

**THE ECONOMIC IDEAS IN EXPERT STATEMENTS OF
THE 2021 FINNISH HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SER-
VICES REFORM**

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<p>Tämä maisterintutkielma tarkastelee ideoiden tutkimuksen näkökulmasta vuoden 2021 sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon uudistuksen parlamentaarista valmistelua ja erityisesti sen taloudellisia perusteluja. Kaikkiin eduskunta vastaanotti yli 1000 sote-uudistukseen kytkeytyvää asiantuntijalausuntoa, joista tämän tutkimuksen aineisto on muodostettu. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan 28 valtiovarainvaliokunnalle annettua asiantuntijalausuntoa niiden sisältämien taloudellisten ideoiden paikantamiseksi.</p> <p>Laadullisen sisällönanalyysin avulla tutkimus nostaa aineistosta seitsemän aihetta, joissa asiantuntijat arvioivat julkisen talouden ja sote-sektorin nykytilannetta sekä esittävät näkemyksiään hallituksen esityksestä. Tutkimuksen keskeinen tulos on se, että asiantuntijalausunnoissa esiintyy pääsääntöisesti kriittisiä taloudellisia ideoita. Suhteutettuna siihen, että monet lausunnot vaikuttavat tarkastelevan sote-uudistusta ja sen tavoitteita paradigmaattisesta näkökulmasta, jonka mukaan julkinen talous kohtaa haasteita kasvavien kustannusten muodossa, asiantuntijalausunnoista välittyy verrattain pessimistinen suhtautuminen esitettyyn uudistukseen. Toinen tutkimuskysymys ohjasi huomioimaan millä tavoin löydetty taloudelliset ideat on esitetty tai kehystetty. Keskeisin löydös on, että kehystämisen muodot vaihtelevat, mutta pääsääntöisesti lausunnoissa talousideat esitetään päätelminä ja ennustuksina.</p> <p>Tutkimus valottaa sote-uudistuksen ideaympäristöä ja osoittaa, kuinka mittakaavaltaan ison julkisen politiikkaohjelman parlamentaarinen käsittely sisältää laajasti äänenpainoja, jotka voivat olla toistensa kanssa ristiriidassa. Tutkimuksen perusteella ideoiden tutkimus voinee edesauttaa paikantamaan politiikkaohjelman muotoutumiseen vaikuttavia seikkoja, jotka muilla lähestymistavoilla voisivat jäädä huomioimatta. Sote-uudistuksen jatkotutkimus ottaisi ihanteellisesti huomioon muut politiikkaprosesseissa vaikuttavat seikat, kuten instituutiot ja intressit sekä hyödyntäisi laajempia politiikkadokumenttiaineistoja.</p>	
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<p>This master's thesis studies the parliamentary preparation of the 2021 healthcare and social services reform and especially its financial justifications from the viewpoint of studying ideas. In total, the Finnish Parliament received more than 1000 expert statements related to the reform, from which the data of this study was formed. The thesis examines 28 expert statements given to the Finance Committee of the Parliament to locate the economic ideas they contain.</p> <p>Using qualitative content analysis, the research raises seven themes from the data, in which the experts review the modern situation of public economy and the healthcare and social services sector along with presenting their views on the Government Proposal. The main result of the study is that the expert statements generally contain critical economic ideas. Compared to the fact that many of these statements seem to examine the reform and its goals from a paradigmatic perspective according to which the public economy faces challenges in the form of increasing costs, the expert statements convey a relatively pessimistic attitude towards the presented reform. The second research question guided the analysis to show how these economic ideas have been presented or framed. The central finding here is that the ways of framing vary but the economic ideas in the statements are mostly presented as deductions and estimates.</p> <p>The research sheds light on the ideational atmosphere of the healthcare and social services reform and shows how the parliamentary processing of a large-scale public policy contains multiple arguments which sometimes conflict with each other. Based on this research, ideational institutionalism could possibly help locate factors which have shaped a policy but would not be revealed with other approaches. Future research of the subject would preferably take into consideration also the other factors that influence policy processes, such as institutions and interests and would use a larger data of policy documents.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In January 2023, the 21 self-governing wellbeing services counties along with Helsinki and HUS Helsinki University Hospital started organising healthcare and social welfare regionally (Valtioneuvosto 2022). The healthcare and social services reform, historical in its scale, creates significant changes for all local governments, over 250 000 employees and adds a new level of governance. When Prime Minister Marin's government introduced this reform, the Government Proposal (241/2020) listed the following goals:

The aim of the reform of healthcare, social services and rescue services is to narrow welfare and health differences, secure equal and high-quality services, improve safety, availability, and accessibility of the services, secure the supply of skilled labor, respond to the challenges brought by social changes and curb the growth of costs.¹

As is visible, the written aims of the healthcare and social services reform largely consist of improving service quality whilst decreasing areal welfare and health differences. However, this thesis focuses on the reform's economic viewpoints. Hence, the last aims, *respond to the challenges brought by social changes* and *curb the growth of costs* are more important when considering my approach to the subject. I think that regardless of other factors related to creating new policies, the guiding influence of economy is quite significant, so analysing it has a great importance.

First, I acknowledge that economy impacts the resources allocated towards policy proposals. Economic institutions such as the national budget and both national and EU-level guidelines regarding public dept sets limits to how much a policy can cost. For example, when the central government transfers to local governments were decreased during the 1990s recession, along with loosening the state's control over

¹ "Sosiaali- ja terveyspalveluja sekä pelastustointia koskevan uudistuksen tavoitteena kaventaa hyvinvointi- ja terveyseroja, turvata yhdenvertaiset ja laadukkaat sosiaali- ja terveys- sekä pelastustoimen palvelut, parantaa turvallisuutta, palveluiden saatavuutta ja saavutettavuutta, turvata ammattitaitoisen työvoiman saanti, vastata yhteiskunnallisten muutosten mukaan tuomiin haasteisiin ja hillitä kustannusten kasvua." p. 1

local service provision, the municipalities received less funding and thus closed services, resulting in inequalities. Later the level of central government transfers to the municipalities stayed in around 25 %, compared to old 40. (Kröger 2011, 151–152.)

Economy also affects politics in other ways. Ideas connected to economy, such as perceptions, estimates and interpretations (Béland 2016, 736–738; Campbell 1998, 384–385) influence the direction to which economic institutions are developed and moreover, how funds are allocated to the public sector. Ideas in their part affect what is considered important in parliamentary action (Perkiö 2021, 64–65). Ideas related to governance and public economy have prompted the previous governments to launch reformations aimed towards healthcare and social services organizations, but no successful policies of the scale of 2021 have been conducted so far (Rautiainen, Taskinen & Rissanen 2020, 21–22; Niemelä & Saarinen 2015, 22).

This thesis, shedding light on economic ideas within the healthcare and social service reform of PM Marin's government, has drawn inspiration from research dealing with public sector economy. For example, in Maija Mänttari-van der Kuip's (2015) dissertation, social workers' work-related wellbeing was studied from the viewpoint that public social work often operates with inadequate resources, causing moral stress and ill-being of the workers. Rather than similar studies, where economy is the context, I lean more on research oriented to shedding light on how political and institutional atmosphere has changed in relation to economy. For example, in his article, Johannes Kananen (2008) has analysed political documents to argue that Finnish public discussion after the 1990s has been reoriented and largely focuses on competitiveness and productivity.

This type of research indicates that a change has occurred in how the public sector is approached by decision-makers, officials, and other policy actors. More specifically, questions have been raised about an ideational change. For example, Kananen (2008) has written how policy documents indicate that the previous social policy paradigm of wage solidarity, progressive income taxation and income distribution via social security benefits has been replaced by the need to succeed in a competitive international market. Anu Kantola and Kananen (2017) even use the concept competitiveness state to refer to this change.

Ideational change, as in previous section, matters because ideas are a force which contributes to policies along with institutions and interests. Institutions, like legislation can seldom be changed radically but instead are changed with gradual steps (Varjonen 2021, 5). Even when decision-makers face pressures to perform cuts, institutions have shown resilience (Saari 2009, 376–379). For example, when in the 90s Finland entered an economic depression, central welfare institutions like social security remained in place but instead their direction was steered to accommodate new ideas weighing active social policy, supply of labour and competitiveness instead of solidarity (Saari & Kananen 2009, 18–19). Throughout the 2000s these institutions have

been attempted to be reformed (Julkunen 2017, 363–364). Related policy proposals often highlight the need to activate those receiving social benefits, which is described as an ideational change compared to previous decades (Perkiö 2021; Varjonen 2021). Central is the notion that the welfare state might remain intact, but ideas surrounding it have changed.

Hence, this thesis acknowledges how ideas related to decision-making have changed and at the present largely revolve around economy. Economic viewpoints have always partly steered the creation of the Finnish welfare state (Hirvilammi 2020, 3–4) but it has been argued that both the authority of economy and those considered experts in that field have received a heightened importance in politics during the last decades (Julkunen 2017, 325–330). For example, the fiscal sustainability gap as a concept relating to benefit-dependency ratio, promoted by the Ministry of Finance, has been commented to largely steer political discourse and policy proposals during the 2000s (Sorsa 2014). Here it is important to note that ideas do not simply appear out of nowhere but are brought on to decision-making processes by policy actors (Sorsa, Alaja & Kaitila 2021, 73–76). For example, from 1970 to 1990, officials especially from the Ministry of Finance brought ideas relating governance to Finnish decision-making, which ended up influencing the privatization of public ownings and organisational changes (Yliaska 2014).

Healthcare and social services might not directly be influenced by changes made to the level of social benefits or to how the function of social security is perceived but developments like the ones made to their organizations, stemming from ideational reasons, have impacted their functioning. During the 90's, the state's control and steering functions of local governments were changed, partly because of ideas about a heavy, overly bureaucratic and inefficient central government. In total, the policies carried out during this time has been described to cause inequalities in services and lower the funding allocated towards the municipalities. As healthcare and social services constituted the largest sector, they faced the highest demands for savings. (Möttönen & Kettunen 2014, 110–113; Kröger 2014, 35–37; Niemelä & Saarinen 2015, 19–21.)

This thesis, then, joins the academic discussion related to public sector economy and especially ideationally attuned policy analysis regarding the subject. My intention is not to commentate whether the current healthcare and social services austerity is real or not. Instead, I shed light on the ideational atmosphere surrounding a large-scale public-sector reformation.

I will answer my research problem by examining how a selected group of experts perceived the economic dimensions of The Government Proposal for legislation regarding the establishment of healthcare and social services counties and the reform of the organization of healthcare and social services and rescue operations, and for issuing a notification in accordance with Articles 12 and 13 of the Charter of European Local Self-Government when it was worked on in the Finnish Parliament. By doing

so, I can shed light on the political economic atmosphere in which this significant public sector reform was prepared. This thesis acknowledges how policy actors such as experts can influence decision-making with economic ideas they bring to the equation. After all, ideas such as normative reflections or cognitive interpretations have been identified as one of the elements affecting policies, along interests and institutions.

The thesis is structured as follows: chapter two aims to contextualize the subject by opening the background and the history of the current reform. Next, chapter three introduces ideational institutionalism, the theoretical framework of this thesis along with explaining how the outlook of ideas affect their success. Chapter four then is about the methodology of this study: research question and the data and method with which I aim to answer it. Fifth chapter consists of the results of the analysis. The thesis is concluded in chapter six where I summarize the most important results along with further discussing their meaning.

2 BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES REFORM

The current healthcare and social services reform has a long history as some kind of a reform has been planned for more than 15 years by several governments. These policy proposals have largely dealt with organisational structures and have been aimed at, for example decreasing the number of municipalities. In this chapter, I will introduce the most important developments done to the local governments during the 2000s, as these policies form the context of this thesis. At the end of this chapter, the proposal for the 2021 healthcare and social services reform is introduced.

2.1 Plans to reform healthcare and social services

Before the current reform that came into force at the beginning of 2023, several governments tried to reform the Finnish healthcare and social services system, but all these previous efforts had smaller impacts or failed in passing the parliamentary process. However, these attempts affected both the number of municipalities, but also their role in the organization and production of services.

According to Mikko Niemelä (2008), concerns about local governments' resources in securing demographic and geographic equality of healthcare and social services arose during the 2000s. Economic terms have largely dominated the political discussion around these matters, showing for example in estimates about the budgetary resources of municipalities, or when the need to increase efficiency of public action has been highlighted in political discourse. With this development, other equally important aspects might have received less attention, amongst them questions regarding local democracy and inclusion. In Niemelä's view, the fact that political discussion has focused on economic dimensions of healthcare and social services organisations can

be tied to a larger social policy paradigm, which unlike previously, attaches weight to competitiveness and productivity. (Niemelä 2008, 45–46; 48.)

To solve these problems, which deal with both the realized and estimated capability of the local governments to provide services, policy programs have encouraged and mandated municipalities to form units with larger population bases. Starting in 2002, there was a series of reforms that affected the number of local governments and their role as the organizers and providers of healthcare and social services. As mentioned, and especially regarding the organization of healthcare, the municipalities have been encouraged or forced into closer cooperation. (Niemelä & Saarinen 2015, 22–24; Niemelä 2008, 45–46.)

First, PM Matti Vanhanen, during his first government 2003–2007, planned a municipal development program (*PARAS-hanke*) and set it in motion during his second term. PARAS-programme aimed to create municipalities with minimum of 20 000 inhabitants to be adequately large to provide healthcare and social services. As a result, a multitude of small municipals merged. Later, PM Jyrki Katainen and his government proposed 32 base level healthcare and social services areas with 5 special care regions. Both PM Katainen's and his successor PM Stubb's proposal for healthcare and social services reform were deemed unconstitutional due to large increases in the taxation that would have followed the adaptation of the models. (Rautiainen et al. 2020, 22–24.)

Next, PM Juha Sipilä started planning his healthcare and social services reform in 2015. The proposal was to form 18 regions that would have served as the organisational base while the provision of services could have been carried out by either the public or the private sector. The reform highly prioritised the integration of healthcare and social services. However, possibly a larger focus was aimed towards changing the balance of public and private services: the model would have enhanced the abilities of a client to choose a service provider despite the sector. Moreover, PM Sipilä's proposal strongly incentivized the regions to privatize their service production, which was viewed as being against the constitution. The model was changed, but still it was taken as unconstitutional, ending with the government's resignation. (Rautiainen et al. 2020, 25–27.)

The idea guiding these policy programmes aimed towards the local governments is that larger organisations are perceived to provide services more efficiently than their smaller counterparts. In addition, the ideas about inefficient public services have been used to argue in favour of policies, which have deepened the use of private sector healthcare and social services providers. With these developments, the overall cost-efficiency of public services might have increased, but on the other hand, ethical problems have arisen, for example in market-oriented social services. (Niemelä & Saarinen 2015, 22–24; Möttönen & Kettunen 2014, 114; Niemelä 2008, 45–46.)

This subchapter has informed how for almost 20 years, there has been attempts to change the way in which healthcare and social services are organised and provided.

During this period, political discussion has largely dealt with economic factors like the weakening of benefit-dependency ratio or the efficiency of public services. The policy proposals for the raised problems have then mostly dealt with increasing the population bases of service organizers.

2.2 The proposal for the 2021 healthcare and social services reform

The focus of this thesis is on the latest healthcare and social services reform. The reform was originally proposed by the centre-left government of Social Democratic PM Antti Rinne in 2019. After PM Rinne's resignation, Social Democrat Sanna Marin was elected as the new Prime Minister. The government's structure remained mostly unchanged, and it adopted the existing government programme: *Inclusive and competent Finland - a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society* (Valtioneuvosto 2019, 1).

Implementing the government programme, the government launched the preparation of the healthcare and social services reform with the Government Proposal 241/2020, somewhat continuing the preparative work of the previous proposals. The preparation and implementation processes of the proposal were done with a lot of working groups and committees, on top of them the health and social ministry's working group. Along, a parliamentary committee handled the question of wellbeing services counties' right for taxation. The Commission of European Union was involved in preparation when needed. (Valtioneuvosto 2019, 154; HE 241/2020, 19-22.)

As listed in the introduction, the Government Proposal (241/2020) has multiple aims for the healthcare and social services reform, such as securing equal and adequate healthcare and social services, increasing the accessibility and availability of these services, and guaranteeing the flow of professional workforce. However, for this thesis the last goals, *reacting to the challenges brought on by societal changes and curbing the growth of costs* are the most fertile. The Government Proposal states that with the reform, the services' *"effectiveness and productivity is improved, cost development contained, and services openness increased"*. (HE 241/2020, 1, 19.)

The Government Proposal diagnosed the following problems it aims to address by reforming healthcare and social services organizations: First, it describes how in Finland, the fiscal sustainability gap is 3-4 % of the gross domestic product, a situation perceived to likely to worsen with the expected rise of age-related expenses. Second, both the structure and funding of the healthcare and social services are described as unable to secure equal services to citizens. This is then explained partly by geographical development. (HE 241/2020, 19.)

In the Government Proposal, larger organizers of services are introduced as the most significant solution for these abovementioned problems. Hence, 21 wellbeing

services counties along with the city of Helsinki and the hospital district of HUS are proposed as the organizers of healthcare and social services. In addition, five co-functioning areas would be established to promote cooperation between wellbeing services counties. (HE 241/2020, 19–20; 199.)

The proposed model aims to prioritize primary care and preventative services instead of specialised services. Additionally, the Government Proposal mandates the wellbeing services counties to have the capabilities, abilities, and readiness to ensure the availability of services in accordance with the service needs of its residents in all situations. In practice, this means changes and limits to outsourcing of healthcare and social services, which has been carried out in some municipalities and joint municipal authorities throughout the 2000s. However, the descriptions are somewhat vague when referring to how much outsourcing would be allowed with the model: “[s]ufficient provision of services cannot be categorically defined with for example percentages because it is affected by the circumstances of all counties...” In total, the proposal allows an undefined portion of outsourcing and use of private sector providers, but sets boundaries according to which, for example, all healthcare centres in a wellbeing services county can’t be provided by a private provider. (HE 241/2020, 19, 195–196, 671–672.) Compared to the previous Government’s Proposal, where privatization and outsourcing was almost a priority, the Government Proposal 241/2020 presents a different but still somewhat unclear outlook on the matter.

Upon their establishment, the wellbeing services counties are proposed to receive their funding from the state while their right for taxation is investigated. Like previously, with universal central government transfers the counties are allowed to choose relatively freely how to allocate their funding. Service needs largely define the size of a government transfer, being around 80 % of the sum. Other factors amounting to the total sum include the number of inhabitants and actions for promoting wellbeing and health. The calculations are based on a model created by the National Institute of Health and Welfare. (HE 241/2020, 205–206.)

After a transition period, the wellbeing services counties are meant to be compensated with only 80 % of the estimated growth in service-related costs. In the Government Proposal, this is presented as an incentive for the counties to improve efficiency of their services. However, the proposal highlights how the credibility of this possible cost-cutter depends on the assessment process paired with extra funding and if the counties’ hold possible sanctions as credible: the proposed Law on Wellbeing Services Counties’ funding states that the counties can receive additional funding in a situation where their lack of resources would risk the quality of statutory services. The government decides upon additional funding with formatting a committee. If a county exceeds their budgets frequently, they could face sanctions such as increased control and finally mergers with another counties. (HE 241/2020, 270, 276, 1344–1345.)

The transition of funding is proposed to last until 2029. During this period, the state balances the change which would be caused by the new central government

transfer system. However, this compensation is planned to be gradually decreased: according to the Government Proposal, the state would compensate all exceeding sums in 2023 and the next year the amount of change could not exceed + / - 10 euros per inhabitant. In 2029, the state would compensate changes exceeding + 200 / -100 per counties' inhabitant. Thus, the changes brought on by the new funding model leaning on service-needs are compensated but gradually less and less. Additionally, the budgets of all wellbeing services counties would be reviewed annually, and necessary changes made to the level of the central government transfers in a national level. (HE 241/2020, 259-260, 276.)

Last, the Government Proposal describes that the healthcare and social services reform is unlikely to reduce any costs during its first decade. Hence, at the earliest the reform is estimated to start strengthening the public economy from 2030. This also seems dependent on many factors: the Proposal notes how there are difficulties in predicting cost-containing effects in a reform of this scale. (HE 241/2020, 250, 270.) Hence, the proposal seems to demonstrate ambivalence when considering the possibilities of the healthcare and social services reform to achieve its economic goals.

To summarize this contextualizing chapter, throughout the 2000s political discussion has largely dealt with the economic resources with which municipalities provide their healthcare and social services. The reformation of healthcare and social services has often been presented as a solution to these problems but before PM Marin's government, no proposal has been fully enacted. When compared to the previous versions, the 2021 proposal for healthcare and social services reform seems to offer familiar solutions, such as larger organisations towards these acknowledged problems. In the Government Proposal, economic goals might be listed lower than those related to service quality and economy in general might receive less importance as with previous governments' proposals. However, economic dimensions are still strongly displayed in the proposal and hence form a subject worthy of research.

The next chapter deals with the theoretical perspective of this thesis, which acknowledges the power of ideas in policy change. Besides ideas, institutions like legislation or economic factors, and interests such as the shared goals of parties have been used as analytical tools to analyse policy change. (Saari & Kananen 2009, 14-16.) Hence, before a change of chapter I shortly introduce what I see as interests and institutions that likely have affected the formation of the studied healthcare and social services reform.

First, when PM Marin's government inherited the reform from the former PM Antti Rinne, it had already been planned by several other governments, likely creating public pressure to succeed in the process. In addition, the government of previous PM Sipilä had begun enacting some of their reform related legislation, leaving less room to depart from the model containing wellbeing services counties, Rautiainen et al. (2020, 27-28) assume. In Marin's government programme (Valtioneuvosto 2019, 154)

they write how when preparing the reform, they have noted the work done with the previous proposals for reforms.

Considering the interests and power relations of PM Marin's government, it needs to be noted how the Centre party was not willing to decrease the number of counties (Rautiainen et al 2020, 28). As majority of their voters live outside dense cities, geographically broad service network likely was viewed to benefit their popularity. Similarly, it can be speculated that the left-leaning parties, Social Democrats and Left-Alliance were critical of the previous models' stance on allowing further privatization of service production. Lastly, I assume that an institutionalized stance in discourses about weakening ratio of taxpayers and pensioners (Sorsa 2014) together with an implemented austerity of public budgets has likely affected the preparation of the reform. Now, the thesis continues with explanation about policy ideas.

3 IDEAS IN POLICY ANALYSIS

This chapter explains how I use ideational institutionalism as the theoretical framework with which the research subject has been approached. Ideational institutionalism perceives that, along with interests and institutions, policy processes contain ideas which affect decision-making. Ideas are present, for example, when policy actors make sense of reality, form their understanding of the issues at hand, and when decision-makers are being influenced. To succeed in a policy process, ideas need to be presented or framed in the right way.

The chapter begins by comparing the ideational approach in relation to what I perceive as a more traditional institutionalism. Then different types of ideas along with a conceptualisation of policy processes as a cycle is presented. Next, a subchapter introduces framing theories which explain how the outlook of a policy can define its effect on decision-making. Lastly, I briefly discuss how ideas have been researched lately and introduce how I pursue ideas in my thesis.

3.1 How ideas explain policy change

Ideas are here perceived as political actors' views, perceptions, understandings, and values. Human action and decision-making are influenced by worldviews, feelings, and moral options, ideas, especially when faced with uncertainty. Thus, the ideational perspective acknowledges how subjective notions have an effect on rational choices. (Saari and Kananen 2009, 14–16.) In Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox's (2011) view, "*ideas are causal beliefs*", which are cognitively produced and "*connected to the material world only via our interpretations of our surroundings.*" Due to their causal nature, ideas form explanations about the relation of people or phenomena with each other.

They also “*provide guides for action*”. (Béland & Cox 2011, 3–4.) In recent decades, research on ideas has been increasingly conducted in fields like political science, social policy, and political economy. (Saari 2009, 389–394).

This thesis links ideas to institutionalism, a theoretical way of perceiving policy processes as the result of interaction with actors and institutions. The approach connects to “new” institutionalism. Older institutionalist accounts focused on “*...on the interaction of macro-level variables*” such as the economy and society, and produced for example, results about welfare states as a by-product of modernization in the 1960s. Later, institutionalist studies distinguished multiple welfare state regimes in contrast to uniform social security systems. (Saari 2009, 368–379.) Ideational institutionalism in the context of this thesis is used to continue the tradition of welfare state studies and policy analysis about the changing welfare state.

Besides noting the effect of path dependency and institutions in a more traditional sense, modern institutionalism adds micro-level institutions like social rules or norms as important factors in affecting human and organizational action. For example, institutionalist accounts have described how politicians need to consider their change of being re-elected when planning cuts and hence acknowledged the importance of social codes in policy processes. Thus, institutionalism in a modern sense is more actor-centric than its earlier materialistic forms. (Saari 2009, 368–369, 379–383, 390–391.)

Early research about welfare state formation approached country differences by examining the different political power resources and coalitions as explaining factors. The notion was that political parties represent the interests of their voters which then to a degree effects how important welfare institutions like social security gets formed in the parliamentary process. (Saari 2009, 372–374). According to Juho Saari (2011) interest groups are characterized by their

“...established views on objectives, which serve their material interests such as taxes or benefits or cultural values such as patriotism, solidarity or responsibility.” and “Interest groups can be formed around class such as the actors societal position: socioeconomic, areal or work category then being the unifying factor to aim their cause.” (Saari 2011, 7.)

In this account, the material interests of individuals are viewed as the base with which they form groups and then try to advance these interests with social influencing. On the contrary, Béland and Cox (2011) write:

“From Marxism to rational choice theory, the orthodox, materialist view of interests is not compatible with ideational analysis. Materialism tends to consider ideas as mere epiphenomena that simply reflect underlying, supposedly objective economic interests.” (Béland & Cox 2011, 10.)

Hence, it needs to be acknowledged that unlike older institutionalist explanations, ideational approaches do not view interests as independently existing. Instead, ideational institutionalism notes that an establishment’s interests in a policy process varies with its representative. (Béland & Cox 2011, 10.) In addition, despite shared

interests, classes in reality form a heterogeneous group whose central idea might be hard to translate to politics (Saari 2009, 390–391).

If ideational institutionalism is sceptical of the existence of individual objective interests of a group, it also questions the power of interests "...to determine the actions people take". Instead, the argument is that human cognition, at its nature biased, contributes largely to decision-making. Hence, groups' interests are prone to change when an actor perceives them with cognitive and normative processes. So, interests somewhat change with their interpreter. (Béland & Cox 2011, 10–11.) As shown, the ideational perspective is actor centric, giving weight to subjectivity, emotions, and irrationality.

When considering how these theoretical approaches pursue political processes, institutionalism has shown that established policies are relatively hard to change. For example, Saari (2009) writes how in the 1990s, academic interest was turned into the resilience of social security systems when they faced trans-national ideologies, which over a decade had supported cuts to welfare systems. Even though decision-makers, officials and other policy actors adopted these ideologies, Saari notes that social security did not vastly change. Path dependency was then perceived to explain why institutions did not radically change even when politicians faced pressure for budget cuts: established political institutions are easier to maintain than to significantly change their nature. (Saari 2009, 379–384, 390–391.) However, with a window of opportunity policies can abruptly change like with the centralisation of Finnish social assistance in 2017 (Varjonen 2021).

Hence, institutions, such as local, national, and European Union legislation along with other regulation and programmes create constricting effects on policies by forming the walls between which a new policy must fit. Additionally, policies are shaped by time, funds and personnel addressed as with organisational structures to the process. (Saari 2011, 7.)

Ideational explanations do not deny the effects of institutions or constraints they create regarding decision-making but instead supplement these explanations with actor centric notions. Politics are then viewed as largely discursive processes between actors with competing and changing interpretations of the world and the subject matter. Institutions contain and affirm ideas and ideas contribute to the formation of these institutions, creating affirmative cycles. Ideational perspective is to view the world of decision-making as socially constructed and ideas as in cognitive processes as the core of human agency. (Béland & Cox 2011, 8–9.)

In research, ideas are usually not viewed as a uniform block but are instead split into categories by their characteristics. For example, in his article sociologist John L. Campbell (1998) has divided ideas into four categories which seems to have created ground for later ideational approaches. Afterwards, political sociologist Daniel Béland (2016; 2005) has supplemented this typology with political ideologies and problem definitions. In their research, both scholars have largely dealt with the role of ideas in

explaining policies. Similar research seems to largely repeat these typologies, sometimes adding or subtracting categories. (e.g., Kananen & Saari 2009, 15–18; Perkiö 2021, 71–73.)

Campbell (1998) describes paradigms and public sentiments as background ideas. Then on foreground there exists policy programmes and frames. Ideas are also seen to contain either a cognitive or moral dimension, both in back- and foreground. In Campbell's view, the typology accounts for how political actors approach new ideas by assessing their political legitimacy, normative aspects, rationality and lastly their affective dimensions. (Campbell 1998, 384–385.) In reality, the categories are somewhat artificial and probably overlap.

To start from the background, ideational institutionalists and other researchers using ideational explanations seem to agree that paradigms affect decision-making by limiting which problems, proposals, and solutions are seen as realistic or reasonable (Campbell 1998, 389–392; Béland 2016, 737–738; Perkiö 2021, 68–69). Located in the background of policy makers' actions, paradigms "*...generally reside in their cognitive backgrounds as underlying theoretical and ontological assumptions about how the world works.*" They are "*inherently cognitive*". (Campbell 1998, 389–392.)

If paradigms define how policies are viewed at by decision-makers, public sentiments make the decision-makers consider how their actions are perceived. A politically elected decision-maker must think of their constituents. Campbell (1998) views a public sentiment consisting of the public's "*...broad-based attitudes and normative assumptions about what is desirable or not.*" For a proposal to succeed, it must conform to the values of the society. In addition, politicians have attitudes and moral like anyone else. This means public sentiments are sort of double effective at nature as they include the moral values of both decision-makers and the public. Public sentiments are placed in the background of Campbell's categorisation. (Campbell 1998, 392–394.)

Then, a policy programme in Campbell's (1998) thinking is a solution to a policy related problem. These are "*...technical and professional ideas that specify cause-and-effect relationships and prescribe a precise course of policy action.*" For a policy programme to have an appeal on a decision-maker, a clear and straightforward appearance with a set of policy actions is important. This may be more important than the rigorous scientific background of a programme. In Campbell's division, policy programmes are on the foreground of ideas and cognitive rather than normative. (Campbell 1998, 386–389.)

The role of ideas varies in the stages of policy making: first, in the agenda-setting phase, "*[a]ctors such as experts and journalists define certain problems and push them in and out of the policy agenda.*" From the viewpoint of ideas, agenda-setting is characterized by competing views on which phenomena needs legislative action. (Béland 2016, 739.) The authority of a policy actor as an expert along with other factors defines whether their views are noted (Béland 2016, 739; Sorsa, Alaja & Kaitila 2021.)

When policies are being formulated, a competition of ideas is again likely to surface. As noted, successful proposals are both cognitively and normatively appropriated. Thus, when formulating policies, actors likely connect their ideas to modern paradigms. This way a proposal is made valuable and reasonable to the politicians. In addition, some “*instrument constituencies*” are seen to promote a specific policy as a solution to various problems. (Béland 2016, 739.)

Third stage of a policy cycle is decision making, when “...*elected officials, policy entrepreneurs and advocacy coalitions fight over the enactment of concrete policy solutions.*” During decision making, policy actors try to gather support for their policies by connecting them to prevalent paradigms and norms. Like in the previous stages, the paradigms and public sentiments need to be thought of for a policy to succeed. Béland’s policy cycle is finished with the implementation and evaluation of a policy. (Béland 2016, 739–740.)

Above I have explained how ideational institutionalism has further refined explanations about policy processes towards a more actor-centric, subjective understanding. The key notion here is that besides institutions like economic structures or established policies, and interests such as party background that policy actors carry along, ideas such as worldviews or normative evaluations effect decision-making. The next subchapter focuses on explaining how the appearance of an idea likely effects its succession in policy processes.

3.2 Frames and framing in promoting policy ideas

Ideational institutionalism in essence claims that when it comes to decision-making, appearances matter more than has previously been acknowledged. As outlined in the previous subchapter, in policy processes decision-makers and other policy actors deal with competing ideas, which need to fit their understanding of the world along with their values. In general, these policy processes are largely viewed as discursive. To succeed, an idea thus needs to be presented from the right perspective and framed carefully. As Béland and Cox write, “*At the core of politics is the way ideas are packaged, disseminated, adopted, and embraced*” (2011, 13). Hence, next I shed light on how the outlook of policy ideas matter. As a topic, it is closely linked to this thesis’ research questions.

Frames are the fourth idea according to Campbell (1998). He introduces framing as the action done by the policy maker to gain “...*public support for policy proposals.*” Thus, frames are firstly the communicative actions which manipulate ideas into fitting with normative aspects of both public and the elite. In practice Campbell means that actors who try to propose policies need use both popular and normatively acceptable rhetoric. This intentional and strategic act thus connects to Campbell’s previous ideas.

A policy idea needs to have the right appearance for it to succeed in a policy cycle. (Campbell 1998, 394–398.)

In her dissertation concerning basic income as a policy idea in Finnish political discourse, Johanna Perkiö (2021, 66) notes how “[f]raming is a necessary part of all human communication. Any issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives.” Framing thus is referred to actors actively making sense of their surroundings and issues they are met with (Perkiö 2021, 66; Chong & Druckman 2007, 104; Goffman 1974, 8). Parallely, like Campbell (1998), it has been described as to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (Entman 1993, 51–52.)

Hence, ideational research has also noted how policy actors consciously use frames to gain legitimacy for their causes (Béland 2016; Sorsa 2014; Saari & Kananen 2009; Campbell 1998). Ideas “...provide actors with symbols and concepts with which to frame solutions in normatively acceptable terms...”. (Campbell 1998, 394–398). Frame is the exterior and appearance of a subject (Saari & Kananen 2009, 23–25), which can diagnose, evaluate, or prescribe (Entman 1993, 52–53). It can be used synonymously with concepts like discourses or narratives (Karvonen 2000, 83–83).

Despite notions about vagueness or general critique towards the concept (Entman 1993, Chong & Druckman 2007, Vliegthart & Van Zoonen 2011, 111–112), there seems to be a shared notion that frames are highly selective. Hence, framing means highlighting some attributes whilst excluding others. This can be intentional or subconscious. (Goffman 1974, 8; Entman 1993, 52; Karvonen 2000, 82–83.)

As actors actively try to understand and adapt by assuming, adopting perspectives, and relying on their world views, they necessarily will not choose the most objective or refined explanations. Indeed, an effective frame can rely more on values and emotions than objective information. (Peräkylä 1990, 147, 153–159; Goffman 1974, 8; Chong & Druckman 2007, 110–112.)

3.3 Previous Finnish research on policy ideas

There seems to exist little or no research in Finland about the healthcare and social services reform from an ideational perspective. However, researchers have used policy ideas as a theoretical tool to study subjects like the Finnish political economy (Sorsa 2014; Kananen 2008), how decision-making is influenced (Sorsa et al. 2021; Yliaska 2014) and how the Finnish municipality structure has been renewed (Niemelä & Saarinen 2015; Niemelä 2008). Next, I review how some of the studies that have contributed to the perspective of this thesis, have adopted, and used ideas as a theoretical tool.

First, Johannes Kananen (2008) has studied political discussion about social policy to identify if there exists a paradigm of competitiveness and productivity. He approaches this research problem by conducting a thematic and a rhetoric analysis focusing on visible problem definitions, presented goals and policy solutions in contemporary policy documents like ministry committee reports, expert papers and articles provided by the labour market organizations. In his view, using ideas as a theory enables him to achieve a more comprehensive look on the matter than focusing solely on the institutional level like legislation or the level of social benefits: Kananen notes, how locating possible paradigms complements the understanding that could be achieved by researching institutions or interests. (Kananen 2008.)

Second, Ville-Pekka Sorsa (2014) in his article focused on the factors that create an attractive policy idea. Using policy documents, he analysed how the Ministry of Finance has brought the policy idea of fiscal sustainability gap to Finnish public discussion and how it was then able to receive a rather paradigmatic status. Sorsa writes how the Ministry's definition of fiscal sustainable gap contains assumptions and normative decisions, which are overshadowed by its appearance. First, the concept promotes sustainability which Sorsa views is a universally positive word but offers few solutions outside of budgetary cuts to achieve this sustainability. Second, in speech the concept equates the finances of the government to household finances despite there being other views about the matter. Hence, Sorsa notes that as a policy idea, fiscal sustainability was able to receive a dominant position because it offers a seemingly factual, clear and straightforward problem diagnoses and solutions whilst also came to public speech during the right time. (Sorsa 2014) Thus, Sorsa highlights how besides timing and the authority of an expert, the appearance of a policy idea is crucial for its succession.

Johanna Perkiö's (2021) dissertation examined the framing of basic income as a policy idea in the Finnish public discussion over the past 40 years. She used political documents as the data. Her results show, how after the economic recession of the 1990s, basic income schemes were mostly framed to fit the prevalent economic paradigm of austerity and active unemployment. An ideational institutionalist view on Perkiö's topic allowed her to analyse how, for it to succeed, the policy idea's outlook needed to be shaped to fit the normative and cognitive atmosphere of each period. (Perkiö 2021.)

Furthermore, Sampo Varjonen's (2021) dissertation views the change of Finnish social security system from an ideational perspective. He uses ideas, institutions, and interests as theoretical concepts to guide his analyse about changes in the welfare state. (Varjonen 2021.) Varjonen's dissertation not only deepens the distinctions of ideas and institutions but like others, highlights the importance of framing policy ideas by relatively abstract terms in line with the prevalent normative atmosphere.

In their study, Olli Kangas, Mikko Niemelä, and Sampo Varjonen (2014) conducted a survey (n=3500) with competing frames about the centralization of the Finnish social assistance. Their results show, how alternative frames affected the interviewee's opinion about the issue despite when framed neutrally, the opinions supported the issues. Here again, the researchers used ideational theories to study how ideas can be made more attractive by shaping their appearance. (Kangas, Niemelä and Varjonen 2014.)

Lastly, both Ville Yliaska (2014) and Ville-Pekka Sorsa, Antti Alaja and Joel Kaitila (2021) have examined how policy ideas are brought to policy processes by actors. Both have analysed documents relating to decision-making to explain who have brought certain ideas to the centre of politics and how an actor's authority is built. At the core, their research highlights how parliamentary decision-making is sometimes significantly influenced by those who are not elected, raising questions about the processes' democracy. Hence, here the impact of ideas is examined from a larger perspective by asking how they are introduced to the decision-making processes at the first place.

3.4 Ideational approach of this study

To summarize the theoretical viewpoints of this study, I firstly acknowledge that ideas are present in policy processes and that they are capable of influencing decision-making. They do so because they firstly affect how policy actors perceive societal phenomena as problematic and worthy of drawing a policy on, and second limit the amount of policy solutions. Hence, besides institutions and interests, ideas contribute to policy change.

Compared to other institutionalist approaches, ideational institutionalism gives more weight to cognitive and normative processes of those involved in politics. Hence, it argues these processes need addressing when analysing policy change: as a theoretical approach it then acknowledges that ideas can account for unexpected outcomes even if interests like political coalitions or institutions like legislation would have hinted differently. Thus, analysing ideas within politics can offer a more detailed explanation of policy change than other iterations of institutionalism. (Saari 2009, 379–383; Béland 2016, 743; Kananen 2008, 240–241.)

Policy ideas do not appear by themselves to decision-making but are instead - consciously or unconsciously - brought there by actors, like decision-makers, officials, lobbyists or experts, whose relative authority and influence fluctuates over time (Sorsa et al. 2021). In addition, besides other factors, the impact of an idea is somewhat dependent of its appearance and how it is normatively and cognitively refined to suit

the prevalent paradigm. Hence, both who presents a policy idea and how it its presented is important.

With ideas in mind, I approach my research topic, the healthcare and social services reform of PM Marin's government. I acknowledge that the parliamentary process in which the reform was shaped was full of policy actors carrying, besides interests, policy ideas that affected the finished reform. Moreover, as the chosen theoretical viewpoint has previously used to inform how unelected experts influence parliamentary politics, it seems worthy to shed light on expert's opinions. Hence, in the next chapter I introduce the research question along with the data and methodology with which I aim to answer it.

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter opens with an introduction to my research questions. Then, I first introduce my data and second explain the methodology of this thesis. With these I aim to answer the research problem. Last, the study's ethics is briefly discussed.

4.1 Research questions

In the previous chapter, I introduced my theoretical framework, which comes from ideational institutionalism and the study of ideas. For this research, the central notions taken from that framework are first that ideas, besides interest and institutions, can be located in policy processes and their impact analysed. Second, it is important to reveal who carries which ideas, and third that the appearance of a policy idea likely affects its impact.

In this study, I aim to shed light on ideas presented by certain policy actors in the parliamentary process of 2021 Finnish healthcare and social services reformation. Moreover, I will focus on economic issues perceived by those who have submitted an expert statement to the Finance Committee of the Finnish Parliament. This question is approached by conducting a qualitative content analysis on these statements. The analysis simultaneously focuses on the ideas in the statements and sheds light on how they are framed. From now on, the actors behind the statements will be referred to as experts since this is how the parliamentary committees title them (Vainio 2007).

The following questions have guided this study:

1. *What kind of economic ideas can be found in the statements?*
2. *How are the experts framing these economic ideas?*

4.2 Data

As demonstrated in the chapter 3.3, in ideational research policy documents, such as committee rapports, legal briefs and memos are often analysed to locate descriptions, diagnoses and proposals from them. To comprehensively trace how selected ideas circulate within policy processes, the use of longitudinal data is also often preferred (Béland 2016, 742–743; Béland & Cox 2011, 13). In comparison, my data, policy documents located within the parliamentary process, reflects the chosen approach of this study.

Unfortunately, this thesis is not capable of using documents which could enable showing how economic ideas within the reform have changed nor prove their impact on the finished legislation. The healthcare and social services reform consisted of vast amount of new legislation in addition to leading to modifications for the existing one. The Government Proposal (HE 241/2020) alone is 1669 pages. Many Parliamentary Committees dealt with the bills. Both the Finnish Parliament and before that Ministries received hundreds of expert statements. Thus, the parliamentary documents simply create too large a dataset for a single master's thesis. Instead, I chose a small sample to focus on.

Large policies such as this reform are often already agreed in the government formation negotiations and the preparation launched in the respective ministry. The Government Proposal about the healthcare and social services reform was prepared by officials in the Health and Social Affairs Ministry, Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Finance, where the proposal concept received over 800 expert statements. Afterwards, it was handed to the Finnish Parliament where the committees worked on it. (HE 241/2020, 19–22.)

As I focus on the economy of the healthcare and social reform, expert statements given to the Finance Committee were picked as most likely containing solely economy related arguments. The Finance Committee is one of the five constitutionally agreed committees, along with the Grand Committee, Constitutional Law Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee and Audit Committee. The Finance Committee is described to enjoy a high appreciation amongst the MEPS. (Vainio 2007, 157–158, 220.)

When necessary, the parliamentary committees invite experts for hearings to gather additional information about the bills. The experts are usually either academics representing their field, or stakeholders affected by the matter. It has been evaluated that expert statements might not largely impact the bill, but this depends for example on the relevance and ambivalence of the subject. (Vainio 2007, 186–189.)

The statements I used as data were publicly available in the Parliament's web page, where I downloaded them with two different searches, producing a total of 144 statements submitted between January to May 2021. In comparison, the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs and Health received 391 statements. In total, the Parliament received 1182 statements and presentations while working on the reform.

I created a description of the data using Microsoft Excel: every document was included in the chart with its file number, the date of submission, length and the expert's name and instance. Over a period of two months, the data were then reduced. This included removing statements dealing with factors other than my research interests, statements or presentations given by Ministry officials, and data in a slide show form. For example, the statements concerning emergency services were removed. Later statements dealing with or representing municipalities and other areal interest were excluded as they did not form a demographically or geographically coherent group. Similarly, statements from the same experts containing identical content were removed.

Finally, I was left with 28 statements and 170 pages of material. The data contain 24 different experts, such as central trade unions, employer unions, lobbyist groups, both public and private organisations and research institutes, and lastly, academics. Due to privacy reasons, experts are referred here by their organisations even if they have been personally asked to submit a statement. An exception was done with Professor Emeritus Markku Pekurinen, an expert who did not disclose a background organization. The length of the statements varies between 2 and 25 pages, the average being 6 and the median being 5 pages. Most of the statements were submitted to the Finance Committee in general but five were directed to the Tax Sub-committee. The data is shown in table 1 where the statements submitted to the Tax Sub-committee are darkened.

Table 1. Expert statements used as data

Number	Instance	Date	Pages
350405	Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)	16.2.2021	5
355184	Association of Finnish Municipalities (Kuntaliitto)	2.3.2021	17
356007	Taxpayers Association of Finland (TAF)	4.3.2021	4
356068	Chambers of Commerce (Keskuskauppakamari)	4.3.2021	5
356133	Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)	4.3.2021	2
356251	Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)	4.3.2021	4
356830	National Audit Office of Finland (NAOF)	5.3.2021	5
356831	Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (ETLA)	24.2.2021	2
357018	University of Helsinki	7.3.2021	12
357050	The Finnish Economic Policy Council	8.3.2021	4
357183	SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health	23.2.2021	5
357289	Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) 2	10.3.2021	2
357466	Professor Emeritus Pekurinen	10.3.2021	4
357659	University of Tampere	11.3.2021	7
357759	University of Tampere 2	10.3.2021	5
357879	Aalto University 1	11.3.2021	5
358705	Aalto University 2	17.3.2021	6
358932	Akava - Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland	15.3.2021	7
358933	The Finnish Association of Private Care Providers (HALI ry)	15.3.2021	10
359481	Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) 2	17.3.2021	3
359539	Suomen Yrittäjät (no English translation used)	17.3.2021	25
359563	The Finnish Confederation of Professionals (STTK)	17.3.2021	5
359614	The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) 2	17.3.2021	8
360631	VATT Institute for Economic Research	22.3.2021	6
360632	University of Tampere 3	23.3.2021	2
360660	Association of Finnish Municipalities (Kuntaliitto) 2	23.3.2021	5
360661	Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare (THL) 3	23.3.2021	2
360766	Aalto University 3	22.3.2021	3
	Total number of statements 28		170

4.3 Qualitative content analysis

In chapter three, the theoretical framework of this thesis was outlined. To examine the economic ideas and their framing in the selected expert statements, I will analyse the data using qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is here pursued to be a relatively flexible and free way of analysing data. I view its core in coding, complying themes and interpreting the results. Most qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis or frame analysis, use phases of qualitative content analysis in their processes. (Silvasti 2014, 33–34, 48; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 19–18; 112.) The prefix *qualitative* separates this method from a traditionally statistically oriented content analysis (Vuori n.d.).

Tiina Silvasti (2014) along with Jouni Tuomi and Anneli Sarajärvi (2018) see three different variations of qualitative content analysis, which vary in their positioning to theory: The research can firstly aim to create new theory from the data, like in grounded theory where the data is pursued as a blank canvas, without comparing its contents to existing theories. New theory is then built around the information within the data. The challenge might then be how to perceive the data truly objectively without any assumptions. Second approach, theory-driven analysis aims to test and improve an existing theory. Contrary to data-driven analysis, theory is here used in creating codes, classes or categories to which data is then attached. The data is thus pursued from a general perspective towards details with a deductive logic. (Silvasti 2014, 40–42; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

I chose to use theory guided analysis, which unlike the previous two variants, uses theory more freely. The analysis can be pursued either inductively or deductively depending on when does the researcher turn for the theories in support of the analysis. (Silvasti 2014, 43–44; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 108–113.) In this thesis it has meant an approach, where the statements' content largely shaped how codes and themes were formed whereas the background theory guided me to focus on visible causal thoughts, descriptions, problem diagnoses and estimates related to the economy of the healthcare and social services reform. Qualitative content analysis hence allowed enough freedom to approach the data in a way which allowed me to answer my research question. Other methods such as discourse or frame analysis might have limited this ability.

4.4 Conducting the analysis

Drawing from the previous chapters, I view my data, the selected expert statements as containing various economic ideas with which the experts try to influence the Fi-

nance Committee and ultimately, the healthcare and social services reform. Traditionally, ideas are viewed as constructions (Beland & Cox 2011), which in my thesis is taken into consideration by first choosing a qualitative method and second analysing language, more importantly focusing how this language is used. As mentioned, this means acknowledging that ideas truly have an impact on actors' behaviour and decision-making. Furthermore, how language is used, in this case, how economic ideas are framed in the statements is viewed to be done purposefully to affect the behaviour of the MEPs.

Epistemologically, I understand that analysing documents enables the gathering of information such as ideas and ways of framing them, but their impact is left for speculation. Again, theory guided analysis is most suited method for my research question because it allows a relatively data-driven approach whilst parallelly maintaining in touch with the theoretical background.

For the analysis, my data were read several times with changing intensity. Here, my theoretical background guided me in choosing problem diagnoses, solution proposals and evaluations as I view these constitute ideas such as paradigms, frames, and policy proposals. In addition, the data were sought for sentences containing moral dimensions.

On the other hand, I formed my sections or themes largely based on the data. Because I approached the data with relatively little knowledge of the subject, it was simple to choose often used headings or subheadings from the statements. Afterwards, I sketched initial results based on the first 10 statements and complemented them as I carefully analysed rest of the data.

I found multiple themes from the statements, which all dealt with economic ideas. They were largely created by locating a certain topic amongst a statement and then with further analysing either complementing this with similar content in the other statements, or after finding it does not correspond to others, removing the theme. In this way, themes contain groups of ideas dealing with factors of the Government Proposal, such as evaluations of the proposed central government transfers system or diagnoses of the public economy. I dismissed two significant themes, which dealt with the wellbeing services counties' abilities to do investments and in-depth questions related to taxation. Excluded factors make up a large part of the economy of the wellbeing services counties, but research economic factors forced me to focus on fewer dimensions of the reform. This allowed analysing a larger data whilst not considering all economic factions of the Government Proposal. The other option would have been forming a more complete picture with less expert statements included into the study design.

4.5 Study ethics

In this study, I have based my ethics mostly on the recommendations of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2012) and Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) to follow ethical guidelines shared by the academia. In short, it has meant striving for openness, carefulness, and accuracy. Ethical evaluations have been carried throughout the research. (TENK 2012, 6; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 152-154.)

During the research process I have critically reflected my own assumptions and limitations regarding essential matters of this thesis. When needed, I have written about them to this thesis. This way, perspectives hindering a scientific approach were combatted with reflection and openness. Meticulousness and reflection were practised in every step of the research, including planning, production, and analyzation of the data and lastly when evaluating the results. Throughout, i strove for inner coherence. (TENK 2012, 6; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 167).

Regarding the use of data, the expert statements were publicly available and hence, no permissions were needed to use them in research (Alastalo & Vuori n.d.). However, as the data contained the names of the experts, it was nevertheless handled with caution. Additionally, I chose not to disclose the experts' name in the thesis.

This chapter of the thesis has introduced the research problems, which deal with economic ideas in the data. Then it explained how expert statements submitted to the Finance Committee were acquired and then processed to construct the data. Lastly, the methodology of the study was discussed along with ethical considerations. Next, I move on to reviewing the results of the qualitative content analysis.

5 THE ECONOMIC IDEAS AND THEIR FRAMING IN THE STATEMENTS

This chapter provides the findings of the qualitative content analysis by reviewing what kind of economic ideas and framing was found in the expert statements. The chapter is divided into seven sections which introduce the different ideas the analysis produced. This structure is based on themes created from the data: the expert statements often contain sections and subsections, the headings of which were largely adopted into my themes.

Constructing the themes was relatively simple as the statements in general are clear and concise with their language and limit their comments to selected portions of the Government Proposal (241/2020). Interestingly, how the experts argue varies as does their use of citations to support their arguments. The number of subjects in statements varies from those for example solely concentrating on counties taxation to those including more topics. Based by their dates, the statements were submitted to few different committee hearings but the topics of the hearings nor the questions asked from the experts were not disclosed to me. Some of the statements were submitted to the Tax Sub-Committee, which is visible in their content leaning more on questions related to taxation. To summarize, the statements shed more light on some things than others, which has affected the prevalence of some idea groups in the data.

The statements contain a lot of economic ideas, which I have divided into the following categories or themes: First I outline how the experts estimate the public economy at the time of submitting their statements. This includes evaluating the situation, writing about developments, and diagnosing possible problems. If they, for example, have written about threats to the equilibrium, I have tried to write about it. In the same chapter, I gather the viewpoints about the current economy of healthcare and social services such as estimations and comparisons of its funding.

The second chapter deals with the expert's estimations of the proposed reform, and it is divided into four subchapters: economic ideas in relation to number of well-being services counties, public and private sector balance within the proposal, the central government transfer system, and state's review procedure. Then, the third chapter introduces economic ideas about the counties' taxation. Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes certain viewpoints found in the analysis.

I have carefully chosen citations as examples. As the expert statements are written in Finnish, when citing a specific part, I have translated it into English and attached the original citation in the footnotes. I answer the two research questions by both revealing the ideas and the argumentation in the statements.

5.1 Growing costs as a paradigm

Paradigms are large-scale understandings about how the world operates. Located in the background of thinking, they form the limitations of possible solutions. (Campbell 1998, 389–392.) In the data, the perception of growing public sector costs forms a paradigm which is joined with estimates about room for improvement in the healthcare and social services sector. The paradigm is visible when the experts evaluate the capabilities of public economy, assess its strengths and weaknesses, or highlight threats which have the potential to weaken public sector budgets. The 24 statements, which contain paradigmatic ideas about public sector, largely propose that it faces growing costs.

Of the joint municipal authorities, 27 had a deficit balance sheet in 2019. In the big picture, the number of municipalities in crisis is increasing. The challenges of the municipal economy are related to larger social phenomena, such as the change in the age structure, the decrease in the birth rate and the decrease in the workforce.²

According to the estimation made by the European Commission in 2018, the growing expenses related to the aging population needs accommodating the public economy with 2 % to the GDP to stabilize public dept in relation to the GDP. This 4–5 billion stabilization the Commission holds possible in structural reformation of healthcare and social services. ...Hence, the impact of the reform as part of public economy balancing has further gained significance.³

² "Kuntayhtymistä 27:llä oli alijäämäinen tase vuonna 2019. Isossa kuvassa kriisikuntien määrä on kasvussa. Kuntatalouden haasteet liittyvät suurempiin yhteiskunnallisiin ilmiöihin, kuten ikärakenteen muutokseen, syntyvyyden laskuun ja työvoiman vähenemiseen." The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK 2 (359614) p. 6

³ "Euroopan komission vuoden 2018 arvion mukaan väestönikäntymisestä aiheutuvien kustannusten kasvu Suomessa vaatii julkisen talouden sopeuttamista 2 prosentilla suhteessa BKT:hen, jotta julkisen velan suhde BKT:hen saadaan vakautettua. Tämän 4–5 miljardin vakauttamisen Euroopan komissio katsoo olevan saavutettavissa sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon rakenteellisella uudistamisella. ...Sote-uudistuksen merkitys osana julkisen talouden kestävyysparantamista on siten vain kasvanut entisestään." the Chambers of Commerce (356068) p. 2

Reducing the fiscal sustainability gap of the public economy must be one of the main goals in all public sector service structures' reforms. This is especially important when reforming social security services, which have a dominant role in the sustainability gap caused by the change in the age structure. Significantly containing the growth of costs needs to be one of the starting points of the entire healthcare and social services reform.⁴

The three citations above provide good examples of the paradigm in the data: experts largely view that costs are going to grow because the Finnish population is aging. This is perceived to first increase the age-related costs in healthcare and social services as the individuals' need for services can grow with weakened autonomy and increased illnesses. At the same time, due to the structure of population, the balance between workforce and pensioners is viewed to weaken. Additionally, the public sector is acknowledged to suffer a loss in workforce. As is visible, this combination forms a strong sense of urgency, the selected citations being amongst the most vocal. Heavy expectations are thus placed on the capability of the healthcare and social services reform to provide solutions for growing public sector costs.

Some experts also see other factors affecting the public sector's costs. The following two citations were selected as they complement the paradigm of growing costs with workforce-related phenomena, regional developments, and present how producing healthcare is more expensive than before:

It is understandable that the funding decreases in areas with declining populations. However, the number of people needing services does not decrease in the same proportion, because, for example, people with developmental disabilities do not move from declining areas to growth centers.⁵

As aging population creates challenges mostly to care-related services, the central cost growth driver in healthcare has been acknowledged to be developing medical science and medical technology. While we can treat more illnesses than before, the medicine and technology are ever more expensive.⁶

As visible in some statements, the growing costs paradigm is supplemented with additional factors. The first citation acknowledges, how migration trends in Finland mean that some wellbeing counties will have a declining working-age population, while at the same time, those who are likely to use a lot of services, such as the elderly or in this case, those with disabilities, are more prone to remain in these areas. This is

⁴ "Julkisen talouden kestävyysvajeen pienentämisen on oltava yhtenä päätavoitteena kaikissa julkisen sektorin palvelurakenteiden uudistuksissa. E erityisen tärkeää tämä on uudistettaessa sote-palveluja, joiden osuus ikärakenteen muutoksen aiheuttamassa kestävyysvajeessa on hallitseva. Kustannusten kasvun merkittävään hillitsemiseen on syytä olla koko sote-uudistuksen yksi keskeinen lähtökohta." the Taxpayers Association of Finland (356007) p. 2

⁵ "On ymmärrettävää, että rahoitus vähenee alueilla, joiden väkiluku laskee. Palveluja taroitsevien määrä ei kuitenkaan vähene samassa suhteessa, sillä esim. kehitysvammaiset eivät taantuvoilta alueilta muuta kasvukeskuksiin." University of Helsinki (357018) p. 6

⁶ "Kun väestön ikärakenne haastaa ennen kaikkea hoivapalveluja, on terveydenhuollon kustannuskehityksen kannalta keskeisemmäksi kustannusten kasvun ajuriksi tunnistettu kehittyvä lääketiede ja lääketieteen teknologia. Samaan aikaan, kun voimme hoitaa entistä useampia sairauksia ovat myös niihin taroittavat lääkkeet ja teknologiat entistä kalliimpia." University of Tampere (357659) p. 3

then viewed to create problems, for example the heightened need for funding, which in this thesis is addressed in-depth in a later subchapter. The second citation was chosen as it shows a reason for growing costs which seldom is featured in the data or in public speech. In this context, it adds yet another layer for why growing costs is such a significant paradigm in the data.

When considering how this identified paradigm is framed, the most significant feature is that it is largely deterministic, leaving little room for alternatives in thinking. As the citations show, the statements feature a lot of notions framed as facts, such as the geographical and demographic developments. Additionally, the expert's sometimes use sources, such as the rapport by the European Commission, to support their argumentation. Hence, a strong image of growing costs is built.

Additionally, eight experts have provided their evaluations about the situation in healthcare and social services, which at the time of submitting statements was largely municipality based. These evaluations are not necessarily tied to the paradigm of growing costs, but they complement the appearance regarding the economically tight situation when implementing the proposed healthcare and social services reform. If the experts presented unanimous ideas about growing costs, here their ideas contrast. To begin with, of these eight experts, most do not view the funding of healthcare and social services as adequate:

Finland already has the lowest funding of health care per capita amongst Nordic countries, even though the population is the sickest in the Nordic countries, a situation which the model is not going to fix.⁷

It must also be noted, how Finland's healthcare related expenditure growth has with Greece already been the lowest among EU-countries between 2013–2019 and clearly lagged behind other Nordic countries.⁸

Finnish healthcare's public funding is below the Nordic level and how compared to, for example, other Nordic countries, people pay a larger portion of healthcare costs in the form of customer fees and other so called "out-of-pocket" -fees. In addition, social services and care are largely underbudgeted when compared to e.g., the level of funding in other Nordic countries⁹

The citations show that these experts view Finnish public sector allocates only moderate sums to healthcare and social services when compared to other countries with similar welfare state systems. Albeit this does not clearly indicate that they ask

⁷ "Terveyspalvelujen asukasta kohden laskettu rahoitus Suomessa on jo Pohjoismaiden alhaisin, vaikka väestö on Pohjoismaiden sairainta, eikä malli korjaa tilannetta." University of Helsinki (357018) p. 11

⁸ "On myös syytä huomata, että Suomen terveystennojen vuotuinen reaaliikasvu on jo vuosina 2013–2019 ollut Kreikan rinnalla EU-maiden alhaisin ja jäänyt selvästi jälkeen muista Pohjoismaista." Professor Pekurinen (357466) p. 3

⁹ "Suomen terveydenhuollon julkisen rahoituksen osuus on alle pohjoismaisen tason ja että ihmiset maksavat asiakasmaksuina ja muina ns. "out-of-pocket" -maksuina terveydenhuollon kustannuksista enemmän kuin esimerkiksi muut Pohjoismaat. Myös sosiaalipalvelut ja hoiva ovat monin paikoin aliresursoituja, kun verrataan esimerkiksi muiden Pohjoismaiden rahoituksen tasoon" University of Tampere (357659) p. 5

for increases in the funding, their language hints a critical position towards the proposed reforms intentions to later decrease the sums allocated to the wellbeing services counties. At the same time, they all highlight the low level of funding.

As previously was shown, most experts viewed that the Finnish public sector faces increased age-related costs. If parallelly the government plans to gradually decrease the funding it allocates to the counties (HE 241/2020, 259–260), the efficiency of existing services will have to be improved. Here, two statements carry contrasting ideas in regards of this being possible:

The premise from which the efficiency of healthcare and social services would be significantly increased is especially difficult considering the Finnish public sector operates rather efficiently, including the organization of the services. International comparisons have shown resources used for healthcare are low and good health outcomes are produced with reasonable input.¹⁰

There is potential to cut spending growth. If all wellbeing services counties - considering the population structure - worked as well as the most efficient county, the annual healthcare and social services spending would be 4 billion euros lower than it is now. More than half a billion would be annually saved solely with the counties spending over the average reaching the current average level of costs.¹¹

These experts have a differing viewpoint, from which they estimate the room for increasing efficiency in the healthcare and social services sector. First citation shows that the expert is rather critical of the potential room for improvement and views that the sector already is rather efficient. The second expert contrastingly explains how some areas spend over the average level of costs and hence finds a potential for efficiency here. Here, a possible explanation could be that as the second expert represents employers, they could view more possibilities in curbing costs, for example related to limiting the harmonization of workers' salaries when the proposed counties would be established, and workforce transferred.

To summarize, this chapter has shown that the paradigmatic understanding of the experts sets both heavy pressure and significant, if not unanimous boundaries on the proposed healthcare and social services reform. This conclusion is drawn first from the descriptions about age-related service costs, then from experts writing about weakening benefit-dependency ratio and lastly the statements referring to the sustainability gap. From an ideational perspective, this hints a paradigmatic stance which later is likely to affect the possibilities of prescribed solutions. In addition, of the group that commented the matter, most experts view healthcare and social services sector

¹⁰ "... lähtökohta merkittäväälle sotepalvelujen tehostamiselle on erittäin haastava, koska koko julkinen sektori, ml. sotepalvelujen järjestäminen, toimii Suomessa verraten tehokkaasti. Kansainvälisessä vertailussa terveyspalveluihin käytetyt resurssit ovat alhaiset ja kohtuullisilla panostuksilla saadaan hyvät terveytustulokset." SOSTE Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health (357183) p. 2

¹¹ "Potentiaalia menojen kasvun leikkaamiseen on. Jos kaikki alueet toimisivat – väestön rakenne huomioon ottaen – samoin kuin tehokkain alue, vuosittaiset sote-menot olisivat 4 miljardia euroa nykyistä pienemmät. Säästöä syntyisi yli puoli miljardia vuodessa pelkästään sillä, että nyt keskiarvoa kalliimmat alueet pääsisivät kustannuksissa nykyiselle keskitasolle." the Confederation of Finnish Industries 2 (359481) p. 3

receives low funding when compared to other countries. At the same time the room for increasing efficiency is rarely viewed as significant. Hence, the experts create a strong sense of urgency for action by framing their ideas about growing costs, but simultaneously do not view the solutions of the Government Proposal as adequate.

5.2 Experts' evaluation of the reform

This lengthier subchapter analyses how the experts view and describe the goals of the healthcare and social services reform proposal and their attainability. All but one statement commentate, estimate, and evaluate whether the proposed model of organizing healthcare and social services can contain the growth of service-need related costs. They also touch on other aims, which were mostly excluded from this analysis. Additionally, usually even the most critical statements thank the aims despite directing heavy criticism on how they are approached. As most argumentation of the statements deals with the aims, this is a significantly large theme of the analysis which is split into subchapters. The division is somewhat artificial as the arguments are tied together and might not be separable.

5.2.1 The number of wellbeing services counties

Compared to how the sector was previously organized, as the Government Proposal 241/2020 suggests creating 21 larger county-based healthcare and social services organizers, the amount of service organizers would significantly be decreased. 15 statements have carried ideas in relation to these changes. Here I focus on how these experts position themselves to the proposed number of counties. This theme is linked to the previous chapter, where it was found that most statements estimate public sector costs are going to grow. As that phenomena consist of developments in populations' age and inland migration, it affects how experts here estimate the strength of these proposed wellbeing services counties. Even if only 15 have directly commented this matter, it is also visible in other statements in background assumptions about for example the developments of the proposed counties' tax-base.

Those who commented the matter estimate that increasing the size of healthcare and social services organizers can at least theoretically enhance the possibilities or create conditions to increase efficiency of the services:

... if done according to the proposal, the model enables service structures which enhance horizontal and vertical integration. ...Responsibilities with one instance enables planning and producing healthcare and social services as a whole, allocating resources with need and deepening service integration. Costs are easier to review than now. The same applies for steering functions

towards priorities from the standpoint of population wellbeing and health and the development of services for special groups.¹²

...related organizers' economies of scale which can possibly lead to savings.¹³

Above, two citations demonstrate what factors are perceived to enable effective actions and hence create the circumstances for savings: first, as the wellbeing services counties would bring together healthcare and social service functions of multiple areas, it could make allocating resources appropriately easier. As healthcare and social services would be more directly "under the same roof", there could be more possibilities for integration of services and multiprofessional work which might address lacks in wellbeing better than previously. Second, larger organizations could create the circumstances under which services could be steered towards preventative care. Third, economies of scale are referred to, meaning larger organizations could lower the cost of services.

Whilst acknowledging the possibilities of larger organizations, many statements express critique towards the number of counties. Here I have selected three citations to demonstrate the reasoning behind this position:

Achieving the goals set for the reform is made difficult by the fact that some of the wellbeing services counties remain relatively small in terms of personnel, expertise, population base and other resources.¹⁴

In the Government Proposal there would be 21 wellbeing services counties which is clearly over the optimum when aiming for the economically efficient means of production... ..in addition, areal cost differences in producing services have not sufficiently been taken into consideration so far.¹⁵

The politically chosen unrealistic number of counties means that counties with large expenses and small tax bases will have to seek extra funding from the state and decrease the quality of their services to be able to produce the necessary services.¹⁶

¹² "... esityksen perusteella muodostuva palvelurakenne luo edellytyksiä horisontaalisen ja vertikaalisen integraation toteutumiselle, kun pääsääntöisesti sama toimija vastaa perus- ja erityistason sosiaali- ja terveyspalveluista... ..Vastuiden kokoaminen samalle taholle mahdollistaa sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon suunnittelun ja toteuttamisen yhtenä kokonaisuutena, resurssien tarkoituksenmukaisen kohdentamisen, ja palveluintegraation edistämisen. Myös kustannusten seuranta on nykytilanteeseen verrattuna helpompi toteuttaa. Sama pätee toiminnan suuntaamiseen väestön hyvinvointiin ja terveyden näkökulmasta strategisille painoalueille sekä erityisryhmien taroitsemien palvelujen kehittämiseen." Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (350405) p.2

¹³ "...siihen liittyvät järjestäjän mittakaavaedut, voivat mahdollisesti johtaa säästöihin." University of Tampere 2 (357759) p. 1

¹⁴ "Uudistukselle asetettujen tavoitteiden saavuttamista hankaloittaa kuitenkin se, että osa hyvinvointialueista jää henkilöstö-, osaamis- ja muilta resursseiltaan sekä väestöpohjaltaan verraten pieniksi." Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (350405) p. 1

¹⁵ "Hallituksen esityksessä hyvinvointialueita olisi 21, mikä on selvästi yli optimin, jos tavoitellaan taloudellisesti tehokasta tuotantotapaa... ..myöskään alueellisia kustannuseroja palveluiden tuottamisessa ei ole tähän mennessä otettu riittävästi huomioon." Aalto University 3 (360766) p. 2, 3

¹⁶ "Poliittisin perustein valittu epärealistinen hyvinvointialueiden määrä tarkoittaa, että suurten menojen ja pienten veropohjien alueet joutuvat hakemaan valtiolta lisärahoitusta ja heikentämään palvelujen laatua pystyäkseen tuottamaan tarvittavat palvelut." ETLA (356831) p. 2

As is visible, the experts rarely find the 21 wellbeing services large enough to have the means for providing adequate services cost-effectively. This is firstly explained by the geographical differences in morbidity, birth rate and migration. In this context, the experts also note how the proposed wellbeing services counties would have differences in the supply of labour. The second citation shows how this expert views that a lower number of counties would be optimal for economically efficient way of production. In addition, they view the proposition does not account for geographical differences in costs. Lastly, even if at the beginning the counties are funded by taxes levied nationally, the expert sees a causality in counties with smaller tax base and their need for extra funding.

Ideas are causal thoughts and hence problem is usually followed with a proposal for solution (e.g., Campbell 1998, 386–389). I demonstrate the solutions carried by the experts throughout the analysis and here I highlight a certain fix offered for the problems demonstrated in this subchapter. As was noted, the Government Proposal suggests five co-working areas for improving, coordinating, and innovating the areal healthcare and social services systems (241/2020, 199). The significance is evaluated for example in the following citation:

The efficiency of the organization of services and their cost-effectiveness depends especially on how well-being areas would succeed in coordinating and monitoring their services and in mutual cooperation. ... in addition to regional goals, shared national goals could also be set for all welfare areas... ...this way, state guidance would support the uniform organization of services and the introduction of cost-effective operating methods.¹⁷

The citation first describes that the efficient organization of healthcare and social services is viewed to somewhat depend on areal co-working. This likely means, for example, planning together how services are organized and if and when could service users use the services of other counties. More importantly, the citation refers to the possibility of the central government to set areal goals for the counties and the co-working areas. This is viewed positively here. It must be noted that the logic is not present in all statements which criticize the number of counties and rather few experts promote this solution.

To outline this subchapter, 15 experts commented the number of wellbeing services counties proposed and were largely critical towards this number. Even if larger organizations were perceived to contain possibilities for curbing costs by increased integration and economies of scale, mostly the causality was drawn with areal developments in contrast to the need to secure adequate services. With few experts, solu-

¹⁷ "Palvelujen järjestämisen tehokkuus ja palvelujen kustannusvaikuttavuus riippuvat etenkin siitä, miten hyvinvointialueet onnistuisivat palvelujensa yhteensovittamisessa ja valvonnassa sekä keskinäisessä yhteistyössä. ...kaikille hyvinvointialueille voitaisiin asettaa alueellisten tavoitteiden ohella myös yhteiset valtakunnalliset tavoitteet... ...näin valtion ohjaus tukisi palloeluiden yhdenmukaista järjestämistä ja kustannusvaikuttavien toimintatapojen käyttöönottoa" the National Audit Office of Finland (356830) p. 3

tions were found in the co-working areas. Hence, I view that the previously introduced paradigm of growing costs largely guides expert thinking when they consider the number of counties and their resources.

5.2.2 Public and private service organizers and providers

17 experts commented the relationship between public and private service provision in the proposal. This theme forms a large part of some statements. As a reminder, the Government Proposal highlighted the capabilities of the wellbeing services counties to provide all statutory services but did not propose a detailed regulation about the matter. Interestingly, the experts interpretate this section varyingly. (HE 241/2020, 195–196, 671–672.) Here I focus on how the differences of private sector and public sector services are perceived.

First, the statements contain different moral evaluations about the proposed mandate for adequate resources and the meaning of this for public and private sector co-working. As the data consist of experts from academia, the private sector lobbyist groups, and labour organizations, it is understandable that as some experts work as representatives of certain interest groups, they are likely to promote ideas cognitively and morally suited for them. The following citations have been selected because they take varying moral positions about the proposal:

THL considers it justified that the responsibility of the wellbeing services counties to produce services is emphasized by requiring them to provide their own sufficient services and by setting them an explicit obligation to ensure in all situations the availability of services that meet the service needs of their residents.¹⁸

In the Government Proposal, the responsibility for organizing the public sector and the division of private and public work in the production of services are clarified. I consider this to be a principally good thing.¹⁹

Reading the justifications, one can't avoid the fact that this regulation seeks to ensure that production is practically entirely owned by the wellbeing services county... ..Finland's current government seems to blindly believe in the selflessness, unselfishness, and superior ability of the rulers of public production to develop and maintain... ..services without the incentives of a comparison layout.²⁰

¹⁸ "THL pitää perusteltuna sitä, että hyvinvointialueiden vastuuta palvelujen tuottamisesta korostetaan edellyttämällä niiltä riittävää omaa palveluntuotantoa sekä asettamalla niille nimenomainen velvollisuus huolehtia asukkaidensa palvelutarpeen mukaisten palvelujen saatavuudesta kaikissa tilanteissa." Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (350405) p. 3

¹⁹ "Hallituksen esityksessä julkisen sektorin järjestämisoastuuta ja yksityisen ja julkisen työnjakoa palveluiden tuotannossa selkeytetään. Katson tämän periaatteen tasolla olevan hyvää asia." University of Tampere (357659) p. 6

²⁰ "Perusteluja lukemalla ei voi välttyä siltä, että tällä sääntelyllä haetaan sitä, että tuotanto olisi käytännössä lähes kokonaan hyvinvointialueen omaa. ...Suomen nykyhallitus tuntuu uskoavan sokeasti julkisten tuotannon hallitsijoiden epäitsekkyyteen, pyyteettömyyteen ja yliovertaiseen kykyyn kehittää ja ylläpitää... ..palveluja ilman vertailuaseman tuomia kannusteita." the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK 2 (359481) p. 1–2

The first two experts cited use words like justified and principally good when referring to the proposal mandating wellbeing services counties to have the abilities for service provision. It hints that the experts find this morally explainable. Contrastingly, the last citation demonstrates a position in which the proposal prompts the expert to question the wisdom of the government, arguing how the proposal demonstrates a blind belief about the superiority of the public sector. I interpret this stems from morally being against the proposal. At the same time, the last citation carries causal beliefs about efficiency and competition.

Indeed, most experts demonstrate worries about the impact the proposed balance between private and public service provision would have, especially in regarding the efficiency of the services. Improving efficiency was one of the goals set for the reform and it is also largely prevalent in experts thinking as already demonstrated in the previous analysis chapters. The next citations are examples of these ideas.

The proposition seems rather balanced in that it allows the possibilities to use private services, but the counties are also required to produce services independently. Maintaining independent service provision improves the changes the wellbeing services counties have in comparing external offerings, but it can also create additional expenses.²¹

At the same time, from the point of implementation, I view that there is a risk of the dissolution of effective operating models and the difficulty of reforming the system. According to my own interpretation, outsourcing and procuring labor from private service providers would also be possible in the future, as with the current situation.²²

The efficiency of service provision would decrease as competition and the utilization of all resources and competence would significantly be limited.²³

If the wellbeing services counties are unable to form co-businesses with companies or outsource functions, which they cannot for one reason or another efficiently carry out, or if the counties need to dismantle already existing multi-producer models, all of this increases the cost level.²⁴

As is visible, here the statements show cognitive ideas about the interpreted impacts of somewhat ambivalent limitations to the outsourcing of services. The first cited statement holds the proposal as balanced and views how adequate service provision could improve the changes wellbeing services counties have when comparing

²¹ "Esitys vaikuttaa melko tasapainoiselta siinä mielessä, että mahdollisuudet yksityisten palveluiden käyttöihin sallitaan, mutta alueilta vaaditaan myös omaa tuotantoa. Oman tuotannon ylläpitäminen parantaa alueiden mahdollisuuksia vertailla ulkopuolisia tarjouksia, mutta oman tuotannon ylläpitäminen voi aikaansaada myös lisäkustannuksia." Economic Policy Council (357050) p. 3

²² "Samalla katson siihen sisältyvän käytännön toimeenpanon näkökulmasta riskin vaikuttavien toimintamallien purkautumisesta ja järjestelmän uudistumisen vaikeutumisesta. Oman tulkintani mukaan ulkoistusten tekeminen ja työvoiman hankkiminen yksityisiltä palveluntuottajilta olisi myös jatkossa mahdollista melko lailla nykytilan mukaisesti." University of Tampere (357659) p. 6

²³ "Palvelutuotannon tehokkuus heikkenisi, koska kilpailua ja kaikkien resurssien ja osaamisen hyödyntämistä rajoitettaisiin merkittävästi." The Finnish Association of Private Care Providers (HALI ry) p. 1

²⁴ "Mikäli hyvinvointialueet eivät voi muodostaa yritysten kanssa yhteisyrityksiä tai ulkoistaa toimintoja, joita eivät pysty suostu tai toisesta itse tehokkaasti hoitamaan, tai mikäli alueet joutuvat purkamaan jo olemassa olevia monituottajamalleja, nämä kaikki vaikuttavat kustannustasoa kohottavasti." Aalto University 2 (358705) p. 5

offers, most likely regarding services commonly outsourced. At the same time, it presents similar estimations as the other cited statements: most importantly, here the experts perceive that the ability to outsource services and competitively tender service providers improves cost-efficiency. From this viewpoint, even vague limitations to this are viewed as a negative. This is firstly explained by the possibility of tempering down competition between service providers, which is viewed as positively effecting service costs. Second, pre-existing, sufficiently working structures could be dismantled due to more outsourcing than proposed. At the same time, especially with citations two and three, there exists variations in how strict the mandate for outsourcing limitations is viewed. Indeed, some experts commentate:

However, the Government Proposals paints a somewhat unclear picture of how extensive the possibilities of wellbeing services counties are to organize services as desired.²⁵

However, THL draws attention to how the regulation and its justifications still to some extent leave open what these responsibilities mean in practice. Implementing the regulation can in practice prove as difficult, leading to a risk of counties over-or-under producing. This then emphasizes the importance of national guidance when applying the law.²⁶

The proposal notes, how the organizing responsibility of a wellbeing services county requires sufficient service production. The entry is quite vague and leaves room for interpretation as to what is considered as "sufficient".²⁷

Both the opening and second citation demonstrate, how the same experts who estimated the outsourcing -theme in previous paragraphs also commentate the ambivalence it creates for deciding what is deemed as sufficient levels of service provision. The similar section seems to prompt The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare to highlight national guidance needed to combat the risk of over-or-under providing services. The last citation also demonstrates how the experts commonly wonder the problems of defining sufficiency in this context.

As shown in the quotations, the experts largely present their ideas by highlighting the outcomes which could happen if the Government Proposal 241/2020 would not be modified in the Parliament. Hence, framing here leans on mapping out the plausible outcomes which, when they depart from the path of enabling efficiency, are presented as unwanted or containing risks.

²⁵"Hallituksen esitys maalaa kuitenkin melko epäselvään kuvan siitä, kuinka laaja mahdollisuus hyvinvointialueilla tosiasiassa on järjestää palveluja haluamallaan tavalla." University of Tampere (357659) p. 6

²⁶"THL kiinnittää kuitenkin huomiota siihen, että sääntely perusteluineen jättää vielä jossain määrin avoimeksi sen, mitä nämä velvoitteet merkitsevät käytännön toiminnassa. Sääntelyn soveltaminen voikin osoittautua käytännössä hankalaksi, jolloin vaarana on hyvinvointialueen oman tuotannon yli- tai alivastautuminen. Tämä korostaa kansallisen ohjauksen merkitystä lakia sovellettaessa" The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (350405) p. 3

²⁷"Esityksessä sanotaan, että hyvinvointialueen järjestämisvastuun toteuttaminen edellyttää riittävää omaa palveluntuotantoa. Kirjaus on varsin epämääräinen ja jättää tulkinnanvaraa sille, mikä katsotaan "riittäväksi". AKAVA Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland (358932) p. 4-5

This subchapter has first shown how some experts carry differing moral evaluations about the Government Proposal and its suggestions for the wellbeing services counties to maintain adequate level of public service production. Second, it demonstrated the estimates regarding the proposals' effect on the wellbeing services counties abilities to curb costs by improving cost-efficiency. Lastly, the subchapter prompted on how the ambivalence of the mentioned clauses in the proposal gives room for varying interpretations. Hence, regarding the question of privatization and outsourcing, the statements contain both moral and cognitive economic ideas.

5.2.3 Reactions to the proposed central government transfer

As was written earlier, the Government Proposal 241/2020 introduced a system of central government transfers to local governments which are largely tied to the estimated healthcare and social services needs of the area. Compared to previous, the level of funding would remain untouched during the first year of operating wellbeing services counties. Then, after a transition period of gradual decreases, the central government transfers only consider 80 % of the estimated growth in needs in 2029. The counties' budgets are reviewed annually and balanced to match their expenditure in a national level. A county can exceed its budget and receive more funding from the central government, but this can lead to an evaluation procedure and sanctions, ultimately to counties being merged. (HE 241/2020, 259–276, 1344–1345.)

This subchapter gathers the comments about the proposed central transfer system: whether the central government transfers provide the counties adequate resources to organize services and estimates about if this mechanism steers the counties to the functions perceived as necessary. Out of the 29 analysed statements, 21 statements commentate either both or one of the questions.

First is the matter of sufficient funding. Implicitly, all 21 comments deal with the theme but 16 experts have provided direct views on the matter. The next citations demonstrate how some position their self positively towards the proposed central government transfers:

...the proposed funding model would provide the wellbeing services counties adequate economic resources to organize statutory services in the national level.²⁸

...in the systems' level the funding principle seems to be realized in the wellbeing services counties.²⁹

²⁸ "...ehdotettu rahoitusmalli tarjoaisi koko maan tasolla hyvinvointialueille riittävästi taloudellisia edellytyksiä lakisääteisten palvelujen järjestämiseen." the National Audit Office of Finland NAOF (356830) p. 3

²⁹ "...järjestelmätasolla rahoitusperiaate näyttäisi hyvinvointialueilla uudistuksessa toteutuvan." the Association of Finnish Municipalities (355184) p. 9

In the evaluation of the costs of service use, register material collected from several sources is used, and the funding distributed with it corresponds to the variation in the need for services in different areas.³⁰

The quotations are examples of positive ideas found in five statements. Here, both the content and argumentation are quite straightforward and simplified: experts estimate that the proposal for central government transfers has an adequate size and is counted with enough accuracy, and hence will provide the counties the resources needed to provide statutory healthcare and social services. This is visible in descriptions of accuracy, adequacy, and references to the funding principle which is synonymous with providing resources as per needs. At the same time, whilst experts here perceive the national level of funding as sufficient, they also express concerns towards other portions of the central government transfers, joining the other experts who are in general more critical towards the proposed model. Hence, the next citations display what dimensions are criticised amongst the statements:

The proposed funding model insufficiently considers the different cost levels of regions, nor the fact that costs (salaries, rents, etc.) will probably continue to grow faster in growth centers than in the rest of the country. In that case, from the additional funding coming from the increase in costs, proportionally more is distributed to areas with high need coefficients - not to where costs grow the most.³¹

In their current form, the model's disease classifications seem seriously deficient. For example, in the case of HUS, the model is missing almost half of the disease categories and/or disease diagnoses that cause expenses. When trying to explain the individual's and thus the counties' need for healthcare and social services, information about their illnesses is a key issue. With incomplete disease classifications, the assessment of an individual's actual need for social security services is incorrect. The estimate of need coefficients by region is also flawed because there are regional differences in the prevalence of many diseases.³²

...problems arise more due to the insufficient level of total funding instead of the model with which funds are distributed to the wellbeing services counties³³

³⁰ "Palvelunkäytön kustannusten arvioinnissa käytetään useista lähteistä koottua rekisteriaineistoa ja sen avulla jaettu rahoitus vastaa palvelutarpeen vaihtelua eri alueilla." Economic Policy Council (357050) p. 2

³¹ "Ehdotettu rahoitusmalli ei riittävästi huomioi eri alueiden toisistaan poikkeavaa kustannustasoa, eikä sitä, että kustannukset (palkat, vuokrat, yms.) todennäköisesti kasvavat jatkossakin kasvukeskuksissa muuta maata nopeammin. Tällöin kustannusten kasvusta tulevasta lisärahoituksesta jaetaan suhteellisesti enemmän alueille joilla suuret tarvekertoimet - ei sinne, missä kustannukset eniten kasvavat." University of Helsinki (357018) p. 4

³² "Nyky muodossaan mallin sairausluokitukset vaikuttavat vakavasti puutteellisilta. Esimerkiksi HUSin osalta mallista puuttuu lähes puolet kustannuksia aiheuttavista sairausluokista ja/tai sairausdiagnooseista. Tieto yksilön sairauksista on keskeinen asia pyrittäessä selittämään yksilön ja siten alueiden sote-palvelutarvetta. Puutteellisilla sairausluokituksilla arvio yksilön sote-palveluiden todellisesta tarpeesta on virheelinen. Myös arvio tarvekertoimista alueittain on virheelinen, koska monien sairauksien yleisyydessä on alueellisia eroja." Aalto University 2 (358705) p. 4

³³ "...ongelmia koituu ennemmin riittämättömästä kokonaisrahoituksen tasosta, ei niinkään siitä mallista, jonka mukaisesti rahat jaetaan hyvinvointialueille." University of Tampere (357659) p. 4-5

Eleven statements estimate that the proposal for central government transfers will not provide the wellbeing services counties enough funding. As demonstrated in the examples above, some explain this by describing problems in the calculations for the central government transfers. First, areal costs such as rents or salaries are viewed to insufficiently being considered in the model compared to the service needs. This is then perceived to lead to a situation where counties with lower levels of wellbeing will receive more money from the government than those with higher expenses even if both situations require money that is just allocated differently. The second prominent argument concerns how the calculations by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare do not account for all diseases nor the need for social services. Hence, this proposed model of central government transfers is attached to a situation where counties receive less money than they would in fact need. However, the third citation demonstrates the opinion of few experts: the central problem is the overall size of the central government transfer, not the factors it is calculated with. Both those criticizing the size and or the calculations of the central government transfers, frame their arguments by firstly describing the proposal as faulty, inaccurate, insufficient, or as causing problems and then proposing their perspectives to the issue.

Next, as the previous section along with chapter 2.2 described, the Government Proposal featured a model of universal government transfers which largely weighs the prevalence of diseases and morbidity (HE 241/2020, 5, 936, 947-949). If previous citations exemplified the ideas prompted by the central government transfers details, the general capabilities of the proposed county-based system to steer healthcare and social services was also commented in the statements. The following quotes demonstrate what factions of the proposal gained attention amongst the experts:

The counties should be guided prioritizing resources for health centers. ...Needs-based capitation does not necessarily encourage improving the health of population as areal organizers receive more funding when morbidity increases.³⁴

How a wellbeing services county can guide the service system and change its balance from problem-centered, repairing services to services which promote, and support populations' health and wellbeing is also central from the viewpoint of sufficient funding. The proposition does rather little to make sure or support the service system from transitioning to a more strategic model of guidance which would dismantle the current system leaning on specialized care.³⁵

³⁴ "Terveyskeskusten riittävään resurssoinnin on oltava keskiössä alueiden ohjauksessa. ...Tarveperusteinen kapitaatio ei välttämättä kannusta kohentamaan väestön terveydentilaa, sillä alueellisen järjestäjän rahoitus kasvaa, kun sairastavuus lisääntyy." the Economic Policy Council (357050) p. 2

³⁵ "Se, miten hyvinvointialue onnistuu ohjaamaan palvelujärjestelmää ja muuttamaan sen tasapainoa korjaavista ja ongelmakeskeisistä palveluista väestön terveyttä ja hyvinvointia edistäviin ja tukeviin palveluihin on keskeistä myös rahoituksen riittävyyden näkökulmasta. Esitys ei kuitenkaan varmistaa tai juurikaan tue palvelujärjestelmän siirtymistä strategisempaan ja nykyistä erikoissairaanhoidon painotteista järjestelmää purkavaan ohjausmalliin." University of Tampere (357659) p. 5-6

The proposal for healthcare and social services reform does not create adequate circumstances for allocating resources towards preventative functions.³⁶

...the most immediate incentive of the proposed funding model to curb the growth of costs would be funding intended to promote well-being and health, even if its share is only about one percent of the total funding of wellbeing services counties.³⁷

As is visible, amongst the experts, the potential for savings is in steering action of the wellbeing services counties towards the prevention of diseases and promotion of wellbeing. Solutions here vary: first quotation demonstrates how some experts locate a fault in the central government transfer being based on estimates about service needs as they perceive this not creating incentives to improve health which could counterintuitively lower the level of funding. Second citation then demands strategic guidance to “dismantle” the position of expensive specialized care and increase preventative action. The fourth citation considers the actions towards promoting wellbeing and health as the way to deal with growing service costs. Overall, the citations demonstrate how these experts encourage more preventative action and parallelly diagnose the healthcare and social services system as weighing expensive specialized care too much. It seems this situation is viewed to not change with the proposal. These factors then form a strong frame hinting the need to improve the Government Proposal.

In explaining how the data has pursued the parts of the Government Proposal dealing with central government transfers, this chapter has firstly acknowledged how only five statements carry positive ideas about the matter. The positive stance usually acknowledges an adequacy in the transfer, at least in the national level. Second, criticism was examined. Critical ideas carried by the experts are either related to the calculations of the central government transfers or to how the proposal is viewed to enable the wellbeing services counties to continue prioritizing specialized services. The potential for savings, however, is highlighted in preventative care and actions related to promoting wellbeing. As critical ideas, the arguments point out problems in the statements and offer solutions.

5.2.4 The central government’s review procedure

In an essence, the proposed healthcare and social services reform strongly weighs central government transfers as the means with which wellbeing services counties are funded. Other financing like investments unconsidered, the counties seem to have few options to accommodate their income, such as increasing the amount of customer fees and doing small-scale commerce. During the fiscal year, additional funding from the

³⁶ " *Sote-esitys ei luo riittäviä edellytyksiä resurssien kohdentamiseen ennaltaehkäisevään toimintaan.*" Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland Akava (358932) p. 2

³⁷ "...ehdotetun rahoitusmallin välittömästi kannuste hillitää kustannusten kasvua olisi hyvinvoinnin ja terveyden edistämiseen tarkoitettu rahoitus, vaikka sen osuus olisi vain noin yksi prosentti hyvinvointialueiden yhteenlasketusta rahoituksesta." the National Audit Office of Finland (356830) p. 2

state is tied to a review process, which has sanctions: the possibility of leading to increased central control and ultimately counties forced to merge. Parallely, the expenses of all wellbeing counties are reviewed annually, and the government transfers accommodated based on the results. (HE 241/2020, 270, 276, 1344–1345.)

This subchapter handles ideas about these centrally led processes, as their impacts are related to the economic efficiency of the wellbeing counties. Ten statements comment both processes and additional seven focus solely on the questions regarding additional funding. To begin with, the following citation has been selected as it represents a critical but a comprehensive comment on the question of additional funding:

As the counties have no means to adjust the level of funding they receive (since they have no right for taxing), they might have limited possibilities to serve as service organizers, less incentives to allocate resources impactfully and efficiently, and further causes the risk of expenses growing unintentionally. The model contains the so-called problem of soft budget constraints as the counties get funding solely from the state (excluding customer fees) upon starting. This means ultimately that the state is responsible for the counties' funding even if they exceed their budgets or face other economic distresses. While this is the right policy for constitutional rights, it weakens the incentives the wellbeing service counties have for efficiently organizing their services.³⁸

Here, a link is drawn between the strong central government financing and the wellbeing services counties working inefficiently. This type of causal thinking is visible in most of the 13 critical comments. The viewpoint is rationalized first by the limitations the funding model would set on organizing healthcare and social services. The second argument the expert presents is that a strong central government funding lowers the wellbeing services counties' incentives to use resources efficiently and effectively. These are then viewed to cause the possibility of counties' expenses increasing more than is intended. The essential diagnose is presented lastly: as the state would have the responsibility to guarantee constitutional services, the expert perceives this enables the counties to not improve efficiency as much as in a situation where there would be no bail out. Here the experts largely refer to soft budget constraints. The next citation demonstrates how the sanctions of assessment process tied to the additional funding is perceived:

The bill has thought that the threat of being assessed would efficiently curb the use of money in the counties and ensure they would stick to the frames. The assessment process can be started if a wellbeing services county repeatedly has budget deficit (twice in three consecutive accounting years (p. 275)). This enables for example to use more money than is allocated every three years without greater fears of sanctions. When the extra funding is then calculated within the realized

³⁸ "Se, että hyvinvointialueilla ei ole mahdollisuutta säätää oman rahoituksensa tasoa (so. verotusoikeuden puuttuminen) voi rajoittaa alueiden mahdollisuuksia toteuttaa palveluiden järjestämiso vastuutaan, vähentää kannusteita resurssien vaikuttavaan ja tehokkaaseen kohdentamiseen ja edelleen aiheuttaa riskin kustannusten ei-tarkoituksenmukaiseen kasvuun. Koska rahoitus tulee alkuvaiheessa pelkästään valtiolta (pois lukien asiakasmaksut) sisältyy malliin ns. pehmeän budjettirajoitteen ongelma. Tämä tarkoittaa, että valtio viimekädessä vastaa hyvinvointialueiden rahoituksesta, vaikka ne ylittäisivätkin budjettinsa tai joutuisivat muuten taloudelliseen ahdinkoon. Samalla kun tämä on perusoikeuksien toteutumisen näkökulmasta oikea linjaus, heikentää se hyvinvointialueiden kannusteita tehokkaaseen palveluiden järjestämiseen." University of Tampere (357659) p. 4

actual costs, with which is used to define the amount of money distributed to the counties, the premise is that the wellbeing services counties have the incentives to live over budgets and acquire extra funding from the state. Additionally, the magnitude and realism of the assessment procedure can be questioned. This might be the case for the smaller wellbeing services counties, but what would happen if a large county with a university hospital consecutively exceeds their budget? They can unlikely be disestablished and the threat of merging is a formality at the most... ..The government proposal states how by taking into consideration 80 % of the some-models' predicted growth in service needs, the wellbeing services counties are encouraged to improve and streamline functions. As stated above, the fact that the amount of money to be distributed is, in the end, not based on the calculated model but instead the realized costs largely removes the incentives to streamline functions.³⁹

This expert interprets the Government Proposal as containing unrealistic expectations for the threat the assessment process would pose for the wellbeing services counties. From that viewpoint, the expert argues how this is possible: First, they point out how the wellbeing services counties could avoid being assessed by only exceeding the budget every three years. Second, the expert questions the possibility of a large wellbeing services county facing a merger and hence displays suspicions towards the review process. In addition, the citation above demonstrates the claims of those, who criticize the proposal of centrally reviewing the expenses of all counties and then accommodating the central government transfers to that level. These worries are concisely presented in the following quote:

In practice this can mean that counties need not to mind growing costs if this happens in all counties.⁴⁰

As visible, some experts perceive that if depending on the wellbeing services counties' budget surplus or deficit, the state rises or lowers the money allocated towards the counties, this favours indifference towards the expenses. Additionally, the previous quote notes, how counties in fact should reach for budget deficits as budget surplus would more likely lead to adaptation of the central government transfer to a lower level, leading to decreased sums for, as visible in previous chapters, increased service needs. Hence, the former sections show that experts question the credibility of

³⁹ "Lakiehdotuksessa on ajateltu, että uhka arviointimenettelyyn joutumisesta hillitsisi tehokkaasti rahan käyttöä alueilla ja varmistaisi, että raameissa pysytään. Arviointimenettely voidaan aloittaa, jos hyvinvointialue toistuvasti tekee rahoitusaliäämää (kaksi kertaa kolmen peräkkäisen tilikauden aikana (s.275)). Tämä mahdollistaa mm. Sen, että esimerkiksi kolmen vuoden välein voidaan käyttää rahaa enemmän kuin alueelle on kohdennettu ilman suurempia pelkoja sanktioista. Kun nämä ylimääräisenä myönnettyt rahat lopulta lasketaan täysimääräisenä toteutuneisiin kustannuksiin, joiden perusteella hyvinvointialueille jaettava rahamäärä määritetään, hyvinvointialueilla on lähtökohtaisesti kannusteet elää yli varojen ja hankkia ylimääräistä rahoitusta valtiolta. Voidaan myös kysyä, kuinka suuri ja todellinen uhka arviointimenettely tosiasiallisesti on. Se voi olla sitä pienemmille hyvinvointialueille, mutta mitä tapahtuu jos jokin suurempi yliopistosairaala-alueista ylittää toistuvasti määrärahasa? Niitä tuskin voidaan lakkauttaa, ja uhka toiseen hyvinvointialueeseen yhdistämisestä on lähinnä muodollisuus... ..Hallituksen esityksessä todetaan, että huomioimalla 80% Some-mallin ennustamasta palvelutarpeen kasvusta hyvinvointialueita kannustetaan toimintojen kehittämiseen ja tehostamiseen. Kuten yllä on todettu, se että jaettava rahamäärä ei lopulta kuitenkaan perustu laskennalliseen malliin, vaan toteutuneisiin kustannuksiin, poistaa suurelta osin kannustimet toiminnan tehostamiseen." Aalto University 2 (358705) p. 2-3

⁴⁰ "Käytännössä tämä tarkoittanee sitä, ettei alueiden tarvitse välittää kustannusten kasvusta, kunhan se toteutuu kaikilla alueilla." ETLA (356831) p. 2

the central government as “a gate keeper” if the proposal would be implemented unchanged. However, the data also has contrasting ideational perceptions on the matters:

As in the proposed system there are only few limited opportunities for the wellbeing services counties to exceed the state funding according to Section 3 of the Finance Act, matching the funding afterwards with the realized costs of the whole country, as referred to in Section 10, will not greatly affect the level of funding. THL considers the exceptional provisions of Section 36 of the Finance Act as needed with which the annual growth estimate of the service need is increased by 0.2 percentage points in the years 2023–2029, as well as the fact that service needs are considered fully in 2023 and 2024. ⁴¹

In the rationale of the Finance Act (§7), it is assumed that by giving the wellbeing services counties less funding than necessary, they would have an incentive to curb the growth of healthcare and social services costs. This may be the case, but it is more natural to anticipate that the procedure will lead to a loss of morale. Insufficient funding is not credible. The experiences of healthcare and social services underbudgeting are a familiar manifestation of the consequences of a scarce funding framework in municipalities and hospital districts. The review procedure for state funding presented in the Finance Act, which inadequately considers the population's changing service needs, already significantly curbs the sectors accustomed cost development.⁴²

The cost cutter of the central government, in other words the proposal to fund only 80 % of the estimated growth in service needs does not in any way promote the health of the population or reduce the need to use services. The only new introduced mechanic to improve productivity is a strict government guidance and an assessment procedure. It remains unclear why and how the wellbeing services counties would be able to improve their productivity significantly more in the new model especially with their investments at the same time being limited.⁴³

Above, the ideas of experts, four in total, which position differently to the review processes are exemplified. The most important distinction compared to the previous experts is that here the chosen statements estimate the assessment procedure as a potential threat and hence a limitation for the wellbeing services counties' capabilities to get additional resources amidst a fiscal year. This was deduced because these experts

⁴¹ " Koska hyvinvointialueilla on ehdotetussa järjestelmässä vain hyvin rajatusti mahdollisuuksia ylittää rahoituslain 3 §:n mukainen valtion rahoitus, ei 10 §:ssä tarkoitettu rahoituksen jälkikäteinen täsmäytys koko maan toteutuneisiin kustannuksiin vaikuttane suuresti rahoituksen tasoon. THL pitää hyvänä rahoituslain 36 § poikkeussäännöksiä, joilla palvelutarpeen vuosittaista kasvuarviota korotetaan 0,2 prosenttiyksiköllä vuosina 2023–2029, sekä palvelutarpeen huomioimista täysimääräisesti vuosina 2023 ja 2024. " the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (350405) p. 4

⁴² " Rahoituslain perusteluissa (7§) otaksutaan, että antamalla hyvinvointialueille tarvetta niukempi rahoitus, alueilla olisi kannuste sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon kustannusten kasvun hillintään. Näin voi olla, mutta luontevampaa on ennakoida menettelyn johtavan moraalikatoon. Rahoituksen ollessa riittämätön se ei ole myöskään uskottava. Kokemukset sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon alibudjetoinnista on kunnissa ja sairaanhoitopiireissä tuttu ilmentymä niukan rahoitusraamin seurauksista. Rahoituslaissa esitetty valtionrahoituksen tarkistusmenettely, joka ottaa huomioon väestön palvelutarpeiden muutoksen vajavaisesti, hillitsee jo sellaisenaan merkittävästi toimialan totuttua kustannuskehitystä." Professor Pekurinen (357466) p. 2, 3

⁴³ " Valtiovallan kustannusleikkuri, eli ehdotus rahoittaa vain 80 % ennakoitua palvelutarpeen kasvusta, ei mitenkään edistä väestön terveyttä ja vähennä palvelujen käytön tarvetta. Ainoana uutena tuottavuuden lisäämisen mekaniikkana esitellään tiukka valtionohjaus ja arviointimenettely. On epäselvää, miksi ja miten hyvinvointialueet onnistuisivat uudessa mallissa merkittävästi enemmän kehittämään tuottavuuttaan erityisesti, kun niiden investointeja pyritään samalla rajoittamaan." University of Helsinki (357018) p. 8

estimate the wellbeing services counties would face budget deficits but contrastingly to other statements often saw the centrally performed bail out as a more unlikely procedure or otherwise held the counties' budgets as more stable. The first quote also shows how the Institute for Health and Welfare THL sees the proposed limits on additional funding means the nationwide review of counties' budgets has little effects and notes how the proposal for a transition period regarding the funding is needed.

Yet again, framing regarding the matters in this subchapter leans largely on speculation and hence highlights the argumentation which supports the presented estimation. As the quotes have demonstrated, for example the length and depth of explanation varies largely from a single sentence where the outcome is presented to a more meticulous revelation of cause-and-effect relationship. What the citations do not show is that a minor group of experts uses some sources to support their arguments whereas others do not cite anyone.

As this subchapter has demonstrated, the data firstly consists of varying estimates regarding the severity of the assessment procedure linked to the wellbeing services counties' ability to receive more funding: of those who commentated, most view the additional funding as a feature which will hinder the counties' need to improve the efficiency of their actions. As the counties are legally insured of additional funding, they might not need to consider the original central government transfer as the final income, thus lacking incentives for increasing efficiency. At the same time, as the counties budgets are proposed to be reviewed annually and then the level of central government transfers accommodated accordingly, the two features combined are viewed to create a contrasting incentive to aim for higher funding instead of developing more cost-efficient procedures. However, few experts perceive the central government review process is an adequate incentive for curbing costs.

5.3 The wellbeing services counties' right to collect taxes as a solution

A form of ideas are solutions, aimed towards a diagnosed problem (Campbell 1998, 386–389). In my data, the counties right for taxation is one of the most frequently proposed solution which is viewed to solve problems. As noted, the Government Proposal (HE 241/2020, 205–206) suggested that at first the wellbeing services counties are funded by the central government and proposed they would later be granted the right to levy taxes.

As part of the preparation of the reform, PM Marin's government had formed a parliamentary tax committee, which finished their paper when the bill was under a parliamentary process. The committee took a negative stance on creating a county tax system but recommended a re-estimation after the wellbeing services counties have

begun their work. (Valtioneuvosto 2021, 147–149.) Almost all expert statements in my data were submitted before this memorandum was published.

I have here divided the tax question into two categories, to those experts who oppose and those who favour giving the wellbeing services counties the right to tax. The chapter is opened with a quotation demonstrating positive ideas towards the subject, found in 14 statements:

If the wellbeing services counties have no right to levy taxes, there arises a problem with co-resources and soft budget restriction. As the expenses of counties are ultimately paid from a common resource pool by the state and thus partly by other counties, an individual county's incentives to curb costs are weakened. Soft budget restriction, on the other hand, manifests by the counties having the ability to demand additional resources as the financing principle allows this to ensure constitutional services are produced adequately. Hence, a real fiscal discipline is not created even if the reform sought to ensure this.⁴⁴

Here, taxation is often viewed as creating incentives for cost-containment and additionally as strengthening the counties self-governance. It is perceived to combat soft budget restrictions and problems regarding co-resources, which in the previous subchapter 5.2.4 were used to argument why a state-lead funding is problematic. Soft budget restrictions are in the statements defined as possibilities the counties have in exceeding their budgets as the consequences of this are perceived as moderate or non-existing. Problem with co-resources in the statements is used to indicate how the counties have no direct accountability of their expenditure. Hence, these viewpoints are directly connected to the previous problem diagnoses. If the counties would carry taxes, it is largely viewed to solve the problems:

The right to tax would soften this possibility, as the wellbeing services county would have to cover budget overruns with tax increases aimed at its residents. This would increase the incentives for both local elected authorities and officials and citizens to maintain spending discipline. Therefore, it is central to promote the possibility to levy taxes. If the counties' funding is partly dependent of tax revenue and partly from the central transfer, they have better incentives to both development service quality and lower the tax burden.⁴⁵

The citation demonstrates the arguments often used in the data in favour of taxation: first, it is portrayed that with the right to tax, local decision-makers accountability would increase since their capability to steer the wellbeing services counties

⁴⁴ "Jos hyvinvointialueiden verotusoikeuta ei oteta käyttöön, muodostuu yhteisresurssien ja löysän budjettirajoitteen ongelma. Se, että alueiden kustannukset menevät valtion ja sitä kautta osittain muiden alueiden maksettavaksi yhteisistä resursseista, heikentää yksittäisen hyvinvointialueen kannustimia kustannusten hillitsemiseen. Löysä budjettirajoite ilmenee puolestaan siten, että rahojen loputtua alueet voivat rahoitusperiaatteen mukaisesti vaatia lisäresursseja perustuslain edellyttämien riittävien palvelujen varmistamiseksi. Näin ei muodostu aitoa budjettikuria, vaikka uudistuksessa on sinällään pyritty sellaisen varmistamiseen." the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL (360661) p. 1

⁴⁵ "Verotusoikeus lieventäisi tätä ulkoisvaikutusta, koska hyvinvointialue joutuisi kattamaan budjetin ylitykset asukkaisiinsa kohdistuvilla veronkorotuksilla. Tämä parantaisi niin alueen luottamushenkilöiden ja viranomaisten kuin alueen asukkaiden kannustimia ylläpitää menokuria. Siksi on keskeistä, että verotusoikeuden mahdollisuutta edistetään. Jos alueiden rahoitus riippuu osin niiden verotuloista ja osin valtion-avusta, niillä on paremmat kannustimet sekä kehittää palveluiden laatua että alentaa verotaakkaa." the Economic Policy Council (357050) p. 2–3

shows in counties' citizens tax level. If cost-efficiency rose, the tax level could be accommodated, hence also creating an incentive for improving effectiveness. The type of argumentation in the first quote seems to assume a wish amongst the inhabitants for lower taxes. It also highlights how the right to tax has a high priority in the reform:

SAK sees the importance of parliamentary committee working on tax rights as the right can be seen as the cornerstone of the reform in the long term.⁴⁶

Highlighting the importance of the tax solution or as above, naming it the cornerstone of the healthcare and social services reform, creates a sense of urgency. This type of framing is present in some statements which promote the county tax as a policy programme. In addition, amongst few statements, the questions of accountability and incentives for efficiency are yet complemented with another dimension:

The right for taxation would also improve the incentives to promote health as the wellbeing services county would partly have to cover the growing costs of morbidity (or would benefit from the decrease in morbidity).⁴⁷

Again, wellbeing services counties' taxation is framed with the incentives it could create. Here, the argumentation addresses how having responsibility for the funding of areal healthcare and social services would enhance the need to improve health and promote wellbeing. Thus, the county tax is perceived to possibly steer the wellbeing counties services towards preventative care. These ideas address the problems found in the central government transfer system, dealt in subchapter 5.2.3. The next citations reveal, how the tax is perceived to solve yet another problem the reform is seen to contain:

With a right to levy taxes, the wellbeing services counties would have the opportunity to correct the apparent insufficiency of government funding, considering the areal service needs and the values of the decision-makers.⁴⁸

In the preceding statements, the tax was viewed to compensate the otherwise low central government transfer. Next, there are six experts who do not favour county tax as a policy idea. They prominently represent the private sector but also contain a statement of a labour market organization. So, a quote demonstrates their position:

⁴⁶ "SAK pitää tärkeänä, että verotusoikeus on parlamentaarisen komitean selvityksessä, koska oikeutta voidaan pitää uudistuksen kulmakivenä pitkällä aikavälillä." Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK (356251) p.4

⁴⁷ "Verotusoikeus parantaisi myös terveyden edistämisen kannusteita, koska hyvinvointialue joutuisi itse kattamaan osan sairastavuuden kasvun kustannuksista (tai hyötyisi sairastavuuden vähenemisestä)." University of Tampere 2 (357759) p. 3

⁴⁸ "Verotusoikeuden myötä, hyvinvointialueilla olisi mahdollisuus paikata ilmeistä valtion rahoituksen riittämättömyyttä ottaen huomioon alueelliset palvelutarpeet ja päättäjien arvot." Professor Pekurinen (357466) p. 2

The wellbeing services counties are not to be given the right to tax. The counties right to tax would be associated with a considerable risk of an increase in the overall tax rate when the number of parties deciding on tax rates would increase. The right to tax would also lead to complexifying of the tax system when a new level of taxation would be added to the tax system in addition to the existing ones.⁴⁹

As visible, the opposing statements contain firstly descriptions about the likelihood of total tax level being increased and estimates of a more complex tax system. The first idea is then explained as a perceived causality between the number of decision-makers controlling taxes and the level of taxation. The question of total tax level is raised also amongst those who favour it, for example the Institute of Welfare and Health notes:

With the prepared healthcare and social services reform, it has been stated that the total level of taxation is not intended to be risen. It remains unclear how this can be promised when areal taxation prevails.⁵⁰

The quotation shows that this expert questions how the promise of total taxation left untouched can be kept in a possible situation where this is not in the hands of the national decision-makers but instead chosen locally. Moving forward, yet another expert seems to display suspicion towards the tax level's stability:

Taking into consideration the development of the demographic structure and the increasing need for healthcare and social services, tightening taxation needs to be considered in the future none the less.⁵¹

Above, it is viewed that pressure for tax increases will grow mostly due to demographic developments. Hence, this frame questions the ideas about taxation not growing since the logic here is that costs will nevertheless increase, and more funding is needed. Hence, the previously introduced paradigm about growing costs seems to affect how this expert perceives the possible future of taxation.

To summarize the chapter, the following economic ideas were located within the statements: with the counties enabled to carry taxes, politicians' accountability would be increased, increased efficiency would show in budgets and lastly incentives for improving health established. Contrastingly the experts with opposing ideas mostly fo-

⁴⁹ "Hyvinvointialueille ei tule antaa verotusoikeutta. Hyvinvointialueiden omaan verotusoikeuteen liittyisi huomattava riski kokonaisveroasteen noususta, kun veroprosenteista päättävien tahojen lukumäärä kasvaisi. Hyvinvointialueiden verotusoikeus johtaisi myös verojärjestelmän monimutkaistumiseen, kun verojärjestelmään lisättäisiin uusi verotuksen taso nykyisten lisäksi." the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK (356133) p. 2

⁵⁰ "Valmistellun sote-uudistuksen yhteydessä on todettu, että kokonaisverotuksen tasoa ei ole tarkoitus nostaa. On epäselvää, miten tämä voidaan taata alueellisen verotusoikeuden vallitessa." the Institute of Welfare and Health THL 2 (357289) p. 2

⁵¹ "Ottaen huomioon väestörakenteen kehityksen sekä lisääntyvän sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon palveluiden tarpeen, verotuksen kiristämistä jouduttaneen tulevaisuudessa harkitsemaan joka tapauksessa." Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK (356251) p. 4

cus on the possibilities of total taxation being increased. On the other hand, the question of total tax level is raised also amongst those who favour the idea of taxing rights for the counties.

In total, the county tax seems to stand out as a prominent policy programme (Campbell 1998, 386–389). It is a clear and at its core relatively simple solution which is presented for a multitude of problems perceived in the Government Programme. The experts frame this idea as having a high importance.

5.4 Selected summarizations from the statements

Above, I have raised central features of the proposed healthcare and social services reform and the experts' ideas towards them. Lastly, whilst reading the data, I noted how it often is the statements' first or last chapter which provides a general viewpoint of the expert's position towards the Government Proposal 241/2020. Here I show some of these viewpoints even if the interest of this analysis lies not in examining who carries which economic ideas. I try to summarize the experts' viewpoints by collecting the features they themselves have highlighted in the statements. Additionally, this chapter presents other ideas the analysis has not reviewed yet. First, I have selected three citations which show critical ideas on the reform whilst having a mutually differing perspective:

Since the beginning of the government period, Suomen Yrittäjät has tried various means to influence for it to take into account the sector's SME entrepreneurship, market developments and the containment of cost growth. In our opinion, this has not been done sufficiently.⁵²

The healthcare and social services reform proposal, which is currently under consideration, is not clear about the incentives for curbing costs in the presented model.⁵³

...in my statement, I focus on the central problems of the economic effects of the proposal. These include a level of financing that is lower than the service need, problems with the allocation of financing, a lack of incentives for promoting health and increasing the effectiveness of operations, and an inappropriate financing system for investments.⁵⁴

The first quoted expert notes, how the government has not modified the proposed legislation adequately to consider this expert's interests despite continuous lob-

⁵² "Suomen Yrittäjät on pyrkinyt eri keinoin vaikuttamaan hallituskauden alusta alkaen lähtien siten, että uudistus huomioisi alan pk-yrittäjyyden, markkinoiden kehittymisen ja kustannusten kasvun hillitsemisen. Arviomme mukaan näin ei ole kuitenkaan riittävästi tehty." Suomen Yrittäjät (359539) p. 1

⁵³ "Hallituksen nyt käsiteltävänä olevasta sote-esityksestä ei ilmene, mitkä ovat ne kannustimet, joilla kustannusten kasvua hillittäisiin esitettyssä sote-mallissa." Aalto University 3 (360766) p. 2

⁵⁴ "...keskityn lausunnossani esityksen taloudellisten vaikutusten keskeisiin ongelmiin. Näitä ovat erityisesti rahoituksen palvelutarvetta alhaisempi taso, rahoituksen kohdentamisen ongelmat, terveyttä edistävien ja toiminnan vaikuttavuutta lisäävien kannustimien puute sekä investointien epätarkoituksenmukainen rahoitusjärjestelmä." University of Helsinki (357018) p. 1

bying efforts. Because it has not happened, they are critical towards the proposal. Second, the next cited expert writes that the Government Proposal does not display the cost-curbing mechanisms it claims to contain. Here, the expert criticizes the proposal for lacking the incentives despite aiming to curb costs. Last citation on the other hand firstly notes that the proposed funding is lower than the needs. Additionally, they view problems in how the model would stimulate aims for promoting health and improving efficiency and how it handles counties' investments.

The citations demonstrate how the proposal is perceived negatively due to multiple reasons. Negative ideas hence are common in the statements, which might be explainable first because as a large reform, there is a lot of factors and goals to commentate, and secondly as the experts' statements' function is to provide insight on what needs adjusting. Nevertheless, few experts seem to favour the reform and its approval:

The reformation of healthcare and social services structures needs to be conducted. The Government Proposal offers a possibility for more efficient and functional organization of healthcare and social services.⁵⁵

...my assessment is that the reformation, which is now under consideration, would have a change in creating a basis for a service system which also could respond to future challenges more convincingly than the current system.⁵⁶

The first citation demonstrates how this expert estimates that the proposal would create the circumstances for organizing healthcare and social services more effectively and practically. They strongly emphasize the importance of reforming healthcare and social services structures. Hence, their writing has almost a hurrying tone. Second quote shows an example of positive mentality towards the reform, even if the same expert has also aimed criticism towards the proposal. They still evaluate the wellbeing services counties could face future challenges better than the municipality-based system of healthcare and social services. Next, I have selected citations demonstrating how in general the experts have different approaches to the reform's aims:

It is possible that the reform corresponds better to problems related to the accessibility and integration of healthcare and social services sector than to actual cost containment.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ "Sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon rakenteiden uudistaminen pitää saada toteutettua. ...Hallituksen esitys tarjoaa mahdollisuuden sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon tehokkaampaan ja toimivampaan järjestämiseen." Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland AKAVA (358932) p. 1

⁵⁶ "...arvioni on, että nyt käsittelyssä olevalla uudistuksella olisi mahdollisuus luoda pohja palvelujärjestelmälle, jolla on myös mahdollisuus vastata tulevaisuuden haasteisiin nykyistä järjestelmää vakuuttavammin." University of Tampere (357659) p. 8

⁵⁷ "On mahdollista, että uudistus vastaa paremmin SOTEn saataavuus ja integraatio-ongelmiin kuin varsinaisesti kustannusten hillintään." the Economic Policy Council (357050) p. 1

From an economic point of view, the goals of the healthcare and social services reform partially conflict with the stabilization of public finances. ...However, SAK's view is that the current reform should not primarily be viewed through an economic lens, but rather through welfare and health differences and the availability and quality of services.⁵⁸

The Government Proposal for the reformation of healthcare and social services will remarkably increase expenses related to this sector without improving the quality or accessibility of Finnish care and nursing.⁵⁹

Here the quotations show how the expert statements display different approaches towards the proposed healthcare and social services reform. The first cited expert writes that instead of reaching for the cost containment goals, the reform might achieve those goals related to improving service qualities. The expert uses rather neutral language in their assessment. On the other hand, the next expert notes that the reform with its multiple goals can aim for contradicting actions. They however highlight that the economic aims are not as important than others. In other words, here a moral evaluation is done, and economy placed lower than goals about delivering better services. The last citation is short and straightforward in estimating that the proposal, if passed, will increase expenses but not improve care or nursing. I selected this as often the statements present similar estimations with little or no explanations at all.

In total this subchapter showed, how some experts have provided their evaluation of the reform. These experts have started or concluded their statement by providing a general review of the Government Proposal, whereas others focused solely on selected matters like taxation. The summarizations sometimes reveal cognitive and moral evaluations as especially the last section showed. In other words, the brief introduces of viewpoint contain large economic ideas. Reviewing the experts' general approaches to the proposed reform is interesting even if in this analysis I was not especially interested about forming a clear picture about who promotes what ideas.

⁵⁸ *"Taloudellisesta näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon uudistuksen tavoitteet ovat osittain jopa ristiriidassa julkisen talouden vakauttamisen kanssa. ...SAK:n näkemyksen mukaan nykyistä sote-uudistusta ei kuitenkaan tulisi tarkastella ensisijaisesti taloudellisen linssin, vaan hyvinvointi- ja terveyserojen sekä palveluiden saatavuuden ja laadun kautta."* Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK 2 (359614) p. 3

⁵⁹ *"Hallituksen esitys sosiaali- ja terveyspalvelujen uudistamiseksi kasvattaa merkittävästi sote-menoja ilman, että suomalaisten hoidon ja hoivan laatu tai saatavuus paranee."* the Finnish Association of Private Care Providers HALI ry (358933) p. 1

6 CONCLUSIONS

In my thesis, I have reviewed the economic ideas underlying in the 2021 healthcare and social services reform from the viewpoint of ideational institutionalism. By analysing the selected expert statements, I found multiple economic ideas concentrating on paradigms, policy programmes, and frames which were then located within Campbell's (1998) typology of ideas. Public sentiments were mostly not considered in the analysis. The main conclusion is that amongst these experts, the economic dimension of the healthcare and social services reform is perceived rather negatively. Now, this chapter summarizes the most important research findings and discusses their relevance to the topic and furthermore highlights possibilities for future research.

To begin with, I found that most experts seem to assume public sector budgets face increasing pressures. This was deduced from descriptions about increasing age-related service costs, evaluations dealing with geographical developments, and to an extent from arguments about costs of producing healthcare. This argumentation hints of a pattern of thought which I named the paradigm of growing costs. In ideational institutionalism, paradigms refer to large, worldview-like, understandings of how the world operates. They affect in the background of thinking by, for example limiting the scale of possible explanations and solutions. (Béland 2016, 737-738; Campbell 1998.) Hence, it was drawn that this possible growing costs -paradigm likely contributed to how the experts later diagnosed problems in the Government Proposal or chose from their range of policy solutions. In other words, besides other factors such as interests and institutions, growing costs as a paradigmatic idea has likely shaped the possibilities for both what has been viewed as problematic in the Government Proposal, and what could then be proposed a solution.

Second, out of those experts carrying ideas about the matter, most viewed the number of wellbeing services counties as too large for achieving economic efficiency and curbing the growth of costs. The proposal was perceived to create organisations with unequal population bases and service needs. Even if on a general level these larger organisations were acknowledged to create the conditions for enhancing integration

and reducing overlapping functions, it was estimated that not all 21 counties could sufficiently provide mandatory healthcare and social services. With some experts, the five co-working areas were seen as a moderate solution. The result might reflect the paradigm of growing costs: as the experts expect geographically unequal developments to the benefit-dependency ratio, the resources of some wellbeing services counties are viewed to decrease more than their service-needs.

The third result is that the statements could be divided into groups based on their ideas towards the proposed central government funding. To begin with, some experts argued that the wellbeing services counties would receive too little funding. These ideas here were both general estimates regarding the size of the central government transfer, or explanations about flaws in the calculation model. For example, it was diagnosed that this model insufficiently considers the diseases causing costs and areal variances in costs. However, there was a smaller group of experts evaluating the central government funding as somewhat adequate.

In addition, the steering function of the proposed central government transfers system was criticised by some. These experts evaluated that the potential for savings could be achieved with preventative care and actions promoting wellbeing instead of costly specialized services. To summarize, the central government transfers model prompted at least three different economic ideas: first, an insufficiency was in the funding either due to its calculations or in general. Second, some considered the funding as adequate. Last, the central government transfers were argued to not create sufficient conditions for cost-effective solutions. Here, economic ideas were related to causal explanations (Béland & Cox 2011) about what the proposed central government transfer would cause to the wellbeing services counties' monetary resources to organize services.

The fourth result of this thesis is that the experts largely proposed the wellbeing services counties' right to taxation. Here, ideas largely defend that with taxation, the counties would have more incentives for increasing efficiency. The reasoning varies: the county tax was for example seen to remove the possibilities to receive bail outs from the state, steer functions towards prevention of illness and promotion of wellbeing, and to increase the accountability of elected decision-makers by linking them more tightly to the level of taxation collected from the residents of the area. In addition, with some, the right for taxation was seen a way to compensate the otherwise insufficient funding of the counties. Contrastingly, the few arguments against taxation dealt with possibilities for raising income taxes and a new level of taxes creating complications.

Parallely, in commenting the county taxes, most experts also took part in estimating the state assessment procedure's credibility. In brief, the proposal ties the wellbeing services counties' additional funding to increased control and possible sanctions such as mergers. Interestingly, how the authority of the state was perceived varied: some viewed the assessment process as a weak incentive for staying in budgets whilst

others held it as a steady instrument. A similar variation about speculative outcome was visible when experts weighted the Government Proposal's impact on private and public sector balance. In total, I found that the tax question was the primary policy programme (Béland 2016, 738; Campbell 1998) offered for problems raised within the proposal.

The first research question guided the analysis to show what economic ideas could be located from the data, while the second question then prompted to explore how these ideas then were presented. As planned, this problem received less attention than the previous one, but some framing (Perkiö 2021, 66; Campbell 1998, 394–398) was found and highlighted. The first result is that the length of these statements varies, which translates to some experts using relatively little space in explaining their arguments while others address more details.

In the context of my data, framing mostly deals with estimations of the reform's impacts. It was interesting to find that not all experts use sources to support their argumentation. Instead, they seem to solely rely on their authority as an expert. Contrastingly, some experts use mostly academic research to strengthen their economic ideas. Next, as the previous sections have showed, in dealing with the Government Proposal, the statements often contain a single viewpoint around which the argumentation is built. Hence, they might not contain similar detailed speculation about alternative results but instead their argumentation mostly focuses on few causal explanations. Along with other written details, such as emphasizing the moral of a selected option, the expert statements sometimes create strong impressions about there not being alternatives to their opinion. All things considered, the expert statements contain straightforward, simple, and sometimes one-sided argumentation paired with ethical arguments, which creates a strong impression of expertise. In related research, the use of clear and concise language along with tying ideas to prevalent values has been shown to improve the impact of arguments (Perkiö 2021, 66–67; Kangas, Niemelä & Varjonen 2014; Campbell 1998, 394–398).

To conclude, the statements contain a lot of critical ideas related to the economy of the proposed healthcare and social services reform of PM Marin's government. As highlighted, this criticism is visible in all sections of the analysis. The statements aim their criticism varyingly and when compared to each other, contain contrasting arguments. This is probably somewhat natural, as the experts behind these statements are a rich group of academics, lobbyists, and labour market representatives, hence having different worldviews and interests to promote. However, in the analysis I did not strive to examine the economic ideas' relation with the interests of the selected experts. In addition, it needs to be noticed that the purpose of the expert statements is to inform, underscore and criticize. After all, the expert hearings aim to provide Members of Parliament additional information where bills need developing (Vainio 2007).

In this thesis, I set out a task to find economic ideas within expert statements to provide examples of the ideational atmosphere related to the healthcare and social

services reform. The second focus was shedding light on the ways that these ideas were presented. Using a relatively limited data, I answered the questions, especially the first one. Hence, I consider that the task was successfully completed.

The study naturally has its limitations, the most significant being that some economic dimensions of the Government Proposal 241/2020 were excluded from my analysis. If I had reviewed the ideas relating to wellbeing services counties' investments and capabilities to receive loans, a more comprehensive answer to the research questions might have been produced. In a similar manner, the research might have created a more complete picture of the research phenomenon if I had included more expert statements and other related policy documents to the mix. Considering the typical research approach of ideational institutionalism, a richer data could have supplemented my results by for example tracing whether the economic ideas changed along the parliamentary process or revealing their impact (e.g., Béland 2016, 743–744.). In this thesis, however, this was not the primary interest.

I found that ideational institutionalism as a theoretical approach enables an outlook which might otherwise be brushed aside, if solely focusing on institutions or interests. Had I approached the healthcare and social services reform by analysing changes in the central government transfers or shedding light on power coalitions behind in the parliamentary process, some features would have likely not been revealed (Béland 2016, 735–737; Saari & Kananen 2009, 22–23). The chosen framework indeed seems to suit an approach where the research is interested of locating cognitive and moral explanations in public speech or documents. Ideational institutionalism allows locating these ideas and thus shedding light on the worldviews and causal explanations portrayed in the data, which can be used to explain policy changes. On the other hand, to examine the impact of ideas, a methodological enrichment needs to be considered. In the future, a policy analysis with a larger outlook and the inclusion of these factors could for example show a larger picture of the healthcare and social services reform and provide explanations about whose ideas managed to influence the reform.

The starting point for this thesis was research commenting how the public sector has somewhat struggled with low income and high expenses. In the analysis, I found many economic ideas indicating that this situation is likely not solved with implementation of the proposed reformation of healthcare and social services. A quick look to the webpages of the Finnish national broadcast service YLE hints that this might be the case: after 6 months, many wellbeing services counties must already consider reducing services, a situation about which they warned about during fall 2022. Global developments have partly affected this situation, but the austerity is also related to the central government funding system, the level of which is continued from an era before the wellbeing services counties. (Kokko 2023, Björklund 2023, Mäkynen 2022.) As the new needs-based transfer system gained criticism in my data, time will tell whether healthcare and social services' resources are improved after the transition period.

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