

Care Policies in Local Settings: Municipal regulation and provision of care services

Dr. Mara A. Yerkes
Utrecht University

Co-authors: Carla Brega, Samuel
Briones, Karen van Hedel, Mehri
Zamanbin



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



Utrecht University

THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ERC)
UNDER THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HORIZON2020 RESEARCH INNOVATION PROGRAMME
(GRANT AGREEMENT NO 771290).

Overview

- Background & aim of the current study
 - ERC CAPABLE project
- Decentralization in context
- Towards social innovation: a community-based capabilities approach
- Data and methods
- Results
- Moving forward

Background (I)

- Advanced decentralization in many European welfare states (Martinelli et al, 2017).
- “Social policies are essentially delivered and experienced at the local level” (Ciccia and Javornik, 2019: 3).
- Decentralization: both vertical and horizontal subsidiarity (Kazepov, 2010; Mätzke et al., 2017; Jansen et al., 2021)
- Changed ‘welfare diamonds’ (Leibetseder, Anttonen, Overbye, & Vabo, 2017)

Background (II)

- Result? A local policy paradox:
 - Shifting responsibilities: central-local interplay, tensions, rising inequality (Ranci, Brandsen and Sabatinelli, 2014; Jansen et al., 2021)
 - Shifting responsibilities: opportunities new collaborations, thus potentially social innovation (e.g., Yeandle, 2016)
- In short: increased chance for conflict and policy stagnation as well as cooperation and policy innovation.
- Impact of decentralization on ECEC? (Fraisie and Escobedo, 2014; Da Roit et al., 2019)

Background (III) & Aim

- Fundamental question remains unanswered: capacity of **local** policies to act as a resource for citizens?
- The availability of policies and services **does not guarantee equal access** (e.g., Yerkes et al., 2019).
- Despite potential importance of decentralization and local policy for work and family, this aspect of access at the local level relatively understudied.
- Aim: to study extent to which local ECEC policies and services function as (potential) resources for residents in eight European cities

CAPABLE – Enhancing Capabilities?

Rethinking Work-life Policies and their Impact from a New Perspective

[Research Project](#)[Project Team](#)[News](#)[Stakeholder Event](#)[Publications](#)[Internships](#)[Mailing List](#)

www.worklifecapabilities.com

CAPABLE: 7 SUB-PROJECTS, 5 YEARS



a policy-oriented methodology, evaluating the means intended to ease work-life balance as well as quantifying and analysing these means cross-nationally across 8 representative European countries (SP1);



an interpretive process-oriented methodology, conducted in a sub-set of four countries, investigating how conversion factors at the micro, meso and macro level interact; and how they translate into actual capabilities to achieve a valued work-life balance (SPs 2-5);



an analysis of whether work-life policies enhance individual wellbeing (SP6); and



a comparative analysis across the case countries to develop policy tools (SP7).

Decentralization in context

- Countries with variation in dominant policy operating mechanism for work-family policies (Björk Eydal & Rostgaard, 2018).
 - UK: market; far-reaching decentralization
 - SLO: public sector; early decentralization
 - ES: family; early decentralization (regional importance)
 - NL: mixed; late but far-reaching decentralization
- Municipalities key providers of services in all four countries

Towards social innovation? A community- based capabilities approach

- Capability approach (CA; e.g., Sen, 1985, 1992; Nussbaum, 1987; Robyens, 2005, 2017)
- Social policy as a resource (Javornik and Kurowska, 2017; Kurowska, 2018; Yerkes et al., 2019) - vs. instrumental (CA) approach
- Local policies source of welfare rights/services AND social innovation (Adelbert, Ewert, & Brandsen, 2014)

Towards social innovation? A community-based capabilities approach (2)

- Social innovation: rearranging social practices in an intentional way (Howaldt and Schwarz, 2017)
 - Not intended as compensation for social policy shortcomings
- Integrating CA and social innovation: whether policies function as resources in local contexts
- Community (Yerkes, Hoogenboom and Javornik, 2020):
 - Local relationships
 - Locality (place, space, scale)
 - Local policies and services

Towards social innovation?

A community-based capabilities approach (3)

- Local ECEC & a community-based capabilities approach:
 - ECEC policy design: **availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, and flexibility** (e.g., Ciccio & Bleijenbergh, 2014; Björk Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011; Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Plantenga & Remery, 2005, 2009; Saraceno, 2011; Yerkes & Javornik, 2019)
 - 8 municipalities (*places*); varying connectedness of local scale (e.g., in regional settings)

Data and methods

	Total number of documents	Total number of interviews
Amsterdam	44	2 policymakers (combined interview); 1 NGOs; 1 union
Nijmegen	26	1 policymaker
Barcelona	12	3 policymakers; 2 NGOs
Pamplona	8	2 policymakers
London	88	1 policymaker; 3 NGOs
Leeds	28	2 policymakers; 1 NGO
Ljubljana	16	2 policymakers, 1 NGO, 1 researcher
Maribor	16	3 policymakers, 1 NGOs

Analytical strategy

- Theory-driven codes
 - ECEC policy design
 - Social innovation
 - Decentralization/governance
 - Community (place, scale)
- Inductive codes
- Coding by multiple researchers; continual discussion to increase intercoder reliability



Preliminary
results

Complex mixes of national-local ECEC governance

- UK: devolution; minimal free childcare (15 hours/week)
- SLO: public provision & regulation (96%)
- ES/NL: public-private mix (limited public sector)

Contrasting struggles at local levels

- Availability an issue in larger cities relative to national context (e.g., Barcelona, Amsterdam)
 - Urban growth areas; high demand
 - Population decline in London
- Accessibility: targeted populations most affected (e.g., single parents)

Contrasting struggles at local levels (2)

- Affordability in market-driven localities (e.g., Amsterdam & Nijmegen; London & Leeds; Barcelona & Pamplona)
 - Barcelona: affected by low supply
 - UK: affected by austerity and budget cuts
 - NL: affected by childcare allowances 'affair'

Contrasting struggles at local levels (3)

- Interviews demonstrate how interrelated policy design affects ECEC resources locally:

“**Availability** of nurseries is a key problem. Lotteries are used to **access** a place to a public nursery (with approximately 4 out of 10 families applying, not getting a place) for the past 3 years. A private nursery can **cost** between 500 and 600 euros per month per child. The city council is then working on the expansion of public nurseries (which are of high **quality** but take a long time to build). Expansion is very slow, so many families are left out of coverage.

[...]

Although there are public daycare centres, they are not so useful if you don't “touch all the buttons”: if the daycare centre closes at 4:30pm (there is no **flexible schedule**), but working hours are until the late afternoon, someone has to care for children during that gap: grandparents, babysitters, leaving work, or reducing work hours (which happens among women.)”

Int BCN_000

Signs of social innovation?

- Policy design issues creating a space for social innovation
 - But: local initiatives resulting from inability of local governments to provide ECEC services in a fair and equitable manner?
 - Or: innovative practices (e.g., new collaborations)?
- Examples of collaborative initiatives in Barcelona, Leeds
 - Leeds: municipality and parents (e.g., Short breaks)
 - Barcelona: municipality and not-for-profit organisations (e.g., Concilia)
 - Some public-private mixed initiatives: Pamplona, Ljubljana

Moving forward

- Continuation of analysis via inductive codes
 - E.g., stigma, others
- Reflecting on relationship between policy design issues and social innovation:
 - Social innovation possible *despite* policies being an unequal resource?
 - Social innovation possible *because* policies are an unequal resource?
- Back to the 'local policy paradox': tensions *and* innovation?
- And what does this mean for inequalities in access to work-family policies?

Questions? Thanks for listening!

[!\[\]\(8af806fb1314382d09bc5ec5b767526c_img.jpg\) M.A.Yerkes@uu.nl](mailto:M.A.Yerkes@uu.nl)

[!\[\]\(2e897e890e69d81eae4503a8342c36b0_img.jpg\) www.worklifecapabilities.com](http://www.worklifecapabilities.com)



#mara_yerkes; #erc_capable