The New Welfare State
Experiences in the Everyday Work Life of Swedish Employment Agency Officers

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SIMV21, Master’s Thesis, 30 credits
Spring, 2014
Supervisor: Åsa Lundqvist
Abstract

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During the past decades, the Swedish welfare state has been transformed in profound ways. Many important changes are related to the labour market, particularly the organisation of the unemployed. The unemployment insurance, as well as the health insurance system has changed dramatically, resulting in implications for the organisation of work at the Swedish National Employment Agency, Arbetsförmedlingen. This thesis explores how these changes have affected the everyday work of the employment officers, especially those who are working with people with disabilities that hinder gainful employment. The aim is to investigate how they experience the changes and implications of these changes in their day-to-day work.

The research questions are: What kind of changes have been made in the Swedish welfare system? How have said changes contributed to enabling participation in the labour market for people with disabilities that hinder work? How have said changes affected the work situation for officers of Arbetsförmedlingen working with vocational rehabilitation?

The thesis is based on a feminist methodology, and the theoretical framework is based on a feminist critique of capitalism. The study is qualitative, and the material of analysis consists of eight semi-structured interviews, created with ten informants working as officers of Arbetsförmedlingen. The analytical approach is to analyse the processes and systems that organise the informants’ work situation, rather than the actual actions of the informants or their clients. The results display how Arbetsförmedlingen have been assigned to work with a group of people without having the adequate resources to do so, and how the informants feel that they do not have a say in the organisation of work. The State assigns responsibility for structural unemployment upon individuals, and it is therefore argued that the State claims nonresponsibility for their employees, and their citizens. It is also argued that the State reinforces inequality among job-seekers with disabilities that hinder work, by demanding counter performances in order to receive any kind of financial support from the State and thus construct further polarisation between jobseekers. These changes seem to enable participation in the labour market, but only if the unemployed citizens conform to the norm of the ideal citizen. Keywords: Welfare State, Unemployment, Employment Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation, Citizenship, Feminist Theory
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Aim of Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Theoretical Approach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Development of a New Kind of Welfare State</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>The Swedish Model and the Policy of Activation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>The Emergence of Activation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Activation in the Swedish Context</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4</td>
<td>National Elections of 2006 – Changing the System</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Defining the Economy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Nonresponsibility</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2.1</td>
<td>Nonresponsibility and Unemployment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Organisation of Arbetsförmedlingen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The Different Sections</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Historical Review of Arbetsförmedlingen</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>The Emergence of a New Agency</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>A Historical Review of Vocational Disability Policies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Disabilities That Hinder Work – To Investigate and Encode</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Cooperation with Other Authorities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>The Cooperation with Försäkringskassan</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>The Different Economic Support Systems</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>The Unemployment Insurance</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1.1</td>
<td>How the Unemployment Insurance is Disbursed</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>Support for Activity - Aktivitetsstöd</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>Economic Support from the Social Services</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>Sickness Allowance and Sickness Benefit</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Method, Material and Tools of Analysis</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Interviews</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Ethical Considerations in the Research Process</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Anonymisation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Preunderstanding, and the Role of the Researcher</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Delimitations and Certain Concepts</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5  The Informants ........................................................................................................... 27
  4.5.1  Selection of Informants ....................................................................................... 27
4.6  Analytical Approach .................................................................................................. 29
  4.6.1  Analysis of the Interviews ................................................................................... 29
5  Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 31
  5.1  Changing Relations of Work and Welfare ............................................................... 31
  5.2  Consequences of Activation Policies ....................................................................... 33
  5.3  Becoming the Entrepreneurial Subject ...................................................................... 36
  5.4  The Professional Constructor of an Ideal Worker .................................................. 39
  5.5  The Importance of Time .......................................................................................... 41
  5.6  Different Assignments, Different Conditions .......................................................... 43
  5.7  Unheard Voices in the Organisation ......................................................................... 45
  5.8  Lack of Consistency ............................................................................................... 47
6  Conclusion - Nonresponsibility in a Swedish Context ............................................... 50
7  References ....................................................................................................................... 54
  7.1  Reports and Laws ..................................................................................................... 55
  7.2  Web-Based References ............................................................................................ 56
  7.3  Other Resources ...................................................................................................... 60
8  Appendix ......................................................................................................................... 62
I am sitting in one of the rooms at my workplace, reading about the next client I am going to meet. The man I am waiting for has been working at a road carriers company for several years, but suffered an injury at his workplace and the company terminated his employment. His doctor granted him sick-leave, and told him that he had to visit Arbetsförmedlingen on the 10th of May, the day after the sick-leave permit had expired. Unluckily, the date was wrong. He should have visited us on the 7th of May, and since he has been “outside” of the system for three days, his social insurance has ceased to exist, and he will no longer be entitled to sickness allowance. He is not a member of the unemployment insurance, thus he will not receive any money from them, and the Social Services requires him to apply for several jobs per week in order to receive financial support from them. But he is injured, on sick-leave, and cannot take on any kind of job at the moment. The frustration, anger, and hopelessness in his eyes when he enters my room is heart-breaking. He has been working in Sweden for thirty years, “paying his taxes, trying to do good”, he says, with tears in his eyes. Unfortunately, his situation is just like many of my other clients, and I do not know how to help him.

1 Introduction

During the past decades, the Swedish welfare state has been transformed in profound ways. Many important changes are related to the labour market, particularly the organisation of the unemployed. The unemployment insurance, as well as the health insurance system has changed dramatically, resulting in implications for the organisation of work at the Swedish National Employment Agency, Arbetsförmedlingen. I am interested in how these changes have affected the everyday work of the employment officers, especially those who are working with people with disabilities that hinder gainful employment. The agency defines disabilities that hinder work widely, and the concept may involve physical, psychological, neurological, or social disabilities. The aim for the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen is to help job-seekers to find, obtain, and keep a paid employment. In this thesis, I explore what kind of implications the changes in the Swedish welfare state have had for the vocational rehabilitation that the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen are conducting, as well as for the individuals with disabilities that hinder work. I believe this is important to study in order to understand how political decisions affect the society and its citizens, as well as the employees of the State who deliver the policies to the citizens.
1.1 Aim of Study
The overall aim of this thesis is to explore how organisational changes in the labour market have affected the everyday work situation for the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen working with vocational rehabilitation. My aim is to investigate how they experience the changes and implications of these changes in their day-to-day work. This has led me to the following research questions:

- What kind of changes have been made in the Swedish welfare system?
- How have said changes contributed to enabling participation in the labour market for people with disabilities that hinder work?
- How have said changes affected the work situation for officers of Arbetsförmedlingen working with vocational rehabilitation?

1.1.1 Disposition
This thesis will start with the theoretical framework of the thesis, followed by a description of Arbetsförmedlingen and how the agency is organised, an overview of disability-policies in relation to the labour market, and a review of the different kinds of financial benefits provided by the Swedish State. I will then present a description of the method I have chosen, and the analysis of my material. The thesis ends with a concluding discussion regarding my results as well as suggestions for future research.
2 Theoretical Approach

In this section I will present the theory framing my thesis. The theory is based on a feminist critique of capitalism. I have chosen this theoretical framework since I am exploring the structural processes behind the changing relations of the welfare state, and the practical implications of these changes. I will display what kind of changes have occurred in the Swedish welfare state and in the Swedish labour market policies since the 1990's, and offer a model of explanation to the practical implications these changes have had for my informants.

2.1 The Development of a New Kind of Welfare State

During the past decades, the welfare state has undergone a change where the social policies which have traditionally had decommodification as a key objective, have increasingly been replaced by policies emphasising re-commodification (Dingeldey, 2007; Jessop, 1999). This has been analysed by British sociologist Bob Jessop (1999) in terms of a change towards an enabling state, or as a transformation from the traditional post-war 'Keynesian Welfare National State' (KWNS) towards the 'Schumpeterian Workfare Postnational Regime' (SWPR). The definitions of the KWNS and the SWPR are general, and there may not exist a pure form of either of them, but in order to understand the changes, I will outline the basic interpretations of how and why the shift has occurred. The KWNS can be defined based on four dimensions: First, it aims at securing full employment in a national economy; second, the social policy role had a distinctive welfare orientation, where economic and social policies were linked to economic and social rights; third, the KWNS was national since those economic and social policies were pursued within a historically and socially constructed national state with a national economy, and a society with national citizens; fourth, the KWNS was 'statist' since it was state institutions that facilitated and corrected the operation of market forces, shaping civil society and the identities held by its citizens. However, the KWNS has undergone a crisis, and began to fail as a mode of governance when it became inconsistent with the objects it was governing; the state can no longer treat the national economy as closed, but must transform into becoming more flexible, capable, and reliable agents of new economic strategies. The shifts in the economy have led to demands for more differentiated and flexible forms of economic and social policies, and the national economy has been weakened by internationalisation and the formation of triad economies such as the European Union, among others. Furthermore, due to the increasing complexity of society described above there has been increasing reliance on networks and partnerships as modes of governance. Thus, the KWNS have been restructured towards the
SWPR due to these tendencies of crisis, and the shifts towards SWPR can be characterised as followed: Firstly, instead of aiming for full employment, the SWPR tries to promote structural competitiveness by encouraging permanent innovation and flexibility in open economies. Secondly, the SWPR aims at providing welfare services that benefit business, whilst the KWNS tried to extend the social rights of citizens, thus the SWPR demotes individual needs to second place. Thirdly, the formerly important national state has been replaced by the postnational state in the SWPR, since economic and social policy-making functions have been transferred upwards (e.g. the EU, World Bank, OECD etc.), downwards (to local, and regional functions), and sideways through cooperation. However, this has led to a paradox, since the national states have an enhanced role in controlling the transfer of these powers. Finally, the SWPR promotes an increased importance of non-state mechanisms in compensating for market failures, as well as in the delivery of state-sponsored economic and social policies (Jessop 1999). Within this change, activating labour market policies have come to play an important role (Dingeldey 2007), and below I will demonstrate how the labour market policy in Sweden has undergone a change since the 1990’s.

2.1.1 The Swedish Model and the Policy of Activation
The Swedish society has been characterised by a strong work norm for many centuries, and there has been a long tradition of politically, and morally defining the citizen as a worker. The work the individual performs is a sign of them "paying their dues", and this has emerged as an important social principle. Citizenship, and the civil, political, and social rights that comes along with it, is associated with a corresponding set of social obligations, e.g. to work and pay taxes (Johansson & Hornemann Møller 2009). One of the most central political principles of the Swedish welfare state is thus Arbetslinjen, which infers that people who are unemployed will primarily be offered a job, education, or any other labour market program, before receiving any form of cash compensation from the welfare state. All possibilities to make the unemployed self-contained should therefore be exhausted before they are justified to long-term financial support from the welfare state. The active labour market policies have materialised Arbetslinjen by serving its dual purpose - to develop, and make the labour market more efficient, as well as to govern and push the unemployed (ibid). Swedish social scientist Rickard Ulmestig (2009) discusses how the economic crisis in the 1990’s creates new problems in the Swedish labour market, and that there are three main issues that the actors of the labour market policies need to relate to. First of all, the costs for the economic provision system have remained at a high level.
even after the economic crisis of the 1990’s, even though the focus has been more on the health insurance, rather than the unemployment insurance or the economic support from the social services in the first decades of the new millennium. Secondly, there have been structural changes in the labour market. Many of the industrial jobs that previously employed many people in Sweden, above all people with a lower degree of education, were no longer in the same need of manpower due to the automation of manual tasks. Ulmestig (ibid) also points out that an important feature of this structural change stems from the increasing competition by goods produced in countries with lower costs of production. Third, there was a legitimacy crisis of the welfare state and the labour market policy, caused by a perceived inefficiency to maintain *Arbetslinjen*, that the rules of the unemployment insurance were not followed, and that the labour market policy was not designed to handle the massive amount of people who became unemployed during the 1990’s (ibid).

### 2.1.2 The Emergence of Activation

The idea of activation as policy emerged around 1990, coincidental to the economic crisis in several European countries, and a significant ideological change in Western Europe, based on the new policy of *workfare* applied in the U.S. during the Reagan administration. The idea behind *workfare* was to break the dependence of welfare systems by inserting requirements of work and obligations as counter performances\(^1\) to allowances, often with discipline and punishment involved. In Europe, the public debate focused on how too many groups of people where preying on the welfare system, and activation had implications not only for the unemployed (Hornemann Møller, 2009). Swedish political scientist Magnus Dahlstedt (2009) discuss the Swedish model as a well-recognised, social-democratic, nationally-based welfare regime. During the 1990’s, this changed in Sweden, and the model was replaced by a *workfare* regime with neoliberal elements, where flexibility, innovation, and international competition became superior goals (ibid; Jessop, 1999). Sociologist Iver Hornemann Møller (2009) offers two structural explanations to activation policy; first, the global economy shifted towards more flexible means of production, demands for a flexible work force, a change in welfare policies, and the demands for developing a monetarist economic policy. Secondly, an international domination of a neoliberal ideology that demands counter performances when receiving public

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\(^1\) This is my translation of the Swedish word “motprestation”, this means that one needs to do something in order to receive something, and I have not found a better translation than “counter performance”. Even though I am aware of the delimitations and ambiguousness of the English term, I find it to be the best translation.
allowances. Moreover, in almost all of the European countries, there has been an extensive
decentralisation and delegation of governmental tasks to both regional, and municipal
organisations. In addition, private companies have been granted access to the public sphere,
which has spawned several new actors, and made possible an actor-driven cooperation in the
implementation of activation at the local level (ibid; Ulmestig, 2009).

2.1.3 Activation in the Swedish Context
The activation of unemployed people has increased in Sweden, and the activating interventions
are often based on both a logic of control and discipline, as well as an endeavour to capacitate
the unemployed. Citizens are expected to be active and engaged in their own capacity building,
but they are also expected to accept that this is the strict policy that applies to almost everyone,
even groups of people who previously received more consideration, for example, people with
disabilities (Johansson & Hornemann Møller, 2009). The changes in the labour market at both
the national and local level, reveal a new meaning of the Swedish Arbetslinjen, and the
requirement to be available for work has been extended to cover not only the unemployed, but
several groups in society, e.g. people that are on sick-leave, people with disabilities, or people
who have disability pension, etc. The financial incentives available require counter
performances by the individual, and if they do not meet the requirements, their economic
compensation could be reduced, or even withdrawn (ibid).

2.1.4 National Elections of 2006 – Changing the System
Facing the national elections in 2006, the bourgeois parties in the Swedish parliament, and
especially the right-wing party Moderaterna critiqued the labour market policies implemented
by the social-democratic government. Their main critique was based on the idea that the
unemployment insurance had become a system of support rather than a redevelopment aid,
replacing regular work for wages, the so called Arbetslinjen. The bourgeois parties accused the
social-democratic government of using the labour market policies to hide the actual rate of
unemployment, rather than as a means of getting people to re-enter the labour market (Ulmestig,
2009). They explained to voters that the source of conflict did not lie between work and capital
as the Swedish Model was founded upon, but between work and alienation. They managed to
separate the political landscape of Sweden in two camps; The ones supporting work and activity,
and the ones supporting exclusion and passivity (Dahlstedt, 2009) Based on this critique, they
legitimised a change of the system and won the elections in 2006, creating a new coalition in the political landscape; Alliansen. The new government rapidly implemented several reforms in the labour market policies, and among the first was the creation of a much more restrictive unemployment insurance. They argue that a too generous unemployment insurance will create passivity among job-seekers, and thus they changed it to a redevelopment aid in the hopes of creating a higher rate of employment (ibid). Moreover, during 2008 new rules regarding social insurance were implemented. A sick individual’s right to obtain sickness allowance was imposed with a time limit as well as with stricter rules for granting such financial support. Furthermore, the chain of rehabilitation was introduced, and the insurability of a person was conditioned in relation to the individual’s willingness to be at the disposal of the labour market (forsakringskassan.se/forandringar-inom-socialforsakringen). In addition to the restricted unemployment- and social insurance, Alliansen introduced several tax deductions related to the work-life, claiming that it should “pay off to work” (alliansen.se). Furthermore, they have deregulated several businesses, which have created private organisations within health care, schools, employment services, pharmacies etc. They have also lowered the general payroll tax for unemployed youth, as well as implemented tax deduction when purchasing domestic services, and construction work (ibid).

2.2 Defining the Economy

Now that we have established how the Swedish labour market policies are formulated, it is in order to consider why there exists such thing as labour market policies in the first place. The labour market in its current form is based upon a capitalist society where one person sells their labour force and someone else buys it. The canonical definition of 'the Economy' contains the production of goods and services, the exchange of those goods and services for money in markets, and the distribution of the profit from those exchanges (Acker, 2006). However, feminist scholars have critiqued this view, claiming that there is more to it than that, and American feminist sociologist Joan Acker (ibid) argues that the notion of the economy must be broadened to include women’s unpaid labour, informal economic activities, as well as state activities, since 'the economy' is enclosed in processes of social, political, and cultural nature. She defines the economy as “the activities of provisioning human life or providing the material goods and processes for provisioning and survival” (ibid:170). Work is organized in gendered and racialized ways Acker (ibid) argues, and the organization of work still builds upon the
assumption of a separation between production and reproduction. This separation continues to reinforce itself with two simultaneous processes; firstly, the favouring of economic organizations over other areas of life, and secondly, the capitalist corporations successful claims of nonresponsibility for human reproduction and the environment.

2.2.1 Class
Furthermore, Acker (ibid) argues for the concept of inequality regimes, which specifies the intertwining processes that produce and reproduce racialized, and gendered class relations within organisations. Inequality regimes, like class relations, are not fixed, but fluid and changeable. Acker (ibid) also points out that there are differences between different inequalities, and she argues that class relations are seen as legitimate inequalities regulated by e.g. laws, and accepted as natural and necessary to keep the socioeconomic system going. Postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) also discusses class as gendered and racialised in a globalised, capitalist context, but she argues for the notion of the “citizen-consumer” instead. According to Mohanty (ibid), only the ones able to consume are seen as a proper citizens, and thus, someone must do the work that makes the citizen-consumer possible; these workers are often gendered and racialised in their class position. Feminist scholar Anne McClintock (1995) displays how class was gendered and racialized in the Victorian era, and she explicitly shows how working class women were described and viewed upon as ‘another race’. Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen (2002) conveys the notions of global cities and survival circuits, claiming that globalization of the economy has rendered new demands for low-wage workers serving the higher educated professionals that can afford to consume. Thus Sassen (2002) argues, just as Acker (2006), McClintock (1995), and Mohanty (2003), that gender, race and class as categories cannot be separated but are intertwined. All four authors put forward a critique against capitalism, and this critique is crucial for feminist thought, since capitalism as a system legitimates inequalities.

2.2.2 Nonresponsibility
As I have asserted above, capitalism produces class processes, and Acker (2006) argues that race and gender are built into capitalism through the history of gender and racial segregation of paid labour. White men have dominated and managed capitalist efforts (production) throughout centuries, while the market of nurturing and caring for human beings (reproduction) has been assigned as unpaid labour to women, and thus subordinated them in the process (ibid). Due to
the racialising and gendering of work, Acker (ibid) argues that capitalism is organised in ways that are both antithetical and necessary in order to maintain the organisation of reproduction, and this contributes to the prolongation of gendered and racialised class inequalities. In this process, large corporations are important due to their increasing control of the resources of provision, and their resistance to take responsibility for such social goals (ibid). Nonresponsibility is vividly constructed through various organisational ideas, and state actions, for example through legislations, Acker (ibid) argues. The concept of nonresponsibility is defined as rejecting, or attempting to avoid, contributions to meeting the needs of people, if these do not enhance production or expansion of the corporation (ibid). This also includes a refusal to take responsibility for environmental damage, the safety and health of the community, as well as the unwillingness to reinforce public programs such as various forms of income replacement etc. People are affected negatively by capitalism's nonresponsibility Acker (ibid) argues, but effects are seckered across gendered and racialised class processes. It contributes to the devaluation of reproduction, and in the process helps to maintain the image of the ideal worker as someone without caring obligations.

2.2.2.1 Nonresponsibility and Unemployment

But then what about the unemployed? Acker (ibid) conveys that the ongoing class processes in the capitalist society also involve people who are not employed, i.e. the retired, children, and people excluded from the labour force. She argues that relations of distribution other than wages, salaries, and profits are essential to survival, and thus can be seen as elements of class constructions that are also gendered and racialised (ibid). Central to this thesis are of course the state relations of distribution, which are usually termed the welfare state, and include economic transfers as e.g. unemployment insurance, social benefits, and sickness benefits. Acker (ibid) argues that transfers by the welfare state to individuals and families as substitute for wages when e.g. unemployment, decommodify labour by protecting workers against being coerced to sell their labour to any given price. However, because work is gendered and racialised, and these transfers are based upon previous income, white women and persons from racial and ethnic minorities are nearly always disfavoured in the process, due to their prior earnings being lower than those of white men. Despite the fact that laws and rules often are written in race- and gender-neutral vocabularies, welfare state benefits are often gendered and racialised, and have an impact on equality, on the structuring of class differences, and on the relative proportion of population living in poverty (ibid).
3 The Organisation of Arbetsförmedlingen

In this section I will display how Arbetsförmedlingen is organised and managed, present a historical review of the development of Arbetsförmedlingen, as well as of vocational disability policies. Furthermore, I will show how the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen investigate and encode individuals with disabilities that hinder work, and display how the cooperation with other authorities is organised, especially the cooperation with Försäkringskassan that is of upmost importance to this thesis.

The Swedish Employment Service Agency Arbetsförmedlingen is a national administrative authority whose main goal is to provide employers with labour (arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss). The Swedish government decides upon the policies and main goals for the labour market through laws and constitutions, and the government affects Arbetsförmedlingen directly through a yearly letter of regulation. This letter of regulation is the steering document for the agency, and contains more detailed assignments for Arbetsförmedlingen, than those regulated by the laws and constitutions (Olofsson & Wadensjö, 2009; arbetsformedlingen.se/Uppdraget).

There are 320 local agencies throughout Sweden, distributed in eleven labour market areas. In March 2013 the agency employed 13 055 persons, 67% women and 33% men. The board of directors is the highest decision-making body of the agency, led by the director-general appointed by the Swedish government (arbetsformedlingen.se/om-oss).

3.1 The Different Sections

Arbetsförmedlingen is divided into different sections with specific responsibilities, and Arbetsförmedlingen officers working with vocational rehabilitation are organised under the Section for Production, where the agency’s operative instrumentality is organised. There is also a Section for Vocational Rehabilitation. Within this section there are 40 operative units within the eleven labour market areas, excluding the units working specifically with job-seekers who have disabilities regarding sight, hearing or who are deaf, and these units work overall in several labour market areas. The Section for Vocational Rehabilitation employ the specialists that the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen consult, such as psychologists, social advisory officers, occupational therapists, and sight-, and hearing advisory officers. The office managers of Arbetsförmedlingen have a shared responsibility with the branch heads of the Section for Vocational Rehabilitation, to support the interaction between the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen
and the specialists. This work is integrated at the local agency offices where the specialists also have their work stations (ibid).

### 3.2 Historical Review of Arbetsförmedlingen

During the 20th century, a large part of the labour market policies developments in Sweden has been characterised by an expanded state role. There has been a development of public work, a prohibition against private employment offices, and the employment offices have been nationalised, amongst other things (Olofsson & Wadensjö, 2009). However, since the 1980’s this started to change, the prohibition against private employment offices was resolved in 1993, and there has been a development towards a reduced governmental labour market policy. In the beginning of the 1990’s, as mentioned above, there was a massive economic crisis which affected the labour market policies in Sweden, amongst other things, active measures were taken to adjust the massive unemployment that occurred (ibid). During this period of time, shorter interventions outside of the ordinary labour market became common, and the demarcation between the employment service, and the social services became blurry due to cooperation between the two, as well as the individuals’ difficulties to provide for themselves. Because of the high rate of unemployment, the focus of Swedish labour market policies shifted from quality, to quantity (Salonen, 2009). This resulted in critical reviews towards the national employment agency, which was accused of organising and mediating labour market policy measurements rather than mediating jobs. This critique was one of the motives behind the dissolution of the previous agencies and the establishment of Arbetsförmedlingen instead (Olofsson & Wadensjö, 2009).

### 3.2.1 The Emergence of a New Agency

Until 2008 the government labour market policies were administrated through Arbetsmarknadsverket, which organised three different institutions; Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen (AMS), Länsarbetsnämnderna - both independent agencies - and the local employment agency offices. In 2008 however, the organisation was fundamentally changed, and a new, integrated administrative authority called Arbetsförmedlingen was established (ibid). In the same year, the law from 1975 which made employers liable to report vacancies to Arbetsförmedlingen was abolished, and since then, only 30 - 40% of the jobs appointed in the Swedish labour market have been mediated by Arbetsförmedlingen (ibid). Even though the governmental labour
market policy is centralised towards *Arbetsförmedlingen* today, trends in the relocation of parts of the operation are clear (ibid). Today, a system of procurement has evolved, where *Arbetsförmedlingen* purchases several services (such as job-coaching, educational programs, and other labour market programs) from private companies and other official participants (ibid).

### 3.3 A Historical Review of Vocational Disability Policies

Since the 1940’s there have been special measures for people with vocational disabilities, with the introduction of subsidised employments within private companies, as well as within the public sector. During the 1970’s there was an official investigation called *Sysselsättningsutredningen* which worked towards the goal “work for all”, and which resulted in an interim report, “Work for the disabled”, which clearly enhanced the direction towards work regarding the measures for people with vocational disabilities. In 1980 the previously municipal, and county council organised protected activity named *Samhällsföretag* was nationalised. Subsidised work within private companies, the public sector becoming Employment with Subsidised Wage (ESW), and the creation of labour market institutes, are signs of the enhanced direction towards work mentioned above (ibid). Since 2002, *Arbetsförmedlingen* has the overall responsibility of disability issues within labour market policy. In the Regulation (2007:1030) with Instructions for the National Employment Agency people with disabilities are termed as prioritized, and there are other decrees that regulate how this should be done. In 2011, the current government resolved a strategy for the implementation of disability policy in Sweden during the years 2011 - 2016. *Arbetsförmedlingen* has four interim targets formulated on the basis of two orientations of the labour market policy; the capacity utilisation rate for people with disabilities that impair work should increase, and the matching between job seeking people with disabilities that impair work and job vacancies should be effective.

The four interim targets formulated therein are:

1. The proportion of people with disabilities that impair work who acquire employment, or education shall increase annually over the period.

2. The proportion of young people under 30, with disabilities that impair work, who acquire employment, or education shall increase annually over the period.
3. *Arbetsförmedlingen* shall, with assured quality, reduce the time between an individual’s enrolment at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, and the identification, and registration, of that individual’s disability that impairs work.

4. In the procurement of labour market policy measures, there shall always be requirements of availability in the technical specifications, and they shall be included in the agreement. *Arbetsförmedlingen* is annually (2012-2015) to report their work with the interim targets in a special report to the government (AF Rapport 2014).

### 3.3.1 Disabilities That Hinder Work – To Investigate and Encode

The officers of *Arbetsförmedlingen* must, as stated above, shorten the time between registration at the agency, to identification of a person’s disability that could impair work. This is supposed to shorten the time between registration at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and employment, since the person can receive the adequate support they need if their disability that impairs work can be identified. The disability needs to be confirmed by a medical report, or by documents from another authority, for example an investigation made by the Social Services or a certificate from the correctional treatment agency. The investigation made by *Arbetsförmedlingen* must include a description of the job-seeker’s conditions to work, as well as their possibilities, and limitations in relation to the disability. The actual encoding in the internal system of *Arbetsförmedlingen* is made according to a structured system with fourteen different groupings of codes. A written consent needs to be signed by the individual receiving the code in order to allow the officer to encode them (Administrative Support, 2013). Thus, when discussing 'disability' or 'impairment' in terms of “psychological disability”, “physical impairment” or “specific learning difficulties”, this includes several kinds of diagnosis possible.

### 3.4 Cooperation with Other Authorities

Within the responsibility of disability issues within the labour market policy, lies also the assignment to cooperate with other national authorities, in order to achieve a more efficient use of available resources in the rehabilitation sector. *Arbetsförmedlingen* cooperates with the Social Services, schools, health services, the Correctional Treatment Agency, as well as the National Agency of Health Insurance, *Försäkringskassan*. 


3.4.1 The Cooperation with Försäkringskassan

The last-mentioned agency is an essential partner for Arbetsförmedlingen, and they have a common responsibility to clarify the overall need for vocational rehabilitation for individuals that have been on sick-leave for a longer period, or that are about to lose their allowance from Försäkringskassan. This cooperation is separated from the Vocational Rehabilitation at the local offices of Arbetsförmedlingen, due to financial reasons, and methods of work (arbetsformedlingen.se/Rehabilitering-till-arbete). For those who are unemployed, Försäkringskassan assesses their ability to work in relation to the work that normally occurs in the labour market from the first day of the sickness period. In this assessment, Försäkringskassan shall not consider the individual’s age, education, residence conditions, previous work, or other similar factors (forsakringskassan.se/Rehabiliteringskedjan).

The Chain of Rehabilitation

Försäkringskassan constructs a plan together with the individual, for returning to work. The aim of the plan is to provide an overview of the measures and actions needed in order to do so, and it can be revised and changed during the period of illness, if the conditions for the individual change. The plan is also a tool for Försäkringskassan to coordinate the interventions of different actors [such as Arbetsförmedlingen]. The individual who is ill receives a personal administrator at Försäkringskassan who has the overall responsibility for the health insurance case. The personal administrator has a direct contact with the officer at Arbetsförmedlingen working with the case. The individual who is ill needs to sign a form of consent with both authorities in order for them to be able to discuss the case and disclose the information. In the first 90 days of the period of illness, Försäkringskassan assesses whether or not the employed person can do their regular job. The employee is only entitled to sickness allowance, if they cannot perform their normal work, or anything else that their employer can offer. When an employee has been on sick leave for 90 days, Försäkringskassan must find out whether the employer has the ability to temporarily offer the employee another job, or if it is possible to adapt the workplace, or the working conditions, so that the employee can work despite the disease, injury or disability. The employee is only entitled to sickness allowance if they cannot do any work whatsoever offered by their employer. The employee is entitled to leave their current employment in order to try out another job to see if they can do it in spite of their illness, injury or disability. If the employee is still unable to work due to illness after 180 days, Försäkringskassan needs to find out if the person is capable of some other kind of work outside the employer's business. If the employee
can cope with some kind of work that normally occurs in the labour market, they are no longer entitled to sickness allowance. After one year, Försäkringskassan assesses the working capacity of an individual in relation to any kind of work on the regular labour market, not only the kind of work the individual previously did (forsakringskassan.se/Rehabiliteringskedjan).

3.5 The Different Economic Support Systems

Arbetsförmedlingen per se does not disburse any financial support to individuals seeking economic support. When one is faced with unemployment, there is the opportunity to seek allowance from the unemployment insurance, to obtain support for activity, Aktivitetsstöd from Försäkringskassan, or to seek economic support from the Social Services. If you are on sick-leave, you can apply for sickness allowance, or if you have an established reduced working capacity, the more permanent sickness benefit, also from Försäkringskassan. In this section I will try to disentangle the different financial support systems as they are designed in the spring of 2014, in order to make visible the requirements job-seekers

3.5.1 The Unemployment Insurance

As mentioned above, the unemployment insurance has been dramatically transformed during the past years. In January of 2007 the right-wing government, Alliansen, increased the membership fees, as well as the rules regulating who can obtain unemployment insurance. This led to a massive secedes from the unemployment insurances, and by the beginning of July 2007, over 300 000 members had left their unemployment insurance. These changes were made despite of massive objections from the unemployment insurances, the unions, and the general public (samorg.org). The new rules imply that in order to receive unemployment insurance, the person that applies for the insurance need to meet certain conditions. It is the responsibility of Arbetsförmedlingen to inform the applicant of these conditions, but also to verify that the applicant meets the conditions (arbetsformedlingen.se/ Ersattning-vid-arbetsloshet). A person is entitled to unemployment insurance allowance when unemployed, if the person

- Is fit for work, and unhindered to undertake work on behalf of an employer for at least 3 hours per day, and on average, at least 17 hours per week.
- Is registered as a jobseeker at Arbetsförmedlingen and actively searching for a job.
- Is also otherwise available for work in the labour market.
It is the responsibility of Arbetsförmedlingen to notify the unemployment insurance fund if the person does not meet these conditions (arbetsformedlingen.se/Villkor).

### 3.5.1.1 How the Unemployment Insurance is Disbursed

The unemployment insurance is disbursed in the shape of a basic amount, or earnings-related compensation. In order to receive any kind of allowance from the unemployment insurance, one must meet the conditions of work. The later infers that one needs to have worked for at least 80 hours per month, for at least six months during the past 12 months prior to one’s unemployment. One can also meet the condition of work by having worked for at least 480 hours during six months of coherent work, provided that one has worked for at least 50 hours per month. If a person has been unable to work during the past twelve months prior to unemployment, the time can be extended, so called ‘disregarded time’. This includes sickness, full-time studies, parental leave, or participation in military service. The disregarded time cannot exceed five years beyond the last twelve months. It is the unemployment insurance fund, of which the person seeking allowances is a member that decides on the right to unemployment benefits, and what compensation the person will receive. The allowance is liable to taxes, and pension-entitled, and it is the government who determines the size of the maximum daily allowance and the basic amount. The unemployment insurance is disbursed in the form of a daily allowance for a maximum of five days per week, Monday-Friday. The number of days per week will decrease if a person is ill, or has other issues that hinder work. One can be reimbursed for a maximum of 300 days, but this can be extended by 150 days if the person seeking allowances is a parent of a child under 18 years of age. In order to obtain a new period of allowance from the unemployment insurance, one needs to meet the condition of work once again. If a person is partially employed and only works part time, they will receive compensation for the time they are unemployed. However, when partially employed, one can only get compensation for a maximum of 75 days, when those days are exhausted the person needs to make a choice between keeping the part-time employment, or give notice to leave, and seek unemployment insurance full time instead (arbetsformedlingen.se/Fakta-omersattningen).

#### The Basic Amount

The basic amount is based on how much one has worked, not how much one has earned. It is disbursed to those who are not members of an unemployment insurance fund, or who have not
been members for the required time of twelve months. In order to receive the basic amount one needs to have turned twenty years of age. The basic amount, which is not related to earnings, will never exceed SEK 320 per day, or SEK 6400 per every four weeks. If the person’s average working time prior to the unemployment is less than full-time, the basic amount will decrease (arbetsformedlingen.se/Fakta-om-ersattningen).

**The Earnings-Based Compensation**

Earnings-based compensation is based on the individual’s previous income. In order to receive this kind of insurance, one must have been a member of an unemployment insurance fund for at least twelve months, as well as meet the condition of work. The amount one receives in income-related allowances will depend on the average income one had during the twelve months prior to becoming unemployed. During the first 200 days of unemployment, the compensation is at the most 80 percent of the previous average income. After 200 days of compensation the amount decreases to no more than 70 percent of the previous average income. However, the highest amount that one can receive per day throughout the benefit period is SEK 680 per day, or SEK 13600 per every four weeks (arbetsformedlingen.se/Fakta-om-ersattningen).

### 3.5.2 Support for Activity - *Aktivitetsstöd*

Unemployment benefits are coordinated with the support for Activity, *Aktivitetsstöd*, which is the allowance a person can get when participating in a labour market program. This means that the days with *Aktivitetsstöd* are included in the benefit period of the unemployment insurance (arbetsformedlingen.se/Fakta-om-ersattningen). *Arbetsförmedlingen* assigns a person to a labour market program, and then *Försäkringskassan* decides if the person is entitled to *Aktivitetsstöd*, and then disburse this allowance. If a person meets the conditions for unemployment insurance, the *Aktivitetsstöd* is calculated from the daily allowance of the unemployment insurance. Thus, if a person participates in a program full-time, they can get a maximum of SEK 680 per day, before taxes. If a person does not qualify for unemployment insurance and has turned 25, they get SEK 223 per day in *Aktivitetsstöd* if they participate in a program full-time. In order to get paid every month, the person needs to fill out a form and send it to *Försäkringskassan* (forsakringskassan.se/ aktivitetstod).
3.5.3 Economic Support from the Social Services

Economic support is the outermost safety net of the Swedish society, this means that it may be relevant for an individual only if the livelihood cannot be provided for otherwise. Such other means may include: employment and wage income, social security rights, study grants, assets, or that someone else is bound to help support the individual (malmo.se/Forsorjningsstod). Salonen (2009) argues that during the 1990’s it became harder for unemployed individuals to gain access to the unemployment insurance due to changes in the system of qualification for the same, and many of those who received a lower allowance needed supplementary financing from the social services. Also, many of those who were unemployed but were not entitled to unemployment insurance were seen as an encumbrance to the employment service, and they were instead referred to the social services. This lead to a differentiation of the unemployed based on their system of support, between established unemployed people with unemployment insurance, and unestablished unemployed people with economic support from the social services (Salonen, 2009). The logic of activation was applied even in the social welfare system, and in order to receive economic support from the social services, the individual needs to make counter performances so as not to lose their allowance. This was said to be an “enhancement of Arbetslinjen” (ibid:69). In SFS 2001:453 (Ch. 4, §1), it is stated that those who cannot meet their needs, or cannot have them met otherwise, are entitled to assistance by the social welfare committee for their livelihood (economic support) and for their way of life in general. The individual has the right to a fair standard of living through the economic support, and the support shall be designed so as to enhance his or her ability to live independently (ibid). However, the social welfare committee may request that the person receiving income support participate in practices/ internships, or other skill-enhancing activity designated by the board, if the individual has not been offered any suitable labour market policy measure by Arbetsförmedlingen. The practices or skill-enhancing activities referred to above shall be aimed at developing the individual's ability in the future to support themselves. Activities shall strengthen the individual's opportunities to enter the labour market or on a continuing education. It should be designed with due consideration to the individual's personal preferences and circumstances. The social welfare board shall consult with Arbetsförmedlingen before making a decision (SFS 2001:453 Ch. 4, §4). If the individual, without valid reason, declines to participate in practice or other skill-enhancing activities designated under §4, the continued economic support shall be refused or reduced. The same applies if he or she without good reason fails to attend practice or competence-enhancing activities (SFS 2001:453 Ch. 4, §5). Thus, the economic support that
the social services call “the outermost safety net of the Swedish society” (malmö.se/Forsorjningstod), is conditioned to performance, as well as the reassurance that all other possibilities of income are exhausted.

3.5.4 Sickness Allowance and Sickness Benefit

*Försäkringskassan* is responsible for disbursing Sickness Allowance and Sickness Benefit. In this section, I will specify what is what, as well as when one can get what, when unemployed.

**Sickness Allowance**

Sickness allowance is money that one can get if one cannot search for work or accept employment because one is ill. The allowance one gets is just under 80 percent of one’s previous salary, but not more than SEK 486 per day, equivalent to SEK 14,580 per month. A person can get sickness allowance when unemployed, if the person is

- Unable to search for work or accept employment because they are ill. One must be ill at least a quarter of the time that one would have searched for work.
- Registered as a job seeker at *Arbetsförmedlingen*. However, there is an exception to this rule. If the person has stopped working less than 3 months before the person became ill, they can get sickness allowance even if they are not registered as a job seeker at *Arbetsförmedlingen*. They do not get any sickness allowance for the first 14 days in this case.
- Insured in Sweden. A person is insured in Sweden if their last job was here. However, one may have worked in another country and still be insured in Sweden, or have worked in Sweden but be insured in another country.

In order to apply for sickness allowance, one must report that one is ill to *Försäkringskassan* on the first day of illness. If one is ill for more than 7 days, one needs to submit a medical certificate to *Försäkringskassan*, in order to prove one’s illness (forsakringskassan.se/Om-Sjukpenning).

**Sickness Benefit**

Sickness Benefit is money a person can get if the person probably never will be able to work full time due to illness, injury, or disability. A person is entitled to sickness benefit if the person

- Has the age of 30, but younger than 65 years
• Is insured in Sweden and was insured when they got sick. One is insured in Sweden if one lives or works here.

How much one receives in sickness benefit depends on what income that person had prior to the sickness benefit. To apply for sickness benefit, one must submit an application and a medical report to Försäkringskassan. If a person applies for sickness benefit, and submits a medical report, Försäkringskassan will investigate the person’s condition by discussing the report and the application with the individual, and their doctor. However, this is only done when it is likely that the person never will be able to work full time, the office turnaround time is expected to be about four months from application till decision (forsakringskassan.se/Om-Sjukersättning).
4 Method, Material and Tools of Analysis

This thesis is a qualitative study, and I have conducted eight semi-structured interviews with ten informants from Arbetsförmedlingen. Interviewing is a social production of knowledge, where the knowledge is created in the relation between the interviewer and the interviewed. The quality of the produced data requires a preunderstanding by the researcher of the researched subject (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), and my intentions are to display the experiences of my informants in their day-to-day work, regarding the changing welfare state. In this section, I will present the method used, methodological reflections, delimitations and ethical considerations, and finally the informants.

4.1 The Interviews

Prior to conducting the interviews, I constructed a thematically organised interview-guide with suggestions of questions to each theme, based on the aim of the study (ibid). The three themes upon which I based my interviews were “The Job”, “The Clients”, and “The Tools”, and I wanted the informants to discuss these themes as freely as possible, in the hopes of mapping their experiences of their work situation in relation to the changing welfare state. In order to make the informants feel as comfortable as possible with being interviewed, I let them choose when and where the interview should take place, and all of them chose their workplace. In the beginning of each interview, I gave the informants an orientation, where I defined the situation (ibid); I told them who I am, that I am an employee of Arbetsförmedlingen, but that I am on a leave of absence to study Social Studies of Gender, and that I am interested in their experiences of their work. I told them the aim of the study, asked for their permission to record the interview, and informed them of their right to not answer questions, or to stop the interview if they did not feel comfortable with continuing. The initial orientation of the interview was followed up in the end, by me asking if they had anything else to add, and if they had any questions (ibid). Some of the informants had additional information and aspects they wanted to add, and some were content with the information they had provided. The informants were also informed that the recordings would be transcribed, and then destroyed, and when transcribing the interviews, I have tried to make the quotes more readable by transcribing them into written form, rather than

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2For the interview guide, please see Appendix.
colloquial (ibid). The interviews were conducted in the Swedish language, and the quotations in this thesis have been translated into English by me.

4.2 Ethical Considerations in the Research Process
My aim is to study the practical experiences of the changing relations of the welfare state, and thus, my hope is to contribute to visiblising the informants points of views, allowing their voices to be heard (Haraway 1988). Since I want to study the experiences of the street-level employment officers, and not their managers or their clients, I only asked the informants for an informed approval to my study, not the agency officials (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). In order for the informants to feel comfortable with discussing their experiences, they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality (ibid). Since Arbetsförmedlingen is such a large organisation, with many managers on different levels, there would have been a risk in asking permission from agency officials to conduct the interviews, since the informants then could have been compromised and their identities revealed. However, it could be problematic to not ask the managers if they perceive the informants as disloyal when they agree to interviews during their working-hours without asking permission to take time off from their regular work. In order to avoid such a situation, I let the informants decide the time and the place for the interviews, so that they would feel comfortable with the situation.

4.2.1 Anonymisation
In order to guarantee the anonymity of my informants, I will not distinguish between them in the analysis in any way. In some cases I have chosen to leave out the name of places, and other enunciations that might be revealing, such as name of companies or local labour market programs.

4.3 Preunderstanding, and the Role of the Researcher
In this thesis, my aim is to have a feminist perspective on research, and I will in this section explain my view of knowledge production and my role as a researcher. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) argue, alongside with Harding (2004), and Haraway (1988), that one is always positioned to power, and that power establishes what counts as knowledge. Haraway (1988) discusses the political as required to science, and she claims that the struggles over what is rational, or true knowledge as I interpret her, is really the struggle over how to see. Politics are thus highly involved in the art of [social] science, since it decides what knowledge is and who
are allowed and able to produce it. Science is also involved in politics since the aim for science is to understand, evolve and develop our world, and our knowledge about it (ibid). Both Haraway (ibid), and Harding (2004) argue that positioning is crucial for knowledge to be accountable, and that positioning is the one thing that infers responsibility for the research. Just like Harding (2004) deliberates knowledge as less false, and Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) argue that knowledge is always partial, Haraway (1988:586) discusses the researcher as a “split and contradictory self”, and she states that the feminist objectivity simply means situated knowledge (ibid), which I interpret as knowledge created in the moment, in that very context, with the researcher and informant as creators. “The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular” (ibid:590) she states, and hence, the produced knowledge could never be true for everybody at all times, only less false, or partial. Having a critical view from a certain position, and state that position, is thus key to produce any kind of knowledge, and I have tried to be reflexive in my research in order to see my own contribution to the production of knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As an employee of Arbetsförmedlingen, I have a certain preunderstanding of the day-to-day work as an employment officer within the field of vocational rehabilitation. All of my informants have been informed that I have been working as an officer of the employment service for a couple of years, and that I have mainly worked within vocational rehabilitation, but that I now am on a leave of absence in order to study Social Studies of Gender at Lund University. I believe that it has been positive to have this preunderstanding of their work when conducting the interviews, since this has allowed them to tell their stories without having to explain words, concepts or abbreviations (ibid). Furthermore, I believe it has given them a sense of confidence and closeness in the interview situation, and thus I believe they have opened themselves up to me by discussing their work in a more profound way. I have been very clear to each and every one of them that their answers are anonymous, and that I would not discuss their participation in my study with them, or anyone else. In having this kind of direct preunderstanding of the subject I am studying, I have been trying to ask the informants questions as openly as possible, in order not to influence their answers to me, and the interview-guide can be found in the appendix to this thesis. It is of upmost importance for me that their answers are their own, and not a reflection of what they think that I might want to here. However, there is always a risk in an interview situation, where my position as the researcher, but also a colleague of sorts, can affect their sense of sincerity, and I am aware of this.
4.4 Delimitations and Certain Concepts
As I have stated, I have chosen to interview employment officers that are working, or that have been working, within vocational rehabilitation, thus delimitating the subjects of research to this category of work. Since there have been a lot of changes in the social-, health-, and labour market policies, I wanted to explore how the individuals delivering the policies to the citizens with disabilities that hinder work experience these changes, and thus I narrowed the study down to employment officers with experience of working with vocational rehabilitation.

In lack of a better translation, I mainly use the word “client” to refer to the job-seekers my informants are responsible for. In Swedish, the informants refer to them as “sökande”, which could be translated to “seekers”, but I find this translation insufficient.

4.5 The Informants
The organisation of work at the local agency offices is different everywhere, at the particular offices that my informants work there are, however, similarities in how the daily work is organised. The officers of Arbetsförmedlingen are either working with their clients from the day they are registered at Arbetsförmedlingen, until the day they are discharged for any reason, or they are working within different functions, such as different labour market policy measures, for example Jobb- och Utvecklingsgarantin or Jobbgarantin för Ungdomar. The informants of this study are all officers of Arbetsförmedlingen, working within Vocational Rehabilitation in different ways. Six of the informants are all working at local agency offices, while four of them are working at offices that have the special assignment of cooperating with Försäkringskassan.

4.5.1 Selection of Informants
When searching for informants for this thesis, I had to make some delimitations in order to focus on its aim (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Thus, I chose to approach only officers of Arbetsförmedlingen that I know are working, or have been working with Vocational Rehabilitation. I then asked a few if they were interested in participating in this study, explained my criteria for participation, and asked them to forward the request to possible informants that they knew. All and all, I asked nine possible informants to participate, whereof seven confirmed their participation and two chose to decline. All but two of these were contacted face to face when I was visiting their offices, and two were contacted via e-mail. One informant contacted me when I was visiting one of the offices, asking to participate in the study. Two of the
Informants were the result of a forwarded request, and their condition of participation was to conduct the interview together which I agreed to. This interview ended up being with three informants.

**Informants from the Joint Action Offices (Arbetsförmedlingen/Försäkringskassan)**
The four informants working in cooperation with Försäkringskassan are all women. They have been working at Arbetsförmedlingen between 2, and 23 years. Three of them have been working with vocational rehabilitation between 4 and 8 years, while the fourth has been working with this for 2 years. The fourth informant has previously been working at Försäkringskassan for 10 years with the same assignment. All but one have experiences from different local offices of Arbetsförmedlingen, and the number of clients they are responsible for varies between 23 and 48 among them. These informants all discuss their work with emphasis on cooperation. The purpose of their work is to coordinate their interventions with Försäkringskassan, in order to achieve some kind of result for the clients they are working with. They all stress that if the case is not to be coordinated for some reason, for example that Försäkringskassan retreats from the cooperation, the clients are no longer to be registered at their offices, but transferred to a regular office of Arbetsförmedlingen.

**Informants working with Vocational Rehabilitation at the Local Offices**
There are six informants working at local offices of Arbetsförmedlingen. Two of them are women, and four of them are men. They have been working between 3 - 30 years at Arbetsförmedlingen, and they have been working with vocational rehabilitation between 1 to 8 years. Four of the informants are working with vocational rehabilitation today, and two of them are not currently working within this function. All but one have experience from different local offices of Arbetsförmedlingen, and all of them state that they only have an in-house education provided by Arbetsförmedlingen within the field of vocational rehabilitation. The number of clients they are, or have been, responsible for within vocational rehabilitation, vary between 149 and 530 among them. The informants from the regular offices of Arbetsförmedlingen also discuss cooperation as an essential part of their work day, but they discuss it in terms of a more unorganised activity. They argue that they have to be in contact with several other authorities, such as Försäkringskassan, but also health care services, social services, and first and foremost, employers. The organisation of their work differs from the informants from the cooperation offices, for example the officers within vocational rehabilitation to a higher degree needs to be
available for visiting hours in the client service area, and the numbers of clients they are responsible for are much higher than for those working at the cooperation offices.

4.6 Analytical Approach
Dhamoon (2010) argues that however important the focus of identities has been to feminist research, two other aspects may be even more important; “an analysis of interactive processes, and systems” (ibid:234). She refers to processes as the ways “subjectivities and social differences are produced”, and to systems as the traditionally established structures of domination (ibid). Furthermore, she argues that this analysis focuses on power, and that this focus is what gives feminist research its critical edge, i.e. the focus is not on the individual, the group, or even an institution, but on the “techniques of power” (ibid). The identities of groups or individuals are not delinked from research, they are still the ones effected and changed by the processes and systems. They are therefore essential to understanding oppression and inequalities, they are just not the focus of analysis. Categories or groups are important so as to be able to see the power structures that shape our lives; we have to remember that oppression is not connected to the individual but to the group, and that the group experience can give us knowledge about the structures of oppression (ibid). Therefore, I have tried to analyse the processes and systems that organise the informants’ work situation, rather than the actual actions of the informants or their clients.

4.6.1 Analysis of the Interviews
When performing this analysis, I have read and re-read the transcribed interview material with the theoretical framework and aim of the study in mind, and have thus analysed the interviews as a theoretical interpretation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, I have taken a critical role, attending to the larger social, political, and economical issues, rather than focusing on the language or the construction of meaning in the informants’ answers (ibid). I have alternated between the transcribed interviews, and the theoretical framework, trying to see what lies behind the informants answers in order to understand the issues they experience in their social context (ibid). I have identified several themes in the analysis, based on the informants’ continuous repetition of certain issues, and I discuss these themes in relation to the theoretical framework.
5 Analysis

In this section, I will present the result and analysis of my interviews. I have divided the material into different themes, based on the informants discussions regarding their work, and the themes will be discussed in relation to the theoretical approach to this thesis. This section ends with a concluding discussion of my results.

5.1 Changing Relations of Work and Welfare

The Swedish welfare state has in the past decades begun a change from the KWNS towards more of a SWPR as I have discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis, and one of the characteristics of this change is the shift from the aim of full employment, to competitiveness (Jessop 1999). The changing relations of the welfare state have had implications in the everyday work of my informants. All of the informants claim that the detailed steering of the organisation has increased since the agency became Arbetsförmedlingen, and one of the informants discusses the changes that happened during the first years of ruling by the new government Alliansen as follows:

“Well... It was a lot going on then [2006-2008]! Not just a lot of new assignments, but a new general director, etc. And she [Angeles Bermudez Svanqvist] took on a lot of new assignments! And she introduced a lot of new ways to work, Direktservice\(^3\), and service directly, and all of the other names they have called it. It shook Arbetsförmedlingen to its foundation, I would say! All of a sudden you were supposed to work after some kind of template! That was ruled from above, that you couldn't... It was almost like you were supposed to say things in a certain order! You are supposed to document in a certain way which someone else has decided on! That you as a caseworker couldn't recognise! Top-down to the maximum!”

According to Jessop (1999), the impact of competitiveness on the state have rendered state managers to intervene in several institutions and functional systems, amongst other things, to enhance the competitiveness. This has led to the states trying to transform themselves in order to become more capable, flexible, and reliable agents of the state's new economic strategies (ibid). According to the perception of the informant, the dramatic change in the organisation of Arbetsförmedlingen could be seen as sign of this transformation, a 'makeover' of an agency whose aim now is to govern the citizens into autonomous, entrepreneurial subjects in the new

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\(^3\)A way of organising the customer service
economy (ibid, Dahlstedt 2009). Not only have assignments increased, but also the number of people labelled as disabled or impaired that are registered at Arbetsförmedlingen. According to the agency's labour market report for 2013, the amount of people labelled as disabled or vocationally impaired have almost doubled since 2008 (Arbetsmarknadsrapport 2013:59). In the report it is stated that a probable explanation to this heavy increase is the transfer of people who have lost their right to sickness-allowance from Försäkringskassan to Arbetsförmedlingen. About 65 000 people have been transferred between January 2010 till October 2012, which gives an average of about 2000 people per month (ibid). However, this should almost only be covered by the cooperation offices, since that is the way in to Arbetsförmedlingen, if a person has been on sick-leave but are registered as able to work. However, one is only allowed to enter the cooperation offices if one has the right to sickness-allowance, which is dependent on one’s insurability. This does not seem to be the case according to my informants from the regular offices, and all of them bear witness to confined resources in relation to the assignments they have. One of them says:

“There are many, many more people [now, compared to before] who are really, really ill!! Who have lost their right to sickness allowance! And that comes to us! Who don't have the opportunity to go via the cooperation offices, who don't belong there! And suddenly, after a long period of being on sick-leave, they are supposed to belong to our office! And I would say that we don't have the resources to take care of them! Nor the competence! And it's a totally different caseload to work with! Just like the fact that we have clients with ongoing addictions... I mean, the group of people, and I can say that this has happened during the past two years when I have been working with vocational rehabilitation, the group of people within vocational rehabilitation has got heavier! I mean, the cases are more, and more difficult, and it's heavier cases! Every time! In [these meetings] I have, someone is just crying throughout the meeting every other time! [They have] long, long periods of sickness behind them! And four years ago, they wouldn't even have stepped inside the door of Arbetsförmedlingen. So the caseload that we are supposed to get into the labour market, it's a caseload that you wouldn't even have thought would be an alternative four years ago! Of course there are many of them that actually could do some kind of work, but many of them burden the system, I mean, we haven't got the resources to help these people! Because they need a totally different kind of help! You need to take them by the hand from day one, and then you have to hold their hand until, well, it could take 16 months before they are even ready to go on an internship!”

One of the informants who has previously worked at Försäkringskassan states that:
“I would say that, if you look at the political changes, and how [Arbetsförmedlingen] has been affected, the tasks we are doing here today are the same tasks that I did eleven, twelve years ago when I worked at Försäkringskassan! That’s what I’m working with today! A bit closer to the employers, but still! So that assignment has been transferred from Försäkringskassan to Arbetsförmedlingen!”

Not only has the amount of people with disabilities increased the past years, but also the number of clients’ one officer is responsible for. One of the informants argues:

“The workload is so much bigger! The caseload has increased a lot! I know that the colleague I worked with in the beginning [within vocational rehabilitation], she had 85 clients (…) that number has doubled, more than doubled! And I thought [85] was too much! That change has occurred during one, two of the past years!”

In the changing relations of the welfare state, there is a new emphasis upon cooperation between different state institutions, and between the state and the private companies. Behind this lies the idea of a new kind of network-based coordination, a shift from government to governance (Jessop, 1999; Dahlstedt, 2009). The idea of cooperation presupposes a partnership, and thus stage arenas for this partnership, for example the cooperation offices of Arbetsförmedlingen and Försäkringskassan, but also creates the cooperative subject, for example the job-seeking individual that is responsible for their situation (Dahlstedt, 2009). The activating policies that are being implemented could be seen as having the aim to create these active, responsible, cooperative subjects, and when the amount of clients the informants are responsible for increases beyond manageable numbers they are forced to co-create these subjects. The shift from government, where the job-seeker with disabilities that hinder work could depend on the state for financial and health aid, to governance is visiblised in the answers by my informants. Arbetsförmedlingen has all of a sudden got the responsibility for a group of people with difficulties (re-)entering the labour market, without having the resources to manage that responsibility, and the officers are dependent on their clients ability to become employable, or the “autonomous entrepreneurial subjects in the new knowledge-driven economy” (Jessop, 1999:353).

5.2 Consequences of Activation Policies
The informants all state that the group of people obtaining unemployment insurance have decreased drastically since the changes in the unemployment insurance, and the group of people
in need of financial support by the social services has increased. This is also confirmed by statistics, where it is displayed that unemployed persons registered at Arbetsförmedlingen not obtaining unemployment insurance, but receiving financial support by the social services, have increased from 35.6% in 2008, to 45.9% in 2011 (socialstyrelsen.se). All of the informants in the regular offices argue that most of the clients they are responsible for obtain financial support from the social services, and furthermore, one of the informants states that the changes in the rules regarding unemployment insurance have made a deeper impact than just for those who left the unemployment insurance when the rules changed:

“(...) people don't even know what the unemployment insurance is anymore! I don't know how many people I meet who don't have a clue whether they are members [of an unemployment insurance] or not! Especially youths! They don't even know it exists! And I can't remember that being the case before. (...) If a majority have stopped paying [their fees to the unemployment insurance], they won't inform their youngsters that they should do it either! So it doesn't become a force of habit to do so. Thus, it affects in a bigger way that people left the unemployment insurance, it affects more than just that group of people, it affects the coming generations as well, so to speak.”

Another informant discusses how this affects the individual job-seeker in terms of security:

“Unemployment insurance does nevertheless mean somewhat more of a security. So the insecurity has increased to job-seekers. The Social Services, even if it is the last safety-net of society, is a big, big insecurity [to people].”

Salonen (2009) conveys that when financial deficits are explicit to a country, the labour market policies tend to become more repressive and moralising towards unemployed people, especially those who are further away from the regular labour market than others. This reasoning is highly applicable to this discussion, where those who stand far from the labour market, such as people who are on sick-leave but that are forced to search for another job, may not even have a financial support system such as sickness allowance to fall back on. Johansson and Hornemann Møller (2009) discuss how a much more strict policy is aimed towards, above all, people that are long-term unemployed, and people that are unemployed and receiving financial benefits from the Social Services. They are confronted with increasing demands on participating in the labour market, to take an assigned employment, to participate in labour market policy measures, and other forms of projects. The emphasis is on the unemployed individual’s personal responsibility and obligations, and Johansson and Hornemann Møller (ibid) discuss how this is an indication towards conditioned welfare benefits for these groups of people. The growing polarisation in
the Swedish society, which occurs especially in the bigger cities, has created anxiety of alienation and social exclusion, something that is supposed to be obstructed by the activating policies (Dahlstedt, 2009). As Acker (2006) argues, the relations of distribution other than wages, such as financial support from the social services or unemployment insurance, are essential to survival, and thus can be seen as elements of class constructions that are also gendered and racialised. She argues that these transfers are decommodifying labour by protecting workers against being coerced to selling their labour to any given price, but welfare state benefits are often gendered and racialised, and have an impact on equality, on the structuring of class differences, and on the relative proportion of population living in poverty (ibid). However, the changes that have been made in the Swedish labour market policies rather seem to contribute to the polarisation and re-commodification of people, where individuals with employment during the past years, have generally made a higher standard of living, while those who have a weak or no connection to the labour market at all, tends to fall back financially, creating even larger income gaps in Sweden (Salonen, 2009). All of the informants, from both kinds of offices, discuss how the pressure on job-seekers has increased during the past decade, and how the amount of people with some kind of psychological diagnosis has increased. They all say that psychological conditions like anxiety, stress-related syndromes, and depression have increased massively during the past years. More, and more of the informants clients have diagnosis of ADHD, ADD, and other attention deficit syndromes they state, and they claim that physical conditions are not seldom followed by psychological issues. The informants from the cooperation offices describe this:

“[Disabilities that hinder work] have increased for sure! Because I mean, society has become tougher! (…) And I mean, there are more people today that are getting burned-out etcetera. And those who get terminated from their job, they come to us! (…) There are more psychological diagnosis today. If you have some kind of physical [impairment or disability], it’s not unusual to have some kind of psychological [issue] as well! (…) It's connected in some ways! (…) It's rare to only have a physical disability or impairment! Body and soul are connected you see! (…) Yes, it's connected! You might have to take a lot of pain-killers, your financial situation declines, and then you get anxiety about all of it, and, well... “

The 'makeover' of individuals from passive to active subjects, is hierarchical Dahlstedt (2009) conveys, it is always a “we” inviting “them” to join the group of responsible citizens that are supposed to prove their willingness to work and do good for the society. It is no longer legitimate not to have employment, and even those who cannot perform work, no matter how
much they would like to, are excluded from the social community unless they are willing to adapt and make themselves more employable (ibid). However, there are also critical voices raised against the massive expansion of people supposedly having disabilities or impairments, even though it's noticeable in the day-to-day work. One of the informants states:

“I have been a bit critical towards that [increase of disabilities], because I think that you are too fast when encoding people with disabilities at Arbetsförmedlingen! (…) I think that a lot of people could get a job without having their employment subsidised, if you just had the right conditions! If you didn't... If the case-workers had the right conditions to be able to work a bit closer, or a bit more intense, a bit more qualitative, it probably would have been solved anyway!”

When the focus of policies is on activation of passive subjects, and the transfer from KWNS towards SWPR promotes competitiveness and labour market flexibility, the social policies are subordinated in the process, and the welfare services provided are concerned with benefiting businesses rather than providing individual needs and social rights (Jessop, 1999). Thus, I would argue that the increased “search” for disabilities among job-seekers in reality is a way of favouring economic organisations as Acker (2006) has stated. The individual needs of the job-seekers are not the concern of the political decisions controlling Arbetsförmedlingen, but rather the employers economic situation, which are indeed benefitted by the generous system of wage subsidising for people with disabilities that hinder work.

5.3 Becoming the Entrepreneurial Subject
The informants from the cooperation offices tells me that all of their clients are ill in one way or the other, all of the clients registered at the cooperation office obtain sickness allowance from Försäkringskassan, or a kind of Aktivitetsstöd if they participate in a labour market program. Most of the time, the informants participate in a meeting with the client and Försäkringskassan before registrating the client at the office, due to the advice of the clients doctor who have decided that the client has an ability to work:

“You see, it is people who are on sick-leave! (…) Most of the people we work with, and that means that they are estimated by Försäkringskassan to be ill. That means that we have ill individuals to work with at Arbetsförmedlingen. I mean, that actually says it all if I’m to be honest! About the weight of the cases, it's a complex of problems!”
One of the informants, who has previously worked at a regular office of Arbetsförmedlingen, discusses the difference between the groups registered at the different kinds of offices:

“They [the groups of people registered at the cooperation office] are heavier here! One can say that they are more ill! Often, they do not even understand how to manage anything!”

Even though the officers of the cooperation offices stress that their clients have more difficult situations than those registered at regular offices of Arbetsförmedlingen, the informants from those offices do not agree:

“There are a lot of people, a lot, registered at Arbetsförmedlingen that we perhaps shouldn't be working with at all! That should be appertained to other authorities, based on the fact that they aren't fully available to the labour market, or maybe not at all! People that are in need of other kinds of interventions. That group of people are a lot bigger than I expected”

They all discuss how they are working towards getting their clients “job-ready”, but also how this is not always possible due to their clients' illness or disability. Furthermore, the informants from the cooperation offices discuss how there is nothing unusual with having three kinds of diagnosis or even more, but that they can “only register three” in the internal coding system of Arbetsförmedlingen. They stress that psychological disabilities that hinder work are predominant, and that the group of people with such impairments has increased the last decade. They work with testing their clients’ ability to work in different ways, in order to see how much activity they can manage per day, and they draw the line at two hours per day. One of the informants say:

“If you can't handle two hours of activity per day (...) then you probably shouldn't be with us! Then, you are probably too ill! Then you shouldn't be registered at Arbetsförmedlingen.”

Dahlstedt (2009) discusses the entrepreneurial governmentality of the new welfare regime, where entrepreneurship and risk-taking are elevated to moral-political ideals for individuals and the society, attributing different moral traits to individuals and groups of individuals. Some people thus become more worthy and valuable than others (ibid), as could be argued in relation to the job-seekers with disabilities that hinder work. They are unable, or at least they have fewer possibilities, to live up to the ideal, and thus becomes less worthy and valuable than others. This inability is not a political or collective issue, but an individual problem attributed to the moral and personal shortcomings of the job-seeker (ibid). One could argue for that this is reinforcing the inequality regimes of society, where the legitimate class relations are accepted as natural in
order to maintain the socio-economic system (Acker, 2006), and where those able to consume are valued as the proper citizens (Mohanty, 2003). This reasoning is highly applicable to the following section as well, where the informants discuss their clients as only being able to manage unskilled work with low demands of flexibility and responsibility: The informants from the cooperation offices say that there are all kinds of different people registered at their offices, from people with higher education, people that have been self-employed, to people with lower education or that are illiterate. Common for all groups of people are that the jobs they are looking for are unskilled labour, however it is hard to find these kinds of jobs:

“[We are] most often looking for simpler jobs! Even those with higher education such as the nurse, or the teacher that can't go back to their jobs for different reasons. (…) They feel like they need lower demands! So it is often unskilled work [we are looking for]! Where they don't have such high requirements! And it is hard! There are... There are a few employers, but... Those aren't easy to find!”

The informants from the regular offices also claim that there are few of their clients who have a higher education, most of them have a lower education, or no education at all, and many of them have difficulties with the Swedish language. Regarding the search for jobs to their clients, one informant says:

“I am completely dependent on the client managing their own job hunting! Because I cannot do it for them due to my work situation! (…) It can be difficult! Especially for the ones with language difficulties. That is a problem for them actually. But they have to use their own network of people, even if it is confined. (…) Finally we may need to work with our measure employments, and then you have to prioritise the ones that cannot get into the labour market first of all.”

All of the informants state that both they are acquiring, and their clients are searching for, unskilled work, despite the level of education or previous work experience they might have. They all discuss how the disability or impairment of the client is something that needs to be compensated for financially or with different aids, in order to normalise the person with the disability and make them more attractive on the labour market, and thus, employable. This could be argued to favour economic organisations, rather than individual needs, and thus, is a sign of the shift towards SWPR and the nonresponsibility of the state (Jessop, 1999; Acker, 2006; Dahlstedt, 2009). Ulmestig (2009) argues that the Swedish labour market policies have not been successful in adapting the labour force to a new kind of labour market, where new forms of production, and an increased competition from countries with lower costs of
production, have been established. He conveys that this is highly notable in relation to groups that have been trying to establish themselves on the labour market, and gives the example of youngsters, and people born in another country than Sweden that have had [and still have] high rates of unemployment. I would argue that this reasoning is applicable to people with disabilities that hinder work as well, as we can see from the answers provided by the informants in this section. According to Ulmestig (ibid), this indicates that the new kind of labour market in Sweden, is getting even more polarised between those who have a high level of education, and secured terms of employment, and those who have not. In relation to the clients of the informants, I would argue that this is dependent upon the ableness of the worker as well. According to my informants, it does not matter if one has a higher level of education, they are still searching for unskilled work with lower demands for their clients, and thus, if one cannot fit into the “normal” or ideal type of worker one’s education has no relevance. In order to keep the socio-economic system going, the unequal relations of class are maintained (Acker 2006), and in order to cater the consumer-citizens (Mohanty 2006), the demand of low wage workers have increased (Sassen 2002). It could thus be argued that people with disabilities that hinder work are part of this new demand, when they are degenerated to apply for unskilled work no matter their education or previous work experience. Many of the informants’ clients cannot see how they would be able to do anything the informants’ state, and it is the task of the officers to help the clients see their abilities, or non-abilities. In order to do so, they test their clients in different ways, in order to correct their way of thinking, and to get them “job-ready”, and employable by normalising their disability. The individual thus becomes responsible for their own success or failure, and in order to receive employment, the individual needs to have the “right” traits (Dahlstedt 2009).

5.4 The Professional Constructor of an Ideal Worker
All of the informants claim that the best part of their job is the meeting with a person. They all say that even if their clients’ situations are difficult, it is meeting with the clients that makes their work worthwhile. To see the clients grow, and to be part of that growth by supporting and guiding them on their journey. They all argue that the most important thing to think about in meeting with a client is respect for the person, closely followed by explicitness, and compassion, and they all discuss the importance of being professional, as illustrated by one of the informants:
“You see, it is terribly important with a professional treatment! Because I am a person in authority, I am not a pale! My job is to be an employment officer, and I need to be explicit about that when I meet a client that might be so ill that I believe they can't take on employment! (...) That's why it's about having a professional reputation, in the exercise of authority, but! It must be with compassion! Because we are meeting human beings! Human beings that are ill! We need to treat them, and their history with respect, because they often have a huge baggage with them. So, to be compassionate is extremely important!”

However, as a part of being professional, they also discuss how they are obliged to correct their clients:

“(...) it's a lot of focus [with the clients] on what you can't do, instead of what you can do. That's the biggest problem! [If we have] a better basic material [of the clients education and previous work experience], we can direct the client that might be thinking in the wrong way, or where we reckon they think in the wrong way, (...) and give them better advice.”

They all describe the exercise of authority as something good, they say that they feel safe to have a set of regulations to fall back on, and none of them sees that as conflicting with their supportive roles. The importance of being willing to change and adapt to the labour market is evident in relation to the job-, and career-coaching Arbetsförmedlingen offers, where the employment officers are to makeover their clients to fit what is desirable or demanded by employers (Dahlstedt 2009). Furthermore, the informants discuss the internal specialists provided by the section of Vocational Rehabilitation, as a beneficial resource for their clients, and several of the informants stress that the best way for their clients enrolled in vocational rehabilitation to enter the labour market, is to do an internship, or practice, with an employer.

“I think it is very important, especially in vocational rehabilitation that you work actively with internship and work training! Because that's the way to get in! Then the employer can see the human and her qualities, rather than the disability! You'll get in, you'll do a job, and we can accommodate the client with a special chair, or computer, or whatever you need depending on your disability, and then there is no disability! And there's no reason to focus on [the disability]! And that's when, I think, many of our clients get hired, because then you've had the opportunity to show yourself and your qualities, and you're not deselected based on a paper! So that's what I think we need to work with our clients, to search for internships!”

Policies delivered by the employment officers, are in reality decisions about people that affect, and regulate their life chances (ibid). How one treats or designates people, affects the relationship of others to that person, as well as that person’s self-evaluation, and thus, if the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen construct the job-seekers they are responsible for, as too ill to
manage a work-situation, or even to be registered at their agency, this could be the start of, or contribute to, the process of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The informants feeling of security with the exercise of authority, and the view that this exercise is non-conflicting with the compassion for their clients, could be seen as normative behaviour that gives them the prescribed right to control their clients socially. The use of the specialists and internships could also be seen as part of the social engineering objectives, to place people in the hand of skilled professionals, in order to further construct them as in need of a makeover to become the entrepreneurial subject that is employable and conveys to the norm of the ideal worker (ibid).

5.5 The Importance of Time
The informants say that their clients’ way towards (re-)entering the labour market is like a process that builds upon the ability to create a relationship with the client. In order to do so, they all convey that time is of utmost importance:

“(…) of course it takes time, but it is very effective! You need to get to know the person, and to build up a trust with them, and maybe even find out that no! We can't start at point A, we need to start at point C, and then go back to A [in order to get closer to the labour market].”

A recipe for success according to all of the informants, is to have continuous contact with a person, as well as to have the time to meet with them regularly, not just briefly, but to have the time to have longer conversations. Everything takes time in the day of an employment officer, not just to wait for different forms and certificates from other authorities, but also to administrate and use internal resources. An area where the organisation differs between the two kinds of offices, is the amount of clients per officer. All of the officers from the regular offices bear witness to having too many clients (as stated before, between 149 – 530), and too many highly prioritised tasks appointed by the management. All of the informants from the cooperation office on the other hand, stress that they have the time and possibility to perform their work in a qualitative way, due to the reduced amount of clients (20 – 50) appointed to them:

“I would like to say, that you wish for everyone to have the opportunity to work like we do here, even when you are working with vocational rehabilitation at a regular office. But they can't! If they could, there would be a completely different quality to the work being done. So I wish that everybody had this opportunity!”
They also state that they have the opportunity to control their own time, since they do not have any scheduled work sessions, or as many scheduled in-house meetings, as the officers from the regular offices state they do. This is something the officers from the regular offices are very much aware of, and one of them says:

“There are employment officers at the cooperation offices that have 30 clients! And now scheduled time in the customer service! (...) I mean, come on, it's obvious! They have the possibility to actually work with the clients! But those clients that they have, we also have them! But with completely different conditions [to perform our jobs]!

Both groups of informants discuss that the most time-consuming task that they have to perform, is the administrative routines. Every decision made and executed, every meeting with a client and/or other authorities, needs to be documented and administrated with different procedures.

“It's a lot of administration! Because every decision is supposed to be documented, we have check-lists on what's supposed to be done with every official decision. We have to collect different data, make screenings of employers, and verify that they have the right insurances and things like that... Everything needs to be registered, you need to constitute files and things like that... I had a colleague that said that 60% of the time is administrative time. And that's about right! But that's when everything is right on target!”

I would argue that the organisation of work at Arbetsförmedlingen where the officers at the grass-root level display how they are not given the time and resources needed to perform their work adequately, is a sign of the workfare regime that promotes competitiveness and subordinates social policy and individual needs (Jessop, 1999). Arbetsförmedlingen has been assigned the responsibility for a group of people that previously has been aided by Försäkringskassan, but without the resources required to handle the situation. It is evident that the cooperation between the two agencies is valued higher than the work performed at the regular offices, all in line with the new kind of governance discussed previously in this thesis, where the active subject is responsible for the situation and the state institutions are merely a partnering actor providing help to self-help (ibid; Dahlstedt, 2009). The result of the policies seem to be a polarisation between the two kinds of offices, and thus between the job-seekers entitled to sickness allowance, and those not entitled, reproducing a legitimate inequality regime of class relations (Acker, 2006) regulated by the labour market policies. Salonen (2009) argues that individualised models of explanation are popular in politics, and its' administrations, even though there are obvious structural elements that are the cause of reduced availability of work. In Sweden these kinds of repressive, and individualised labour market politics have been
maintained, and even reinforced during the first half of the 21st century's decade, even though Sweden has had a financial rise during this period (ibid). When sickness allowances are being withdrawn, and people need to prove their inability to perform work in order to receive the allowance, they are left with small options and possibilities of achieving employment, but they are still the ones that need to 'change'. There does not seem to be a discussion in the labour market policies, or in the way Arbetsförmedlingen is organised, about the responsibility of employers, public or private, or why a person with less capacity of production than the ideal worker must be normalised and compensated to a certain standard. This is surely evident in the way the government has reduced unemployment insurance, amplified the requirements for achieving financial support by the Social Services, and made sickness allowance expire.

5.6 Different Assignments, Different Conditions

There is a distinct difference between the cooperation offices, and the regular offices of Arbetsförmedlingen related to the conditions of their work. The informants from the former offices tell me how they get continuous education from their employer and Försäkringskassan, in order to better handle and help their clients. The informants from the later offices instead discuss the in-house education system as a rather slow system:

“We can take in-house courses about the different disabilities [as classified by Arbetsförmedlingen]. But one needs to be aware that it can be a one year waitlist to get in! So I mean... [Sighs] I don't think... Personally I can't even be bothered to sign up for it! You don't even know if you'll be allowed [by your manager]! If you're on the schedule [to staff the customer service] you'll probably need to switch those working periods [with someone else] and no! I can't manage it! I think it takes too much of my energy!”

Furthermore, there is a different approach to how the officers are to handle the, sometimes, difficult and demanding cases, and what assistance they can expect from their employer. The informants from the cooperation offices convey that they are much helped by the continuous supervision they get every third week from a psychologist employed by the occupational health service Arbetsförmedlingen engage. The officers working at the regular offices though, does not get anything like it:

“To constantly meet people in crisis that are crying, that might be screaming... People who are in crisis in different ways! And I mean, I'm not really educated to handle that! Eh, and it's not an education that is provided by Arbetsförmedlingen either. No! There's no
supervision. No support-system. What you actually can do is to call the occupational health service, then you can get a few sessions [with a psychologist], but after like five of those, your manager needs to ok further sessions. (…) But you have your colleagues where you can ventilate, but that's problematic to! Because you can only talk about [the actual] work with them! At the lunch break and everything, you only talk about work, work, work. And that's because you need a ventilator within vocational rehabilitation! To deal with some of the clients.”

The government-deployed assignment to Arbetsförmedlingen of having the responsibility for vocational rehabilitation, does not seem to be reinforced with the resources needed to perform that work adequately. The employment officers of the regular offices are all discussing how they do not have the right education, nor the supervision and support system needed to meet the people they do, and their employer does not seem to take responsibility for aiding them in their situation. Thus, one could talk of a nonresponsibility by the State (Acker, 2006), where there seem to be an unwillingness to take responsibility for the needs of their employees, but also the health of the community when the citizens in need of help by the government are left alone in their struggles to enter the labour market. The responsibility of structural problems, such as inadequate resources, unemployment, and discrimination of people with disabilities on the labour market, is assigned to the individuals whether those individuals are officers of Arbetsförmedlingen, or citizens in need (Dahlstedt, 2009). Salaried employment is essential for both the individual, and the society as a whole Dahlstedt (ibid) argues, and claims that users of welfare-services, like Arbetsförmedlingen, nowadays are called customers, rather than citizens, which is evident in the way the informants discuss the job-seekers they are responsible for, as well as the “customer-service” some of them are to work in. Furthermore, he states that this shift is connected to the strive for the power of the consumer, for example to make 'active choices', but emphasises that every subject matter of a political nature in the Swedish context is derived from ideas of an ideal citizen, or an ideal citizenship (ibid). In relation to the ideal citizenship, the individuals' autonomy, ability to take initiative, and free choice becomes even more important, and is set against state control, a strive towards equality, and the redistribution of public resources. This kind of welfare model pursues to foster the citizens active participation, and responsibilities, instead of them being passive, and dependent upon governmental benefits (ibid). This is evident in the organisation of work for the informants, who are dependent upon their clients’ active engagement, and responsibility for their situation due to the way their work is organised. They have no opportunity to create their clients as citizens, but as customers, since they have too many clients in order to manage to aid them all
in their search for a job. Thus, the ideal citizen needs to be a working citizen, leaving those who cannot perform work in the ideal way, as less of a citizen.

5.7 Unheard Voices in the Organisation

All of the informants discuss how they wish the short-term objectives of the organisation could be changed. They all describe how there are new, prioritised commands by the management almost every week, making it hard to know how to prioritise in their day to day work. What is worse, they reckon the commands to be non-essential to their actual job, to convey work between employers and job-seekers. One of the informants describes the hardship of prioritising in relation to the plan of actions every job-seeker are to receive when registered:

“(...) personally, I don't think that the action-plans will get anyone hired. The management might think that that's a priority but... You have to do it if it's an expressed priority. I won't go on strike and refuse to do it! But I can't say I will prioritise it myself! (…) Sometimes I feel like [the management] lack an apprehension about reality! The people that review our work lack a grass-root... Like, what are we actually working with? What does a month of work mean to us? What do we actually do in a month? I would love it if someone just jumped right into my schedule and followed me around everywhere, and kept up with me! Because then they would realise that we can't sit around and write those action-plans like they want us to! Our clients take these action-plans, ball them, and throw them in the bin! Is that really what we're supposed to do for forty-five minutes?! To write a qualified, really good action-plan that the client then throws in the bin?! I mean that breaks you, I think they need to see caseload, they need to see us! Take the caseload in our city, for whom are we writing these action-plans? Well, it's for the social services! So it's all about feeding a system rather than about the client!”

Dahlstedt (2009) discusses the action-plans that were first launched in the mid-1990, as a contract between the individual and the state, where the individual is bound to live up to the agreement made. He argues that this is a form of control since the contract strongly emphasises the individuals’ own responsibility for their situation, and the action-plans are based upon the idea of the active citizenship (ibid). Dahlstedt (ibid) is critical because this focuses upon the issue of why an individual is passive/in need of welfare measurements instead of active/autonomous, and therefore makes invisible the structural processes that lead up to this situation. Instead, the focus is aimed at the individual looking for a job, rather than the structural processes that have made them unemployed (ibid). The standardised way of writing an action-
plan, is just another way of producing for the masses, rather than accommodating the individual, as the informant states, another sign of the social policy and individual’s needs being put aside (Jessop, 1999). The organisation does not seem to take their employees input in to consideration as displayed by the informant above, and the result seem to be that the management have a lack of insight into their employees every day-work. Thus, one could argue that the state is favouring the economic part of the organisation, rather than the needs of the individual employee and citizen (Acker, 2006). This is also displayed by the informants from the regular offices, as well as those informants from the cooperation offices that have previously worked at regular offices, that all discuss how they cannot fulfil initiated projects, such as group-activities for their clients.

Several of them have been given an in-house education in a guidance activity meant for groups of maximum 12 participants at a time, but say that they weren't allowed to fulfil it, or were forced to engage up to 50 participants at a time, which they claim is a testament of the management missing the whole point of the activity. However, the one thing they all claim they long for, is the opportunity to work undisturbed, to be able to do what they see best for the individual rather than producing for the masses. All of the informants from the regular offices discuss their work as quantified, for example they have a minimum of “sticks”, in other words, a number of people they have to get into the labour market, every month. This quantified goal often results in the officers having to hunt down individuals that have not been in contact with their case worker for a longer period of time, by calling on lists compiled by the office management, rather than working proactively or qualitative:

“You can have a client that is long-term unemployed, but that is fully capable of taking on a job, you're not always in need of more help just 'cause you're long-term unemployed (...) Sure, it could be more difficult for the person to get a job, but the person can handle their job-search as good as anyone else! But that is not taken into account on a central level. You [as an officer of Arbetsförmedlingen] have no opportunity to direct the help to those who actually need it! I'm thinking on the attendance rate [that is a priority right now], that it's focused on the statistics! It's not about helping the individuals. It's quantity above quality. It's the detailed steering of our work, and the amount of clients you're responsible for! That's very limiting.”

Another step towards the SWPR governance of Swedish society is displayed above, where the aim of providing welfare services that benefit business rather than social rights is shown by the

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4"Pinnar" in Swedish – a way of discussing how many of your clients have obtained employment.
informants (Jessop, 1999). Thus the practical reality of the policies decided by the government is closely related to the rationality of the market (Dahlstedt, 2009), where the “profit” of the agency, in reality the individuals that gets employed, is valued higher that the help they might need to get there. In one sense, the agency seems to be managed as any corporate business, with individual “sales-goals”, sticks, of the employment officers, and detailed steering of their time. When the power of management is transferred to the regional labour market areas, it could be argued that the state control is enhanced in order to supervise that transfer of power (Jessop, 1999), thus managing the employment officers work down to intimate details.

5.8 Lack of Consistency
Apart from the matters discussed above, all of the informants take issue with the constant shift of budget that they say affect their everyday work in several, different ways. They give examples of how the agency employs a lot of people, but then lets them go six months later, just to have a need of labour after another six months. “There is no consistency” one of the informants say, “neither for us, nor for the clients”.

“If we had kept those people for another year, and waited out the deficit, you wouldn't have had to hire lots of people the year after! A lot of competent people had to go! And then there came new ones that had to be trained again. That is a perfect example of the non-existing long-term thinking in this organisation!”

“(…) the jerkiness of the organisation! One year we are a hundred employees at the office, and the second we're maybe 60 or 70! So it's like gas, and break all of the time! It's very hard to have a long-term plan. It's more like, 'Oh well, today it's like this, tomorrow it might be something else!' You never know. Plus, the result of this, is that employees come and go! All of the time! And when employees leave, the ones left have a lot more to do! And when employees are hired, they need to be trained, and that takes quite some time! And then, when they are finally done, there's a new cutback, and they are forced to leave! [Laughs] It's a lot like that!

Another example of the constantly shifting budget, is how the procurement of different labour market measurements is cut from one week to another, making it difficult for the employment officers to make long-term plans with their clients. They all discuss how they have to make emergency responses in their everyday work, due to the lack of consistency in the organisation, and all of them state that the hardest part of their job is to find enough time to do it all, and to feel sufficient. This lack of consistency described by the informants could be seen as a sign of
the constant 'makeover' the state needs to deploy, and the agency's need to be innovative and flexible in order to convey to the new ideal of the economy (Jessop, 1999; Dahlstedt, 2009). Thus, the organisation of work is favouring of economic organizations over other areas of life, and the state could be said to successfully claim nonresponsibility (Acker, 2006) of the structural problems of unemployment, placing the responsibility upon individuals that are forced to adapt to the flexibility of the free market.
6 Conclusion - Nonresponsibility in a Swedish Context

Throughout this thesis, I have displayed the practical reality of the changing welfare state, by showing how the changes that have occurred in the welfare policies in Sweden the past years, are evident in the everyday work of the informants in different ways. Not only has there been a massive reorganisation of Arbetsförmedlingen, but the agency has been assigned new missions, while dealing with the implications of cut-backs in social welfare institutions of different kinds, during a financial crisis driving the unemployment rates upwards. The picture painted by the informants in this thesis, is one of frustration. The agency seems to have been assigned to work with a group of people, job-seekers with disabilities that hinder work, without getting the resources needed to perform that work adequately. Not only does it seem like the regular offices have too few human resources, but the personnel working with the group seems to lack education and supervision to sufficiently do their jobs, and are denied those resources in their everyday work. What is worse, the experiences and input made by the officers of Arbetsförmedlingen do not seem to matter at all when the organisation of work is formulated, and the management does not seem to take their lived reality into account when calculating budgets or disbursing resources. Thus, I have argued that the state claims nonresponsibility for their employees that are left in a precarious situation, but also for their citizens who are assigned the responsibility for structural problems of unemployment.

Polarisation that Furthers Inequality

There seems to be a polarisation created between the regular offices and the joint action offices, when adequate resources are disbursed to the later, but withdrawn from the former. Hence, a polarisation takes place among their clients as well, reinforcing structures of inequality among job-seeking individuals that already have a strenuous situation related to their unemployment, health and financial situation. This inequality is furthered by the state that seems to be constructing anyone obtaining any kind of financial support from them as able to work, no matter what circumstances surround the individual. However, there is only unskilled work that seems 'suitable' for these individuals, no matter their previous careers or level of education, and it is the job of the employment officers to correct their thinking into the 'right' path. This is done through testing the job-seekers and their abilities, as well as writing action-plans with requirements and conditions that are to be fulfilled by the job-seekers.
The Ideal Citizen

As I have discussed, there has been a shift in the Swedish labour market policies, towards a higher degree of 'work-activation', and demands of a higher degree of job-search activity. The foundation of a social citizenship in the Swedish context, is the decommodification of work that disconnects the welfare state from the principals of the market (Dahlstedt, 2009). Furthermore, the Swedish welfare-system, unlike the Anglo-American, does not reflect the worth of the individuals work, or their lack thereof (ibid). I suggest that this could be debated though, in the context of the Swedish government that increasingly conforms to neoliberal ideals and the idea of the free market, privatising the welfare state, and declining social welfare benefits to individuals (ibid; Jessop, 1999). What could also be discussed is how the policies implemented are recommodificating job-seeking individuals, when requirements of responsibility and flexibility, to take any job at any given price, are put in front of their social rights as citizens. However, the ideal citizenship is context and time-bound, and thus changeable, even though political ideals often appear natural and obvious (ibid). The shift of view upon the ideal citizenship that has happened in a Swedish context the past years, is a reflection of the continuing dislocation of the political landscape, Dahlstedt (2009) states, and the consequence of this is a shrinking ideological scale where it becomes harder to clearly see the political alternatives. The insecurities the informants bear witness to, that they are participating in creating by acting upon the norm of the “voluntary” client with a free choice, and handing the responsibility of unemployment to the individual, legitimises the effects of the policies they deliver. Thus, the changes in the Swedish welfare state enable participation in the labour market for job-seekers with disabilities that hinder work, but only if they are willing and able to adapt to the norm of the voluntary, ideal, citizen.

6.1 Proposals for Future Research Projects

The changing relations of the welfare state have made possible several new actors in the labour market providing services that Arbetsförmedlingen purchase, for example private organisations providing job-, and career-coaching, education, therapeutic support etc. It would be interesting to see if, and how these services have contributed to enable participation in the labour market, and how this have changed the allocation of resources to Arbetsförmedlingen. It would also be interesting to research how the service provided by Arbetsförmedlingen and the actors they cooperate with are experienced by the job-seekers participating in the different labour market measures. Furthermore, the informants in this thesis all discussed discrimination in the labour
market, and especially the lack of support from their employer in dealing with such issues. Due to the aim of this study, I was not able to discuss this further in this thesis, but it would be interesting to study how normality and deviance is constructed through legislations, and how this is displayed in the everyday work of officers from Arbetsförmedlingen. I find it very interesting that an agency with the goal of bringing employers and job-seekers together, and having the responsibility of disability issues within the labour market, does not seem to have an action plan, or support system, towards working with issues of discrimination.
7 References


### 7.1 Reports and Laws


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7.3 Other Resources

8 Appendix

Interview Guide

The Job

- How long have you been working at Arbetsförmedlingen?
- Do you have any experience from other offices of Arbetsförmedlingen than the one you are working at now?
- Tell me about your work?
- What do you do in a regular day at the office?
- How long have you been working within vocational rehabilitation?
- What differs between vocational rehabilitation and regular mediation of work?
- Why do you work within vocational rehabilitation?
- What did you think the job would consist of?
- Does the reality differ from that idea? - How?
- What is the best thing about your work?
- What is the hardest part about your work?
- Is there something you would like to change?
- Have you experienced any changes in the labour market that affects your work? - In what way?
- How do you experience the changes in the organisation when the agency became Arbetsförmedlingen?
- Do you experience any changes in your work related to the changes in the unemployment insurance?
- Do you experience any changes in your work related to the changes in the health- and social insurance?
- How do you experience the exercise of authority?

The Client

- How many clients are you responsible for?
Who do you meet in your work?

How do you relate to your clients?

What is the most important thing to think about in the meeting with a client?

What kind of jobs are you searching for?

What kind of financial compensation does the majority of your clients have?

Has this changed in any way?

In what way do you experience that you have control over the process towards work for a client?

In what way do you experience that you are obstructed to have control over that process?

The number of job-seekers with disabilities that hinder work have increased during the past years, and almost doubled since 2008, how do you experience this in your work?

Resources

Do you have any specific education within vocational rehabilitation?

What kind of resources do you have within vocational rehabilitation?

How can you use these resources?

Have the resources changed in any way?

In what way do you experience that you can control your work?

In what way do you experience obstruction to control your work?

Is there something that you would like to add?