and SINTEF on durable inequality in education and AWSS. In addition, we plan to utilize already existing university-municipality collaboration between the Nordic Sister-Cities with 1) bi-annual seminars (physical meetings and video-based meetings); 2) presentation of main results via a joint web page with a share point solution; 3) provide recommendations for policy and organizational development in the participating municipalities; 4) facilitate communication and research collaboration with the participating schools; 5) arrange “breakfast seminars” on relevant topics and research for a wider audience. The collaboration with OppInk is especially important as it facilitate collaboration between institutions and researchers and enable us to reach out to reach out with more professional means of communication than in an ordinary research project alone (cf. *work package #6 above*).

3. Implementation

3.1 Project manager and project group

Professor *Håkon Leiulfsrud*'s (NTNU) professorship is in comparative sociology. Leiulfsrud has led the Nordic part of the project since the year 2002. Leiulfsrud's main expertise is in comparative welfare and inequality research, family and childhood studies, school and educational sociology. His research is grounded in an interest in theory and theory development, and he is well versed in both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. His current research with colleagues at NTNU Social Research focus upon organizational challenges bridging schools/kindergartens with pedagogical and welfare services. Håkon Leiulfsrud and Peter Sohlberg have just finalized a major international project sponsored by NFR on theory development and theory application, which has resulted in three edited volumes, published by Brill Academic Publisher/Haymarket & a substantial number of Ph.D courses. Leiulfsrud is joined in CODIC with partners having a background in sociology, educational science, childhood studies & health science; associate professors *Eli Smepllass*, *Anna Rapp* and *Annelie Schedin Leiulfsrud*, postdoctoral research fellow *Emil Øversveen* (all NTNU) and assistant professor *Sigrunn Tvedten* (University of South-Eastern Norway). *The responsibility for the Nordic Data collection in the past has been/will be shared by Leiulfsrud, Rapp and Smepllass in collaboration with professor Harri Melin in Tampere.*

David Harding, Professor of Sociology at UC Berkeley and Director of the Berkeley Social Science D-Lab, has expertise in education, inequality, and mixed methods research. *Trinel Torian* and *Khoi Quach* are Ph.D. students in Sociology at UC Berkeley whose research focuses on educational institutions and inequalities. *Harri Melin*, Professor of Sociology at Tampere University, has a strong research record in comparative welfare and inequality research and industrial relations. He will supervise and work in tandem with a postdoc to be appointed working on the Tampere case.

The Norwegian part of the project is joined in work package #5 by professor *Ann Christin Eklund Nilsen* (UiA), who both specializes in the organization of early childhood and institutional

ethnography, and professor *Johs Hjellbrekke* with an expertise in social inequality & analyses of register data.

3.2 Project organization and management

The project is jointly organized with professors Leiufrud as principal investigator, and Harding with special responsibility for the US case and the UC Berkeley collaboration. Professors Melin (P3) is in charge of the Tampere case. Leiufrud, Rapp and Smeplass, who have worked together for many years, are jointly in charge of the Norwegian and Swedish case. Professors Leiufrud and Harding are joined by professor Melin, Associate professors Eli Smeplass & Anna Rapp, and Head of Research, Joakim Caspersen, in a **steering group** that will have monthly video-conferences. The **advisory board** of CODIC is represented by leading expertise in the field of a) childhood and durable inequalities (adjunct professor (em.), Irmeli Järventie, Tampere University and professor (em.) Jens Qvortrup); b) expertise in organizational theory in line with CODIC, professor Raimund Hasse (University of Lucerne, CH); c) local expertise from the field of early childhood and education, senior advisor Jannicke Akse (who is also representing Trondheim municipality). The advisory board will have biannual video-conferences and be invited to seminars and conferences. The project is based on long lasting, strong and solid collaboration in Trondheim, and between the Norwegian and Nordic stakeholders, which has been formalized in the Nordic university-municipality collaboration and in agreements with the previously mentioned Gemini center, with Head of Research Caspersen as the leader and Leiufrud as an active partner. *The researchers involved are able to shift roles and/or functions in the project in the case of unforeseen events.* The uncertainties in the after match of the Covid19 pandemic is also the reason why we extend the project duration from 36 to 51 months. The steering group with a broad representation of stakeholders will have frequent meetings through the project period to minimize potential risks associated with a large project such as this.

Four women are in senior leadership positions (wp. 1-3 & 5). Rapp, Smeplass, Tvedten are all examples of former students of Leiufrud who continue to play a vital role in our collaboration. Eklund Nilsen with a strong research record in institutional ethnography and comparative welfare state research is also key in Ph.D. training and in the collaboration with UC Berkeley. In this project we will strive to find a good gender balance in the recruitment of junior researchers. In a project with a high percentage of full professors, it is also a goal to promote and facilitate the academic careers of our research partners, recruit new researchers, train students (MA and Ph.D), and strengthen the research field (cf. wp. # 4-5).

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