Renewal and Retraditionalisation
– the Short and Not Very Glorious History of the Danish Bachelor’s Degree in Policing

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ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the prehistory and short existence of the Danish bachelor’s degree programme in policing. I argue that both the development and the implementation of the programme were characterised by a systematic decoupling of the educational reform from the strategic objectives that it was supposed to accomplish. This explains the programme’s early demise in the politically tense situation that arose in the fall of 2015. However, since the study programme was originally intended as the concluding element in the 2007 police reform, I also argue that the recent restructuring of police training is part of a more general reorientation of Danish policing away from the objectives of the 2007 reform.1,2

Keywords
Police training, Danish Bachelor’s Degree in Policing, Police reform, Recent history of the Danish police

One of the stated goals of the major reform of Danish Police that took place in 2007 was to create a more analytically based and more technically savvy police force, capable of fighting international and organised crime. This, it was claimed, required a better educated police force, which was why the last and in some sense concluding element in the reform was the

1. Disclaimer: I played a central role in the development and implementation of the Danish bachelor’s degree programme in policing. This means that I have had unique access to documents, meetings and persons involved in this process, and to a large extent this paper may be said to be based on field observations as a supplement to the various quoted documentary sources. However, it also means that my objectivity may be limited by the personal role that I played in the events. I hope to have avoided this danger by drawing extensively on institutional theory and giving explanations in terms of institutional processes and developments rather than in terms of personal agents, their actions and their merit (or lack of it).
2. I would like to thank the anonymous referee and two of my former colleagues from the Danish National Police College, who preferred to remain anonymous, for their helpful suggestions and comments to an earlier draft of this paper.
creation of a new bachelor’s degree in policing, providing Danish police with better trained
officers equipped to handle future and more complex police tasks.

Or so the official story ran. In this paper, I shall show that central actors often gave other
and sometimes conflicting grounds for supporting and justifying the need for the new
bachelor’s degree. More specifically, I shall draw on New Institutionalism in organisational
theory in order to show that the educational reform was systematically decoupled from its
alleged strategic goals, which made possible a series of reinterpretations of the reform that
recoupled it to new and previously unrelated goals. This meant that Danish police, in some
sense, never knew why the degree programme was created and what it was supposed to
accomplish. This in turn meant that the educational reform was the weakest link in the
2007 reform and therefore also the first to give way, after the objectives of Danish policing
changed in the wake of the terrorist attack in 2015. It also means that the new and much
shortened police education created in 2015 and again in 2016 can be seen as a symptom of
an ongoing and profound change in the methods, goals and rationalities in support of Dan-
ish policing. If the bachelor’s degree was the last element of the 2007 reform, the new police
training programme may well be the harbinger of a coming reorientation of policing.

THE DANISH POLICE REFORM

The first steps in what should become a major reform of the Danish police education were
taken in 2002. That year a working group was established at the Danish National Police
College and asked to draft a list of suggestions for improving the Police Basic Education
(Politiets grunduddannelse), i.e. the internal training programme, which was mandatory for
new recruits upon employment as police officers. The working group came up with a num-
ber of suggestions for improvements, including raising the length and academic level of the
schooling period of the programme (which also included a substantial element of on-the-
job training), so it would be comparable to other medium length programmes such as
nursing or teaching.

It was however only with the police reform that the need for a new police education rose
to a more prominent place on the political agenda (on the Danish police reform, see Balvig,
Holmberg & Nielsen, 2011; Røn, 2007). The overall goals and structure of the Danish
police reform were originally drafted by the so-called Vision Committee (Visionsudvalget),
which published its report on the future of policing in 2005. The Vision Committee also
commissioned a number of reports, delivered by the consultancy firm KPMG, including a
report that specifically addressed the future educational needs of the police. The Commit-
tee itself had a quite broad representation, including a majority of members from outside
the Danish Police and the Ministry of Justice, perhaps signalling a political will to produce
real change in Danish policing (Visionsudvalget 2005a, p.27; Stevnsborg, 2016). This may
in part explain that policy makers followed the recommendations of the Vision Committee
quite closely in the final version of police reform, which lay near the Committee’s vision.

The police reform was not only a compromise between competing vision of future
policing, but actually contained several internal contradictions, pulling the police in fund-
damentally opposed directions. This is first and foremost true if we look at the political
goals that the reform was supposed to accomplish. In addition to the many words about
new and knowledge-based policing, there is also another ‘voice’, as it were, focusing on economic efficiency and the delivery of what in Danish is known as core tasks (kerneopgaver), that is to say, the (alleged) core task of a specific public organisation in distinction to the many other functions that the organisation may have. In the case of the police, the core tasks were, in the eyes of the Vision Committee, safety (tryghed), security, and peace and order (Visionsudvalget, 2005a, p. 15). And according to the Committee, the reform would allow the police to deliver its core tasks more efficiently and therefore also more cheaply. The visions for a new and improved style of policing was thus accompanied by an efficiency agenda. After the reform, policing would become not just better, but also cheaper (Visionsudvalget, 2005b, p.145).

In addition, there was a quite widespread expectation that the reform would also strengthen traditional policing, in particular patrol. In its answer to the official hearing concerning the police reform in January 2006, the Police Union (Politiforbundet) noted that ‘patrolling (beredskab) is one of the most important core areas of the police and probably the area in which the improvements resulting from the reform will first be measurable. Patrolling is probably also the area that draws most public attention and where the success of the reform will be measured’ (Politiforbundet, 2009, p.18). In other words, the police union turned patrolling into a central issue in the reform, stressing in particular the need for many patrolling police officers, in stark contrast to the Vision Committee’s wish to raise quality through new (i.e. non-patrol) methods of policing. However, the police union had to give up its attempt to reach an agreement with the National Police (Rigspolitiet) on a fixed minimum number of patrolling police officers, and in the official description of the future police districts, it is simply noted that the number of patrolling police offers has to meet ‘certain demands’, without specifying what these demands were. In the final legislation, it is stated that patrolling needs to be modernised and made more efficient. In fact, the reform proposal was based on, as it should later become clear, very optimistic assessments of the gains in efficiency produced by the reform – KPMG had calculated that the reform would lead to increased efficiency amounting to ‘at least’ 860 additional police officers ‘on the street’ (Visionsudvalget, 2005b, p. 150). This particular number was later to gain a special significance as a symbol of the reform’s failure and unkept promises, since the final reform led to a strong decrease in available police resources.

THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM

As for police training, the Committee points out that future policing will probably be more complex and therefore require a higher level of competence in the Danish police (Vision Committee, 2005, p. 172). Furthermore, the Committee notes that the police will need more specialists, and for the same reason much future policing will be done in interdisciplinary teams, which again means that police officers and management must have the necessary competences to participate in and lead such interdisciplinary teams; in describing future policing, the Vision Committee thus combines interdisciplinary teams with the notion of competences (Stevnsborg 2016, p. 418). Moreover, surveys confirm that police employees themselves would like more opportunities for professional specialisation (Vision Committee, 2005, p. 180). In other words, there is a need for a general improve-
ment and lifting of the academic levels of police training, both when it comes to basic training and later training for specialist and management positions. (Vision Committee, 2005, p. 204. The passage in question is incidentally in the last section on the very last page of the report; the recommendations concerning police training are thus quite literally the last and concluding words of the Committee on the future of policing).

Moreover, the Committee also pointed out that an educational reform would make it easier for the police to recruit talented and skilled officers in the future, because young people increasingly expect and demand a work-life characterised by open and flexible career paths. The then existing internal police training could turn policing into a ‘dead end’, which would be unattractive to young people, because it would be difficult to combine a career in policing with later employment outside the police. Integrating police training in the open educational system therefore also serves the purpose of creating possible career paths outside the police (Vision Committee, 2005, p. 178–9). The Committee furthermore held that ‘harmonising police training with the external educational system’ was a prerequisite for the necessary increase in competences, just as formal accreditation of the police educations would render transfer of educational merit possible, which would in turn contribute to greater consistency and coherence between basic training and later specialist and management training (Vision Committee, 2005, p. 178). Finally, the Committee noted that a strengthened ‘external’ perspective on policing would be a good thing and added that the Norwegian model with bachelor’s and master’s degrees could serve as a source of inspiration.

In short, KPMG and the Vision Committee envisioned quite a large-scale and comprehensive reform of police training. In addition to the overall and very ambitious goals of a higher academic level and a tighter integration with the external educational system, KPMG also recommends the establishment of a police research centre, which would be responsible for developing professional standards and new methods of policing. Furthermore, KPMG suggests a fundamental reorganisation of the National Police College in order to establish a police academy, that is an independent educational and research institution like the Norwegian Politihøgskole. At the same time, the consultants also entertain high hopes, bordering on confidence, that a new police education can serve as an agent of change and as a carrier of new methods and thinking in policing. In particular, KPMG notes that a new professional bachelor’s degree study programme will lead to a meeting between different police cultures, as the police role ‘adjusts’ away from traditional patrolling and social peacekeeping towards a more knowledge-based type of policing (KPMG 2014, p. 167). KPMG thus explicitly links the new police study programme with a historical break with traditional models of policing in favour of new ideas on how policing ought to be done. Historians have later characterised the thinking behind the police reform as a shift from an ‘industrial’ to a ‘project-based’ mode of work, adding that the educational reform was supposed to train the new flexible workforce required by the new ‘project police’ (Christensen, 2012). (Note however that the subsequent development seems to show that an ‘industrial’ way of organising police work may have a longer future than Christensen anticipated).

In April 2006, the National Police established a project organisation, tasking it with establishing a solid foundation for deciding and planning a comprehensive educational reform. The project organisation was subdivided into three working groups, which in 2007
submitted a report on a reform of police training (Rigspolitiet, 2007). The report recommended the establishment of a professional bachelor’s degree programme (professionsbacheloruddannelse) in policing, and in the autumn of 2007, the implementation of the educational reform commenced (Politiforbundet 2009, p. 31; Stevnsborg, 2011, 2016).

Historically, this was a period in which a major reorganisation of educational systems throughout Europe took place in connection with the so-called Bologna process. In Denmark, many medium length study programmes, such as nursing and teaching, were reformed and turned into professional bachelor’s degree programmes, situated at newly founded university colleges. Many other European countries had chosen also to submit police training to formal accreditation within the so-called European Qualification Framework, which lay the foundation for the Bologna process and the integration of the educational systems in the various EU member states (cf. The European Higher Education Area, 2005). Furthermore, the competences that the Vision Committee claimed would be important for policing in the future did seem to require qualifications at the bachelor level as described in the qualification framework (Rigspolitiet, 2007; see also Jonasson & Lauritsen, 2008). In short, given the ambition of improving the quality and academic standard of police training, there were many reasons to choose a professional bachelor’s degree as the formal framework for the new police education.

The final decision was made in 2008 and a number of work groups began the more detailed planning of the new programme. The last element in the police reform was about to become reality. Or so police leadership thought.

GATTOPARDO CHANGE AND FAILED ACCREDITATION

Given the expectation that the new bachelor’s degree programme in policing would train officers that could function as agents of change and carriers of new policing methods, it is clear that the National Police College needed to produce real change and improvement in academic quality. Moreover, integration with the external educational system and the formal requirement for accreditation put the Police College under strong pressure to change both the content of the study programme and its didactic principles. This is particularly true of the so-called Danish Qualification Framework (Den danske kvalifikationsramme, the Danish national version of the European Qualification Framework). With its strict division between various academic levels and its equally strict division between different types of qualifications (knowledge, skills, and competences), it rendered necessary a complete redesign of police training. It is indeed quite difficult to ‘translate’ a large part of traditional police training into the language of qualifications and competences. For instance, much of the training at the Police College was what in Danish is known as ‘maintenance training’ (vedligeholdelsestræning), that is, training that aims at maintaining skills in for instance shooting or martial arts that the students have already acquired, but which will slowly degenerate if not maintained and routinised. In other words, such training does not, strictly speaking, teach the students anything new, and is therefore hard to legitimise within a qualification framework based on the premise that students at a particular level must acquire new qualifications that build on those previously acquired. The Police College was also forced to change the balance between school periods and on-the-job training.
(praktik), since it was a formal requirement for accreditation that the latter did not exceed one year (60 ECTS) in total length.

When the first detailed and quite visionary draft of the new study programme was finished, it therefore amounted to a complete transformation and remake of the former police training programme (Jonasson & Lauritsen, 2008). The new study programme should be based on fundamentally different didactics and pedagogical thinking, namely problem-based learning, which had proven its merits in other police training programmes throughout the world, and which had a unique capacity for combining theoretical or academic education with practical training. Furthermore, policing should be seen in a much broader context, encompassing perspectives from academic disciplines such as Sociology and Psychology. The expert group also suggested that the programme's length should be increased from 3 to 3 ½ years. (Jonasson & Lauritsen, 2008, p. 10).

At the same time, more conservative voices defended a traditional notion of policing in relation to the new study programme. This is in particular true of the police union (Politiforbundet). A priori, raising the academic level of the study programme had its merit from a union perspective, since it would be an asset in future collective bargaining about wages and working conditions, if police officers were on the same educational level as nurses and teachers. However, when it came to the changes in the content and structure of the study programme and the notions of policing that served as the foundation of the programme, the union was much more cautious, and probably internally divided. In the written report presented to the union's congress in May 2009, the union noted that the National Police agrees with the union that the existing study programme is not only good, but 'even very good', and that it is important to maintain that policing is a craft (Politiforbundet, 2009, p. 31), the latter notion probably serving to underline that policing is not a science that can be taught in an academic manner. Moreover, it was important to the union that the police should still be able to recruit police officers without a high school diploma (which is normally a requirement for admission to a bachelor's degree study programme), just as it underlines that the new study programme should and does not lead to a distinction between 'A' and 'B' police officers, in spite of the fact that future officers will have a higher education and level of competences. Finally, the so-called ‘generalist model’ should be maintained, i.e. the notion (and organisational practice) that a police officer is, and should be trained as, a generalist rather than a specialist, and that all police officers therefore can, in principle, perform the same job functions. By contrast, the police union apparently did not see professionalisation of policing as a way of increasing police officers' autonomy and occupational control of their work, although professionalisation as a strategy has often been used for that purpose by other occupational groups (Evetts, 2003).

All of this is in clear contrast to the Vision Committee and its claims that police officers needed training on a higher academic level, and that the police should employ more highly skilled specialists in addition to police officers. Note in particular that the 'generalist model' can be used as an argument why only police officers should perform various job functions in the police organisations, even functions that would be a specialist function in other organisations – if a police officer could perform the function (and since they are generalists, they can perform any function), no one else should, even if (more) qualified. However, the union also notes that it has to accept that current legislation does not allow the police to grant the exist-
ing study programme a bachelor’s degree status (Politiforbundet, 2009, p. 31–2). Somewhat reluctantly, the union thus has to accept at least some changes. It may also be worth noting that the police union was not alone in its sceptical attitude towards the new professional bachelor’s degree programmes; criticisms of the unnecessary and even harmful ‘academisation’ of ‘crafts’ such as nursing were widespread in the public debate at the time.

The National Police and, especially, the Police College were thus caught between conflicting and irreconcilable expectations. On the one hand, there was a pressure to produce real change in both the study programme and the Police College as an institution, as this was necessary for both formal accreditation and for the implementation of the ‘vision’ behind the police reform. On the other hand, powerful forces resisted changes, in particular those that challenged traditional conceptions of policing. This resulted in what may be termed a Gattopardo change after the famous line in Lampedusa’s novel The Leopard: ‘everything needs to change, so everything can stay the same’. The main elements in the expert group’s draft were accepted, although with the notable exception of the length of the study programme, which was maintained at 3 years. But at the same time, police leadership was very cautious in changing anything substantial in the functioning of the Police College and the actual teaching that it delivered. The College did not recruit new academically educated teachers, and only an insubstantial number of police officers teaching at the College were offered further education themselves, thereby making it less likely that they would be able to teach future students at a higher academic level and according to new didactic principles. Moreover, the guiding assumption seems to have been that the actual content of the study programme did not need to change, even though the overall structure of the study programme was about to do so: The name of the class may change, but the teacher’s slide show can and should remain the same. In other words, police leadership took the educational reform as being merely a question of changing names and legitimating discourse, rather than content and organisational culture. The Police may have been willing to accept a new study programme, but not to reform the Police College. The only problem was that it was not up to either the National Police, or the Ministry of Justice, to decide whether that kind of change would be enough.

In 2009, the National Police applied to the Accreditation Council (Akkrediteringsrådet) for formal accreditation of both the new study programme and of the Police College as an educational institution at bachelor’s degree level. The study programme itself was accredited (ACE Denmark – Akkrediteringsinstitutionen, 2010a; EVA, 2010a). However, the Police College itself was denied accreditation with reference to the College’s low academic standard, in particular the lack of teachers with a higher education (ACE Denmark – Akkrediteringsinstitutionen, 2010b; EVA, 2010b). If Danish police had formerly inhabited a world where it was an accepted truth that the police study programme was not only good, but ‘even very good’, the official verdict, rendered by Danish authorities, was now that the standard of the Police College was too low. The defeat was complete; adding to the humiliation was the fact that in 2011 the Danish Defence acquired a positive accreditation of its newly minted bachelor’s degree programmes for future officers.3

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3. The bachelor’s degree programmes for military officers were however only short-lived and were closed in 2013, foreshadowing perhaps later development in policing.
REACTIONS TO THE POLICE REFORM

In 2008, the national newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* ran a series of stories about police failures in the wake of the police reform (Stevnsborg, 2016). Many of the stories were about crime victims, including victims of violent crimes, who had not received the help they needed from the police, even when calling them in distressful situations. As the number of stories increased, the situation called for immediate political action. Then Minister of Justice, Lene Espersen, initiated an official investigation, which confirmed that the police had failed to provide help and protection to crime victims in a number of cases (Stevnsborg, 2016; Politiforbundet, 2009).

This in turn created an urgent political need to demonstrate the will to take the public’s concerns seriously, do what was needed, and make the police reform work. One particular key performance indicator, namely *response time* (i.e. the time lapse from the police receive a call until they are present at a crime scene), came to play a central role in proving political will and renewed police efficiency. There were probably several explanations for this. First, measurements of response time were easy to communicate and relatively easy to understand in comparison with many other possible indicators of police efficiency and effectiveness. Second, response time spoke directly to popular and recognizable images and conceptions of police work, namely those associated with patrolling and ‘blue light’ (on the importance of images for policing, see Mawby, 2012). Third, it seemed, at least to Danish politicians, journalists and a large part of the public, to be a well-defined and reasonable measure of police efficiency and perhaps also of the quality of police work. Fourth, this particular indicator was imminently suited to address the public concern raised by stories about citizens not getting the help they needed when they needed it. Finally, we may speculate that central political actors saw it as an advantage that improvements in response time could be used as evidence that things were improving and that the reform gradually started to work as intended.

The problem was, however, that implicit in this particular measurement of police work lies a valorisation of traditional reactive policing. The notion that the core task of the police is to respond quickly when a crime is committed is obviously based on an image of police work as reactive in nature. This image is, however, difficult to reconcile with the ambition, prominent in the police reform documents, of creating a more knowledge-based and analytical police force, aiming at being more proactive and better at preventing crime problems before they occur. In other words, Danish police got caught in a clash between an institutional structure and a series of major development projects that aimed to transform the police in a more proactive direction and then a massive political pressure to produce measurable results within a very traditional (‘industrial’) understanding of police work, as measured in an equally mechanical and industrial manner. The Police Union’s prophesy had come true: The overall success of the police reform was measured by the police’s success in patrol and reactive policing, and not by its success in developing and using the new proactive methods of policing, which the reform was supposed to facilitate (Politiforbundet, 2009; cf. also above).

In contrast, there was no attempt to address the more fundamental issues that may have caused the problems. Degnegaard argues that the problems were due to a conflict between the police organisation with its specific culture characterised by a high degree of social cap-
ital and the change management technologies, which were used in implementing the reform, and which were tied to other organisational contexts (Degnegaard, 2010). To this may be added that most police organisations are inherently conservative, so major changes take time and only gradually come to be accepted by members of the organisation. This is particularly true of change in the methods and goals of policing, which is why attempts at such change often end up being merely cosmetic, adding new technologies and changing discourse and ways of legitimisation, but without changing the nature of policing and its fundamental ‘rhythm’ or ‘music’ (Manning, 2008; cf. also Gundhus, 2009, 2013). Moreover, in the case of the Danish police reform, the inherent conservatism in the police organisation was reinforced by the public and political backlash, which was also conservative in its quite traditional conception of police work.

Neither would it be the last time that the new vision of policing behind the police reform would prove to be out of step with both public expectations and the nation’s political leadership (Balvig, Holmberg & Nielsen, 2009, 2011). Somebody forgot, so to speak, to align public expectations with the police reform. Thus, a recurring theme in recent years has been a clash between analytic and intelligence-led policing methods and a public which expects the police to react to and investigate their individual case. Moreover, this seems to be a problem not only for Danish police, but also more generally (see for instance Loveday, 2016 on the clash between public expectations and the use of intelligence-led policing methods by the British authorities in combating cyber fraud).

This contradiction was moreover important for the educational reform. The intention behind the educational reform was to improve the quality of policing by training a police force that had the necessary knowledge and academic skills to work in a proactive and knowledge-based manner, whereas the attempt to create a police force that reacted quickly was much less central to the reform. The new study programme was thus not even fully drafted before the criteria for what counted as good policing began to change. In other words, the political response to the public backlash against the police reform led to a relapse into traditional notions of policing that were difficult to combine with the new knowledge-based policing, which the new programme was intended to teach students. The criteria of success for the new study programme were already changing even before the paint on the building was dry.

In this situation, the failed accreditation could very well have spelled the end of the Danish bachelor’s degree programme in policing. The fledging new programme was however about to find new and powerful friends.

STATE OF EXCEPTION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE

Among stories of police failures, the reform also created a massive economic problem for the Danish police. In spite of KPMG’s promises of huge gains in efficiency, it soon became clear that the police needed substantial new resources, if the reform was ever to be successful (Stevnsborg, 2016, p. 480). During 2008, it furthermore became evident that the budgetary control mechanisms of the police were failing and that the organisation was unable to manage its own economy. This resulted in a series of additional funding packages, including in particular an economic aid plan in the fall of 2008, encompassing addi-
tional funding of 651 million Danish crowns allocated as part of the state budget for 2009 (Stevnsborg, 2016, p. 480). However, the extra funding came with an unconditional demand that the police re-establish control of their own economy. To further underline the point, the National Chief of Police (Rigspolitichefen) was replaced. Note also that this took place in the aftermath of the financial crisis, where economic austerity was the order of the day.

Moreover, the police were subjected to a budgetary review by an external committee supported by the consultancy firm McKinsey (Udvalget for en budgetanalyse af politiet 2009–2010, 2010). In reality, it would however not be an exaggeration to say that the police came under the administration of the Ministry of Finance. When political leaders agreed on a new settlement on policing (politiforlig) in 2010, the lack of trust in the police was further underlined by the fact that the settlement only covered a period of one year instead of the usual four-year period (Stevnsborg, 2016). It therefore became the number one top priority of the National Police and the Ministry of Justice to demonstrate their ability to control the police’s finances, in order to avoid even tighter control and regain some of the autonomy lost to the Ministry of Finance.

For our purposes, it was particularly important that police training was one of the elements contained in McKinsey’s budget review. This meant that the educational reform became inextricably linked to a new political logic, which no longer had anything to do with future police competences, but with the need to manage the finances of the police and find budgetary savings.

It is hard to imagine a clearer illustration of the so-called Garbage Can theory of decision-making, according to which decisions are made, not because they are strictly rational or necessary, but because a predefined solution suddenly becomes attractive or possible in virtue of a more or less coincidental conjunction of a set of problems and the interests of various agents. Solutions are not found to pre-existing and well-defined problems; predefined solutions are used, when the occasion or opportunity arises. There is therefore only a loose coupling between problems, solutions, opportunities, and decision makers (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972; March & Olsen 1979; cf. also Kingdon, 2013).

Even though the solution (the bachelor’s degree) remained the same, the problem that it was supposed to solve changed: The ‘point’ of the bachelor’s degree was no longer to address future needs for highly-skilled police officers and to guarantee that the police should be capable of recruiting talents; the ‘point’ was rather that the new programme was cheaper and economically more efficient than the old. In short, there was a shift in the legitimating discourse used to explain why the bachelor’s degree was necessary from a vision of future policing to present economic need. Speaking in consultancy-terms, we may perhaps say that McKinsey took KPMG’s work and used it for its own purposes.

More precisely, the Budget Review Committee suggested increasing the size of the classes at the Police College, just as the number of lessons per week delivered by the teachers at the College should be increased to the average standard of other professional university colleges. Furthermore, the 28-week long emergency response training (beredskabsuddannelse) that police recruits had to complete after their training at the Police College, should be shortened and integrated in the basic police training programme. Finally, the Committee suggested that police recruits should no longer be paid during schooling peri-
ods, but offered student grants (SU) as other students (Udvalget for en budgetanalyse af politiet 2009–2010, 2010, p. 117).

In principle, these suggestions had nothing to do with the content of the new bachelor’s degree programme, and they could just as well have been implemented in the former, internal police training programme. In practice, however, the budget review became inextricably linked to the new study programme, because McKinsey had used the somewhat unfinished draft plans for the programme as the foundation for their analysis of the economic consequences not only of the programme itself, but also of the various initiatives suggested by the Budget Review Committee. It would later become apparent that these plans were indeed unfinished and needed substantial revisions. Nonetheless, they were now cast in iron as part of the foundation for the future finances of the Danish police.

As a result, the bachelor’s degree study programme was promoted from a relatively unimportant part of the police reform to an essential element in the attempt to regain control of the police’s finances and, perhaps even more importantly, to secure the independence of the Ministry of Justice. This would prove to be decisive when the new police education was denied accreditation. In other times, the police may have chosen to back-paddle on the commitment to a new bachelor’s degree education and may have settled for a slightly updated version of the internal training programme. This option was however politically impossible in a situation where the bachelor’s degree had become an integral part of the economic reconstruction of Danish police after the massive 2008-deficit. The new study programme had become an inescapable part of the future of Danish policing.

The failed accreditation therefore confirmed what political leaders and many Danish citizens may have suspected – that police management had lost control of the police reform – and furthermore it threatened to undermine the budget review and thus potentially also the attempt to regain control of the police’s finances. For this reason, the failure created what may be termed an organisational singularity, i.e. a point where all the dimensions that an organisation normally uses to orient itself collapse, giving rise to a widespread sense that everything is possible – which will be threatening to some members of the organisation, promising to others. A renewed and successful accreditation attempt thus took on a whole new significance: It was no longer simply a question of adding the last element to the police reform; it was a question of securing a return on the enormous amount of political capital invested in the budgetary review (to use an apt metaphor). The various criteria for accreditation were therefore no longer something that the police tried only reluctantly to fulfil while paying due tribute to the organisation’s inherent conservatism; fulfilling the criteria was now seen as both politically mandatory and as an investment with a strong business case, thus securing both will and resources. Police leadership therefore created a new project-organisation with the task of implementing the recommendation in the budget review, while securing successful accreditation of an updated version of the bachelor’s degree programme. Failure was not an option.

This in effect created an unexpected alliance between McKinsey, with all the political clout of the Ministry of Finance behind it, and the group of persons involved in the educational reform at the Police College. The new study programme became so important that it pushed aside everything that could have prevented or delayed its successful implementation in other organisational and historical settings. In particular, two of the dominant ele-
ments in most police organisations – conservatism and organisational inertia – were suddenly rendered inoperative: It was no longer possible to argue that this or that element in the new education was not necessary, because it was not how things were done in the police. Or perhaps we should not forget that the police are, more than anything, an organisation which is supposed to handle emergencies. And in this particular state of emergency, that particular organisational trait showed itself to be stronger than the conservatism and inertia which would in other situations have prevented change. The state of exception was, as it were, a strong driver of organisational change.

This created a short but very real moment of dreaming and out-of-the-box thinking. The dominant mode of legitimisation was of course economic. But if you could produce a spreadsheet showing that something would save money, anything was possible. Perhaps this is best illustrated with one or two examples. One of the major differences between the Police College and other educational institutions was that the police recruits were employees rather than students. When attending classes, they in principle went to work, which meant that they had the same duties and rights as other state employees. It also meant that the study programme had to be planned as a full-time working-week, which in turn implied that all of their time was spent in classes being taught, whereas they did not spend time studying outside of class; nor was it possible to experiment with more student-engaging study forms such as project-oriented teaching methods. This had to change, since the new study programme was based on problem-based learning, which requires the students to work on their own, following their own ideas while attempting to solve a specific problem. This new study form was however met with considerable scepticism. For the police union, it was important that the police recruits or students had well-regulated work conditions, which in the union’s (industrial) view apparently implied fixed working hours. And police managers sometimes expressed concerns about the possible implications of losing control of what the police students did during their working hours: What would for instance happen if it became public knowledge that police officers spent their time relaxing (‘studying’) at the local café (as other students are wont to do) rather than protecting hardworking and taxpaying citizens? After the budget review, all of these concerns suddenly disappeared, since McKinsey’s analysis was built on the premise that future police students would not spend all of their time in the company of a teacher, but would also spend time preparing for class and engaging in problem-based learning in the company of their fellow students – which was one of the main reasons why the new study programme was considerably cheaper than the old one. As the budget committee notes, ‘the new bachelor’s degree programme in policing is, as other professional bachelor’s degree programmes, constructed around a combination of teaching and student-driven study activities (selvstudier)’ (Udvalget for en budgetanalyse af politiet 2009–2010, 2010, p. 118). And that was the end of it: Police students got time for study activities outside of class. Note, however, that the reason why they got it was no longer didactic, but budgetary. It was not, because the Police College wanted to teach police student to seek out new knowledge and use it for solving problems; it was because it was cheaper than the old, costly and class-centred teaching style.

Another example would be the hiring and full-time employment of teachers with a university degree. The Police College had traditionally been very reluctant to do so, because there were concerns that this would lead to an unwanted ‘academisation’ of police training.
(which apparently would be a bad thing). However, the draft version of the new study programme that served as the basis for McKinsey’s budget review, contained quite a large number of lessons in university subjects such as Sociology or Psychology. Furthermore, it seemed likely that a full-time employment of teachers with a university degree would allow for a more efficient use of their work time than part-time employment, not to mention that full-time employment would make accreditation easier, since the Police College would then be allowed to count them in when calculating the total number of teachers with a master’s degree at its disposal. And that was the end of that story – the Police College started recruiting new university-educated teachers.

Many of these new initiatives could in principle have been taken also without being tied to the implementation and accreditation of a new study programme. In principle, the Police College could have introduced new teaching methods or have hired university trained teachers, while still holding on to the old study programme. But again, that option was never considered, and the implementations of the budgetary review became intrinsically tied to the bachelor’s degree programme.

This explains that the budget review could also be used to justify investments that served to lift the academic standard of the Police College. In particular, a considerable investment was made in raising the educational level of the College’s teachers, since this has been the main explanation for the failed accreditation (EVA 2010b). As the Budget Review Committee notes, the Police College faces a challenge, in relation to the implementation of the professional bachelor’s degree programme, concerning the level of competences among the teachers; the Committee therefore recommends that a part of the saved means should be used for this particular purpose’ (Udvalget for en budgetanalyse af politiet 2009–2010, 2010, p. 126). In other words, there was a strong business case for offering the teachers bachelor’s and later master’s degrees. A substantial amount of money was therefore allocated to that end, including means used to pay the University of Aalborg for developing and accrediting a new master’s programme in policing, which the College’s teachers would attend.

The budget review thus came to function as a battering ram for changes in police training. It created the change, which had previously been impossible, even unthinkable. However, as a consequence, the new study programme came to be seen, in the eyes of many police officers, as being inextricably linked to budgetary cuts in line with other cut-backs, such as the fact that socks were no longer part of the set of state-paid uniform equipment that a police officer was entitled to. This was in particular true of the changed status of police students, who no longer received payment during the school part of their education, but offered student grants; a major defeat for the police union that had fought in vain to maintain the former model. Many police officers suspected that what was true of payment was also true of the study programme itself, and that it was not only an unduly academised, but also a discount education.

DECOUPLING AND RECOUPLING

The coupling of the new study program to the budget review thus had two important consequences. First, the study programme was decoupled from the strategic goals that it was formerly supposed to meet, since it was no longer linked to future educational needs, but
to budgetary needs. The new coupling was however neither direct nor close, as the new economic goals were not directly linked to the content of the programme. That meant more specifically, that there was no longer any political or managerial vision behind the programme's content, nor, as we will see, any will to support it as soon as the economic pressure receded. Second and somewhat paradoxically, it also meant that the implementation of the new programme was no longer up for discussion, because the forces that were put in motion were too strong to withstand for even the most conservative and powerful players in the internal politics of the police organisation. All in all, the new study programme was implemented, not because police leadership had any major visionary reason for doing so, but because there was no way to avoid it. But there was a price to pay: Danish police no longer knew why the new study programme was created.

I shall introduce a theoretical framework in order to analyse this process of decoupling and recoupling. More precisely, I shall draw upon New Institutionalism, in particular DiMaggio and Powell’s theory of Institutional Isomorphism. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991), institutions need not only to be efficient in economic terms or in terms of their official purpose or ‘mission’; they also need to be seen as legitimate, that is, as rational, well-functioning and modern. An organisation achieves legitimacy by arranging itself in a manner which is consistent with universally accepted ideas on effective and efficient organisations. This means that an organisation is under constant pressure from its surroundings to live up to contemporary standards for how modern organisations are supposed to work. A number of rationalised myths are in other words prevalent in the surroundings, i.e. a number of fundamental notions of what an efficient and modern organisation should look like. To a certain extent, the New Institutionalist theory of organisations is therefore a reformulation of the classical Weberian account of a still more comprehensive bureaucratisation of society driven by instrumental rationalisation. Weber’s account is however based on the optimistic premise that there is a close link between means and ends, that is, between the purpose of the institution and its (rationally chosen) organisational structure and working methods. In contrast, rationalised myths are commonly accepted notions of what a rational and efficient institution looks like, which is not necessarily the same thing as an institution that actually is rational and efficient.

According to New Institutionalism, we can therefore not assume the close relationship between ends and means that we find in Weber’s notion of instrumental reason. On the contrary, there is often only a loose coupling between the institutional structure and the purpose that the institution is supposed to have. In particular, it is striking how similar many organisations are, in spite of huge differences in the functions that they are supposed to perform. A priori, we may have expected that institutions that perform different tasks would also be organised differently. But often this is not the case. The central theoretical task is therefore to explain homogeneity rather than variation (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In particular, this homogeneity can be accounted for in terms of isomorphism, that is, institutions often copy other institutions and take over their structure and basic assumptions about rational and efficient organisations, which is why institutions come to resemble each other so much. More precisely, we can distinguish three different types of isomorphism: (a) coercive, where external (political) pressure forces institutions to adopt a certain organisational structure; (b) mimetic, where institutions react to uncertainty by imitating
other organisations; (c) normative, where isomorphism is the result of professionalisation and the transfer of professional standard from one organisational context to another (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Returning to our theme, all three forms of isomorphic processes are present in the history of the Danish bachelor’s degree. This is first and foremost true of mimetic isomorphism. The Danish police is obviously an example of an institution that is under constant pressure to appear legitimate, rather than engaged in a marked competition. It is thus important that the police appear to be a modern and efficient organisation based on rational principles, which creates a strong incentive to imitate the principles that other organisations have successfully used to appear efficient and rational. It is likely that such mimetic pressure played an important part in the police reform in general. This is in particular true of the educational reform, based on the premise that police training should imitate the development in other areas such as nursing and teaching, and become a professional bachelor’s degree programme. Furthermore, the educational reform had a strong element of normative isomorphism, as evident in the attempt to bring the content and didactics of the study programme closer to the standard in the external educational system. There is an element of mimetic isomorphism in this attempt as well. But since many of the persons involved in drafting the new study programme had a master’s degree in didactics and educational studies, the process also contained a substantial element of transfer of professional standards from one area or organisation to another. Such combinations of mimetic and normative isomorphisms are quite typical, and it is rare that an organisation itself describes the development it undergoes in terms of copying or imitation, with the notable exception of benchmarking with ‘best practice’ (Powell 2008). (Note however that both the budget review and the accreditation review did contain explicit benchmarking of the Police College against various ‘best practices’). Finally, coercive isomorphism was also important in the reform process. This is the case on two different levels. First, in the form of the formal criteria for accreditation, and, second, in the form of the massive political pressure that made the bachelor’s degree programme mandatory after the budget review.

The three types of isomorphisms each played the main part in a specific stage in the bachelor’s degree programme’s short history. Originally, the programme was tied to a vision of future policing. During this initial stage, the process was driven by a combination of normative isomorphism, in the sense of an import of professional didactic standards, and mimetic isomorphism, in the sense of an ambition to bring police training up to the same level as other medium length study programmes, because this was how things were done in other major welfare state institutions such as the school system or health-care. However, conservative forces tried to sideline normative isomorphism and secure that the process was a purely mimetic one – a Gattopardo transformation that changed legitimating discourse without changing the substance. This strategy ended in failure in the literal sense of a failed accreditation attempt. After the budget review, mimetic and normative isomorphism was therefore replaced with coercive isomorphism, which on the one hand led to real change at the Police College, but on the other hand implied that the new study programme was now only loosely coupled to the strategic vision it was originally meant to realise.
THE BIRTH AND EARLY DEATH OF THE BACHELOR’S DEGREE

In the fall of 2011, the first 96 students began their studies on the professional bachelor’s degree programme in policing. At that time, it was still unknown whether the new study programme would be accredited and therefore also whether the students would actually be awarded the professional bachelor’s degree when they had finished their studies. However, in the summer of 2013, both the study programme and the National Police College were officially accredited, and permission was given to retrospectively grant the bachelor’s degree to all students who had already been accepted to the programme (Akkrediteringsrådet 2013a, 2013b; EVA 2013a, 2013b). The first classes following the newly accredited study programme began their studies in the spring of 2014.

The new study programme was however destined to an early demise. On the 14th of February 2015, the known criminal and newly radicalised Islamic fundamentalist Omar El-Hussein attacked the cultural centre Krudttønden and the Synagogue in Copenhagen, killing two people and wounding six police officers. The attack hit a population already fearful of Islamic terrorism in the wake of attacks throughout the Western world and the Cartoon Crisis in 2005, drawing unwanted fundamentalist attention to Denmark. It also triggered a strong political reaction, and even though the Danish police succeeded in locating and killing the gunman, there was a push towards creating a better armed and more militarised police force, capable of handling and stopping terrorist attacks. Moreover, in order to prevent future attack, the police were asked to provide a permanent guard at the Synagogue and other possible terrorist targets, putting strong pressure on already spare police resources. The pressure increased even further, when the Danish government, in the wake of the European refugee crisis in the fall of 2015 and under strong pressure from the populist right Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti), introduced a temporary (but still running at the time of writing) border control, requiring police officers to guard the Danish–German sea and land borders.

This created a quite exceptional political situation (although short of an actual state of exception) in the fall of 2015, as political leaders showed a growing determination to use police forces against real and perceived foreign threats, while it became still more obvious that the police did not have the necessary resources to do so, especially not since the force was still expected to deliver other types of policing at unchanged service levels. The provision of more police resources therefore rose to the top of the political agenda. At the same time, a convenient solution presented itself, namely to shorten the police study program in order to train more officers in shorter time. Since the study program was already at the minimum length required to be a bachelor programme, this meant that the Police College had to give up its newly acquired accreditation. As part of the political settlement (politiforlig) regarding the funding and priorities of the Danish police in the following four years, political leaders therefore decided to shorten the police study programme to two years and pull the Police College and the study programme out of the officially accredited educational system. According to the Ministry of Justice, the shortened version was actually an improvement, which would ‘future-proof’ (fremtidssikre) police training and raise ‘the total competence level’ of the police, and which would furthermore be backed by new initiatives regarding further education and on-the-job training of police officers (Justitsministeriet, 2015). Apparently, the Ministry had found the recipe for a didactic mir-
acle sauce, allowing a cut of one third of the study programme without loss of quality. A year later in the fall of 2016, an even shorter, six-month long police training programme – the police ‘cadets’ – was introduced as a supplement to the ordinary, now two-year programme, thereby further underlining the apparent determination of political leaders to lower the competences of Danish police officers.

There can hardly be any doubts that the decision is best seen as yet another ‘Garbage Can decision’, in the sense of a more or less coincidental meeting of a political, a problem, and a solution ‘stream’ (Kingdon, 2013). The really good question is, however, why a shortening of the study programme was present in the solution stream in the first place. This is especially intriguing since both political leaders, police management, and civil servants in the Ministry of Justice all seem to have overlooked what may otherwise have seemed to be the obvious solution, namely to increase the number of students admitted to the bachelor’s degree programme. Moreover, no official explanation was ever offered, why the shortening was necessary, apart from the obvious falsehood that it was an improvement, and the taken for granted assumption that it was a necessary step in order to increase the number of officers. Finally, the decision seems to have been made in haste and without the consultancy reports and expert groups that usually pave the way for a major public reform. The bachelor’s degree study programme was for example never officially evaluated; nor was there any official report or statement concerning the qualifications that police officers would need in the future.

There are probably several different reasons that explain this, operating at different levels and timescales. The first and in some sense the most important, is a structural one, namely the decoupling of the bachelor’s degree programme from the goals that the programme was supposed to accomplish. Since political leaders and police management no longer knew why the new study programme was introduced in the first place, the bachelor’s degree had few friends and even fewer political significant protagonists. In a historical context where the ‘point’ in having a bachelor’s programme had been forgotten, it may have seemed a ‘no brainer’ that the study programme could be sacrificed when political opportunity, especially since the Minister of Justice provided convenient PR cover in the form of the blanket denial that the shortening had consequences (cf. Justitsministeriet, 2015).

To this may be added a series of causes operating on a shorter timescale. Political opposition to perceived ‘academisation’ of the educational system on the part of Danish People’s Party and perhaps also on the part of the then Minister of Justice, Søren Pind (cf. Weekendavisen, 2016) may have played a role, although probably only a minor one. Furthermore, the reluctant support of the bachelor’s study programme on the part of the Police Union made the decision easier and may even have contributed to it. As we have seen, the Police Union was never a strong proponent of the bachelor’s programme, and had been a quite conservative voice in the long development process. Still, the programme had its supporters also among senior figures in the union, although the union leader, Claus Oxfeldt, not only never spoke out in favour of the bachelor’s programme, but actually figured as the perhaps most outspoken defender of the decision to shorten the police study programme. However, in the fall of 2015, the Police Union was probably under considerable political pressure, where various possible solutions to the lack of police officers flourished, including the use of military forces or private security guards, something that had always been
anathema to the union, or increased use of civilian personnel, entailing a loss of traditional job functions for police officers. In that situation, the bachelor’s study programme may have seemed to union leaders as a relatively minor sacrifice to bring in order to avoid major changes in the employment and working conditions of Danish police officers. Since the opposition to a division between an ‘A’ and a ‘B’ police had been union policy for a long time, it is also likely that the union attempted to avoid the introduction of a less trained auxiliary police force, something that may very well have been under consideration among political leaders and police top managers. If that was the case, the attempt failed spectacularly, since this was exactly what happened in the fall of 2016 with the introduction of the police cadets (although of course it then ended up being, not an A and a B police, but a B and a C police, given the shortened length of the ordinary police study programme). So, whereas the pressure during the police reform process came from above in the form of the highly skilled specialists that the Vision Committee imagined would be employed by the police, the pressure now came from below in the form of private guards and unskilled workers, to which the police union reacted by consenting to a lowering of the competence level of police officers. Finally, rumours suggest (although rumours may of course be wrong) that it may have played a role that it was uncertain whether the Police College would be capable of being re-accredited (in the Danish accreditation system, an accreditation is only valid for a period of 4–6 years, after which both the educational institution and the study programme need to be reaccredited, a process, which is often more demanding than the original accreditation). More generally, there may have been opposition amongst senior police managers to the fact that the police had to accept external influence on the Police College and the police study programme in the form of the formal criteria for accreditation, which may have made it convenient to shoot the programme down, when the political opportunity arose. This may explain why the police never sought accreditation for the new and shortened programme, which could in principle have been accredited on a lower level in the qualification framework.

THE FUTURE OF DANISH POLICING

Although the loose coupling between the bachelor’s study programme and its intended goals may have facilitated its demise, its short-lived existence still raises serious questions about the future of Danish policing. In particular, the goals that the educational reform was supposed to accomplish seem more relevant than ever. Danish police still face complicated, international, and organised crime, and Denmark still needs a more analytical and technologically savvy police force. The use of IT tools for data analysis and monitoring becomes more prevalent in Danish policing, as in many other police forces around the globe, as recently illustrated by the acquisition of the IT platform POL-INTEL. The most difficult part in building a more knowledge-based police force is however not buying suitable IT tools, but to make these tools functional in an organisation used to and trained in older and more traditional policing methods (Gundhus, 2009). Danish police will now have to manage the change to a more analytic style of policing with a police force with no, or only a superficial, training in analytic skills and thinking. Also in relation to more traditional forms of police work, such as rape cases and other violent crimes, it will be more challeng-
ing for Danish police to deliver the high level of police service, including care for victims, that the public expects.

But perhaps we should reverse the inference. What is most important may not be the many difficulties for the Danish police that the demise of the bachelor’s degree programme will likely produce. The most important may be what the demise says about the general direction that Danish policing will follow in the coming years. In recent years, and particularly in the period since the terrorist attack in February 2015, it has become increasingly clear that the vision of a more knowledge-based type of policing no longer has the support of political leaders and police top-management. Instead, the focus has been on centralisation and standardisation of work-flow and ‘products’, often supported by new IT tools, such as apps that guide police officers through the reporting and investigation of high-volume crimes such as burglaries. A high-tech police force does not have to mean a highly-skilled police force, if the latter is taken to mean highly-skilled police officers. On the contrary, new technology can also be a way of standardising and de-skilling police work to the level of unskilled work. More specifically, new technology can be used as a tool for reinforcing the virtues of Weberian bureaucracy and ‘rationalisation’ in the sense of the four virtues of calculability, efficiency, predictability, and control (Ritzer 2014; Heslop, 2011). That is, new technology may be a driver of a new ‘industrialism’ characterised by de-skilling of the workforce and standardisation of products and production methods.

To a certain extent, these ‘virtues’ were already part of the police reform. First and foremost, because police organisations are Weberian bureaucracies ‘by nature’, but also because the police reform did not aim solely at improving the quality of police work, but also at delivering cheaper policing by focusing more narrowly on ‘core tasks’, that is to say predictable standardised products. Instead of seeing the new police training programme as entailing a rupture with the guiding ‘vision’ behind the police reform, it would thus be more accurate to see it as a strengthening of certain parts of the reform, namely the elements pointing towards a new industrialism, rather than a new professionalism. So, whereas the Vision Committee envisioned a future where increased police professionalism was a means of achieving both quality and efficiency, we now seem to have abandoned the ideal of increased professionalism, which perhaps shows that the most important elements in the Danish police reform were always calculability, efficiency, predictability, and control through standardisation and centralisation.

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