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The Responsibility and Blame of Organised Crime

A Study of the Problematisation and Subject Production of Organised
Criminality in National and Local Policy in Sweden

Clara Svensson

Lund University

Sociology of Law Department

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Supervisor: Elin Jönsson

Examiner: Rustam Urinboyev

Sherzod Eraliev

Abstract

Crime prevention in Sweden has become decentralised as the municipalities' responsibility to contribute to the national crime preventive work has been established in law, while still being shared with the state. At the same time, national focus has shifted to organised criminality and the production of the criminal other. The aim of this thesis was to explore how these two policy developments were reflected within national and local policy documents from four selected municipalities in southern Sweden, by studying how organised criminality was problematised in the policy documents, and what subjects were produced within the problematisations. The theoretical framework of governmentality was used to analyse the decentralisation and responsabilisation of crime prevention work, along with critical race theory which helped identifying hidden and subtle racial discrimination within the policy documents. The findings showed that the national and local policy documents problematised organised criminality similarly, by producing organised criminality to be multifaceted, a threat against society, and primarily located in vulnerable and socioeconomically weak areas. The produced subjects within these problematisations were primarily the criminal immigrants, which at times overlapped with the criminal youth, and additionally produced the criminal immigrant youth as a subject of organised criminality. The similarities suggests that the national problematisations have influenced the local problematisations and steered the municipalities to act against certain areas or groups of people. The production of the criminal immigrant revealed that the policy documents showed direct and indirect signs of racial discrimination. This thesis highlights how local crime prevention reproduces national discourse and policy, despite the decentralisation of crime prevention work.

Keywords: Organised Criminality, Decentralisation, Responsibilisation, Problematisation Subjects, Policy

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1. Introduction

“For me and the government there is no greater task than the security of the Swedish people. We will do what it takes to restore safety in Sweden.” (Regeringskansliet, 2023. Translated).

This was the words of the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in his speech to the nation in 2023. Delivering a speech to the nation in Sweden is typically done in connection with a great crisis (Svenska tal, 2025), and the speech that the Prime Minister delivered in 2023 was to address the deadly violence that is connected to criminal networks and organised criminality. The current government claims that criminality is Sweden’s biggest social problem (Regeringskansliet, 2026a), and they claim that serious and organised crime in Sweden is a threat to the system and restoring safety in Sweden is our times biggest quest for freedom. In 2024, the Swedish Government issued three new strategies and an action programme connected to crime prevention, where the most central national initiatives and reforms of crime prevention lay focus on fighting organised criminality (BRÅ, 2025, p. 73-74). With the increased focus on organised criminality in the current national crime prevention work, and in the Swedish political discourse, organised criminality has been framed as one of the most urgent problems our society is facing.

The production of organised criminality is also part of a political discourse where certain groups of people are framed as the criminal other. The narratives of who the criminal is have changed and framed the ‘foreign other’ as the culprit, while promoting the Swedish society as an actor with a collective identity, acting against this ‘criminal other’ (Lowe, 2025, p. 9). The shift in Swedish criminal policy is also participating in the ‘otherification’ of immigrants, by favouring the interests of the socio-economically strong groups in Sweden (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 296). The framing of the criminal other becomes clear in the Prime Minister’s speech, where he frames “irresponsible immigration politics and a failed integration” (Regeringskansliet 2023. Translated) as the cause for the growth of organised criminality over the past decade. This perception of immigrants being the cause of crime, is the result of the rise of right-wing parties in Sweden, where an anti-immigrant rhetoric has emerged (Lowe, 2025, p. 1), where racialised working-class neighbourhoods are specifically targeted in political discourse (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 18)

Local crime preventive measures have been pointed out as an important factor that contributes to the crime preventive work by dealing with local problems (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 293). With the new priorities of the Swedish government, crime prevention in a Swedish

context has transformed, from the state being the main responsible actor for crime prevention work, to sharing the responsibility with local authorities and local communities (Lozic, 2018, p. 129). To this end, a new law was introduced in 2023 that legislates the responsibility of the municipalities concerning their crime preventive work (SFS 2023:196). The aim with the law is to strengthen the national criminal political goals and contribute to the joint national crime prevention initiatives. By using national criminal policy as a foundation, the local authorities and communities are to adapt the national policy to fit their context and their local issues (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 13 & 15). It encourages collaboration among the local authorities, especially with the local police force, as the municipalities and police force are considered the core of crime preventive work (ibid). At the same time, the law allows the municipalities and local authorities to work close to the community and the people in it, which allows them more freedom as responsible actors (ibid, p. 9). The increased involvement of municipalities and local authorities are a part of achieving the priority of the Swedish government to fight organised crime (ibid, p. 1).

1.1 Problem statement

Drawing on the above, two policy developments have been identified in Swedish criminal policy over the past years. The first policy development is the focus on organised criminality and the subjects produced as the criminal others. The political discourse frames organised criminality to be a problem outside the Swedish welfare state, specifically as it gets framed as a problem that primarily exists in the vulnerable areas in Sweden (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). These vulnerable areas are characterised with high immigrant populations, social exclusion, and ‘parallel structures’ (Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 3-4; Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). In connection, there is a rise of an anti-immigrant rhetoric that frames immigrants and foreigners as the culprits for the rise in crime, which is strengthened by the structural segregation (Lowe, 2025 p. 2).

The second policy development is the decentralisation and responsabilisation of crime preventive work. The new law on the responsibility of the municipalities concerning their contribution to the national crime preventive work, indicates this decentralisation of crime preventive work (Lozic, 2018, p. 129). The municipalities are supposed to contribute to the national crime preventive initiatives, at the same time as they are supposed to adapt the national initiatives to their local context depending on their situational picture (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 5 & 18). The legislation indicates that the responsabilisation of crime prevention work is meant to steer the municipalities into a certain direction through policy by

focusing on certain crimes, in this case organised criminality, and additionally, focusing on certain areas and groups. At the same time, the legislation expects the municipalities to act as responsible actors that take over certain aspects of crime prevention work (ibid, p. 13).

The new law on the responsibility of municipalities, creates a need to study how Swedish municipalities take on this new responsibility in practice. Specifically, the heightened focus on organised criminality in national strategies creates a need to study how the municipalities take on this new responsibility in relation to the national focus on organised crime and the consequently produced subjects.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore how the two policy developments, concerning the decentralisation, and the heightened focus on organised criminality and the anti-immigrant rhetoric gets reflected within the national and local policy documents of four selected municipalities in southern Sweden. To do this, the study intends to investigate how organised criminality is problematised on a national and local level and highlight the connection between national and local policy. Further, the study intends to investigate how the problematisations produce subjects of organised criminality.

1.3 Research questions

To achieve the aim of the study, the following research questions are stated:

- How is organised criminality problematised in national and local policy?
- Within these problematisations, what subjects are being produced?

1.4 Relevance according to sociology of law

The study becomes relevant according to sociology of law, in part because it deals with the implementation and effects of the law, concerning the study of how the municipalities take on their new responsibility as crime prevention has become decentralised, which is connected to law in action (Baier, Svensson & Nafstad, 2018, p. 39 & 41). At the same time, the study will focus on how the national and local policy can produce subjects, and therefore affect societal norms, which is connected to the relation between law in action and social change (ibid, p. 20). This reveals the relevance to sociology of law, where the municipalities implementation of the law requires studying, along with how national and local policy can affect social change.

1.5 Background of the legal framework

The government bill for the law on the responsibilities of municipalities presents to two main points to motivate the implementation of the law. The development of crime in Sweden and the importance of local crime prevention work (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 7). The development of crime in Sweden shows that criminal rates have decreased, and Sweden is considered to be a safe country. On the other hand, certain serious crimes have increased, for example deadly shootings with connection to organised criminality, along with the continued problems with domestic violence, honour-related violence and sexual violence against women (ibid.). This has contributed to increased feelings of unsafety and fear in large parts of the Swedish society, which can in turn lead to seriously negative consequences on both an individual and societal level. The detrimental effects of fear and feelings of unsafety, frames preventing crime as one of the most pressing societal challenges in present time (ibid, p. 8).

The importance of local crime prevention work is being emphasized due its possibility to work closely to the local community, with the local situational picture as a leading light (ibid, p. 9). The government bill argues that municipalities have the opportunity to prevent crime through local initiatives on both a structural and operational level, with both situational and social crime preventive measures at hand. Municipalities also possess the opportunity to establish collaboration with local authorities and other relevant actors to work together. For example, maintenance of housing area, urban planning and local integration (ibid, p. 9). Along with the police, the municipalities make up a central part of crime prevention work. With the background of the increase of certain serious crimes, fear and feelings of unsafety, and the centrality of municipalities in the crime prevention work, the law on municipalities responsibility for crime prevention work has emerged (SFS 2023:196).

1.6 The purpose and goals of the law

According to the government bill, the purpose of the law is to ensure that the municipalities contribute to the national crime prevention work, by taking over certain responsibilities for the coordination of crime prevention within the municipality (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 13). The government bill argues that the municipalities crime preventive work is an important part of societies joint efforts in combating crime and therefore it should be prioritised and made efficient. The idea of making local crime prevention work more efficient, is referring to working with an evidence-based strategy and ensuring that there is collaboration between local actors (ibid, p. 14). By implementing the law and making it a requirement for municipalities to produce their own situational pictures and plans of action, the law pushes the

agenda of making municipalities work with an evidence-based strategy. The law aims at making the local crime prevention work more structured and goal-oriented, by making the municipalities work more systematically (ibid, p. 18).

Another purpose with the law, is to make sure that local crime prevention work gets prioritised. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has proved that crime prevention work has previously not been a top priority for municipalities across Sweden, since there has been a lack of obligation for municipalities to work with crime preventive measures within their geographical area (ibid, p. 14). From these standpoints, the government bill makes it clear that the government believes that there is an opportunity for municipalities to develop and intensify their crime prevention work to contribute to the national crime prevention work (ibid, p. 15).

1.7 Disposition of the thesis

This thesis will continue with a literature review that will present the relevant existing literature to provide a background for understanding the context of the Swedish criminal policy. The third chapter will present the two theoretical frameworks that will be used to analyse the results. The chapter will explain the relevant aspects of the framework in accordance with the research questions. The fourth chapter is the method chapter, which presents the material that is used for conducting the study. In addition, the chapter will also present the method used to analyse the material and how the method will be applied. Limitations, ethical considerations and a section on self-reflexivity will also be included in the method chapter. The fifth chapter will combine the relevant findings in line with the research questions, with the analysis where the two theoretical frameworks presented in chapter three will be used to analyse the findings. The sixth chapter is the discussion where the results and analysis will be discussed and positioned within the existing literature from the literature review. The concluding seventh chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the study and then continue to present the limitations and what they can imply for future research.

2. Literature review

The literature review in this thesis, follows the characteristics of a narrative literature review. It aims to survey the state of knowledge about Swedish criminal policy, crime prevention, and organised criminality in order to provide a comprehensive background to understand the topic (Efron & Ravid, 2018, p. 21). Further, the aim with the literature review was to identify a research gap in the relevant literature which this thesis can fill. The literature review identified

a significant research gap of the decentralisation of crime prevention work, and the connection to the politically relevant issue of organised criminality, and the racialisation of crime. The literature review is going to be centred around four main themes that discusses the main trends, issues, and contradictions in the literature. The four identified themes that make up the structure of this chapter, are the following: *A shift in Swedish criminal policy, fear of crime, local crime prevention and local collaboration, and organised criminality.*

Finn and Google Scholar were the two databases that were used to find literature for the review. The search words were the following: *Crime prevention, Politic*, Ideology, Brottsprevention, Crime control, Crime, Prevention, Criminal network, Method, Strate*, Swed* and Euro**. The search words were combined in different ways in different search strings as the search went on. Some words were used to broaden the search, while other were used to narrow the search. In some cases, a snowball method was applied, where relevant literature was found through other articles. To decide if the literature were going to be included in the review, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. To be included in the review, the literature must have been published from the year 2000 and onwards, they must have been written in either English or Swedish, and they must be peer-reviewed. From the start the plan was to only include literature that focused on the Swedish context, but as the search went on, the context broadened to also include the European context. This provided more seminal works and helped to put the Swedish context in a wider international context, that aided the aim of the literature review to provide a comprehensive background on the topic.

2.1 A shift in Swedish criminal policy

Criminal policy has taken a preventive turn internationally (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 295). The internationalisation of criminal policy took off in the 1990s, where global plans were developed for fighting trans-border crime, and multiple international tribunals were established (Lahti, 2000, p. 149-150). The preventive shift has affected Sweden, and on a national level it entailed the establishment of a national crime prevention program, new public authorities, and the reshaping of crime policy and legislation (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 296). The preventive turn is a reaction to increasing crime, fear and insecurity, lack of trust in criminal justice institutions, and the fading of the rehabilitative ideal (ibid.). The criticism of the preventive turn is mainly twofold. First, Persson (2013, p. 6) and Lidskog and Persson (2012, p. 296), both argue that the preventive turn serves the strong socioeconomic groups and their interests, concerns and demands for safety, making it biased. Second, Persson (2013,

p. 6) argues that the talk of a preventive turn in Sweden is misleading and is a more reactive prevention.

As a response to the preventive turn, a combination of two crime preventive measures is especially common to prevent crime and decrease fear and insecurity, which are the social and situational crime preventive measures (Ceccato, Jorge & Giori, 2024, p. 5). Situational crime preventive measures are meant to influence opportunities of crime, help with identifying and prosecuting criminals and at the same time focus on feelings of safety (Ceccato, Jorge & Giori, 2024, p. 5; Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Svenonius, 2018, p. 2). Compared to the situational crime preventive measures, the social crime prevention measures lay its focus on social, political and economic changes for a long-term crime prevention strategy (Ceccato, Jorge & Giori, 2024 p. 4). It concentrates on the social, economic and political causes for crime that might impact criminal behaviour in communities (ibid.). The social crime preventive measures are meant to make structural and fundamental changes to society to prevent crime, while the situational crime preventive measures are meant to reduce opportunities for crime.

At the same time as the preventive turn has been established in Sweden, the punitive turn has developed (Andersson & Wahlgren, 2022, p. 79). The reasons why the punitive turn has manifested in Sweden are several. The most recurring ones are the decline of confidence in rehabilitation, government and experts, the increased positive view of punishment, the increased focus on the victim and the political exploitation of the crime discourse (Hermansson, 2018, p. 24). The international impact on Swedish criminal policy is undeniable, concerning both the preventive and punitive shift. One might argue that Sweden has lost its footing, from being a beacon in the Western context to emphasise trust, tolerance and peace, to being influenced by other Western countries that has adapted a warfare rhetoric to deal with groups that were viewed as enemies (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 19 & 21). Barker (2013, p. 6) argues that this is a pattern in Sweden, where the Nordic exceptionalism is contradictory, and Sweden violates human rights when dealing with individuals and groups of people that are deemed 'unwanted' or 'undeserving', while claiming humane and mild penal regimes (ibid, p. 7). The international impact on Swedish criminal policy implies a loss off, or a distancing from Nordic exceptionalism, while Barker's (2013) argues that the idea of Nordic exceptionalism is contradictory and problematic when Sweden shows a pattern of working against it.

The individualised discourse on crime, that places the blame on the individual criminal, instead of structural explanations of crime has also contributed to the punitive turn, where the

lack of control of people is seen as the cause of criminal behaviour (Hermansson, 2018, p. 24; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 296). That a punitive turn has happened in Sweden is a shared view (Andersson & Wahlgren, 2022, p. 79; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 296; Lowe, 2025, p. 2; Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 836). But Hermansson (2018, p. 23) and Branteryd, Gallo, Brown and Svensson (2022, p. 948) argue that there is a contradiction between the punitive turn and the Swedish welfare state, and there have not been a punitive turn that aligns with the punitive criminal policies in the US and UK. The different perspectives on punitive criminal policy in the context of the Swedish welfare state shows that there is not a clear-cut adaptation of the punitive shift in Swedish criminal policy, according to the standards of the UK and US. Rather, it reveals that Swedish criminal policy has embraced some aspects of a punitive criminal policy and adapted it to the Swedish welfare state (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 948).

The punitive shift in criminal policy is connected to the anti-immigrant rhetoric that places the blame for the rise in crime on immigrants and foreigners, which is strengthened by the racialisation of crime and segregation (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 961; Grander, Roelofs & Salonen, 2022, p. 245; Lowe, 2025 p. 2). The claim of the rise in crime is based on nothing tangible, because there is no general rise of crime in Sweden (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 836). For the majority of the 20th century, Sweden had a non-punitive logic, where the criminal was still seen as a member of society in need of rehabilitation to get reintegrated in society (Lowe, 2025, p. 1). With the rise of right-wing parties in the Swedish political arena, this has changed, into a perception of immigrants being the cause of crime (ibid.). At the same time, Sweden upholds an ideal of colour-blindness that operates through the Swedish legislation and discourse (Schütze & Osanami Törngren, 2022, p. 639). But, by the racialisation of crime, the problem of crime is no longer considered Swedish, since the refugees and minorities are being viewed as the potential security threats (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 22). The responsibility is transferred to the non-white immigrants, and in turn, this shapes the Swedish criminal policy that emphasises the segregated neighbourhoods as the cause of crime and social problems (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951 & 953).

The segregated neighbourhoods, with the Million Program as a contributing factor (ibid.), are framed as the result of social problems (Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 4; Persson, 2013, p. 14). This means that the segregated neighbourhoods and immigrants works as a scapegoat for crime as a problem. Segregation is seen as a problem to solve, and at the same time, segregation is required as a political explanation of crime to differentiate between the Swedish society and the 'criminal other'. The segregation of the racialised working-class

neighbourhoods justifies the over-policing, through surveillance and increased police presence in the neighbourhoods (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). At the same time, can the conflict perspective interpret the “justified” over-policing as a way for the state to uphold differences between ethnicities in Sweden, to create a gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Schclarek Mulinari, 2017, p. 13). While the consensus perspective, argues that the over-policing of hotspots is an efficient way for the police to administer their resources, and is not a discriminating practice, despite the immigrant population in the monitored areas (ibid, p. 12). Depending on the perspective, the interpretation of over-policing segregated neighbourhoods can have dual meaning. One that argues that over-policing is a discriminating practice, and one that argues that it is an efficient use of resources.

The shift in Swedish criminal policy is affected by the political exploitation of crime. The political framing of ‘who’ crime control procedures affect, and ‘how’ crime control procedures are put into practice have influenced the Swedish criminal policy (Lowe, 2025, p. 15). Political actors are the origin of the criminal discourse, where the understanding of crime is created in a political context (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 836). That means that the political actors are the ones framing segregation as the cause and result of social problems. They are the ones that have caused the punitive and preventive shift in Swedish criminal policy. By influencing the discourse of crime and using the crime victim as a basis (Hermansson, 2018, p. 30), as well as the framing of the immigrant as criminal, they are justifying the increased state control and the risk-managing of immigrants (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 26). By justifying increased control and police presence in racialised working-class neighbourhoods, more crimes will be mapped in the area, and in its turn, it will contribute to the discourse of the criminal immigrant and then justify further control. It becomes a vicious circle where political actors are using the problem of crime as an instrumental tool to further political ambitions and agendas, and legitimize an expansion of control (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 830).

Swedish criminal policy has been through ideational shifts during the second half of the 20th century and the 21st century due to internationalisation of crime policy, increasing fear of crime, focus on the victim, individualisation, anti-immigrant rhetoric and political exploitation of crime. Crime has been politically transformed into a constant problem that can be handled by increased state control (Andersson & Wahlgren, 2022, p. 86). The literature in this section has covered these shifts, in order to provide a historical perspective to Swedish criminal policy, and to provide a background to understand the upcoming sections.

2.2 Fear of crime

With increased public concern and fear of crime (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 833), crime prevention measures are shifting from preventing crime, to reduce fear and unsafety in society (Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Di Ronco, 2016, p. 147; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 293). To decrease the increased fear in society, situational crime preventive measures are meant to be a cost-effective way to enhance public safety by more policing and security guards, manipulating environment and surveillance cameras (Ceccato, Jorge & Gliori, 2024, p. 5; Chrysoulakis, Gerell & Jakobsson, 2025, p. 2). Situational crime preventive measures are meant to influence opportunities of crime, help with identifying and prosecuting criminals and at the same time focus on feelings of safety (Ceccato, Jorge & Gliori, 2024, p. 5; Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Svenonius, 2018, p. 2).

With the increase in fear, that does not match the increase in crime (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 833 & 836), the discourse and narratives on fear of crime are part of the political exploitation to justify control (Hermansson, 2023, p. 36; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 294; Lowe, 2025, p. 7; Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 830). The discourse is created in a political context and by political actors (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 836). The political actors can themselves use emotions in speeches and public appearances to promote this narrative (Hermansson, 2023, p. 38 & 50). By shifting the focus to fear of crime and public safety, crime prevention measures must shift to meet the public demand. For example, surveillance on public places like train stations, are visible to increase the feelings and experience of safety (Svenonius, 2018, p. 3 & 7). Another example is within the SafeGrowth initiative where residents experience and descriptions of their reality lead the police work, instead of police expertise (Nilsson et al, 2023, p. 179). Therefore, their experience of reality takes over actual reality of the situation and shows that the shift of focus to fear of crime can have detrimental effects on crime preventive work.

Another problem with using crime preventive measures to reduce fear and increase public safety, is that fear is often unwarranted. Persson (2013) analysed a policy implementation of local crime prevention, that showed that people feel more unsafe in a safer society (ibid, p. 11). In Lidingö and Danderyd, two municipalities with high socioeconomic status and low crime rates, people felt very unsafe and there was a high public demand of control (ibid, p.7 & 11). The increase in fear, that does not match the increase in crime (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 833 & 836), and people in safe neighbourhoods that feel unsafe, makes it clear that the fear of crime can be unwarranted, and therefore crime preventive measures that focuses on fear should not be pursued. Although, Di Ronco (2016, p. 147) argues that prevention should

address fear of crime, because fear can be as harmful as crime itself, and can lead to a loss of faith in the rule of law and the police. Meanwhile, Sahlin Lilja (2024, p. 841-842) argues that fear of crime is not a problem that can be solved, but rather a phenomenon that makes social progress difficult. And when a solution seems to be close, the attempts to solve the problem can feed the problem, and in turn make people feel more unsafe (Persson, 2013, p. 11)

The literature in this section covers the challenges and contradictions of the shift in crime prevention measures to focus on fear of crime and public safety. First of all, the increase of fear of crime, does not match the increase of crime (Sahlin, Lilja, 2024, p. 833 & 836), therefore deeming it unwarranted. Second of all, fear of crime is a construction by political actors in a political context to justify increased crime control (Hermansson, 2023, p. 36; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 294; Lowe, 2025, p. 7; Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 830 & 836). Lastly the section covers the contradictions about ‘solving’ fear of crime, if it is possible or not, or if it should even be approached (Di Ronco, 2016, p. 147, Persson, 2013, p. 11; Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 841-842).

2.3 Local crime prevention and local collaboration

Local crime prevention and local collaboration is seen as the best way to deal with local problems (Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Davey & Wootton, 2016, p. 162; Di Ronco, 2016, p. 150; Johansson, 2014, p. 153; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 298; Lozic, 2018, p. 133), due to their knowledge of their local issues and differences (Andersson & Wahlgren, 2022, p. 85; Lozic, 2018, p. 135). This has resulted in a shift in responsibility, where increased responsibility to deal with crime prevention has transferred to lay on the local community (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 300; Lozic, 2018, p. 129; Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 5). They use national criminal policy and adapt it to the local level (Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 294; Saraiva et al, 2016, p. 183), which means that local communities tend use similar guidelines (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013, p. 102; Persson, 2013, p. 8) and focus on the same problems. In rural areas, rural problems are neglected and focus mostly lay on urban issues (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013, p. 109). This implies poor adaption to the local context and issues, making local crime prevention work weak in practice. At the same time, lack of knowledge and training is a reoccurring theme for implementing crime prevention measures on a local level (Alstam & Forkby, 2022, p. 3; Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013, p. 94; Lind, 2024, p. 3), contributing to making local crime prevention work weak. This reveals that even if local crime prevention work has grown more important, it can be an ineffective adaption of crime prevention work, from the national level to the local level.

With an increase in focus on local crime prevention work, the structural problems on a national and international level are being ignored (Dahlstedt, 2019, p. 101; Persson, 2013, p. 14). Here lays a contradiction among the literature. Authors in support of local crime prevention, claim crime as a problem is localised (Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Davey & Wootton, 2016, p. 162; Di Ronco, 2016, p. 150; Johansson, 2014, p. 153; Lozic, 2018, p. 129), while other authors are critical and claim the root of crime are at a national and international level and local interventions are not enough to change a structural problem (Ceccato and Dolmen, 2013, p. 94; Dahlstedt, 2019, p. 101; Nejadi, 2025, p. 5; Persson, 2013, p. 14). A critique against making crime prevention a matter of national level and social welfare is presented by Knepper (2009, p. 63-63). He argues that welfarist values risk becoming a secondary objective, if crime reduction becomes a goal of social welfare. Meanwhile Persson (2013, p. 14) argues that societal distress causes crime and social disorder, and social welfare can aid in reducing this. This leaves us at a crossroad of contradictions where the best strategy for crime and crime prevention depends on the researcher's own outlook if crime is a national or local issue. Yet the lack of knowledge and training in crime prevention on a local level, combined with the weak adaption of national guidelines to a local level, reveals that the faith rested on local crime prevention work, might be misplaced.

The literature in this section shows a clear split among the authors, whether crime as a problem is a local issue or a national and international issue. This creates a discrepancy between which crime prevention measures that should be taken, and where they should be applied. This disagreement between authors could suggest that a meeting point between local and national could be considered the best strategy for crime prevention work.

2.4 Organised criminality

Organised criminality is a difficult concept to define with many different ideas of what make up the umbrella term (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 429). The most accepted definition is the definition by the European Union, that consists of eleven points, where at least six of the criteria needs to be met, making it diffuse and unprecise (Träskman, 2012, p. 339). It is hard to define due to its empirically elusive and diffuse nature, where words like 'transnational' often get attached to the definition (Flyghed, 2007, p. 60; Träskman, 2012, p. 336). The commonality across different definitions is the multi-criminal character, where organised criminality can be present across various crimes, for example economic crimes, terrorism, human trafficking and exploitation, unauthorised influence, violence and narcotics (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 432-433; Schclarek Mulinari, 2015, p. 324; Träskman, 2012, p. 337).

Another commonality among the understandings of organised criminality, is that it is a threat against society (Schclarek Mulinari, 2015, p. 327; Tham, 2019, p. 14).

The framing of organised criminality as a threat against society, gives political actors a chance to exploit organised criminality to show political viability (Flyghed, 2007, p. 65). Politics create beliefs, beliefs of what is part of organised criminality, but also of who is the problem and where the problem originates from. Additionally, through attention in media, organised criminality as an exceptional threat becomes normalised, which in turn creates fear among people which puts pressure on politicians to act (Flyghed, 2007, p. 63; Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 429; Tham, 2019, p. 8). The populist turn of criminal politics where they exploit fear is a part of the framing of organised criminality (Tham, 2019, p. 11 & 13).

When organised criminality gets produced through political discourse and media, the threat is framed to be outside of the Swedish welfare system, specifically in the vulnerable areas (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 434, Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21; Tham, 2019, p. 15).

Vulnerable areas are characterised by low socioeconomic status, and areas where the criminals have much impact on the local community (Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 1). These areas have come to overlap with suburban areas (förorter), which historically have been characterised by high immigrant populations, social exclusion, and 'parallel structures' (ibid, p. 3-4; Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). The connection between vulnerable areas and organised criminality, continues to frame the problem to be heavily focused on certain areas, and the populations living in the areas, specifically the immigrants living in the areas (Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 4). The structural segregation contributes to the creation of a 'us' versus 'them', in other words, the process of creating the 'other' (Flyghed, 2007, p. 66). Even with Sweden's official policy of colour-blindness, crime gets characterised as the responsibility of immigrants (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 950-951), due to segregation and lack of integration (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 438). Therefore, the framing of organised criminality, shows a connection to vulnerable areas with high immigrant populations, the racialised working-class neighbourhoods (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21).

The literature shows a commonality in the difficulty of defining organised criminality and its diffuse nature, even with the definition provided by European Union with its eleven points. The literature also shows that the fear that organised criminality causes can get politically exploited, and how political discourse shapes the understanding of organised criminality and limits it to specific areas and populations. The racialised working-class neighbourhoods gets

connected to organised criminality and contributes to the political discourse of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and the process of othering.

2.5 Summary and research gap

Previous research has addressed the shift in Swedish criminal policy, the increased fear of crime, the importance of local crime prevention work and local collaboration, and the understanding and framing of organised criminality.

The literature describing the shift in Swedish criminal policy address the preventive and punitive shift and the criticism using these terms to describe the Swedish criminal policy. It also emphasises the international influence on the Swedish criminal policy and the political exploitation of crime. The literature on fear of crime, showed that public fear and unsafety has become a focus for crime preventive measures, and that fear and unsafety is often unwarranted, as fear is high in generally safe areas. The third theme, local crime prevention and local collaboration, showed a disagreement among the literature, whether crime prevention work is best applied on a local level, or a national and international level. Lastly, the literature on organised criminality demonstrated the diffuse definition of organised criminality, and how political discourse and media contribute to the framing of organised criminality by connecting it to vulnerable areas and the immigrant population.

The literature review has achieved its aim to identify a research gap. The literature reveals a research gap concerning the decentralisation of crime prevention work in Sweden and how it has affected the crime preventive work against organised criminality in relation to the emerging anti-immigrant rhetoric. Specifically, how municipalities take on their new responsibility according to the new law on municipalities’ responsibility of crime prevention work implemented in 2023 (SFS 2023:196), and how it works in relation to the highly relevant political discourse on organised criminality and the racialisation of crime. The gap is significant because it reveals that the existing literature overlook exploring what the decentralisation of crime prevention work looks like in practice on a local level. At the same time, it neglects the connection between national and local strategies and understandings concerning the same issue, in this case, organised criminality.

3. Theory

This chapter will present the two theoretical frameworks that will aid to deepen the analysis and help critically analyse the findings. The first theoretical framework is Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, which refers to how governing can shape behaviours. The second

theoretical framework is critical race theory which draws on the premise that racism can operate through routines and everyday activities and can exist in policies where it can remain hidden under a colourblind ideology. Together the two theoretical frameworks will contribute to the analysis of the decentralisation and responsabilisation of power in the municipalities, and how the policy documents as products of power can be instruments for racial oppression.

3.1 Governmentality and responsabilisation

Governmentality is a theoretical concept developed by Michel Foucault, which refers to how power through government can shape behaviours, knowledges and norms (Foucault, 2002, p. 220). Governmentality is often referred to as the ‘conduct of conduct’ (da Silva & Quattrone, 2017, p. 116). It refers to the governmental form of power that alters the action of the individual and their acts through forms of knowledge and techniques (ibid, p. 118), and how we think about governing (Dean, 2010, p. 24). By the term government, Foucault does not only refer to the institutions of the state, but rather to all activities that aim to shape the behaviour of the population in a particular way (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4). The target for the power is the population, where the political economy is the foundation for the forms of knowledge that is produced (Foucault, 2002, p. 220). The security, production, reproduction and stability of the population within a state becomes the concern of the state (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 46).

The term governmentality is a concept that Foucault means to highlight the power that is exercised by institutions, procedures, and discourses, and make up the foundation for the knowledge production (Foucault, 2002, p. 219-220). The term governmentality consists of four main principles that guide the concept (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 3-4). Firstly, governmentality consist of the development and distribution of particular strategies and forms of knowledge that is being used to deal with specific problems. Secondly, the governmentalist strategies are resting upon the idea of increasing individual freedom while reducing the role of the state. Thirdly, the governmentalist strategies are legitimatised, and are rendered neutral, instead of partial. Lastly, the governmentalist strategies find ways to develop forms of control over specific types of individuals. They find ways to define, monitor and assess the population to identify the specific groups of people that require intervention (ibid, p. 4).

By using the concept of governmentality, one can study the creation of a subject, by studying the techniques that are being used to shape the subject into the subject (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 11). The subject can be shaped by knowledge that institutions and practices express and produce (ibid.), for example, through policies. Policies can produce subjects and shape

how a subject can be thought about, how they think and how they act (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 84). Subjects are culturally produced through rituals of power (ibid.). We govern each other and ourselves in accordance with what we accept as true about who we are and our existence (Dean, 2010, p. 27).

To govern is to use mechanisms, or technologies, to exercise power in order to shape the behaviour of individuals and groups (ibid, p. 48). It can be done through programs, policies, performance data, case management and censuses. These technologies are mechanisms that tend to reflect political rationalities. Political rationalities use forms of knowledge that characterises the society's intellectual background, for example, theories, philosophies, economics and medicine (ibid, p. 47). These forms of knowledge and discourse are being recognised as governing practices that can govern from a distance. Discipline and regulation through knowledge can establish societal norms, which in turn works as self-regulation and self-surveillance mechanisms for the subjects (ibid, p. 48).

Governmentality is connected to responsabilisation, where responsibilities shift from the state to local communities or individuals. Foucault argues that governance is widespread phenomenon, which is not just confined to the state (Walters, 2012, p.11). Governance is a phenomenon that is active on different levels where individuals of groups of people aim to shape the behaviour and conduct of others. This means that the responsabilisation of governing lays beyond just the state and is laid upon groups and individuals. Rose (2009, p. 22 & 284) argues that the responsabilisation shift make human beings and local authorities politically responsible for governing themselves and others.

The theoretical concept of governmentality focuses on the decentralisation of power. Instead of the state as the centralised source of power, power can exude from a diverse range of societal institutions through the production of knowledge and discourses. This will help deepen the analysis by providing a theoretical framework for analysing the responsabilisation of power, where the municipalities turn into responsible actors that produce knowledge about organised criminality.

3.2 Critical Race Theory and the 'other'

Critical race theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary approach and a movement that challenges racial oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. xvii) and focuses on the hidden processes that can have discriminating effects, regardless of the intent (ibid, p. 4). CRT as a theoretical framework, aims to expose the hidden processes and the deeper inner workings of social

processes that are controlling and exclusionary, while they are disguised as doing good (ibid, p. 5). It is a critical framework that critiques the ideas of race neutrality, objectivity and colour-blindness (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022, p. 256).

CRT starts with the premise that white societies are legally obligated to treat everyone equally, through a so called colourblind ideology, and that the premise fails to make racial inequalities visible (ibid, p. 255). The critique against colour-blindness argues that it hides systemic racism, rather than eliminating it. The colourblind approach suggests a neutral and objective approach to race, but instead it avoids any consideration of race in decision making (Gotanda, 2000, p. 35). It is also argued that the concept of colour-blindness and the claim of race neutrality is impossible, and that the racial ideology benefits the interests of the racial majority (ibid, p. 36). Which leads to the concept of interest convergence. Interest convergence argues that advances in race equality only happens when it aligns with the interest of white people (ibid, p. 6). Racism works in the interest of white people, both materially and psychically (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 9). As long as racism advances the interests of white people, there is no benefits for white people to eradicate racism.

A second premise is that CRT sees race as something that is socially constructed (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 2). The premise of race being socially constructed, contends that race is a result of social relations and thoughts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 9). Race is something that society produces. Society invents, manipulates and retires the social construction of race, in accordance with convenience (ibid.).

Thirdly, CRT views racism as something that is normal and integrated into our society (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 4). It is integrated into our actions, beliefs and policies. Racism can be subtle and more extensive than the general association of racism with violent acts of hatred. Racism can be fluid, complex and can take on multiple forms through time (ibid, p. 7). CRT implies that racism can operate through routines, everyday activities and assumptions that goes unquestioned by most people, which includes policy makers. This means that racist notions can be incorporated into policies and social agencies. CRT uses the term 'white supremacy' to describe the political, economic and cultural systems where white people are in control, possess power and material resources. It also refers to the conscious and unconscious idea that white people are superior (ibid, p. 5).

Creating racial hierarchies institutionalises oppression and racial discrimination, which in turn can produce the 'other' (Williams, 2015, p. 19). Williams (ibid.) defines the process of

othering as “the process of attaching moral codes of inferiority to difference”. Othering excludes and discriminates individuals and groups based on their marginalised belonging. The others, as outsiders, get produced as a threat to the normative social order, and it can be based on socially constructed signifiers, for example race and cultural attributes (ibid, p. 21). The others are not just socially excluded and discriminated; they become criminalised as they are deemed to be a threat which is to be regulated through the state’s criminal justice apparatus. The othering of individuals and groups are part of the racialisation of crime and works as a discursive tool to refer to marginalised groups (ibid.).

CRT will be useful to make the racism that is integrated into our everyday activities, actions, beliefs and policies visible. It will help to analyse the findings, by identifying subtle or hidden, conscious or unconscious racial oppression in the policy documents that can participate in the process of producing the ‘other’. It will help to identify and critically analyse colourblind ideology in the policy documents, in order to understand how racism can be integrated into the policy documents on a national and local level.

4. Method

To conduct this study, a qualitative method has been applied. By using a qualitative method as a research strategy, the focus for the study has been to interpret and analyse the policy documents from the government and the four selected municipalities. This chapter will start off by presenting the selection of municipalities, the material used in the study, why this material was chosen, and how it was found. Following, there will be a description of the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to Be?’ approach that was used to analyse the chosen policy documents. Further, there will be a discussion of the scope and limitations of the study, following a consideration of ethics. Lastly, the final section will present a self-reflective discussion.

4.1 Selection of municipalities

For this study the four biggest municipalities in Skåne, a province in southern Sweden, have been chosen. The four chosen municipalities are the following: Malmö, Helsingborg, Lund and Kristianstad. The reasoning behind why four municipalities were chosen instead of three or five municipalities has to do with data saturation. The data from the four municipalities offer enough data to analyse, without becoming superfluous (Clark, Foster, Sloan & Bryman, 2021, p. 381). At the same time, by choosing four municipalities instead of three, opened up the local political variation among the municipalities. The three biggest municipalities,

Malmö, Helsingborg, and Lund are all governed by The Social Democrats as the largest political party, while Kristianstad is governed by The Moderate Party as the largest political party (Helsingborg stad, 2026a; Kristianstads kommun, 2026a; Lunds kommun, 2026; Malmö stad, 2026a). By selecting the four biggest municipalities instead of the three biggest, a municipality gets included that is governed by another political party that is on opposite ends of the political spectrum of The Social Democrats. This was another motivator for the selection of municipalities as it could result in a knowledge production that differs from the other three municipalities, and therefore ties back to the data saturation, where Kristianstad contributed to new data.

When choosing the four municipalities to study, a purposive sampling was used to strategically sample cases (Clark et al, 2021, p. 378). A criterion sampling was used (ibid, p. 379) and it had one criterion to meet, and it was the size of the municipality. Malmö, Helsingborg, Lund, and Kristianstad are the four biggest municipalities in Skåne based on population. Skåne was chosen as a province because of its geographical connection and relevance to Lund University. The advantages of basing the criterion off the size of the municipalities, is that the bigger municipalities would potentially have more resources concerning their local crime prevention work. With bigger populations they would assume to have more crime to map and analyse in their situational picture and therefore provide a more detailed picture than a small municipality. Adding on, with a large population, it provides more urban complexity, where different areas within the municipality can vary greatly and become interesting to study. Choosing the criterion of size therefore became the most logical and strategical choice.

4.1.1 The demographics of the municipalities.

To contextualise the municipalities, some things should be noted about the demographics of the selected municipalities. As the largest municipality, Malmö had over 360 000 residents in 2023, with almost half of the inhabitants being under 35 years old (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 7). About a third of all the residents in Malmö are foreign born, with ethnicities from 187 different countries. Malmö municipality has seven vulnerable areas, where two of them are considered more severely vulnerable, according to the definition of the police (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 17). Helsingborg municipality, as the second largest municipality in Skåne had about 150 000 residents in 2023 (Helsingborg Stad, 2026b). Helsingborg has two vulnerable areas, according to the definition of the police (Helsingborg, 2024a, p. 77). Lund municipality had about 130 000 residents in 2023, making it the third largest municipality in Skåne (Lunds

kommun, 2024a, p. 6). Historically, Lund have had good socioeconomic conditions with good health, high education levels, and low unemployment rates. In Lund there are no vulnerable areas, per the definition of the police, but there are areas with socioeconomic challenges (ibid, p. 23). Lastly, Kristianstad, as the smallest out of the four selected municipalities, had about 85 000 residents in 2025 (Kristianstads kommun, 2026b). About a third of the population of the municipality have a foreign background (Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 16). The municipality have multiple areas that are socioeconomically weak, and one area that is considered to be vulnerable according to the police (ibid, p. 16-17; Polismyndigheten, 2025, p. 37).

4.2 Material

The material for this study consists of three types of documents from the four municipalities, and three government communications. The first one of the documents from the municipalities is a document providing the situational picture of crime in the area. The situational pictures provide a mapping of the crime within the geographical area, an analysis of the causes of crime, along with relevant information about the municipality that is required to understand the mapping and the analysis of the cause of crime. The second type of document is a plan of action for preventing crime within the municipality. The plan of action document is supposed to be supported and motivated by the situational picture. The third kind of documents is the interoperability arrangements. The purpose of the interoperability arrangements documents is to ensure efficient and systematic cooperation between the municipality and the local police.

Among the documents from the four chosen municipalities there are some differences. Some documents are more detailed and developed than others. That results in a difference of how much material there is to analyse from each municipality. For example, the situational picture from Kristianstad is twenty pages long, while the situational picture from Helsingborg is one hundred pages long. An additional notable difference is that Lund does not have a separate document for their plan of action but have incorporated it into their situational picture. The differences among the policy documents could affect the findings, as some policy documents are significantly shorter than others, which could result in less and shorter problematisations of organised criminality and less descriptive presentations of the corresponding crime preventive measures, an in turn, limit the production of the subject. But, as Clark et al. (2021, p. 514) states, the shape and content of a document can reveal the reality of the organisation. Meaning that it is still relevant and interesting to use and analyse. But it should be made clear

that there are some differences among the documents regarding their detail and development which can affect the details of the findings, as some municipalities offer more extensive problematisations.

The three government communications used in this thesis are national strategies that face similar challenges and are meant to be read and understood together (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 5). The policy document that will be used as the primary source of material out of the three government communications is the strategy against organised criminality (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67). The other two policy documents will be used as a supplement to the first document where they overlap and become relevant. The second government communication is the strategy against criminal networks (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68), and the third is the national strategy against violent extremism and terrorism (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:56).

4.2.1 Selection of material

By using the documents of the situational picture, plan of action and the interoperability arrangements, one is allowed to follow the different steps of crime prevention work in the municipalities. From the start of the mapping process, to the end where the plan of action has been produced, and the collaboration and goals among the local authorities is settled in the interoperability arrangements. This makes the selected material analytically relevant in line with the chosen method, as the method will focus on the construction of problems by tracing them backwards from the solutions and initiatives that the policy documents present. The different documents are produced by the municipalities and for the municipalities making it useful to understand the local context and the municipalities' implementation of the new law on municipalities' responsibility of crime prevention (SFS 2023:196). In its turn, the chosen material proves to be highly relevant for the stated research questions.

The chosen material is also relevant from another perspective, which is the perspective of time. Since the law (SFS 2023:196) was implemented in 2023, this makes the material new and not outdated. The situational pictures from all four municipalities are based upon the data from 2023 and the documents were published between 2024 to 2026. Therefore, the data within the documents reflect current issues. New situational pictures and plans of actions from the municipalities are expected to be published later this year, according to 6 § (ibid.).

The government communications follow the same logic. They are the newest and most relevant strategies for understanding the national criminal policy concerning organised

criminality, as all three government communications were published in the first quarter of 2024. Since the situational pictures, plans of action and interoperability arrangements were published in the following years, 2024 to 2026, they are expected to have taken the three government communications into consideration when producing the local policy, which connects the selected material.

4.2.2 Finding material

The majority of the material was found on the websites of the respective municipalities, with a few exceptions. To find the situational picture and plan of action from Kristianstad municipality, it was necessary to contact the municipality to specifically ask for the documents. The documents were sent over email within a few days. There was a short version of the plan of action for Helsingborg municipality available online, but to require the entirety of the document, contact with the municipality was necessary. The document was sent over email within a few days. Lastly, to find the plan of action and interoperability arrangements from Malmö it was necessary to contact the municipality. The documents were sent over through email within a few days. The government communications were all found on the website of the Swedish government.

4.3 What's the Problem Represented to Be?

To analyse the policy documents, the 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (WPR) approach was used. WPR is a critical approach developed by Carol Bacchi, in order to analyse problem representations in policies (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 15). WPR challenges the common view that the government solves problems through implementing policies, instead WPR contends that governments produce 'problems' (ibid, p. 16). This also entails the municipalities, as they are governing through their own production of policies. The WPR approach suggests that when governments and municipalities produce problems, they are constructing a problem to be a particular problem that requires fixing (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). Through the policymaking, governments and municipalities carry power that affects and shape people's conceptions of themselves and of the world around them (ibid, p. 38). Meaning that the WPR approach considers power as something productive, instead of power being possessed. Therefore, the effects of power should be studied, over who possesses the power (ibid.).

The goals with WPR approach are to identify, reconstruct and interrogate problematisations by asking six questions to critically analyse the chosen policy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 2 & 21). It starts by examining the recommended interventions in the policy, and then working

backwards (Bacchi, 2009, p. 79). By doing that, the WPR approach makes the politics involved in the policy making visible (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 16). When the politics behind the policy is made visible, one can understand how the problem is thought about, how the people involved are treated and how the people involved are constructed to think about themselves (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). This makes the WPR approach a suitable choice of method for analysing policy documents, because it will aid in the critical analysis of the policies to interrogate how problems are shaped, the production of subjects within the problematisations, and the effects of the problem representations.

4.3.1 Definition of 'policy' according to WPR

The term 'policy' within the WPR approach is in line with the general comprehension of policy being a program of a course of action (Bacchi, 2009, p. ix). It extends beyond legislation and laws to include general societal administration (ibid.). Policy entails practices of political institutions, groups and agencies of professionals, experts and researchers and the knowledge they rely on (Bacchi, 2025, p. 1), and is a product of the historical, national or international context it is created in, making it a cultural product (Bacchi, 2009, p. ix). Policy is also understood as the 'doings' of government (Bacchi, 2025, p. 2), and governing aims to shape behaviours through the implementation of policy (ibid, p. 15).

With this definition as a base, policy is understood as a program of a course of action that has a problem that needs fixing. It can include laws, legislations and societal administrations, and is created and practiced by political institutions, groups and agencies of professionals, experts and researchers, that aims to shape behaviours. As political institutions, the state and the municipalities present problems that require fixing in the government communications, the situational pictures, plans of action, and interoperability arrangements. In line with Bacchi's definition of policy, the selected material is considered policy documents that aims to shape the behaviour of the subjects of the documents.

4.3.2 The definition and usage of problematisation

In line with the theoretical concept of governmentality, that refers to how governmental power can shape behaviours, knowledges and norms (Foucault, 2002, p. 220), problematisations are a governing mechanism that refer to how specific issues are thought about as problems (Bacchi, 2009, p. 30). The WPR approach challenges the notion that governments don't address existing problems, but they produce them. Therefore, the WPR approach considers how governing practices produces problems by framing them as problems (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 16 & 18). For a policy to exist, there needs to be an existing 'problem' that

the policy aims to fix (Bacchi, 2009, p. 31), that is identified and produced by governmental practices. Additionally, problematisation refers to an interrogation of the framed problems in policies (ibid, p. 30). It is a critical interrogation of policies and how problems are conceptualised, as they are filled with assumptions (Bacchi, 2015, p. 9). As the new law on crime preventive work transfers responsibility from the government to the municipalities (SFS 2023:196), the municipalities are creating their own problems and problematisations as governing mechanisms.

Problematisations are ways of thinking and a framing process to understand how particular issues are thought about (Bacchi, 2009, p. 30-31). By having a critical stance towards governmental practices, the WPR approach uses the concept of problematisation to make politics visible in existing policies (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 18). By critically assessing policies that propose a solution to a problem, one can uncover the underlying thought processes that indicate what the government think of as a problem. Problematisation will be used in this thesis as used as a way of thinking and to critically interrogate the framed problems.

4.3.3 The six questions of ‘What’s the Problem Represented to Be?’

The WPR approach consists of six questions that are to be applied to identify, reconstruct and interrogate problematisations in a policy analysis (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 21).

- Question 1. *What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?* The first question aims to identify and clarify the problem representations (Bacchi, 2009, p. 4).
- Question 2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?* The second question aims to identify and analyse the presuppositions and assumptions that underpin the problem representations. The presuppositions and assumptions refer to the embedded ‘knowledge’ that must be in place for the problem representations to be coherent (ibid, p. 5).
- Question 3. *How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?* The third questions aim to highlight the particular conditions that has allowed the problem representation to be formed. The focus for this question is to look at the processes that has made the problem representation came to be (ibid, p. 11).
- Question 4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?* The fourth question aims to reflect and consider the issues and perspectives that are silenced in the problem representation. The question highlights what is not problematised in the

problem representations. Where are the silences in the problem representation? (ibid, p. 13).

- Question 5. *What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?* The fifth question aims to identify the effects of the problem representations so they can in their turn be critically assessed. There are three different effects to be considered: discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects. The discursive effects highlight the effects of how the problem representation can affect how things are thought about or talked about. The subjectification effects focus on how subjects that are made available in policies, can affect a person's sense making of the world and therefore affect how we feel about others and ourselves. The lived effects are referring to the material impact the problem representations has directly on people's lives. (ibid, p. 15-17).
- Question 6. *How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended?* The sixth question aims to highlight the means through which the problem representations became dominant and emphasise the possibility of opposing problem representations that can be harmful (ibid, p. 19).

When analysing the material, the six questions, and the WPR approach as a whole, has worked as a guide to critically analyse the policy documents. The WPR approach have worked as a tool to analyse the material, and to help grasping what is interesting to critically analyse and what to focus on when analysing and interrogating the policy documents and framing the problem representations. The six questions have partially guided the structure of chapter five and six, concerning the results and analysis, along with the discussion chapter. The results and analysis chapter focuses primarily on questions one through three, and question six, while the discussion chapter focuses primarily on question four and five. Although, the application of the questions is not strict, something that the WPR approach makes possible (Bacchi, 2025, p. 24). Like previously mentioned, it rather worked as tool to analyse the material, and only partially to structure chapter five and six.

4.4 Scope and limitations

The scope of this study is crime prevention on a local level within the four biggest municipalities according to population size, in Skåne. Meaning that it is limited to a geographical area and municipalities that are of the larger size and is excluding the other smaller municipalities in Skåne. For a master thesis, this selection of material provides a data saturation, as mentioned in section 4.1. For a bigger project with more time, this scope of four

municipalities could expand, but with the current time and word limitations, four municipalities make up the scope.

The material is limited to policy documents produced by and for the municipalities and their crime prevention work within their geographic area, as is the government communications. The limitation of the material is in line with the stated research questions, as the selected material is connected to the law on municipalities' responsibility of crime prevention (SFS 2023:196). The material is also limited by time, as it needs to have been produced after the law was implemented in 2023. Meaning that all material produced before 2023 is excluded from the material selection, because of its irrelevance to the stated research questions. The last limitation deals with the crime preventive measures. Both the government communications and situational pictures, plans of action and interoperability arrangements from the municipalities are not meant to deal with every aspect of crime prevention (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 7; Malmö stad, 2026b, p. 3). Which limits the exploration of the crime preventive measures, to the measures they present in their policy documents.

There is also a limitation of how detailed the problematisations of the national and local policy documents can be. Due to word and time limitations, only the most prominent problematisations and subject productions are addressed along with the most prominent similarities and differences between the national and local policy documents.

4.5 Ethical considerations

As the material for this study only consists of official policy documents, that are either available online for everyone to read or can be easily acquired through contact with the municipalities, the ethical considerations are brief. The material used for this thesis does not directly involve any people, and therefore the requirement of information, consent, confidentiality and usability are not relevant to consider (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). There are no participants in the study that can be harmed, made uncomfortable or have their privacy and integrity intruded.

4.6 Reflexivity

In line with the WPR approach, self-reflexivity is deemed important and could be seen as a final step. When analysing a policy, one is immersed in their own conceptual logics depending on their cultural context and their era of time. It makes self-reflexivity important to make sure that one is critical of their own position (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). At the same time, the reflexive position claims that knowledge is a reflection on the researcher's position in time and social

space, meaning that the researcher is a part of the construction of knowledge (Clark et al, 2021, p. 367). The researcher is part of the construction of knowledge through the perspective they adopt, the decisions they make, and further, how they represent these decision (ibid, p. 368). The values, preferences and inclinations of the researcher can influence many parts of the research process (ibid, p. 33).

With my involvement in the knowledge production in mind, and the importance of self-reflexivity, it becomes important to reflect upon my own critical position and how it could have influenced the choice of research area, choice of method, formulation of research questions, interpretations of data, as well as the choice of theory (ibid, p. 33-34). I reject the idea of being impartial and neutral, as my own position as a researcher is part of the construction of the knowledge that this thesis presents (ibid, p. 367). Everyone has biases and preconceptions, and for a more just study, it is important to acknowledge this and reflect upon it and admit that I possess a critical stance that have influenced parts of the research process (ibid, p. 33). Especially regarding the focus of the thesis, concerning the production of subjects in the problematisations, but also the choice of theory in regard to critical race theory.

5. Results and analysis

This chapter will consist of a combination of a presentation of the results, and an analysis of the results. The results will focus on how organised criminality is problematised in the policy documents, and what subjects these problematisations produce. The analysis will use the theoretical concept of governmentality by Foucault to analyse how the national and local policy documents interact and govern the population. At the same time, the critical race theory will be applied, with the connected process of creating the ‘other’. Throughout the chapter, Bacchi’s WPR approach will also be used to deepen the analysis. The first part of the chapter will focus on the national level, followed by the local level of the municipalities. Those two sections will present the more general findings, while the third and last part of the chapter will be focused on how the national and local problematisations exist in relation to each other, by looking at the central similarities and differences.

5.1 The national problematisation and subjectification

The governmentalist strategy of reducing the role of the state (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4), is connected to the responsibilisation of crime prevention to local communities. The reduction of the role of the state and the legislation of the responsibilities of the municipalities to contribute to the national crime prevention work (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 29), suggests that the

prevention of organised criminality cannot be performed exclusively on a national level. Rather, it indicates that the problem of organised criminality can partially be solved on a local level, through the municipalities and the collaboration between local authorities. The shift in responsibility from the state to the municipalities, transforms the municipality and the local authorities into politically responsible actors (Rose, 2009, p. 22 & 284), that are meant to govern themselves and the inhabitants of the municipality. By making the municipalities into politically responsible actors that is supposed to contribute to the national crime prevention work, the state releases parts of their responsibilities.

Organised criminality threatens Sweden. Criminal networks and the criminality they perform has become one of the biggest problems of our time. By extension it threatens the foundational values, such as democracy, rule of law and trust between people and between citizens and the state. (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3. Translated)

The national policy documents produce organised criminality, and unsafety as our time biggest problem as it is understood as a serious threat (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 1). They produce organised criminality as a problem that exists in the entire country, and is a tangible problem on a national, regional and local level, that threatens the welfare systems, the economy, civil society and the Swedish population (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3). The problem representation of organised criminality as a serious threat has been formed mainly through the visible escalated deadly violence that is connected to organised criminality. Deadly violence with guns has increased heavily in Sweden since 2010, and in 2022, there was a prominent increase in deaths caused by guns, and in 2023 the number of explosions reached its peak (ibid.). In connection with the problematisation of organised criminality as a threat against safety, the crime preventive measures of the government communications are presented not just as crime preventive but also measures taken to ensure safety in society (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:56).

There is no single action that can alone counteract and fight all parts of organised criminality. The threat of organised criminality is of different character [...]. The criminality comprises for example, murder, illegal drug trade, gun trade, human trafficking, acquisitive offences, welfare crime, fraud and other economic and financial criminality. (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 4. Translated)

Organised criminality gets produced as multi-criminal and multifaceted, as it stretches across different types of crime (ibid). The multifaceted understanding of organised criminality is visible in the national strategy for fighting organised criminality, as it presents five strategic goals that focuses on the different aspects of organised criminality (ibid, p. 7). They are the following: stopping criminal careers, limiting the access of weapons and explosive, diminishing the criminal economy, building robustness against unauthorised influence and strengthening the administration of identities and information supply (ibid.). Bacchi and Goodwin (2025, p. 16) argue that when policy documents present certain problems that require fixing, they are instead producing the problems. Meaning, that when the national policy documents present the five strategic goals that are connected to certain problems, they are in turn, producing them as problems. In this case, they are producing organised criminality as multifaceted.

Further, the national strategies problematise organised criminality as a country wide problem, but a problem mainly located in vulnerable areas (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 5). They characterise the vulnerable areas as areas with low socioeconomic status, extensive criminality, high unemployment rates, parallel social structures and a large population of people with a foreign background (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 13). The national strategy refers to the vulnerable areas as being “outside the control of the state”, due to the parallel social structures (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3), which produces the people living in the areas as the ‘others’ (Williams, 2015, p. 21). The parallel social structures in the vulnerable areas provides a local social order that offers an alternative system for economy and justice, but also a system of norms that differs from the norms in the rest of society (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 5).

As the national policy documents problematises the vulnerable areas, subjects are being produced through the problematisations. By characterising vulnerable areas as areas with high populations of people with foreign backgrounds (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 13), groups of people with a foreign background in the vulnerable areas are being produced as subjects that are connected to organised criminality. Along with the subjectification of immigrants, the criminal youth is also produced as subjects within the vulnerable areas, through the crime preventive measures that is focused on preventing the recruitment of youths into criminal networks in the vulnerable areas (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 8). Given the production of the criminal immigrant in the vulnerable areas, one might argue that the additional focus on the criminal youth in the vulnerable areas would suggest that the focus is

on the criminal immigrant youth in the vulnerable areas. There are also a subjectification and criminalisation of immigrants and people with a foreign background, that is not connected to the vulnerable areas. This is deepened through the national policy documents.

The past years extensive migration in combination with lacking integration has contributed to Sweden facing great challenges with alienation and criminality today. (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12. Translated). Another way to strengthen the protection of society is to introduce the possibility to deport members of criminal networks without Swedish citizenship, even if they have not been convicted of a crime. (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 13. Translated). [...] the police received expanded authority in areas close to borders, which provides more opportunities to perform controls of foreigners and to prevent or discover crime through body visitations and searches of vehicles. (ibid, p. 16. Translated)

By presenting extensive migration to be a cause for criminality, and by presenting deportation of non-convicted members of criminal networks without Swedish citizenship as a preventive measure, and providing the police with authority to conduct control of foreigners (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 13 & 16), the national policy documents strengthens the subjectification of foreigners as criminals. This is a part of the process of producing the criminal 'other', which has racial implications (Williams, 2015, p. 19). The production of immigrants as the criminal 'other' in the policy documents reveals signs of racial inequalities, where the state wants to implement forms of control over specific groups and individuals, and in this case non-white immigrants and foreigners. The framing of extensive migration as cause for criminality (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12), becomes a justification for implementing more controls of immigrants to deny and recall residence permits (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12). In these instances, the racial discrimination becomes clear, despite the colourblind ideology (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022, p. 255).

The policy documents create assumptions about where organised criminality exists, and who the criminal is. These assumptions that make up the problematisations of organised criminality are acting as governing mechanisms that produce subjects, and in turn can cause the subjects to think and act according to the knowledge production of the policy. For example, connecting the vulnerable areas and the high levels of immigrants in these areas to organised criminality and social exclusion (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12) can

produce the subject of immigrants and foreigners as criminals and the ‘other’. This governmentalist strategy is a way of defining and monitoring specific groups of people that are deemed to require intervention (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4). At the same time, it is part of a subjectification process where the national policy documents are producing certain subjects as the criminal other (Williams, 2015, p. 19).

5.2 The local problematisation and subjectification

Governmentality highlights the power that is exercised by institutions, procedures and discourses, and produces knowledge (Foucault, 2002, p. 219-220). Municipalities, as a form of government, are therefore producers of knowledge, just as the state. With the legislation of the responsibilities of the municipalities to contribute to the national crime prevention work (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 29), the municipalities have become politically responsible actors (Rose, 2009, p. 22 & 284). As politically responsible actors, the municipalities have the power to produce knowledge through their policy documents, their problematisations and their production of subjects. This corresponds to the idea of power not being confined to the state (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4). At the same time, it suggests that governing and shaping the behaviour of a population in a specific way, has become decentralised from the state, as municipalities has become producers of knowledge.

The municipalities problematise organised criminality in a very similar way. First of all, all four municipalities understand organised criminality to be a serious problem by the threat it poses. Malmö states that “Organised criminality constitutes a great threat against democracy” (Malmö stad, 2026b, p. 6. Translated), as Helsingborg states “That is how organised criminality works. It uses and lives off existing legal structures that is everywhere” (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 5. Translated). The seriousness of organised criminality is tied to the problematisation of organised criminality to be multifaceted and multi-criminal (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 29, 49, 61 & 66; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 9; Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 34; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 34), as it can “in different ways affect people and society” (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 34. Translated). The municipalities’ problematisations of organised criminality as multifaceted and stretching across crimes is both palpable through their definitions of organised criminality, but also through the crime preventive measures they present to prevent organised criminality. For example, Malmö presents four sub-crimes of organised criminality that they are actively working to prevent: unauthorised influence, shootings and explosions, economic crimes, and false payments (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 34-39). Similarly, Helsingborg applies different kinds of local

collaborations within the municipality to prevent, for example, recruitment of youths, welfare crimes, and fraud (Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 6). The problematisation of organised criminality as multifaceted, with its variation of crime preventive measures in the municipalities, produces organised criminality as a great threat due to its multifaceted character and that it can hide in legal structures everywhere (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 5; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 34).

Second of all, all four municipalities make the connection between organised criminality and vulnerable areas, and areas with weak socioeconomic status, but with some variation (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 79; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 17; Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 33; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 17). Malmö, Helsingborg and Kristianstad all have vulnerable areas that has been classified as vulnerable by the police, while Lund only have areas that are deemed socioeconomically weak. But a commonality is that organised criminality is more prominent in these areas (ibid.). Both Malmö and Helsingborg point out that in these areas, there are parallel social structures where another set of norms are used, and criminals have power of the local community (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 92; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 17).

Through Lund's crime preventive measures, they are problematising organised criminality in the socioeconomically weak areas to be a social problem with gaps between social classes, where they want allocate resources to areas with weak socioeconomic opportunities, especially in order to prevent youths from entering a criminal lifestyle (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 33). Meanwhile, Kristianstad views organised criminality in the vulnerable areas to be a problem of safety, where their crime preventive measures are mainly situational in order to ensure safety in the area where criminal networks are prominent (Kristianstads kommun, 2025, p. 4; Kristianstads kommun, 2026c, p. 5-8). Even if Malmö connects organised criminality to vulnerable areas, their crime preventive measures are not focused on organised criminality in the vulnerable areas. Malmö claims that due to the normalisation process and the tough situation in the areas, it becomes hard for the police to do their job and prevent crime (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 17). Rather, they focus on the economic aspects organised criminality (Malmö stad, 2026b, p. 5), framing crimes that generate financial gains for the criminal networks to be more important than focusing on initiatives specifically for the vulnerable areas. In Helsingborg, the issues within the vulnerable areas are varied, but they are especially tied to narcotics and recruitment of youths (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 7). This becomes clear in their plan of action where they focus on collaboration with the police against narcotics, and collaboration with schools to offer support to youths that are at risk of entering

criminality (Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 6 & 8). This frames their problematisation, where the problem in the vulnerable areas is tied to the criminal youth and narcotics.

Furthermore, another commonality between the municipalities' understanding of organised criminality in relation to areas with weak socioeconomic status, is the subjectification of immigrants. Helsingborg and Kristianstad explicitly characterise their vulnerable areas as areas with high rates of people with an immigrant of foreign background (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 78; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 16-17). Meanwhile, Lund makes an indirect connection between their socioeconomically weak areas and the immigrant background.

“At the same time, the risk of ending up in criminality is higher among the people living with worse socioeconomic conditions [...] In Lund there are groups that are at higher risk of ending up in socioeconomic vulnerability, such as foreign-born people [...]” (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 7. Translated).

Malmö is the noticeable difference, where they don't mention ethnicity in relation to their vulnerable areas or the parallel social structures in these areas, even if their municipality is the most diverse municipality out of the four, where about one third of Malmö's residents is born in another country (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 7). In contrast, Helsingborg's definition of parallel social structures has racial implications through otherification. “Usually the term is used to discuss the relations between the traditions or social structures of the minorities and the rules and institutions of the majority” (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 92. Translated).

Additionally, another focus in the municipalities is the prevention of youths being recruited into organised criminality. In Lund and Helsingborg, they are allocating resources to vulnerable areas where youths are at bigger risk of entering organised criminality (Lund kommun, 2024, p. 33 & 38; Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 8). In Helsingborg and Kristianstad, they are applying the national strategies, by collaborating with the school, police and social services (Kristianstad kommun, 2025, p. 3). According to the WPR approach, the crime preventive measures that the municipalities suggest, shape how the problem of organised criminality is thought about (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). Meaning that the crime preventive measures that are meant to prevent the recruitment of youths, specifically in the vulnerable areas, produces the subject of the criminal youth in the vulnerable areas.

The empirical material shows how different terms are being used to focus and steer the crime prevention work. Specifically, vulnerable areas and socioeconomically weak areas with parallel social structures. These terms might appear neutral, but through the connection of

these areas with their high population of immigrants and foreigners (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 78; Kristianstad kommun, 2024, p. 15-17), they are producing certain immigrants and foreigners as subjects that are in need of control and supervision (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4). The connection between vulnerable areas, areas with weak socioeconomic conditions, parallel social structures and people with an immigrant background, produces the marginalised groups in these areas as outsiders, and further, they are being produced as the 'other' (Williams, 2015, p. 19). In Helsingborg they directly frame criminals as living outside the established welfare state (Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 6). The production of the immigrants in the vulnerable areas as the other, suggests that these terms have subtle racial implications, and that the terms are not neutral (ibid, p. 21). It is not directly stated that people involved in organised criminality are strictly immigrants or foreigners, but the connection that Helsingborg, Lund and Kristianstad makes between organised criminality in socioeconomically weak areas and their high population of immigrants (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 78; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 16-17; Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 7), suggests subtle racist notions that can be discriminating and operate through the policy documents in the three municipalities (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 7).

5.3 The relation between the national and local problematisation and subjectification of organised criminality

Bacchi and Goodwin (2025, p. 16 & 18) emphasizes that problems are produced by governments. The national strategies are policies that problematise organised criminality and produces it as a problem with certain characteristics, that in turn produces subjects. By producing national strategies with problem representations of organised criminality and then presenting crime preventive strategies that correspond to the problem representations, the state governs the municipalities at a distance (Dean, 2010, p. 48). The problematisations and subjectifications in the national policies are governing mechanisms that are meant to shape the behaviour of groups or individuals (ibid.), and in this case, the municipalities. This aligns with the government bill for the law on the responsibility of the municipalities, which states that the law should ensure that the municipalities contribute to the national crime prevention work, by taking over certain responsibilities (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 29).

The idea that national problematisations govern the local problematisations corresponds to what the results are showing. There are many similarities between the problematisations of organised criminality on a local and national level. Firstly, on both a national and local level, organised criminality gets produced as a prominent problem in society (Helsingborg stad,

2024a, p. 5; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 9; Malmö, 2026, p. 6; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3). It is problematised as a great threat against democracy, safety, the rule of law and trust. This is because of the problematisation of organised criminality being multi-criminal and multifaceted, where the complexity of organised crime that stretches across different types of crimes get emphasised (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 29, 49, 61 & 66; Kristianstads kommun, 2024, p. 9; Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 34; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 34; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 4). As Bacchi (2009, p. 79) traces problems backwards from the proposed interventions in the policy documents, one could understand and clarify this problematisation of organised criminality as multifaceted. With five national strategic goals presented in the national policy (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 7), that covers different crimes that could all be related back to organised criminality, the varied solutions in turn produce organised criminality as multifaceted, as it can attack and threaten society on different levels.

Secondly, just like in the four municipalities, organised crime on a national level is understood to be more palpable in vulnerable areas and areas with low socioeconomic status (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24: p. 5). They emphasize how organised criminality can thrive in an area with low socioeconomic status, and in these areas, there are established parallel social structures. The national understanding of parallel social structures in the vulnerable areas where criminal networks are present, is the following:

Criminal actors can have extensive influence in these areas. [...] By extension, parallel social structures imply a society within a society that obey their own norms and rules, outside the control of the state. Parallel social structures in Sweden therefore risks undermining the democratic social order. (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 5- 6. Translated)

Meanwhile, Helsingborg claim that the term is usually used to discuss “the relations between the traditions or social structures of the minorities and the rules and institutions of the majority” (Helsingborg, 2024a, p. 92. Translated). Through these problematisations, it is understood that these areas live outside the control of the state, and that they are considered to exist outside the rest of the society, separate from the majority.

Thirdly, another notable similarity between the national and local problematisation of organised criminality, is the direct and indirect racialisation of crime. On a local level in Malmö and Lund, it is more subtle. Malmö’s problematisations of organised criminality do

not make the direct connection between ethnicity and criminality in the vulnerable areas. It is through the racial implications of the othering process (Williams, 2015, p. 19) of the marginalised groups in the vulnerable areas that suggests that Malmö is not being neutral when referring to the vulnerable areas and parallel social structures. Lund makes the indirect connection between weak socioeconomic areas and ending up in organised criminality, and the higher risk for foreigners to live in weak socioeconomic areas (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 7). In contrast, Helsingborg and Kristianstad make the direct connection between ethnicity and crime, by presenting that in the vulnerable areas where criminal networks are more present, there is a large population of people with a foreign background (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 78; Kristianstad kommun, 2024, p. 15-17). But the national racialisation of organised crime is more noticeable, as extensive migration is presented as a direct cause for crime (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12). This notion contributes to the national problematisation of organised criminality as it becomes racialised, as the policy documents contain assumptions about who the criminal is, and where the organised criminality is located. The national and local problem representation in Helsingborg and Kristianstad frames the immigrant living in the vulnerable areas as the criminal and therefore creates the subject of the criminal immigrant (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 78; Kristianstad kommun, 2024, p. 15-17; Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 13). Meanwhile the local problematisation of the criminal immigrant in Malmö and Lund is more subtle through the othering process and the indirect connection between a foreign background and living in socioeconomically weak areas (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 7; Williams, 2015, p. 19). This reveals the direct and indirect racialisation of crime on both national and local level.

The last prominent similarity between the national and local problematisation of organised criminality is the role of the criminal youth. The policy documents on both levels shows that a part of the understanding of organised criminality is dependent on the recruitment of children, and the criminal youth in the vulnerable areas. This could be traced back from the proposed solutions and initiatives on both the national and local level. One of the five national strategic goals is focused on preventing new recruitment of children and youths, by emphasising “improved collaboration between the police, school, social services, health and medical care and other local actors” (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 9). On a local level, Helsingborg and Kristianstad are focused on the same thing by collaborating with the school, police and social services (Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 8; Kristianstad kommun, 2025, p. 3). While in Lund and Helsingborg they are allocating resources to vulnerable areas where youths are at

bigger risk of entering organised criminality (Lund kommun, 2024, p. 33 & 38; Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 8). The similarities of the social crime preventive measures on a national and local level are significant, with a large focus on preventing youths, especially in vulnerable areas, from entering organised criminality, along with focusing on collaboration between school, police and social services. This focus on initiatives that are supposed to prevent youths from entering organised criminality underbuilds the problem representation, as it produces the problem of the criminal youth as a group that require intervention and monitoring. The overlap between the production of the criminal immigrant and the criminal youth in the vulnerable areas, also suggest that in the vulnerable areas there is a special focus on the immigrant youths.

The similarities between the national and local problematisation of organised criminality, concerning the connection to vulnerable areas, the multi-criminal character and the threat against the Swedish democracy, suggests that the national problematisation and discourse, affects and gets reflected in the local problematisation. Which in turn, reveals that the national problematisation of organised criminality works as a governing mechanism, that governs the local problematisations of organised criminality. The knowledge that the state produces through their policy documents contributes to creating societal norms that in turn governs the municipalities and the population from a distance (Dean, 2010, p. 48). Further, it reveals that the national production of organised criminality as a prominent problem in Sweden gets reflected in the municipalities policy documents, even as the power of governing gets decentralised from the state.

Although, it should be noted that despite the dominant similarities between the national and local problematisations and production of subjects, there are some differences between the crime preventive measures. The national crime preventive measures are more extensive and covers more aspects of organised criminality with the five national strategic goals (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 6-7). While the local crime preventive measures are narrower and focuses on certain aspects of organised criminality that is more prominent within their geographical area. For example, Helsingborg focuses more on the economic aspects of crime and therefore implements control functions to prevent economic crimes (Helsingborg stad, 2024b, p. 6). Among the municipalities, there are also differences. Where Kristianstad focuses more on situational crime preventive measures to ensure safety in the vulnerable areas (Kristianstads kommun, 2025, p. 4), Lund problematises organised criminality in the vulnerable areas as a social problem.

“Research clearly shows that children who grow up with circumstances that entail weak economy, low employment rates, lacking parenting skills, and/or school related problems run a higher risk of developing a norm breaking behaviour and ending up in criminality. Against that background it becomes important for resources to be diverted towards areas in Lund where the inhabitants have worse socioeconomically conditions than the average” (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 33. Translated).

The sixth question of Bacchi’s WPR approach highlights how the problem representation gets produced, dominant and defended (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). The similarities between the problematisation of organised criminality on a national level and the local level, indicates that the knowledge production in the municipalities gets defended by the state and the national knowledge production. Meaning that the knowledge that the municipalities create through their policies correspond to the national knowledge production, and the societal norms the national policies create in order to shape the behaviour of the population. This proposes that even if crime prevention has become a bigger responsibility for the municipalities, the national knowledge production still influences the local knowledge production and steers it into a certain direction. Which showcases the governing power that the state has over the municipalities from a distance (Dean, 2010, p. 48). At the same time, it shows that the municipalities are an extension of the state’s reach of power over the local communities and authorities. So, even if governing has become decentralised from the state, the problematisation of organised criminality on the national level, contributes to the problematisations on a local level.

The governmentalist strategies in the policy documents on both the national and local level, are resting on the principle of being neutral, and not partial (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4). This goes hand in hand with the premise of CRT concerning the colourblind ideology (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022, p. 255). CRT argues that the premise of colour-blindness hides racial inequalities. Despite the colourblind ideology (ibid.), and the governmentalist principle of being neutral (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 4), there are signs that some terms that are used in the political discourse when discussing the causes and the subjects of organised criminality, have deeper meanings that reveal racial discrimination. The national and local framing of organised criminality is closely tied to vulnerable areas, areas with weak socioeconomic conditions and parallel social structures. Through the characterisation of these areas as areas with large populations of people with a foreign background (Regeringens skrivelse

2023/24:68, p. 13), and the othering process, these terms are produced to have racial implications. Meaning that when the national and local policy documents connect vulnerable areas, areas with weak socioeconomic conditions and parallel social structures with immigrants, foreigners, minorities and the 'other', they are creating racist discourse that is discriminating when they are using these terms to problematise organised criminality. As CRT implies, racism can operate through routines and assumptions and therefore be more fluid (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 5 & 7), which becomes the case in the policy documents.

Although, it is important to note that the municipalities' production of the criminal immigrant as subjects is more subtle and hidden, compared to the national level. While the national strategies are outright claiming that the extensive migration and lack of integration have contributed to criminality (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12), the municipalities are only producing the criminal immigrant as a subject through the connection to vulnerable and socioeconomically weak areas, where there is a higher population of immigrants. This could imply, in line with the theoretical framework of CRT, a hidden process within the municipalities, of subtle racial discrimination that is controlling and exclusionary, while disguised as neutral and colourblind (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5). There is also the possibility that the racial discrimination in the policy documents is an unconscious doing. As Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2019, p. 5) mentions, the idea of white people being superior can be an unconscious idea, and therefore, unconscious racial discrimination can unknowingly become a part of everyday activities.

The assumptions and subjectification that are produced and defended through the national and local policy documents, applies to the claim of CRT, that racism is a part of our everyday activities (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 7). It is integrated into our beliefs and policies, and can operate through the assumptions of the policies (ibid.). Using the terms with racist implications, is a way of constructing racism in political discourse and steering local authorities in a certain way to act against certain groups. The racist notions can be more subtle and hidden or more direct, as they operate through the assumptions in the policy documents (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 7). In line with Bacchi and Goodwin (2025, p. 16 & 18), this suggests that the racist notions and assumptions in the policy documents are being produced by the government, which corresponds to the premise of CRT that race and racism is socially constructed and can be manipulated (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 9). At the same time, the racial discrimination and racist notions in the policy documents, shows that racial

discourse cannot be neutral and objective (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022, p. 256). It also complies with the CRT critique of the colourblind ideology. The racist notions show that the proclaimed colour-blindness works as a veil in attempt to hide systemic racism in the policy documents (ibid, p. 255).

6. Discussion

Organised criminality in Sweden is being framed as a serious threat against democracy, the rule of law and trust between people and the state (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 3). To counter the serious threat, fighting organised criminality was issued as a central national initiative (BRÅ, 2025, p. 74). With the new law on municipalities' responsibility on crime preventive work, the aim was to strengthen the national criminal political goals (SFS 2023:196). The responsabilisation of crime prevention in Sweden has resulted in the amplification of the role of the municipalities. The findings show that despite the decentralisation of crime prevention, there are many similarities between the national and local problematisations of organised criminality, and the produced subjects within these problematisations. This entails the production of organised criminality as multi-criminal, a threat against society, the connection to vulnerable areas and the production of the criminal immigrant and criminal youth. This chapter of the thesis will entail a discussion of the results, followed by a discussion of the effects and implications of the results, and it will be positioned within the existing literature from the literature review.

6.1 Discussion of the results

The results have established that there are many similarities between the national and local problematisations of organised criminality. The shared characteristics of the problematisations of organised criminality is the multi-criminal character, the threat against society, and the connection to vulnerable areas. Through these problematisations, the productions of the subjects are also similar, referring to the criminal immigrants and the criminal youth. That there are many similarities between the national and local problematisations and subjectifications of organised criminality, even with its many different ideas of what make up the definition (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 429), is not unexpected. The analysis with the theoretical framework of governmentality points out that the problematisation in the national policy documents have governing power over the municipalities' own problematisations of organised criminality (Dean, 2010, p. 48). In a similar manner, Bacchi (2009, p. 1) mentions that policymaking exercises power. In this case, this means that national policy documents

exercise power over the municipalities, in order to shape their problematisations and their production of the subjects.

This aligns with the existing research, which claims that local communities tend to use similar guidelines as they adapt national criminal policies (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013, p. 102; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 294; Persson, 2013, p. 8; Saraiva et al, 2016, p. 183). At the same time, it ties back to the purposes of the law on the responsibilities of the municipalities, where the municipalities are meant to contribute to the joint national crime prevention work (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 13). By legislating that the municipalities should contribute to the Swedish society's collective crime preventive work (SFS 2023:196), the problematisations of the municipalities are from the start already embedded within a broader national political discourse, through the national policy documents. This showcases that the national criminal policies work as governing mechanisms that steers the local guidelines in certain directions, and it explains why the problematisations and productions of subjects are very similar on a national and local level. At the same time, the tendency among local communities to use similar guidelines (Ceccato & Dolmen, 2013, p. 102; Lidskog & Persson, 2012, p. 294; Persson, 2013, p. 8; Saraiva et al, 2016, p. 183) shows a contradiction where the government bill emphasizes the importance of adapting to the local context (Prop. 2022/23:43, p. 18). If the municipalities tend to use similar guidelines, the local context consequently becomes neglected. Although, the tendency to use similar guidelines aligns with another angle of the law on municipalities responsibility, where the legislation encourages the municipalities to contribute to the national crime preventive work (SFS 2023:196),

The similarities between the national and local understanding of organised criminality concerning the threat it poses against society, and the fear it causes, is an example of how the national policy steers the municipalities. The narrative and discourse of fear of crime is produced and reproduced in a political context by political actors, as well as through attention in media (Korsell & Larsson, 2010, p. 429; Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 836). More often than not, the fear is unwarranted, such is the case in Malmö, where people feel unsafe, even though the risk of being a victim of crime is decreasing (Malmö stad, 2023, p. 1). But the fear of crime allows political actors to exploit the fear that organised criminality creates (Sahlin Lilja, 2024, p. 833 & 836). By being a part of the knowledge production, political actors create beliefs of what organised criminality is. This aligns with the theoretical framework of governmentality, where governments exercise power that shape knowledge (Foucault, 2002, p. 220).

In this case, political actors produce knowledge about organised criminality's widespread existence in society, and then use it to meet the public demand to create a safer Sweden. By employing various kinds of crime preventive measures that can all be tied back to preventing organised criminality, the multifaceted character allows political actors to show political viability (Flyghed, 2007, p. 65). They are producing and reproducing the knowledge about organised criminality and the fear of crime discourse, in order to exploit it for political gains (Tham, 2019, p. 11 & 13). For example, all of the municipalities presented safety as a goal in their interoperability arrangements (Helsingborg stad, 2023, p. 1; Kristianstads kommun, 2025, p. 1; Lunds kommun, 2024b, p.1; Malmö stad, 2023, p.1). By having 'safety' as a goal, the municipalities can apply a variety of crime preventive measures and still be perceived as determined and proactive. Striving towards preventing fear of crime, by ensuring safety, can be criticised. Sahlin Lilja (2024, p. 841-842) argues that fear of crime is a problem that cannot be solved, as Persson (2013, p. 11) argues that attempts to solve the problem, can instead feed the problem and cause people to feel more unsafe. Meanwhile, Di Ronco (2016, p. 147) states that if policy does not address fear of crime and unsafety, it can cause a loss of faith in the rule of law and the police, which can be just as harmful as crime itself.

When the problem of organised criminality gets produced in the national and local policy documents, they are creating assumptions and presuppositions about organised criminality (Bacchi, 2015, p. 9). The findings established that vulnerable areas, socioeconomically weak areas and parallel social structures have been connected to organised criminality, and that the terms are in turn connected to ethnic minorities and non-white immigrants, which existing literature supports (Nejadi & Saunders, 2025, p. 3-4; Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). At the same time, the analysis brought up that the terms can have racist implications through the definitions in the policy documents (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019, p. 7), and the othering process (Williams, 2015, p. 19). But, if the situational pictures of the municipalities shows that there is more organised criminality in vulnerable and socioeconomically weak areas, where it happens to live more immigrants, it could be questioned if that really does imply that the policy documents are causing racial discrimination by focusing on crime preventive measures in the areas where organised criminality is more palpable.

From a conflict perspective, Schclarek Mulinari (2017, p. 13) argues that the state upholds differences between ethnicities through the criminalisation of subordinate groups. In turn, this means that the focus on certain areas, with big populations of ethnic minorities, is a way to uphold this difference, and through subtle discrimination or over policing, it creates borders

between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The environment, or the area, that generates more crime, therefore legitimates the control and surveillance of the people living there, and is presented as necessary and justified (ibid.). Compared to the understanding of policing in certain areas as a cost-efficient way to administer their resources (ibid, p. 12), the focus is rather on how policing creates a ‘us’ versus ‘them’. This aligns with CRT and othering process, where policing institutionalises oppression and racial discrimination and produce the ‘others’ as a threat that needs to be regulated and controlled (Williams, 2015, p. 19 & 21)

It is these kinds of subtle and hidden processes of racial discrimination that CRT wants to reveal (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 4). With the colourblind ideology Sweden has (Schütze & Osanami Törngren, 2022, p. 639), the policy documents can’t openly be racially discriminating, which implies that they must stay hidden (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022, p. 255). Pointing out race or ethnicity within policy documents would be problematic and contradictory. Instead, they can use immigration and the focus on certain areas with large populations of foreigners in order to hide the systemic racism in their policy documents (Gotanda, 2000, p. 35). By placing focus on vulnerable areas and immigration, that might appear to be colour-blind terms, they are concealing the racist implications of the problematisations, where the non-white immigrants are the ones that are blamed for the responsibility for crime (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951). Schclarek Mulinari (2025, p. 21) argues that the spatialisation of crime were transferred to the racialised working-class neighbourhoods in the mid-2010s. These areas became connected to organised criminality, immigration, parallel structures and the label ‘vulnerable’ (ibid.). This supports the analytical point that the terms vulnerable area, socioeconomically weak areas, and parallel social structures have racist implications. It is also supported by CRT, that emphasizes that the colourblind ideology hides racism, instead of eliminating it (Gotanda, 2000, p. 35).

The existing literature supports the idea of racial discrimination in Sweden that affects the production of Swedish criminal policy. With the rise of right-wing parties in the Swedish political arena, the production of the criminal has changed. A commonality between the existing literature is that there is a perception that there has been a shift to where crime has become racialised (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 961; Grander, Roelofs & Salonen, 2022, p. 245; Lowe, 2025 p. 2). An anti-immigrant rhetoric has emerged in national policy where immigrants are perceived to be the cause of crime, due to extensive migration and lack of integration (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p. 12). When the responsibility of crime is transferred to the non-white immigrants, the results is a Swedish criminal policy that focuses

more on segregated racialised working-class neighbourhoods (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951 & 953), and especially the criminal youth in these areas (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 8). These neighbourhoods are then over-policed through surveillance and high police presence (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). Sweden produces the idea of the criminal other as an immigrant and uses them as a scapegoat when implementing crime preventive measures. The alignment between the existing literature, the critical race theory and the concept of the 'other', corresponds to the findings and analysis that found that the national and local policy documents contain racial discrimination and oppression. Consequently, this means that the national policy documents that produce political discourse with racist notions about who the criminal is, can influence the municipalities and steer them in the same direction.

Additionally, the results revealed that there are differences between the national and local crime preventive measures. The national crime preventive measures proceed from five strategic goals that are guiding the national crime preventive work against organised criminality (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 6), where the local crime preventive measures don't always correspond to the national strategic goals. With Bacchi's WPR approach, that traces problems from the solutions (Bacchi, 2009, p. 79), this indicates that there are differences in the problematisations. Lund's problematisation of organised criminality showed that they understand organised criminality as a social problem that require social solutions. This difference could be explained by the fact that they don't consider organised criminality to be an urgent problem in their municipality, but rather a future problem (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 34). While, in the other three municipalities, organised criminality is problematised as a serious and urgent threat that cannot be solved with just social solutions but requires situational crime preventive measures to ensure safety and control (Ceccato, Jorge & Gliori, 2024, p. 5).

Lund's problematisations could be understood in relation to their demographical history, where Lund have had good socioeconomic conditions with good health, high education levels, and low unemployment rates (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 23). Kristianstad's problematisation of organised criminality as a safety problem differs from the other municipalities, which can be understood through their political position. Kristianstad is the only municipality out of the four that has The Moderate Party as the ruling political party (Kristianstads kommun, 2026a). The national policy documents were produced with the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson being the political leader of The Moderate Party, and in these national strategies, safety is produced as the biggest concern of our time (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:68, p.

1). Even if safety is a concern of the other three municipalities, Kristianstad stands out, as this specific national problematisation gets reflected in Kristianstad's own problematisation.

The differences among the municipalities, as well as the differences among the national and local level, can be explained through the decentralisation and responsabilisation of crime preventive work. The responsibility of the municipalities concerning crime preventive work has become prescribed by law and are obligated to contribute to the national crime prevention work (SFS 2023:196). At the same time, the decentralisation of crime prevention work has provided the municipalities with freedom to adapt the national crime prevention work to their local context, depending on their situational picture. This indicates that even if the national policy has proved to influence the municipalities and steer them in certain directions, the responsabilisation shift have given municipalities freedom to govern themselves (Rose, 2009, p. 22 & 284).

6.2 Discussion of the effects and implications of the results

The responsabilisation of crime preventive work, can have discursive effects where crime prevention will be thought about as the sole responsibility of the municipalities. In consequence, this can turn into a lived effect, where the structural problems and causes of crime on a national and international level can be ignored and silenced (Dahlstedt, 2019, p. 101; Persson, 2013, p. 14). Existing literature are conflicted, where some authors claim that crime is a localised problem (Chiodi, 2016, p. 145; Davey & Wootton, 2016, p. 162; Di Ronco, 2016, p. 150; Johansson, 2014, p. 153; Lozic, 2018, p. 129), while others state that the root of crime are national, and therefore, local crime preventive measures are not enough (Ceccato and Dolmen, 2013, p. 94; Dahlstedt, 2019, p. 101; Nejadi, 2025, p. 5; Persson, 2013, p. 14). This provides two perspectives with two lived effects. On one hand, local crime prevention will prove to be an efficient method to prevent crime. On the other hand, the focus on local crime prevention can silence the national and structural causes of crime and therefore ignore a pivotal part of the puzzle and not be an efficient way to prevent crime.

The national and local policy documents are governing mechanisms (Dean, 2010, p. 48) that produce knowledge through the problematisations of organised criminality. In turn, the problematisations are producing subjects. By producing knowledge and problematising organised criminality, the national and local policy documents are also shaping the behaviour of the subjects of the policy (McKinlay & Pezet, 2017, p. 11). Further, they can shape how subjects perceive themselves, perceive others, along with how they think and how they act (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 84). These are the subjectification effects of the policy

documents that Bacchi speaks of (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 16). They can affect a person's sense making of the world and therefore affect how we feel about others and ourselves.

Through the knowledge production and the establishment of societal norms, the subjects become governed from a distance, through self-regulation and self-surveillance (Dean, 2010, p. 48).

The subjectification effects of the racialisation of crime, specifically organised criminality, can have many effects on the lives of the non-white immigrants. The assumptions and racial implications can first of all effect and shape the immigrant's conception of themselves and the world around them (Bacchi, 2009, p. 38). It can affect their sensemaking and the way they perceive themselves as subjects of the national and local knowledge production (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2025, p. 84). The process of producing immigrants as the other, the criminal outsiders, aligns with the CRT critique of how social processes can be discriminatory, exclusionary and racially oppressive (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5). It can also affect how other people perceive non-white immigrants, as they are produced as criminals through policy documents. The knowledge production in the national and local policy documents about who the criminal is, is a governing technique that can cause people to self-govern and govern others with what we accept as true about who we are (Dean, 2010, p. 27). This can be connected to the process of othering, where the process produces the subject of the other (Williams, 2015, p. 21). This process of subjectification gives the other an identity as a threat. In turn, this production of the subject of the criminal other creates lived effects where the immigrants are socially excluded, discriminated and criminalised, which has shaped the Swedish criminal policy, where the segregated neighbourhoods are framed as the cause of crime and social problems (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951 & 953).

The individualised discourse on crime causes the structural terms to be ignored, while the individual and moralist aspects are emphasized (Hermansson, 2018, p. 24). In turn, the subjectification effects can affect the lived effects, where more control of foreigners gets justified in policy documents (Regeringens skrivelse 2023/24:67, p. 16), along with over-policing and surveillance in vulnerable areas with high immigrant population (Schclarek Mulinari, 2025, p. 21). Even with the proclaimed colourblind ideology that Sweden has in their discourse (Schütze & Osanami Törngren, 2022, p. 639), the policy documents are producing the immigrants as the criminal subject, living in the vulnerable areas. On the other hand, the framing the vulnerable areas as problem areas for organised criminality, can also have potential positive lived effects, where more resources can get allocated to the weak

socioeconomic areas, which is the case in Lund (Lunds kommun, 2024a, p. 33). Meaning, that the areas where organised crime is more prominent will get resources to prevent organised criminality.

The problematisation of the vulnerable areas and subjectification of the criminal immigrants, and the lived effects that comes with it, can have their own effects through the silences it creates (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). By focusing on vulnerable areas, other areas where organised criminality might not be as prominent, can become neglected in the crime preventive work. In a similar manner, when focusing on over-policing and surveilling non-white immigrants, the groups of people that does not fit that criteria can become neglected. By focusing on the immigrants as criminals in the policy documents, they are silencing the responsibility of crime for other groups of people (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951). When the problem is no longer considered Swedish (ibid.), the punitive shift becomes visible through the increased positive view of punishment (Hermansson, 2018, p. 42), which is an effect of not considering crime a Swedish problem. The silence in the policy documents, can produce discursive and subjectification effects, where the idea of a criminal becomes directly attached to groups of people that are non-white (Branteryd et al, 2022, p. 951). Meaning that even when the policy documents are actively producing subjects, their neglect of other groups of subjects are in turn reinforcing their production of subjects.

7. Concluding remarks

The aim of this study was to explore the two policy developments in Swedish criminal policy to investigate how they are reflected within the national and local policy documents. The first research question corresponds to the first policy development concerning the decentralisation and responsabilisation of crime preventive work. The study showed that organised criminality gets produced as multi-criminal, a big threat against society, and a problem focused to vulnerable and socioeconomically weak areas. The second research question corresponds to the second policy development, concerning the anti-immigrant rhetoric where immigrants get produced as the cause of crime. The study showed that while the criminal youth gets produced as a subject within the problematisations, it is not all criminal youth, but rather the non-white immigrant youths in the vulnerable areas.

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the problematisation of organised criminality is very similar on a national and local level. As previously mentioned, the similarities entail the production of organised criminality to be multi-criminal, a threat against society, and

organised criminality gets produced as a problem that is primarily located in vulnerable or weak socioeconomic areas. With the similarities in mind, one can conclude that the national problematisations influenced the problematisations of the municipalities, and that they work as a governing mechanism for steering the municipalities and governing them from a distance.

The second conclusion is that the problematisations produced the criminal immigrant as subjects. With the help of critical race theory, one can conclude that the national policy documents showed signs of racial discrimination through the usage and definition of vulnerable areas, weak socioeconomic areas, parallel social structures and their connection to immigrants, but also their outright statements that the extensive migration and lack of integration is a cause of crime. At the same time, one can conclude that the local policy documents had more subtle and hidden racial implications about who they produce as subjects, but they still produced the criminal immigrant as a subject, through the othering process and the usage of terms that had racist implications.

With the new law on the responsibility of municipalities concerning crime prevention work that was established in 2023, this thesis has contributed to understand how the decentralisation of crime preventive work has affected how municipalities problematise organised criminality and what subjects are being produced through the problematisations. By relating national and local policy documents, this thesis has pinpointed the significance of the decentralisation and responsabilisation of crime preventive work, and how the national policy documents interact with and influence the local policy documents. At the same time, the study has contributed to the identification of racist notions and racial discrimination in the national policy documents, and more subtle racist notions in the local policy documents. With the new law that establishes the responsibility of the municipalities, it has become especially important to study how the municipalities are influenced and steered by the national policy, but also to study how they take on the freedom the responsabilisation of crime prevention provides. This study has shown to be highly relevant to sociology of law, because it has shown how the law works in practice, when the municipalities have taken on more responsibility. Along with how the national and local policy has contributed to the production of subjects which have shown to have discursive, subjectification, and lived effects for the produced subjects.

Even so, there are limitations of what this study can conclude. The law is from 2023, making it relatively new. The situational pictures, plans of action and interoperability arrangements that the municipalities have produced and are used for this study, are the first and only of its kind. Meaning that even if the policy documents are timely relevant, they are also limiting and

restricting, as conclusions can only be made about the present situation. For future research this could mean that one could study future policy documents produced by the state and municipalities. This study used the first round of policy documents, but future studies could study the second or third round and compare how the problematisation and production of subjects of organised criminality has or has not changed with time. It could offer richer material where the development and changes of the policy documents could be studied. At the same time, the early production of the municipalities' policy documents could have impacted the varying detail and development among the policy documents as previously mentioned. Therefore, it becomes beneficial again for future research to study the second or third round of policy documents, to study how the documents might have developed in time.

Further, the study had geographical limitations where four municipalities in southern Sweden were studied. The geographical limitations restrict the generalisability of the results, as regional context can influence the results. Malmö and Helsingborg mention that their geographical location of being close to the continent through harbours and bridges, can make them vulnerable for smuggling and criminals hiding in legal structures (Helsingborg stad, 2024a, p. 5; Malmö stad, 2025, p. 34). Which proves that the problematisations of organised criminality might be different if municipalities in northern Sweden were studied instead. Future research could build on this and extend the geographical selection of municipalities. Either by selecting municipalities in other specific parts of Sweden, or by comparing municipalities across Sweden to study how the problematisations might differ.

Similarly, the selection of municipalities offers limitations. The four biggest municipalities in Skåne were chosen, but it could also restrict the findings of the study as organised criminality might be problematised differently in smaller municipalities. Future research could therefore alter the selection of municipalities to strictly include smaller municipalities or compare bigger and smaller municipalities to explore if there are any similarities and differences between the configuration of problematisations and production of subjects. In addition, one could alter the selection of municipalities, and base it upon the political rule in the municipality. Future research could therefore entail the study of how the problematisation and subjectification can be affected by the ruling political party.

Additionally, by having governmentality and CRT as theoretical frameworks, this study has taken a certain direction and the relevant findings that have been analysed have aligned with the chosen theoretical frameworks. By choosing different theoretical frameworks that focuses on other aspects of organised criminality, the findings and analysis could have looked

different, because the focus for the study would have shifted. For future research, a last suggestion would be to adapt a different theoretical framework to produce a study with a different focus. The results showed that within the problematisations, certain groups were produced as criminals. Future research could therefore, for example, adapt the theoretical framework of stigmatisation to look into the social processes that causes this and explore the effects of stigmatisation in depth.

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