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“Being a Risk” or “Being at Risk”: Factors Shaping Negotiation of Concerns of Radicalization within Multiagency Collaboration in the Nordic Countries

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“Being a Risk” or “Being at Risk”: Factors Shaping Negotiation of Concerns of Radicalization within Multiagency Collaboration in the Nordic Countries

Multiagency collaboration between state and municipal actors such as schools, social services and the police is at the core of the Nordic countries’ approach to preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Yet, assessment of reported concerns of radicalization differs across countries. This qualitative study analyze how professionals negotiate assessments to identify factors that shape whether a concern of radicalization develops into a perception of risk. We argue that differences in structural factors and “institutional logics” in addition to trustful relations between practitioners at the local level affect collaboration and shape the perception of the task when the assessments of concrete concerns are negotiated.

Keywords: risk assessment, violent extremism, multiagency collaborations, institutional logics

In response to violent extremism in various forms, the Nordic countries have formed local multiagency teams to handle radicalization and assess concrete cases of concern. As noticed by Head and Alford,¹ collaboration and coordination among practitioners with different backgrounds are often put forward as a standardized solution to complex problems. However, multiagency collaboration requires some degree of shared understanding, purpose, and mutual trust, which take time, effort, skill, and optimally produce “collaborative advantages”.² Yet, different backgrounds and “institutional logics” can give rise to disagreements.³ These factors apply to multiagency radicalization prevention and assessment of concrete concerns, which is also influenced by, e.g., the international “war on terror” and experiences with terrorist attacks, which inform policies and legal frameworks.⁴ Such aspects influence how diverse actors at the local level perceive the nature of radicalization prevention, which may vary from a primary focus on protecting public safety to how best to safeguard young people and

steer them away from criminal and violent extremist groups and back towards a “good life”.⁵

This article seeks to identify factors that shape the negotiation of concerns of radicalization within multiagency collaborations across the Nordic countries. Specifically, we analyze how factors shape the assessment process and negotiations within multiagency teams about whether concerns of radicalization may develop into perceived security risks and how concrete evaluations of concerns play out in this complex, contingent, and negotiated assessment process.⁶

Our assumption is that differences at the policy level in the Nordic countries along with the professionals’ different institutional logics influence collaboration, information sharing, and risk assessments at the local level. We ask the following research questions: 1) What factors shape assessments of whether a concern of radicalization develops into a perception of risk within multi-agency collaborations in the Nordic countries. 2) What influences how the assessment is negotiated between different professionals?

We use qualitative data from case studies in Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, which holds unique information about unfolding negotiations of what constitutes a concern of radicalization and the factors that shape whether a concern develops into a perceived risk of involvement in violent extremism. The data allows us to identify factors that shape assessments across institutional setups, professions, types of cases, and time. Based on our empirical findings from observing actual collaborative processes, we argue that practitioners’ perceptions of the nature of the task are shaped by institutional logics and structural factors, such as legal frameworks, organizational models, and assessment tools, which influence the negotiation of concern and risk. In addition, experience, time, and thus development of trustful social relations between

practitioners at the local level have a significant effect on how collaboration unfolds. As an analytical framework, we use the concept of institutional logics⁷ and a descriptive model developed by Sivenbring and Malmros,⁸ which compares the prevalence of different institutional logics, organizational setup and legal frameworks in policy texts on radicalization prevention in the Nordic countries.

The article makes three main contributions. First, the article provides novel theoretical insights about multiagency negotiation and assessment of concerns of radicalization and the development of risk perceptions specifically as well as the workings of public multiagency collaboration more generally. Other studies highlight the complexity and necessity of multiagency assessment of concerns and risks,⁹ but few studies investigate empirically the factors that shape such assessments and how negotiation of assessments of concerns and perceptions of risk – seen from the perspective of different professions – unfolds in practice. Second, the article provides unique empirical data in an area of research where primary data is notoriously difficult to obtain. By engaging practitioners from multiagency collaboration in the Nordic countries in simulation exercises based on fictive but realistic cases, we created empirically rich and ecologically valid data, circumventing problems of protection of personal information when dealing with actual referrals of radicalization concerns. Third, by collecting data from multiagency collaboration in 13 Nordic cities and individual interviews with 78 practitioners using the same simulated cases and interview guide, we created a comparative and unprecedented dataset that allows us to investigate multiagency assessment of radicalization concerns and whether and how such concerns develop into perceived security risks across professions, and local and national contexts.

Below, we give a brief overview of multiagency collaboration in the Nordic countries. We review extant research on multiagency collaboration to prevent

radicalization and violent extremism, and assessments of what radicalization concerns and risks may look like more broadly, to identify factors that may shape multiagency assessments of concrete cases. We then present the methods and data of the study and subsequently our empirical findings with specific focus on the differences we identify across professions within each country.

Multiagency collaboration and prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in the Nordic countries

Before diving into a review of the literature on assessment of concerns of radicalization and violent extremism in multiagency collaborations, some conceptual clarification is in order. In the following, “radicalization” refers to an individual’s change in values and attitudes towards embracing violence as a means to achieve political goals.

“Engagement” refers to a change in behavior leading to involvement with extremist groups and activities. “Extremism” refers to political ideologies and movements that reject core values and principles of democracy and universal human rights, and/or a readiness to use violence to realize political, religious, or ideological goals.¹⁰

Collaboration between state and municipal actors, such as schools, social services, and the police, is at the core of the Nordic approach to preventing and interdicting radicalization and violent extremism. It is referred to as the SSP model (schools, social services, police) in Denmark, SSP(f) in Sweden (“f” as in “free time”), SLT in Norway (coordination of local services), and Anchor teams (Ankkuri in Finnish) in Finland, which has a more developed inclusion of health care. The teams may consult or involve other professions such as psychiatry, prisons, and community or civil society representatives. Normally such multiagency collaborations handle concerns regarding youths up to age 18, but the age limit has been expanded in cases involving concerns of radicalization.

Multiagency collaborations are institutional setups for handling cases of individual concern regarding radicalization to violent extremism, where practitioners from different authorities come together on a regular basis. One of their tasks is to assess concrete cases of concern that have been referred to them by typically municipal frontline practitioners, parents/relatives/friends or members of the public.¹¹ A central task is to assess whether to categorize a concern as “security”-related or as a “social” issue for the individual and decide whether an intervention is required, and if so, what kind. Accordingly, they distinguish between radicalization concerns based on the perception that an expressed attitude or behavior may signal acceptance of (and potential involvement in) violent extremism (security risks) and the perception that social issues are putting the individual at risk (socio-psychological risks). The latter may be the outcome if the reason behind the concerning behavior is understood as a malfunctioning social environment or mental health issues, which require a social intervention. The goal is not only to prevent violent extremism but also to assist in referring individuals to interventions that would steer them away from extremism towards a “better life”, and interventions to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration are thus also outcomes of interagency discussions.

In the following, we present a review of extant research on multiagency collaboration and the factors that shape the assessment of cases. We have identified three broad categories of factors that are highlighted as important for understanding outcomes of multiagency collaboration: factors at an institutional/structural level, factors at a situational/interactional level, and factors concerning time and experiences of collaboration.

Institutional/structural level factors

Institutional logics

At the institutional/structural levels, studies of multiagency collaboration in the Nordic countries suggest that different institutional logics – that is different perspectives on the fundamental goals, strategies, and grounds for attention that are inherent to different professions, institutional orders, and organizational norms – can make this type of collaboration challenging.¹² An institutional logic constitutes the formal and informal norms that govern, or guide, practitioners' actions, interactions, and interpretations of situations.¹³ Such norms are developed through education and practice,¹⁴ which means that the basic institutional approach, professional norms, and logics within, e.g., the police are different from those of teachers or social workers. In this article, we analyze institutional heterogeneity in social spaces, such as multiagency settings, through the prism of institutional logics, which are defined as:

Socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their life and experiences.¹⁵

Research on multiagency collaboration points to the importance of differences in institutional logics for understanding how collaboration unfolds.¹⁶ Institutional logics are so to speak “the rules of the game” guiding professional actors in handling cases and situations in accordance with their institutional belonging. Lindekilde describes a situation in which different logics could cause problems in risk assessment and posits that “what counts as ‘radicalization’ or ‘signs of radicalization’ on the one hand and

protective ‘resilience factors’ on the other hand – who qualifies as ‘vulnerable individuals’ – varies considerably across professional groups”.¹⁷

Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury¹⁸ argue that an institutional logic consists of four elements. First, *collective identities* inform actors about who they are and where they belong, and ultimately how to act in a given situation. Second, *goals* are what is desirable to achieve when you belong to a certain collective identity. Third, *strategies* help actors identify how to act in a situation and solve a problem. Finally, the *ground for attention* explains why some questions/situations/problems are given attention within specific institutional logics, while others are not. In short, the institutional logic perspective on organizational collaboration argues that such differences will shape interactions, assessment of information and outcomes of concrete situations (here assessment of cases of concern and whether the concern develops into a perception of risk), may constitute a barrier to effective collaboration and be a source of misunderstandings. Sivenbring and Malmros¹⁹ use the institutional logic framework to compare policies of radicalization prevention in the Nordic countries and identify two main logics: a “societal security logic” and a “social care logic” as illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1. Institutional logics in Nordic CVE efforts²⁰

	Societal security logic	Social care logic
Collective identity	Police, security service etc.	Teachers, social workers, youth worker etc.
Goals	Security and safety of citizens and public facilities. Law and order.	The well-being of pupils, clients etc. Safeguarding individuals.
Strategies	Repressive: prevent, interdict, mitigate. Incapacitate.	Relational: prevent, support, help. Emancipate.
Ground for attention	Signs of rule-breaking behavior.	Signs of socio-psychological concern.

Ground for authority	Chain of demand: centralized decision-making.	Ad hoc: decentralized decision-making.
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Effective multiagency collaboration requires that involved actors hold or develop a sense of mutual trust and acknowledgement of competences as research points to the role of institutional and personal trust as a prerequisite for multiagency collaboration.²¹

Perceptions of trustworthiness and legitimacy form the basis for, e.g., exchange of sensitive information, pooling resources, and joint implementation of decisions.²²

Research shows that differences in institutional logics are important for cross-professional trust, and that professionals with more similar institutional logics show a higher degree of immediate mutual trust.²³

Organizational setup and legal foundation of multiagency collaborations

The multiagency approach to preventing violent extremism in the Nordic countries builds on pre-existing approaches and networks for crime prevention for which especially Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have long traditions.²⁴ However, research shows relatively large variation regarding legal frameworks and organizational setups between the Nordic countries and even cities.²⁵ The way multiagency collaboration is regulated and organized – who sits at the table, with what mandate, regulated by which rules, and equipped with what assessment tools – is obviously important for how assessment is carried out.

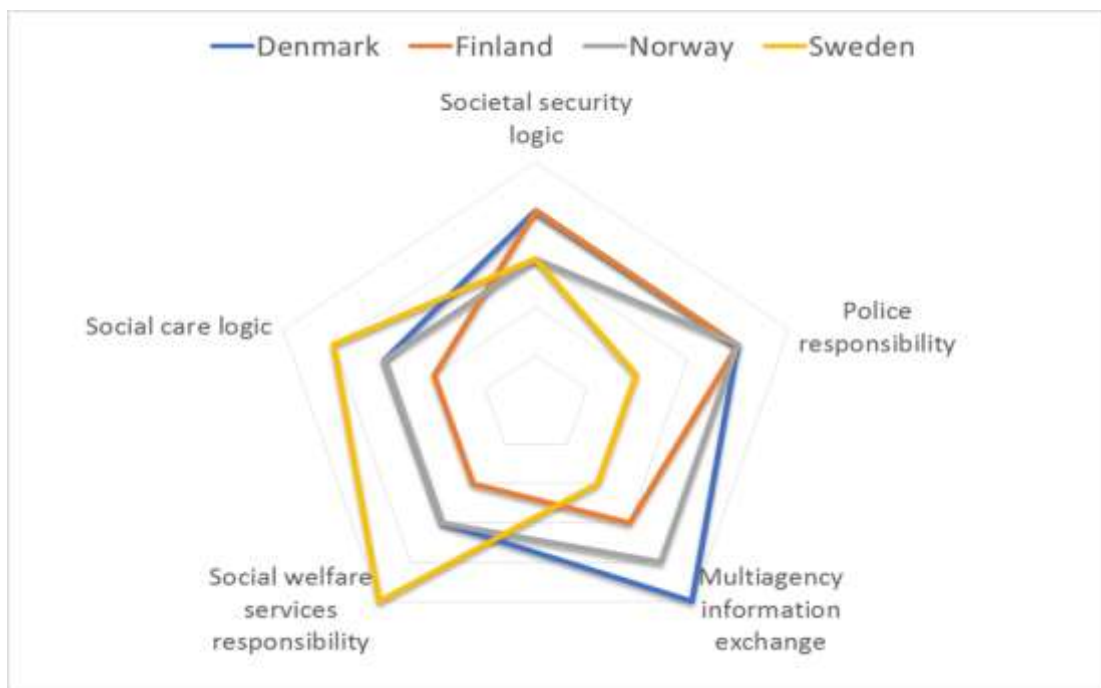
While the police and social services are key to multiagency collaboration everywhere, many other elements vary: the actors' mandate; who decides; to which authority cases are forwarded; involvement of representatives from schools, psychiatry, and health services; in which public institution/service the official responsibility for the multiagency collaboration efforts is anchored. The responsibility comes with the power to pre-assess cases, call meetings, and set the agenda.

In Sweden, cases are always forwarded to the social service. In Norway, the municipal SLT coordinator is in charge, and the police is only involved in cases of likely risks of violence. In Finland and Denmark, the official responsibility lies with the police, which according to some studies generates a stronger focus on societal security.²⁶ This also means that the police have the mandate to pre-assess referred cases of radicalization. In Denmark, the police decide whether a raised concern has anything to do with radicalization, if it is better handled through other routes, and whether the risk of violence is so urgent that the case should be handled directly by the police or security services.²⁷ Here, it is important to highlight that the Swedish police do not have the same strong preventive legal mandate as the Danish and Norwegian police, and therefore play a more marginal role in interagency collaboration compared to their Nordic counterparts.

At the core of assessing concerns of radicalization is the sharing of personal information across agencies. On the one hand, this sort of information sharing constitutes the potential efficiency of multiagency collaboration as it allows for more nuanced and comprehensive assessment of cases. On the other hand, research indicates important concerns regarding privacy when agencies exchange personal information about citizens.²⁸ The specific regulation of personal information sharing across agencies in the context of assessing concerns of radicalization varies across the Nordic countries. While consent to share information between actors given by the individual of concern constitutes a legal basis for sharing sensitive personal information in all the Nordic countries, the possibility for sharing such information *without* consent for the purpose of preventing crime varies considerably. Denmark has the widest possibility of information sharing as §115 of the Administration of Justice Act [*Retsplejeloven*] of the Danish civil code permits relevant actors to share information without consent. Sweden has the most

limited possibilities to share. Here information on individuals can be exchanged *only* if the individual or their legal guardian gives consent. When a municipality decides to work in an SSP(f) formation in Sweden, police and social services make a collaboration agreement.²⁹ Finland and Norway are placed somewhere in between,³⁰ and especially the Norwegian approach seems to contain many gray areas regarding information sharing. Figure 1 below summarizes national differences in organizational setups and legal foundations for information sharing as well as the variation in institutional logics expressed in policy texts across the four Nordic countries.

Figure 1. National differences in the prevalence of institutional logics, organizational setups, and legal foundations vis-à-vis multiagency collaboration to prevent radicalization and violent extremism³¹



Summing up, we argue that legal and organizational factors govern who partakes in multiagency collaboration and what sort of information they are allowed to share, while established procedures and institutional logics shape interaction in collaborations and assessment of concrete cases at meetings.

Situational and interactional factors

At a more practical level, extant research points to the importance of how multiagency meetings are organized, and how procedures for decision-making are implemented. For example, it matters whether decisions are reached through open discussion and formation of consensus, or whether some actors have a privileged decision-making position.³² It is key to multiagency collaboration to assess concerns of radicalization whether a formalized assessment tool is used to organize assessment of cases and decisions regarding interventions.³³

Contrary to the other Nordic countries Denmark employs the “dialogue tool for analysis of radicalization concerns” developed by the National Center for the Prevention of Extremism in collaboration with local multiagency radicalization prevention teams.³⁴ The tool consists of two parts: one that guides assessment of risk and threat, and one that guides assessment of concerns regarding individual wellbeing and resilience factors on a scale from one to four (each actor present rates their concern regarding perceived risk). The tool is designed to establish a framework for discussing referrals and ensure a comprehensive assessment. Formalized assessment tools are not used in the other countries, but multiagency radicalization prevention teams draw upon and refer to academic knowledge and practical experience regarding concerns about radicalization, and when they concerns should be perceived as risks. Several informants in Norway expressed skepticism about formalized assessment tools, which we will discuss in the empirical analysis below.

Experiences with collaboration over time

The literature on multiagency collaboration highlights time as an important factor in shaping outcomes in at least two ways.³⁵ First, stability of the constellation of actors

over time is associated with mutual trust building and efficiency in problem solving.³⁶ Second, over time, multiagency collaboration can develop “hybrid organizations,”³⁷ where different institutional logics mix, new collective identities form, and shared perceptions of goals, strategies, and grounds for attention take shape. The development of hybrid organizations should not be considered an either/or, but rather a continuum.³⁸ In the case of multiagency collaboration to prevent radicalization, this would include development of a common understanding of, and language for, assessing concerns of radicalization.³⁹ Development of hybrid organizations can either increase or decrease efficiency. For example, shared understandings may cause “tunnel vision”, which means that certain aspects of cases are systematically overlooked, and critical assessment of information from different perspectives is substituted by reference to tacit knowledge and common in-group experience.

Method and data

To answer the research questions, we draw upon two qualitative data sources: 1) case-based assessment simulations within multiagency collaboration, and 2) individual interviews with participants in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway in 2019-2020.

Case-based meeting simulations

To secure cross-country comparable data on how practitioners in multiagency collaboration in practice negotiate and assess cases of radicalization concern, we developed and implemented a set of meeting simulations, i.e., sessions where real multiagency teams were asked to assess the same two fictive cases of concern created by the research team. Using the same fictive cases in all cities secured comparable data for our analyses and prevented challenges and dilemmas regarding research ethics, confidentiality, and access that typically arise in observations of actual case meetings.

Besides, the study is funded by the Nordic Societal Security Programme at Nordforsk, the authors report there are no competing interests to declare and that NSD - Norwegian centre for research data has approved the study.

To be able to investigate within-country differences and secure some geographical spread, we decided to include at least three cities, including the capital (or part of it), a large city, and a medium-sized or more provincial city in each country, as teams are locally organized and anchored. Meeting simulations were carried out with 13 city teams including 78 professionals (Table 1) between September 2019 and June 2020. The case discussions lasted approximately 120 minutes, and subsequent group interviews reflected on the case discussions.

Table 3. Practitioners' professions across simulated case discussions and individual interviews⁴⁰

Professional group	Denmark	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Total
Police or correctional services	2	8	7	5	22
Coordinators	5	5	0	5	15
Social workers	2	2	5	4	13
Health workers	0	8	2	0	10
Educators	2	3	0	3	8
Agency or municipal actor	3	4	0	1	8
Youth workers	0	0	1	1	2
Total	14	30	15	19	78

The study was conducted mainly prior to but also during the Covid-19 pandemic, and some interviews and meeting simulations were conducted online. In all four countries, the research teams were able to use pre-established contacts to obtain centralized authority support and approval of the research. This allowed us to approach selected teams and organize the simulations without negotiating access on a case-by-case basis.

In general, we experienced a high degree of willingness to participate from local multiagency teams.

Members in the multiagency teams were informed about the purpose of the research, namely to study how multiagency collaboration works in practice. Prior to and on the day of the simulations, the members were instructed to act as if they were attending a real meeting and approach the assessment of the cases as they would have done in real life. Each meeting simulation lasted approximately 3.5 hours and consisted of a brief introduction by the researchers, assessment of case 1, a break, assessment of case 2, and a group reflection task. All participants gave informed consent prior to the meeting. All simulations were audio recorded.

The fictive cases were carefully created by the pan-Nordic research team to resemble typical multiagency collaboration cases. Case construction was informed by academic research on drivers of radicalization.⁴¹ To reflect the current threat scenario in the Nordic countries, one case concerned Islamist radicalization, and one case extreme-right radicalization.

Both cases consisted of a short description of the basic scenario and information cards with further details about the overall plot, including sensitive personal information. The information cards were given to representatives of different professions (e.g., police, social services, schools), who were instructed to read the card and decide whether this was information they would share at the “meeting”. We used this approach to imitate real-life situations where representatives would come to meetings with different pieces of information regarding the case. The agencies have access to different data registers, and the approach was designed to mimic common dilemmas of information sharing in multiagency collaboration. A case development was presented to participants after they had assessed the basic scenario using the first set of

information cards. The case development was introduced by the research team, which instructed the participants “to imagine that two weeks have passed, and a new meeting about the case is called”. This step was included because real-life cases often are continuously reassessed in light of new developments and information. The full wording of the two basic case scenarios, developments, and information cards can be seen in table 1 in the online appendix.

As a final step, participants were asked to “step out of character” and reflect together upon whether the simulation mirrored an actual meeting and assessment of real-life cases. Likewise, participants reflected upon their choices and assessments during the meeting simulation. Listening to these reflections reassured us that the setting and content of the fictive cases had high ecological validity.

Individual interviews with participants

We conducted 78 semi-structured, individual interviews⁴² with members of the multiagency teams to obtain further reflections on how assessment of concerns of radicalization was carried out, especially reflections on potential challenges and problematic aspects of collaboration, which might be difficult to articulate during meeting simulations with other team members. The interview guide was organized in three main sections addressing: 1) potential diverging logics/norms and perceived hierarchies and conflicts, 2) perceptions of mutual trust and collaboration efficiency, and 3) considerations on information sharing. The full semi-structured interview guide can be found in table 2 in the supplementary online appendix. All individual interviews were audio recorded and typically lasted 1-2 hours. While the data from the case-based meeting simulations constitutes the base for our empirical analysis, we draw upon data from the individual interviews to nuance our interpretations of unfolding case assessments.

Transcription, coding and strategy of data analysis

We analyzed the data through content analysis.⁴³ As a first step, all audio files from simulations and individual interviews were transcribed using the following principles of anonymization: 1) all references to city names were substituted by “city 1”, “city 2” etc.; 2) all names of participants were substituted by a reference to their professional background (e.g., “police officer 1”, “social worker 1” etc.); and 3) references to real-life cases or individuals were deleted. Anonymity during transcription was enforced to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing (sensitive) information and act authentically, and in compliance with GDPR regulations.

As a second step, we coded the transcribed material using Nvivo. First, national teams read transcriptions and conducted an open coding of the material.⁴⁴ Second, the national teams discussed initial coding and how to adapt this to a set of closed codes that were deduced based on the literature review, the structure of the simulations, and the semi-structured interview guide. After a round of revisions, an initial coding frame was established. Third, the initial coding frame was applied to one selected case city per country. Finally, after some revisions of the coding frame, a final coding scheme was agreed upon and applied to the full data set by each national research team. This combination of open and closed coding⁴⁵ was meant to ensure openness to the data and any unforeseen factors shaping assessment of radicalization concerns and that the analysis covered the most important factors identified in extant research on multiagency collaboration.

After the final round of coding, each national research team prepared national case reports following the analytical grid outlined above, paying specific attention to cross-profession and within-country variation. Finally, the country reports were discussed and used as basis for the final analysis presented below.

Findings

“Being a risk” or “being at risk”

Our data demonstrates that legal and organizational factors such as the formation of the multiagency teams, the prevailing institutional logics within the teams, and the duration of collaboration are important aspects in the process of assessing concerns of radicalization across the Nordic countries. These factors shape practitioners’ possibilities and perceptions of the cases from the initial referral of a concern, to it becoming an active case, and decisions on concrete interventions. Yet, we identify differences between the countries in how the same cases of concern are handled.

The major differences are connected to the varying prevalence of institutional logics in policy texts, legal foundations, and organizational setups across the countries.⁴⁶ For example, institutional logics affect how individuals in our fictive cases are perceived in terms of risk. Within a societal security logic, the individual is seen as “being a risk”, as the risk assessment is based on a focus on public security. This is – as mentioned – the prevailing perspective at the level of policy text in Denmark and Finland, which dictates a strong focus on risk and the individual’s capacity for violence. The contrast to this perspective is the social care logic and its primary focus on the individual “being at risk” and a focus on safeguarding their wellbeing. This perspective is more dominant in Norway and Sweden. Denmark and Finland’s stronger focus on risk and security already manifests itself in the reporting of a concern. If frontline personnel or anybody else reporting a concern has *any* doubts about the person’s capacity for violence, they have to report it to the police, who qualify the concern and decide whether it becomes a case. In contrast, the stronger focus on social care in Sweden is reflected in the dominant position of social services.

These different organizational setups and standard procedures for referring cases influence whether security or care is weighted and which profession gains the dominant position in the multiagency collaboration and comes to “own” the process. The agency in charge has a strong say in who is invited to meetings and on what basis. Depending on who sits at the head of the table – police or municipality (social services) – different institutional logics may prevail and create concerns within other professions as shown in the following quote from a Swedish police officer:

We have had cases where we received information from the social services, which is a little troublesome because of confidentiality. I know they had a case about a person who ... it was about violent extremism, Islamism then, and the person was a supporter of ISIS, he lived in the municipality but traveled a lot to his home country back and forth. It was worrying ... or relatives were worried and informed the social services, and there they had a hard time. It probably took almost two weeks, I think, before the police authority received the information.

The Swedish police do not have the same strong preventive legal mandate as their Danish and Norwegian colleagues, which makes their role in interagency collaboration more secondary. From a security logic, the described referral process may cause an unfortunate situation, as urgent cases are also reported to the social services, who first consider the case in terms of safeguarding a vulnerable individual. The quote indicates how confidentiality regulations protect personal information but make it difficult for a third party (here the police) to receive potentially crucial information in time to help detect a security risk. The quote illustrates the double bind of safeguarding the individual *and* preventing a possible security threat to society that characterizes this kind of risk assessment.

Despite differences in policies, legal foundations, and organizational setups, practitioners in the Nordic countries in general seem to perceive violent extremism more as an outcome of social issues than of perceived social injustice and/or a struggle for political or social change. Our data shows that different institutional logics tend to mix and co-exist in practice. For example, in Denmark, Norway, and Finland, practitioners, including the police, ascribe strong explanatory power to social factors such as social exclusion, family problems, unemployment, drugs, negative social networks and relations in understanding individuals' involvement in violent extremism. As such, individuals in our fictive cases are to a large degree also considered "at risk" by the police. Likewise, social services and teachers recognize the need to assess and discuss the degree to which individuals may be considered "a risk" and that at times, e.g. when our cases escalated, safeguarding and supportive measures made way for more repressive interventions. This mixing of institutional logics in terms of risk assessments was most pronounced and institutionalized in the Danish context, where the formalized risk assessment tool ensures a constant double gaze on cases. Yet, as shown below, the assessment of security risk comes before the assessment of individual vulnerabilities and protective factors.

Who shares which information with whom?

§115 of the Danish civil code permits actors to share personal information without consent from the individual of concern but only among actors deemed relevant for a case, and only for preventive purposes (the other Nordic countries cannot do this). The police and municipality can query the civil registries based on the individual's social security number to find potentially relevant information and share within the multiagency collaboration. In the following quote, a Danish municipality coordinator

describes how they “qualify” a concern and who would be invited to a meeting in the multiagency team:

I would collect information from all municipal parties, and the police coordinator would collect information from all the state’s parties, then we compare the information. However, not everyone should be involved in this conversation. There are some questions of safeguarding privacy here, why should seven authorities be there if five of them are irrelevant? Therefore, we would select two authorities that are relevant to elucidate the case. Because the other authorities do not really have any current knowledge about the case. Then we would typically select one to two authorities, which we invite to the meeting, and someone who has the first-hand impression, like a close relative.

In general, when a concern becomes a case for local multiagency teams in the Nordic countries, a municipal or police coordinator selects a team with the relevant expertise. When the team has been formed, the process of assessing the concern starts.

As mentioned, the formalized “dialogue tool for analysis of radicalization concerns” is used in Denmark to structure attention and streamline the assessment. Our data shows that regardless of institutional belonging, the professionals focus primarily on identifying whether the individual has a potential for violence on a personal level or via their social networks. This is built into the assessment tool, and the first questions focus on “risk and threats” based on four dimensions: 1) attitudes and rhetoric; 2) inclination to/capacity for violence; 3) criminal history; and 4) (alarming) socialization and relations, followed by five social relational factors: 5) personality characteristic; 6) mental vulnerability; 7) family; 8) network and spare time; and 9) education and occupation. If the discussion concludes that there is no potential for violence, the multiagency collaboration team closes the case and refers it to social services as a

“social concern”. In the other countries, especially Norway and Sweden, the multiagency team might keep such a case.

The Danish assessment tool pushes the practitioners to discuss the preselected themes according to a predetermined strategy, which seems to help them structure the conversation regardless of institutional belongings and logics. However, it might also limit their perspective. Over time, it seems to support the practitioners in developing a shared understanding of why and when team members from especially the police can/cannot share information. A Danish municipal consultant says:

I would also like to credit both the police and The National Center for the Prevention of Violent Extremism for developing this assessment tool, because that’s how we get into the same lingo and get into the same systematics with fewer possibilities of interpretation. This means that when we talk about worrying “beliefs and rhetoric”, we also approach a common understanding of what worrying “beliefs and rhetoric” are.

In general, practitioners from all four countries said that they base their assessments on a combination of formal assessment tools, intuition, and experience, which in Sweden and Finland may include risk factors such as “social inheritance, family situation, upbringing, and social relations” and other socially driven indicators. Practitioners in Norway used formalized risk assessment tools to some extent, often lists of potential risk factors and signs of radicalization. However, many practitioners were skeptical of such lists, as each case of radicalization is perceived to be different, and lists can be misleading and stigmatize individuals or groups of people who possess certain traits but pose no risk. Approaches to risk assessment and information sharing varied across countries and cities and seemed to contain many gray areas with unclear rules and boundaries, which lead to the practice of learning by doing with trusted colleagues.⁴⁷ This creates the paradox that practitioners in one Swedish and several Norwegian teams

increasingly use legal advisers to help interpret laws about information sharing but try to avoid having them present at the multiagency meetings, as they fear that it might complicate collaboration and information sharing in practice. Our data also indicates hesitance in Finland to share information across agency boundaries because of doubts about what kind of information they can pass on and to whom.

Our data furthermore shows across countries that the more time the multiagency teams spend together, the more they trust each other, understand each other's perspectives, and develop a common frame of understanding. Other studies show that clear aims, objectives, definition of roles and responsibilities, and joint training and/or teambuilding promote cooperation.⁴⁸ However, it is a fragile balance, and collaboration suffers as leaders and colleagues in some local teams change often. A Swedish police officer explains:

When someone leaves, and someone new comes in, you have to start over. Go back, read the documents, establish again, inform each other – this is who we are, this is the purpose of us being here, these are the common grounds. This is a big deal, there could be reasons for our differences; they can be objective but also subjective, but it needs to work.

In general, actors in Finland, Norway, and Denmark emphasize that the multiagency approach makes it possible to draw a holistic picture of the person, which is as a key advantage, especially in complex cases (e.g., mental health issues plus socio-economic issues plus problems at school) and when specialized knowledge, information, or measures are needed that only certain actors can provide. Another advantage is updating and passing on knowledge about how to handle concerns of radicalization in a dedicated group.

Factors facilitating and hindering information sharing when assessing risk

Assessing risk involves sharing thoughts, perspectives, and information to establish a complex and well-founded picture of the person of concern. The exchange quoted below provides a glimpse into the negotiation of a concern and information sharing between practitioners during a simulated meeting in a Danish multiagency collaboration team.

Police coordinator: Yes. Well, I will start as we've got this concern [fictive case description]. I can add from the police that we know this group of young people. Not least this 17-year-old guy ... he in particular has acted aggressively during weekends when they have been drinking. He has been in juvenile prison ... it is also for fights and violence, and the police know that the social services are involved. That's what we know ... maybe it can be elaborated?

High school teacher: Yes, we are very concerned at the high school since he is a member of the Nordic Resistance Movement [a right-wing extremist organization]. He said in class that the Holocaust is something the Jews came up with to support Israel. That is extremist attitudes ...! Two teachers have received anonymous threats from members of the group. The 17-year-old behaves extremely aggressive towards other students ... now the parents are concerned and have contacted the principal ... How to deal with it? The principal is in dialogue with the leader of the youth club, because he is close to the young people.

Municipal coordinator: In relation to the boys, I can see that ... the boy of 17 years, we know a little from SSP, and we also know some of those he hangs out with. Our experience in SSP is, it's someone who's a little isolated ... it also is worrying that they have developed a small community. So, we have discussed them a few times at §115 meetings. Especially the 17-year-old boy, who is aggressive, he has threatened several at McDonalds ... he has behaved strangely and quite aggressively. So, it is not the first

time that we hear that he is ... And it is also from you, the police have also made inquiries sometimes, because he has also shouted and spat at police officers, I understand.

Youth worker: Have any social measures been taken in relation to him?

Social counselor: Yes. We have known him for many years under our auspices ... he comes from a tainted family and has been placed for a period outside the family, and we have a contact-person who actually has a good relation to him, which makes it possible to have a dialogue with him.

The quote shows how practitioners share information across agencies to establish a holistic picture of the individual in question. The discussion is shaped by the formalized assessment tool and institutional logics, which again shape the focus and content of the information being shared. The police, the high school teacher and the municipal coordinator's input is implicitly informed by the dimension "attitudes and rhetoric" and the person's "inclination to/capacity for violence" and "criminal history", and the social practitioners add their knowledge about his "alarming socialization and relations". Representing different institutional logics, the professionals contribute to a holistic picture of the individual and assess whether the concern constitutes a risk.

The high school teacher is participating in this sort of meeting for the first time, but the other practitioners display a high degree of trust in her, likely because of their general trust in collaborators' professional and ethical conduct.⁴⁹ The interviewed practitioners across the four countries repeatedly mentioned trustful relations and a belief in people's professional and ethical conduct as facilitating information sharing. For some practitioners, trust and relations trump secrecy regulations, and colleagues who are known to be trustworthy can be given information in "gray situations". The

quote from a Swedish practitioner below illustrates the considerations and potential calculations behind information sharing:

It differs, but largely it is about building relations, that you trust each other. That we both know that what we are talking about right now is not what we are allowed to talk about, because it is classified information, but I know that YOU will not spread this to Tom, Dick and Harry. (...) and when you have started to share and loosen up a bit, you get more information in return, which can come to good use for the people who are working with the family.

Time is implicit in the perspective, as building relations and developing a shared language and understanding are the foundations of trust. In Norway, several actors in the multiagency teams expressed that in some high-risk cases, it was necessary to breach confidentiality to be able to act swiftly. They were able to do this because they have known each other for several years and trust each other. It follows that if information sharing becomes too entangled in personal trustful relations, it may threaten negotiation and efficient risk assessment when practitioners leave and new ones arrive. Changes may jeopardize relations in a group, which in this perspective would restrict information sharing and potentially the efficiency of the collaboration.

The demand for consent in Sweden, Norway, and Finland hinders the sort of information sharing illustrated in the quote from Denmark. Consent is simultaneously the strongest facilitator and hindrance of information sharing. If consent is obtained, it breaks the restraints of secrecy among all professionals involved. If consent is not given, it can stop any cooperation, as explained by a Swedish practitioner:

If you do not have consent – you need to speak on a general level, because it is still a problem, the person is living in the neighborhood. You cannot air a concern [regarding an individual] and then get consent afterwards. Someone in the team who is the most

suitable needs to get it. I know that in [city neighborhood], in one case, it took eight months.

Besides the legal demand for consent, power asymmetries are perceived to hinder information sharing. Power asymmetry can be an outcome of the organizational setup (who coordinates) and personalities (who can be trusted) and shapes who shares what with whom. Swedish practitioners described an uneven flow of information between the coordinators from the social services, who receive information from *all other agencies*, often without sharing information themselves, which causes frustration and hinders collaboration. The situation in Denmark and Finland mirrored Sweden but the other way around. Municipal practitioners complained that they do not get any information in return from the police. Likewise, the police in Denmark and Finland complained about getting no information in return from the secret services, regardless of what they shared. In Norway, the police have wider legal possibilities to share information with collaborative partners than other agencies and felt that in some instances collaborating actors were too restrictive when it comes to providing information. On the other hand, social services and other municipal agencies pointed out that sharing too much information with the police could jeopardize their relation and trust with the individual of concern, which is crucial to continue working on a case and in the field.⁵⁰ A

Norwegian social worker found this highly problematic:

The interaction with the police [in the multiagency meetings] became challenging. It became a conflict [...] because it was obvious whom we were talking about. And we could risk our relation to that person.

Ongoing police investigations also influence whether practitioners share or withhold information in the negotiation of risk, illustrated by the quote below by a Finnish social worker. The police shared sensitive information within the multiagency collaboration,

but a social worker in the team cannot share this crucial piece of information outside the team, not even to the social worker handling the particular case:

In police-social work, there may be that kind of knowledge that is being investigated and sensitive. That information we can't share, not even with the client's own social worker.

Practitioners mentioned multiple reasons for withholding information whether it was mandatory or not. For example, practitioners would withhold information if they had experienced that a colleague in the multiagency collaboration team had acted unprofessionally and/or unethically; or, as a youth worker said, "you get the feeling that a colleague's assessment seemed to be based a personal opinion rather than on a professional, informed judgment." Finally, a social worker said that information could be withheld if a colleague in the team failed to take the agreed actions and follow up on a case after a multiagency meeting.

Concluding discussion

In this article, we have identified factors that shape the negotiation of radicalization concerns in multiagency collaborative teams, and we have explored how assessment is negotiated between different professionals in local multiagency teams across the Nordic countries.

Through analysis of a rich dataset, we have shown that the way multiagency collaboration is regulated and organized is decisive for assessment of cases in practice. The coordinating agency seems to reflect the prevalence of different institutional logics inherent in the policy discourse in the four countries. And while the multiagency collaborative approach leads to constant presence of and tension between diverse institutional logics informed by a social or a security domain,⁵¹ power asymmetries seem to follow from the organizational setup.

We used institutional logics as a fruitful prism to understand negotiations of assessments of concerns in local multiagency teams. Whether an individual is perceived to be “a risk” or “at risk” partly depends on the institutional logic brought to the table. It varies whether a social security logic or a social care logic is applied first, but both are active and recognized as valuable in all local multiagency teams studied. The dominant institutional logic in the national policy discourse affects the organizational setup, the coordinating organization’s mandate, and to whom the concern should be reported. This again influences internal power hierarchies, the choice of risk assessment tools, and thereby the concrete negotiation of whether a concern constitutes a risk. We are not arguing that assessments of concerns are in any way pre-given – our data shows clearly that assessments are a collaborative and negotiated process dependent on the particularities of the case at hand – but that the policy and thereby the agency that prescreens the referred concern sets the parameters for the negotiation.

Furthermore, we argue that sharing of personal information across agencies is at the core of assessing concerns of radicalization. It facilitates efficiency and, more importantly, it allows for a nuanced and comprehensive assessment of cases. However, in practice, information sharing across agency boundaries creates challenges and dilemmas and at times requires a strategic approach by professionals. Who shares information with whom depends on the legal frameworks, organizational setup, personal experience, and trust. Swedish practitioners described that coordinators from the social services receive information from all other parts but are legally prevented from sharing it. We identified the same pattern in Denmark and Finland, where the coordinating actor – the police – did not always share with all other involved parties. Our data indicates that withholding of information, regardless of the reason, challenges

collaboration. It causes irritation among partners as they hand over information and receive nothing in return.

Thus, a clear legal framework concerning information sharing across multiagency boundaries is crucial to this form of collaboration. Several Norwegian and Swedish teams indicated that it was difficult to act when practitioners were unsure about the legal scope for information sharing and that uncertainty sometimes made them reluctant to share. This shows that professionals take concerns of privacy seriously. Clarifications about options, obstacles, and gray areas could potentially make collaboration easier. However, fundamental tensions are bound to persist. From a social security perspective, sharing information to uncover “a risk” will always take priority but jeopardizes the individual’s legal protection and vice versa.

Painting with a broad brush, we can conclude that Denmark and Sweden form opposite ends of a continuum with Norway and Finland in between. In Denmark, the police have the overall coordinating responsibility and prescreen referred cases in terms of immediate risks. This organizational setup flows from a dominant social security conception of CVE at the level of policy discourse and shapes information flows and assessments of concerns in practice. The regime is legally supported by wide-ranging possibilities to share information across agency boundaries when it comes to preventing crime/avoiding risks. In Sweden, the social services sit at the head of the table, call meetings, and are the first to screen referred cases. This setup mirrors a dominant social care conception of CVE in the policy discourse. In practice, the social services are privileged in terms of information flows, which affects assessments of concerns. This approach prioritizes safeguarding individual vulnerability, which is underlined by a legal framework that stresses privacy and confidentiality and strictly regulates information sharing.

We argue that our analysis makes three main contributions. First, while the complexity and necessity of multiagency assessment of concerns and risks are highlighted in studies of radicalization prevention, our study is among the first to investigate empirically the factors that shape such assessments and how assessments – from the perspective of different professions – unfold in practice. Second, the study provides unique empirical data in an area of research with scarce primary data. By engaging practitioners from real-life multiagency collaboration in the Nordic countries in simulation exercises based on fictive cases, we have generated empirically rich and ecologically valid data. Finally, by collecting data from multiagency collaboration in thirteen Nordic cities and individual interviews with 78 practitioners using the same simulated cases and interview guide, we are able to shed light on variation in assessment of radicalization concerns across professions, cities, and national contexts.

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