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Community Safety Policies in Sweden. A Policy Change in Crime Control Strategies?

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Abstract:

Internationally, there has been a general trend towards crime prevention and community safety measures. The main policy ideas and instruments associated with this trend have spread widely in Western countries. This article examines the Swedish national crime prevention policy. As Sweden is a welfare society with a long tradition of social crime prevention, it is of great interest to explore to what extent the aforementioned trend has influenced its crime prevention policy. We do this by examining Sweden's national policy and how its concepts have spread to the local level—specifically, to municipalities and their local crime prevention councils. We find that there has been a preventive shift in Sweden, although not as far-reaching as in many other European countries. Substantial changes have occurred in the understanding and direction of crime prevention work, and the question is to what extent this development will continue.

Keywords: crime prevention, community safety, preventive turn, policy convergence, Sweden

Introduction

International policy transfer and diffusion is claimed to exert increasing influence over national and international policy formation (Jones & Newburn, 2007; Levi-Faur & Vigoda-Gadot, 2006), though there is debate concerning the nature and extent of this influence (e.g., Bennett, 1991; Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). The central question of whether or not this transfer implies policy convergence has been widely discussed in relation to a variety of policy areas. A policy area that is intensely discussed, nationally and internationally, and is a target for broader international trends, is crime control (Ericson, 2006; Newburn & Sparks, 2004; Worrall, 2008).

Since the mid-1970s, starting in Britain, we have witnessed a widespread shift from social crime prevention to an emphasis on community safety and social order (Matthews & Pitts, 2000; Squires, 2006; see also Bauman, 2001). “Community safety” is a key term in current discussion of crime prevention. As public safety has become a central goal of crime prevention and public fear seems to be increasing in many countries, local-level measures have been singled out as pivotal. Community safety addresses not only crime reduction and fear of crime, but also more general public fear and social disorder (Gilling, 2007). It has become a more encompassing project than earlier policies for crime prevention and local crime control.

Through the research network, community safety and local crime prevention concepts have spread to various national contexts (Crawford, 2009), as part of a broad cross-national exchange of criminological ideas (Edwards & Hughes, 2005b). However, the implementation of preventive crime control policies differs among European countries in terms of timing, content, and direction (Garland, 2001; for a comparison with non-European countries, see Barak, 2000). Though international policy transfer is influential in crime prevention policy, the role of domestic policy and state influence should not be neglected (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). National policies are located in different political cultures and parts of different national regulatory styles, which causes cultural and institutional path dependency (Newburn & Sparks, 2004; Pfau-Effinger, 2005; Pierson, 2000; cf. Jasanoff, 2005). As stated by Pfau-Effinger (2005, p. 4), “the cultural values and ideals which predominate in the welfare culture restricts the spectrum of possible policies of a welfare state.” While theories of policy transfer and diffusion help us understand the occurrence and direction of policy change (see, e.g., Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996; Hall, 1993; Radaelli, 2000), path-dependency theories highlight the institutional constraints that hinder states and institutions from changing paths (Peters, 2005, ch. 4; Pierson, 2000; Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992).

The Nordic countries are commonly described as having a specific “Nordic model” of crime prevention that emphasizes the social aspects of crime prevention. Generally well-developed welfare systems and a long tradition of social crime prevention are seen as decisive in reducing crime and creating an inclusive society. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that Sweden is affected by broader trends, trends that challenge both the traditional welfare state with its large public sector and the traditional way of understanding crime as caused by social inequality and

poor social security. This surmise forms the basis of this article, which explores to what extent these trends have influenced Swedish crime prevention policy. We do this by focusing on the tension between the ideational convergence of community safety policy and the Swedish policy legacy.

The article is comprised of six sections, this introduction being the first. The next section presents the theoretical approach and method used in studying policy convergence. The third section discusses crime prevention and community safety policy as an idea complex. In particular, it emphasizes that crime control policy has taken a preventive turn, implying an emphasis on security and the reduction of fear and disorder. The fourth section investigates Sweden's national crime prevention program and to what extent it converges to the idea complex of crime prevention, not least in its view of safety and security and proposed measures for reaching these goals.

The fifth section analyses to what degree these goals and ideas have spread to the local level through conferences and local crime prevention projects. The sixth section concludes that Swedish crime control policy has indeed taken a preventive turn, but to a lesser extent than in other European countries. This is because the policy legacy of the social democratic welfare state has provided less fertile ground for such a policy change. At the same time, the change in direction may in the long run provide for a more far-reaching policy change in Sweden as well.

Studying policy convergence

Policy convergence is the expected outcome of policy transfer and diffusion (Levi-Faur & Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). To gain a more nuanced understanding of the process and of the results of policy change and ideational spread, we need to distinguish between levels of convergence. In this study, three levels are identified (cf. Brunsson, 1989; Pollitt, 2001a, 2001b): *discursive convergence*, which concerns the world of talk and policy discourse; *decisional convergence*, which concerns decisions regarding policy direction and strategies, often studied through the occurrence of similar concepts, titles, or labels of policies and interventions; and *practice convergence*, which concerns the activities and practices resulting from the policy. Many studies of policy diffusion do not consider practice convergence. However, to obtain a more encompassing account of whether or not a policy change has occurred, the level of practice also merits investigation. This is particularly important in newer and less institutionalized policy areas, such as the one studied here, since they have rarely established their own operative organizations, but largely work through networks, knowledge exchange, and ideational spread.

To change a specific policy in a certain direction that breaks with the prevailing welfare culture, policy makers need to launch a new discourse that makes it logical or desirable to move policy in this new direction (Knuth, 2009, p. 1057; Pfau-Effinger, 2005). Even if this new discourse is successfully realized at the national level it may fail in practice, if local actors translate and transform the policy in line with the prevailing culture. Therefore, all three levels of convergence

merit analysis.

To investigate the *discursive and decisional levels* and to what extent community safety ideas are evident in Swedish national policy, we analyze the current national crime prevention program. This part of the study focuses on the national program's fundamental view and on the measures with which it proposes to reduce crime and bolster safety. The empirical material is primarily the current national crime prevention program. The study also examines the governmental commission reports on crime and crime prevention that preceded the establishment of the national crime prevention program and the government's evaluation of the national program in 2001. These documents are analyzed using qualitative content analysis methodology (Bryman, 2008; Krippendorff & Bock, 2009) with the aim of identifying the underlying problem definitions and assumptions to see whether there has been any substantial change in Sweden's crime prevention policy in line with the transnational trend towards preventive crime control policy.¹

The first part of the study demonstrates how the Swedish government currently conceptualizes the problem of crime and safety, but says nothing about the spread of this understanding to other actors or about the practices it has led to. Therefore, the next part analyses how the central public agency on this field – the National Crime Prevention Council – endeavours to disseminate these national goals and ideas to municipalities and their local crime prevention councils. This part of the analysis draws on two empirical studies. The first concerns an *extended discursive level*, which includes various policy actors at the national and local levels. It focuses on the interactive formation of the policy discourse and what the National Crime Prevention Council sees as important input to local work. The study consists of a quantitative content analysis of the plenary sessions and seminars held at the annual national conferences on local crime prevention between 2004 and 2010. These conferences — organized by the National Crime Prevention Council — gather participants from most local crime prevention councils in Sweden as well as representatives of municipalities and relevant national authorities (e.g., the police, Department of Justice, and Department of Social Affairs). The speakers represent a mix of national and local civil servants, politicians, researchers, and other experts.

The empirical material consists of documentation from these conferences, each plenary speech and seminar having been summarized in 400–1000 words (average, approximately 600 words). The analysis was conducted in several steps. First, each summary was read to create a list of major categories. Then the summaries were re-read to see how they fit these categories and whether some categories were redundant. A final list of eight categories was created, after which the 53 speeches and seminars were finally categorized. This part of the analysis both reveals the extended discourse and indicates the direction of practice, as several of the plenary sessions and

¹ There is no established Swedish translation of “community safety,” “public safety,” “citizen safety,” “safety,” and “local crime prevention work” are the most common related terms used in public documents. Our study focuses on the content, meaning, and direction of Swedish crime prevention work, which implies that it is the usage and meaning of the concept and not the chosen terminology that is of interest. This does not mean that the words used are without significance, as conceptual usage is an important part of a policy discourse. What it does mean is that the term “community safety” was not used as such in the empirical analysis.

seminars focused on presenting and exchanging experience from specific projects and interventions.

The level of practice is taken into account by investigating the aim and direction of the local projects that received grants from the National Crime Prevention Council from 2004 to 2010. Based on reading the project applications and final reports of all 100 projects that received grants, a preliminary list of categories was made. The final reports were then re-read to facilitate revision of the list of categories, and a final list of seven categories was created. Finally, all project reports were categorized in terms of their primary focus and target. These projects represent important efforts to steer the activities of local crime councils and indicate what measures are seen as important for reducing crime and achieving safety. Not least with reference to the limited budget of the local councils, project grants are often central to determining what activities local councils prioritize.

By accounting for these levels, we will investigate to what extent Swedish crime prevention policy has shifted towards a community safety paradigm. The analysis also has something to say about the tension between policy diffusion and cultural and institutional path dependency: to what extent, in what manner, and at what level do these processes collide?

The preventive turn in crime control policy

Crime and public fear are increasing in many countries. To counteract this trend, national and local authorities have developed a number of crime prevention strategies. Parallel to this has been rampant growth in the security industry, encompassing burglary protection, private guards, assault alarms, gated communities, and surveillance systems. Political parties are developing personal safety programs, city planners are striving to monitor urban public spaces (see, e.g., Hoyt, 2006), municipalities are developing crime prevention programs, and communities are organizing citizens to protect themselves from “deviant” others.

Crime control policies have taken a preventive turn in many countries, not least in Europe and North America. This ideational shift can be summarized in four points (see, e.g., Crawford, 2009; Edwards and Hughes, 2005a; Garland, 2001; Hughes, 2007; Wacquant, 2009; Young, 1999):

- public concern about increased crime and public fear of crime, together with concern about the weakening and fragmenting of traditional bonds of social control
- concern about the limited capacity of formal criminal justice institutions to reduce crime and come to terms with rising crime levels
- the development of community policing as a central means to achieve safety, in which partnerships and problem-solving techniques are proactively used to address the immediate conditions that give rise to crime, fear of crime, and social disorder
- the decline of the rehabilitative ideal, the fading of welfarist rationales for criminal justice in which rehabilitation and inclusion were the goals of penal institutions. Instead,

retributive justice discourse has reappeared in which proportionality of sentencing and punitive measures (most visibly in the death penalty) have replaced the earlier “modern” penal system’s aversion to punitive sanctions.

This preventive turn implies that crime prevention is no longer confined to crime and criminal opportunities but includes broader questions of feelings, fears, and social order. Consequently, crime prevention is often replaced by alternative terms, such as community safety, urban security, local safety, and safety partnership (Edwards and Hughes, 2005a). This broadening of the object of crime prevention implies a merging of the concerns of criminal justice and social policy. When crime and insecurity are seen as central threats to social order, social policy may be reconfigured in response. It is even claimed that we now see a criminalization of social policy, social policy being legitimated with reference to its potential to reduce crime (Crawford, 2009; Edwards & Hughes, 2005a; Gilling, 2001).

This preventive shift has entailed reshaping government crime policy, supported by changes in criminological thought, popular attitudes, and media attention. This has, in turn, resulted in a new crime control infrastructure in which prevention, security, and fear reduction have become guiding principles associated with new technologies for sorting, measuring, and managing crime and public fear (Garland, 2001; Lyon, 2001; de Maillard, 2005; O’Malley, 2004; Stenson, 2005).

In addition, there is growing acknowledgement of the limited capacity of formal criminal justice institutions to reduce crime and counteract public fear. This has led to a quest for new ways to organize crime prevention. Today, greater efforts are being made to mobilize civil society and create preventive partnerships between public and private actors to develop prevention strategies and community policing, emphasizing local solutions to local problems (Deflem, 2009; Gilling, 2001; Hughes, 2007).

The main criticism of this trend is that it dresses a particular interest in universal clothes. Behind a seemingly general interest — i.e., social order and public safety — lies a program that favours socio-economically strong groups and their particular view of what constitutes “good social life” (cf. Edwards & Hughes, 2005b). Other groups’ views and needs are overshadowed, and the fundamental question “safety for whom?” is not explicitly considered. This will result in an exclusive society in which certain groups are categorized as problematic, resulting in otherification, discrimination, and social disintegration (Gilling, 2001; Young, 1999). Some commentators see this trend as part of a broader neoliberal wave that has swept over the Western world (Crawford, 2009; Gilling, 2007; Wacquant, 2009), implying the devolving of responsibility from the state to the individual and an emphasis on individual rather than structural explanations of the causes of crime.

Crime prevention no longer focuses solely on reducing crime but also on fostering public safety. Although there is considerable convergence in Europe and elsewhere in the world concerning crime prevention goals (EC, 2004; ICPC, 2008; Ruggiero et al., 1998), there are national differences in policy instruments and implementation (Crawford, 2009; Edwards & Hughes,

2005b). Local crime prevention councils and actors depend on criminological input from experts who are part of national and international policy is converging to the international trend, we must also consider the transfer of this policy to the local level; the next two sections are devoted to this task.

Swedish crime prevention: the national policy discourse

The Nordic countries are characterized by comparatively large public sectors and generally well-developed welfare systems. Through its emphasis on preventing social marginalization, spatial segregation, and socio-economic inequality, the welfare state has placed a far-reaching emphasis on social crime prevention.² In many non-Nordic countries, crime prevention is equated with more severe punishment and other controlling and repressive measures. In Sweden, however, the dominant view is that the criminal law system has only a marginal effect on crime prevention (BRÅ, 2001, p. 3). Instead, the role of the justice system is primarily one of creating basic norms and general prevention. Socialization and social inclusion are seen as more effective means of crime prevention than are general deterrence and repressive measures (Lidskog, 2006, p. 193). In 1974, Sweden was the first nation in the world to establish a national crime prevention council. It endeavors to reduce crime and improve safety levels in society by producing data and disseminating knowledge of crime and crime prevention efforts.

Nevertheless, Sweden still seems to have been affected by broader trends in preventive crime control strategies, resulting in a national crime prevention program, the establishment of new public authorities, changed legislation (not least concerning the surveillance of citizens), and a new way to understand how effective crime prevention should be designed. Since the mid-1990s, there has been growing political and public debate on crime and public fear (Pollack, 2001).

A number of governmental commissions have investigated violence and public trust (Governmental Commission Report, 1990, 1994, 1995b). In 1994, the government established a Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority. The government first adopted a national crime prevention program in 1996, and two years later, it established a national committee for local crime prevention work (Governmental Commission Report, 1998, 1999). The Local Crime Prevention Division was established at the National Crime Prevention Council, with the aim of fostering interest and involvement in crime prevention efforts at the local networks.

Internationally spread ideas and nationally formulated goals and programs have to be disseminated to and interpreted by local actors to become relevant and meaningful. Whereas international and national studies have found that crime prevention policy ideas and instruments have spread extensively, few studies discuss to what extent these policy ideas have penetrated the

² There are two main approaches to crime prevention (Tilley, 2009). Social crime prevention emphasizes reducing the number of offenders and the motivation to offend. Related measures are directed towards the social causes of crime, often by changing social conditions and social environments. Situational crime prevention emphasizes reducing criminal opportunities rather than addressing the characteristics of criminals or potential criminals. This strategy attempts to increase the risks and difficulties associated with crime and to reduce the rewards of crime

local level (cf. de Maillard, 2005). To investigate whether Swedish crime prevention level. In the 1990s, a community-based policing strategy was developed in Sweden, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions promoted an extended cooperation, which is still under development, in the form of partnerships among municipalities, local police, and other stakeholders.

A National Crime Prevention Program

In 1996, the Swedish government adopted a national crime prevention program, Our Collective Responsibility (Ds 1996). Five years later, the government evaluated the program and found that it was still in a development phase (Skr 2000/2001); Our Collective Responsibility is still in force today.

The problem, as conceptualized by the program, is that the former social order has dissolved, leading not only to increased crime rates but also increased public fear and feelings of unsafety. Whereas social cohesion and order were formerly developed and maintained through shared norms and social ties (Ds 1996: 9–10, Skr 2000/2001: 5), this informal social control has weakened due to processes of urbanization, industrialization, migration, and segregation. Instead, social order has become increasingly based on formal authority, exerted mainly by the police and the judicial system. Current societal developments, however, have made formal control less functional and relevant. A functioning social order in a modern democratic society needs to be based on other mechanisms than formal authority, and informal social control, social ties, and socialization (i.e., internalized social norms) have been suggested as preferred means to achieve social order. The program attaches particular roles to families, schools, communities, and the citizenry as central institutions that inculcate social norms and self-control in citizens (Ds 1996: 31, 59; Skr 2001: 8, 23, 62). It also emphasizes preventive partnership, civil society, and local-level community policing as important strategies.

However, both the program's problem formulation and proposed solutions have been heavily criticized (Lidskog, 2006; Sahlin, 2000; Tham, 2001). It is claimed that the program is based on a mono-cultural and non-pluralistic view of society, assuming that certain general social norms apply to all citizens, irrespective of their cultural and religious heritage. The crime prevention program is largely a socialization project having norms, ties, and control as its cornerstones (Lidskog, 2006, pp. 206–207). Furthermore, the program pays almost no attention to the gender aspects of crime, violence, and trust (Listerborn, 2002), ignoring a governmental investigation of violence against women presented the year before the program's inception (Governmental Commission Report, 1995a). It turns a blind eye to male violence and how it affects women's feelings of safety, and abets the concealing of asymmetries of power, patriarchal norms, and other structural aspects of violence. By disregarding the pluralistic and differentiated nature of society, the crime prevention program implicitly fosters a view of society as homogenous. Issues concerning the structural causes of crime and unsafety are ignored, and the consequences of the program for different social groups are not discussed.

A Changed Understanding

The crime prevention program was part of a broad process in Sweden, which resulted in a substantial change in crime prevention policy. Whereas crime was primarily defined as a social policy problem in the 1960s and 1970s, in the 1980s and 1990s, it came to be defined as a criminal policy problem (Sahlin, 2000; Tham, 2001).

According to the earlier view, the offender was a victim needing rehabilitation in order, ultimately, to be reintegrated into society. This view has gradually been replaced by the view that there should be proportionality between the criminal act and sentencing and by an emphasis on crime as violating the individual rights of victims. This implies the de-emphasis of the social aspects of crime prevention, which stress the circumstances that generate offenders. Instead, social control and punitive measures have increasingly been emphasized.

Swedish researchers have explained this shift in crime prevention policy with reference to broader changes in society (Flyghed, 2000; Lidskog, 2006; Sahlin, 2000; Tham, 2001). The cutback of welfare state provisions implied a decrease in social crime prevention. This created space for new policy initiatives, space that was largely filled by strategies for situational crime prevention and risk group assessment. Instead of counteracting structural causes of crime, such as segregation and exclusion, with social crime prevention, situational crime prevention was given a central role. Social control and social order are thereby seen as central mechanisms for both counteracting crime and fostering public safety. In cases in which individuals “choose to commit crimes,” punitive measures may deter the offenders from relapsing to commit further crime; such measures may also deter potential offenders from committing an offence in the first place.

A Preventive Turn in Sweden

Sweden has taken a preventive turn in its crime prevention policy. Although not as pervasively as in many other European countries (not least Britain) and the United States, there has been obvious change in line with the preventive turn described above. The national program for crime prevention:

- assumes that crime is increasing, that public feelings of unsafety constitute a great problem for crime prevention, and that this development is caused by a weakening of traditional bonds of social control;
- believes that formal criminal justice institutions have a limited capacity to tackle the increase in crime and public fear, and therefore invites civil society and its informal social control to complement (and, in certain areas, even replace) formal social control;
- increasingly emphasizes situational crime prevention; though social crime prevention still plays a role, it is not framed as a means of addressing the structural causes of crime (e.g., social conditions such as unemployment, segregation, and inequality for certain groups in

society); instead general norms and social ties are believed to reduce crime;

- puts the individual, injured victim at the centre, and the offender is not seen as a victim of his/her personal history and social circumstances; and
- stresses community policing and community safety, in which partnerships and collaboration between local- level actors are central to reducing crime and increasing public safety.

There has been convergence to the ideas underlying the preventive turn at the national level, convergence concerning both discourses (i.e., how to conceptualize the problem) and decisions (i.e., policy direction) and, to some degree, also practices (i.e., changed legislation, development of partnership and collaboration programs). We note, however, that other policy areas may be developing in other directions. For example, segregated housing areas have been the object of social intervention (e.g., the government's new metropolitan policy for the most segregated areas of Sweden's major cities; see Parliamentary Bill 1998, No. 165).

Furthermore, policy development at the national level only partially answers the question of whether there has been a shift in Sweden's crime prevention policy. With the national policy's strong emphasis on the local level as the central arena for crime prevention, any answer must also take account of policy development at the local level. What ideas from national crime prevention policy have been transferred to the local level, and what crime prevention practices are being developed in the municipalities?

Local Crime Prevention in Sweden

Community safety policies imply that the relevant activities are to be carried out at the local level, i.e., the operational level of crime prevention. Since the 1990s, local crime prevention efforts have comprised an important part of the activities of the National Crime Prevention Council. It established a local crime prevention division, which organizes annual meetings, publishes handbooks on local crime prevention, and reports on successful local initiatives. So far, 18 reports on local crime prevention ideas have been published, and since 2000, an annual national conference on local crime prevention has been held.

The Council provides support and funds for local crime prevention projects, and more than 100 local projects have so far received support. The council has also financially supported the establishment of local crime prevention councils. Over 15 years, the number of local crime prevention councils has increased ten-fold, from approximately 30 in 1996 to 292 in 2011.³ This means that local crime prevention councils exist in almost 90 percent of Swedish municipalities.

Some years ago, a survey examining the organization of the local crime prevention councils

³ There are 290 municipalities in Sweden, and the largest cities include several sub-municipal councils (e.g., Stockholm 14, Gothenburg 15, and Malmö 8). This means that 256 municipalities have local crime prevention councils (www.bra.se).

found that the municipal board, social services, and the police are represented in most local crime prevention councils (BRÅ, 2005). Trade associations and housing companies are members in more than one-third of the local councils, and other members include churches, fire departments, schools, and various municipal units (members of 15–25 percent of the local councils). This composition of members can be interpreted as indicating broad-based support for the current merging of social and criminal policies. The police are represented in 83 per- cent of all local councils and have a strong mandate as law enforcement agents to represent and act in this organizational setting. The police play a key role in the councils, and the survey indicates that the police are largely responsible for defining the situation and interpreting criminal statistics.

The proliferation of local crime prevention councils does not mark a decentralization trend, in which tasks are transferred to the local level; instead, it should be seen as a mode of discursive steering (cf. Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). By disseminating ideas and measures, providing financial support to specific projects, and initiating various public-private partnerships, the National Crime Prevention Council has succeeded in influencing local crime prevention work. Through conferences, networks, and printed materials supported by the National Council, general views of crime prevention work have been disseminated.

National Conference for Local Crime Prevention

The National Conference for Local Crime Prevention is an important annual gathering for the dissemination of ideas, strategies, and measures. It gathers approximately 300 participants, including many representatives of local crime prevention councils. Table 1 summarizes the subjects of discussion at the plenary presentations and seminars of these conferences.⁴

Table 1: Subjects of discussion at national conferences for local crime prevention

Social prevention	15
Situational prevention	14
Cooperation and partnerships	8
Feelings of safety	5
Knowledge development	4
Crime victim aspects	3
Information on organized crime	2
The media projection of crime	2

⁴ More than half the speakers were from the National Crime Prevention Council, the police, or universities. About one third were from municipalities (e.g., local politicians and civil servants, representatives of local crime prevention councils) and the remainder were NGO representatives, national politicians, and representatives from business and trade

Comments: Documentation is only accessible for five of the ten national conferences held, i.e., in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010. This categorization was produced through a quantitative content analysis of the documentation, which consists of summaries of all presentations. Source: www.bra.se.

Social crime prevention was a major theme of the presentations. Several presentations on social crime prevention were delivered by street-level bureaucrats from the social services. Their presentations expressed more of a traditional social preventive focus, in line with the welfare culture of Sweden. However, more than half of the presentations categorized as treating social crime prevention concerned the need to address specific risk groups in terms of either offenders or victims, reflecting another understanding of social crime prevention than was discussed earlier. The focus has shifted from general social crime prevention, in which the welfare model was seen as the most important preventive factor, to individual explanations and risk factor assessments.

The presentations categorized as dealing with *situational crime prevention* concern mainly physical design and planning, including safety inventories the main goal of which is to identify “risky places” (in terms of crime risk or cause of public unsafety). These inventories also aim to investigate and involve local residents in increasing public safety by redesigning these places, and activating and engaging citizens and civil society. This is the main activity carried out by the local crime prevention councils. They face considerable challenges getting the proposed changes implemented by the authorities, for whom theirs is but one of several perspectives to consider.

Presentations on *cooperation and partnership* concern both the benefits of coalition-building in combating crime and facilitating public trust, and the evaluation of successful partnerships. Hence, these presentations could be seen as manifesting the idea that governance through networks and partnerships is an effective way to address “new” social problems. Presentations on *feelings of safety* treated aspects of public trust and safety. It mainly includes discussions on factors that make the public feel safe or unsafe, as well as how feelings of unsafety can be counteracted.

The analysis indicates that the nationally formulated ideas had a wide influence, but that the crime prevention initiatives face resistance from local authorities responsible for actually implementing them. The extended discursive level involves a more diverse set of actors, not the least actors from traditional welfare institutions, such as the social services, that largely give expression to traditional Swedish welfare culture. However, we are still witnessing convergence to the policy ideas of the preventive turn, especially in the changed focus of social crime prevention on individual risk factor assessment, the greater focus on situational crime prevention than on structural explanations, and the emphasis of partnerships and networks as solution to these emerging social problems.

Local Crime Prevention Projects

As mentioned above, an important means to influence local crime prevention efforts, other than the national conferences, is the National Crime Prevention Council’s financial support of local

projects, i.e., at the level of practice. Local actors (mainly municipalities) can apply for grants for local crime prevention projects. Table 2 shows the themes of the projects that have received grants over the last seven years:

About one-third of the projects that received grants from the National Crime Prevention Council dealt with *social crime prevention*. These projects were largely directed towards specific risk groups, mainly “problematic youths,” and paralleled the analyses and themes expressed at the net- work conferences. Only a small proportion of these projects were directed towards a more general population, for example, projects encompassing all pupils at a school. A large number of projects dealt with graffiti, with the overall aim of reducing its amount, either by reducing graffiti as such or by redirecting it, by providing specific places where graffiti is permitted. The commitment against graffiti is based, on the one hand, on the argument that it signals disorder and thereby a lack of safety and social control and, on the other, on the belief that it represents an early form of disobedience (i.e., a risk factor) and is thus important to counteract.

Projects under the *information dissemination and education* category aim to spread information on risks, promote the development of norms, and prevent undesired behavior (e.g., use of drugs, anabolic steroids, and weapons; care- less driving; and refusal to testify in court). Most of the projects are directed towards young people, though some have other specific target groups (e.g., information on violence within families) and others are directed towards the whole local population (e.g., information about violence and crime statistics). Apart from spreading information, a central aspect of these projects is citizen socialization.

Another category of projects concerns *information gathering*, which generally has to do with citizen opinions and attitudes or crime rates in particular areas. Central assumptions in this policy area are that interventions should be based on knowledge and results should be measured. In practice, this has primarily meant that citizen attitudes — captured by opinion surveys rather than more general social research — have been paid special attention.

The focus on means of organization, in particular, partnerships and networks, is obvious here as well. *Cooperation and partnership* projects primarily aim to facilitate or build partnerships between various actors. While many other projects may be based on cooperation between actors, these projects have the expressed aim of creating, facilitating, or ameliorating partnerships between various public actors as well as public-private partnerships. Projects addressing feelings of safety have the explicit aim of promoting public feelings of safety, in contrast to situational crime prevention projects that primarily aim to reduce crime. These projects often target particular places seen as problematic because citizens associate them with risk.

To sum up, analysis of the crime prevention projects that received grants indicates convergence in line with the community safety paradigm, even more so than did the extended discourse (which also includes actors and projects financed by other institutions). The convergence is evident in the emphasis on managing disorder, be it in the form of combating graffiti, interventions targeting risk groups (not least specific categories of youth), or citizen socialization.

Table 2: Local projects financed by the national crime prevention council, 2004-2010

Social prevention	30
Graffiti: prevention and removal	17
Information dissemination and education 14 (incl creation of norms)	
Information and compilation	13
Situational prevention	11
Cooperation and partnerships	8
Feeling of safety	5
Other	2

Comments: The categorisation is made by us through a quantitative content analysis of all project applications that have received grants and their final reports (in total 100 projects).

Table 2: Local projects financed by the national crime prevention council, 2004-10

Conclusions: between policy legacy and policy convergence

The questions of how to make society safer and how to reduce public fear are on the political agenda in many countries, Sweden being no exception. The preventive policy shift and the community safety paradigm have diffused internationally, resulting in the convergence of national policy programs. Underlying these programs is a particular understanding of a social problem that needs to be addressed, namely, decreasing social control while crime and public fear are increasing and public confidence in formal institutions is declining. This understanding has provided essential input to community safety policy in Sweden. The explanations and solutions offered by Swedish crime prevention policy have converged in line with this preventive turn; in this, the policy represents a break from Sweden's crime prevention policy legacy.

It may seem surprising that Sweden has become fertile ground in which the preventive turn can take root. Sweden has a well-developed welfare system and a long tradition of social crime prevention. In Sweden, crime and public fear are not in fact increasing and social capital is high, including trust in formal institutions and public support of the welfare state (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003; Svallfors, 2006). However, there have been substantial cutbacks in welfare services over the last few decades, setting the stage for these shifts in crime prevention policy.

Currently, Sweden provides a mixed picture. To some extent, national-level policy is converging with the international trend. An understanding, directions, and practices are developing that are more or less in line with the preventive shift in crime control policy. At the same time, a still vital part of Swedish crime prevention policy is not in line with the preventive shift, especially in its

continued emphasis on social crime prevention.

Turning to the local level, the preventive shift is also visible. Ideas have spread to the local level, arenas for knowledge exchange have become established, and project grants have been distributed to the local level. At the same time, municipalities not only provide fertile soil for new ideas and policy changes, but are also important arenas for implementing traditional Swedish welfare policies and have a long tradition of social policy and social services. Changes in policy direction do not take place in a socio-historical vacuum, but in a context of cultural values, social norms, and established routines.

Policy legacy seems to play an important role; it could explain why the preventive turn has not gone as far in Sweden as in many other European countries. Even though there have been substantial changes in the crime prevention policy, the historical legacy has made these changes less far-reaching than in many other countries. However, this should not overshadow the implication of these changes, especially in the long run.

The policy shift has long-term implications because crime prevention policy does something in the world, shaping both people and places. Launching national policies, developing preventive programs, and disseminating them to municipalities have profound implications for municipalities and serve to shape society at large. Though the current policy shift represents only a small step in this new direction, it may nevertheless mark a significant departure. This shift in understanding might not confine itself to crime prevention work but may also come to influence broader views of what constitutes a good society. How actors understand crime and fear — the meanings they attribute to them, the causes they trace, and the remedies they suggest profoundly influence other areas.

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