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Finding a Suitable Object for Intervention: On Community-Based Violence Prevention in Sweden

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Abstract: In Sweden, local municipalities, working in collaboration with the police, are assigned an important role in community-based crime prevention and the promotion of safer neighbourhoods/cities. The strategies adopted are supposed to be informed by the policies of national advisory bodies, which emphasize surveying the current situation, problem analyses, systematic planning of interventions and evaluation of efforts. This paper reports on a three-year research project that studied local crime prevention/safer community practices in four so-called ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ (PVAs) using meeting observations and stakeholder interviews. The analysis shows that when constructing intervention strategies, the actors involved had to navigate between different organizational logics and found it difficult to demarcate a suitable object for joint efforts. When they were able to find an object to be targeted, such as youth at risk of drug abuse or low-level criminality, they could rely on a collective mindset, but they struggled in situations where a joint effort was not possible, such as when dealing with the risk of aggravated violence or when the operations got close to more organized crime—both elements that form part of the definition of PVAs. This failure may partly be explained by competing logics dominated by idiosyncratic action in line with bureaucratic rules and routines. This finding raises questions about a putative but non-articulated limit to crime prevention and whether a predetermined approach aligns with the prescribed sequence of survey, analysis, intervention planning and evaluation when faced with more brutish violence.

Keywords: collaborative crime prevention; organizational logics; intervention; violence; particularly vulnerable areas



Citation: Alstam, K.; Forkby, T.

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Societies **2022**, *12*, 75. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12030075>

Academic Editors: Jaimee Mallion and Erika Gebo

Received: 4 March 2022

Accepted: 25 April 2022

Published: 29 April 2022

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1. Introduction

In recent years, Sweden has focused increasingly on gang-related criminality and how it is related to the situation in more marginalized neighbourhoods. The policy response has generally prioritized repressive interventions such as allocating more resources to the police, tapping phone calls and messages, assigning longer sentences for gang-related crimes, and reducing the ‘youth reduction’ that reduces imprisonment time for younger persons. Concerns have also been raised about local authorities’ competence and the prioritization of preventive measures, not least the readiness of municipal organizations and police for coordinated strategies and operations [1,2].

The most influential document framing political discussion and media coverage was the first *NOA Report* presented in 2015 by the national police. It introduced the concept of ‘vulnerable areas’ (in later reports also referred to as ‘areas of risk’, and ‘particularly vulnerable areas’), thus inventing a term that embraced drug sales, uprisings against the police, violent crime, undue influence on law enforcement agencies, religious extremism and so-called ‘parallel societies’. The solutions suggested spreading the responsibility for action across a wide partnership of local authorities and services such as social services, local schools, leisure administration, local churches and health centres, which were to work hand in hand with the police. The intensification of voices calling for increased collaboration among stakeholders and a more systematic and knowledge-based approach have led

to a legislative bill that is to be enacted in 2023. The bill will make it compulsory for municipalities to develop strategies for and engage in crime prevention collaboration [3] (p. 49).

The need to upgrade locally situated crime prevention has a long history. The world's first crime prevention council was launched in 1974 to inform policymaking by analysing crime fluctuations in order to provide guidance on crime prevention strategies [4]. The national crime prevention programme *Everybody's Responsibility*¹ was released in 1997, to be replaced by *Together Against Crime*² in 2017. Both policy documents emphasized the need for collaboration between authorities to reduce crime, with the latter document phrasing this more strongly. At present there is a nationwide organizational structure including the national advisory body, county level coordinators, local crime prevention councils at the strategic municipal level, and local groups responsible for the operative work at the district level.

The collaborative structures at the strategic and operative level in the municipalities have a history that can be traced back several decades in Swedish crime prevention history. An operative level involving social services, municipal police, district schools and youth centres has been recommended since the beginning of the 1970s [5]. These groups have regular meetings where they address issues relating to potentially vulnerable young people at risk of involvement in drug use, criminality or recruitment by known criminals. However, although Swedish initiatives for local crime prevention were implemented several years ago, they have been studied only to a moderate degree (see however [6–8]).

This paper stems from a three-year long research project started in 2019 that investigated collaborative crime prevention strategies and settings in four of Sweden's particularly vulnerable areas (PVAs), or 'superdiverse' neighbourhoods [9]. The aim was to identify the logics that regulate local crime prevention practices and assess whether the policy recommendation of a systematic problem-solving process is applicable, and if not, why not.

Crime prevention is understood here as a broad term including intentional measures and circumstances that decrease the probability of criminality or reduce the harm from crime [10]. It thus includes interventions both before and after a criminal act has occurred. In the latter case, it might involve taking action to counter the risk of aggravated circles of violence and counter attacks, as well as trying to cushion the effects of stress and protect safety at the community level after an incident. This definition fits well with the assignment given to the crime prevention settings that are the focus of the study, namely, that they are to address both the symptoms and the mechanisms behind the problematic aspects of PVAs. However, given the fact that the collaborative prevention groups traditionally have addressed delinquent youth groups and low-level crimes, what happens when they are confronted by heavy criminality and intertwined links between organized criminality and rowdy behaviour among youth? This paper aims to probe into the manner in which the prescribed logics for interventions work when the collaborative preventive settings face situations associated with organised crime and/or a risk of aggravated violence.

2. Collaborative and Systematic Crime Prevention

Nordic crime prevention has traditionally aimed at a combination of situational prevention and social welfare policies [11]. The chief institutional actor in the field of crime prevention in Sweden is the Council for Crime Prevention (CCP), operating under the Ministry of Justice. The CCP can be described as an institute mainly initiating and circulating research in the domain, including hands-on methodological knowledge about crime prevention [8]. The CCP's methodological guidance lays out a prescribed sequence of professional actions that need to be carried out if crime prevention is to reach its goals. The work is to be conducted in a 'systematized' fashion and is ordained to include the following steps: (1) surveying the problem, (2) analysing the problem, (3) prioritizing the correct measures, (4) implementing the measures and, lastly, (5) evaluating the results. To produce a broad understanding of a particular problem, the participating actors are supposed to merge their perceptions into one that encapsulates the complexity of the phenomenon. Although the details of this systematic strategy were not top of mind for the various leaders

involved in the collaborative settings we studied, they were all familiar with the general idea of the different phases and what type of work they involved.

Some attempts to work according to the CCP recommendations have been evaluated, such as the method known as *Effective Collaboration for Increased Security* (EST). The professionals expressed a need for an enhanced structure and organization, and noted that working according to EST seemed more flexible and better theoretically supported. The professionals involved expressed a perception of more systematized and structured crime preventive work [7].

3. Previous Research

Collaborative efforts clearly have a long history in Swedish crime prevention policy, but their present ideological and methodological encapsulation is indebted to the multi-agency/partnership approaches articulated by New Labour during the mid 1990s. The intention to be both ‘tough on crime, and tough on its causes’ was translated into managerial efficiency, long-term agreements between stakeholders, and the design of tailor-made local strategies to promote safety and prevent crime [12–14]. While the partnership model has been a success with respect to the international exchange of policy initiatives, it still has a lot to prove in terms of its capacity to sustain what is envisioned [15].

Crime prevention programmes, and especially the practice of prevention, are seldom evidence-based [16] or adapted to tackle different target groups, places and type of crimes [17]. The potential effects of a programme will depend upon what is supposed to be changed, e.g., opportunities for crime, the mechanisms that fuel individual motivation, or group dynamics between rowdy youth. This variability places high demands on a preventionist’s competence [18]. The idea that crime prevention should rely on established models or assigned methods [7] becomes problematic when confronted by new and evolving situations. The requirement to integrate the ideas of different parties when assessing strategies can obstruct a plan to find more well-documented methods.

Even if the intention in the partnership policy is to focus on the broader structure, signalled by ‘safer city’ approaches, actual practice often focuses more narrowly on individuals [13], and thus transfers responsibility for safety lower in the hierarchy [19]. However, involving residents has not been as easy as is assumed in the policy documents [20–22]. A key to forming a successful partnership seems to be including local coordinators and providing training and assessable guidance in crime prevention [23,24], provided that their role is given the required mandate for the assignment [6,25]. As Harkin [26] argues, the question is perhaps not whether partnership works or not, but when and what issues are suitable for the partners. The police may often get more out of a partnership than the other parties [27].

In terms of crime prevention efficiency, there is much room for improvement, not least regarding the methods used and the collaboration, as well as in terms of partnering with citizens [15,28–30].

A substantial part of the crime prevention literature has been concerned with place-based prevention and hot-spots policing, showing generally small or moderate positive effects (e.g., [31–35]). However, the partnerships also involve social prevention, which translates into more ambiguous processes, even more so when the issue is to prevent violence. Programmes designed to prevent violence at a community level are not easily evaluated as they are geared toward impacting both protective and risk factors, which makes it difficult to ascertain their success [36]. Two well-known exceptions that target gang-related violence and include the community level are the Chicago Ceasefire programme [37] and Focused Deterrence [38]. The latter has begun to be implemented in Sweden [39].

From their experience supporting crime prevention in deprived neighbourhoods in Tulsa, OK, USA, Corsaro and Engel [40] propose a number of key factors for effective partnerships: (a) mobilizing resources widely among public institutions, community groups, business representatives, etc.; (b) giving time to build trust and form long-term commitment; (c) employing a structured work process (surveying, planning and executing

interventions) supplied with well-founded feedback; (d) including a varied tool box of interventions serving to facilitate local norm building, social support and local capacity; (e) working in alliance between (embedded) researchers and practitioners (see [41]). Even if these factors are familiar to partnerships internationally, British experiences show that variations in overall aims decide the balance between the components [27]; furthermore, the implementation in Germany was uneven and not supported by evidence and had hard time integrating citizen perspectives [42], while the influence in Spain was hampered from the lack of a supporting national framework [43], and the reduction in crime, somewhat paradoxically, resulted in a decreased interest in safer city/partnership approaches [44].

4. The Study: Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this paper were collected during a three-year research project starting in 2019³. The focus was on the practices employed in crime prevention, how safety is understood and facilitated, and what capacity the collaborative operations had when responding to the situation in four PVAs. Data from two of the PVAs were chosen for deeper analysis, while data from the other two were used to inform and check this analysis. We observed and took fieldnotes of 34 collaborative meetings at the operative and strategic levels and interviewed 29 stakeholders from the top municipal level and managerial level down to the operative level for the two PVAs chosen. Five days of shadowing local coordinators are also included in the data.

The research process was discussed within the research group throughout the project. A research handbook for the project was worked out before the data were collected, describing how to proceed with the different methods to be used.

The observations were guided by a structured scheme including background data for meetings, actual participants and the issues brought up. We also concentrated on the dynamics within the meetings, such as whether questions were posed, when information was given, whether different opinions were articulated and how potential conflicts were handled. Fieldnotes were taken to support the observation sheet and provide emerging ideas for the analysis.

The interviews were semi-structured to allow interviewees to talk freely and share their views on preventive collaboration and to obtain information on each interviewee's own organization's task and responsibilities.

The analysis contained both quantitative observations of the meetings and thematic qualitative analyses of processes during the meetings. The overarching findings of the project, partly presented in this paper, are anchored in the four case study reports and their associated data. However, the results include a deeper analysis of the way challenges to crime prevention practices have resulted in a concentration on critical incidents, together with obstacles faced and strategies adopted. The empirical extracts chosen for analysis were selected on the basis of their exposing recurrent features of the meetings observed.

5. Projected Knowledge

The formal task for the crime prevention councils is to assess present situations, make assumptions about potential future developments and identify what actions should be undertaken to improve the odds for preferred outcomes. The resources available for this process are mainly the actors' knowledge of the local community, their theoretical and practical experience, and the organizational resources they can allocate to making things happen. All of this is framed by what the organizations will allow, the dynamics within the prevention group, and what knowledge they collectively have at their disposal. From this viewpoint, the practice of prevention is a case of organizationally bounded knowledge use in which specific professionals plan to restrict or promote mechanisms that affect future events.

Lam [45] points out the 'interactive relationship between dominant knowledge types and organizational forms' (p. 487). Collaboration thus imposes a non-articulated demand that separate knowledge types and organizational forms coalesce. An important feature

of collaborative practices is that they exhibit some characteristics of being organizations in themselves and simultaneously are betwixt and between organizations. This means that the actors have a double identity and divided loyalties and will have to negotiate the mandate to define which ‘orders for action’ will dominate the groups. These orders relate to the concept of institutional logics [46], meaning direction indicators coming from the particular organization’s design and knowledge types, as well as its value system, chains of command and working practices.

A steering philosophy that would sit well with the policy ideal of a systematic but still innovative order of action would be to organise the work as a project flow guided by project management [47]. Assessment and decision-making would be guided by pre-structured instruments with theoretical underpinnings. A mandated coordinator would lead the process and a dedicated group would target the actual problem, drawing on available resources while relatively free from other obligations or administrative restrictions. Such a logic would take the best from a routine-based bureaucracy, meritocratic openness to dialogue and adhocratic readiness to act and use embodied knowledge in uncertain and unpredictable situations (see [48,49]).

When evaluating a situation and reaching a decision on how to act, the interplay of the organisational form and logic with different kinds of knowledge is a key feature. At an epistemological level, there is the issue of explicit and tacit knowledge to consider. Explicit knowledge is normally manifest and can be codified. It is easy to abstract, communicate and store without the participation of the knowing subject. Tacit knowledge is unarticulated, action-oriented and almost intuitive. It is less easy to communicate, understand or apply without guidance from a knowing subject. Transferring tacit knowledge takes close interaction and a shared understanding [45] (p. 490).

Explicit knowledge can be acquired by formal study, while tacit knowledge is generated through practical experience. Even the ways in which the two forms of knowledge can be aggregated differ. Explicit knowledge can be aggregated at a single site. It can be stock-piled and reached without assistance from the knowing subject. Tacit knowledge works the other way around: it is produced in a particular context and it is personal. To access it, one needs to cooperate in close involvement with the knowing subject [45] (p. 490).

There is also an ontological dimension of knowledge, configured as a matter of individual versus collective knowledge. The first is domain-specific, specialized and accumulated within a single person’s body or brain, which makes it a case of bounded rationality [50]. Since it is autonomous and moves with the individual holding it, the accumulation of such knowledge is precarious [45] (p. 491). Collective knowledge, on the other hand, is held by an organization itself and deposited in its norms, routines and procedures. It is fertilized in communicative action among professionals, and comes to life *between*, rather than within, individuals [51].

All organizations normally manifest a mix of the knowledge forms. Lam [45] (p. 493) suggests the following model that brings together the epistemological and ontological forms to show their manifestations within an organizational framework, see Figure 1 below:

		Ontological dimension	
		individual	collective
Epistemological dimension	explicit	<i>Embrained knowledge</i>	<i>Encoded knowledge</i>
	tacit	<i>Embodied knowledge</i>	<i>Embedded knowledge</i>

Figure 1. Logics for decision making in respect to different types of knowledge.

Embrained knowledge is the combination of individual and explicit knowledge. It is based on theories and depends on the individual's conceptual skills. Embodied knowledge (which is individual and tacit) is action oriented. It is a type of knowledge that requires practical experience. Encoded knowledge is a combination of collective and explicit knowledge forms and could be summarized as that which we label 'information'. It is codified and stored in written rules and procedures and it may predict patterns of behaviour and output in organizations. Lastly, embedded knowledge is a combination of the collective and tacit knowledge categories and can be understood as the tacit knowledge embedded in shared norms and organizational routines. This knowledge comes from a shared understanding and is relation-specific, contextual, organic and dynamic and applied in the absence of written rules.

The requirement to operate in the recommended systematic, phase-regulated fashion in an unstable environment while making assessments and reaching decisions in a collaborative setting in-between organizations places high demands on the competence of the actors involved. They must translate the meaning of regulations and routines from their mother organizations into a new context, and articulate which aspects of their embrained, encoded, embodied and embedded knowledge are applicable. This requires the group to evolve as a community of practice [52], constructing in negotiation both a mutual group identity and an amalgamated knowledge base.

6. Results

The results will be presented in terms of three themes that together show the prevention constellations' responses when confronted with complex situations of violence and crime. The first, *preventionist creaming*, refers to the tendency for crime prevention groups to work on the basis of previously established patterns and with the issues that are most accessible for them. The next theme, *pulling intertwined strings*, shows the difficulties of planning for action when a situation requires deep insider knowledge and different perspectives block resolution. Lastly, the theme *prevention as a double-edged sword* probes the question of strategic planning when it is very hard to envisage whether the consequence of taking action will exacerbate the situation rather than alleviate it.

6.1. Preventionist Creaming

A vital insight when seeking to understand collaborative crime preventive settings is that the work is often commonplace. Even when the professionals are dedicated to the severely marginalized communities described in political debates and the media as controlled by criminal elements, they are to a great extent occupied with teenagers found in the wrong places at the wrong time, neighbourhood beatings, shopkeepers selling illegal fireworks, or loitering with intent to commit theft. Even when confronted with more severe crimes, attention is often steered towards previously constructed knowledge bases and cases that are more easily demarcated. This can be seen as a practice of creaming, separating what could be intervention objects from the more complex issues in need of a structured analysis and plan of action. As a consequence, efforts often focus on situational measures such as lighting and camera surveillance, or on social measures such as intervening in conflicts or drug use among teenagers at the local high school [32].

The collaboration that does take place is invested in updating the collective awareness of the day-to-day fluctuations in the neighbourhood. This is often translated into a ritual of going around the meeting table as the participants (e.g., the police, social workers, school representatives, housing companies and youth workers) present concerns about what has been going on. There may be questions and discussion during this part of the meeting, but usually the focus is on sharing information rather than on more substantial analysis.

This lack of analysis has been observed as a general problem when evaluating crime prevention settings in Sweden [53]. There are a few (but not many) examples of more systematic analyses seeking to bring the parent organizations together under a broader umbrella of local crime prevention. However, this only seems to happen when there is a

specific issue to be addressed and a specific setup of actors. The example below from case A, a PVA in a medium-size city (100,000 inhabitants) in Sweden, indicates that such an analysis is easier when it comes to more mundane aspects of keeping the environment nice and tidy.

The foundation Safer Sweden was asked to perform a safety analysis in [case A] last autumn. And they produced a plan of action with concrete measures and later long-term goals. ... And it is ... It places the emphasis on the physical environment. That is, how to make changes in the physical environment to increase security and that stuff. But we try to ... Now we talk to, well the housing companies in A, on getting a joint project to ensure that we have guaranteed ... Yes, for example to pick up litter and manage walkways ... You see, there are many things of that nature they pick up in analysis. (Security coordinator in A)

By contrast, observation of the work performed by the security coordinator in case B, situated in the suburbs of a large Swedish city (600,000 inhabitants), revealed that matters of a more trivial nature were addressed alongside issues relating to serious crime and violence.

During one and the same meeting with housing companies, security coordinators and caretakers, the group discussed (a) plans to tackle matters of parking surveillance and incorrect parking, and (b) a murder in a residential area close to B. In the meeting observed, the murder was dealt with only by giving sparse information and leaving the solution to the police, while the lion's share of the meeting was dedicated to parking matters. This is not surprising given that the required preliminary investigation secrecy prevents the police from providing information to the participants, and the fact that the police was not present at the meeting. It nevertheless shows that the dominance of the organizational logic [48] can be present simply through information. Perhaps the fact that the police were to address the matter, hampered all other initiatives from the group. Even though the murder could not be prevented any longer, the group could have considered the risk of revenge attacks and countering the spreading of rumours as part of a prevention strategy to counter violence in the community. However, the more easily demarcated subject for joint deliberations and interventions around parking concerns caught their attention.

It may be that the group lacked a collective knowledge base on how to act in the context of murder. By processing explicit and tacit knowledge, they had previously succeeded in forming alliances to deal with unruly teenagers, parking tickets and cartridges of laughing gas being found near the shopping mall. However, when confronted by the murder, they did not step up as preventionists, and seemed to be lacking 'ad hoc' motivation to reduce its harmful effects at the community level. This preventionist creaming, meaning a restriction of collective efforts into the perceived manageable in respect to organizational boundaries, knowledge base and previous practices, may also block attempts to find deeper causes of crime, something Gilling [13] has pointed out as a main shortcoming of these attempts. This, in turn, may relate to another finding in the study: the perception from the preventionists that they indeed possess knowledge about causes for crime, but lack the necessary mandate to address it.

6.2. Pulling Intertwined Strings

When it comes to violence prevention, it can be difficult to carve out a suitable object of intervention because of the complexity of a situation, even if the group has scope to act before (worse) violence occurs and is free from the influence of other organizations in the planning phase.

The meeting from which the following field notes stem was commissioned for the social services and the police in case B. The group met on a weekly basis to jointly address matters involving young offenders, specifically to prevent cycles of retaliation and progression to more serious criminal activities.

Incident of a ten-year old student intending to strangle a classmate at school.
Discussion about whether there is a more far-reaching threat scenario to consider.

The father of the family to which the ten-year old belongs has applied to the social services for protection of the family, as he suspects that one of his older sons plans to execute a man in a rival family to revenge a shooting that took place one year before this incident. If the murder is committed, the father expects retaliation. In retaliation for the earlier shooting, another of the father's sons has already been exposed to a revenge attack in which he was severely injured by gunfire and is now permanently wheelchair bound. This son has been placed in a protected residence because further threats against his life have been articulated by rival parties (the family is threatened by a dominant network in another PVA). The group discussed whether yet another criminal network from the other side of town might be involved in the conflict. According to the father, his son 'must' kill a member of the rival family network.

The meeting closed without any decisions about future actions being made. Instead, it had discussed how to label the issue: should it be called 'preparation for a criminal offence' or defined as a matter of 'conspiracy'? Since social services have an obligation to formally report any plans, they should also inform the father, but he was no longer contactable due to a change of phone number and an unknown address.

The requirement of working in a 'systematised' way in the sequence ordained by the CCP is not tailored to situations of this magnitude. Even the first step appeared difficult to manage at the observed meeting. How would one go about creating an overview of a situation as broad as this, in which different processes are intertwined in a way that pulling one string may have consequences far beyond what could be foreseen? Applying encoded knowledge (written rules and procedures) would obviously work up to a point, but what prevention strategy is to be injected into a chain where already precarious events have been retold and imbued with rumours and hearsay?

From our study, two strategies stand out. One would be to bureaucratize the case, letting routines and regulations, first and foremost from the police, guide further action. Such an approach would reduce uncertainty by making the situation manageable, but it does not provide any deeper understanding of the issues. This neutralising of uncertainty, and consequential frustration, may explain a general finding in our study about the police dependence in collaborative settings. This dependence can manifest as meetings being cancelled when not involving the police or being impeded or fettered in other ways. This implies that the adhocism of the collaborative groups is sometimes dependant on the bureaucratic procedures of the dominant actor for the groups' functioning [27].

The other possible route, which especially some social workers spoke of as embodied knowledge, would be to have long experience of and personal relations with people living in the area. To call for this is to advocate for a kind of individual, domain-specific and autonomous knowledge (see Figure 1) [45] (p. 491). Since the meeting observed above had scarce knowledge resources of this kind at their disposal, they had to follow the first strategy or, as it turned out, they could not reach any collective strategy but halted at definitional issues. Generally, this strengthens previous research indicating a need for professionals embedded both in the public organisations and in the local community [25], and different forms of knowledge may be needed in conjunction.

6.3. Prevention as a Double-Edged Sword

Prevention following systematized steps in relation to possible threats of violence or acts of severe violence can also prove difficult because the steps may risk causing organizational or communication problems, or even result in yet more violence. The potential institutional logics—direction indicators coming out of the organization's design and knowledge types [46]—become fuzzy in collaboration. Moreover, the logics must be capable of preventing several potential 'ills' simultaneously and avoid future problems emanating from the solution itself.

When manifest violence has occurred, the groups are often faced with the delicate task of dealing with both the incident in itself and the question of how to communicate it to the public, as stated by the head of security in the area of A:

Let's say for instance this weekend when we had a . . . Well, we had a shooting this weekend and we found cartridges, cartridge cases. Communicating that part makes people scared of A. But the incident in itself is between two groups and has nothing to do with a third party. And it is very important that we communicate that this does not mean a risk for third parties, because it is between two groups, to sort of . . . still create peace in the area. And it is delicate communication because this is not something we can . . . We cannot communicate this on our website or the like, but it is word of mouth communication. (Head of security in A)

In this case, the issue of the shooting itself must be handled, as well as the possible consequence of people becoming scared of the residential area. The former issue could be dealt with through frank communication, but making people feel safe in the area may involve not communicating as frankly. What direction indicators [46] apply in such a dilemma? The orders of action are in conflict when it comes to managing communication: how can the group gain the necessary information to work with the incident while still keeping vital parts of the information private? In this case, the question of differences between individual and collective knowledge, or between tacit and explicit knowledge (see Figure 1), matters less, as it is seemingly an issue of working with an incidence of violence semi-covertly. However, once again, this makes the methodological order laid out by the CCP difficult to manage. The first step for surveying the problem becomes problematic if you must avoid making the inhabitants nervous while simultaneously carrying out an investigation.

Moreover, there are cases where the organizational logics appear not to be able to guide action because addressing a problem increases the risk of creating another problem. This is the case regardless of whether the actors are understood as separate entities belonging to each participating organization or are viewed as a group-specific conglomerate of diverging logics. In the extract below, the prevention group discussed a case where potential interventions to stop (sexual) violence would be likely to produce a risk of more violence.

In one of the schools in the neighbourhood, a boy masturbated in front of a female teacher and molested her sexually by touching her body. The principal announced that she wanted to report the incident to the police. However, another teacher at the school shared information about the boy's family with the prevention group. According to this teacher, there was a high risk of a severe battery of the boy should the parents find out what had happened. As a result of this information, no report of concern about the boy was made to the social services.

To some extent, the situation above cannot be fitted into the matrix of professional actions recommended by the CCP. If they intervene, the professionals may ignite more violence; if they do nothing at all, the sexual violence is seemingly condoned. According to the logics within the police, the possibility of igniting violence would putatively not prevent a professional response, since the police's task is to uphold the law. For the social services, the teacher's warning about the possibility of a brutal assault by the parents of the boy would present a reason to set up a report of concern. In other words, the organizations involved in collaboration have already established institutional responses and explicit knowledge types (both encoded and embedded knowledge) ready for (at least parts of) this case. The patterns of actions are there, and thus should be of less concern for the CCP. Still, the meeting ends with no plans for action. In this situation, actions are supposed to take place through collaboration, but what is to be achieved or added *specifically* through collaboration is hard to see. Who would be the intended primary client or intervention object in the situation sketched: the molested teacher, the boy or the boy's parents? The answer appears to change depending on whether one asks the principal, the social services or the police.

Partnership approaches mean to assign an additional layer of (systematised) working orders that risk delaying the institutions' 'normal' responses that operate within each participating organization's collective knowledge [6]. Thus, instead of making work flows more effective, the result could be an obstruction of the operation of both collective and individual knowledge [45] (p. 491). The encoded knowledge type manifested in written rules and procedures [45] (p. 492–493), such as that delivered by the CCP, is in this event too simplified or too selective to be translated into concrete action. The same can be said about the embrained knowledge (based on theories and conceptual skills) behind the methods propagated by the CCP. In turn, this might in some instances mean that collaboration, as it is designed by the CCP, slows down the process of intervening.

7. Discussion

We've got a problem and we solve it through a collaborative meeting. And we meet, check, and it [the problem] is solved. But is it? (Security coordinator specialized at religious extremism in B)

The security coordinator quoted above points to the 'as if' problem of organizational action, i.e., the tendency to explain a certain action as if it has a particular effect, while this assumption is unfounded. Action is undertaken in line with what is thought of as adequate, and then dressed in the policy costume presently favoured [54]. In Sweden, there has been a strong inclination to call for collaborative action. However, there is a risk that this call is made without evidence that collaborative action has the capacity to handle issues better than individual organizational action, or that it can respond to the more difficult issues, such as aggravated violence or the challenges in PVAs. The organizational ideal of collaboration may turn out to be empty, with the risk of having it become a desirable end goal in itself.

Returning to the ontological dimension of knowledge as a matter of individual versus collective knowledge (see Figure 1) [45], we argue that there is a possibility that collaboration may become a knowledge form in itself. It may be understood as an individualistic form of knowledge, although surprisingly held by a group of individuals within the collaborative setting. Each group holds its 'own' knowledge, and in that sense, each group becomes a bounded rationality [50]. This knowledge, however, may not be centred around how to prevent severe violence but around how to execute collaboration. This particular skill becomes domain-specific and specialized, even if accumulated not within a single person but within a single constellation. Its relative success in combating school bullying, speeding on mopeds, battery or vandalism may simply be because the participating actors already possess organizational knowledge (or are familiar with the orders of action) on how these things are handled. However, lacking organizational methods to curb more brutish violence, such violence leaves the groups nonplussed.

In one sense, none of the knowledge models applied in analysis operate efficiently. This may at times be seen in the documents where details about the present situation in the area are to be merged into one document—the 'common operating scenarios' that the groups are to produce. These documents are to be generated once a week, and they form the basis for the efforts launched. They are perhaps the one artefact best summarising the difficulties that the groups face, as they are made to display information that ranges from 'mopeds speeding in the schoolyard' to 'murder committed outside the grocery store'. The knowledge that may explain two such very different events, and the knowledge underlying interventions addressing them, must inevitably differ. Embrained knowledge [45] (pp. 492–493) based on conceptual skills would obviously be useful, although difficult to balance in collaboration at the point where actors' different conceptual understandings must be merged. Embodied knowledge with its practical output may not be ideal, as it is carried by an individual. The encoded knowledge stored in rules and procedures might perhaps be the model best suited to the task. Still, one may ask: rules and procedures *for what*? In this case, are they more likely to revolve around rules for collaboration rather than procedures for intervention? The embedded knowledge based on an organization's joint understanding shares the same

type of problem. Does this shared understanding orbit around ways to work together in the prescribed fashion, or is it applied to prevent crimes (murders) and promote security (making sure motor vehicles do not disturb the inhabitants)? The results in this study thus bear a relation to findings on other types of ‘fuzzy’ collaborative settings where group-decision is to take place. The strategies for inter-professional collaboration are often shaped by intuitive problem-solving [55], personal beliefs and experiences [56], dominating actors (leading to other actors submitting their beliefs) [57], a tendency to concentrate on orally conveyed details and initial impressions and to dismiss contradictory evidence [58], and a reliance on a collective memory of the group [59]. Adding a putative lack of a common goal as well as a lack of a joint knowledge base from which to operate, it is perhaps no wonder that one of the unarticulated organizational goals of the groups in question becomes precisely that: to collaborate.

Author Contributions: K.A. and T.F. both contributed equally to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (FORTE). Registration no. 2018-01353.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the National Authority for Research Ethics (protocol code 2019-01858, 9 April 2019).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. The study only involved professionals and did not cover any sensitive personal data.

Data Availability Statement: Data are not public according to ethical guidelines.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ See: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/1996/01/ds-199659/>.
- ² See: <https://regeringen.se/tillsammansmotbrott>.
- ³ The project received funding from the research council FORTE, Ethical approval was requested, and an advisory statement obtained, Dnr: 2019-01858. Since the project does not involve sensitive personal data, it falls outside the legislation on research ethics.

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