



FAMILIES AND THE SOCIAL SPACE OF SCHOOL CHOICE IN URBAN FINLAND

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Abstract

This dissertation is positioned in the fields of sociology of education, urban sociology and family studies. The focus of the study is on schools and families' lower-secondary school choices in 2010s urban Finland. The study consists of four academic articles and an introductory part, in which the results of the four original articles are presented and discussed in relation to each other. The first sub-study (I) is a literature review, in which the application and transmission of concepts in school choice research in five European countries is examined. The three empirical sub-studies (II–IV) concentrate on how the reputations and prestige of schools and their general and selective classes in the case city of Espoo are constructed in the parental discourse, what sorts of lower-secondary school choices the families conduct in relation to those hierarchies of symbolic prestige, and which factors seem to be interrelated to the success in the competition over certain study positions. The analysis concentrates on the differences in reputation between general and selective classes across and within schools, the constructed urban spaces of school choice, and families' choices. The ways in which the educational trajectories of the pupils diversify and differentiate in basic education were analysed.

The data consists of 96 semi-structured thematic interviews with parents of 6th graders. The interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011 in the research project *Parents and School Choice. Family Strategies, Segregation and School Policies in Chilean and Finnish Basic Schooling* (PASC). The data includes parents from all school catchment areas. The interviews were analysed by applying theory-informed qualitative content analysis. The theoretical framework leans strongly on Pierre Bourdieu's theory and conceptualisations of distinction. The analysis focuses on how the conducted school choices relate to families' possession of different forms and combinations of cultural, social and economic capital and how these processes relate to the symbolically differentiated space of school choice. The study deals with who chooses, what is chosen, and especially

with how and why. The parental discourse on school choice has been contrasted with the noted worry concerning the increase in urban segregation in the metropolitan area, the social and academic school differentiation, and the general condition of the Finnish comprehensive school.

The space of school choice in the city of Espoo was divided into two separate spaces of school choice in the parental discourse: the local space of school choice and the selective space of school choice. The central divide was the pupil selection conducted by some of the schools to their selective classes. The local space of school choice consisted of general classes in schools within the catchment area. In some of the local spaces the symbolic hierarchy of the general classes was non-existent, but in some local areas the general classes across schools had a strict hierarchy. The general class in the bottom of the hierarchy was considered to be a study environment to avoid. The most common way of aiming to avoid the school allocation to those aversive classes was to apply for classes with a special emphasis. These classes comprised the selective space of school choice, which covered the whole city area and did not follow any catchment area borders. The transition from the local space to the selective space of school choice required different forms and amounts of cultural, social and economic capital from the family, and was not thereby equally accessible as an option to all families.

In addition, the most desirable choices for the parents in their discourse were not the classes with elite reputations with high selectivity and presumably demanding teaching. The most desirable classes were often considered to be 'good enough' in terms of teaching and learning, and somewhat selective, as long as desirable amounts of social and ethnic diversity existed. Contentment with school was emphasised in the discourse around the most desirable classes. The elite classes were avoided due to their expectedly high levels of unnecessary competition between pupils.

The analysis on the school choices of upper-class families showed how the mobilisable amounts of different forms and combinations of capital strongly impacted the process of school choice. Optimising the school choice of the child in the competition over study positions was interconnected with social capital, as well as with the mechanisms of transforming and transmitting cultural and economic capital from one form to another and from one field to the next. The most successful with the highest numbers of realistic choices were those possessing the most amounts of capital. The role of social capital was emphasised. The success of the upper-class child in the competition seemed to derive from the habitus, and via their shared lifestyles success in the school choice seemed 'natural' among them. The social differentiation produced by the practices of selection of pupils were noticed in the parental discourse, and the choice was legitimised by referring to meritocratic selection procedures and talented and motivated children. The cultural capital derived from the field of culture, such as

skills in music or sports, turned out to be relevant trump cards in the competition over study-positions in selective classes within publicly funded compulsory education in Finland.

The central features in the optimizing of the choice were the families' capacities to evaluate their own position in the social space in relation to other families in the field as well as to the symbolic hierarchy of the schools. This combination is named as the *social space of school choice*. The limitations to parental action are urban limitations, caused by the urban structure of the city, as well as the borders of educational governance (e.g. catchment areas). The central notion is that the differentiation of school choices across families (how the families are able and willing to conduct school choices) are related to their possessed amounts of capital also in Finland. Interestingly, these processes of pupil selection seem to guide pupils from different social backgrounds seemingly 'naturally' to different educational trajectories already within comprehensive education.

Sonja Kosunen

PERHEET JA SOSIAALINEN KOULUVALINTATILA URBAANISSA SUOMESSA

Tiivistelmä

Tämä koulutussosiologian, kaupunkisosiologian ja perhetutkimuksen rajapinnalle sijoittuva tutkimus kohdistuu kaupunkien kouluihin ja perheiden kouluvalintoihin lapsen siirtyessä perusopetuksen alakoulusta yläkouluun 2010-luvun suomalaisessa kaupunkiympäristössä. Tutkimus koostuu neljästä tieteellisestä artikkelista ja yhteenvedosta, jossa artikkeleissa esiteltyjä tuloksia esitellään ja kehitetään edelleen suhteessa toisiinsa. Ensimmäinen artikkeli (I) on kirjallisuustarkastelu, jossa on arvioitu kouluvalintatutkimuksen käsitteiden käyttämistä ja paikallista siirtymistä viidellä kielialueella Euroopassa. Kolmessa empiirisessä artikkelissa (II–IV) tutkimustehtävänä on ollut tarkastella, millaisiksi tutkimuskaupungin, Espoon, koulujen maineet rakentuvat vanhempien puheessa, millaisia kouluvalintoja perheet tekevät suhteessa koulujen ja niiden luokkien välisiin havaittuihin mainehierarkioihin, ja millaiset osatekijät näyttävät vaikuttavan siihen, keillä lapsista on parhaat edellytykset pärjätä kilpailussa koulutuspaikoista. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan koulujen välisiä ja sisäisiä maine-eroja, niiden muodostamia erilaisia kouluvalintatiloja ja perheiden tekemiä kouluvalintoja. Työssä on analysoitu sitä, miten koulutuspolkujen eriytymismekanismit rakentuvat tehtyjen kouluvalintojen kautta jo perusopetusvaiheessa.

Aineisto koostuu 96 espoolaisen, kuudesluokkalaisen lapsen vanhemman puolistrukturoidusta teemahaastattelusta, jotka on toteutettu keväällä 2011 *Parents and School Choice. Family Strategies, Segregation and School Policies in Chilean and Finnish Basic Schooling (PASC)* -tutkimusprojektissa. Aineistossa on vanhempia Espoon kaikilta oppilasalueilta. Aineisto on analysoitu teoriasidonnaisen sisällönanalyysin avulla nojaten Pierre Bourdieun distinktio-teorian käsitteistön. Työssä on analysoitu, miten perheiden väliset erot kouluvalinnoissa jäsenyvät puheessa perheen kulttuurisen, sosiaalisen ja taloudellisen pääoman määrän ja komposition mukaan ja millaisia eriytyviä koulutuspolkuja nämä prosessit yhdessä symbolisesti eriytyneen kouluvalintatilan kanssa muodostavat jo perusopetusvaiheessa. Tarkastelussa on kuka valitsee, mitä valitaan ja erityisesti miten ja miksi. Perheiden koulutusstrategioihin liittyvää puhetta on tulkittu suhteessa

esitettyyn huoleen kaupunkitilan sosiaalisesta ja koulujen sosiaalisesta ja tiedollis-
taidollisesta eriytymisestä sekä suomalaisen, ennen yhtenäiseksi mielletyn,
peruskoulun tilasta.

Kaupungin kouluvalintatila jakautui maineeltaan vanhempien puheessa kah-
teen erilliseen tilaan, paikalliseen ja valikoivaan kouluvalintatilaan, joiden raja-
pinnan ensisijainen jäsentäjä oli koulujen toteuttama oppilasvalikointi. Paikalli-
nen kouluvalintatila koostui kodin ympärillä olevan hallinnollisen oppilasalueen
koulujen yleisopetuksen luokista, joihin oppilaat osoitettiin lähikouluperiaat-
teella. Osalla oppilasalueista koulujen välinen mainehierarkia oli olematon, mutta
osassa paikallisia kouluvalintatiloja maineet jäsenyivät symboliseen hierarkiaan.
Hierarkian huonomaineisimman luokan välttämistä puhuttiin. Yleisin välttä-
misen keinona mainittu strategia oli siirtyminen painotetun opetuksen luokista
koostuvaan, koko kaupungin kattavaan valikoivaan kouluvalintatilaan. Tämä siir-
tymä kuitenkin vaati perheeltä paitsi taloudellista, myös sosiaalista ja kulttuurista
pääomaa, eikä siksi ollut käytännössä yhtäläinen ja todellinen mahdollisuus kai-
kille.

Toisaalta mainehierarkioiden tarkemmassa tarkastelussa osoittautui, ettei
useinkaan toivotuin ja omalle lapselle sopivimmaksi mielletty luokka ollut mai-
neeltaan valikoivin ja tiedollis-taidollisesti vaativin. Toivotuimman luokan piir-
teiksi valtaenemmistöltään keskiluokkaisessa aineistossa mainittiin riittävän
hyväksi mielletty opetus ja oppiminen, jonkinlainen oppilasvalikointi kuitenkin
säilyttäen luokkakokoonpanon vähäinen sosiaalinen ja etninen moninaisuus ja
erityisesti korkea koulutyytyväisyys ja -hyvinvointi. Eliittimaineisia luokkia väl-
tettiin tarpeettomaksi mielletyn oppilaiden välisen oletetun kilpailun vuoksi.

Yläluokkaisten perheiden kouluvalintojen tarkastelussa havaittiin, miten
mobilisoitavissa olevien pääomien määrä ja kompositio vaikuttivat kouluvalinnan
onnistuneeseen toteuttamiseen. Lapsen kouluvalinnan optimoiminen kilpailussa
oppilaspaikoista nivoutui paitsi tietynlaiseen sosiaaliseen pääomaan, myös kult-
tuurisen ja taloudellisen pääoman muuntamisen ja kentältä toiselle siirtämisen
mekanismeihin. Parhaiten kilpailussa oppilaspaikoista vaikuttivat selviytyvän ne,
joilla oli näitä kaikkia. Sosiaalisen pääoman merkitys korostui. Yläluokkaisten las-
ten menestyminen oppilasvalikoinnissa valikoiville luokille juontui habituksesta
ja elämäntyylistä ja näyttäytyi siten ”luonnollisena”. Oppilasvalikoinnin tuottama
havaittu sosiaalinen eriytyminen kouluissa nostatti silti puhetta valikoinnin legi-
timaatiosta, joka palautui meritokratialla oikeuttamiseen ja puheeseen lahjak-
kaasta ja motivoituneesta lapsesta. Oli havaittavissa, että muilla kentillä toimiva
kulttuurinen pääoma, kuten lapsen taidot musiikissa tai urheilussa, osoittautui
kelvoksi valttikortiksi myös kilpailussa oppilaspaikoista suomalaisen julkisrahoit-
teisen perusopetuksen sisällä.

Optimoinnin keskeisenä tekijänä olivat perheen kyky oman asemansa hahmottamiseen suhteessa koululuokkien symboliseen järjestykseen ja omien pääomien muodostaman aseman tarkastelu suhteessa muihin kentällä toimiviin perheisiin. Tämä yhdistelmä on tutkimuksen yhteenvedossa nimetty *sosiaalisesti kouluvalintatilaksi*. Sosiaalisen kouluvalintatilan muina rajaajina toimivat kaupunkitalan muodostamat urbaanit rajoitteet ja kouluhallinnon asettamat valinnan rajoitukset. Keskeinen havainto on, että perheiden kouluvalinnat ja niiden eriytyminen ovat myös suomalaisessa kaupunkiympäristössä sidoksissa perheen pääomiin. Oppilasvalikoinnin muodot ja perheille mahdollistuva toiminta sosiaalisessa kouluvalintatilassa muokkaavat oppilaiden valikoitumista perusopetuksen sisällä, mikä hiljaisesti ja näennäisen ”luonnollisesti” ohjaa eri yhteiskuntaluokista tulevia lapsia ja nuoria eri koulutusreiteille jo perusopetusvaiheessa.

... the construction of social reality is not only an individual enterprise but may also become a collective enterprise. But the so-called micro-sociological vision leaves out a good number of other things: as often happens when you look too closely, you cannot see the wood from the trees; and above all, failing to construct the space of positions leaves you no chance of seeing the point from which you see what you see.

Pierre Bourdieu (1989, 18–19)

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Sonja Kosunen

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- I Agnès van Zanten & Sonja Kosunen (2013): School choice research in five European countries: the circulation of Stephen Ball's concepts and interpretations, *London Review of Education*, 11:3, 239–255.
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- II Sonja Kosunen (2014): Reputation and parental logics of action in local school choice space in Finland, *Journal of Education Policy*, 29:4, 443–466.
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1 INTRODUCTION

School choice as a family matter became a politically loaded issue in urban Finland during the 2010s. In the context of this dissertation school choice refers to the process in which families choose schools and schools select some of their pupils. Parents in the case city of Espoo in the Finnish metropolitan area may express their wish for a lower-secondary school within their catchment area – the number of options being between three and five – or apply for selective classes with a special emphasis across the city. The local educational authorities then take parental wishes into account when allocating pupils to general classes in the city's schools. Some of the schools select pupils for their special classes via aptitude tests. Many children (about 23 per cent of the age cohort) attend lower-secondary schools and their selective classes to which they would not have been assigned had their parents not taken any action and the decision was based on local allocation policies. Pupil selection and parental choice have become the reality.

The main emphasis in the Finnish public debate has been on the contrast between social justice and individual rights regarding these emerging mechanisms of selection within comprehensive education. In concrete terms the discussion focuses on the diversified profiles of schools, the tendency being to treat 'local schools' as a homogeneous group of institutions (often with negative connotations). Current school-allocation policies and the politicised debate on promoting parental choice has fuelled a value-laden discussion about parents' rights and desires to influence their children's education via choosing the schools they attend. The way in which educational provision, pupil-enrolment policies, pupil-selection practices, urban segregation and the housing market, and families as (presumably rational) actors making choices in the field of education are related and interconnected has been over-simplified in the politicised discussion. However, despite the generally egalitarian reputation of Finnish education, the social reality in urban areas seems to tell a different story. Hence, the main questions addressed in this dissertation are as follows. Are all city schools the same? If they are, why do families still seem to be choosing between them, and if they are not, how and for what reasons do they make their choices? These questions address the issues of differentiation and inequality in urban education in Finland.

School choice became a recognised field of academic study in developed countries in the 1980–90s following the educational reforms that opened up school markets and facilitated parental choice. The assumption in the field of sociology of education is that educational choice and the potential outcomes are connected to the production and reproduction of social and educational

distinction and social closure. School choice is related to the social background of the choosers, the families, in multifaceted ways. (e.g. Ball et al. 1995; van Zanten 2009a.)

My aim in this dissertation is to show how urban families relate to school choice in the city of Espoo in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, Finland in the 2010s. The focus is on the process of choosing a school in families with children who are moving from the primary to the lower-secondary level within the compulsory nine-year comprehensive school. The dissertation was compiled as part of a comparative research project, Parents and School Choice – Family Strategies, Segregation and School Policies in Chilean and Finnish Basic Schooling (PASC). Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of parental choice in Finland and Chile have been conducted in various cities in the two countries. This dissertation concentrates mainly on the city of Espoo but also includes analyses from the cities of Turku (Finland) and Santiago (Chile) in the sub-studies.

The parents' voices are heard via a qualitative study investigating parental discourse based on thematic interviews with parents (n=96) of 12–13-year-olds. The analysis relies for the most part on the theorisations and conceptualisations of Pierre Bourdieu (1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) and Basil Bernstein (1977), and later applications in the field of sociology of education (e.g. Ball 2003; Ball & Vincent 1998; Power et al. 2003; Power & Whitty 2002; van Zanten 2009a). The findings related to the city of Espoo are contrasted with analyses of parental interviews conducted in the Finnish city of Turku and in Santiago, the capital of Chile. The aim here is not to present an in-depth comparison with these two other local contexts, it is rather to portray the logic of action in the city of Espoo by presenting the findings in the light of insights from elsewhere. This dissertation is positioned in the fields of sociology and politics of education, urban sociology and family studies.

Agnès van Zanten (2009a, 179–180) describes two ways of analysing educational provision in relation to parental choice of schools in local contexts. One option is to concentrate on the characteristics of the 'objective' and 'concrete' school market, including aspects of local dynamics in school choice, urban and school segregation (social and ethnic) and aspects of educational provision in general. The alternative is to consider parental choice in relation to local educational provision and the possibility of choosing.

The objective in this dissertation is to analyse the differences in symbolic hierarchies of reputation across schools and their general and selective classes, map the space of school choice in which families operate in cities¹ and describe

¹ Parents exercise choice either by expressing a wish for a local school (general class following the general guidelines of the national core curriculum), or by applying for a *class with a special emphasis* (with the acronym CwSE in sub-study II) through aptitude-based tests. There are general classes in all schools in the case city, and selective classes

the ways in which families choose schools. The reputation of a school is a social construction, which is derived from rumours and first- and second-hand experiences circulating along the parental grapevine. I argue that relations including the symbolic hierarchies of schools and the social hierarchies of families, based on their possessed capital in various forms and combinations, create a social space of school choice² within which distinctive educational practices take place. Given the tuition- and ranking-free provision of education in Finland, the ways in which various forms of capital are invested in the process of school choice are sophisticated and often fairly subtle. Thus, the capacity of families to play well in the school choice game is related to their social position. Knowing where one stands in relation to the other players, in other words families with children in the area, is essential, as is understanding the symbolic school hierarchy.

The aim in analysing the reputations of schools and their classes was to find out how they differ, rather than just establishing that there are differences in the reputations of general and selective classes with their varying allocation and selection practices. Three of the sub-studies (I, II and III) included in this dissertation therefore describe and conceptualise educational provision in the local context, in other words the features of the local space of school choice (or local school choice space, as stated in sub-study II). The research task in sub-studies II and III was to find out what kinds of reputation are constructed in the parental discourse with regard to schools, or more specifically their classes, and what kinds of educational practice emerge via the symbolic hierarchies of educational regulation and pupil selection (sub-study II); and how the hierarchies shape parental wishes and visions with regard to the desirability of different institutions (sub-study III). Sub-studies II and III discuss the limitations and advantages of parental choice. The main focus in the fourth sub-study (IV) is on the construction of parental choice. It addresses the question of how the highest social groups, the Finnish upper class³, construct, naturalise and justify their choices and educational strategies.

in the majority of them, at least one in each catchment area. The discussion about symbolic prestige and differences in reputation is conducted across classes even within the same school. Given that social classes are discussed in relation to school choice later in the study, the following qualifying adjectives are used: *selective class* (for CwSEs), *general class* (with local school allocation by the local educational authorities), and *social class* (with specific prefixes such as middle and upper class).

² The identification of social space in the context of school choice is one of the key results of this study. The concept is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5.2.

³ The highest social group could be defined differently in other contexts. For example according to the definitions provided in French context (e.g. van Zanten 2009a) these parents could be defined as upper-middle class, *classes moyennes supérieures*. In the Finnish context are defined as belonging to the upper class.

The analyses in this dissertation describe aspects of the local social reality, and are based on interviews with parents who voluntarily put themselves forward. It is not surprising, therefore, that a high proportion of parents were from the upper (18 out of 96) and middle classes (72 of the 96 in total). Despite the dominance of the middle-class voice in the interview material and the analysis, special attention is given in the fourth sub-study (IV) to the upper-class parents and how they describe their actions within the field of education in urban Finland.

The aims in this dissertation are to contribute to the cross-national discussion on parental choice of schools in different local contexts; to explore the relationship between the families and the socially constructed space of school choice in cities; and to investigate possible patterns in creating social distinctions in the local context. Complementing the empirical analysis, sub-study I explores the complex process of finding a common language with which to develop concepts and interpretations in research on school choice from a multinational, meta-analytical perspective. This dissertation also contributes to the discussion on *local* and *lived school markets*⁴ (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Lauder et al. 1999; Seppänen 2006; Taylor 2002), and introduces an additional concept, the *social space of school choice*, which could give new insights into the academic debate about school choice among urban families.

This work on parental choice is positioned in the ‘market-sceptical’ stream of research, as defined by Nihad Bunar (2010). The market-sceptical approach criticises the market-oriented view (e.g. Chubb & Moe 1990), in other words the idea of promoting market-based competition and allowing markets to govern education. It has been suggested that proponents of the market-oriented view flirt with rational-choice theory when discussing educational choice (e.g. Friedman & Hechter 1988), and disregard the cultural context in which the choices are made (Power et al. 2003, 5). Research adopting a market-sceptical position focuses instead on the complexity of choice as a process, and the related social divisions that emerge (e.g. Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003; van Zanten 2009a). The areas of exploration include the construction of education markets and the emergence of inequalities (Ball 1990; 1993; Felouzis & Perroton 2007; Felouzis et al. 2013; Gewirtz et al. 1995), school choice and social class (Ball

⁴ Given that the Finnish basic-education system operates almost exclusively within tuition-free, publicly funded, locally governed and locally run schools, and private schools (3% of all schools) are fully state-subsidised (Steiner and Christian), I do not use the ‘market’ as a concept in this dissertation. Recent findings indicate that parental attitudes towards educational provision are not generally based on market thinking, but rather reflect the position of the taxpayer supporting public services (Räty & Kasanen 2013). Instead, throughout the study the concept of the *space* within which choices are conducted is used with different adjectives. However, the intentional use of the term ‘space of school choice’ does not exclude the idea that different forms of capital are invested and required in the process of choosing schools.

2003; Ball et al. 1995; 1996; Power et al. 2003; Reay 2001; Reay & Lucey 2004; Reay et al. 2011; Seppänen et al. 2015a; Vincent 2001; Vincent et al. 2010; van Zanten 2001; 2007; 2009a; 2009b), choice and ethnicity (Bunar 2011; Reay 2001; Reay et al. 2011; Vincent et al. 2013) and gendered choice and schooling (Duru-Bellat et al. 2001; Reay 2000), or all of the above (e.g. Ball et al. 2013; Gillborn et al. 2012).

According to van Zanten (2009a), school choice is not merely an act that represents individual freedom and will, it is also a social act, and it is treated as such in this dissertation. The other people involved constitute the chooser's reference group and influence the choices more or less visibly through primary and secondary socialisation processes (van Zanten 2009a). In the context of this dissertation, choice as a concept is related to the choosers' social position and their social, practical and emotional possibilities and limitations (see also Poikolainen 2012; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; Reay 2000). Thus, it does not necessarily imply rational choice, as described in some research literature especially in the field of economics.⁵ In line with Jæger's (2007) thinking, it is assumed here that educational decisions and choice are embedded in social contexts. According to van Zanten (2009a), the social embeddedness of school choice is also observable in the ways in which people reflect on and discuss their choices with others. Members of different social groups tend to vary in their propensity to choose: possessing different forms and amounts of capital (economic, cultural and social; Bourdieu 1984) and representing different cultural positions in terms of taste, traditions and social expectations, they formulate their choices differently (van Zanten 2009a).

Conceptually distinguishing between choice in general, and school choice as a specific kind of choice, van Zanten (2009a) gives three main reasons why school choice cannot be treated like any other consumer choice in the research. First, it is highly significant for various reasons: it concerns children, who are simultaneously the source of enormous amounts of parental happiness and distress, and also constitute the basis for future economic growth and social and cultural reproduction in society. Second, it is a long-term choice influencing the life-course of the child in terms of its future education, occupation and thereby status in society, at least to a certain extent. Finally, the nature of educational choice is engaging: a natural consequence is the affective engagement in social relations via school, such as with friends and in other networks. (van Zanten

⁵ As Friedman & Hechter (1988) point out, models of rational choice consider actors as, in theory, purposive and intentional in terms of attaining ends, which are explicit in their hierarchy of preferences. Boudon (2004), on the other hand, describes rational choice in the form of six postulates, of which the last three refer to individual action as deriving from individual reasons, which are rational, and individuals as egoistic and striving for optimisation of costs and benefits. It is assumed in the theory that the chooser as an individual is able to distinguish the costs and the benefits from all other choice options. (Boudon 2004, 3-4.)

2009a.) It is therefore essential to investigate the phenomenon of school choice in its 'natural' environment, in other words the local context, when the aim is to shed light on the relationship between the choosers, in other words the families with their different social backgrounds, and the educational choice being made in each locality (Ball & Vincent 2007).

The debate on school choice in both the public and the academic arena has long been dominated by research on social and school segregation, grades, education costs, social networks in school choice, identity and the discussion of good parenting (Bunar 2010, 13). However, the urban dimension embedded in the choice should also be considered. According to van Zanten (2009a), school choice in rural France, if existent, tends to be based on proximity and the availability of transport. This also applies in Finland: as Rätty et al. (2009) note, choosing a school is not a realistic option in rural Finland given the lack of schools and the long distances. There has been extensive research in various countries on the interconnection between school and urban segregation, and how it relates to parental choice (Ball & Vincent 2007; Bunar 2011; Bernelius 2013a; Dhalmann et al. 2014; Oberti 2007; Oberti et al. 2012; Oría et al. 2007; van Zanten 2001). However, there is still a need for studies focusing on local-level actors and their options and limitations concerning school choice in cities (see Bunar 2010).

This dissertation leans on the work of Bourdieu on distinction in educational choice and social reproduction through education (Bourdieu 1984; 1986; 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), and on Bernstein's (1977) description of the characteristics of educational institutions and how they differ. The main concepts on which it is based, which are discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters, are school choice, space, symbolic hierarchies, educational strategies, urban segregation and school differentiation, social class, and social and academic⁶ closure. Gender and ethnicity could have been investigated further as factors affecting choice, but they were not the main focus in this study. Moreover, social class was an understudied area in Finnish research on school choice when this dissertation process started in 2011. These two aspects of Finnish school choice are prospective areas for future research. Nevertheless, approaches focusing on gender and ethnicity are discussed in this introduction given their prominence in international research on school choice.

The dissertation comprises this introductory part and four original articles on families and their school choices. The first article (sub-study I) is a literature review focusing on research into school choice conducted in Finland, France,

⁶ Broccolichi and van Zanten (2000) use the English word *scholastic* as an adjective that is rather similar in meaning to *academic* as used here. In their earlier work (Broccolichi & van Zanten 1997) published in French they use the term *scolaire*, which is exactly what *academic* means here.

Norway, Spain and Sweden and representing some of the academic discussion on the topic. The other three articles (sub-studies II, III and IV) include empirical analyses of qualitative interview material. Sub-study II shows how the *local* and the *selective space of school choice* are constructed, and explores what forms of capital families require when making such a choice. The third sub-study (III) analyses parental wishes and conceptions about desirable schools for their own children within the local symbolic hierarchy of reputations. Finally, sub-study IV explores how the different forms of capital are invested, transformed and transmitted from one field to another in the presumably most distinctive school choices of urban upper-class Finns. The results of the sub-studies are fully discussed in Chapter 5, and are also mentioned in Chapter 2 in relation to other empirical studies.

In the following chapters of this Introduction I review the international empirical research on school choice that is relevant to this dissertation (Chapter 2), and define the key concepts applied starting with educational choice in the sociology of education (Chapters 2 and 3). The focus in Chapter 4 is on the research task, the local contexts and the methodology. In the final chapters I present the results more specifically and my analytical reflections (Chapter 5), and conclude with a discussion (Chapter 6). Following these chapters are the original articles (sub-studies I–IV), which have been published in international academic journals.

2 SCHOOL CHOICE AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE AND AN URBAN PHENOMENON

This chapter describes the different approaches to school choice that are applied in the research fields of educational and urban sociology, urban geography, family studies and the politics of education. Given that this dissertation straddles these fields of research, the approach to parental choice in the introductory part is intentionally pervasive, hence the need to discuss the theoretical backgrounds of these discussions in this chapter. The concepts of urban, social and institutional space are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 in the light of the empirical findings in local Finnish contexts.

Two of the main elements in educational choice are educational provision and its regulation, which are often combined under the umbrella term of education markets. School choice among families from different social backgrounds has been studied from various perspectives following the educational reforms that liberated education markets and gave space for parental choice across countries in Europe⁷ during the 1980s and 1990s. The main research traditions in the field of school choice in different national and local contexts are discussed in sub-study I, and divided into three content-areas: school choice policies, school choice as a class strategy, and school choice as a local phenomenon. This chapter of the Introduction echoes the division in its structure. I discuss education policies and the construction of space for school choice, extended to the geography of urban school choice (2.1), review the literature related to school choice as a class strategy (2.2), and consider the local space of school choice in urban Finland together with the research on choice policies and practices conducted during the past decade (2.3).

2.1 School choice policies and education markets

Research on school choice policies in cities and markets in education has been conducted in many local contexts. On the policy level school choice incorporates school-enrolment practices and the (local) governance of choice, the extent of parental choice, and practices of pupil selection. In general, the institutional strategies of schools and the social strategies of parents are related and emerge in different ways in each local context (van Zanten 2011, 187). Typical approaches to the phenomenon include the governance of education and the institutional space of school choice (Felouzis et al. 2013; Gewirtz et al. 1995;

⁷ The majority of the studies referred to in this dissertation are European, and the relative lack of references to North and Latin American studies, for example, is acknowledged.

Lauder et al. 1999; Taylor 2002; Varjo & Kalalahti 2011), school choice in relation to the characteristics of the neighbourhood and patterns of school and urban segregation (Bernelius 2013a; Butler & Robson 2003; Butler & Hamnett 2007; Oberti 2007), the social construction of school markets through hierarchies of prestige (Delvaux & Joseph 2006; van Zanten 2011), and the school-level effects in relation to pupil selection (Duru-Bellat & Mingat 1997; Rajander 2010). It is not within the scope of this chapter to cover all of these areas: the aim is rather to discuss the dimensions that constitute the background of my study.

There has been an increasing trend in international education policies during the past three decades to reinforce the market-driven approach in structuring education systems in different local contexts (Forsey et al. 2008; Lauder et al. 1999). There are numerous conceptualisations of urban educational choice, all of which relate to the local field of education. Education markets are approached from different perspectives: ideological (school markets), governmental (quasi-markets), regional (local school markets) and experiential (lived school markets) (Seppänen 2006, 23). The extent to which the 'market' as a concept fits different local educational contexts has also been questioned. Neoliberal reforms and New Public Management have generally been blamed for many of the negative consequences of emerging school markets in terms of the increase in educational and social inequalities. Given that neo-liberalism is both 'out there' and also 'in here' (Exley & Ball 2014, 1), there is an evident need to listen to nation-level stories about its impact on structures and practices. The implications extend to actor-level changes on the local level and thereby contribute to possible inequalities, or at least new forms of inequality, and should therefore be thoroughly investigated.⁸

Market logic assumes that people aim to make rational educational choices, which has been criticised in more in-depth research on educational choice conducted among families (e.g. van Zanten 2009a). *The family* as a concept has been discussed and debated in various streams of research from several viewpoints. As a primary institution and a community for primary socialisation (van Zanten 2009a) it has been explored at least from social, psychological, political, legal, ethnic and gender perspectives (e.g. Castrén 2001; Jallinoja 2006).⁹ The impact of parents and the family on children's educational attainment and future trajectories has also attracted interest in educational

⁸ Thomas Piketty (Piketty & Goldhammer 2014, 20) states that the history of wealth distribution is highly political and the historic inequality relates to definitions of just and unjust expressed by political, social and economic actors, as well as their relative power and subsequent collective choices.

⁹ The main determinant of family relations and parenthood here has been the official status reported to the city officials: invitations to attend the interviews were sent via an online-system to all official guardians of sixth-graders in 2011.

studies (e.g. Dryler 1998; Nori 2011; Willis 1977). Moreover, the division of labour and gender differences within the family in terms of decision-making and children's education and school attainment have been widely studied from a gender perspective. The results of these studies indicate that, in general, mothers are more involved in the child's everyday schooling than fathers, although fathers tend to be more heavily engaged in formal areas such as being members of school boards (van Zanten 2009a). According to recent research, family composition and, in particular, maternal educational level combined appear to be connected to the school choice of the child in a statistically significant manner (Seppänen 2006).

The choice of an educational path is not a routine choice, but is highly important, and given the emotional aspects and long-term consequences should be treated as special (van Zanten 2009a). According to Richard Bowe, Stephen J. Ball, and Sharon Gewirtz (1994a, 1994b), the 'language of choice' is not only consumerist discourse, but also incorporates rights, duties and responsibilities encouraging parents to become 'active choosers' in the education market. This position of a 'chooser' or a 'consumer' of educational services not only provides parents with the possibility of choosing, but also makes them somewhat responsible for two things: choosing well on behalf of their own child, and thereby being good parents, and making a choice that is ethically sustainable, given the societal-level consequences. These definitions of 'good' parenthood and citizenship represent two conflicting viewpoints in education markets, and are at the core of the ideological and ethical dilemmas surrounding (middle-class) school choice (e.g. Jordan et al. 1994; van Zanten 2001, 375; 2009a). Simultaneously, recent findings (Bloomfield Cucchiara & McNamara Horvat 2014) indicate that solving this ethical dilemma in the act of school choice may be a means of enacting an identity. This is interesting in relation to Sonia Exley's notion of working-class parents 'failing' to be good parents because they neither share similar educational values with the middle classes, nor do they engage in the process of choosing schools. According to the (middle-class-biased) definition of good parenthood, working-class parents are unable to carry the responsibility that being a 'good parent' would require. (Exley 2013.) The choice operates not only as consumerist optimising of the best available school in the market, but also as affirming the parents' identity, which is loaded with personal, symbolic and social meanings (Bloomfield Cucchiara & McNamara Horvat 2014).

The discussion in research on school choice in countries where educational provision is diverse and the education market includes public, private, semi-public and/or independent schools is somewhat different than in countries with only public schools, or public and independent schools. In certain countries economic capital is involved in a straightforward way in parental choice in the form of tuition fees for private schooling. This is the case in countries such as the

UK, the US, France, Estonia and Chile, which in view of the geographical closeness, or the vast amount of research literature on the topic, provide a point of reference in relation to Finland. The literature on educational choice in England is extensive and covers all stages of choice, from childcare and preschool (Vincent & Ball 2001; 2006; Vincent et al. 2004) to compulsory and upper-secondary schooling (e.g. Ball & Vincent 1998; Ball 2003; Reay & Lucey 2004) and higher education (Ball et al. 2002; Reay et al. 2001a; 2001b; Whitty 2001). There is also lively discussion about accountability and publishing or not publishing league tables and ranking lists of schools based on their performance, and about the implications for school and residential segregation (e.g. Hsieh & Urquiola 2006; Ladd & Walsh 2002). According to Brynin (2013, 3–4), the advantages of using different rankings are skewed by social class, and although the ranking of institutions might appear to reduce ‘the risk environment’, i.e. provide information, it does not actually reduce the risk.

A related issue concerning the question of whether classes in schools should comprise homogenous or heterogeneous pupil populations has fuelled an extensive academic debate (see Dupriez & Draelants 2004). Different forms of tracking and banding have been investigated, and their impact on student study attitudes, for example, assessed in different localities (van Houtte & Stevens 2009; Maaz et al. 2008). Many studies point out the differentiating and segregating effects of increased educational choice.

As an example, the market-liberating reforms providing free school choice in Sweden, which given its geographical closeness is often referred to in the context of education in Finland, have been discussed widely and still constitute one of the key elements of the public debate. Söderström and Uusitalo (2005) describe how the reform in Sweden was intended to come about, and what actually happened: the aim was to solve the problem of school segregation attributable to local allocation based on place of residence together with general urban segregation. Local school allocation was abolished and free school choice was introduced at the beginning of the 1990s, but at the same time there was an increase in social segregation across residential areas and growth in private schooling. Together with the new grade-based admission and ‘banding’ of pupils, these reforms had a strong impact on the general situation and relations across schools in Stockholm. As a result, pupils were allocated to schools based on their abilities, but the increase in segregation was also evident to a statistically significant degree on all other measurable variables, along ethnic and socio-economic lines in particular. (Söderström & Uusitalo 2005.)

Ball et al. (1995) describe parental choice in the context of cities as a combination of space, social class and the actual choice. Hamnett and Butler (2013) refer to the relationship between space, distance, education and inequality as fairly simple, based on the fact that pupils and schools have particular characteristics and are spread around in space in their specific ways.

Space as a concept plays a key role in their study, along with the social class of the families making the school choices. Henri Lefebvre (1979; 1991) states in his study of space in its different forms that urbanism and territorial management are mere elements of spatial planning, and that space in itself should be seen as social space. History leaves its marks, but space should always be treated as 'present space'. Lefebvre contrasts the old conceptualisation of space as 'natural' (physical) with the idea of social space:

Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations, but it also is producing and produced by social relations. Space has its own reality in the current mode of production and the society, with the same claims and in the same global process as commodities, money and capital. (Lefebvre 1979, 186–187.)

Thus, social space is a social product comprising *social relations of reproduction* and *relations of production*, including the actions of individual and collective subjects (Lefebvre 1991, 26–33). Space is perceived in this way in some educational research contexts, classified as physical space, social space (the lived space: (Gordon et al. 2000)) and mental space (the imaginary and symbolic: (Gordon et al. 2000)). However, this dissertation leans on Bourdieu's definition of social space, which is several intentional steps away from Marxist-influenced theories (Bourdieu 1985), such as the one Lefebvre supports. According to Bourdieu, relationships among actors should be more fully recognised. The social field should not be reduced to matters of economic production, or to the establishment of a hierarchy of prestige in various fields of struggle.

Bourdieu views the social world as a space of relations and relative positions among its agents: it is a multidimensional space of positions, which are defined in accordance with the overall volume of possessed capital, and its composition (Bourdieu 1985, 723–724). He claims that social space functions as a symbolic space, a space of lifestyles (Bourdieu 1989, 20). This definition is applied in this dissertation.

The urban space as an environment includes the social composition of the neighbourhood. This is particularly relevant in the context of residential and school choice given the importance to parents of the social environment in the neighbourhood and the school. According to Willem M. Boterman (2013), most middle-class parents end up reflecting on the social and ethnic diversity in relation to their choice of residence and of a school. This aspect is frequently studied in conjunction with the geographical and urban aspects of school choice (school journeys, travelling longer distances and avoiding threatening situations) affecting the middle classes (Butler & Robson 2003; Butler et al. 2007). The urban dimension and differentiation in the provision of schooling in cities has been the subject of many studies conducted in various localities focusing on inequalities (e.g. Bell 2009; Butler & Robson 2003; Hamnett & Butler 2013; Kosunen & Rivière, *under review*; Oberti 2005; Taylor 2002; van

Zanten 2009a), and more specifically on the dynamics of gentrification and urban and school segregation (Butler 2007; Butler & van Zanten 2007; Oberti 2007; Oberti et al. 2012; Taylor 2002; Skolverket 2012; van Zanten 2009b). Nevertheless, there is still a need for more research reflecting both traditions: the politics and policy of education, and educational and urban sociology.¹⁰ The debate about the effects of education policy on segregation is complex, especially in the context of school choice in urban areas. As Maarten van Ham and Peteke Feijten (2008) state, on the one hand there is differentiation in the literature between studies on *neighbourhood effects* and *segregation*, and on the other hand, when it comes to education policy on a larger scale, some policies primarily affect residential segregation, and others school segregation – each of which influences the other.

Ethnic segregation in relation to schooling has also been widely studied in various countries. Beatrice Schindler Rangvid (2007) presents two main perspectives from which urban space and ethnicity have been studied in the context of urban and school segregation: sub-urbanisation, when members of the native population move from multi-ethnic inner cities to the suburbs (see e.g. Oberti 2007; van Zanten 2001), and cross-neighbourhood segregation within cities (e.g. Gramberg 1998 on Amsterdam). Rangvid (2007, 1348) concludes from a study conducted in the Copenhagen area of Denmark that school choice applied in areas with moderate residential segregation (in terms of ethnicity) is compatible with high residential segregation as such, because the key factor producing school segregation is the choice of private schooling.¹¹ Much of the discussion on ethnic diversity in US schools relates to racial segregation by colour. The phenomenon of ‘white flight’ from schools and neighbourhoods, meaning the flow of white pupils starting to move away from schools with a majority of black pupils, is often brought up in the literature (e.g. Sikkink & Emerson 2008). In the framework of this dissertation, the relevant point David Sikkink and Martin O. Emerson (2008, 273) make concerning parental choice and the prestige of schools in the US is that ‘school status is strongly related to the presence of African Americans’. Racial segregation in

¹⁰ There seem to be several parallel traditions in studies of school choice in cities, concentrating mainly on the urban or the educational side of the phenomenon. A few studies combine these two traditions by means of cross-referencing (e.g. Berisha & Seppänen, *in press*; Bernelius 2008; 2011; 2013a; Boterman 2013; Kosunen & Rivière, *under review*; Oberti 2007; van Zanten 2001; 2009a).

¹¹ Nevertheless, immigrants choosing private schools for their children in segregated areas do so for varying reasons: some wish to pass the cultural values on to the next generation, some to escape the low-SES neighbourhood school, and others to escape the extra attention the child has already attracted in public schools. Native Danes, on the other hand, might choose private schools because of the perceived lower quality of schooling in the local school and the difficulty their children might have in making friends with immigrant classmates. (Rangvid 2007.)

some parts of the US is evident along segregated city and so-called colour lines (for more see e.g. Lewis 2003). Thus far there have been no studies conducted in the Finnish context on ethnic segregation across schools from these specific perspectives and conceptualisations.

The relationship between the catchment area (with several schools) or district (one school) and the school itself is not straightforward in school markets: it is mediated by enrolment practices in the local area, which might weaken or strengthen the effects of residential and school segregation (van Zanten 2001, 5). As Chris Taylor (2001) points out, it is implied in many studies on parental choice that the local school is not as acceptable to families as some other 'types' of school with more prestigious reputations. Similar observations are also made in this dissertation. Thus local schools are not treated as a homogenous group, but are analytically divided into even smaller units: general and selective classes within them. It is also pointed out in studies focusing on social-class-related practices that whereas working-class people tend to favour local schools (Oberti 2007, *logique de proximité*; van Zanten 2001, *localisme*), the more instrumentally oriented middle and upper classes are willing to consider more distant schools (van Zanten 2009a). However, as van Zanten (ibid.) has shown, some middle-class families 'colonise' the local school: parents might decide together to choose the school with a view to enhancing the quality of the schooling experience for their own child through active participation and involvement in its activities.

Choosing the local school may ease parental anxiety because it does not really require justification (Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; van Zanten 2009a; 2011, 186) and thereby avoids the contradiction between being a good parent and a responsible citizen (Jordan et al. 1994). Nevertheless, as Geoff Whitty (2001) points out, by actively choosing the local school that is close by in the interest of their children's 'safety' some members of the middle class exclude 'other people's children' from the best public provision as the local school becomes full and forces 'other children' into schools outside the local area.

The role of capacities in choice making is significant with regard to the actions families take in local urban and educational contexts. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1993) and Jacques Lévy (1994), Catherine Barthou and Brigitte Monfroy (2010) elaborate on the concept of *spatial capital*, which is 'composed of all means that allow individuals to manage problems of distance in their own interest' (ibid. 178). They distinguish between *positional capital*, in relation to a place, and *situational capital*, in relation to an area¹². Georges Felouzis, Christian Maroy and Agnès van Zanten (2013, 54), in turn, referring Barthou and Monfroy (2010), relate positional capital in the field of education

¹² Lévy (1994) uses the concepts of *capital positionnel* and *capital situationnel*. Barthou and Monfroy (2010) translate this as 'position capital' and 'situation capital'.

to parents' unequal capacity to live close to a school in which they would like to have their children educated. Situational capital, on the other hand, relates to inequalities in terms of mobility, and could compensate for inequalities in positional capital.

These two aspects are also relevant in the Finnish case with its local school-allocation practices based on catchment areas. Moreover, the choice of a school other than the local one allocated to the family by the local educational authorities in the case city of this dissertation meant that parents were responsible for covering the costs of the journeys to and from school. Situational capital and positional capital are, in fact, strongly related to the volume of economic capital and the opportunity to use it in urban areas. Barthön and Monfroy (2010, 191) conclude that social and school segregation develops not only in static terms with regard to place (of residence), but also through the dynamics of spatial mobility and access. Similar findings have been reported in Finland, where selective parental choice that does not follow local school allocation seems to be connected with changes in pupil composition (Bernelius 2013a). Still, the question of choosing either the local school or another one is one aspect of the urban educational market in Finland and choices *within* the schools seem to be as important (sub-studies II, III and IV).

A key element in analyses of educational provision in cities is the existence of symbolic hierarchies in the school market. Bernstein's (1977) concepts of *instrumental* and *expressive orders* have been applied in analyses of school reputation and prestige in several studies in various contexts (e.g. Ball & Maroy 2009; Butler et al. 2007; Kosunen & Seppänen 2015; Power et al. 1998; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; van Zanten 2013). According to Bernstein's (1977) original definition, the instrumental order of a school is related to the acquisition of specific skills (ibid. 38). It can be measured in terms of achievement, meaning comparing performance-assessment data. In this study the instrumental order is the expected exchange and market value of the education and the social networks gained in the social environment. The emphasis is on children's expected intellectual development and 'relevant' networking (sub-study II¹³), which are assumed to contribute to the construction of the school's reputation in the local context.

¹³ According to the parents, the selective and general classes with the highest amounts of instrumental order, in comparison with other classes in the same school and other schools in the same city, would prove to be an asset for children applying for upper-secondary and even tertiary education (sub-studies II and III). The intellectual development of the child is also valued, and classes with an outstanding reputation are seen as places in which the status of the child is primarily defined in terms of intellectual performance. Classes with a reputation for the lowest amounts of instrumental order were seen as environments that were not intellectually challenging, and that might become an obstacle in one way or another when the pupil applies for higher levels of education, starting with the secondary level.

The expressive order in Bernstein's original definition (Bernstein 1977) comprises conduct, character and manner. Following further elaboration in this dissertation two sub-forms of expressive order emerge, which could thus be conceived of as two-dimensional: the social and the personal (sub-studies II and III). One way of applying this idea in the Finnish context would be to determine to what extent, according to parental discourse, school classes promote and even produce a certain type of *habitus*, in Bourdieu's terms (Bourdieu 1998). Accordingly, the social dimension of the expressive order (*expressive-social order*) would seem to consist of the selectivity of the school class, the social composition of the peer group in the school class, and the expected aspects of conduct and character promoted in the class as a social environment. The expressive-social order of the school also refers to questions concerning with whom the child is interacting with, what sort of behaviour is expected within the peer group and what kinds of social background peers should have: in other words it refers to the child's social environment and to 'what sort of' children the environment is likely to produce.

Parental conceptions of the expected school contentment and happiness of each child can be analysed separately, and conceptually identified as the personal part of the expressive order (*expressive-personal order*), as in sub-studies II and III and in other studies on slightly different terms (Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; van Zanten 2009a; 2011). The expressive-personal order includes wellbeing and 'blossoming' during the lower-secondary stage (fairly similar to *moratoire expressif*; van Zanten 2009a). Here, it relates to parental conceptions about whether or not pupils as individuals regard the school as a physically and mentally safe environment, and whether or not they would enjoy their time on the lower-secondary level in the school in question. Schools with a reputation for violence and bullying were categorised as having low amounts of expected expressive-personal order (sub-studies II and III), whereas high amounts were associated with mental and physical safety. The expressive orders are thought to construct parental conceptions of the prestige and desirability of schools in the socially constructed school market, where these features are discussed on the parental grapevine as 'hot' knowledge (Ball & Vincent 1998).

Emphasizing the locality and specificity of each educational context of choice, Ball et al. (1995) refer to parental choice as action that takes into account distance and transport, the hierarchical structure of the school market (including the varying reputations of schools), as well as specialisation and forms of school selection. Van Zanten (2001, 94) points out the bidirectional relationship between parental social class and the social composition of residential areas. An earlier study on day-care choices among the urban middle classes in the UK (Ball & Vincent 2007) identified different 'spatial grids', meaning 'different forms of living in and in relation to space, involving different kinds of local social relationships and interactions and more generally different

relations to the social' (Ball & Vincent 2007, 1177). The authors conclude from their empirical findings that there would seem to be different versions of place, urban politics of schooling and collective belonging, or as Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall and Brian Longhurst (2005) put it – different 'narratives of belonging'. With regard to the neighbourhood aspect of schooling, studies have shown that the general characteristics of the neighbourhood affect conceptions about local schools (Bernelius 2013a; Holme 2002). The conceptual division of space within a school into physical, social (lived) and mental (imaginary and symbolic) spaces (Gordon et al. 2000, 17–19) is described in different terms (instrumental and expressive orders) in this dissertation with reference to the reputational hierarchies of schools and their classes. Discussions of space and choice in other studies imply a conceptual division between 'geographic preferences' and 'choice set' with regard to schools (see Bell 2009), through which Courtney Bell attempts to grasp the difference between geographically reachable schools and schools that, in the end, are placed in the palette of possible schools for the child. The concepts 'landscape of choice' (Bowe et al. 1994b) and 'lived markets' (Seppänen 2006; Waslander & Thrupp 1995) have also been used to describe the relationship between urban and educational spaces.

It is assumed in this dissertation that the space of school choice has multiple features: governmental limitations (school allocation and pupil selection policies), pedagogical provision (public versus private schools, competition across public school markets, school specialisation), school provision in urban spaces (traffic and access, proximity), the social and reputational hierarchies of schools constructed by consumer-citizens in their social networks, and the relation of all these to the different forms and amounts of capital that families possess.¹⁴ Families are assumed to compete for study positions in the field of education (e.g. in the form of study places and related future expectations), but given that the Finnish education system does not allow for straightforward money transfer from families to schools and rather functions on public and fiscal funding, the concept of a school market is avoided in this dissertation, and the space of school choice (sub-study II) is used instead. The patterns through which school choice becomes a question of social class in the local context, and a matter of reproducing inequalities, is discussed in the following section and in sub-study IV.¹⁵

¹⁴ The literature on school effectiveness and the economics of education also plays a big role in countries with diverse educational provision and funding, and with public school rankings (e.g. Thrupp 1999, 13–31, 160–181). These research streams are not discussed in detail here because they are not as relevant to the Finnish case in the context of school choice.

¹⁵ As competition for school places intensifies, ways of exercising choice and cheating the system become more diverse: fake addresses, second apartments in preferable areas, sham divorces and using the address of relatives or friends have been reported in various countries (see also van Zanten 2011). In the US, with its strong private educational

2.2 School choice and social class: who chooses what, how and why?

Social class, race, social exclusion, and social exclusivity are all intertwined in urban educational choices. (Reay 2004a, 539)

Sociological research has long concentrated on the relationship between education and social mobility. Simon Boone and Mieke van Houtte claim (2013) that most studies on class differentials in educational choice concentrate on cultural reproduction theory, rational action theory or the theorisation of social capital. Studies in education define social class in different ways, often reflecting the conceptualisations of John Goldthorpe and others (e.g. Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe 1996; Wright 2005), the aim being to clarify the logic that relates class differences to social origins (Brown et al. 2013). As Carol Vincent and Sally Tomlinson (1997, 368–372) point out, a major problem in educational research is that parents tend to be treated as one homogeneous category, as one group, which they are not. Account should also be taken of the ‘vertical’ differences across social classes, and of the ‘horizontal’ differences within a class, especially with regard to economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; Chauvel 2006; Vincent 2001; van Zanten 2011, 186). Van Zanten (2011, 192) describes school choice in France as a strategic principle, which is used by parents of high social status with ample and diverse resources to create more or less visible (social) barriers between their own children and children from lower social groups, and thus to maintain or improve their position. The pathologisation and demonisation of the working classes has a long history: Diane Reay, among others, points out how urban working-class children in London ‘deal with the burden of middle-class representations of working-class lives’, which eventually results in conceptions of schools with working-class children as pathologised places (Reay 2004b, 1006).

Van Zanten (2009a, 9) concludes that the essential task in the research on school choice is to investigate *who* does the choosing by means of *which strategies*. Research on parental choice in urban areas has traditionally concentrated on the relationship between educational choice and class, ethnicity and gender. More recently, however, interconnections with class, gender and ethnicity have attracted more attention in the research community (e.g. Gillborn et al. 2012; Lucey & Reay 2002; Reay et al. 2011; Vincent et al. 2012a; 2013). In this section I briefly discuss approaches focusing on gender and ethnicity, then

provision and segregated public schooling, the wide distribution of school rankings and intensifying parental anxiety, school-choice-related shams have increased and have started to assume legal significance. For example, *district hopping*, when children cross a school district line illegally and attend a school other than the one allocated to them, can result in prison sentences of up to five years for the parents, according to a recent study on how poor families in particular deal with the constraints of school-choice policy (Faw & Jabbar 2013).

consider more thoroughly social-class strategies and the construction of social closure through educational choice.

Gender could be considered a hidden form of cultural capital, as Beverley Skeggs (2004) suggests. In the tradition of feminist class theory (e.g. Lovell 2004; McNay 2004; Skeggs 2004; Tolonen 2008) gender is interconnected with cultural capital and symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1984; 2001). Masculinity is valued over femininity, which also has its implications with regard to the establishment of class positions, or at least experienced class (Tolonen 2008, 12; see also Kahma 2010; Käyhkö 2014). The gender aspect has been less visible than class and ethnicity in studies concerning school choice. This is slightly surprising given that it is embedded in systems of private, specifically Catholic education, in which children are allocated to schools in accordance with their biological gender. The gender aspect is frequently mentioned in the research literature in relation to differentiation in learning outcomes.

Studies on the educational choices of girls in the French context (Duru-Bellat 1990; Duru-Bellat et al. 2003; Marry 2000) take gendered stereotypes and role expectations in society and the family as a starting point. Marie Duru-Bellat et al. (2003) point out in their extensive longitudinal study how education- and social-class-related social inequality has decreased during the past hundred years in French society, suggesting that there has been a turn-around in gender inequality so that girls now outperform boys in all social classes. Societal discourse in the 1970s did not fuel the conception of women as primarily future housewives, and the matriculation diploma became a sign of professional and economic autonomy and emancipation. Families had started to value the education of girls and boys equally. (Duru-Bellat et al. 2003, 71–72.) In addition, the assumed ‘intrinsic’ characteristics in parental descriptions of school choice (see van Zanten 2013) seemed to perceive girls as more intellectually and socially autonomous, yet simultaneously as vulnerable, which is connected to questions of discipline and social mix in schools¹⁶.

In the Finnish context and according to the most recent studies measuring ‘capacities of learning to learn’ (Hautamäki et al. 2013), girls outperform boys in all measured areas. The social-background effect seems to be very similar in both genders (ibid.), but after more thorough investigation of differences in the backgrounds of girls and boys it has been found that parental support explains the good learning outcomes of girls (Kalalahti 2014). Nevertheless, the connection between gender and class is more complex than described here, as has been shown in recent studies (Crozier et al. 2008; Gillborn et al. 2012; Reay et al. 2011). The research focusing on a gender emphasis in certain educational

¹⁶ Still, expectations of boys and girls in terms of future family roles have an impact on the advice given to young boys and girls concerning their future educational choices (van Zanten 2013).

careers and professions (e.g. Brunila et al. 2013; Lappalainen et al. 2013), such as the male majority in technical fields and the female majority in nursing occupations, explains the gendered patterns partly through analytical interconnections with ethnicity and social class. According to Sirpa Lappalainen et al. (2013), 90 per cent of students in the social and health sciences are female, and 85 per cent of those in the technological sciences are male. This is reflected in the labour market, which also influences the formation of class positions in the long run. (ibid.)

Another factor that is strongly attached to school choice is ethnicity, which tends to be discussed more directly in the context of urban studies. In the field of education, Reay (e.g. 2004b; Reay et al. 2007; 2011) studied the interconnections between class and race in school choice pointing out in her qualitative study in the English context (Reay 2004b, 1012) some of the patterns through which some schools become demonised within the ‘wider public imagination’. Many of these patterns are powerfully racist, and are connected with the demonization of the ‘ethnic other’ and the working classes in certain schools, which white middle-class families then tend to avoid (Reay 2004b, 1012–1019).¹⁷ On the other hand, as Vincent et al. (2012b) state, ethnicity should also be explored within the middle classes, and in more general terms: research should rather focus on the ways in which class and race interact in different contexts.

The key issue with regard to this dissertation relates to the (expected) social and ethnic features of schools that infiltrate the local and wider public imagination: the reputations of schools and their classes also seem to be affected by the estimated numbers of immigrant and working-class pupils in the discourse of parents across social classes. The media also play a role in giving specific neighbourhoods the reputation of being ‘problematic spaces’, often related to ethnic minorities there (Haapajärvi & Junnilainen 2013): this is also reflected to some extent in the discussion on local schools in these areas.

However, the role of social class is influential as such when it comes to educational choice and the reproduction of social positions.¹⁸ As Reay et al. (2001a) state, educational choices in general are neither pure products of clear and intentional decision-making, nor are they completely rational, but are rather shaped by other factors, such as social class. One of the major foci of interest has

¹⁷ Riitaoja (2013, 350) states in her ethnographic study that the construction of ‘normal’ in schools is often created and categorised through defining the ‘other’: these definitions are also strongly related to ethnicity (with physical, linguistic and religious aspects), social class, gender and family composition in Finland.

¹⁸ As stated, this study concentrates on social-class-related aspects of educational choice, given the vast amount of literature on gender and ethnicity in educational choice. Hence, the findings are mainly in dialogue with the research on school choice that touches on the problematisation of social class.

been the white middle class and their actions in the field of educational choice from various perspectives. Sally Power et al. (2003) concluded that rather little was known about how class-based assets become transformed into educational and professional success. Many of the studies focusing on various stages of education describe the process of ‘making up the middle-class child’, thereby giving some insight into middle-class practices of educational choice in local UK contexts (Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003; Reay et al. 2011; Vincent & Ball 2007) in terms of constructing middle-class identities, dealing with the fear of social falling (see Ehrenreich 1989) and parental anxieties (Furedi 2001; *paranoid parenting*). There is also a tendency to refer to the middle class in the plural, implying both vertical as well as horizontal differences within it. ¹⁹Annette Lareau’s (2003) theorisation of ‘concerted cultivation’ has been applied in varying degrees in educational research, and has been connected to middle-class reproduction processes (e.g. Soisalo 2014; Vincent et al. 2012b). Educational choice has also been described as contradicting individual and communal values, it being a question of putting the family first, ahead of the common good (see Jordan et al. 1994; van Zanten 2009a).

Another angle related to school choice and family background, including working-class families, is the well-established typology of *privileged/skilled*, *semi-skilled* and *disconnected choosers* (Ball et al. 1996; Gewirtz et al. 1995). Parents are assigned to chooser categories on the basis of their *capacities* and *willingness* to choose. These could be seen as the investments Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 118) refers to when describing the game (*jeu*) played in the field and include the propensity to act. This, in turn, emerges in the relation between the field and the system of dispositions adjusted to the game, meaning the combination of inclination and ability to play the game. Both, he states, are historically constituted, not universally given. Capacities cover the resources and forms of capital the family has to invest in the choice, and willingness concerns the ethical and ideological aspects of the choice. Across contexts and despite the different reasoning patterns, choice strategies and

¹⁹ Sally Power et al. (2003) and Agnès van Zanten (2009a) discuss school choice and social class as a horizontal (as well as a vertical) division across the various fractions of the middle class. In applying this division they aim to better explain both school-choice behaviour and the reasoning behind the choice. Power et al. (2003) divide the middle classes based on employment sector and other work-related characteristics, and on whether they belong to the old or new middle class. Van Zanten (2009a) identifies four subgroups, intellectuals (*intellectuels*), technocrats (*technocrates*), mediators (*médiateurs*) and technicians (*techniciens*), also based on their profession, area of work and employment sector. She extensively describes the differences across fractions when it comes to parents choosing schools, and defines three individualistic approaches: the instrumental (*instrumentalisme*), the reflexive (*développement réflexif*) and the expressive (*moratoire expressif*), which in combination constitute the reasoning behind the choice.

chooser positions, the common aspect is the desire to choose the ‘right’ school (Power et al. 2003, 32–33), although definitions of the ‘right’ choice vary.

The capacity to choose a school is acknowledged as a social-class issue related to the different forms of capital and families’ capacities to transform them into other forms. Another relevant aspect concerns what the different social classes and fractions tend to choose. One practice among certain middle-class fractions, mainly the so-called intellectuals, is to colonise the local school (van Zanten 2001, 100–103; 2009a, 131: see also Ball et al. 2004). In doing so parents from higher social classes (upper and middle) could be expressing their support for social mixing and minimising social closure (*entre-soi social*).²⁰ Simultaneously, they could still make more subtle choices, meaning that children are divided across classes within schools in terms of aptitude in certain subject areas or language choices (*entre-soi scolaire*; van Zanten 2009a). Ball et al. (2004) identify patterns of creating social networks in relation to social mixing in schools in different local contexts. Depending on the social profile of the neighbourhood and the school, the primary question concerns who are ‘we’ and who are ‘them’. Is this differentiation made across social class lines, or within social classes? Social relations in school may be horizontal, with minimal social mix, or vertical, when the social mix is stronger and is referred to as the ‘creative mix’ (*mixité creative*), even if it means diversity. (Ball et al. 2004.)

In any case, parents, both mothers and fathers, who choose local schools in socially mixed areas are more likely to participate, or at least to feel the need to participate in home-school interaction and the development of the local school in order to improve its quality (van Zanten 2009a, 137). The level and quality of participation, the ‘voice’, which works as a collective rather than an individual attempt, is determined by the resources (social, cultural, material) the parents have to invest, and also depends on the opportunities the school offers parents to become involved in the education of their children (Vincent & Tomlinson 1997, 365). According to van Zanten and as Bourdieu (1986) implies, intellectuals tend to trust their own capacities to reproduce and transfer their cultural capital to their children, including the arrangements they make to give their children family time (parents and children) during which the transfer could take place. This transmission is related to economic capital and its transformation into cultural capital: in cases in which the mother of the family does not need to work to augment the family income but can stay home, for example, the children have far more time with her than in other families. The

²⁰ In this respect the stage of schooling is of relevance. According to van Zanten (2001, 103), parents are more tolerant of an ethnically and socially heterogeneous pupil body in primary schools because they can control their children’s schooling and activities better than in later stages of education, when the children are older. Recent studies also emphasise the need to examine the social and ethnic mixing of children and adults in schools on a micro-level (Neal & Vincent 2013).

school choice of intellectuals may also be more independent and require less negotiation with other similar families than that of technocrats, who tend to seek confirmation of similar choices from other families (van Zanten 2009a, 114, 116).

Technocrats tend not to prefer colonising the local school for several reasons: they trust the private sector more than the public sector in terms of total education, they feel socially pressured by other parents to put their talented children in a more demanding class (van Zanten 2009a, 90–91), and more generally they promote social closure and exclusion more than the other groups (ibid. 68–69). Nevertheless, moving closer to a public school with high social prestige could be considered one of the most common and efficient school choice practices of technocrats who do not opt for private education. There is still a need for high levels of economic capital in that school choice turns into residential choice. Moreover, technocrats thereby manage to avoid the moral conflict of responsible citizenship (*bons citoyens*, ibid. 242; *responsabilité citoyenne*, ibid. 213), which can always arise among those opting out of the public system and thereby contributing to social closure and distinction through exercising school choice on economic grounds. (ibid. 242.)

Complementing the research on who chooses what, much of the literature also emphasises the formation of the social context in which the choices are made. These studies focus on the school's reputation, parental networks, home-school interaction and the use of different types of information as the basis of the choice (e.g. Ball & Vincent 1998; Ball & Maroy 2009; Gronow et al. 2015; Karsten et al. 2001; Kosunen et al. 2015a; Silmäri-Salo 2015). The aim in this dissertation is to add to current knowledge of educational strategies, in addition to investigating *what* families choose and considering *how* and *why* they do so. The main focus is on the discourse of reasoning with regard to why some schools and their classes seem more suitable than others, in other words of matching the child with a school (van Zanten 2013) and determining how the child would 'fit in' (Power et al. 2003, 51; Saporito & Lareau 1999). In practice this means describing the schools in terms of their reputation and analysing parental preferences in the school hierarchy. Sociologically more interesting is the contrasting of families' resources, or different forms of capital, with their knowledge about the reputation and desirability of various schools. The hierarchy of schools in the local market structures the parents' and schools' logics of action (Delvaux & Joseph 2006; Maroy & van Zanten 2007). As Broccolichi and van Zanten (2000) suggest, some schools that are suffering from pupil flight could invest effort in making their classes attractive to families. They add that (as Gewirtz et al. 1995 also claim) parents differ in their capacity and willingness to choose schools and judge their quality. Ball and Vincent (1998) concluded that one of the main strategies shaping the choice, the use of the grapevine and rumours, was also a social-class issue, being embedded in local networks to which the different social groups had varying access and were more

or less willing to use. The authors suggested three levels of trust in the grapevine as part of the family's decision-making process: suspicion, doubt and acceptance, and found that the rumours that spread up and down the parental grapevine had a varying impact on the choice of school. As van Zanten (2009a, 163) states, the impact is often bigger on the lower social classes, the higher fractions (especially technocrats) explicitly distancing themselves intellectually from the rumours given that they have other sources of information. Nevertheless, the grapevine also influences them. (van Zanten 2009a.)

According to Power et al. (2003, 26), the decisions middle-class parents make about schools are commonly based on evaluations of the instrumental order and discipline, which are also considered instrumental in constructing the reputation of schools and their classes in this dissertation (sub-studies II and III). Power et al. further claim that parents of the highest socio-economic status presumably strive for as prestigious schools as possible for their children. In terms of matching they try to find a place in which the child would not end up going down the 'wrong paths', would fail to fulfil its potential or would be stigmatised for being clever and capable. (Power et al. 2003, 51.) Van Zanten (2009a) found in her large-scale study that middle-class parents in France perceived choice in terms of evaluating the psychological readiness and maturity of the child (with certain gender-based difference, girls being considered more mature, *ibid.* 96), the reputation of the school as a social environment from the perspectives of the pupils and the staff (*ibid.* 171–172, 185), and both the family tradition and context and the surrounding urban context (*ibid.* 204). The reasoning differs across middle-class fractions, and the choices even more so, in comparison with those of the working class. This could be attributable to practices of choice related to social background, the ethos of choosing and, according to van Zanten (2009a, 119), financial restrictions.

The studies discussed in this section (2.2) serve as a basis for a deeper investigation into the Finnish field of studies on school choice. As mentioned earlier, social class is the main theoretical lens through which differences in parental choice in urban Finland are viewed. Other approaches used in the Finnish context are discussed in Chapter 2.3 below.

2.3 School choice in Finland

Finland's history of school choice policy is shorter than that of many other countries, such as France and the UK. The aim in this section is to introduce the essential features constituting the Finnish context of educational choice in which urban families operate. I outline the historical framework of school choice in cities, describe practices of choosing selective classes and different languages, and reflect on the every-day life of families with regard to school journeys and

meals. In conclusion I elaborate on the connection between social class and school choice in Finland.

The comprehensive school was introduced in Finland during the educational reform of 1972–1977. The parallel and dual school system of more academically oriented (*oppikoulu*) and more vocationally oriented (*kansalaiskoulu*) education was abolished. Banding in comprehensive schools was discontinued between 1974 and 1985 (Ahonen 2012, 156; Seppänen 2006, 53–54, 58–62.) School choice as a practice enabling parents to express their school preferences or wishes, and schools to select some of their pupils for certain classes, namely classes with a special emphasis, was ratified at the end of the 1990s in the Basic Education Act (628/1998, 6§; 28§). During the same period the changes in the core curriculum of basic education seemed to transform pupils (*oppilas*) into learners (*oppija*), and the school context into a pedagogical concept that seemed to lack both the historical and the societal context (Simola 1995, 126). The curriculum became more process-like, and the role of teachers as active producers in the process of curriculum formation was emphasised (Kosunen 1994, 91). A holistic change away from normative guidance (*normiohjaus*) penetrated the curriculum and gave schools the freedom to define the specific contents of all subject matter: the norms in the curriculum only concerned the general aims and goals of each discipline (Varjo 2007, 119).

The style of public governance changed during the 1990s, and decentralisation, accountability, managerialism, competition, educational choice and, to some extent, privatisation became part of the Nordic educational discourse (Johannesson et al. 2002). The Nordic model of equality in education was challenged (Rinne 2000), centralised governance was questioned, and the role of local actors was emphasised (Johannesson et al. 2002). These processes were also underway in Finland, of which one of the most visible forms was the introduction and implementation of parental choice in urban areas. There is still no free school choice per se, and the majority of pupils still attend their local city schools. Nevertheless, cities do have the option of self-defining their school choice policies, which also vary (Seppänen et al. 2015a).

Municipalities in Finland in the 2010s still allocate all pupils to local schools primarily on the basis of a short and safe journey between home and school. Practices of pupil admission vary from one municipality to another, given that the governance of education is decentralised. The municipalities also decide on the maximum intake of each school, thereby regulating *first-order competition* (Delvaux & van Zanten 2006; Maroy & van Zanten 2007), meaning that schools compete over the actual numbers of pupils. This also defines the basic guidelines and minimum and maximum levels of admission to each school. The Basic Education Act (1998) enabled parents to influence the enrolment process, and introduced parental choice into the legislation. Schools were given permission to select some of their pupils into their selective classes, thereby introducing

second-order competition of a kind, enabling schools to compete for the ‘best’ pupils (Maroy & van Zanten 2007): the practice was nevertheless described as generally selecting certain pupils into some of the classes based on their interests and aptitudes. Piia Seppänen showed in her early work on Finnish urban school choice (Hirvenoja 1998; Seppänen 2003a; 2003b; 2006) how parental, and especially the mother’s educational level was related to the choice of other than the local school, and identified changes in pupil flows from one school to another as a consequence of parental choice. (Seppänen 2006.)

One of the key analytical procedures in Seppänen’s (2006; Seppänen et al. 2012) work, as well as in this dissertation, is to examine the choice of schools and their general and selective classes (often in a school other than the local one) separately based on different practices of pupil enrolment.²¹ A variety of city schools offer selective classes with a special emphasis, and their pupil admission is based on application and selection via aptitude tests. The classes have their roots in the 1960s Kodály music method, which certain teachers promoted and eventually resulted in the provision of foundation classes with an emphasis on music in certain cities (Seppänen & Rinne 2015). Later on the special emphasis expanded to include science, sports, drama, ICT and the arts, for example. Pupils are tested only in the emphasised subject area.²² In practice the teaching results in one additional hour of the emphasised subject in the weekly schedule, otherwise these classes also follow the basic guidelines in the national core curriculum.

Thus far the findings indicate the presence of distinctive practices of school choice into classes with selective enrolment in urban Finland that differentiate the study paths of pupils (Seppänen et al. 2012). Seppänen showed how the choice of different classes in urban areas reflected the background of the families. The reason why the local school was preferred over others was related to the short school journey and the presence of friends. The main reason for choosing other than the local school appeared to be a preference for a class with a special emphasis. (Seppänen 2006.)

The emphasised teaching area (music, science or sports) was not necessarily as important to all families, as long as there was some pupil selection. This has been interpreted as implying that school choice is a socially distinguishing practice. (Kosunen 2012.) It has been suggested that differences in the provision

²¹ As Parsons (1959, 298) suggests, the school and especially the classes within schools are often the first arenas for children’s socialisation outside the family. The functional point of a school class (instead of the whole school) is to operate as ‘an agency of socialisation’, in which the children are socialised into the commitments (values and roles within the structure of the society) and capacities of performing and living up to those expected roles. (Parsons 1959, 298–300.)

²² Technically the choice in most cities (see Simola et al. 2015) refers to emphasised teaching, but as this teaching tends to be arranged in separate study groups (selective classes), for clarity it was deemed relevant to talk about selective classes in this study.

of comprehensive education on the lower-secondary level and how parents relate to that are behind the differing chooser positions and value conflicts among parents (Poikolainen 2012; Poikolainen & Silmäri-Salo 2015; Silmäri-Salo 2015).

In general, there also seems to be a tendency in Finland to inherit educational and occupational positions (Antikainen et al. 2003; Kivinen & Rinne 1995), as Paul Willis (1977) found in the English context. There have been many studies investigating emerging educational inequalities in policy and practice (e.g. Jauhiainen et al. 2001; Järvinen & Vanttaja 2006; Karisto & Montén 1997; Kivinen & Rinne 1995; Rinne & Kivirauma 1999; Simola 2001), but it was not until the 2000s that they began to focus on inequalities produced through school choice within comprehensive, compulsory education (see Bernelius 2008; Koivisto 2008; Metso 2004; Rajander 2010; Rätty et al. 2009; Seppänen 2003a; 2003b; 2006). A variety of studies in the field of urban research showed how unemployment (Kortteinen & Tuomikoski 1998), poverty (Uusitalo 2000) and regional deprivation (Karvonen & Rintala 2004; Kortteinen 1982; Kortteinen & Vaattovaara 1999; Rintala & Karvonen 2003; Vaattovaara 1999; Vilkkama et al. 2013) were accumulating among individuals and in neighbourhoods. As these factors affect neighbourhoods, the characteristics of which affect choices in multiple ways in an education policy that was previously based on allocation in residential areas by school district (which was abolished in 1999; Seppänen 2006). In the 2010s the Finnish research fields of the sociology of education and urban studies have come closer together in a small number of publications (e.g. Berisha & Seppänen, *in press*; Bernelius 2013a; Kosunen & Rivière, *under review*; Kosunen et al., *under review*).

School choice has thereby become institutionalised in the legislation, and appears to be *de facto* practice in urban areas. Cities differ in how much space they provide for parental choice, which as a phenomenon has been conceptualised more as an open and closed space of school choice (Varjo & Kalalahti 2011). Not all cities provide a wide variety of selective classes. In those that do not, parents who desire to choose their child's school, regardless of the non-existent room for parental choice, might opt for a school in a neighbouring city, as has happened in practice in the metropolitan area of Helsinki (Kosunen 2010; 2012), and in large numbers in certain of Finland's bigger cities (Simola et al. 2015).

Selective classes as a governmental construction and a practice have produced a whole new arena for competition among families and schools, which in this dissertation is named the *selective space of school choice* (or selective school choice space, as in sub-study II). Reflecting the old terminology of economics-oriented *exit* and politically oriented *voice* (Hirschman 1970), the selective space of school choice applies in a somewhat similar manner as private education in other contexts: it works as a gateway through which some families

abandon the public and non-selective provision of education for one reason or another. The ways in which parents believe that selection into classes with a special emphasis will produce new arenas of competition and social distinction within public education have now been discussed in a variety of studies (sub-study IV; Koivuhovi 2012; Kosunen 2012; Kosunen et al. 2015b; Seppänen et al. 2015b). Different forms of capital (cultural and social in addition to economic capital in Bourdieusian terms) are required of families that are willing to exit rather than use their voice (see Hirschman 1970) within the non-selective system. Using voice instead of exit as an option implies the possibility of being able to change the current state of affairs, and requires a feeling of belonging in some form: it is understood as an attempt to change the situation rather than to escape from it. The voice is also the instrument with which consumers in education markets can react if the exit option is unavailable. (Hirschman 1970, 30–31.) In the case of Finnish school choice, the question of who is able to use the exit option (and exiting from what) is interesting, and is connected to the issue of emerging educational and social inequalities.

As Ball (2003) puts it, in general it is not as meaningful to investigate whether or not there are more inequalities nowadays than before as to find out what kind of inequalities there are and how they are produced. Thus, another identified way of producing ‘subtle streams’ within comprehensive schools in the Finnish system, in addition to selective classes with a special emphasis, is through the teaching of other languages (in addition to English) in primary school, such as German, French, Swedish and Russian (sub-study II: Seppänen & Kosunen 2015; Seppänen 2006), which has been shown to work as a distinctive practice of educational choice in other contexts (Duru-Bellat & Mingat 1997). As a rule, only a minority of pupils in each age cohort in Finland study these languages. According to Kangasvieri et al. (2011), on the national level, 97.7 per cent of pupils studied English as their ‘long’ language (level A1 starting in the third or A2 starting in the fifth grade) in 2009. Other ‘long’ languages (A1 or A2) studied by a minority of Finnish-speaking pupils in the same age cohorts included Swedish (8.3%), German (6.7%), French (3.8%), Russian (0.6%) and others (e.g. Chinese or Spanish; 0.4%). (Kangasvieri et al. 2011.)

Pupils who learn an additional language in primary school should technically be able to continue their studies in the same municipality and even catchment area at the lower-secondary school. Given that not all these so-called exceptional languages are taught in all lower-secondary schools, and that the paths from primary to lower-secondary school in Espoo city, for example, are not straightforward, some parents rule out certain non-preferable lower-secondary schools when they choose a certain language in primary school (sub-study II). This is a consequence of catchment-area-based school allocation, meaning that the local school, by definition, can be any of the three-to-five schools within the larger area (vs. the school district, where there would be one school for each

smaller area). Regardless of the fact that choosing a special emphasis or choosing an additional language can be used as a way of putting the child on track for a certain school (or avoiding one), it do not necessarily bind schools to allocating pupils who have chosen either to exclusive study groups. Nevertheless, in the everyday life of schools and for practical and technical reasons (the drawing up of daily schedules for pupils and teachers) the likelihood is that pupils who have made these choices will end up in the same classes.

The impact on parental choice of the school journey, the proximity to home and the urban area in which it is situated has not been widely studied in the Finnish context until recently (Dhalmann et al. 2014; Kosunen & Rivière, *under review*; Seppänen 2006), and in studies on schools and segregation in urban areas (e.g. Bernelius 2011; 2013a; 2013b; Vilkama et al. 2013). The main findings seem to be similar to those related to segregation in studies focusing on other European metropolitan areas (see Andersson 1998; Boterman 2013; Rangvid 2007): the increasing socio-economic and ethnic segregation across urban areas contributes to families' residential decisions (Dhalmann et al. 2014; Vilkama et al. 2013) and reflects the pupil composition of schools, which in turn explains much of the differentiation in learning outcomes across schools (Bernelius 2011). The flight of the native population from areas with the highest percentages of immigrants as a phenomenon in some parts of Helsinki has recently been brought into the picture (Vilkama et al. 2013), but has not been discussed to such a wide extent and in similar terms (such as 'white flight') as in other urban contexts (e.g. Boterman 2013; Gramberg 1998).²³ Nevertheless, Hanna Dhalmann, Mari Vaattovaara and Katja Vilkama (2014) found when investigating the reasons why native Finnish families moved away from various neighbourhoods that the question of urban and ethnic segregation arose, given that pupils are allocated to their local school primarily on the basis of their home address.^{24 25}

²³ Andersson (1998, 424) points out in his study in the context of Sweden that some neighbourhoods are marked as being in a 'symbolisation process', meaning that the differences across residential areas might not be 'real' and could be merely perceived.

²⁴ As a possible but contested solution, Rangvid (2007, 1349) suggested on the basis of an analysis conducted in the Copenhagen area that freer choice of public schools might 'loosen the link between residential choices and eligibility, and might make it more attractive for well-off Danish families to locate in neighbourhoods with higher immigrant concentrations'. Meanwhile, some other studies (van Ham & Feijten 2008) predict that (regardless of the schools) an increase in the percentage of ethnic-minority inhabitants in an area will lead to a desire to leave among the native population.

²⁵ 'The neighbourhood as a bad environment in which to grow up' was considered an important factor by 43 per cent of respondents who moved away from neighbourhoods with high percentages of immigrants (13–23% of inhabitants born outside Finland and 14–28% of non-Finnish/Swedish speakers within a neighbourhood in 2010), in comparison with 23 per cent of respondents from other kinds of area. When the percentage of immigrants in the peer group in schools was between 20 and 50 (it was not possible to be more specific), 45 per cent of the parents wished it were smaller. Still, the

One factor worth mentioning in discussions about choosing the local school and what affects the choice in the context of Finnish comprehensive schools in urban areas is the provision of free school meals for all children, which was fully implemented across the country in 1948 (Kouluruokailun... 2010). With regard to the cost of schools meals in relation to parental choice in the French context, van Zanten (2001, 95) points out that some parents might favour the local school despite the undesirable characteristics because of the lunch breaks. This is related to economic capital in the sense that school meals are either bought in school or brought from home, or lunch is eaten at home. This limits school choice options, especially in families with smaller amounts of economic capital: buying lunch at school might not be possible, meaning that the children need to go back home to eat and a longer distance to school becomes an obstacle. (van Zanten 2001.)

As in other countries, the focus of research on school choice in Finland turned to social class in the 2010s. Finnish research on social classes has a long history as such (e.g. Luokkaprojekti 1984; Rahkonen 1999; Roos & Rahkonen 1985; Waris 1973), and has strengthened its position in the academic and public debate in recent years (e.g. Erola 2009; Järvinen & Kolbe 2007; Kahma 2011; Katainen 2009; Kolbe 2014; Ruostetsaari 2014). This is, to some extent, reflected in studies of school choice, even on the level of the titles of articles (e.g. Kosunen 2012). School choice in Finland has been studied as a social-class-related practice (Seppänen et al. 2015a; Silvennoinen et al. 2015a) and a social practice (sub-studies III and IV). Middle-class fractions exercise their choices differently in relation to each other and to other social classes (Kalalahti et al. 2015; Rinne et al. 2015). Very little attention has been paid to the choices of the lower social classes, with a few exceptions (Silvennoinen et al. 2015b). Upper-class choices appear to construct somewhat distinct paths in the highest social echelons even during comprehensive education, but not in the same way as in countries with private educational provision (Kosunen et al. 2015b): the ways in which these paths are constructed and legitimised are discussed in sub-study IV. Hence, it is feasible to discuss school choice as a phenomenon in relation to other international research literature given that social-class-based conceptualisations are applied across countries, and nowadays also in Finland.

majority seemed to react positively to immigrant children in their neighbourhood and in their child's school. (Dhalmann et al. 2014, 23–25.) As a notion this reflects the idea of preferring a slightly socially and ethnically mixed group, a so-called 'nice mix' of pupils in the peer group, which parents are known to look for in the French context, for example (see van Zanten 2009a).

3 FORMS OF CAPITAL AND ITS TRANSMISSION IN EDUCATION

... the goal of sociology is to uncover the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the “mechanisms” that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation. (Bourdieu 1996, 1)

The work of Pierre Bourdieu constitutes the theoretical basis of this dissertation, and of many of the studies on school choice referred to in previous chapters. The focus in this chapter is on the content and use of the main concepts on which the dissertation is based (in 3.1 and 3.2). It also gives a few empirical examples of how these concepts are considered in the data gathering and operationalised in the analyses (in 3.2) Reflecting the above quotation from Bourdieu’s *State Nobility* (1996), these concepts are used to capture the essential elements of school choice as a social phenomenon. This idea is not original, but rather follows the tradition in certain branches of French and British educational and sociological research that leans extensively on Bourdieu (e.g. Ball & Vincent 1998; Reay et al. 2001a; Power et al. 1998; van Zanten 2009a) in terms of frameworks and interpretations. Further discussion on applying Bourdieu’s and Bernstein’s concepts side by side is briefly summarised the end of this chapter (3.3).

3.1 Social space and forms of capital

The main concepts on which the empirical sub-studies (II, III and IV) are based concern *social space* and the mutual *relations* in the *social positions* of actors, such as the symbolic prestige of institutions in their respective hierarchies, and the ability of families to exercise school choice by mobilising their capital(s). The *field* of education is discussed in this dissertation in relation to other fields such as culture, and concepts such as *habitus* and *lifestyle*. The major determinants in the construction of the habitus are the amounts and combinations of possessed *forms of capital* (cultural, economic and social), on which the choice is based. The focus in sub-study IV is on the *transformation* of one form of capital to another, and its *transmission* from one field to another. The *misrecognition of the role of capital* in relation to the possibilities and limitations of optimising school choice is discussed in the empirical analysis. These concepts are further defined below.

According to Bourdieu (1984, 104), individuals are not mobile in the *social space* in an arbitrary way: they are subject to the forces structuring the space or field, and they resist these forces through their embodied (dispositions) and

objectified (qualifications, goods) properties. He describes social space as a multidimensional space constructed of principles of differentiation in which the actors are defined by their relative positions in it (Bourdieu 1991, 229–230). These positions are constructed along two dimensions: the overall capital volume and the dominant capital. Social space allows both vertical (within a field) and horizontal (from one field to another) movement among the actors in it. Vertical movement requires an increase in the amount of dominant capital in the field in question, whereas horizontal movement requires the ability to transform one form of capital into another, and to transmit it from one field to another. (Bourdieu 1984, 126.)

Perceptions of the social world are twofold: the ‘objective’ type comprises combinations of the properties of agents, and the ‘subjective’ type derives from prior symbolic struggles and embodiments of symbolic power relations. The sense the agents occupy in the social space is ‘the practical mastery of the social structure’, and the categories of perception require internalisation of the objective structures in the space. This internalisation of one’s place also produces the sense of limits and distance, which should be kept, respected and expected.²⁶ (Bourdieu 1985, 727–728.) Taking this idea further, in the social space the:

... socially known and recognized differences only exist for a subject capable not only of perceiving differences but recognizing them as significant, interesting, i.e. only for a subject endowed with the capacity and inclination to make distinctions that are regarded as significant in the social universe in question. (Bourdieu 1985, 730)

Thus, through the distribution of properties the social world becomes a symbolic system in which differences across agents emerge, and which works as a space of lifestyles that are distinctive across social classes (Bourdieu 1985). Bourdieu describes, in *Distinction* (1984), how the different ways of appreciating and consuming culture in its different forms across social classes do not result in open conflict, but rather constitute a subtle struggle among hidden distinctions. The differences emerge ‘spontaneously’ in the social space, and function *symbolically* as a space of lifestyles: symbolic capital is just another name for distinction (Bourdieu 1991, 237–238). Moreover (Bourdieu 1985, 731), distinction is ‘the difference inscribed in the very structure of the social space when perceived through categories adapted to that structure’. Symbolic capital can be understood as another name for distinction, and distinctions as symbolic transfigurations of de facto differences such as ranks, orders, and other kinds of symbolic hierarchies. (Bourdieu 1985.)

²⁶ Referred to later as ‘the feel for the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

Much of the research on school choice leans on conceptualisations of social class, social hierarchies, and different forms of capital and reproduction, derived from or at least loosely attached to Bourdieu's theorisations. According to Bourdieu (1985), classes can be separated on the basis of their space of positions: in other words, agents who occupy similar positions and are 'subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions' (Bourdieu 1985, 725). The aim in this dissertation was to produce 'classes on paper' for analytical purposes, in other words to group people with similar characteristics in terms of economic, social and cultural capital. In practical terms, which are further elaborated in Chapter 4.3 of this Introduction, the parents are grouped into social classes on the basis of their combined level of education, occupational status (following the Classification of Occupations of Statistics Finland) and income. This does not undermine the idea of actual or experienced class, which is a different concept. However, Bourdieu's critique of the Marxist confusion between a constructed class and a real class is taken seriously. The classes referred to in this dissertation do not exist as real groups, but rather constitute a *space of relationships* (Bourdieu 1985) or a space of relations (Bourdieu 1991). As Bourdieu states (1991, 231), social classes within *the social space* have a theoretical existence, which helps to 'explain and predict the practices and properties' of actors, but are not separate entities (Bourdieu 1991, 232).²⁷ The positions of social classes in the social space are based on the possession of different volumes of different forms of capital: *economic, cultural* and *social* (Bourdieu 1984; 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The idea of social class as a struggle rather than a real group was adopted in this dissertation because it seemed to incorporate the necessary tools and theoretical standpoints for the analysis. In terms of describing the positions families have and struggle for in relation to each other within the social space, Bourdieu's theorisations are highly relevant here.

Bourdieu theorised on the questions of how societal structures and cultures are interconnected, and how the definer of social classes and the main factor creating barriers between them are shared lifestyles (Bourdieu 1984, 49)²⁸. He saw social class not only as the sum of certain properties, such as social origin, gender, age, ethnicity, income and educational level, but also as 'the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties', which later on results in practices (ibid. 100). From this perspective, agents occupying similar positions and provided with similar conditions have a high chance of having similar

²⁷ A relevant criticism of this view is class as experience and a sense of belonging, which was present in most of the interviews conducted for this study, but was not included in the definition of social class, as explained in Chapter 4. Class as a subjective experience has been studied to a certain extent in the Finnish context (see Kahma 2010).

²⁸ Bourdieu focuses more on struggles between the classes in his later work, e.g. *The State Nobility*.

dispositions and interests and thereby exhibit similar practices (Bourdieu 1991, 231). Bourdieu's way of differentiating classes seemingly emphasises the role of the upper social fractions in creating the distinctions (Kahma 2011; Roos 1985). However, although Bourdieu's study (1984) could be criticised for the over-representation of the middle and upper classes in his sample, and thus be empirically questioned (Kahma 2011, 43), the results regarding the construction of distinctions are theoretically interesting.

In addition, his theorisation concerning distinctions across tastes and lifestyles also applies in Finland, where the main determinants of divisions across lifestyles are the amounts of capital possessed (of which the most accurate is cultural capital in the form of educational level) and age (Purhonen et al. 2014). In general, Finnish sociologists have criticised the applicability of Bourdieusian theorisation to the Finnish context (e.g. Rahkonen 2008), although various studies have ended up applying it in any case. It would thus seem that, carefully applied in the Finnish context, Bourdieu's basic assumptions are still highly relevant (e.g. Kahma 2010; 2011; Purhonen et al. 2014).

Expanding on the notions of economic, cultural and social capital, researchers in the sociology of education and urban sociology have introduced the concepts of academic capital (Bourdieu 1984; Vincent & Ball 2007), cosmopolitan capital (Weenink 2008), emotional capital (Reay 2000; 2004c) and spatial capital (Barthon & Monfroy 2010; Lévy 1994). These concepts are not applied in this dissertation to the same extent as Bourdieu's three forms of capital mentioned above, which are connected to social class through habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). According to Bourdieu, (1984, 104) the amount of inherited capital results in individuals having differing starting points for action (*field of possibilities*), and 'all positions of arrival are not equally probable for all starting points'. The real value of the capital is defined in each national context with its local characteristics: the aim in this dissertation is to portray the use of capital in a Finnish context.

Bourdieu points out the strong correlation between social positions and the dispositions of agents occupying them, and also the trajectories that have led these individuals to occupy those positions. He divides the structure in the social space into three general classes: the dominant classes, the middle classes and the working classes. These classes are differentiated from each other in terms of the consumption of culture, in other words *taste*²⁹ (Bourdieu 1984, 49, 370–371), which Bourdieu divides into legitimate, 'middle-brow' and 'popular' taste (ibid. 8). For him, the homogeneity of dispositions and positions constitute the basis of class constitution: for example, certain individuals seem to be 'made for

²⁹ Homologies (see Bourdieu 1998) are part of the theory explaining how all the different fields of culture are organised in a hierarchical manner.

the jobs' that seem to be 'made for them'. He does not deny the possibility of social mobility, yet he criticises studies on the topic for their naivety (Bourdieu 1984, 126). He takes the original conditions of an individual as the starting point of the trajectory on which the 'social career' is built. These different trajectories also contribute to the internal fractioning of social classes (ibid. 105).

As mentioned, Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital over which actors compete in the social space in order to remain or improve their position: economic, cultural and social capital. Studies on school choice have investigated how these three forms of capital relate and are transformed from one form to another, especially the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital (van Zanten 2009a). Cultural capital exists in different forms: in an *embodied* state (long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body), an *objectified* state (cultural goods such as paintings, books, instruments and electronics) and an *institutionalised* state (educational qualifications) (Bourdieu 1986). The embodied form of accumulated cultural capital, or cultivation³⁰, is linked to the body and to processes of assimilation and embodiment. Investment in self-improvement, which according to Bourdieu could also be seen as a process of converting 'external wealth into an integral part of the person, into a habitus' (ibid. 48), requires time. A basic feature of embodied capital is that it is directly connected and linked to its bearer, and dies with him or her (ibid.).

Cultural capital is continuously transmitted in the family, but needs to be validated in the education system to reach its full efficacy in the labour market. This is what makes the relationship between different families and their educational choices become a relevant field of study. As Bourdieu (1986, 49) states, the 'process of appropriating objectified cultural capital and the time necessary for it to take place mainly depend on the cultural capital embodied in the whole family'. The process through which children accumulate their cultural capital in the family is part of their whole socialisation process, and could thus be considered the most efficient hidden form of capital transmission. Nevertheless, cultural capital is 'subject to a more disguised but more risky transmission than economic capital' (Bourdieu 1986, 55) in that it requires a process (formal education) in order to be transformed from an embodied into an objectified state. The analyses therefore include, in addition to institutional cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications that was used as a measure to define the social classes before the qualitative analysis of the interview data, the ways in which families spend their leisure and the kind of activities in which they engage (children, parents and the whole family).

As Lareau and Weininger (2003) state in their critical review of how the concept of cultural capital is used in educational research, the role of schools in

³⁰ Lareau (2003) developed her concept of concerted cultivation along fairly similar lines as in Bourdieu's original idea.

the process of reproducing advantage across generations is paramount in almost all economically advanced areas. Thorough investigation of the transmission of advantage and the (re)production of cultural capital as part of this process is therefore called for. (Lareau & Weininger 2003, 568.)³¹ Moreover, bigger amounts of academic, institutionalised cultural capital do not necessarily convert into higher levels of economic capital (Bourdieu 1986), meaning that the linkages between different forms of capital are not cumulatively straightforward. The relevance of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to the sociology of education lies in the fact that he based it on hypothesised hidden scholastic inequalities in the performance of children from different social classes. Lareau and Weininger (2003) elaborate on Bourdieu's conceptualisation, stating that cultural capital 'allows culture to be used as a resource that provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next'. This aspect is discussed more thoroughly in sub-study IV. The notion of cultural capital conflicts with the view that academic success rests purely on individuals' natural aptitudes. Thus, the 'best hidden and socially most determinant investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986, 48) is a premise on which this dissertation is based.

Social capital consists of social obligations, or connections, which are convertible to other forms of capital in complex ways. It refers to social relations and networks, as well as group membership. The real volume of a person's social capital is linked to the size of the networks of which he or she is a member, as well as to the volume of mobilisable forms of capital within them (Bourdieu 1980) in each local and national context. Social capital is the 'aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu 1986, 51). The real volume of a person's social capital is therefore linked to the size of the networks of which he or she is a member, and to the volume of different forms of mobilisable possessed capital. Here Bourdieu is suggesting that social capital is never fully disconnected from economic and cultural capital in that social connections require mutual acknowledgement, which is often based on some level of objective homogeneity.

The definition of social capital has fuelled heated discussion among scholars. Putnam and Coleman, for example, developed the concept in their own way, which differed from the direction Bourdieu was taking (e.g. Coleman 1988;

³¹ Lareau & Weininger (2003) note in their literature review that the concept of cultural capital has been widely used in educational research following DiMaggio's (1982) work on cultural capital and school success, which emphasises 'prestigious' cultural practices in its approach. DiMaggio (ibid.) writes about 'elite status culture'.

Ichou 2014; Portes 1998; Putnam 1995)³². The Bourdieusian definition of the concept is used in the framework of this dissertation. As Bourdieu (1986, 54) states, ‘the convertibility of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital’. His analysis reflects the French context of a few decades ago when all the different types of capital could be derived from economic capital. It required effort to transform the capital into another form, which works differently in each field (ibid. 53–54). This notion is contested especially in sub-study IV, bearing in mind the Nordic context in the 2010s but still remaining loyal to Bourdieu’s theory.

Economic capital is ‘immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of propriety rights’ (Bourdieu 1986, 47). It is an essential part of class formation, but not its sole determinant (Weininger 2005). Transforming economic capital into social capital requires time and effort, as the relationships need to be developed and maintained over time via acts of attention, care and concern. Thus, social exchanges do not follow the same logical patterns as pure economic exchanges (Bourdieu 1986).³³

The key question in the transformation of capital concerns the reproduction of social positions: Bourdieu (1986, 55) concludes that ‘every reproduction strategy is at the same time a legitimation strategy aimed at consecrating both an exclusive appropriation and its reproduction’. He points out that the more the surrounding structure prevents the straight transmission of different forms of capital, the more emphasis is put on the ‘clandestine circulation of capital’, meaning the ways in which cultural capital becomes a key element in the reproduction of the social structure. He concludes at the end of his article *The Forms of Capital* (1986):

³² Coleman (1988, 98) defines social capital as something that ‘inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors’: it identifies elements of the social structure by distinguishing between their functions and forms he defines as information channels, norms and sanctions (both of which facilitate but also constrain action), and obligations and expectations. Portes (1998, 9), who also evaluated the conceptualisations of Bourdieu, Coleman and others, describes the three basic functions of social capital as the exercise of social control, the provision of family support, and access to benefits derived from extra-familial networks. Coleman also discusses the transmission of capital within a family, stating that social capital in this respect is essential: accessing parents’ human (or cultural) capital is related to their physical presence and also to the amount of attention the child receives. Strong relations between parents and children constitute the family’s social capital. (Coleman 1988.)

³³ Bourdieu (1986) points out that two conceptions of the transformation, possession and functioning of capital warrant criticism and replacement: first, economism, which ignores the functioning of other forms of capital and eventually reduces capital in all its forms to economic capital; and second, semiologism, which neglects economics and treats social exchange as an act of communication.

As an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function, the scope of the educational system tends to increase, and together with this increase is the unification of the market in social qualifications which gives rights to occupy rare positions. (Bourdieu 1986, 55)

Bourdieu's approach has been widely applied in research on the sociology of education, and educational choice in particular. In general, as in this dissertation, it concerns the interconnectedness, transmission and transformation of different forms of capital, which in combination can be used in different ways depending on the local context. Reproduction strategies (Bourdieu 1984, 119–125) refer to the practices of individuals or families trying to maintain their assets and positions in the class structure, consciously or unconsciously. The strategies depend on the amount and composition of capital intended for reproduction, and also on the instruments of reproduction, examples of which include inheritance law, the labour market and the educational system. These instruments are related to the capital intended for reproduction and both, when exposed to changes, will require a restructuring of the reproduction strategies.

In France, for instance and according to Bourdieu, despite the dominance of dominant classes, changes in the educational system that transformed the relationship between jobs and qualifications forced them to change their strategies. The increased competition over positions through the massification of academic qualifications and the general increase in the mass of cultural capital also forced these classes to reflect on their use of the educational system given their aim to ensure over-generational social reproduction. (Bourdieu 1984, 126–128.) Competition for positions in the labour market intensified following the wider proliferation of educational qualifications. It could be said that competition in the educational market resulted from the change in this relation. Bourdieu emphasises the fact that qualifications (academic qualifications as an institutionalised form of cultural capital) in fields other than the scholastic market are worth what their bearer is worth socially and economically. Thus social position is again a combination of all three forms of capital, and is not based solely on any of them. (Bourdieu 1984.)

3.2 Habitus, field and a feel for the game

The theoretical framework of this dissertation incorporates, in addition to the different forms of capital and their transformation and dissemination, Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Educational choices are perceived as strategic practices and procedures that do not follow explicit rules and are not necessarily conscious, but which are a product of the habitus (see Bourdieu 1976) and thereby appear natural. In the context of educational research, habitus has been

re-conceptualised as institutional habitus³⁴ (e.g. Reay 1998; Reay et al. 2001a), and familial or family habitus (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Reay 1998). However, these conceptualisations have also been harshly criticised (e.g. Atkinson 2011, 338) for diminishing the power of the original concept in describing the specificity, complexity and diversity of phenomena. As Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 19) points out, according to Bourdieu's original conception:

Habitus is creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures, which are embodied sedimentation of the social structures which produced it. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 19)

Bourdieu also defines habitus as a 'system of schemes structuring every decision without ever becoming completely and systematically explicit' (Bourdieu 1976, 119), adding that it is defined by 'the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (*taste*), that the represented social world, i.e. the space of life-styles, is constituted' (Bourdieu 1984, 166). Habitus is constituted of the different forms of capital, and is interconnected in particular with embodied cultural capital. In his work on marriage strategies (1976) Bourdieu describes people's strategic practices related to matrimonial choice (which can be extended to other types of choice), stating that complex procedures of choice do not directly follow any rules or law, but are a product of habitus. Elsewhere (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 128) he describes strategies through habitus as a 'feel for the game', which is often unconscious and inexplicable to the bearer, but somehow still seems to affect the decision-making (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The 'feel for the game' is investigated in sub-study IV of this dissertation, where it is analysed as the general notion that families choose strategies aiming in 'a certain direction' and '[an]other type of framework', without ever fully explicating, what the 'direction' or the 'framework' is really like. In the following example the strategic practice is to choose a selective class.

With regard to the choosing process, we had many different motives. ... But it's also linked slightly to social ... I found myself that music as a hobby when I was a youngster helped me to develop in a certain direction, which might not otherwise have been possible. And this influenced our choice in that we ended up choosing a music emphasis. ... The older brother said the other day when we were discussing the girl's choice that he's really happy about the fact that he came to this [special emphasis], that his previous classmates who are in the local school, they spend their Friday nights at the back of the [shopping centre] drinking beer. He says he's glad that he has another type of a framework here. (Father in sub-study IV)

³⁴ The concept of institutional habitus (Reay et al. 2001) is acknowledged in sub-studies II and III.

In line with these Bourdieusian conceptualisations, the field of education is considered a game that has no explicit rules but is worth playing, in which *illusio* (what is invested in the game) and trump cards emerge. The relative value and utility of the different trump cards depend on the game, and on the varying relative value of forms of capital in different fields. The players' strategies are defined in terms of their social track and habitus. Thus, as Bourdieu states, the task of empirical research is to identify the limits of the field(s) in question, and the forms of capital that are active and efficient within them, in other words how the game is played. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992.) Habitus in this context reflects the individual's capacities to master a number of implicit principles that have their own logic of action, emerge 'spontaneously' and for these reasons do not need to be explicated but remain implicit. Thereby habitus becomes the end product of the same structure it was and is reproducing. (Bourdieu 1976, 141.) Simultaneously (as a criticism of rational theories of choice and strategies), habitus explains how social agents (people) are reasonable, yet not rational. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, the relationship between field and habitus is strong because 'they function fully *only in a relation to one another*'. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 19, 129.):

A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 16)

Bourdieu explains (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 96–97) that inherent in the idea of field is that the thinking must be relational: as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the social world consists of relations. Bourdieu (*ibid.* 17) defines the field as 'a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity', a 'space of conflict and competition', and as a 'space of play' (*ibid.* 19). With certain restrictions he draws a parallel between the concept of field and the idea of a game, but emphasises that the field does not follow codified rules and regularities and is not a product of a deliberate act (*ibid.* 98). In terms of structure the field is based on the unequal distribution of capital (Bourdieu 1986, 49). Fields are the sites where the symbolic struggles take place, which as a combination constitute the social space and cannot be reduced only to relations of economic production. Space can be described as a 'field of forces, i.e., a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field' (Bourdieu 1985, 724). When it comes to the agents in the social space, Bourdieu states that their positions are defined based on the positions they occupy in different fields and the distribution of valuable capital in each of them. (Bourdieu 1985.)

As some kind of combination of habitus and field, *lifestyles* are ‘systematic products of habitus’ and ‘become sign systems that are socially qualified’ (Bourdieu 1984, 168). Sub-study IV in particular aims to portray lifestyle-related decision-making and habitus in terms of what becomes self-evident in the discourse of educational choice. The practices of all agents within a social class are the product of the transfer of similar schemes of action, a process that applies from one field to another (Bourdieu 1984). Taste, on the other hand, could be seen as the ‘generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis’ (Bourdieu 1984, 169). Lifestyle as a concept has been applied in urban sociology (Florida 2002), and in the Finnish urban context as a version of life orientation (Kortteinen et al. 2005: *elämänorientaatio*). In this dissertation, however, the school choices of upper-class Finns (sub-study IV), all of which were considered ‘individual’ and exercised in order to match their own child with a suitable school, are described in terms of lifestyle practices. They appeared to include many similarities across families with similar socio-economic backgrounds, which has been interpreted as practices of shared lifestyle within a social class.

The number of concepts derived from Bourdieu for analytical purposes in this dissertation might seem high, and not very original in combination. Nevertheless, they have not been applied to such an extent before in the context of school choice in Finland. Moreover, the local context with its distinctive features, which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter, adds its own flavour to Bourdieu’s theorisation, and is of some academic relevance when the findings are discussed in more theoretical terms in the latter part of the conclusions (5.2). In short, this dissertation portrays how different agents (families and schools) in a social space comprising different forms and combinations of capital (symbolic, cultural, economic and social capital) act in restricted field(s) (of education and culture, for example) in relation to each other, and how some of the reasoning behind these actions seems to remain unconscious even for the actors (as the practices are a part of habitus), and just naturally appears in practice (as a part of the lifestyle). These relations appear in the social space, a space of relations.

3.3 Bourdieu and Bernstein

This dissertation incorporates the conceptualisations of Bernstein (1977) into the ways in which the limits of the field of educational provision, the local schools in terms of their reputation and prestige (in sub-studies II and III), can be identified in order to clarify the limits of the field, in other words, the provision side of the school choice (van Zanten 2009a). The idea of combining Bourdieu and Bernstein is not unique in the sociology of education, their work

together and separately having been widely applied for decades (see e.g. Ávila Frances 2005; Ball 2003; Gorder 1980; Harker & May 1993; Power et al. 1998; 2003; van Zanten 2009a). However, given that they both derive some of their ideas from Durkheim, and Bernstein even more so even as a personal declaration (Bernstein 1977, 15), and combine micro-analyses with a macro-sociological approach in studies concerning education (Harker & May 1993, 172), it seemed relevant to apply both theories in this dissertation. Bernstein (1977, 15) even explicitly calls his work with Bourdieu's group of researchers 'complementary'.

The instrumental order derives from Bernstein's conceptualisations. It is analysed in this dissertation as the exchange value of education in a certain class, and could be related to Bourdieu's idea of the accumulation of mobilisable forms of capital. The utility of the skills (and networks as included in sub-studies II and III) gathered in the school in question (Bernstein 1977, 38) could be interpreted as the intended accumulation of the child's cultural and social capital, to be transformed later into economic capital (e.g. by getting a summer job in a classmate's family business).

The expressive-social order, on the other hand, is conceived of here as a promoted habitus (Bourdieu 1984) in the social environment of the school. It is operationalised in sub-studies II and III and could also be seen as describing the predicted level of legitimate taste (Bourdieu 1984, 8) as manifested in social encounters and action. In the parental discourse it was linked to the consequences of schools selecting (some) pupils (into certain classes), and thereby to the social composition of schools and their classes. In Bernstein's terms these would be the forms of promoted 'conduct, character and manner', the problem on the conceptual level being that not all social groups within society hold the same notions of acceptable behaviour (Bernstein 1977, 39). Bourdieu's theory of taste (roughly divided into legitimate, 'middle brow' and 'popular') would more easily allow explanation of the different social characteristics of the social environment as manifested in the reputations of schools and their classes. It also touches on the problematics of emerging social selection in education. The classes with the highest amounts of expressive-social order were seen as promoting 'acceptable behaviour' (Bernstein 1977), or as an upper- or upper-middle-class habitus (Bourdieu 1984) (see sub-studies II and III). This is manifest as a process of social selectivity in the following example:

I checked with [my son's] friends, who were the ones who applied to [a selective class with a reputed high expressive-social order]. Every single one of them came from engineering families. So is it really the case that this engineering talent for some reason is concentrated in families in which the dad works for an IT enterprise? ((laughs)) That makes me laugh. (Father in sub-study III)

The father questions the means by which the selection is conducted. He brings up the role of family social background in the formulation of children's school

choice, and the embedded social selection in the process. The expressive-personal order, which leans on Bernstein's (1977) more general concept of the expressive order, was included as a category following analysis of the latter as an entity in two analytical rounds. The fact, as shown in sub-study III, is that the expressive-personal order of a school (including the notions of bullying and other forms of physical and mental safety, risk behaviour and the physical conditions in the premises) strongly defines the position of the school and its desirability in the symbolic hierarchy of schools, in Bourdieusian terms.

I don't know so much about rumours, or I actually don't even care about them. But of course, if it is generally known that in a certain school there are significant problems with order, or problems with intoxicants or other things. And if I can exclude that school from our options, it is crystal clear that I wouldn't put my own child into that sort of an environment. (Father in sub-study III)

This father explains how, in his view, certain features of a school might threaten his child's wellbeing, and this would be a reason to exclude it from their list of possible schools regardless of its perceived academic quality. Hence, the theorisation and conceptualisation of what comprises the reputation and prestige of schools represent a combination of Bourdieu's and Bernstein's theoretical and analytical tools, and are divided into three analytical units in this dissertation.

However, Bourdieu's consideration of agency and structure as implicit in each other (in his discussion on symbolic struggles over positions in the field) rather than as two ends of a continuum is applied here as the stronger viewing angle, rather than Bernstein's analytical separation of structure and agency (see Harker & May 1993). Still, many of Bernstein's concepts come close to Bourdieu's social theory and give added value to the analytical toolbox applied in the analyses in this dissertation.

4 THE RESEARCH TASK AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation relates to relationalism (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). It is assumed that any research conducted to describe and analyse reality becomes a part of the construction of reality. Accordingly, many reflexive and context-relevant methodological choices were made in connection with this dissertation, such as explicitly positioning the researchers in relation to the gathered material and using the local language in each context when conducting the interviews. Methodologically, the aim was to position the dissertation in a relevant space-time, as Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) suggest, and to avoid making de-contextualised comparisons (see Steiner-Khamsi 2009) when contrasting the different fields. Hence, the local contexts in which this qualitative study was conducted are described in detail in the following sections, with a specific focus on Espoo. The articles and the findings are positioned in relation to the historical, cultural and social construction of each context. The underlying idea behind the methodological approaches adopted here was to emphasise ‘theoretical vigilance’ and ‘theoretical vision’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

In the following sections I discuss the research task, the data and the tools used in analysing it, the ethical standpoints and the reliability of the study.

4.1 The research task

The focus in this dissertation is on how the space of school choice is socially and discursively constructed in the local urban context, the forms of capital that are required in the making of a school choice within that space, and the competitive assets that are constructed on the basis of the possession and capacity in different families to transform and transmit various forms of capital. The main aim is to clarify the structures and social mechanisms that facilitate the optimisation of school choice, which presumably relate to the differing educational practices and social distinctions across families from different social backgrounds.

The research questions addressed in this dissertation are:

1. What kind of space of school choice is constructed through the reputations of schools and their hierarchies of prestige in the parental discourse?
2. How do families' desires and limitations concerning school choice relate to the space of school choice?
3. How are the forms of capital utilised, transformed and recognised by parents in their choice of school, and how does this relate to the possible reproduction of social positions via educational practices in the Finnish comprehensive-school system?

In addition, conceptualisations adopted in research on school choice in Finland and nearby countries in Northern and continental Europe are discussed, and the problem of finding a common language in which to discuss concepts and interpretations across countries is explored in a meta-analytical, 'sociology of sociology' setting (sub-study I). The aims are to contribute to the discussion on parental choice of schools in different local contexts, to closely explore the relationship between the families and the socially constructed space of school choice in the city, and to investigate possible patterns in the creation of social distinctions in this process. In combination the articles are intended to contribute to the discussion (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Lauder et al. 1999; Seppänen 2006; Taylor 2002) on the phenomenon of local and lived school markets, and to introduce an additional concept, the *social space of school choice* (see 5.2).

4.2 The cities as local contexts

School choice is an urban phenomenon in Finland. A few years ago almost 80 per cent of parents in Finland did not even consider the possibility of choosing a school, and virtually none did so in rural areas (Räty et al. 2009; Räty 2013). Nationwide, the parents who were considering school choice tended to live in urban areas, and those who were most favourable to the idea also supported more selective educational ideologies (Räty 2013). It is necessary to consider the city as something more than a governmental area, as Chris Taylor (2002) proposed more than a decade ago in his 'hypothetical example' (p. 14) of the functioning of local educational choice. He created a model of the educational market place, 'the spatial arena in which the education system currently operates' (ibid. 7), which consists of institution space, producers and consumers of educational services, and competition space. The general idea was to observe how, within the governance of education and the urban space families competed

for places in schools. Seppänen (2006) brought this idea to the Finnish educational context in her study and elaborated on the aspect of the differing positions of schools and families within the space of competition: she emphasises the importance of the local context when describing parental choice, and further elaborates on the notion of families' differing capacities and aspirations when choosing schools from the local urban provision. She identified a connection between family background and school choice in local Finnish contexts. (Seppänen 2006.)

Seppänen (2006) found that the main reasons for choosing a certain school in the city of Espoo, which is also in the case city of this dissertation, were related to the school journey and the child's friendships. Here, the city as a platform for parental choice is understood to have multiple meanings: a historical construction, an arena and a product of politics, as well as a space producing and reproducing social, political and educational inequalities. As Ball and van Zanten (1998) emphasise, school choice should be seen as embedded in local contexts, thereby bringing the phenomena under exploration to a more concrete level: for example, inequalities and processes of stratification are brought from the universalist and conceptual level to the level of the local environment, on which their consequences are experienced in every-day life.

In the following I describe the local context of this dissertation, the city of Espoo, which is the context in three of the sub-studies (II, III and IV), and mention some of the characteristics of the two other local contexts, the cities of Turku (sub-study IV) and Santiago in Chile (sub-study II), where some of the data was collected. Nevertheless, as stated above, the main local context is the city of Espoo.

The main fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted in 2011 in the city of Espoo, in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. Espoo is the second largest city in Finland with about 250,000 inhabitants. It borders on the city of Helsinki, the capital of Finland. It has had official city status since 1972, but was a residential area for a long time before then. The first stone churches were built in the area in the 1490s. When Helsinki became the capital in 1812 (replacing Turku) after Finland became part of Russia in 1809, the surrounding area attracted more inhabitants. Until the early 1900s, many of the officials working in Helsinki had their villas in Espoo, and visited them frequently. The first Finnish basic school in Espoo (*Kirkonkylän suomenkielinen kansakoulu*) started functioning in 1902, and was designated a building in Kauklahti in 1912 (Varjo, *manuscript*, 3–4). The railway connection between Helsinki and Turku opened in 1903, which also increased the amount of inhabitation and industry by the track that passed through Espoo. The next three schools to be founded were in Nuuksio in 1905, and in Lahnus and Leppävaara in 1906 (Varjo, *manuscript*, 5). In an attempt to protect Helsinki from the Germans during the First World War the Russian Emperor Nikolai II had a trench built in the area surrounding Helsinki and

extending across Espoo, which was a huge construction project that increased the demand for labour in Espoo. Russian soldiers and war prisoners were kept in camps in the fields of Leppävaara before the Russian revolution in 1917.

There was an increase in the number of people moving to the Espoo area in the 1930s and 1940s in search of industrial work in factories. The number of inhabitants reached 25,000 in 1950, and for the first time the most commonly spoken language was Finnish rather than Swedish. The ‘garden city’ of Tapiola, near to the Helsinki border, was designed and constructed to fulfil the dream of those who wanted to live close to services, but still close to the sea and surrounded by green areas. The nearby Otaniemi campus area of the Technical University was constructed in 1951. Otaniemi is physically close to Keilaniemi, where the first construction project, for Neste Oy, appeared in 1976, but is nowadays full of buildings serving as the headquarters and offices of international corporations. The infrastructure has been constantly under development, and major highways have been constructed to ease the traffic flow in the extensive metropolitan area (Figure 1). Construction work to include Espoo in the Helsinki subway system (*Länsimetro*) started in 2010. (City of Espoo 2014.)



Figure 1. The metropolitan area of Helsinki (City of Helsinki 2015)

The city spread out, a characteristic phenomenon being the development of several centres (e.g. Tapiola, Espoo Centre and Leppävaara), as opposed to one historical centre. It became apparent in the interviews that the parents identified with their neighbourhood rather than with Espoo as a city. Detached or terraced houses comprise about 40 per cent of the housing stock (City of Espoo 2011), but more than half (56.4%) of dwellings are in blocks of flats (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2005). Sixty per cent of the housing is based on private ownership (City of Espoo 2011). Socio-demographically, people with a higher education are highly concentrated in the east of the city, in areas such as Tapiola, Mankkaa, Haukilahti, Westend and Kauniainen (which has city status within Espoo) (Päivänen et al. 2006, 20).

The general income level in Espoo is higher than in the neighbouring cities of Helsinki and Vantaa. Nevertheless, the annual income across various districts of Espoo varied from 21,000 to 71,000 euros in 2011, when the interviews were conducted (Aluetietokanta 2011): the campus area of Otaniemi is excluded from the analysis given the high prevalence of students and student housing. Many people commute to Helsinki, which is easy given the well-established public-transport network, and professional profiles vary. Still, Espoo has several areas in which the metropolitan regional élite, and especially the business élite (when income and education are combined) are concentrated, such as Otaniemi, Westend, Kuusisaari and Lehtisaari, in addition to the city of Kauniainen (Kortteinen et al. 2005, 478, 480).

Many people move from various parts of the country to study or work in Espoo. In a population of over-generational local inhabitants, the only concentration of second-generation locals is in the neighbourhood of Nöykkiö, and in general it could be said that more people moved to Espoo (west of Helsinki) from western Finland than from Eastern Finland (Päivänen et al. 2006, 28). According to Arja Munter (2011), almost one third of the people who moved to Espoo in 2007 had a higher-education degree, which is an exceptionally high percentage. The main industrial end employment growth areas in Espoo are information technology and telecommunications, which are concentrated in the eastern part of the city in Keilaniemi, next to the Helsinki border (Väliniemi 2005).

Half of the new inhabitants of Espoo who moved there from other areas of Finland (in 2007 $n \approx 14,100$) were male, as were more than a half of the people moving there from other countries ($n \approx 2400$). Compared with the other two cities in the metropolitan area, more of the immigrants moving to Espoo were part of the work force. (Munter 2011.) In 2010, 9.9 per cent of the inhabitants of Espoo had an immigrant background. In terms of area of origin, the highest proportion of immigrants (more than 25%) came from the Far or Middle East, the second highest (15%) from the previous Soviet countries or Russia, and the third highest (11% each) from the African continent and the Baltic states.

(Munter 2013.) Areas close to the railway stations housed the highest proportions of immigrants, the Otaniemi campus being an exception with high proportions of non-native Finnish inhabitants (Päivänen et al. 2006, 31), about 19 per cent of residents in 2010 (Munter 2013).

A factor shaping the residential choices and thus the demography of the city is the public-transport access to the capital. Also of importance are the cultural activities in the metropolitan area, which are concentrated in Helsinki but also extend to certain parts of Espoo. Concert halls, theatres and cinemas as well as galleries, museums and art museums are positioned mainly south of the line crossing the city (Päivänen et al. 2006, 24–25), not next to it, unlike the cultural provision in the neighbouring cities of Helsinki and Vantaa. Public transport is accessible and buses run across the city, but still many areas of Espoo are most easily accessible via private transport, in other words cars. In 2012 (Environment Committee of Espoo 2013) there were 484 cars per 1,000 inhabitants in Espoo, as opposed to 404 in Helsinki and 515 in Vantaa. The use of rail transport has increased by 24 per cent in the last ten years (the opening of the line from Leppävaara in 2002 increased it instantly), and of buses by 12 per cent. The number of cyclists has increased by almost 50 per cent over the same period. (Environment Committee of Espoo 2013, 28–29.) Many parts of Espoo are highly urban and densely populated. Some eight sub-areas (*pienalue*) are so scarcely populated (Aluetietokanta 2011), with less than 100 inhabitants, that their socio-demographic structure is not explicated. There are about 27 active shopping centres in Espoo located across the city, built mainly during 1951–1986 (with the exception of an extension of Lintuvaara shopping centre in 2009) (Laitinen & Huuhka 2012).

Governmentally Espoo was divided into five service areas in 2011, within which there are seven school catchment areas (Figure 2). Health care and education are governed and arranged accordingly. Espoo abolished individual school districts (*koulukohtainen oppilasalue*) in 2003–2004 and introduced seven school catchment areas (*oppilasalue*) across the city (Seppänen 2006, 145). Each catchment area has between three and five lower-secondary schools that could be designated the local school of the child. Before the allocation, parents are asked to state a preference. Hence, the allocation is not strictly by district (*carte scolaire* in France) but accounts for parental wishes in a system of catchment-area-based local school allocation. Almost all parents (96% in 2011) expressed a preference. Some pupils applied to the Finnish-speaking school of Kauniainen, which is not marked on the map (Figure 2) because it is not under the governance of education in Espoo. Espoo provides classes with a special emphasis in all of its catchment areas. The oldest ones historically are those with an emphasis on music and art, which started in 1989 (Varjo, *manuscript*, 12), thus pre-dating the official legislation of 1998. Espoo also has two state-subsidised independent schools, the Rudolf Steiner School and the Christian

School of Espoo, plus a system for pupils with Swedish as their first language, which is governed separately from the Finnish schools and is therefore not further elaborated on here.

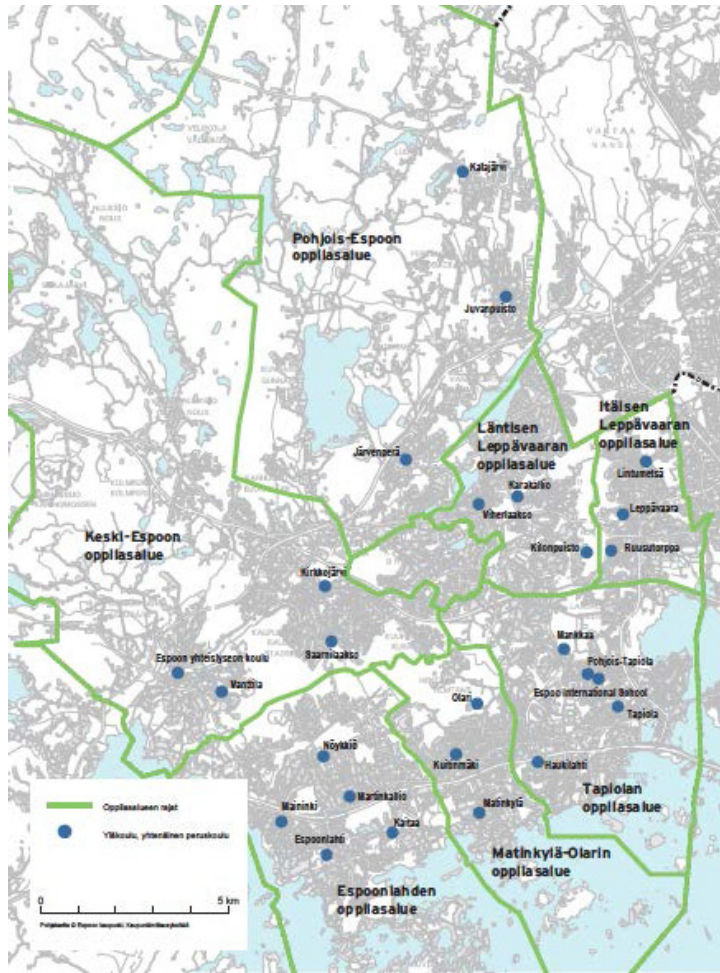


Figure 2. The seven school catchment areas of Espoo. The green lines represent the borders and the blue dots the lower-secondary schools, 2011. (City of Espoo 2010)

Politically Espoo is dominated by the moderate right-wing National Coalition Party, which held 26 of the 75 positions in the city council in 2008–2012, increasing to 29 in the municipal election of 2012. The Greens had 11 seats, the Social Democrats nine, the True Finns seven (increasing to 10 in 2012), the Swedish People’s Party 6, the Centre Party three, the Left Alliance two, the Christian Democrats two and the Party of the Poor one. (Yleisradio 2012.)

The two other fieldwork contexts that provide relevant points of contrast in sub-studies III and IV are the city of Santiago in Chile and the city of Turku in Finland. Santiago is a city with about six million inhabitants, in which public, semi-subsidised and private schools compete with each other in order to attract families. The parental choice takes place across public and private schools and their variations (Carrasco & San Martín 2012; Elacqua 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2014). The families operate within an education system that has several providers at all stages, from primary to higher education, organised through the mixed provision of suppliers and including public municipal, state-subsidised and private schools. The governance of the public system is decentralised. Earlier reforms related to privatisation and decentralisation introduced in 1981 activated a massive redistribution in favour of state-subsidised schools at the relative expense of public municipal schools. Since 1992 state-subsidised schools have been allowed to charge parents a tuition fee, which they set independently. In general, in line with the mixed provision of education, other market-oriented reforms have increasingly segmented the system in terms of socio-economic status (Carnoy 1998; Mizala & Romaguera 2000; Mizala & Torche 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2014). Whereas 83 per cent of pupils were enrolled in public schools in 1981, the corresponding percentage in 2004 was 49. Reciprocally, the proportion of pupils attending state-subsidised private schools increased from nine per cent (in 1981) to 41 per cent in 2004.

The most visible effects of the reforms in Chilean schools have been the significant decline in the number of middle-class pupils in municipal schools, in which there are now concentrations of children from families with lower-social-class backgrounds as well as pupils with learning difficulties or behavioural problems: the latter are not normally admitted to private or state-subsidised schools. (Mizala & Torche 2012.)³⁵ It seems that school segregation is stronger than residential segregation in Chilean cities (Valenzuela et al. 2014). The role of economic capital in constructing social closure is also evident, given that along with the social practice of constructing separate arenas of choice for different social classes, the high tuition fees as such prevent lower-class families from choosing certain schools, even if they had the necessary information about accessing them (sub-study III; see also Kosunen et al. 2015a). The differences in the historical and social construction of the societies and cities of Espoo and

³⁵ Chile is currently undergoing a major educational-policy reform under the governance of Michelle Bachelet, who explicitly aims to equalise opportunities, and to weaken the educational and social distinctions and the processes of social reproduction that school choice facilitates (even at the primary-school stage; *escuelas primeras*). Radical reforms of the old constitution aimed at equalising the education system and educational opportunities across social classes were introduced in 2015.

Santiago were acknowledged right at the beginning and taken into account in the entire process (see sub-study III)³⁶.

Turku, where almost half of the upper-class parents interviewed for sub-study IV lived, was the capital of Finland until 1812. It is a university city two hours away from Helsinki by train, with 180,000 inhabitants and an annual average income of 22,217 euros (in 2011; see Turku 2013). People with other than Finnish or Swedish as their first language comprised 8.7 per cent of the population in 2011 (Turku 2013). The University of Turku has numerous faculties, of which the prestigious and big faculties of law and medicine should be mentioned in this context, since many of the parents interviewed for sub-study IV had studied in one of them. According to Rasinkangas (2013), the most well-off and highly educated inhabitants of the city are concentrated on the islands close to the centre, and have also partly gentrified nearby towns. The moderate-right National Coalition party dominates Turku's city council (19/67 members), followed by the Social Democratic Party (14/67). School allocation is district-based and there is a lot of room for parental choice. About 40 per cent of pupils in lower-secondary school in Turku studied in classes with a special emphasis in 2010 (Seppänen et al. 2012; Simola et al. 2015).

According to Raveaud and van Zanten (2007), although cross-country comparisons are valuable, it has also been found that people with similar social-class backgrounds share similar mind-sets across areas rather than across social classes within the same area, which makes studying similar social groups across localities interesting. Given the context of two Finnish cities on the Baltic coast at a geographical distance of 162 kilometres, sub-study IV could be considered an analysis of the Finnish upper social class in two cities rather than a comparison across cities. Moreover, some of the parents had studied the same major subject at university, even at the same university regardless of their current city of residence. The interview material gathered in Espoo and Turku was combined and treated as one batch of material. The different nuances in the Finnish accents characteristic of the two cities were unfortunately lost in translation into English.

³⁶ Gender operated differently in diversifying pupils' study-paths in Finland and Chile, in that quite a few of the schools in Santiago were single-sex schools. All schools in Finland are mixed. Immigration was not a relevant factor in school choice in the study conducted in Santiago, where the proportion of immigrants is relatively small and most of them are Peruvians who speak Spanish as their native language. They live mainly in the northern parts of the city, whereas the families interviewed for sub-study III lived in the eastern and southern areas of Santiago.

4.3 The families

This primary material for this dissertation comprises interviews with 96 parents of 6th-graders (12–13-year-olds) in Espoo.³⁷ Ninety-four individual interviews were conducted, and one with a couple. The interviewees were reached via a questionnaire that was sent to the parents of the whole age cohort of children born in 1998 and living in Espoo through the schools' online system for home-school interaction (*Wilma*). All parents who volunteered, and could be reached later on via the provided contact information, were interviewed during the spring of 2011.

The parents interviewed for sub-studies II and III are treated as individuals discussing their child's choice and the rumours they had heard. The gender division identified in the French context (van Zanten 2009a, 134–135), that mothers tend to engage more with so-called 'hot' knowledge, rumours and stories on the parental grapevine, and fathers with 'cold' knowledge, is acknowledged. The men might also have had more limited access to the parental grapevine than the women, as has been shown in the English context (Ball & Vincent 1998, 384), on account of the different levels of parental engagement and time consumption in relation to the child's schooling and school-related activities. Therefore the parents, regardless of their gender, were also asked to explain the extent to which the other adult in the family (if there was one) participated in the discussions and decision-making. The family is treated as a unit in sub-study IV, which also explores family lifestyles and inter-familial social networks.

Families were identified in accordance with the response of the interviewees to the opening question: who belong to your family?³⁸ All families included adults, who were either heterosexual couples or single parents. Sixty-eight of the 95 families were intact, meaning that both parents were the child's biological parents, and almost all were married. Eight families were step-families with one biological parent (in all cases the mother) and her partner (*uusioperhe*), and fourteen were single-parent families. In cases in which the children were shuttling between two households and had both biological and step-parents, background information was gathered about both, the biological parent as well

³⁷ The PASC research group also interviewed 101 parents in the city of Turku within the same project, and 16 of those interviews were analysed in connection with sub-study IV. More specific information about the interviewees in Turku is provided in Seppänen et al. 2015a and Silmäri-Salo 2015. The content of those interviews and the ones conducted in Espoo is very similar. The data gathering (for sub-study III) conducted in Santiago is discussed more thoroughly in Seppänen et al. 2015c, but in general it was planned within the PASC research group and similar questions concerning school provision and reputations were asked in the thematic interviews with these families.

³⁸ Many interviewees also explicitly mentioned pets, and especially dogs, as family members in addition to biological and social members.

as the step-father. If the other biological parent was not in contact with the child or was not involved in his or her schooling in any way, the discussion in the interview concentrated on the social parent, if existent. The interviewees comprised 62 mothers and 34 fathers, born between 1951 and 1976. Two of the parents who were interviewed and three spouses had other than Finland as their country of origin.

Types of economic and cultural capital were used as background information in placing the interviewees in social-class categories for this dissertation. Cultural capital is considered in its institutionalised form, meaning academic qualifications, and economic capital via income.

The background of the parents' own childhood family varied: 11 of them had two academically educated parents, 17 had one and 61 had none. The matter was not discussed in seven of the interviews. Only a few of the parents were originally from the metropolitan area of Helsinki, most of them having moved to Espoo from other parts of the country for study or work purposes. As became evident, both social and spatial mobility was characteristic of these parents, which is not surprising given the regional nature of the case city of Espoo. The aspect of mobility was considered in the analyses conducted for this dissertation.

Thirty-five of the parents were working or had recently been working in the private sector, and 61 in the public or third sector. In terms of educational level, six parents had a basic education, eight had vocational secondary education, three a general secondary education and 25 institute-level education (*opisto*); 10 had studied in a university of applied sciences (equivalent to a BA), 38 had a university degree (BA or MA) and six had a PhD. With regard to occupational status (Classification of Occupations of Statistics Finland) ranked from the highest (I) to the lowest (IX), the parents varied, leaning towards the higher end: 14 parents with status I, 33 with II, 18 with III, 11 with IV, nine with V, none with VI, two with VII, one with VIII and six with IX (two parents did not provide this information). Annual income varied across families from less than 10,000 to more than 100,000 euros. As combinations of these three factors (educational level, occupational status and income, considered in Bourdieusian terms forms of capital), the social class of the parents was defined as follows:

Table 1. Current social class of the interviewees³⁹

Social class	Mothers	Fathers
Upper class	5	13
Upper middle class	15	10
Middle class	24	7
Lower middle class	14	2
Lower class	4	2
Total	62	34

The school choices discussed concerned 42 boys and 55 girls (including one set of twins). All kinds of parent-child dyads are represented in the data: mothers of daughters (34), mothers of sons (28), fathers of daughters (20) and fathers of sons (14). Six of the children were in full-time special education. In 44 families the children were applying for classes with a special emphasis, 13 of them from upper-social-class, 15 upper-middle, 10 middle-, and six lower-middle class families. None of the children of lower-social-class parents applied for any of these classes. The twins included, 18 of the children applying for selective classes were boys and 27 were girls. Twenty-eight girls and 23 boys followed the local school allocation to non-selective general classes (including special education classes). Some of the children had studied an additional language (German, French, Swedish or Russian) in primary school: 15 boys and 26 girls. Some of these (17 girls and 11 boys) had been doubly selected - into a class with a special emphasis and to study an additional foreign language in primary school, both of which stem the choice of lower-secondary school (Seppänen & Kosunen 2015). In terms of social class, eight of these children had an upper-class, 11 an upper-middle-class, five a middle-class and four a lower-middle-class family background.

4.4 The interviews

The interviews were thematic and semi-structured, most of them lasting between one and two hours: the average duration was about 1.5 hours, the two

³⁹ One of the families in sub-study IV (based on family rather than individual income), in which the mother was a housewife with a higher education (MA, defined individually as upper middle class) and the father had a very high socio-economic status, was classified as upper social class. This was in accordance with Diane Reay's notion of 'familial habitus' (Reay 1998, 526–527) or 'family habitus' (ibid. 527).

extremes being one hour and 53 minutes, and just 35 minutes. The interviews were fully transcribed by a third party, a private company specialising in transcriptions with full confidentiality, and analysed by means of AtlasTI and NVivo software. The questions (see Appendix. Outline for the interviews) concerned educational choices and practices (conceptions of schooling, home-school interaction, parental involvement, school reputation, peer-group composition and school well-being), residential choices, free-time activities, and educational values and valuations on two levels (of the parents' own children, and the societal level). If the interviewee did not bring up the subject of equality in education the interviewer introduced it: this is noted in the analyses. Hopes and fears concerning the future of the child were also discussed. Background information about over-generational educational and occupational level (grandparents) as well as the educational and occupational paths of the parents themselves was also gathered. At the end of the interview the interviewees were asked to comment on certain statements, and to place themselves on a ten-point scale describing the socio-economic status of Finns. The interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011 by post-doctoral researchers, doctoral and Master's degree students, and research assistants in the PASC research group⁴⁰.

The interview structure (Appendix) was formulated on the basis of previous relevant research on school choice, as discussed in Chapter 2. In line with similar data-gathering exercises within the PASC project carried out in Vantaa in 2009 (n=76) and Turku in 2010 (n=101), the aim of the interviews in Espoo was to include the same content but also increase the number of questions in thematic areas such as school reputation. The interviews took place in family homes, university premises, parents' offices, and public places such as libraries and cafés.

4.5 The analyses

According to C. Wright Mills (1959, 57–58) methods are procedures that are applied in the process of enhancing understanding of or explaining phenomena. Methodology could be described as a set of methods, and includes the theoretical approaches researchers adopt in their studies. He also claims that conducting empirical sociological studies is problematic in that it produces only a certain type of knowledge if the researcher focuses solely on individuals and reduces phenomena to individual characteristics and life situations without further reflection on the societal level. (Mills 1959.) Mills summarises the basic function of social scientific research as follows: 'Social research of any kind is advanced by ideas; it is only disciplined by fact' (ibid. 71).

⁴⁰ The interviewers were Ulla Gratt, Satu Koivuhovi, Sonja Kosunen, Jaana Poikolainen, Tiina-Maija Toivola and Lauri Varakas.

The main theory-related ideas discussed in this dissertation derive from previous literature and the application of relevant research methodology in analyses of socially constructed facts. The aim was to find out if existing scientific notions concerning families' school choices also applied in this context, to identify the local and characteristic features of school choice in Finland, and to see how they relate to more general social phenomena.

The interview data were subjected to theory-related qualitative content analysis in sub-studies II, III and IV, in other words abductively analysed and categorised in relation to existing concepts and theories of school choice and a school's reputation. As Jouni Tuomi and Anneli Sarajärvi (2013) state, theory-related content analysis is a framework within which data is categorised, thematised and analysed. In this dissertation it involved formulating preliminary conceptualisations that developed into theoretical assumptions during the analytical process. The AtlasTI program was used for the coding. Quantitative content analyses (calculating the number of codes in the overall data) were conducted at the beginning of the coding process.

Qualitative content analysis followed, the codes and thematic categories being specified in each of three analytical rounds. The analysis was conducted in three phases in sub-study II, in other words school reputation was re-analysed in three different ways to ensure reliability in comparison with previous research. In the case of sub-study III, parental desires and limitations were assessed on the basis of the previous analyses conducted in sub-study II and contrasted with the Chilean data in a similar manner. The authors translated the interview material from Finnish to English or from Spanish to English.

The interviews were individually analysed for sub-studies II and III, and all the discourse concerning educational practices and school choice was coded phrase by phrase under one or more headings, derived directly from the utterances of the interviewees but frequently already analysed in more abstract terms. As a concrete example in terms of reputation, every time a school was mentioned, the quotation was included in the analysis. The first analytical round produced 446 analytical codes concerning school choice as a process, planning and tracking the educational path of the child, sharing information about schools within parental networks, the urban dimension of the choice, and the composition of the peer group in each school, among other things. These codes, so-called sub-themes, were later combined in bigger thematic categories such as the peer group, wellbeing and the exchange value of the education, and then contrasted with the chosen theoretical framework, in this case, Bernstein's conceptualisation of instrumental and expressive orders. After the first round the results were elaborated on within the general theoretical framework (see Chapters 2 and 3 in this Introduction).

The best example of a cross-analysis connection between the original data and the related theory reported in this dissertation is the division of expressive

order as an analytical unit (sub-studies II and III) into expressive-social and expressive-personal order. It became apparent in the first two analytical rounds that simply applying Bernstein's original definitions in the Finnish urban context would obscure some of the findings, which was not the intention. Consequently, the theoretical tools were redefined before the third analytical round, and used as a basis for reporting the results in sub-study II. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2013, 100) refer to the logic of invention (*keksimisen logiikka*) as the main point in the analysis. I have done my best to describe the analytical process (and the logic of invention) followed in the sub-studies as accurately as possible.⁴¹

The same framework was used in sub-study IV to analyse the interviews with families from the upper social classes (n=33). Both authors analysed all the interviews (in connection with the related articles Seppänen et al. 2015b and Kosunen et al. 2015b), and the main author of this dissertation went through all the original material a second time. All the discourse related to the social networks of the different family members (living, leisure, educational and lifestyle choices, the child's school performance, educational values and valuations, urban and educational segregation and the children's use of urban space) was coded and compared with earlier research (Bourdieu 1984; 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Florida 2002; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; Vincent & Ball 2007; van Zanten 2009a; 2013). There were 63 original codes altogether. These categories were thematised into relevant entities in line with the research aim to shed light on the discourse and practice of school choice among upper-class parents.

No new empirical material was gathered for sub-study I, which is a review of the literature on school choice that shows how the field of research is constituted in terms of cross-references in Europe, with a special focus on Stephen Ball's work. The first author of the study, Agnès van Zanten, reviewed all the relevant literature applying the conceptualisations and work of Stephen Ball related to France and Spain and written in French, Spanish and English. I (as the second author of sub-study I) reviewed all the material from Finland, Sweden and Norway, written in Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and English. Denmark and Iceland were also originally included in the analysis, but because of the small amount of research on school choice applying Stephen Ball's concepts, they were eventually excluded.

⁴¹ The main author of this study conducted the analyses of the Finnish data for sub-study III, and the second author, Alejandro Carrasco, analysed the Chilean data within a common frame. During the final stages of the analysis the original field notes (in Spanish) from the Chilean data were also available to the main author of the study.

4.6 Reliability and research ethics

A major goal in qualitative research is to describe and comprehend the phenomena in focus. According to Alasuutari (1994), putting the findings in dialogue with previous research and thereby including them in wider discussions and as part of a wider entity is considered one way of generalising qualitative findings. This was done consistently in all the phases of this dissertation. As Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2013) state, the credibility of a study can be assessed via the concepts of validity and reliability, which were developed and are widely applied in quantitative studies. Their use in qualitative research has been criticised, but there are no equivalent general guidelines for evaluating the quality of the findings. The main point in qualitative evaluation is to focus on the research as a whole and its internal consistency. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013, 133–135.)

I have aimed to be honest, open and critical in this dissertation. I have taken into account the ethical norms of the human, social and behavioural sciences (TENK 2009), and norms in securing the anonymity of the interviewees (see Kuula 2006). I have removed the names of individuals, companies and residential areas, the names of schools and catchment areas, and often even the special subject areas and specific names of the languages studied in the school when the information was not relevant to the analysis, in order to secure the anonymity of the interviewees, the schools and their staff when reporting the findings. As suggested (TENK 2009), I have done my best to avoid causing harm to the participants resulting from their participation. The parents interviewed for sub-studies II and III, which mainly describe the construction of symbolic hierarchies across general and selective classes, are identified by means of non-personalised pseudonyms, such as Mother 10 and Father 4. The names assigned to the interviewees in sub-study IV, in which the main focus is on the families' educational strategies and discourses, are informal first names such as Laura and Andreas, in accordance with the Finnish non-formal discussion style. The names were chosen explicitly to indicate the gender of the parent, and are widely used in Finland.

As required (TENK 2009), the interviews were voluntary and the parents were informed that they were participating in a school-choice-related research interview. On the ethical level it should be noted that the interviewees were able to define what sort of information they did or did not provide (Kuula 2006). Some of them refused to answer certain questions, especially those concerning the family's income.

The interviewees were contacted via an online communication system operated by the local educational authorities, and asked to participate in a survey in connection with the PASC project. Parents were asked to volunteer, and almost all those who did were interviewed. They were contacted by telephone

and email before the interviews, and given basic information about the research. Some of them asked questions about the research beforehand, and some wanted to know more afterwards. All the interviewees received reasonably similar amounts of background information in advance, thus there were no significant differences among them in this respect.

Reflexivity has featured strongly throughout the study in terms of observing the ‘social and intellectual unconscious embedded in analytic tools and operations’, and considering the research as a ‘collective enterprise rather than the burden of the lone academic’ (Bourdieu 1989; Wacquant in Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 36). Reflecting on the position of the researcher and triangulating the findings within the research community have been intentionally and continuously pursued. Preliminary findings have been presented to academic audiences at different seminars and conferences and the analysis has been sharpened and deepened based on the received feedback, all of which contribute to the credibility of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013). All the co-authors have been engaged in the common processes of reading a wide range of research literature, analysing data and writing research papers. Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 38) sees reflexivity as a requirement for sociological work and as an ‘epistemological program in action for social science’. The reflexivity in this dissertation has also served, as Steiner-Khamsi (2009) puts it, to avoid being culture-insensitive.

Vincent and Ball (2007, 1062–1063) openly describe the requirement for researchers to position themselves in relation to the phenomenon they are studying. Reay (2004b), on the other hand, points out in a footnote that reflecting on the position of the researcher might detract attention from the interviewees, on account of which she does not do so in the actual text. Explicit reflection is considered relevant in this work, and is part of the methodology. During the process of data collection and analysis I, the main author of this dissertation, was a relatively young (in her 20s), white and native-Finnish-speaking, upper-middle-class (in terms of the definitions of social class applied in this dissertation) woman living in a few capital cities across Europe and South America with no children of her own. Therefore I am not claiming to intuitively, or based on my own experience, understand parenthood or the parental anxieties concerning the school choice of their children.⁴²

I have described the research process and my own role as a researcher as thoroughly as I thought necessary, which could be seen as a factor increasing the trustworthiness of a study (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 211).

⁴² Later on, in 2011, I interviewed my own parents individually based on the same interview structure as used with the parents interviewed for this study in order to raise my awareness of my own family background concerning educational choice. I obviously did not use these interviews in the analysis reported here.

5 RESULTS

This dissertation comprises four articles. One of these explores the theoretical and conceptual framework of the academic debate on school choice in Nordic and Continental Europe (sub-study I⁴³), within which the three empirical studies (sub-studies II, III and IV) are positioned. The concepts and interpretations applied in the research in Europe travel across countries as researchers read and refer to one another's work. It is evident that there are three main areas of study: policies and school markets, school choice as a social practice, and school choice in both areas in a local context. The findings of this dissertation can be positioned along the continuum representing the market-sceptical approach to school choice (Bunar 2010), and simultaneously at least to some extent covering the presented perspectives (sub-study I) on school markets (here the space of school choice: sub-studies II and III), and school choice as a social practice (sub-studies II, III and IV) and as a local phenomenon (sub-studies II and III).

As van Zanten (2009a, 179–180) states, studies on school choice in cities should investigate the characteristics of the 'objective' and the 'concrete' school market, including the local dynamics of choice, urban space and educational provision in general. The construction of parental choice in relation to the locally provided room for choice should also be examined. The aim in this dissertation is, first, to explore empirically how the space for parental choice is socially constructed through the social hierarchies of schools and their general and selective classes in the local urban context (sub-studies II and III). A further aim is to find out what forms of capital and processes of transformation and transmission are required in the making of a choice in the local context (sub-studies II and IV). Finally, the study explores how these symbolic relations relate to the possible reproduction of social positions via educational practices in the Finnish comprehensive-school system.

A major contribution of this dissertation is to introduce the concept of the *social space of school choice* as a way of gathering together the findings reported in all four articles and furthering the discussion on the applicability of relevant research across localities (sub-study I). The concept is elaborated on more thoroughly in the latter part of the results section (5.2), but in brief, the social space of school choice constitutes the relative positions of agents within the social hierarchies of families, and of the symbolic hierarchies of schools within the *borders of local governance* (governance of education) and *urban limitations* (local urban context). As a concept it relates to optimising the choice

⁴³ The focus on Stephen Ball's work on school choice was intentional and in response to an explicit demand to investigate his work for a special anniversary issue of the London Review of Education.

in the competition space (see Taylor 2002): knowing with whom one is competing, what the positions of the other agents are, what is the symbolic significance of the competition, and how to react to it - in other words having a feel for the game (see Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

5.1 Families and school choice in cities: symbolic hierarchies, the transmission of capital and the legitimation of distinction

As Bernstein (1977) suggests, the applied concepts of instrumental order, expressive-social order and expressive-personal order were utilised as analytical tools for exploring the symbolic hierarchies of prestige and reputation in schools (sub-studies II and III). Two overlapping spaces of parental choice were discovered: *the local* and the *selective*. The general (non-selective local-school allocation) classes, in other words seven individual entities in the city of Espoo, constituted a catchment-area-based *local space of school choice*. The borders of these spaces were the catchment-area borders, which by definition and in accordance with school-allocation policies and practices are top-down dictated by the city. Local schools were allocated to children in these geographical areas within the boundaries of educational governance.

On the social level there were two kinds of local spaces of school choice based on the reputational hierarchies of the general classes. The first of these comprised the catchment areas, in which no significant differences in prestige among the general classes were evident and the social hierarchy of schools in the area was thereby practically non-existent. The parents in these areas seemed less anxious about putting their children in the general class of the local school. In other areas there was a clear hierarchy among the general classes, which in at least one of the schools was described as aversive and parental anxiety began to show in the discourse. With only a few exceptions the interviewed parents actively wanted to avoid allocation to the classes with the worst reputations. The exceptions related to the personal experience of having older siblings succeed at the school, or to ignorance of the general reputation of that school and any others in the area. Parents from lower social classes or with an immigrant background, who were aware of the school's reputation, also used avoidance as a tactic: there were not many in the study, but their perceptions were consistent with those of the other parents. Many of them just did not have the means to make any other choice. They lacked multiple forms of capital, such as information about other options, or someone they could ask (social and cultural capital), as well as the economic means to pay for journeys to more distant schools, which the city did not cover in the case of selective classes. These families therefore stayed in the local space of school choice, even if they would have preferred a school beyond its borders.

The effect of the so-called aversive classes was to push those who were willing and able to use the *selective space of school choice* towards classes with a special emphasis either within that catchment area or in others around the city. In line with Hirschman's (1970) notion of choosing between *exit* and *voice*⁴⁴, parents in the hierarchically structured local space of school choice tended to take the exit option instead of using their voice as a political act with a view to improving the education in the general classes of the local school. This option was exercised by means of applying for selective classes. The selective space of school choice comprised the selective classes accepting pupils on the basis of aptitude tests. There were also *hierarchies of reputation across subject areas* (e.g. mathematics vs. sports) and *reputational hierarchies within the special-emphasis classes across schools* (selective classes with the same emphasis in schools 1, 2 and 3). Parental awareness of these subtle distinctions and of the related matching process of their own child within this hierarchy was a significant factor.

In short, sub-study II showed how the reputations of general and selective classes varied from class to class across and within schools, and that the local space had both hierarchical and flat symbolic hierarchies of prestige. The reputational distinctions across classes within the selective space of school choice were subtle, yet known by many parents. It became evident that the perceived knowledge was strongly related to the amounts of different types of capital the family possessed, hence the ability to move from the local space to the selective space varied across social classes. The positions of the families in the field of education in relation to school choice were not equal in that utilisation of the selective space required forms of capital that not all families possessed. What might logically follow is that if families are desirous of obtaining a place in the selective space, the selection process will eventually lead to distinction through educational choice even if it all happens within a public and tuition-free education system.

Second, parental conceptions of the desirability⁴⁵ of schools were linked to the hierarchies of prestige in multifaceted ways. Some of the characteristic patterns in the construction of parental desires and limitations were discovered in the case city in urban Finland (sub-study III): the same schools were discussed

⁴⁴ Hirschman discusses *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty* in terms of choosing between public and private education, but the point is being able and willing to choose something other than publicly provided education.

⁴⁵ Given the comparison with a strongly market-like Chilean education system, the concept of 'preference' was applied in sub-study III. As mentioned earlier, the market concept does not easily fit in with the publicly funded and run Finnish education system, hence the concept of space is applied in this study. In addition, 'preference' is conceptually closer to the economics of education than to sociology. Hence, the concept is not further discussed in this study in the context of parental desires, fears and ambitions.

by parents from all social classes, with the few exceptions of certain highly selective classes only the higher social classes talked about. In Santiago, on the other hand, the upper, middle and lower social classes all had their own context of school choice. The transition from a school intended for the middle classes to one targeted at the upper classes, was made technically impossible for middle-class families due to the practice of pupil selection. Hence, the ways in which the education system produced and reproduced social positions through educational choice were evident in Santiago: social mobility produced through education was restricted at an early stage.

This did not feature as strongly or as explicitly in the Finnish context. The Finnish parents emphasised school contentment and wellbeing (in other words valuing high expressive-personal order over instrumental order) in their discourse, and a large majority avoided classes with an elitist reputation⁴⁶. This was partly attributable to ideological factors, and also to the unacceptably high levels of unnecessary competition and stress for children in comprehensive school. Parents would have opted for schooling that was ‘good enough’: it did not need to be the best possible that was available. All the parents in Santiago, on the other hand, wanted the most selective and academically demanding school with the most prestigious reputation for their children. School choice meant selecting a desirable habitus and relevant social networks, which would determine the child’s social position in the future. Parental expectations of the long-term impact of school choice, good or bad, on the child’s future were not as deterministic in Espoo. They still had trust in the relatively good quality of education in all schools (with variations in expected quality). Still, school choice seemed to work as a social rather than a purely educational practice in its own way in both contexts. The mechanisms of selection and its legitimation still needed to be more thoroughly studied, which was done in the later stages of the work with parents from the highest social fraction in urban Finland (sub-study IV).

The educational strategies and resources of the families were emphasised in the playing of the school choice game and optimising the choice. When the choice concerned the local school and the selective classes within it the parents were not confronted as directly with the conflicting demand for good parenthood (on the ‘imperative of good mother’ see also Vincent et al. 2010) and responsible citizenship (van Zanten 2009a). According to this logic, good parents choose a good school for their children, and responsible citizens support the development

⁴⁶ It is worth repeating here a limitation of this interpretation: the vast majority of the parents in question were from the middle class by definition. The upper-class parents interviewed for sub-study IV also discussed the elite classes and did not exclude them from the choice set for their own children as strongly as it appeared in sub-study III. Nevertheless, elitism was also strongly opposed by the upper-class interviewees, and the overly tough and competitive aspects of the ‘elite classes’ were criticised in similar terms as in the interviews with middle-class parents.

and improvement of the local area and its schools: they use their voice and/or stay loyal, hoping for improvements in the local situation (Hirschman 1970). As Reay (2004b) points out, some schools could become demonised in the ‘wider public imagination’. In this case, given that the reputations varied from class to class in all schools, demonization, if it happened, was far more complex than is often presumed.

The choice of a selective class away from the local school was seen in some respects as an attempt to create social closure in the parental discourse, and was interpreted as such in sub-study IV. In the case of a selective class in the local school (not necessarily the most prestigious in the city by reputation), the choice seemed to be a way of ensuring academic closure (*entre-soi scolaire*) in the parental discourse, meaning that pupils who are ‘interested, motivated and talented’ in a certain school subject study it. A socially more challenging choice, for which the parents said they would have needed more justification, was to explicitly aim for social closure (*entre-soi social*), meaning that only children from certain backgrounds are accepted. The conflict and the connection between these two ways of selecting children and choosing schools constitutes a basic contradiction in the parental discourse on the legitimation of selective school choice: they perceived selection into selective classes as meritocratic and based on aptitudes, whereas social selection was incomprehensible to them, as this upper-class father states:

Of our son’s friends, in [hobby], it seems that quite a few have chosen something other than the local school. In other words, they have gone to a class with a special emphasis. Surprisingly many. (Father in sub-study IV)

This could be interpreted in Bourdieusian terms as *misrecognition of the role of capital* in the process of families choosing schools and schools selecting their pupils (sub-study IV). The choices of upper-class families were in focus in this dissertation on the assumption that the actions of the highest social fractions have implications for the middle and lower classes (Giddens 1998): the highest social classes are the best able to exploit the choice option in public education systems (Taylor 2002), and find ways of using and getting around the official ‘rules’ of school choice (van Zanten 2009a, 217),⁴⁷. The ways in which upper-class families related to schooling (sub-study IV) and school choice were explored in the context of their general lifestyle. The transfer of economic capital into cultural capital appeared to be connected to family activities and desirable hobbies (see also Lareau 2003; Vincent & Ball 2007; Vincent & Maxwell 2015), and its reproduction depended on the available time resources (e.g. mothers not working and thereby being able to help with schooling and to spend time with

⁴⁷ Upper-class educational choice has not been widely studied in Finland, with a few recent exceptions (Kosunen et al. 2015b; Rinne 2012; Soisalo 2014).

their children), which again depends on having sufficient economic resources (see van Zanten 2009a, 116). Special attention was given to the social capital that influences the choices of these families, which was in line with sub-studies II and III investigating the impact of the parental grapevine.⁴⁸

The upper-class parents in this study did not seem to be cheating the system in the same way as, according to some previous studies, some middle-class parents do in other Finnish cities with fewer options for parental choice (Kosunen 2012) and no possibility of exit (Hirschman 1970). Nevertheless, given the high amounts of all sorts of capital in the upper-class families, the children were able to opt out of general classes in the local school together with their friends. For example, institutionalised hobbies involving music and sports and the embodied cultural capital they provided gave the children some advantage in the aptitude tests for certain classes with a special emphasis, which assessed the skills acquired through these extra-curricular activities⁴⁹. Vincent and Ball (2007, 1067) refer to this as a process in which 'inherited capital is supplemented by that bought in activities'. The parents negotiated the school choice with other parents of children with particular hobbies such as certain ballgames and ice hockey. The social profiles of the families in these networks were fairly similar, according to the parents involved⁵⁰. The families thus seemed to be moving towards closure, which they presented and justified as a 'choice by aptitudes'. They said they had chosen a class with a motivated and talented peer group that included some of their children's friends from their hobbies, which in other terms could be described as academic closure based on skills and knowledge. It is worth mentioning that not all of these upper-class (in terms of cultural and economic capital) families had the necessary resources to choose 'well': some of them admitted they were lacking in perception with regard to the symbolic hierarchies of the local schools, their reputations and their prestige, and did not know how to access them. A frequently mentioned source of information was the relevant social networks the family had.

⁴⁸ Vincent and Ball (2007, 1071) similarly found that the division between body and soul and their relative positions was not as obvious as implied in Bourdieu's work (1984), and that both were valued in the 'construction' of a healthy childhood.

⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning that some of these children could have acquired the necessary skills at primary school in classes with a special emphasis, within the public education system. The testing for admission to primary-level classes with a special emphasis on music, for example, seems to be based on musicality rather than musical skills. Nevertheless, the mechanism of gaining advantage in the competition for places in special classes through costly extra-curricular activities should be questioned.

⁵⁰ As noted, in this case we only interviewed upper-class families. The hobbies through which parents met and socialised could also be considered middle-class activities (Lareau 2003), even if most of them were on the most expensive level of the free-time-activity scale. We do not claim in sub-study IV that access to these hobbies is completely denied to other social classes, but suggest that some of the choice strategies of the upper class were related to participation in these hobbies and seemed somewhat specific.

Nevertheless, many of these parents pointed out that they were aware that the choice of selective classes away from the local school was also a de facto practice of social closure based on social background, which needed to be justified and legitimised. The creation of social closure through pupil selection was considered undesirable (which was not the case in Chile according to sub-study III). Explaining why they felt they had to justify their choice, apart from a general feeling of anxiety, some of them referred to the conflict between the uniform welfare-state-related ideology of Nordic comprehensive education and the emerging social distinctions via pupil selection. They even mentioned the trauma of the civil war in Finland, since when there has been considerable reluctance among all social groups to talk about the elite. Aiming to be 'just ordinary' and encouraging the child to stay with his or her friends when choosing a schools was one common objective. This could also explain, to some extent, why the classes with an elitist reputation were not referred to as the most desirable in the parental discourse, even though some selection into 'averagely good classes' was supported (sub-studies II and III). The practice of selection was naturalised through the concept of the talented child, indicating misrecognition of the role of different forms of capital (sub-study IV).

Economic capital became a mediating tool with which to access the selective space of school choice and classes with a 'better' reputation (sub-study II). The highest social classes had the residential option as a means of accessing a school with a good reputation, their children were more likely pass the aptitude tests, and they had the means to lessen the anxiety related to choosing a school other than the local one. Parents who are familiar with the functioning of the education system and the space of school choice (cultural capital) and have sufficient social networks to fill the gaps in their knowledge (social capital), can make a socially acceptable and reasoned choice in line with the norms of the social circles in which they move. Success in the competition was also related to the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital: the child needs certain skills to pass the aptitude test (embodied cultural capital), which at least in some disciplines can be enhanced via institutionalised training requiring economic capital. The talent that, according to the parents, justified their socially distinctive choices in the seemingly meritocratic selection into classes with a special emphasis was then transformed into institutional cultural capital in the form of formal education in selective classes. This would also be a time when the child could accumulate various types of social capital.

The upper-class (and some of the middle-class) parents could not be held accountable for the fact that their children were talented, hardworking and motivated, and wanted to join a selective class for multiple explicit and often non-explicable reasons. This is interpreted as a natural practice deriving from habitus. The interconnection between academic and social closure was often hidden and legitimized through institutionalised practices of selection, which

only shows the complexity of the phenomenon given the inclusion of other agents such as schools and local educational authorities. Given that selective choice seemed to be the norm in certain social circles, less justification was necessary, as ‘everyone’s choosing’. Few differences were identified in the choosing behaviour of the cultural and economic fractions of the upper class: almost all of them used the selective space of school choice.

In any case, the upper-class families had a wide space for school choice: they were well aware of the symbolic hierarchies of schools, and they were able to position themselves realistically in relation to their competitors, meaning other families, in the field. They had a clear picture of the social space in which they were operating, and held the relevant trump cards to succeed in their school choice. In some cases, especially in second-generation urban and academic families, there was already a ‘culture of choice’, or as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) put it, a ‘class ethos’ of choosing and selecting a distinct route. The empirical findings from urban Finland reported in this dissertation seem to be in line with Broccolichi and van Zanten’s (2000) observations in the French context:

...the differences between parents from different social milieus have not only to do with parental will to send their children to better schools - as is assumed in explanations that do not take into account the social conditions conditioning school choice - but also with their varying levels of knowledge about schooling establishments and of power to get into them under good conditions. (Broccolichi & van Zanten 2000, 58)

5.2 The social space of school choice

The theoretical expansion of these empirical findings from urban Finland to a more general model of school choice processes is discussed via the concept of the *social space of school choice*. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) state:

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake at the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 97)

In the quotation Bourdieu explains the logic of action of a field, which changes and is structured by power relations among the agents. There may be multiple fields in a social space, such as the educational or the cultural, which then have sub-categories such as the fields of music, art, literature or sports. The fields are

relatively autonomous but simultaneously structurally homologous with other fields (Bourdieu 1993, 6). It is essential in this theoretical elaboration to focus on the relations of the agents occupying the positions in the field, in other words to 'think relationally' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 96). The theoretical elaboration of the symbolic hierarchies of schools and their interconnectedness to the social hierarchies of families conducted for this study highlighted the relevance of the homology thesis across fields within the space.

According to van Zanten (2011, 187), the institutional strategies of schools and the social practices of parents related to school choice always have their local features and are strongly influenced by status dynamics (*dynamiques statutaires*). Schools and families aim to become associated with families and schools that would positively affect (by maintaining or improving) their own status in the social and symbolic hierarchy. Hence, the system of competition over status positions is based on asymmetries in the hierarchy and on the aim to redefine the positions of schools and families within it. (van Zanten 2011.) Moreover, the hierarchy of schools seems to structure the parents' and the schools' logics of action in each local market (Delvaux & Joseph 2006; Maroy & van Zanten 2007). The relationships between the symbolic hierarchies of schools and the social hierarchies of families competing for study places are discussed here through the analyses of parental discourse presented in sub-studies II, III and IV.⁵¹ What structure of social position emerges, and how does this affect the choice process among families with different social backgrounds and different positions in the field? This latter section of the results chapter introduces the theoretical concept of the *social space of school choice*, which is based on previous literature on school choice and made more specific through the empirical perspectives discussed in this dissertation.

The main aim here is to build on what Taylor (2002) started and Seppänen (2006, 26) continued in explicating the formation of lived school markets, focusing particularly on the Finnish, tuition-free and ranking-free educational context. Taylor (2002) focused on the physical space and the micro- and macro-level differences among educational consumers. His aim was to show how competition space and institution space overlap, and how schools and families (consumers) appear to be positioned in relation to both. Elaborating on this idea, Seppänen (2006) concentrated even more on the symbolic differences across schools within that field. The objective of this dissertation as a whole is to contribute theoretically to the given and applied definitions of lived education

⁵¹ Anheier et al. (1995) adopt a somewhat similar approach regarding the social networks of writers in Germany in their investigation of the social positions of writers and their mutual social structure in the field of literature. They found strong support for the hypothesis that actors are positioned in the social space based on their overall volume and composition of possessed capital. They discovered that the accumulation of cultural capital was highly significant, but that social and economic capital also played a part in the transfer of one form of capital into others.

markets (Lauder et al. 1999; Waslander & Thrupp 1995) (or *lived school markets*; Seppänen 2006), *institution space* (Taylor 2002) or *institutional space of school choice* (Varjo & Kalalahti 2011), and *local and selective space of school choice* (in sub-study II *local and selective school choice space*), and to introduce the social space of school choice as a concept in the field of public education. According to the reported findings (sub-studies II, III and IV), the family's relation to the city as an urban area and a system of educational governance, and to the socially constructed symbolic hierarchies of schools (knowledge about them and personal desires and limitations), the school's selection criteria (for classes with a special emphasis) and parents' previous educational strategies (e.g. choosing additional languages) all involve the transformation and transmission of different forms of capital within and across fields. The transmission is related to reproducing educational and social positions, and in a wider context concerns the emergence of social inequalities.

The concept of 'geographical imagination' (Andersson 1998) has been used in urban studies to explain the symbolic and descriptive features (e.g. stigmatising certain neighbourhoods as 'dangerous') people include in their perceptions of neighbourhoods: a similar notion is applied here to investigate the socially constructed differences and symbolic hierarchies of schools in cities. In order to match the child with a preferred and accessible school (van Zanten 2013) its parents need to be aware of and to optimise the reputational hierarchies of schools. Access to such knowledge seemed to relate to their social networks, as shown in other studies on Finnish cities (Gronow et al. 2015; Kosunen et al. 2015a). Thus, in order to play the 'game of school choice' well, not only did the parents need information about the school's reputation, they also had to have an understanding of their own position in relation to the other families in the field of competition. This may be what Bourdieu meant (1985) in relating the practical mastery of the social structure to the sense of the occupied position. It is therefore suggested here that the addition of the social space of school choice to Taylor's (2002) original division into physical (urban) space, institution space and competition space will give a better picture of the practices of parental choice.

The social space of school choice incorporates the symbolic hierarchies of schools and the social hierarchies of families (mobilisable forms of capital in different fields, such as linguistic, music, sport and education). The following figures (Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) are intended to capture and clarify the different and overlapping elements in the social space of school choice, even if the visualisations simplify the complex phenomenon somewhat. Figure 3 depicts the symbolic hierarchy, in other words the city's schools (organised by their hierarchies of prestige) situated in the urban space on a map of the city, which as a feature is acknowledged to have an impact on parental choice (Oberti 2007; Rivière 2014; van Zanten 2009a). The schools are positioned on the map where

they are positioned in the city, which was also part of Taylor's original conception, elaborated by Seppänen (2006). An additional element, *urban limitation*, is added to this model. The urban limitation in this case might be a road or a lake, which is part of the urban context (in Espoo) and affects the length and security of the school journey, which in turn has an impact on parental choice, as shown previously (sub-study II). The vertical axis describes the level of symbolic prestige attached to the school in question within the social hierarchy of schools in the city, which was empirically derived from the parental discourse in sub-studies II and III. The higher the position of the school, the higher is its prestige. Thus, schools differ in their symbolic prestige and geographical location, both of which define their desirability and accessibility to families. These hierarchies are visible in the empirical analysis from which this idea derives in comments such as the following:

... and I might be naïve. I have this, not evidence-based, but feeling-based idea that in that school [in a high-SES area] I could go to any class, so either it would be any class in [the higher-SES area] or then one of these thematic [selective classes] in this [low-SES area]. It gives you an opportunity. (Father in sub-study II)

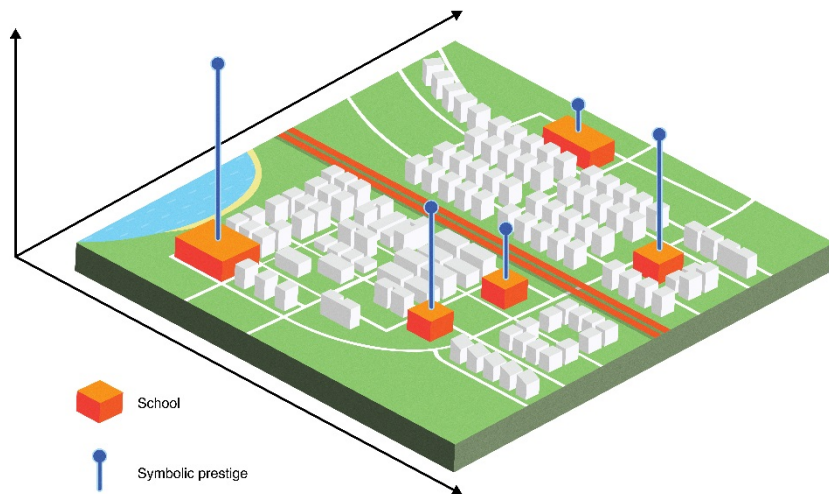


Figure 3. The schools in the city: symbolic hierarchies of reputation

On the other side of the social space of school choice are the families, depicted in Figure 4 as social hierarchies in the urban context based on their possession of capital, thereby indicating their mutual relations and residential location. Figure 4 is similar to Figure 3 in terms of the basic outline, hence the bottom is the urban space and the families are positioned according to the addresses of their homes. The vertical axis describes the hypothetical overall amounts of capital they possess: the higher the family is positioned on the vertical axis, the more capital it has accumulated in varying combinations of cultural, social and economic capital. A concrete example of accumulated and mobilisable capital in different fields (e.g. languages, sport) and also a sought-after physical position of the family house in the city can contribute to the multiple options of some families, as shown in the following:

Actually we had multiple options, I think more options than many others, since we could choose to continue in this international environment and proceed to [international] school, or then to . . . the [class with a special emphasis], and then we had this [nearby school in the next municipality]. So we didn't actually talk at all about the possibly allocated option. We had all sorts of options. Eventually the outcome of the process was a happy one, and he got into the [class with a special emphasis]. He got into the one we didn't believe he would. He performed so well in the aptitude test. (Father in sub-study IV)

These combinations are known to shape the possibilities and limitations related to school choice, together with the family's geographical location, as shown in sub-studies II, III and IV.

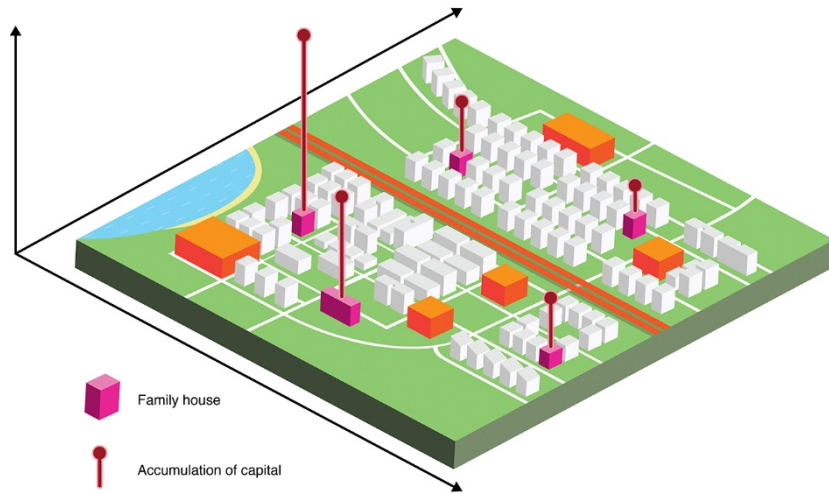


Figure 4. The families in the city: social hierarchies according to the possession of different forms of capital

The essential school-choice-related question facing families in an educational-policy setting such as this concerns the choice making. How do they choose a school from the schools within their own catchment area (the local space of school choice; see sub-study II)? How do they choose a selective class, possibly in another catchment area (the selective space of school choice; see sub-study II)? The *borders of educational governance* limit the choice (Figure 5).

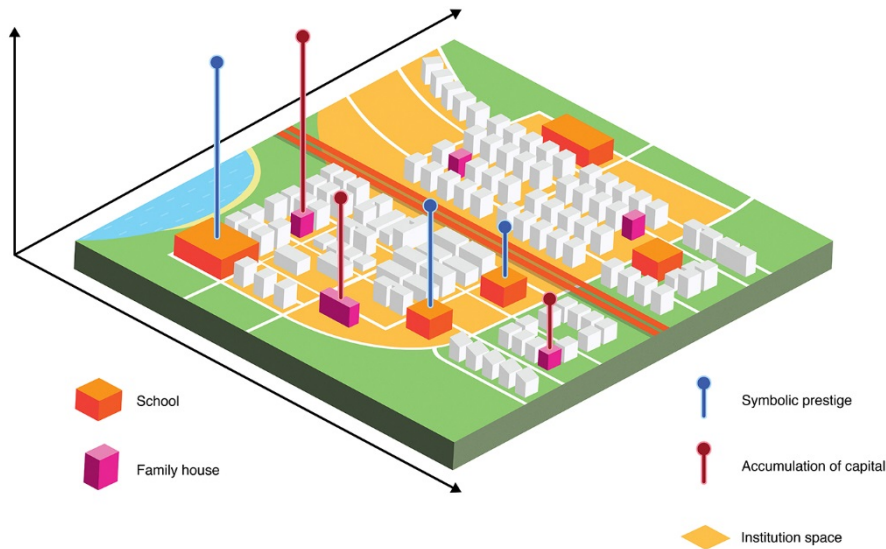


Figure 5. The institution space (borders of educational governance) in the city

A successful school choice across catchment-area borders (marked as institution space in Figure 5) requires knowledge of the symbolic hierarchies in the provision of schools in different areas, geographical and institutional access to the schools, and knowledge about the other ‘players’ in the field, meaning the other families. The choice of another catchment area in many cities also requires direct economic capital, in that parents might need to cover the costs of the school journey themselves. Moreover, some parts of the ‘game’ take place within catchment areas (institution space), which requires relevant knowledge of the education system and the functioning of the institution space (considered cultural capital):

There was this distinction – that those who did not choose [an extra language starting at the age of 11] were automatically allocated to the [neighbourhood school with the aversive reputation], and those who did were allocated to the [other neighbourhood school in the catchment area].
(Mother in sub-study II)

This information is available beforehand and facilitates the matching of the child with a preferable school (see van Zanten 2013). As Taylor (2002, 9) notes, cultural capital in particular has an impact on parental choice, but a ‘major constraint on the school choice is the amount of available choice, largely determined by the location of the families to the schools’. Taylor’s notion is taken seriously, but the findings reported in this dissertation indicate that the social space of school choice, including the relational, symbolic positions of schools and families, should be acknowledged in addition to the urban space. This

perceived social space of school choice (fairly close to the *landscape of choice*, Bowe et al. 1994b; *lived markets*, Seppänen 2006; Waslander & Thrupp 1995, and *choice set*, Bell 2009) provides a framework for the competition space described by Taylor (2002), in which families optimise their choices.

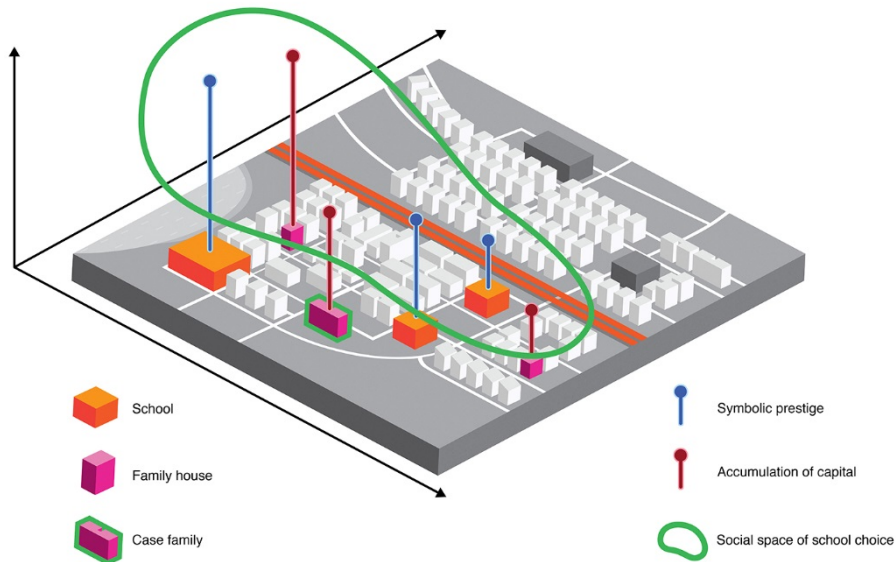


Figure 6. The social space of school choice (an example of one case family)

Figure 6 depicts the social space of school choice in which the family is perceived to be operating, and includes information about the geographical and symbolic position (prestige) of schools. Not all schools or families in the city necessarily fit into this image. Information related to other families in the social strata helps in terms of estimating the child's chances of success in the competition for places in schools with a selection policy. Ways of perceiving the limits of the field(s) and the position of one's own family in the social space of school choice are described in the following empirical example:

Yes, she also chose [language emphasis] . . . because it became clear during the information evening for parents that for this school . . . they can only take five more pupils from outside the area and these places are reserved for five basketball players, who come to the [sport] special class. So, it became very, very clear that [without choosing another emphasis] there was no way of getting in. (Mother in sub-study IV)

All the schools belonging to the social space of school choice of this case family (Figure 6) are within the catchment area (see Figure 7) and are on the same side of the highway: in other words there are no urban limitations. The symbolic hierarchy of the schools in relation to the known competitors for the places help

families to optimise their choice, which is depicted in more detail in Figure 7. Perceptions of the social space of school choice are strongly related to the amounts of social capital the family possesses, as described in the following quotation:

In fact we got the information earlier from the head of the team, given to all the players, that in [outside the high-SES area] there is a school emphasising sport with which our sports club [...] is in cooperation anyhow.
(Father in sub-study IV)

Then again, the actual choice is enabled via cultural and economic capital and their mutual transformation and transmission, as described in sub-study IV.

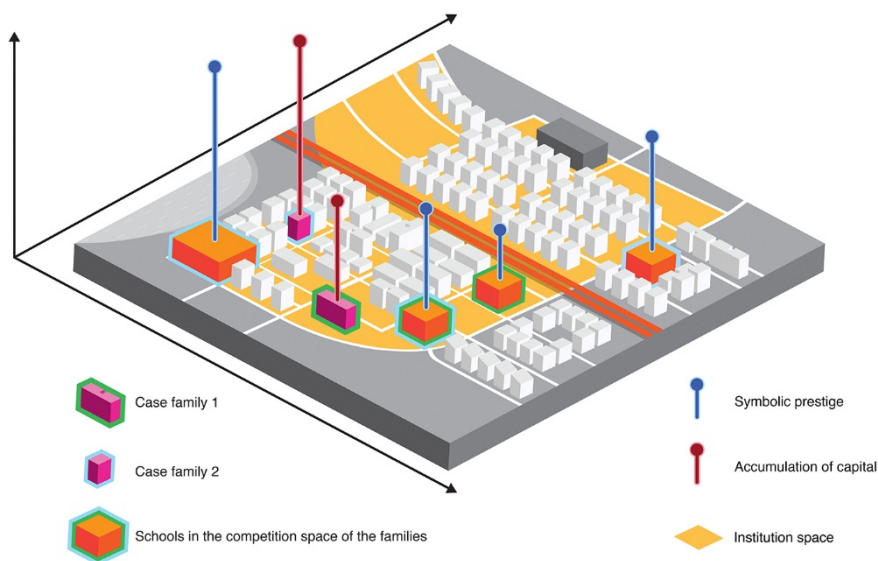


Figure 7. The competition space: optimising the child’s choice within the social space of school choice (an example of two families)

This still does not imply that parents in urban Finland seek as selective and instrumentally ‘valuable’ a school or class as possible in the symbolic hierarchy of schools (sub-study III), as has also been shown in other studies investigating families’ residential choices in relation to schools (Dhalmann et al. 2014, 21). The reasoning behind not choosing some schools varied in the interviews, but mainly related to wellbeing at school and fears of risky behaviour within the peer group (expressive-personal order). However, the more parents know about the positions of other families and other children in the competition, and the more they trust their own child’s capacities, the easier it seems to be to make the choice and to obtain a place at the preferred school. Hence, the phenomenon of urban

school choice is not only about the prestige of schools and individual choice, it also concerns the family's realistic evaluation of its competitive assets in relation to other families' assets.

The family with less capital (Case family 1) in the hypothetical situation depicted in Figure 7 has two nearby schools (coloured green) in its competition space. The other family (Case family 2) with more accumulated capital has three schools in mind (coloured blue), two in its own catchment area and one in another area beyond the urban limit. Case family 1 is aware of different players in the field with more and less capital than they have (Figure 6). They could therefore limit their choice to the less prestigious school on the assumption that other families like Case family 2 might apply to the more prestigious schools with stricter selection criteria. Simultaneously, by optimising their school choice in this way the family might avoid allocation to the least prestigious school (i.e. an aversive reputation: sub-studies II and III) in the catchment area, which is positioned (see Figures 3 and 5) within the same institution space but on the other side of the urban dividing line.

On the other hand, Case family 2 might apply to the slightly less prestigious school, which is near their home but beyond the urban limit and in another catchment area. These are not strong limitations for this family given that their capacities in terms of making a successful choice (via success in aptitude tests, for example) and physically getting the child to school (by car, for example) on a daily basis are more extensive than those of many other families, and they know it (as shown in sub-study IV). Finally, both families might have chosen an additional language for their children to study in primary school, one that is not taught in the 'aversive' school in the area. This is considered a 'soft' choice strategy (sub-study II), but it still clearly affects the actual choice in the local context.

The social space of school choice as a concept facilitates definition of the positions and relations of the different institutional and social actors in the field. It complements the concept of competition space, given the lack of 'hard' indicators in Finland where perceptions of a school's prestige are based on rumour and reputation. It also includes the parents' 'practical' reasoning (with regard to urban limitations, for example) about the usage of urban space, as well as the local governance of education, the institutional space in school choice. A crucial element in the information gathering (information flows) within the social space of school choice is the amount and quality of the family's social capital, and in terms of access to the selective classes it is the amount of cultural capital. It was reported in sub-study IV that access to selective classes could also correlate with the family's economic capital, which is not usually included in the debate on Finnish public comprehensive schooling. The most efficient actors in the social space of school choice seemed to be those who were able to position

themselves and the other families in relation to the symbolic positions of different institutions, and to choose the option that was best for them.

The novelty in this dissertation is not the focus on parental choice across social classes, or the differing symbolic hierarchies across schools: it is the fact that the findings relate to Finland, which is egalitarian by repute in terms of providing equal access to education regardless of social background. Nevertheless, the equal access to uniform comprehensive education is questioned. One of the major concerns raised in the dissertation is summarised in the words of an upper-class mother in the following empirical example:

This is the interesting thing here: the specialisation seems to create an A- and B-class division among the pupils. ... the problem is how to ensure a good education in these general classes as well. It can't happen that the most enthusiastic and dedicated teachers teach only the [selective classes], and then the less eager ones cover the general classes: no. Everybody should have the right to as good an education as possible. (Mother in sub-study II)

Echoing Bourdieu and the game analogy, if an agent sees the relevance in 'playing the game' he or she will invest in it and aim to pick up the 'trump cards', the value of which depends on the game, but their relative value is defined in each context (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 98). According to Bourdieu, empirical research should aim at exploring the field, where its limits lie and what species of capital are active in it (ibid. 98–99). This dissertation has shown what the limits are in the field of education (including school choice within comprehensive schooling), how the limitations of educational governance and urban space confine the field, and the extent to which the different forms of capital are valuable and transformable within the social space. In addition, the links across fields (e.g. culture and education) are explored in sub-study IV and the general notion is that certain trump cards in one field (culture) can be transferred to the next (education) and carry value within the social space of school choice. As a concept, the social space of school choice emphasises the role of social capital in acquiring power in the field in question (knowing what and how to choose, which later serves as a basis for the future accumulation of capital). The highest amount of power in the field is held by families with the required amounts of all forms of capital, which allows them to make the best choices. Nevertheless, the power invested in social capital seems to be stronger than was anticipated at the beginning of this study.

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim in dissertation was to shed light on the school choices made by families in the city of Espoo in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. The processes through which the local space and the selective space of school choice are constructed in the parental discourse are described in sub-study II. The discussion concerning 'good and bad schools' turned out to be superficial and covered up some of the distinctions within schools across their general and selective classes. It also imposed distinctions and limitations of choice on some families. The types of capital required of families making a school choice concerning a transfer from the local (non-selective) to the selective space of school choice, and the opportunities and limitations associated with these requirements in families with different social backgrounds, were thoroughly discussed (sub-studies II and IV). However, many families tended to choose schools that were best 'matches' for their own child, as they saw it. This did not necessarily mean choosing the most prestigious or selective school from the available options: many of them were considered unnecessarily stressful and demanding for the children (sub-study III). The implication reflects van Zanten's (2009a) conclusion: school choices are choices of a particular kind, not just any choices of consumption. As could have been predicted, the parents said they would not choose adverse study environments in terms of reputation for their children, which meant avoiding general classes in certain schools.

Further emphasis was placed on the choices of upper-class families (sub-study IV). These choices seemed to be socially distinctive, but simultaneously were legitimised through meritocratic discourse in which there was strong misrecognition of the role of the required capital invested in a successful choice. The trump cards handed to the children were transformed from one form of capital to another (economic to embodied cultural capital, for example), and transmitted from one field to another (from culture to education, for example). As noted in sub-study II, these practices, which appeared very naturally as part of the upper-class lifestyle, would not have been options for children with less capital (sub-study IV).

Hence, the assumption that Finnish education is of equally high quality across schools seems to be somewhat false, at least on the level of symbolic prestige and reputation in the parental imagination. Moreover, the families making the choices were in relatively unequal positions in that the amount and composition of possessed capital in reality affected their choice palette: pupil selection as practised by schools seemed to profit those with more capital in subtle and fairly hidden ways. Neither of these notions is surprising or shocking in the light of the international literature on school choice. The surprising aspect

is the fact that they derive from qualitative analyses conducted in Finland, a country with a reputation for providing equally good education across all schools, and similar educational opportunities to all pupils regardless of social background.

On a more theoretical level, this dissertation sheds further light on the conceptualisation of school choice in introducing the *social space of school choice* as a new concept in the field of public education. The family's relationship with the city as an urban area and with the socially constructed symbolic hierarchies of schools (knowledge, personal desires and limitations), local educational governance and schools' selection criteria (for classes with a special emphasis), and parents' previous educational strategies (additional languages) all have an impact on the transformation and transmission of different forms of capital within and across fields. This transmission is related to reproducing educational and social positions, and is connected with the emergence of social inequalities.

One of the main questions concerning school choice in urban Finland relates to the structural construction of the education system and its connection with the labour market. In the case of Chile (sub-study III; Kosunen et al. 2015a), the institutional links between kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and universities play an essential role. The labour market operates on certain credentials, which are socially linked to these early choices. The prestige of different educational institutions has not officially penetrated the process of enrolment in upper-secondary schools and universities in Finland, which is progressive: accomplishment of the required level of studies at any recognised institution qualifies the individual to apply and be admitted to the next level of studies. The relationship between the prestige of different universities and the recruitment of graduates in different fields of employment has not been widely studied in the Finnish context: this would be a relevant subject for future research⁵².

In any case, given that admission to comprehensive, secondary and higher education, and post-graduate recruitment (or recruitment after any level of education) is not institutionally linked in a similar manner as in some other countries, an obvious question arises when looking from outside the national context. What are families competing over when they fight for study places in certain schools? Despite the fact that institutional stigmas attached to school choice should not follow pupils to the following stages of education, for some reason many urban families in Finland find it relevant to play the game of school choice. In line with the logic of action in education, when some agents are seen

⁵² Some studies (e.g. Nori 2011) have shown the connections between the backgrounds of students admitted to universities, but no consistent results on the prestige of higher-education institutions have been produced.

to 'play the game' actively in case the institutional field diversifies (symbolically or even more concretely), others eventually feel the need to join in to avoid relative deficit. Even if the deficit resembles a market-oriented explanation, which in the Finnish context should not (at least currently) lead to institutional closure, there may be social consequences that would warrant more thorough investigation.

A sociological explanation of the reasoning behind the problematic nature of school choice in the Finnish context would reflect the fairly recent process of urbanisation in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the parents interviewed for this study were socially and spatially mobile in Finnish society: quite a few of them were educated at university level in cities in southern Finland, and stayed in the capital area after graduating. Nevertheless, their personal experiences of basic education were from elsewhere. One of the remaining novel issues to investigate in the capital area concerns the schooling of one's own children and the investment potential. There was also a contradiction in some parents between promoting selective educational paths by choosing selective classes for their children and thereby serving their individual needs (as talented, motivated and hard-working), and realising how much they had profited from uniform and egalitarian Finnish education in terms of social mobility. The question of the role of Finnish compulsory education was raised, and specifically the role of individualism.

In concrete terms this dissertation shows how families aim to avoid local schools with the worst reputation, and this applies to all families regardless of social class and ethnicity. They aspire to enrol their children in classes with a 'nice social mix' and good-enough teaching, and to avoid the most competitive classes, all in the interest of their children's wellbeing at school (or *moratoire expressif*; van Zanten 2009a). Everyday contentment was emphasised in the discourse, and 'tracking' the child towards their future education or occupation was not considered possible via school choice on the lower-secondary level. Aiming at 'good-enough' (see Simola 2001) teaching and learning to ensure an easier path *in* (but not *to*) secondary education was discussed especially among the highest social fractions. Choosing a preferred peer group and a desirable habitus was also important to many. There is thus a need to investigate the educational and occupational trajectories of pupils not only in terms of their current social status but also in relation to their educational career from the first stages of compulsory (or pre-compulsory) education and, conversely, in relation to the patterns of labour-market recruitment from particular educational institutions.

When school choice was officially implemented in the Finnish system at the end of the 1990s the discourse associated with the reform emphasised the possibility of providing more individual teaching and learning for pupils with differing needs (referred to in the French context as *personnalisation*; van

Zanten 2009a, 48), and was not as closely connected to societal macro-level discussions on equality and segregation as in other countries (demolishing school districts so as to reduce urban and school segregation, for example) (Seppänen 2006). Aside from this reasoning, the Basic Education Act (1998) has been described as a landmark shift from *social equity* to *individual equity* in Finnish education policy (Simola et al. 2015). Finnish teacher education provides high-quality training in universities and requires Master's-level qualifications even for primary school teachers. Given that the training also provides teachers with tools enabling them to divide tasks and aims within their classes, by assigning tasks that differ in the level of difficulty for example, one might question the need to give parents the opportunity to choose schools (or specifically to choose the specific classes in which their children will study). The law does not require it.

This dissertation has shown that parental choice is used as an option, and the higher social classes in particular can profit from it. However, even though the distinctions are not explicit (even to the choosers) in terms of social closure, they seem to produce patterns and mechanisms of social distinction within the public education system. These divisions at the comprehensive-school stage are not articulated at the next level of education due to the distinct structure of secondary education and meritocratic selection. Nevertheless, given that the promoted habitus (sub-studies II and III), learning outcomes (Duru-Bellat & Mingat 1997), practices of choice and attitudes towards studying (van Houtte & Stevens 2009) are partly peer-group related, the segmentation of the age cohort across and within schools in cities at the lower-secondary stage (Seppänen et al. 2015b) could influence the future educational and occupational trajectories of youngsters in Finnish cities in ways that are thus far unknown in the Finnish context.

The final issue raised in this dissertation is that of distinction via school choice and the possibility of providing arenas of social reproduction. Thus far the egalitarian Finnish comprehensive education system, historically based on the principle of one school for all, has aimed to offer equal opportunities to all children in terms of education and future occupation regardless of social class, gender, ethnicity or place of residence. There seems to be some diversification of educational provision, at least symbolically, in cities, and family capital, especially social capital, strongly influences school choices. The question of equal access to good education thus needs to be raised. Is the Finnish comprehensive school on its way to segmentation through social distinction and even closure, or are these mechanisms merely becoming more visible?

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APPENDIX

1. TAUSTATIEDOT

Kerro tallentimelle haastattelun ajankohta (pvm), haastateltavan nimi + PASW koodi (esim. id 678) kyselylomakkeen taustaosiosta.

Perheen kuvaus: keitä kuuluu haastateltavan perheeseen? (haastateltavan oma määrittelemä perheestä: lapsi ja isä tai äiti, ydinperhe (biologiset vanhemmat), uusperhe jne.)

Vastaajan syntymävuosi

Lapsen toisen vanhemman / huoltajan syntymävuosi

Haastateltavan koulutuspolutun kuvaus

Haastateltavan ammattipolun kuvaus; missä ammateissa toiminut ja kuinka kauan?

Haastateltavan puolison / kumppanin koulutus ja ammatti (ks. kysely)

Haastateltavan vanhempien koulutus ja ammatti

Haastateltavan puolison / kumppanin vanhempien koulutus ja ammatti

Haastateltavan ja perheen sosioekonomisen aseman kuvaus: taloudellinen tilanne, koulutus ja ammatti

2. VALINNAT, TOIVEET JA SUUNNITELMAT

a. Asuinalueen kuvaus

Kaupunginosan ja kadun nimi, jolla asuu (ks. kysely)

- Asuinaika alueella (ks. kysely)
- Millainen asuinalue on, viihdyttääkö asuinalueella?
- Kuvailu; millaisia ihmisiä alueella asuu? (SES)
- Huomiointiinko tulevat koulut asuinpaikkaa valittaessa, miten?
(Ks. kysely)
- Missä muualla asunut ja kuinka kauan?

b. Aiemmat ja muut kouluun liittyvät valinnat

Milloin ja millaisia lapsen koulunkäyntiin ja opiskeluun liittyviä valintoja on tehty jo ennen yläkouluun siirtymistä?

- päivähoitoratkaisut (kotiäitiys tai -isyys, perhepäivähoito, päiväkoti)
- esikoulu

Missä alakoulussa 6. lk käyvä lapsi opiskelee tällä hetkellä ja missä aloittanut? (ks. kysely)

- alakoulun valinta, millä perusteilla? ja miksi (ks. kysely)
- koulumatka, kaverit
- musiikki- tai kieliluokkavalinta tai muu painotettu opetus ja missä vaiheessa
- ylimääräisen kielen opiskelu (A2-kieli)

Onko ennen yläkoulua tehdyillä ratkaisuilla ja valinnoilla merkitystä lapsen tulevan koulutuksen kannalta?

c. Ajankohtaiset yläkouluvalinnat (6. luokalla)

Lapsen koulumenestys

- viimeisimmän todistuksen keskiarvon luonnehdinta (ks. kysely + vanhemman oma määrittely ka:n tasosta)
- mistä aineista parhaat arvosanat, missä aineissa ehkä vaikeuksia?

Mihin yläkouluun haettu 7. luokalla / tai mikä yläkoulu osoitettu tai osoitetaan? (ks. kysely)

Millainen mielikuva koulusta ja mihin se perustuu?

Millainen kouluvalintaprosessi oli? (ks. kysely)

- Käytiinkö perheen sisällä keskusteluja siitä mihin yläkouluun lapsi menee? Millaisia?
- Ketkä keskusteluihin osallistuivat? Osallistuiko lapsi itse?
- Miten lopulliseen päätökseen päädyttiin? Mitkä tekijät ja kuka tai ketkä lopulliseen päätökseen vaikuttivat?
- Oliko koulunvalintaprosessi samanlainen muiden sisarusten kohdalla?

Vertailtiinko eri kouluja? Millä perusteilla?

- Mitä muita vaihtoehtoja harkittiin?
- Mietittiinkö toisen oppilasalueen kouluja?
- Millaisia koulut ovat?
- Millaisia kouluja kodin lähellä on?
- Mistä lähteistä perhe sai tietoa eri kouluista? Millaista tietoa? (ks. kysely)
- Harkitsiko perhe hakemista muun kuin asuinalueen lähikouluun? Perusteluja? Jos harkitsi, mutta jätti hakematta, miksi?
- Osallistuttiinko yläluokkien informaatiotilaisuuksiin ja kuka tai ketkä niihin osallistuivat?

- Löytyykö / saadaanko yläkouluihin ja kouluvalintaan liittyvää informaatiota riittävästi?

Millaiset mahdollisuudet Espoossa on valita haluamansa yläkoulu?(ks. kysely)

Millaisia näkemyksiä vanhemmilla on lähikouluperiaatteesta eli siitä, että koulu määräytyy pääasiassa kodin osoitteen (asuinalueen) ja oppilasalueen mukaan?

Millaiset asiat ovat merkityksellisiä yläkouluvalintaa tehtäessä? Millainen on hyvä koulu ja opettaja? Mitkä ovat tärkeitä oppiaineita?

Millainen merkitys painotetulla opetuksella on vanhemmalle ja lapselle? Millaisia eroja on painotetun opetuksen ja yleisluokkien välillä?

Vaikuttaako/vaikuttiko painotettu opetus yläkoulun valintaan?
Miksi halusitte lapsenne hakevan painotettuun opetukseen?

Jos lapsi menee / on haettu / haetaan painotettuun opetukseen, millä perusteilla oppilaat valitaan / valittiin? (ks. kysely)

Mitä mieltä ollaan tasokursseista eli oppilaiden ryhmittelystä koulumenestyksen mukaan?

Mitä ajatellaan pääsykokeista ja kilpailusta peruskoulussa?

Pitäisikö yläkoulun tai jopa alakoulunkin päätteeksi järjestää ylioppilaskirjoitusten tapainen kansallinen päättökoe, jotta vanhemmat voivat niiden perusteella vertailla kouluja?

Pitäisikö päättökokeen tulokset tai jos sellaista ei ole, oppilaiden suoritustaso (esim. keskiarvojen keskiarvo) julkistaa jolloin siitä voitaisiin laatia nk. ranking listat?

d. Kouluun kohdistuvat muut toimet ja toiveet (valintaa kompensoivat tai täydentävät)

Millaisissa asioissa ollaan yhteydessä opettajiin ja rehtoriin?

Miten ja miksi osallistutaan ja / tai vaikutetaan koulun toimintaan (kodin ja koulun yhteistyö)?

- Osallistutaanko esim. vanhempainyhdistyksen toimintaan?
- Kuka osallistuu, millä tavoin ja miksi?
- Kouluun vaikuttaminen ajatellen oman lapsen oppimismahdollisuuksia / saamista muuhun luokkaan

Onko ollut tarvetta alakoulussa?

- Kouluun vaikuttaminen oman lapsen saamiseksi tiettyyn (parempaan) luokkaan / ryhmään
- Kouluun vaikuttaminen kaikkien lasten opetuksen kehittämiseksi (vanhempainyhteistyö, vanhempain yhdistys, koulun johtokunta, vanhempain aloitteet)

Millaisia suunnitelmia, toiveita tai haaveita vanhemmilla on lapsensa koulutuksesta, ammatista ja yhteiskunnallisesta asemasta tulevaisuudessa?

- Jatkokoulutus: ammattikoulu, lukio, korkeakoulu, yliopisto?
- Esimerkki toiveammattista, asemasta yhteiskunnassa

3. PERHEEN PÄÄOMAT

a. Taloudellinen pääoma

Onko taloudellisilla tekijöillä vaikutusta perheen tekemille koulutukseen liittyviin valintoihin? Tarvitaanko peruskouluun vanhempien rahallista panostusta? Ollaanko valmiita kustantamaan tarvittaessa koulumatkat? Kalliit harrastukset? Kurssit ja matkat? Kirjat?

b. Kulttuurinen pääoma

Miten lapsi viettää vapaa-aikaansa, mitä harrastuksia hänellä on?

Miten vanhemmat viettävät vapaa-aikaansa, millaisia harrastuksia heillä on?

Mitä perhe tekee yhdessä vapaa-ajallaan?

- Ohjataanko lapsia samankaltaisiin harrastuksiin ja miten?
- Onko perheellä ”korkeakulttuurisia” harrastuksia (kirjallisuus, musiikki, taide, teatteri)?

Onko harrastuksilla ja perheen vapaa-ajan viettotavoilla merkitystä lapsen tulevaan koulutusuraan? Millaisena vanhemmat näkevät erilaisten (ja varsinkin ”kehittävien”) harrastusten merkityksen ajatellen koulutusta?

- esim. ylimääräisen kielen opiskelu
- kirjojen, kurssien yms. hankkiminen lapselle
- harrastukset (ei vain ”kadulta” pois pitävät)

c. Koulutus ja kasvatust

Millainen merkitys vanhempien koulutuksella ja ammatilla on lapsen tulevaisuuden koulupolkua pohdittaessa? Entä perheen muiden lasten koulupoluilla?

Onko merkitystä sillä, tuntevatko vanhemmat koulutusjärjestelmän toimintaa?
(esim. mihin kouluihin voi hakea peruskoulun jälkeen)

Autetaanko lasta kouluun liittyvissä tehtävissä (kotitehtävät, oppimisvaikeudet)

d. Sosiaaliset verkostot

Kenen / keiden kanssa lapsen koulutukseen ja kouluvalintaan liittyvistä asioista keskustellaan?

Onko vanhempien sukulaisilla, ystävillä ja tuttavilla eli sosiaalisilla verkostoilla ja suhteilla merkitystä lapsen koulutusta pohdittaessa?

Millainen on vanhempien sukulais- / ystävä- / tuttavapiiri koulutukseltaan ja ammatilliselta taustaltaan? Keskustellaanko heidän kanssaan koulutukseen liittyvistä asioista? Millainen merkitys keskusteluilla on pohdittaessa koulutusta? Onko valittu samoin kuin ystävä/tuttavapiirissä on ollut tapana?

Tuntevatko vanhemmat opettajia tai muita koulutusalan ihmisiä ja keskustellaanko heidän kanssaan koulutukseen liittyvistä asioista?

Millaisena vanhemmat näkevät lapsen oman kaveripiirin merkityksen koulutukseen liittyviä asioita pohdittaessa?

Miten suhtaudutaan siihen, että samassa koulussa ja samassa luokassa on kaikenlaisia lapsia

- tukea tarvitsevia (erityisopetus)
- erilaisista sosiaalisista taustoista tulevia lapsia

4. ARVOSTUKSET

Vaikuttaako yläkoulu / kouluvalinta lapsen tulevaisuuteen ja koulutusuraan peruskoulun jälkeen? (ks. kysely)

Mikä on (yleisesti) lapsen/nuoren koulutuksen tavoitteena ja tarkoituksena?

Keskustelun jälkeen pyydetään haastateltavia laittamaan seuraavat asiat tärkeysjärjestykseen.

Yksilötaso: koulutuksen tavoitteena ja tarkoituksena lapsen/nuoren

- onnellisuus ja hyvinvointi
- tiedollis-taidollinen, älyllis-kriittinen kehitys
- sosiaalinen ja persoonallinen kasvaminen
- koulumenestys, kreditit ja pääsy työmarkkinoille => menestys työmarkkinoilla (ja tietyn statuksen saavuttaminen)

Millaisia maahanmuuttajia on Espoossa?

- Mitä ajatellaan siitä että maahanmuuttajataustaisia oppilaita on samassa koulussa / samalla luokalla
- Onko vanhemmilla kokemuksia sosiaalisesti ja/tai etnisesti moninaisesta oppilasryhmästä? Millaisia?

Mitä ajatellaan siitä että kukin saa itselleen sopivaa ja näin varsin erilaista opetusta VAI että kaikki saavat suurin piirtein samanlaista ja laadukasta, yhteistä opetusta.

Pitäisikö kaikilla olla mahdollisuus saada yhtä laadukas peruskoulutus ja sen jälkeen samanlaiset mahdollisuudet valita jatkokoulutus (koulutuksellinen tasa-arvo, equality)?

Tulisiko kaikkien saada omia tarpeitaan ja vaatimuksiaan vastaavaa koulutusta (koulutuksellinen oikeus, equity)?

Nähdäänkö ristiriitaa siinä, että vanhemmat saattavat haluta yhteiskunnassa kaikille lapsille tasalaatuisen peruskoulutuksen, mutta silti tekevät yksilöllisiä valintoja omalle lapselleen? Millaista ristiriitaa?

Onko suomalainen peruskoulu kokemuksen perusteella tarpeeksi / liian vaativa

- oppimisen (oppisisällöt, älyllinen kehitys jne.) suhteen
- kasvamisen (sosiaalisuus, käytöstavat jne.) suhteen?

Mitä mieltä ollaan seuraavista väittämistä:

1. on tärkeää, että kaikki peruskoulut ovat riittävän korkealaatuisia
2. on tärkeää, että erinomaisia ("huippu"-)kouluja?

Olisiko peruskoulu järjestettävä yhtenäisessä peruskoulussa eli yhtenäiskoulussa (1-9 lk) vai jaettuna ala- ja yläkouluun (1-6 lk + 7-9 lk)?

Miten peruskoulutus tulisi järjestää? Siten että

1. kouluviranomaiset ja -asiantuntijat päättävät kunnallisen koulun asioista, jolloin esim. oppilaat menevät pääsääntöisesti asuinalueen mukaiseen lähikouluunsa
2. kouluja on monenlaisia; kunnallisia, valtiollisia ja yksityisiä. 'Markkinat' (= kysyntä) määräävät nykyistä enemmän, eli kukin perhe ja oppilas päättävät siitä, mihin kouluun hakeutuu?

Lopuksi

Lisättävää? Voiko ottaa tarvittaessa uudelleen yhteyttä?

