Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the engagement and commitment of the informants involved in this project. I want to express my deepest gratitude to all who shared with me their memories of their former working lives as employees at the National Labour Market Board. I hope I have managed to do justice to all the stories, experiences and knowledge they have so generously shared with me.

I have worked with this project for a number of years, funded by the Swedish Research Council. The findings have been discussed with many people at various places, and I have received important and vital feedback and critique through collaborative efforts. Over the years I have especially benefited from enthusiastic, encouraging and inspiring discussions with Terese Anving, Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, Ann-Zofie Duvander, Sara Eldén, Johanna Esseveld, Janet Fink, Bob Jessop, Stein Kuhnle, Arnlaug Leira, Hanna Lindberg, Urban Lundberg, Pirjo Markkola, Ann-Catrin Östman, Christine Roman, Bente Rosenbeck and Ngailing Sum. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the Department of Sociology at Lund University. I especially want to thank all my friends active in the Family, Migration and Welfare (FAMIW) research group for contributing to a stimulating, open and inclusive intellectual environment. Over the years I have been visiting Klaus Petersen and his vibrant research environment at the Welfare State Research and Public Policy Section in Odense. I have gained immensely from the stimulating and energizing academic conversations that I always encounter during my visits.

I am deeply grateful to Sonya Michels and Ann Shola Orloff, who shared with me their interest in this project early on. Their vast and pioneering knowledge in the field of gender relations and the welfare state has given me a unique opportunity to further my perspectives: their encouragement and critique have been vital to the whole project. Ilona Ostner inspired me to think beyond my Swedish and Nordic lenses. Her sociological imagination and deep knowledge about the German experience gave me additional theoretical tools to use in the understanding of the Swedish case. My dear friend and colleague Diana Mulinari always
allows invaluable time for critical conversations about sociology, feminism and politics. She read the whole manuscript at an early stage and encouraged me to continue the project.

I am especially grateful to Pauli Kettunen and Eskil Wadensjö, who carefully read the whole manuscript during autumn 2016. Their extraordinary knowledge in the field of labour market policies helped me in many ways, not least to broaden my thinking on how to conceptualize and understand Swedish active labour market policy. Commissioning editor Emily Mew at Edward Elgar Publishing has been a truly perfect editor, not only always available to answer my many questions, but also patient and supportive in making sure this project came to an end.

Finally, to my companion and partner Mats Benner: your way of approaching academic life in general and sociological analysis in particular plays an absolutely essential role in my everyday life. You have discussed with me this project many times and reviewed countless drafts: I would not have finished this book without the support and love you always offer me. Thank you also to my children, Markus, Sebastian and Sofie, for letting me be part of your remarkable lives. You are my true source of inspiration.

Despite the truly generous contributions of colleagues and collaborators, all errors and shortcomings are mine alone.

Åsa Lundqvist
Lund, February 2017