

Experiencing trust in multiagency collaboration to prevent violent extremism: A Nordic qualitative study

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Abstract

In previous studies, multiagency collaboration was identified as a key strategy for early intervention in violent extremism. However, there has been little focus on professionals' shared communication to support collaboration. The aim of this study was to describe trust in multiagency collaboration teams in the Nordic countries tasked with preventing violent extremism. The data have been collected through simulated case discussions for groups (N=13) and individual interviews (N=78) with multiagency professionals in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden and analyzed using the thematic analysis method. Based on our results, trust emerged on 1) structural, 2) professional and 3) perceived personal levels. In addition, we identified facilitators and barriers for building trust at these levels. To fully understand the potential of trust, we argue that there is a need to take into account all these three levels of trust. Finally, we find that particularized trust can function as a foundation for building generalized trust. In future, more knowledge is needed about how to enable and manage trust with multiagency collaboration at organizational, but also national and international, level.

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Introduction

Preventing violent extremism (PVE) has risen high on the policy and research agenda during the last two centuries (Stephens et al., 2021). It is a complex task calling for holistic approaches by different professionals (Bjørge, 2016), because a single agency lacks the resources and expertise to solve it (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2016). In Denmark, Finland, Norway

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and Sweden, early intervention is at the core of these efforts, and multiagency collaboration between schools, social and health services and the police, is utilized to gather the expertise needed and to streamline preventive work. Although, as Mazerolle et al. (2021) argue, there is not enough scientific evidence to establish whether multiagency teams reduce radicalization leading to violence, this type of work has been transferred to PVE based on the core tenets of crime prevention and multiagency collaboration more broadly. This work is based on the intuitive assumption that holistic, coordinated and collaborative approaches are more likely to address the plural factors leading to violent extremism (Mazerolle et al., 2021). The multiagency teams typically work to address ‘at risk’ individuals who have not yet acted in a criminal way but may increasingly accept violence as a means of promoting extremist ideology (Ellis et al., 2020).

The aim of this study is to describe what trust means for multiagency teams for PVE in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and the facilitators and barriers of building trust in these teams. The teams are in-groups to their members, where trust in this new structure might compete with the other structures in their everyday institutional belonging. For instance, work ethics, regulations and hierarchies in a social worker’s profession can compete or collide with those of other professions and pose challenges for the team. The article engages with the practices and perspectives of different professionals brought together to provide necessary care for individuals and, simultaneously, protect society from potentially dangerous individuals and groups. This is a challenging task with potentially large consequences at personal, group and societal levels, calling for further research (Strype et al., 2014). In previous studies, multiagency trust has been found to play a key role in addressing a number of dilemmas and obstacles (Goodkind et al., 2011, Curnin et al., 2015, Gill and Thompson, 2017). This study will primarily have an interpretive approach (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013) to trust, namely how we interpret our informants’ experiences of trust.

The article is structured as follows. We first offer a theoretical background on multiagency collaboration and trust among social care and security agencies. Second, we will describe the methodology of the study before moving to our findings. Through the interviews and focus groups, we demonstrate what trust means to the professionals, the strains and

opportunities that come with this collaboration over time, and their consequences for these relations. Finally, we offer a discussion on trust in multiagency collaboration.

Theoretical background

In this section, we will briefly discuss relevant literature in the following two topics; trust and multiagency collaboration and highlight where relevant some of the special characteristics of Nordic countries. First, the literature on social trust can, in simple terms, be separated into three major fields, one on interpersonal or what is sometimes referred to as particularized, trust (Weber and Carter, 2012). A second on institutional or generalized trust (Rothstein and Stolle, 2008). Finally, a third field linking these varieties of trust together, such as Freitag and Traunmüller (2009) who argue that particularized trust can function as a foundation for building generalized trust. However, there are major variations in the epistemological basis for the encompassing field of social trust literature, from rational choice and economic approaches to interpretive and relational approaches. Nevertheless, it is important to contextualize the literature on trust in the Nordic countries, which, overall, score highly on European institutional trust measures (Evs, 2021). We will thus first discuss some of the aspects of institutional trust that loosely refer to Nordic exceptionalism, i.e. a “social environment highly conducive to trust” (Seifert, 2018). Second, we will discuss the literature on trust in the context of multiagency working.

The trustworthiness of government institutions is assumed to play a major role in the Nordic countries along with other factors such as ethnic homogeneity, wealth and income equality (Delhey and Newton, 2005). This can be referred to as the procedural fairness of government institutions, i.e. impartial, fair, and efficient institutions, and their influence on how citizens perceive and experience institutional trust (Rothstein and Stolle, 2008). Yet, as Rothstein and Stolle (2008) make clear, we do not know the direction of causality or, in other words, whether a great deal of generalized trust shapes fair institutions. In the Nordic context, scholars have debated a Nordic model or the favorable socioeconomic conditions and equality to understand citizens’ high-trust levels (Bjørnskov and Svendsen, 2013, Ervasti et al., 2008, Østerud, 2005). Here, it is debated if and how generally trust is essential for maintaining

social democratic welfare states where a majority of citizens are eligible for welfare benefits (Bjørnskov and Svendsen, 2013, Jensen and Svendsen, 2011, Larsen, 2007) as well as its links with a low level of corruption (Svendsen and Bjørnskov, 2007, Uslaner, 2008).

Second, multiagency collaboration is a topic relevant to the debate on interpersonal and institutional trust. Trust is found as a prerequisite for multiagency collaboration, along with mutual respect, and clear demarcation lines between agencies (Cooper et al., 2016, Keast, 2016). Trust is also important between the communities subject to strategies by the police and other public sector services (Gøtzsche-Astrup et al., 2021, Nguyen, 2019, Tsantefski et al., 2018, Lamb, 2012, Ellis et al., 2021). This is especially important for racial, ethnic and religious minority groups, namely that the government is perceived as fair and just in order to support PVE measures (Ellis et al., 2021). However, when services have worked separately, efforts must be made to develop a sense of shared goals, values and trust to facilitate collaboration (Harris and Allen, 2011). As Ellis et al. (2020) suggest, power-sharing and co-learning in the multiagency teams and with the communities can build trust. This can be a time consuming process but can be achieved especially if there are high quality, pre-existing relationships (Mazerolle et al., 2021). Hence, trust appears as an enabling factor, one that must be present before collaboration can ‘run smoothly’ between services. This is particularly important in PVE, where the logics and aims of the professions involved might not be aligned, or may even conflict (Sivenbring and Andersson Malmros, 2021, Clubb et al., 2021).

As a key component of multiagency working, establishing trust itself is a complex challenge (Bryson et al., 2006). According to Weber and Carter (2012), trust is something that cannot be given, nor appear at the onset of a relationship. Rather, it is developed through human interaction over time, by engaging with each other’s perspective, by responding to acts of disclosure, and having the other’s perspective influence decision-making. In multiagency working, trust between different actors is found to develop along with insight into each other’s professional values and with working towards the same goal (Edwards et al., 2009, Hubbard and Themessl-Huber, 2005). This kind of understanding between professionals, such as police officers and social workers, occurs between individuals, not organizations, and

according to Buchbinder and Eisikovits (2008), one may trust an individual, but not an official member of a professional group.

Further, extant research has revealed factors that both hinder and promote multiagency collaboration between educators, social and health workers and the police. At the core of hindering factors are unclear jurisdiction, different legislation regarding confidentiality as well as different professional logics (Buchbinder and Eisikovits, 2008, Dudau et al., 2016, Sloper, 2004, Sarma, 2018). Factors that promote multiagency working are, among others, establishing clear aims, objectives and definitions of roles and responsibilities, as well as joint training and teambuilding (Atkinson et al., 2007, Chun et al., 2010, Sloper, 2004, Mazerolle et al., 2021). Between social workers and police officers, differences in assessing concern (Ford et al., 2020) and defining a 'risk' (Ellis et al., 2020, Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2016), deep rooted ideological differences (Clubb et al., 2021), lack of trust (Cooper et al., 2016, Westwood, 2012), especially in information-sharing (Sarma, 2018), and unclear jurisdictional settlements have all been identified (Haugstvedt and Tuastad, 2021). In crime prevention collaboration, certain agencies such as the police, justice or correction services may 'become the power brokers as their resources and their frontline dealings with crime place them in an elevated position of authority,' as Walters (1996) states. Such hierarchies may create conflicts in the collaboration and, as such, affect trust in professions.

Sivenbring and Andersson Malmros (2021) found that, in Nordic multiagency approaches, different professionals relying on their respective institutional expertise to handle a common problem, are made up of two institutional logics, namely social care (SCL) and societal security logics (SSL). To be clear, both these logics are strongly tied to PVE and reflect the hybrid nature of the concept. Specifically, as Clubb et al. (2021) argue, this type of work rests on "an uneasy alliance of ideas which do not necessarily sit together comfortably, and when these hybridized elements are made explicit, they invoke wider ideas and practices which are in greater tension". Accordingly, team members bring diverse perspectives on violent extremism and different views on what needs to be prevented, how it is best handled, and by whom. Ideally, multiagency collaboration can strengthen and multiply the expertise and preparedness for PVE (Sivenbring and Andersson Malmros, 2021). In practice, this means that collaboration can lead to strengthening what Sizoo et al. (2022) call "a novel plan

of action” to respond to PVE, where trust is a condition for mutual multiagency dependency. However, as Sampson et al. (1988) have established, there are “structured power relations between the state agencies”, such as the police and social services, influencing cooperation (rather than collaboration) and taking a particular view of what constitutes a ‘crime’. More recently, as Battaliana et al. (2007) found, multiagency collaborations co-constructed their own mix of institutional logics, work ethics, regulations and hierarchies.

Despite previous knowledge about trust as an identified factor influencing multiagency collaboration, there is lack of knowledge about trust regarding PVE multiagency working groups in the different Nordic countries. Thus, as a still under-researched topic, more insight is needed to more fully understand how different professional actors work to establish trust and multiagency working. In this search for more insight, this study is a contribution to the field.

Methodology

Study design

This study uses a qualitative design where multi-disciplinary groups participate in simulated case discussions, and group and individual interviews (Gaskell, 2000). The informants are multiagency professionals working on preventing violent extremism in the Nordic countries in the years 2018-2020. The data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Nowell et al., 2017), further discussed in the data analysis section below.

Research environment

The research was carried out in the four Nordic countries. In each country, different crime prevention multiagency models have been adopted. These are pre-existing networks for crime prevention named Coordination of Local Crime Preventive enterprises (CLCP). They are referred to as the schools, social services, and police (SSP) system in Denmark, similarly in Sweden but with an additional focus, namely after-school care (*fritid*) SSP(f), and coordination of local drug abuse and crime prevention measure (SLT) in Norway. Finland

has adopted a similar approach, with a more developed inclusion of health care, called Anchor teams (Ankkuri in Finnish). Despite similarities, the Nordic countries have implemented the crime prevention multiagency models in quite different ways. Differences related to, amongst other things, organizational setups, legal frameworks and recommended practices that professionals rely on. All these models include educators, social workers and the police in their multiagency teams (Table 1). For this study, we selected three cities as case study sites, including national capitals, another large city and one mid-sized city for data collection. The crime prevention model with multiagency teams was utilized in all the cities involved (n=13). Different professions participate in the meetings and vary within and across cities and countries. Moreover, these collaborations are mostly ‘needs-based’ (except in Denmark) and in Norway and Finland with a low population density, only the larger cities will have experience with such multiagency collaboration on extremism, not the rest of the country.

Data collection

We collected data by using simulated case discussion for groups (Bohnsack, 2004), followed by focus group and individual interviews using a semi-structured interview method (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) in 2018-2020. For simulated case discussions, in our research team we developed two fictitious cases of violent extremism. These cases included role cards containing individual information about the case, adapted to different professionals. The participants were asked to simulate real life multiagency discussion about the cases. The case discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes and were followed by group interviews reflecting these discussions. Focus group interviews were led by one researcher and meant that the participants were asked to reflect on the simulated case exercises and ‘real’ experiences in PVE work, such as how they would assess potential PVE cases and practical organization. They were also asked broader questions on the advantages and challenges of multiagency collaboration. We conducted a total of 13 case discussions with 78 professionals (Table 1) followed by semi-structured focus group interviews at their workplace in a quiet room. The session lasted on average two-three hours and were audiotaped.

Table 1. Participants' professions and their countries in the simulated case discussions and individual interviews.

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

After the case simulations and reflective focus group interviews, we carried out individual interviews with all participants (n=78). When conducting the individual interviews using a semi-structured interview guide which we developed based on previous literature (Byrne, 2018, Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The interview themes were as follows: 1) norms, logics and potential hierarchies and conflicts, 2) perceptions of trust and collaboration efficiency, and 3) aspects of information sharing. In addition, we used follow-up questions to ask the informants to elaborate on their answers (Kallio et al., 2016). Individual interviews lasted 30-120 minutes (in total 4262 minutes or 71 hours) and they were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

At the onset of the project, we chose a city in Norway to conduct a pilot study to evaluate the relevance and feasibility of the data collection. The pilot study led to only minor changes to the order of the interview guide and the pilot study was included in the data. The elaborated interview guide was used for the rest of the data collection. We used a convenience sampling strategy to ensure a degree of experience with implementing a multiagency team effort to PVE and also variation in local practices. We interpret these 13 cities (three in Finland, Denmark and Sweden and four in Norway) as case study sites and not as national comparison per se.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method was suitable for this study because it enabled us to construct a cohesive narrative based on individuals' experiences and perceptions and thus deepen understanding by identifying, organizing, describing and reporting the data. In addition, it was applicable for teasing out different perspectives and for discerning similarities, differences and unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Nowell et al., 2017). As a first step of analysis the data from group and individual interviews were transcribed verbatim. All national teams were familiarized with the data and developed specific codes to highlight different aspects of topics of interest. The codes were tested and adapted in accordance with joint discussions and decisions within the Nordic research team. This process included testing all the codes and sub-codes individually, sharing the initial coding results with all national teams and subsequently organizing a workshop where all the researchers engaged in refining the codes. This enabled a raw data analysis with a significant reduction in codes and making explicit definitions of each code to ensure similar understanding. By doing so, it increased consistency and transparency of coding from each national team, reflecting intercoder reliability (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020). We used NVivo software for organizing the data. Based on our coding analysis we found three main themes describing trust in multiagency collaboration for prevention violent extremism in Nordic countries: trust at a structural level, a professional level and a perceived personal level.

Research ethics

The study followed the ethical standards for research (Allea, 2017). The research permissions were obtained in each participating organization and ethical reviews were applied according to each national regulation. The informed consent of all participants was obtained. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to terminate their participation at any time. All personal information has been omitted, and all names replaced by titles representing their professional affiliation, for example 'police' or 'health worker', and country codes (DK for Denmark, FI for Finland, NO for Norway and SE for Sweden).

Empirical results: Trust in multiagency collaboration

Description of trust and grounds for trust

Based on our results, trust was seen as an issue that to some informants was so basic that they took it for granted – as a fundamental condition for collaboration – while others debated back and forth about processes of trust in different relations. In other words, perceptions and views on the establishment of trust varied in our informants' perspectives and experiences. The informants spoke of trust in three types of relations, namely at a 1) structural, 2) professional and 3) perceived personal level. These relations are interconnected, but they represent different layers of trust that may be divergent or complementary processes. As an example, an actor can have confidence in the way the welfare system works (1) but be skeptical about some of the professional competency (2) while simultaneously feel a strong sense of trust in the individual team members (3). We will, in this section, start with the broad type of trust, namely structures, and then continue with professional trust and finally personal trust.

Trust on structural level: self-evident and skeptical

Trust in structures was described as a broad type of trust, from an overall idea of generalized trust in the society that represents specific aspects of the municipal or state institutions. This could be about experiencing overall trust in the authorities, in the actors in a position to make executive decisions, and in their mandate to delegate decisions to others in a position to exercise authority. As one police officer in Finland stated: “When we talk of authorities, I don't even have to think of it (trust).”² Underlying this perception is something close to what is often described in the literature as a generalized trust, which plays a role in experiencing state and municipal institutions as impartial, fair, and efficient. As a Danish social worker put it, the effect of the structural on the professional was essential in creating trust:

² FI interviewee No. 014

Their professional background is shaped by the organization they are part of and so it really matters what type of institution [they work in].³

Yet, there were certainly informants who expressed more skepticism toward the system of municipal institutions and how they operated. As one health care worker in Norway expressed it:

I may have authority in the position I have. But that is something completely different than trust. It is what we create and build together that constitutes trust, meaning in terms of the themes we discuss, trust in terms of professional competency and ethical competency and understanding.⁴

This and a similar understanding of trust were more common than the previous citation and bring us to the next level of trust, namely professional.

Trust on professional level: positioning team members

Professional trust was described by the informants as being part of their role and position in their team. This could be trust in particular professions, the professions in general who were participating in the team, and/or the person representing the profession in the team. In other words, this type of trust can overlap between levels, and intersect with a personal element – relations between two people – as well as professionalism and competency due to their educational and institutional background, and skills and/or role in the multiagency team. Several informants described how trust relates to confidence in that every professional member brings expertise into the collaboration. For some, this could be a requisite for being member of the team in the first place, i.e. a selection of key expertise and personnel with a relevant knowledge background who have an important contribution to the task in hand. As one Swedish youth worker stated; “When you enter the meeting, you trust that they are professionals, sitting there.”⁵

³ DK interviewee No. 026

⁴ NO interviewee No. 014

⁵ SE interviewee No. 205

For others, having a professional background did not automatically lead to trust. Several of the health and social care workers across the teams expressed an intersecting understanding of trust as both professional and personal. As one Finnish social worker expressed it:

Well, of course I trust my own social work partner the most, because we look at things from the same angle and our collaboration is so fluent.⁶

This corresponded to perspectives from other informants positioned in the ‘social care logic’; where several informants also expressed skepticism towards police officers who often demanded more information than that which these professionals are normally allowed to share. The opposite relationship can also be actualized, as when the Swedish police on occasion said that social workers have stricter confidentiality regulations and therefore are prohibited from sharing information, while they are allowed to receive information from the police. This can be interpreted by a professional as an issue related to a lack of trust in an otherwise trustful relation, rather than to the differences in legal restrictions. As a Swedish police officer puts it when speaking about differences in the flow of information: “I think this is about schooling, a kind of mistrust towards the police, that they [social workers] fail to understand that we want the same thing.”⁷ Thus, legal obstacles can affect the notion of mutual professional trust.

Trust on a perceived personal level: knowing individuals, feeling safe

Perceived personal trust relates to several experiences and perceptions among the actors in the team. Many informants described it in relation to knowing the others in the team and that “the group remains the same” and consists of a “sound mix of personalities” (Swedish coordinator).⁸ This also enabled a feeling of “psychological safety” (health care worker in Norway) where you share openly concerns and previous mistakes and, at the same time, feel

⁶ FI interviewee No. 002

⁷ SE interviewee No. 009

⁸ SE interviewee No. 101

safe.⁹ Or, in the words of a Finnish health care worker, trust related to being open and communicative.¹⁰ It could be described as “good chemistry” (police officer in Norway) between team members.¹¹ Sometimes, the perceived trust intersected with the professional trust in the way that trust was understood as doing what was agreed and sensing that you could trust the others about the duty of confidentiality.

Facilitators and barriers to develop trust in multiagency collaboration

Based on our results, the developing levels of trust, at structural, professional and perceived personal levels, have facilitators and barriers. Often, the same factors that enable trust can also disrupt it, e.g. having the same group of people meeting on a regular basis can enable trust but if the opposite is the case, if there are new staff and few meetings, it can disrupt trust. Hence, the section is organized using the levels of trust rather than grouping them as barriers and facilitators.

In sum, we found three main issues in terms of enabling or disrupting trust at the structural level. The first issue was the immediate structures, where having clearly defined mandates, roles and functions. If there were problems with the hierarchical structures, such as differences in authority or mandate, this could disrupt qualitative working relations. Second, the time and regularity of group meetings affected levels of trust. The final issue of structural barriers was efficiency or slowness of institutional or municipal services. This could also be practical barriers deriving from social care institutions not being familiar working with security institutions such as the police.

At professional level, we found the following two main concerns regarding trust. First, in relation to sharing information, confidentially regulations and ability of the different professional actors to work around these regulations could be a barrier or facilitator of trust. Second, and relatedly, the ability to understand each other’s motives and handle problems towards a common goal of PVE was put forward. Here, a high quality collaboration would mean clear understanding of respective fields and experiences of the professions that participated in the multiagency team. This could include developing a common language for

⁹ NO interviewee No. 008

¹⁰ FI interviewee No. 012

¹¹ NO interviewee No. 010

handling CVE, such as the Danish case, or respecting the different professional gazes. At the perceived personal level, we found two main issues. First, familiarity played a key in handling informal and formal discussion and enabling a trusting dialogue. Finally, ensuring reciprocity in interaction and continuity among members of the team was important for establishing a trusting atmosphere.

Structural level: organizing the team and external collaboration

At a structural level, facilitators and barriers to developing trust refer to the ‘immediate’ structures in multiagency team and general elements outside the core team. With regard to the immediate structures, several informants pointed to having an established team with clear structure, including a clear mandate and coordinator, as well as stability of staff members as facilitators. How this played out in practice varied considerably, where some groups had a fixed structure with a clear mandate and leadership role from the beginning, others had to establish a group from scratch, defining roles and mandate little by little. Regarding the latter type of group, the exercise of defining the mandate, roles and functions was described as a trust building process. This often led to experiences of collaboration and potentially successful impacts when combining forces. Some of the informants could describe what we interpret as hierarchical struggles that disrupted trustful relations. This could be actual or perceived differences in authority or mandate within the group, or from actors outside the group interfering with the work of the team. Although the data collection was done mainly prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swedish informants interviewed in the aftermath of lockdown also described how online meetings disrupted good working relations. This was, however, not the case for the Danish teams interviewed during the pandemic who described long-term familiarity and collaboration, with established routines for how to handle cases.

At a general level outside the core team, facilitators and barriers to developing trust were associated with time and regularity of working with the team: informants emphasized that trust in others team members depended on working together over time and having regular meetings so that the groups were familiar to each other. This process of building trust certainly intersects with the perceived personal level. However, they were structural in the sense that they were affected also by external factors such as time and, sometimes, how the

meetings were regulated in their mandate. For instance, one of the Norwegian groups only met in emergency situations and thus rarely sat together as a group, while others met regularly as much as six times per year or on a monthly basis and would develop stronger understanding for each other's work. Both type of set-ups could, of course, enable trust, which depended more on the two other levels of trust discussed below.

Furthermore, informants described having what they considered an efficient and professional collaboration within the team, while being frustrated with the slowness of institutions in the municipality or similar. In other words, the structural barriers to collaborating across services and security institutions in their municipality and/or city could disrupt trust with other institutions. In practice, this could mean that response was slow, there could be misunderstanding with dire consequences, missing information or potentially sharing too much information due to lack of previous collaboration. As one Norwegian social worker put it:

It is a demanding task for the municipality to collaborate cross-sectionally. It is a cumbersome system, to find smooth solutions and be efficient in handling needs. This is a challenge indeed.¹²

Here, the mandates and roles carefully debated and understood within the teams were not necessarily understood in the institutions the team members either represented or were externally relevant to the handling of a case. For instance, after considering how best to approach a person of concern, the team members could agree on offering a housing option and/or a temporary job and/or psychological service to reduce the threat of potential harm or radicalization. At the other end, their response to the services could sometimes be bureaucratic and unwilling with offering their services or sharing too much information with a potential client so that the client would become scared of surveillance and unwilling to accept help.

¹² NO interviewee No. 022

Professional level: professional boundaries and bridges

The different confidentiality regulations depending on the profession were perceived as both a barrier and facilitator to developing trust. On the one hand, having a good understanding of other professions' limits and regulations strengthened trust. This was especially emphasized in the Danish cases where they often pointed to the importance of the Danish Code of Civil Procedure Section 115 (*Retsplejeloven*) that enables an extensive freedom for government agencies to share information about individuals for crime prevention purposes. This Section trumps other confidentiality rules during a SSP meeting. It is expected that each participant in the team brings all available information about an individual and their family relations to the meeting (Gillman and Freund, 2021). As one police officer in Denmark stated:

There is a great focus on GDPR rules and (...) a constitutional state governed by the rule of law. And we are all well acquainted with what §115¹³ can and what §115 cannot, so in relation to the professional part of the information and the things we are talking about, there is trust all around.¹⁴

In the other cases, for those with a healthcare position handling patients, understanding confidentiality rules was particularly important for their work ethics, especially in relation to police officers. As one social worker from Finland put it, “[w]ith healthcare, knowledge sharing is not as easy as with the police.”¹⁵ In one Norwegian case, the divergent mandates and roles between the police, on the one hand, and diverse municipal actors on the other, led to the group dividing into two separate meetings. This was a way of handling professional differences in confidence as well as securing an open and free meeting where these professional differences were taken into account. As the coordinator in the team described it:

¹³ This refers to the Danish Code of Civil Procedure § 115 “The police may disclose information about individuals' purely private relationships to other authorities, if the disclosure must be considered necessary for the sake of crime prevention cooperation (SSP cooperation) (...)”. Accessed 19 May 2022 at <https://danskelove.dk/retsplejeloven/115>

¹⁴ DK interviewee No. 022

¹⁵ FI interviewee No. 002

We know each other so well now. And the more you know each other, the more cautious you need to be. Not that we should withhold all the information. But I believe in a two-track system. That the police have their track and the municipality another track.¹⁶

This type of ‘two-track’ collaboration discussed above created, according to the team members in both teams, a more trusting dialogue where social care workers could share concerns without fearing that the police would intervene on account of the information, and simultaneously having the coordinator – an expert on radicalization – represented in both meetings. In other cases, the informants described how, over time, they would develop a shared understanding and respect for each other’s professional mandate and reasons for sharing and not sharing information. This led to another element of professional trust, namely that when team members shared information, they would know each other’s motives and managed to handle that type of information with a sense of a common goal. As one Danish advisor on racialization put it, trust building is about being faithful to “legislation, to your mandate and to your authority”.¹⁷ In order to reach this level of trust, some of the informants pointed to the importance of the professional collaboration having a clear structure, namely identifying who is in charge and defining who is an expert in the respective fields. In the words of a Swedish police officer:

You must know why you are there, what is my role in this, why is A here as a youth worker? Why is the school needed here? That you have a clear notion of why we are here, in the following meetings, hopefully trust is developed over time.¹⁸

There could be specific situations that disrupted trust between professions. For instance, a Finnish informant described an experience of another professional talking about other people in an inappropriate way, and disrupting formal or informal professional group

¹⁶ NO interviewee No. 028

¹⁷ DK interviewee No. 024

¹⁸ SE interviewee No. 203

values by using racial slurs. These unhelpful attitudes were intersecting personal and professional trust levels.

Across the cases, many of the informants described the importance of developing a common language for handling cases as an enabling factor for trust. Here, different professionals would describe how they, over time, became familiar with each other's profession and how they could combine their knowledge in handling cases successfully. In the Danish cases, this was especially pointed to as the common language constructed from the onset of the collaboration, through externally constructed tools to handle violent extremism cases.¹⁹ In the other Nordic cases, such tools were not externally enforced but more commonly created through interaction in the team. In cases where professionals experienced that they did not have a common language; this was seen as a barrier to trust. For instance, a Finnish social worker described the challenges of approaching the topic of violent extremism through different professional gazes:

Something can be highly worrying for some and normal for others. This kind of lack of common language can be a challenge every now and then.²⁰

Moreover, one of the coordinators in a Danish team described an experience where trust was reduced due to an individual being unprofessional. By unprofessional, the coordinator meant that the individual used his/her "gut feeling" instead of "scientifically based theory and experience."²¹ Although using a more typical law enforcement jargon, this view was supported by a police officer in another Danish team who had experience with professionals who in their role shared "personal views" and not conclusions based on "objective facts".²²

¹⁹ Denmark has a dialogue based *Assessment model for concerns for extremism* to be used by local multiagency radicalization prevention teams. The manual forms a common tool for a shared systematic approach when different areas of expertise come together.

²⁰ FI interviewee No. 011

²¹ DK interviewee No. 028

²² DK interviewee No. 022

Perceived personal level: connecting professionals

When it comes to the personal level, familiarity played a key role in enabling trust among team members. This facilitated an environment where they were free to speak about issues without fear of information being withheld. However, as one Norwegian healthcare worker put it in a group very familiar with each other:

Trust can easily turn into joviality; a dialogue that breaks the boundaries for what is really the mandate. There are formalities and structures associated with this meeting that we remind ourselves of all the time.²³

In other words, maintaining the balance between familiarity and professionalism was an important trust-building exercise. Moreover, trust through familiarity with other team members was based on knowing each other over time, having regular meetings and personal contact. Substantially, several informants described what we interpret as reciprocity in their interaction and continuity of members over time as key facilitating factors for trust. Reciprocity could be described in terms of having an open and friendly dialogue, where members showed mutual respect for each other at both personal and professional levels. Continuity of members is perhaps self-evident but includes, in our view, how they considered themselves as one group – as a “We” – and where personnel changes could disrupt a trusting atmosphere.

Discussion: Implications for theory, policy and practice

Based on the findings, we argue that trust enables team members to work across the legal boundaries that would normally hinder or reduce the type of information flow, development of common language and general collaboration we found across the cases. In other words, the professionals are more willing to share, participate and plan common actions based on experiencing trust in the group. As such, collaboration in the teams becomes both natural and functional. In several examples, our informants described the openness in how they were free

²³ NO interviewee No. 004

to question their own and others' work and feel free to share past mistakes as lessons for the future. Thus, trust facilitates and contribute to organizing the team's interaction (sharing, participating, planning) professionally, and potentially at a more personal level. On the latter, trust toward particular others can be seen as a unique experience and may be colored by common values that make the relationship more personally meaningful (Weber and Carter, 2012). However, leading actors in the team, such as coordinators or the police, were sometimes considered to have too much institutionally founded trust in their profession and a strong institutional mandate that in turn distorted the collaboration. Similarly, as Ellis et al. (2020) found, police officers are committed to the multiagency work but if they learn about significant risk, they cannot "unhear" information and "need to act".

With different professional logics at play in the same room at the same time, challenges arise in such collaborations, influencing trust between these actors. Our findings have demonstrated that trust development in PVE appears to be as complex as the PVE field itself, and that trust is not something that develops by itself. Rather, through analysis of rich data we have shown how the process of developing trust is active at structural, professional and personal levels. As such, our findings expand the previous concepts of trust used in this research on particularized trust and generalized trust (Weber and Carter, 2012). Our findings are more in line with those of Freitag and Traunmüller (2009), and contribute to strengthening their argument that particularized trust can function as a foundation for building generalized trust. Experiences from multiagency cooperation with practitioners of different professional backgrounds may contribute to strengthening, or weakening, trust in that person in particular, and their profession and collaboration with the members of that profession. Such examples function as role models for, and reinforce, trustworthy behavior as something that pays off (Freitag and Traunmüller, 2009). As became clear from our analysis, the different roles and mandates of social workers, health workers and police are a possible cause of strain on the cooperation and the trust building exercise. The importance of taking time to build trust and understand each other's roles and mandates has been found to be a key consideration by several studies of multiagency teams' ability to handle PVE work (Mazerolle et al., 2021).

Trust may, under the right circumstances, contribute to bridging the differences between practitioners from different backgrounds. However, trust needs to be accompanied by

efforts to give the various practitioners insight into their partner agencies' responsibilities. Joint training sessions and workshops have earlier been recommended to clarify roles and responsibilities, build understanding between agencies and foster trust and respect (Atkinson et al., 2007). Such training sessions may contain jurisdiction and perspective presentations, case practicing, as well as informal interaction. These topics intersect the three levels used in this research: structural, professional, and personal. To fully tap into the potential of trust between partnering agencies in multiagency collaboration, attention to all three levels is recommended. Our findings, and these recommendations should be considered by both policymakers and practitioners when developing or changing guidelines and practice.

Returning to the aim of the study and the meaning of trust in multiagency teams and aspects that can be described as facilitators and barriers of trust, this study contributes complementary knowledge from the field of PVE on the consequences of trust in multiagency work. First and foremost, trust certainly matters in multiagency work, it can even be a requisite and facilitating force making cooperation possible and meaningful. To place trust in others is an investment in relational interaction, which also makes trust into something that can be gained, lost and destroyed-hence the expression 'circle of trust'. Nordic societies are characterized by high trust in the procedural fairness of governmental institutions (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008), which is different to similar studies conducted in the US context (Ellis et al., 2020, Mazerolle et al., 2021). In our study, structural trust is framed by clearly defined governing aspects such as legal regulations, hierarchies, and mandates. If such structures are in place and functioning, they serve as baselines for trustful teamwork. This can be noted in Denmark for instance, where the *Assessment model for concerns for extremism* provided a sense of clarity and trust in a structure when the pandemic distorted the possibilities of collaboration in a physically shared environment. In Denmark, this streamlined approach facilitated a common language and systematized methodology to assess risk (Gillman and Freund, 2021). The opposite, a lack of support, internal conflicts and ambiguities where team members need to make up their own regulations and defend their own professional perspectives, distorts trust.

We can also conclude that reciprocal trust among the professional actors involved is key, even if there are some examples of distrust apparently due to different legal regulations.

PVE is a complex task where the members of the team, based on their different institutional logics, must take both crime prevention, societal security and social care into consideration (Clubb et al., 2021). It is about avoiding an escalation of a situation and people harming others - or themselves. This challenge in the dual goal of PVE is played out foremost in the relationship between the police and social services, the two institutional actors that have the most dichotomously diverse placement in the SSL and SCL institutional logics. Such challenges have been previously detected and analyzed as ideological differences and lack of trust (Cooper et al., 2016, Westwood, 2012). It has also been argued that the police can be placed in an elevated position of authority (Walters, 1996). In our study, the challenges are not about professional ideology or authority, they are rather about understanding between the parties of the boundaries of different legal spaces for sharing information between different authorities. Thus, the idea of a trustful professional, or perceived personal relation, poses a challenge when it is not a prerequisite for sharing structurally guarded secrets.

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