From Idea to Policy: Scandinavian Municipalities Translating Radicalization

Robin Andersson Malmros[a][1]

[a]PhD Student, School of Public Administration/The Segerstedt Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

Radicalization has emerged as a dominant idea for understanding processes that lead to extremist beliefs and behavior. As societal efforts to counter extremism have become increasingly decentralized, local policymakers are being confronted with the task of making sense of radicalization. Departing from neo-institutional theory, this paper explores how the idea of radicalization has been materialized in 60 Scandinavian (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) municipal policies that share the explicit aim of countering extremism. Most research on how radicalization has been conceptualized in policy focuses on the international and national levels. Instead, this paper provides a first large number analysis of how radicalization has been understood at the local level. A content analysis of the policies highlights the different definitions, explanatory factors and theories, models and checklists utilized. Findings show the considerable variance between municipal translations of radicalization. In some cases, the processual properties usually attributed to radicalization are contested as radicalization is portrayed as a mere outcome. A total of 66 different explanatory factors for radicalization are noticed by the municipalities, transforming most forms of deviant social and cultural statuses, psychological conditions and ideological positions to possible explanatory factors. Although the municipalities to a certain degree utilize the same labels for popular theories, models and checklists, this paper demonstrates that the content varies as they are transferred between contexts. The paper explains how and why such local variance occurs and which institutional elements that constrains translations of radicalization.

Keywords: Radicalization, Local Policymaking, Neo-institutional Theory

Introduction

Since being revitalized in the beginning of the 21st century as a way to conceptualize "what goes on before the bomb goes off" (Neumann, 2008, p. 4), radicalization has proven to be

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[1] Corresponding Author Contact: Robin Andersson Malmros, Email: robin.andersson@gu.se, School of Public Administration/The Segerstedt Institute, Gothenburg University, Box 115, SE 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden

"irresistible as a concept" (Coolsaet, 2015, p. 6) and led to an "upsurge of academic interest" (Kundnani, 2012, p. 7). Intertwined with increased societal efforts to counter extremism, the popularity of radicalization has grown and generated numerous theories and models that aim to explain the pathway to extremism (De Coensel, 2018). However, the substantial academic and political interest has had disadvantages. Closely related to the rise in popularity of radicalization, one substantial stream of criticism points toward the ambiguous use of radicalization (Borum, 2011; Neumann, 2013; Schuurman & Taylor, 2018; Sedgwick, 2010). Neumann and Kleinmann (2013) called radicalization "one of the great buzzwords of our time" (p. 360) and the meaning of radicalization is today "essentially contested . . . the term generates such debate about its actual meaning that no objective or neutral position is possible" (Heath-Kelly, Baker-Beall & Jarvis, 2015, p. 6). In a literature review, Schmid (2013) found 13 somewhat contradictory definitions of radicalization that led to the conclusion that "the popularity of the concept of 'radicalisation' stands in no direct relationship to its actual explanatory power regarding the root causes of terrorism" (p. 4). Despite being a contested idea, the process toward ideological violence that radicalization implies underpins and has motivated the adoption of policies at all societal levels to counter or prevent violent extremism (CVE/PVE). The logic motivating such policymaking is apparent: If there is a pathway to extremism, it can be interrupted by applying measures that address the perceived root causes of radicalization.

CVE policies have spread over the world and thus also to Scandinavia. Sweden got its first national action plan in 2011 (SE state document 2011/12:44), Norway in 2010 (Justis- og politidepartementet, 2010) and Denmark in 2009 (DK state document, 2009). A public policy can be described as an overall and intentionally chosen approach to a specific subject of relevance to the public administration (Smith & Lipsey, 1976). Policies are often statements of intent that offer definitions of objectives, propose measures for meeting the objectives and outline how organizations understand and make sense of the problem they are trying to address (Lowi, 1972; Wolman, 1981). In Scandinavia, the municipalities have been given considerable responsibility for CVE work. This is partly motivated by the highly

decentralized state structures in the Scandinavian countries (Sellers & Lidström, 2007). The municipalities are locally autonomous political jurisdictions serving under national law with operational responsibility for many welfare operations, including schools, social services and youth centers. But the delegation of responsibility is also an effect of a broader assumption that local actors are better positioned to discover and counter radicalization as they encounter the target groups in everyday work:

> Local municipalities, together with and supported by national governments, are key frontline defence against radicalisation and violent extremism . . . it is at the local level that prevention and early detection can be most effective. Frontline practitioners such as teachers, community police officers, youth and social workers play a key role in detecting radicalisation and preventing violent extremism (RAN, 2016a, p. 2)

As a consequence of the focus on local involvement, one of the most extensive CVE efforts in Scandinavia has been to establish municipal CVE policies. Mappings show that 134 of 290 Swedish municipalities and 63 of 98 Danish municipalities have developed CVE policies in only a couple of years, without any regulatory measures forcing them to (Andersson Malmros & Mattsson, 2017; Ramboll, 2018).

In relation to this background, it is surprising that local policies have drawn so little attention among researchers interested in radicalization and the countering of violent extremism. Previous research focused primarily on how radicalization has been conceptualized in global and national policymaking (Hardy, 2018; Lindekilde, 2012; Schmid, 2013). Vermuelen (2014), however, argued that understanding local CVE policies is "imperative. This constitutes the backbone of European policies against violent extremism and is highly understudied, with most research on counterterrorism focusing on the national level" (p. 288). Consequently, we know little about how radicalization is understood by those who are to make practice of it at the local level.

The aim of this paper is to address this gap by contributing with an analysis of how Scandinavian municipal CVE policies conceptualize radicalization and offer an explanation for why variances and similarities occur between the policies. The research questions posed are:

- How do Scandinavian municipalities translate the idea of radicalization into policy?
- How can variances and similarities in the translations be explained?

To operationalize the questions, the analysis focused on (1) the definitions of radicalization, (2) explanatory factors for radicalization and (3) theories, models and checklists that explain radicalization. The data consist of 60 Scandinavian municipal CVE policies (Denmark, n = 20; Norway, n = 20; and Sweden, n = 20) that are explored by applying a content analysis of the manifested and latent content of the policies. The findings are interpreted through the notions of translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) and editing (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996), which have emerged as prominent analytical tools in neo-institutional theory for understanding how and why organizations, despite being confronted with the same idea (radicalization), translate it differently in policy.

Findings show considerable variance in conceptualizations of radicalization. Definitions fluctuate regarding whether the outcome of a radicalization process is solely cognitive or includes behavioral elements. In some cases, radicalization is conceived as the outcome itself and not the process to extremism. However, the variances are most notably represented by the 66 different explanatory factors accounted for in the policies. Almost any form of deviant individual behavior, social status and attitude can be translated into a potential root cause or indicator of radicalization. Although municipalities to some degree utilize the same labels for popular theories, models and checklists, the content of these varies as they are transferred between contexts.

The outline of the paper is as follows. First, the theoretical framework is introduced. Then, the paper's methods, data and coding scheme are discussed. In the following section, the findings are presented nation by nation for a comparative analysis between the Scandinavian countries. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings in relation to neo-institutional theory and previous research on radicalization. Based on the findings, suggestions for future research and policymaking are provided.

Theoretical Framework

A central theme in neo-institutional theory has been to explain organizational behavior in relation to its environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Pfeffer & Salanick, 2003; Selznick, 1948). As an organization is socially embedded in its surroundings, it is affected by the rules, ideas and norms found within the institutional order in which the organization acts (Scott, 1995). Under institutional pressure and to remain legitimate, organizations change their forms and behaviors in relation to the symbols and myths considered to be appropriate by the organization's environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). As a consequence of the adoption of the same rationalized myths, organizations involved in producing and distributing the same type of services (e.g., CVE work) increasingly become more similar (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

But as previous studies on terrorism and CVE work have demonstrated, although focused on the same or similar issues, the outcomes in policy seems to be somewhat different (Andersson Malmros & Mattsson, 2017; Hardy, 2018; Vermeulen & Bovenkerk, 2012). For example, Van Heelsum and Vermeulen (2017) noted in their study of CVE policies in four European cities that "even if national policies gave direction, cities interpreted them in their own ways" (p. 169), indicating that local actors pick out the content that they find most fitting in relation to their local context, identity and objectives. A well-known way of understanding such change and variance is through the sociologic translation model (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). According to the translation model, socially constructed ideas such as

radicalization are translated rather than diffused when traveling from one space and time to another. This argument draws on Latour and Woolgar's (1986) suggestion that ideas are not transmitted in a vacuum without human interference, thus we can expect variance as policies travel between contexts. The translation chain can be portrayed as involving four phases (inspired by Erlingsdottir & Lindberg, 2005): (1) For an idea to travel across an organizational field, or from one field to another, the idea must first be dis-embedded from its institutional environment, translated and packaged as a materialized object, such as a picture, PowerPoint presentation, prototype, template or as in the case of this paper, a policy plan. The objectification of an idea is important because "only a thing can be moved from one place to another and from one point in time to another" (Czarniawska, 2009, p. 425). The idea then is able to travel from one local time and space to another until the idea finds an organization that finds it attractive. (2) The materialized idea is then unpacked and translated to fit the new context and finally, re-embedded (implemented) to form new practices (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005). Once moved, the idea cannot remain unchanged: "to set something in a new place is to construct it anew" (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005, p. 8). If these practices are repeated over and over again until they are taken for granted, (3) they become an institution and (4) can be abstracted and dis-embedded to be sent away through time and space again.

Therefore, we can expect the materialized idea of radicalization to be reformulated and recontextualized, *edited*, as it moves between contexts and settings (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Editing provides a detailed micro-level analysis of the translation process, in which new properties are subscribed, or old ones removed, potentially changing the meaning and the content of the original model. The editing process is according to Sahlin-Andersson (1996) influenced by social editing rules that restrict and direct how accounts are given. The first set of rules concerns the *context*. As an object (e.g., a radicalization model) is applied in a new organizational setting, the specific time- and space-bound features of the original setting are downplayed or omitted. Consequently, a decontextualized, abstracted and generalized account of the original model is translated and implemented (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008). The second set of rules concerns the *logic* and how effects of models are retrospectively rationalized to fit a

causal problem-solving ideal. The (positive) effects of an activity are portrayed as the result of identifiable and planned activities. Contradicting (negative) results, other possible explanations or results that are deranged from an unplanned or uncontrollable activity are neglected, erased or omitted (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). The third set of rules concerns *formulation* which highlights how objects are formulated and reformulated to fit current agendas, often by applying dramatic terms and labels that are easy to talk about, associate with and remember. Stories are created about a successful model or development, which are circulated and further edited by ascribing new or emphasizing certain elements as they travel (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Objects may be packaged and repackaged, and as "even small reformulations . . . may fundamentally change its meaning or focus" (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 110), such processes are of interest when analyzing the content of CVE policies.

Methods

To answer the question of how the idea of radicalization has been translated to policy, data were retrieved from 60 municipal CVE policies (Denmark, n = 20, Norway, n = 20; and Sweden, n = 20) that share the outspoken objective of countering violent extremism. A presentation of the policies included in the material can be found in appendix 1. In cases where excerpts from the policies are utilized as examples in the findings, the full reference is provided in the reference list. All excerpts were linguistically translated from their native language to English by the author. The data were collected between December 2017 and May 2018 and the municipalities were strategically (Flyvberg, 2006) chosen based on two criteria. The first was the population size of the municipality which is motivated by the fact that the problem of radicalization, especially in relation to violent Islamism, has been manifested primarily in urban areas and in suburbs of larger cities in Scandinavia (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017; Politiets Sikkerhetstjenstene, 2016). The second criterion was that a plan could be retrieved. In two cases, a separate file containing a CVE policy could not be found;

instead, content from a municipal webpage on CVE was downloaded and analyzed as the CVE policy.

The content analysis drew on key principles found in Duriau, Reger, and Pharrer's (2007) overview of the use of content analysis in management research. Content analysis is a class of methods "in the intersection of the qualitative and quantitative methods" (Duriau et al., 2007, p. 5), recognizing that the use of words and themes reflects the attention given by an organization to certain issues. The content analysis in this paper focused on two levels of the text. The first level is frequencies, where the categories proposed in the analytical framework below are analyzed to understand to what extent they are manifested in the policies. The second level is the latent content of the policies, where deeper context and meaning are analyzed which acquires more interpretation (Duriau et al., 2007).

The CVE policies were added to NVivo and coded according to three categories: (1) definitions of radicalization, (2) explanatory factors for radicalization and (3) theories, models and checklists that explain radicalization. The main categories were then broken down into subcategories with the help of previous research on radicalization, but the data motivated the development of additional subcategories. This abductive research process, inspired by the framework provided by Dubois and Gadde (2002), follows Weick's (1979) suggestion to "invest in theory to keep some intellectual control over the burgeoning set of case descriptions" (p. 38).

The analysis of (1) the definitions of radicalization relies on the distinction between cognitive and behavioral radicalization (Neumann, 2013). The focus is on how the process of radicalization is described and with what outcome (or endpoint as Neumann, 2013, called it). In short, *cognitive radicalization* refers to the movement from moderate mainstream beliefs to extremist ones and thus, focuses on attitudes, values and beliefs. The outcome is radical or extremist beliefs. *Behavioral radicalization* focuses the question of how someone becomes an extremist (the action pathway). The endpoint according to this perspective is extremist actions. However, no policy had a pure behavioral definition of radicalization. Instead, the policies used definitions that either included a cognitive process with a cognitive outcome or a

cognitive process with a cognitive and behavioral outcome. Therefore, the relevant categories were cognitive and cognitive/behavioral.

The analysis of (2) explanatory factors for radicalization focused on the accounts in the CVE policies concerning the factors that contribute to radicalization, often referred to as "root causes" in academic and public discourse. The subcategorization draws inspiration from the work of Hafez and Mullins (2015) whose synthesis suggested that radicalization research focuses on four different factors that "come together to produce violent radicalization" (p. 958). *Grievance* focuses on macro-level processes and circumstances that might drive a person toward terrorism. Often-used examples are marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination. *Networks* refer to the ties between the individual and the meso-level milieu in which the socialization and diffusion of extremist ideas take place. The subcategory also captures arguments that propose involvement in extremist milieus as a response to the need to belong and meaningful relationships. *Ideology* includes accounts about the role of master narratives, political and religious, that explain how the world should look and justifies the use of violence to achieve change. *Support systems* focus on physical and virtual settings and milieus in which radicalization is facilitated, such as prisons, radical civil society organizations and the internet. Two additional subcategories were added during the coding process. *Individual vulnerability* focuses on micro-level factors, such as gender, age, mental status and experiences of trauma, that make individuals become at risk of being radicalized. In the original categorization by Hafez and Mullins (2015), factors such as personal crisis or losses fell under Grievances, but did not include factors related to age, sex and mental illness. Therefore, this subcategory was developed and expanded to broadly capture micro-factors related to vulnerability. The category *Power and thrill* was inspired by Atran's (2010) notion that individuals engaging in terrorism are partly doing it because they are on a quest for adventure, glory and purpose for their lives. This type of explanatory factors occurred frequently in the CVE policies and was added as a sub-category.

The analysis of (3) theories, models and checklists that explain radicalization includes coherent theories or models that aim to explain the path toward engagement in violent

extremism. In addition to theories and models, "checklists of radicalization" are highlighted as they provide practitioners with observational signs that are presented as possible indicators of an ongoing radicalization process.

Findings

Definitions: Radicalization, a process or an outcome?

Nearly all Danish and Norwegian municipalities include a definition of radicalization in their CVE policies, while only one of four Swedish policies do (Denmark, n = 17; Norway, n = 20; and Sweden, n = 5). Overall, the definitions utilized in the policies portray radicalization as a cognitive process in which the acquisition of certain beliefs serves as a fundament of the radicalization process. Another general finding is that the definitions portray radicalization as an individual process, but important national differences can be found concerning this. Danish and Swedish municipalities to a higher degree include groups as a basic unit that might undergo radicalization processes.

Nearly a third (n = 19) of the municipalities (Denmark, n = 7; Norway, n = 11; and Sweden, n = 1) uses definitions that indicate that a person only has to acquire certain ideas to be radicalized, making the process and the outcome solely cognitive. These definitions focus on the acceptance and (cognitive) support of violent or non-legal means to achieve political or religious goals and not the actual use of such means. Radicalization is understood as an "inner process, that under the right conditions, can bring a person in an increasing degree to accept use of violence to achieve political, ideological or religious goals" (Drammen, 2015, p. 9). Norwegian municipalities primarily focus on acceptance of the use of violence as an outcome of cognitive radicalization, but Danish municipalities have a more inclusive point of view, often including acceptance of other forms of non-legal means (e.g., Copenhagen, 2016) and "undemocratic" (Lyngby-Taarbaek, 2016, p. 13) outcomes of the process.

Furthermore, 23 CVE policies (Denmark, n = 10; Norway, n = 9; and Sweden, n = 4) include behavioral elements in the outcome of radicalization, most often in combination with

cognitive elements. Extremist beliefs are understood as a precondition for extremist behavior. In most policies, violence is the proposed outcome, but Danish policies diverge by ascribing affiliation with violent extremist organizations as a behavioral outcome of the radicalization process.

	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	Total
Cognitive	7	11	1	19
Cognitive/Behavioral	10	9	4	23

Table 1: Type of definitions of radicalization

Drawing on an official Swedish assessment of extremist threats (SE state document 2014/15:144), two Swedish policies make an effort to display radicalization as a pure behavioral process with an expressed focus on criminal actions:

> To develop anti-democratic values or to hold extreme opinions do not fall, according to this definition, under the term radicalization . . . The radicalization process involves a phase where acceptance of violence is developed, but those who remain in this early phase or abort the radicalization process are, therefore, not to be considered radicalized . . . That which is criminal and so of interest of the police and therefore included in the definition of radicalization is exclusively the process that results in support for, or participation in, ideologically motivated criminality . . . Those who are affiliated with violence-approving extremism milieus have almost always gone through a radicalization process. (Gothenburg, 2016, pp. 5–6)

Initially, the policy suggests that developing anti-democratic values or extreme opinions are not to be considered part of radicalization. However, in the following sentence the policy contends that the radicalization process involves cognitive non-criminal elements (acceptance of violence). Next, the account states that only processes whose outcomes are criminal behavior or support for such behaviors are to be understood as radicalization. This is contradictory as support for ideologically motivated criminality might be considered an extreme opinion and thus would not, according to the first sentence, be understood as radicalization. Interestingly, the account also distinguishes among radicalization, radicalization process and radicalized. Radicalization is portrayed as an outcome with certain manifestations, radicalization process the road to that outcome and radicalized a particular social status. Finally, the account leaves an open space for extremism to be an outcome of something other than a radicalization process, without suggesting an alternative or further elaboration. If a municipality's objective is to counter radicalization, utilizing this definition would make such work difficult as the term only would be able to apply in retrospect: once you know if someone has "gone all the way" into violent extremism.

However, the struggle to make sense of radicalization is not limited to Sweden. The Norwegian municipality of Ski (2016) states that "radicalization is defined as to dissociate oneself from society's democratic principles and at the same time justify use of threats and violence to reach its goals" (p. 3), while arguing later in the same section that "radicalization takes place when thoughts become actions" (p. 4). Thus, radicalization is understood as two outcomes that are hard to reconcile with each other: Is radicalization a divergent political position (cognitive outcome) or when the same thoughts result in actions (behavioral outcome)?

Focusing on cognitive outcomes is far from unproblematic in countries with far-reaching constitutional rights regarding freedom of speech, invoking the conflict between radical thoughts and radicalization as proposed by previous research (Heath-Kelly et al., 2015; Kundnani, 2012). Horten (2016) provided an example of how this conflict is dealt with:

It is important to distinguish between radicalization and being radical. The term radical is used about what is revolutionary and far-reaching. Radical stances and actions can be used concerning politics, religion, ethics, art and culture and so on. It is not illegal to be radical. The term is often used in a positive manner. Large changes in society has been completed thanks to radical persons who have pushed for a matter or change. Radicalization, on the other hand, displays a process where a person or group in a gradual degree accepts the use of violence as a means to reach political, ideological or religious goals. (Horten, 2016, p. 4)

In this case, radical is formulated as a positive, legal and static position, while radicalization is portrayed as a negative process that ends with the acceptance of violence. The Danish municipality of Frederiksberg (2016) utilizes a different strategy to cope with the conflict by transforming radical points of view into an outcome of radicalization: "radicalization is defined as support for radical points of view or extremist ideology, on grave occasions accepting the use of violence or other non-legal means to achieve a political/religious goal" (p. 7). Such a formulation eliminates the possible boundary and divergent relationship between being radical and being radicalized.

To sum up, radicalization is defined in fundamentally divergent ways. In addition to having different perspectives on the outcome of the process, the processual properties usually attributed to the idea are contested as radicalization is portrayed as a mere outcome in several policies. Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino and Caluya (2011) critically noted in a literature review of counter-extremism and radicalization that "the only thing that radicalization experts agree on is that radicalization is a process. Beyond that there is considerable variation as to make existing research incomparable" (p. 13). The analysis of CVE policies in this paper implies that this alleged common ground should not be taken for granted.

When confronted with the problem of distinguishing between cognitive outcomes of radicalization (e.g., radical opinions) and the universal democratic principle of freedom of speech, I argue that the municipalities apply two editing strategies (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996).

The first is editing by neglecting the existence of a conflict, either by not offering a definition of radicalization at all (e.g., 15 Swedish municipalities) or not elaborating on the problematic relationship between radicalization and radical opinions. Although apparent in relation to the encouragement for practitioners to detect so-called early concerns of radicalization regarding attitudes, political or religious ideas and rhetoric, few municipalities make an effort to problematize or discern what separates the process that leads to radical thoughts from one that leads to extremist violence. The second strategy is editing by downplaying the conflict. The municipalities utilizing this strategy recognize the conflict but downplay the problematic relationship through reformulation of the conflict. As presented in the findings, one way of doing this is "stripping" radical or radicalization from its processual properties by portraying one or the other as a static position or more commonly, simply including radical thoughts as outcome of the process.

Explanatory factors for radicalization: everything or anything?

Norwegian CVE policies make a considerably more extensive and inclusive effort to describe the explanatory factors for radicalization in comparison to Danish and Swedish ones. Of the 20 Norwegian policies analyzed, 17 of them mentions at least one factor, while 15 point to three or more factors. Eleven Danish policies describe a minimum of one factor, while four describe three or more factors. In Sweden, 12 policies bring up at least one factor, and five account for three or more factors.

	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	Total
Grievance	10	17	7	34
Major factors (≥ 3)	Exclusion, failure to thrive, frustration, marginalization, social vulnerability	Exclusion, marginalization, racism, discrimination, reaction to conflicts and in-group exposure, poverty	Exclusion, lack of belief in the future, lack of opportunities to engage in society, injustice	
Minor factors (< 3)	Unemployment, reaction to conflicts and in-group exposure, poverty	Dedication to refugee-related questions, unemployment	Discrimination, reaction to conflicts and in-group exposure, stigmatization	
Ideology	4	7	9	20
Factors (≥1)	Brainwashing, Salafi-militant Islamism, legitimizing violence	Conspiracy theories, brainwashing, polarization tactic, guidance on how to live, legitimizing violence	Provides answers to frustration, legitimizes violence, inspires "lone wolves"	
Individual vulnerability	5	13	6	24
Factors (≥1)	Psychological vulnerability, ADHD diagnosis, Asperger diagnosis, secondary traumatization, moral shock, trauma, youth, gender, social heritage, imprisonment	Psychological pain, youth rioting, moral shock, conflict of identities, domestic violence, trauma, experiences of bullying and/or assault	Youth, identity quest, gender, rapid personality changes, trauma, domestic problems, youth rioting	
Networks	5	13	5	23

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Factors (≥1)	Need to belong, extremism in family, support for beliefs and violence, promotes isolation, evolution of a brotherhood, in-group pressure, cross-over phenomenon	Need for friendship, longing for safety and support, pressure from transnational family relations, need to be acknowledged, sheltering	Socialization of beliefs, belonging to a fellowship, loyalty bonds, extremism in family, need for friendship	
Power and Thrill	1	12	-	13
Factors (≥1)	Excitement, sense of adventure	Excitement, wanting power, provoking		
Support Systems	4	16	3	23
Factors (≥1)	Internet propaganda, social media connections, prisons	Criminal areas, internet propaganda, social media connections	Internet propaganda, discussions in web forums	

Table 2: Explanatory factors for radicalization

Overall, grievance is the subcategory considered by most Scandinavian municipalities as explaining radicalization (Denmark, n = 10; Norway, n = 17; and Sweden, n = 7). A wide range of factors are described as contributing to radicalization, but frustration as a result of being marginalized, of being excluded, of not having opportunities to thrive and conflicts (domestic and international) is among the most frequently mentioned factors in all countries. The focus on grievance in the CVE policies points to circumstances that exist outside the individual, bringing society and politics into the radicalization process as factors: "In a society where individuals experience polarization, exclusion, low possibility to influence and low belief in the future increases the risk of emergence of destructive milieus and violent affirmative extremism" (Gothenburg, 2016, p. 9). Copenhagen's (2016) policy argues that a

consistent feature among individuals at risk of radicalization is that they "feel excluded from the community to such a high degree that they develop resistance to the society in which they grew up" (p. 6). Grievances are described as having a direct causal relation to radicalization processes (e.g., Esbjerg, 2016), as well as serving as a basic foundation for different negative outcomes, with radicalization one of them (Lund, 2016; Ringkoping-Skjern, 2017). In Norway, more focus is on conflicts, both national and international. Racism and discrimination in society are seen as important factors that might drive a person toward radicalization. In line with such arguments, a number of municipalities explicitly recognize national political conflicts concerning immigration and refugees as important factors for radicalization. International conflicts might also contribute as becoming a violent extremist for some can be a reaction to war (Baerum & Asker, 2015) or a reflection of the wish to "help one of the parties in a conflict" (Fredrikstad, 2017, p. 1).

Ideology (Denmark, n = 4; Norway, n = 7; and Sweden, n = 9) is given the most attention in Swedish CVE policies, but is stressed less in Denmark. Even if policies agree on ideology serving a role in legitimizing violence, the factor varies considerably between the countries. Swedish policies focus on the connection between ideology and so-called lone wolves, actors who perpetrate their actions seemingly alone and without sharing planning or execution of terror attacks with others (Gardell, Lööw, & Dahlberg-Grundberg, 2017). Norwegian municipalities pay attention to the role of conspiracy theories and the effect such theories have on the radicalization process. Danish municipalities, however, focus on militant Islamism and the mobilizing effect it can have among people in criminal networks, offering a way to contribute to a righteous cause and providing a narrative that the West is in a war with Islam.

For the category individual vulnerability (Denmark, n = 5; Norway, n = 13; and Sweden, n = 6), the countries display similarities and differences. Age is the most common factor among the countries. Being young and in the process of becoming an adult is considered a risk factor for radicalization. In line with these arguments, radicalization is often portrayed as a form of youth rioting or revolt against the norms of family and society. The

Swedish municipality of Halmstad urges their professionals to ask themselves whether the identified risk behavior is a "call for attention, exclusion or a normal part of a teenage process which identity quests and fascination for sub-cultures are a part of" (Halmstad, 2017, p. 9). The municipality of Nacka (2016) in Sweden suggests that employees should have knowledge to identify suspicious milieus where extremism can "grow" and that indicators of such milieus are "homogeny youth milieus concerning gender, age, ethnicity, etc." (Nacka, 2016, p. 3). What "etc." means in this particular case is not specified later in the policy.

Ethnicity, culture and identity struggles are factors that reoccur together. Several Norwegian municipalities refer to the "moral shock" that a refugee might experience coming to Norway. In Denmark, Herning (2017) is more explicit about the matter, proposing that the troublesome position of being between two cultures (Muslim and Danish) and the change from being in environments informed by traditional values to such where individual values are dominant, might be a root cause of radicalization. Psychological vulnerability is also presented as an important, but most often unspecified and unelaborated, factor. A few exceptions are found, however. Concerning individual psychological conditions, Frederiksberg (2016) points to an attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnosis and Asperger syndrome as relevant risk factors for radicalization. In addition to such specific diagnoses, attention is given to the role that trauma plays, both in terms of individual "wounds" and those that family members carry with them, so-called secondary traumatization (Frederiksberg, 2016). Traumas can include a death in the family (Herning, 2017), abuse and bullying (Ski, 2016; Stavanger, n.d.) and domestic violence (Oslo, 2018).

The accounts regarding networks (Denmark, n = 5; Norway, n = 13; and Sweden, n = 5) can be divided into two parts. One focuses on general social needs among human beings, while the other focuses on specific group- or network-oriented processes. The accounts supplement the former, describing radicalization as driven by the need to belong, status, acknowledgement and safety among mostly young, troublesome individuals. In segregated communities with a low degree of social cohesion and trust and the isolation of certain ethnic groups, such drivers become stronger (Helsingör, 2017). The same applies to problematic

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family circumstances (Karlstad, 2016; Lund, 2016). The Norwegian municipality of Skien (2015) provides a telling example: "For some, the extreme groups are experienced as the only way to be seen and heard for your opinions . . . They can also experience that it gives status and power when the group they belong to frightens others" (p. 8). The specific group and network processes highlighted differ among the countries. Danish policies pay attention to the cross-over phenomenon - when gang members shift to violent Islamism groups (Copenhagen, 2016; Frederiksberg, 2016), or when right-wing extremists change to Motorcycle gangs (Helsingör, 2017). The capability of using violence established in the previous violent milieu becomes a resource for the group and the individual when switching milieus (Herning, 2017). In addition to the possibility of exploiting the resources, cross-overs are simplified by family and childhood contacts between the milieus (Herning, 2017).

Power and thrill (Denmark, n = 1; Norway, n = 12; and Sweden, n = 0) is a category given less space than the five others, especially in Denmark and Sweden. Although 12 of the Norwegian policies describe power and thrill as drivers for radicalization, no further elaboration of how these drivers affect the process is provided.

Support systems (Denmark, n = 4; Norway, n = 16; and Sweden, n = 3) are mainly concerned with the role of the internet as a way of spreading propaganda (Eskilstuna, 2018), an arena where so-called online radicalization takes place (Aarhus, n.d.), a facilitator for social contacts (Copenhagen, 2016) and an arena for committing extremism-related crimes (Bergen, 2015). Norwegian municipalities have a high frequency of accounts, but they portray little variance. Oslo (2018) provides an additional comment on the role of the internet, but the others use the same phrase that differentiates extremism and radicalization in the "real world" from that on the web, by viewing online extremism as "radicalization and violent extremism on the internet" (Kristiansand, 2015, p. 6). The Danish and Swedish policies that acknowledge the role of the internet primarily focus on how extremist groups use the internet to spread propaganda and recruit new members.

To sum up, although translating the same idea (radicalization), 66 different explanatory factors are conceived as potential root causes. Almost all forms of problematic or

deviant social, cultural, psychological and ideological "conditions" have been translated into a possible explanatory factor for radicalization, supporting notions on radicalization as a vague and ambiguous idea (Sedgwick, 2010) or more radically, "a container concept" (Coolsaet, 2016, p. 37). However, one category is given considerably more attention than the others: grievances. As countering the macro-related factors included in this category is an established part of Scandinavian municipal work, these factors are easier to make sense of and tie existing practices to. To do this, the logic of the causal relationship between grievances and radicalization is edited to fit a causal problem-solving ideal. Radicalization becomes "an expression of miss-being, frustration and the feeling of not belonging" (Esbjerg, 2016, p. 3), making practices designed to prevent or allay consequences of grievances "translateable" to fit the new frame of countering radicalization.

Another interesting finding is that radicalization is used without consideration of its contextual manifestations. Thus, the local context itself is not viewed as a root cause. No or little reflection (exceptions exist: e.g., Oslo, 2018, and Copenhagen, 2016) is given to whether radicalization is a problem within the municipality or what type of milieu (e.g., jihadi-Salafism, right- or left-wing extremism) in which citizens are being radicalized. Thus, radicalization is decontextualized - edited by stripping it of the contextual properties, abstracted, stabilized and therefore made possible to fit any new context. Put differently, radicalization and its root causes are portrayed as something that is not dependent on where it happens or in what milieu. This decontextualization is a paradox in relation to the "radicalization is best dealt with locally" paradigm as local CVE work, arguably, should rest on a local analysis of the problem and not national or international mappings. The absence of contextualization also indicates that the explanatory factors for radicalization presented in the policies are not products of a rational deliberation process derived from local experiences, but according to institutional constraints in the organizational environment (the institutional constraints are further elaborated in the concluding discussion).

Theories, models and checklists: same labels, different contents

There are nation-specific and transnational ways to theorize and model the radicalization process. To begin with the former, the life psychology theory (Bertelsen, 2015) was picked up by three Danish municipalities. Norwegian CVE policies (n = 5) are the only policies that use the radicalization tunnel model (Norwegian government, 2016), and two Swedish policies use an unnamed theory produced by the Swedish Security Police and the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2009), portraying four major pathways to extremism. This finding serves as the strongest evidence for the overall observation that national belonging serves as an institutional constraint in the translation process.

However, internationally well-known theories and models are also used in the Scandinavian countries, including the push and pull factor model (Denmark, n = 1; Norway, n = 3; and Sweden, n = 2). This model includes two sets of factors. Some push individuals toward extremist milieus while other pull them in (RAN, 2016b). In general, the factors listed as push factors (ranging from seven to ten factors depending on the municipality) are found in the grievance and individual vulnerability explanatory boxes, while the pull factors (ranging from five to 13 factors) mainly concern the role of networks, ideology and power and thrill. In addition, the model is used with caution as nearly all municipalities state that the factors listed "are only examples of push and pull factors" (Helsingborg, 2016, p. 5). Local editing of the model is extensive, as none of the municipalities use the same push and pull factors in their CVE policies, but vary regarding which factors are enlisted and how many. For example, the municipality of Helsingborg (2016) in Sweden lists problematic and destructive home conditions as a relevant push factor, while Karlstad (2016) in the same country does not include that factor.

	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Theories, models and checklists	Push and pull factors to extremism (n = 1)	Push and pull factors to extremism (n = 3)	Push and pull factors to extremism (n = 2)
	Risk and protective factors (n = 2)	Risk and protective factors (n = 12)	Risk and protective factors (n = 1)
	Life psychology theory (Aarhus model) (n = 3)	Radicalization tunnel theory (n = 5)	Pathways to VE theory (Swedish Security Police) (n = 2)
	Three-phase model (n = 3)		
	List of concern signs and signals (n = 15)	List of concern signs and signals (n = 15)	List of concern signs and signals (n = 7)

Table 3: Theories, models and checklists

Another common model in use that resembles the push and pull factor model is the risk and protective factor model (Denmark, n = 2; Norway, n = 12; and Sweden, n = 1). The logic underpinning the model is that some factors make individuals become at risk of radicalization, while other factors make individuals resilient, and thus, function as protective against radicalization. Norwegian policies are especially fond of the model, and they use it with little variance. Nine of the 12 policies rely on a model consisting of 40 risk factors divided into five sections: personal factors, family-related factors, social factors, motivational factors and ideological and cultural factors. Examples of the factors categorized this way are impulsivity, poverty, bad home conditions, lack of knowledge, feeling discriminated against and being discontented with social and economic injustices. There are also 22 to 27 protective factors, which are divided the same way as the risk factors, but with the exception that no motivational protective factors are found in three of the CVE policies.

Checklists of signs, signals and indicators of radicalization are popular and widely used (Denmark, n = 15; Norway, n = 15; and Sweden, n = 7). These lists consist of a range (the mean value of the listed signs is 16) of observable or communicated behaviors, looks, attitudes and values that are presented as indicators of radicalization. Thus, they are to inform primarily frontline practitioners how to detect radicalization among the people they meet in daily work. The signs are to a high degree individualized, but some examples of signs among youth milieus and in specific communities are mentioned in three Danish policies and one Swedish policy. The signs on group and community level are, in most cases, the same signs used to detect individuals, but pluralized in order to fit the level of focus.

There are different ways to categorize the individual indicators of concern. The Norwegian standard CVE policy categorizes them into four boxes, covering a total of 20 indicators: (a) interest in, appearance and use of symbols; (b) families, friends and social networks; (c) activities; and (d) verbal opinions. The same homogeneity concerning the signs is not evident in Danish and Swedish CVE policies. In Denmark, six variants are used, and although only seven Swedish CVE policies use lists of concern signs, five variants are found in the material. Some of these signs in the checklists have a more direct connection with violent extremism and point to individuals' actual involvement and actions in extremist organizations and milieus, while other are vague in their relation to radicalization:

> Intolerance for others' point of view . . . Conspiracy theories . . . Sympathy for absolute solutions, such as abolishing democracy . . . Appeals to and search after extremist content on the internet . . . Changing looks, clothes . . . Quits school and leisure activities . . . Changing networks and social circle. (Baerum & Asker, 2015, p. 7)

Other signs found in the policies include "attempts to legitimize its opinions by pointing to deprivations in the society or the world" (Halmstad, 2017, p. 9), "is convinced that own opinions are the only just, try to argue and convince others" (Huddinge, 2016, p. 1) and "the

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person begins to use an ideological and emotional language that criticizes and discriminates against others" (Haderslev, 2017, p. 4). The policies' instructions for how a practitioner should understand these checklists contribute to rather than reduce the vagueness of the signs and their relation to violent extremism. Examples are statements such as "the list is not complete" (Baerum & Asker, 2015, p. 7), "a list cannot stand alone" (Rudersdal, n.d., p. 1), "the signs often are the same as we see at despair. Moreover, it can be other signs that can paint the picture of a youth who is in a radicalization process" (Hedensted, 2015, p. 4) and that there should be "a combination of signs of concern" (Drammen, 2015, p. 14) for a frontline practitioner to act, but without providing any information about the number or mix of combinations. As a consequence of the vague indicators, there seems to be a fundamental confusion concerning what the signs actually are signs of. Stavanger (n.d.) is one of the municipalities that suggests the signs "function as signs of circumstances that would make it possible for the person to be in danger of radicalization" (p. 11), underlining the general confusion whether the signs are indicators of someone who might be at risk of becoming radicalized, is undergoing a radicalization process or already is radicalized. More importantly, such a broad approach will transform certain groups to become "at risk and risky" (Heath-Kelly, 2013, p. 394) based on "a mix of facts, norms, values and personal feelings" (van de Weert & Eijkman, 2018, p. 17), increasing the risk of stigmatization and violation of constitutional rights for those deemed vulnerable.

To sum up, there are theories and models specific for each country and more interestingly, local translations of internationally known ones. Six Scandinavian municipalities uses the push and pull factor model, but no one the exact same version. Although only seven Swedish municipalities have a checklist with indicators of radicalization, five versions of checklists exist. The factors and indicators are continuously being reformulated and exchanged as they move between time and space: They live their own life in the hands of the "editors," the officials writing the policies, and as Latour and Woolgar (1986) put it: "each of these people may act in many different ways, letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it" (p. 267). The

vague nature of the indicators and the fluent instructions for how to use them result in indicators that seemingly have little to with extremism, for example, focusing on young people's non-criminal political or religious attitudes, their way of arguing for their cause, changes in their social relationships and clothing.

Concluding Discussion

This paper seeks to explain how local policies conceptualize radicalization by exploring the definitions, explanatory factors and theories, models and checklists utilized in 60 Scandinavian municipal CVE policies. Wolman (1981) argued that to address a problem in public policy, the first step is to understand the problem. From that point of view, it might be concerning that the findings in this paper show that there are various understandings regarding some of the fundamental characteristics often associated with the idea of radicalization: its proposed processual nature, outcome(s) of the process, root causes, theories or models to explain it and what indicators should be used to detect radicalization (or the risk of it). In several cases, radicalization is portrayed as a mere outcome and not a process. Regarding the different types of outcomes of radicalization, the problem of distinguishing between cognitive outcomes of radicalization (e.g. extremist ideas) and radical thoughts is managed by applying editing strategies where the municipalities either neglect or downplay the problematic relationship. The problem, however, remains on a practical level: How is a teacher to know if a pupil is developing into a "good" radical or a "bad" radical? Instead of neglecting and avoiding, policymakers need to explicitly address this conflict and the overall variances in the understanding of radicalization by problematizing the idea. Otherwise, there is an increasing risk of CVE policies countering radical thoughts rather than extremism.

There are at least two ways to understand why such considerable variance in translations of radicalization occurs on the local level. The first is the lack of scientific evidence concerning "how and why radicalization happens" (Hardy, 2018, p. 99); we know little about why people actually choose to engage in and commit violence in extremist groups.

This uncertainty simplifies the connotation and transformation of most forms of deviant ideas, behaviors and experiences, as well as social and cultural identities, into possible risk factors and indicators of radicalization. Therefore, more research is needed on which and how factors causally relate and contribute to radicalization processes. Otherwise, there is an obvious risk of labeling deviant individuals as future extremists on a vague and prejudiced basis.

The second way is grounded in the neo-institutional understanding of what happens when organizations are put under institutional pressure to act in situations of uncertainty. Given the general absence of local mappings and reflections of how the problem of radicalization is manifested in the municipalities, the need for a CVE policy does not seem to derive from a rational problem-driven deliberation process, but as a response to the demands of the institutional context. The uncertainty about how to make sense of a problem that they have little experience of encountering drives the translation of legitimate and fashionable (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005) definitions, explanatory factors and theories, models and checklists for radicalization in the "emerging policy field" (Lindekilde, 2012, p. 337). However, as these abstract models then encounter local institutions and agency in the municipalities, the objects becomes locally edited. For instance, recall the origin and travel of the push and pull factor model (table 3), used by many Scandinavian municipalities. It derives from migration research (Schoorl, 2000), was dis-embedded from that context, translated to the field of counter extremism, edited to incorporate factors relevant to countering radicalization, repackaged into a coherent model, made fashionable by legitimate actors and is now being edited and re-edited as it is "littered around the social landscape" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 345).

Few municipalities reflect upon whether radicalization is a problem at all in the municipality and if so, into what type of milieu and how this might affect the municipalities' understanding of the issue. Radicalization is edited and stripped from its context in the analyzed policies and presented as a decontextualized, abstracted and stable idea that will "fit" everywhere. One of the main arguments for local authorities' involvement in CVE work is that contextual adaption of measures in relation to the local manifestations of the problem is

more effective (Vermeulen, 2014; RAN, 2016a). The decontextualization of radicalization noticed in this paper serves as a stark contrast to this ambition and should raise some concerning questions for international, national and local CVE policymakers. Paying attention to the context in which radicalization happens is a major potential improvement that possibly can contribute to more relevant local descriptions of the problem and thus, more adequate practical work deployed to counter it.

Despite the considerable variances in the translations of radicalization manifested in the findings, institutional elements constrain and direct attention to certain ways of understanding radicalization. The first is national belonging. As noted in table 1, 2 and 3, there are some notable differences between the Nordic countries in their translations of radicalization. This shows that the national context constrains and influences which type of definitions, explanatory factors and theories, models and checklists that are the focus. As the municipalities strive to be conceived of as legitimate actors, they adapt their translations in relation to its immediate spatial (Scott, 1995) and cultural (Strang & Meyer, 1993) relationships in the organizational field. Second, the social entity of the translators influences the translation and editing of radicalization (Strang & Meyer, 1993). As the perceived self-identification (Hedmo, Sahlin-Andersson, & Wedlin, 2005) of an organizational actor is formed by its belonging to certain social entities (e.g., municipalities), municipalities focus on certain explanatory factors rather than others. This becomes most evident when reviewing the focus placed on grievances in table 2. The puzzle is that neither national belonging nor the social entity is able to explain the micro-level variance in the translations of radicalization between municipalities in the same country. As mentioned, local experiences of radicalization seem to have limited influence on the translation process, indicating that instead, they are dependent on the local identity and agency of the editor. The identity, agency and preferences of the one(s) in charge of writing the policy highly influence "what cherries to pick" in the construction of the policy. As exploring this constrain goes beyond the methodological scope of this paper, institutional scholars and scholars interested in radicalization studies are

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encouraged to further analyze such micro-level processes to understand why some cherries are chosen while others are neglected in the construction of CVE policies.

What has been analyzed in this paper is how the idea of radicalization has been materialized, through translation processes, in municipal CVE policies. Countering extremism is a fairly new task for Scandinavian municipalities and most of the policies analyzed in this paper were crafted during 2015-2016 under intense institutional pressure from politics, media and the public (Andersson Malmros & Mattsson, 2017). Since then, many national- and international training initiatives have been undertaken in the Scandinavian countries. The professionalization of local level employees and institutionalization of the field of actors involved in CVE work have possibly contributed to streamlining conceptualizations of radicalization. In regard to this acknowledgement, the data analyzed in this paper only limitedly can portray the changes and development that the field has undergone during this period of time. Also, the findings only provide an indication of how radicalization is further translated, conceptualized and used in practical CVE work conducted by frontline practitioners. Hence, understanding how the idea of radicalization plays out in practice remains an ambitious, yet fundamentally important, empirical task for research in this field. Another interesting task for future research would be, in contrast to this paper, to compare more politically, culturally and geographically deviant cases to shed further light on the social institutions that shape national- and local CVE policies and their understandings of radicalization.

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Appendix 1: CVE policies included in the analysis

Sweden		Norway		Denmark	
Stockholm	Huddinge	Drammen	Skien	Frederiksberg	Ålborg
Gothenburg	Uppsala	Ski	Bergen	Copenhagen	Silkeborg
Örebro	Eskilstuna	Ålesund	Fjell, Asköj, Öygarden & Sund	Esbjerg	Randers
Norrköping	Malmö	Horten	Oslo	Ringkoping-Skjern	Haderslev
Karlstad	Linköping	Stavanger	Kristiansand	Herning	Viborg
Helsingborg	Borås	Moss	Karmöy	Helsingör	Vejle
Solna	Gävle	Baerum & Asker	Kongsberg	Odense	Horsens
Nacka	Västerås	Fredrikstad	Larvik	Kolding	Hedensted
Halmstad	Sundsvall	Trondheim	Lillehammer	Aarhus	Frederikshavn
Lund	Kungsbacka	Hamar	Gjövik	Holbaek	Lyngby-Taarbaek

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