DISCUSSING DRUGS
AND
CONTROL POLICY

Comparative studies
on four Nordic countries

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In memory of our friend and colleague

Bengt Swedin (1945-1993)
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Preface

The project on *Drugs and control policy* started up in 1990. Five years earlier, the Nordic Council — the parliamentary cooperative body of the Nordic countries — adopted at its annual session a recommendation concerning an action plan against illicit drugs. This plan was later accepted by the Nordic Council of Ministers, that is, the cooperative body of the Nordic governments. In this action plan research was mentioned as an integral part of drug policy, stressing among other things the need for additional knowledge about how the control system works.

The first step was for the Nordic Council in cooperation with the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology to arrange a seminar on drugs and drug policy. This seminar was held in Denmark in 1985, with participants including Nordic politicians, lawyers and researchers (*Narkotika og kontrollpolitik* [Drugs and drug policy]. Minab/Gotab, Stockholm 1985).

In 1987 the Nordic Council adopted a request to the Nordic Council of Ministers, asking them to take the initiative to conduct a comparative research project on drugs and control policy in cooperation with the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) and the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology (NSfK). A research team was appointed by these research councils to prepare guidelines for the project, and later to prepare concrete research plans as part of an application for financial support to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

In 1990 the Nordic Council of Ministers agreed to give financial support for the *Drugs and control policy* project for a three-year period — provided that additional funding be made available by national bodies. Finally, later in 1990, an extensive process of data collection was started, continuing until 1995.

On behalf of all the project members, I wish to thank the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research, as well as the national bodies who have provided financial support for our work.

Oslo, November 1996

*Ragnar Hauge*
Introduction: Sisters are never alike

Pekka Hakkarainen, Lau Laursen & Christoffer Tigerstedt

The work with this book has coincided with recent attempts to redefine drug policies both within the Nordic countries and elsewhere. The pressures have come from many different directions. To mention just two crucial factors, extensive rearrangements in European border control systems have probably opened up new drug routes into the far North as well; and secondly, the AIDS epidemic started a wide-ranging debate on how to contain the drug problem and reduce drug-related harm. At the same time, several governments throughout Europe have been rethinking or defending their traditional strategies of tackling drug problems (e.g. National Programme ..., 1992; Massnahmen ..., 1994; Drugs Policy ..., 1995; Tackling Drugs ..., 1995). Given the contradictory nature of the drugs issue, these considerations have tended to bring the discussion back to basics again. The questions addressed today include such as, "What is the state allowed to do?", "What is it capable of doing?", and more practically, "What should the state do?"

At the very same time as this book is published, both Finland and Norway will be looking at new comprehensive White Papers dealing with the national strategy of drug policy. In the two other countries scrutinized in this book, Denmark and Sweden, there are also fairly fresh governmental reports on drug policy (Bekæmpelse af narkotikamisbruget, 1994; A Restrictive Drug Policy, 1993; Nationell handlingsplan, 1995).

The fluidity of the situation has obviously rendered a special flavour to our work with this book. The questions guiding our work have been: How has drug policy been defined by different actors and in different sectors in the Nordic societies? How can arguments and opinions expressed by these actors be compared? How can differences and similarities occurring between the countries be explained? The answers offered are based on studies in both recent history and the current situation. As the title of the book indicates, the aim is to put forward research results for the discussion on drug policy, for how
drug policy is discussed and perceived in society — and to take part in that discussion.

"Drugs and control policy"

The book is an outcome of a collaborative project, *Drugs and control policy*, under the supervision of Ragnar Hauge from the National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research in Norway (SIFA). It was initiated by the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) and the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology (NSfK), and later financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Broadly speaking, the project had two goals which are visible throughout this book. Firstly, it aimed at describing the 'Nordic history' of drug policy from the 1960s onwards. This attempt included explanations of similarities and differences as well as the political interplay between the countries. Secondly, the aim was to show how drug policy is shaped and reshaped within a multitude of discourses occurring at different levels of society. In addition to these comparative efforts, the project also included national studies of different aspects of the control system.

To pursue these plans various social actors and institutions were studied, ranging from politicians (in both a national and Nordic context) to newspapers and public opinion. These actors were represented in various data sets, that is, parliamentary and interparliamentary discussions, a population survey, statistics on drug-related crime, press material, as well as other documents. Some of these data have been utilized in articles published by the project members, and most of the collected data will be presented on the pages to come.

Problem construction

This approach to drug policy was based on the general notion that the drug issue is by no means a morally or politically fixed entity. It varies over time, as do the arguments about it. Over the past decades, however, the drug issue has usually been viewed as a social problem, causing harm to vital parts of society. In underscoring the discursive and discursive character of this specific social problem, the studies in this book search for social practices that contribute to the construction of drugs as social problems.
In doing this, the authors are indebted to those scholars of constructionist thinking who stress a definitional, collective and interpretative perspective on social problems. Using Herbert Blumer's (1971) well-known words: "A social problem exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in society".

This point of departure is important not least because it has implications for political practice. As soon as the perspective and scope of a problem is defined, the horizon for possible solutions is also fixed to a considerable degree. If we are aware of this, it becomes easier to understand why countries and cities opt for so different strategies in combatting their drug problems.

In fact, the drug problem is an excellent example of a social construction. Nowadays, it is conceptually based on normative categorizations by which some substances with psychoactive or intoxicant properties are proclaimed forbidden. The very classification between allowed and forbidden, or legal and illegal, substances has been a matter of social and political choice. Even drugs with no narcotic effects have been placed in the category of narcotics (Bruun et al. 1975; Lindgren 1993).

Political struggles, compromises and the domination of the most powerful states have been typical features of the development of international drug control (ibid.). It has been more difficult to get prescribed drugs under international drug control than opium, cannabis and cocaine, which are strange to modern Western culture and lack powerful industrial supporters. Alcohol and tobacco are the reflected image of this phenomenon. It is generally known that these two substances cause more harm to human lives than illegal drugs do, but even so control is minimal in comparison with the control of illegal drugs. Drugs are a suitable enemy, Nils Christie and Kettil Bruun (1996) point out.

To conclude, a constructionist analysis of social problems should focus on (1) arguments concerning the definition of a problem, (2) the actors who are putting forward rival arguments, and (3) the collective process or frame within which the rival arguments are presented, evaluated and measured (see Best 1989).

This idea is by no means systematically employed in the subsequent articles. Nonetheless, the articles aim precisely at picturing how the drug problem is defined and conceived among different actors and in different sectors in the Nordic societies, instead of surveying drug-related harm to human well-being. In that sense, the
constructionist idea works as a connecting thread that runs throughout the book.

**National characteristics**

It is not by chance that the Nordic countries are lumped together in a discussion of drug policy. The reasons for this, however, are quite complex and manifold. Some are general reasons, drawing attention to similarities in history and culture; others are drug-specific justifications for actual measures, or at least attempts of measures, taken jointly by the countries. Historical relatedness and joint efforts, however, should not overshadow the fact that the countries also show differences in social structure as well as in actual policies. To frame the 'Nordicness' of the object of study, we will dwell on these issues for a short while. Let us start with the differences.

Denmark and Sweden are often presented as the most diverging Nordic countries. It is true that alongside the nation-building process, the norm systems of the countries diverged, the Swedish becoming urban and the Danish rural in character. Later, and in concordance with the genuinely Swedish modernization model of People's Home, popular social movements were integrated in the administrative structure from the top to the bottom. Danish local autonomy, on the other hand, strengthened by 19th century rural popular-intellectual movements, remained rural and stayed apart from the central power. As a result, in a comparative perspective, the Danes' notion of 'Danishness' is anchored to the periphery, while in the (ideal) concept of 'Swedishness' the state and 'its' citizens are close to each other, the state sometimes being almost personified. (Stenius 1991.)

Such differences in the structure of civil society might give a hint of why 'democratic', central decisions are preferred and possible in Sweden, whereas it is often an unreasonable demand in neighbouring Denmark (ibid., 135).

In Norway, as in Denmark, there was also a notable distance between the citizens and the central state. Even today Norwegian mentality is characterized by rural and popular values. And most importantly, it seems that political power in Norway is heavily dependent on the voice of the periphery. In addition, Norway — like Finland, by the way — is characterized by its geographical position: situated at the edge of Europe, the country has developed a particular solidarity which effectively identifies elements that are alien to Norwegian culture. When the Norwegian "way of life" is threatened, traditional rural
opinions work well together with the state administration, paving the way for comparatively brave, sometimes extreme solutions.

Finland, finally, is marked by the short distance between state and civil society, as well as by its geopolitical location between east and west. This was an outcome of a process of intense nation-building that started during the latter half of the 19th century when Finland was still a Grand Duchy of Russia. In that context, political activity became associated with state activity, necessarily unanimous in character. That is, civil activities tended to be politically powerful, provided that they were related to state bureaucracy. Hence the guarded tradition in Finnish political life.

Despite these historical variations, the Nordic countries have generated relatively similar views of the world. We tend to believe in and long for a fairly undivided social system, based on conforming moral norms, banning the emergence of slums and permanent social exclusion as well as considerable social and economic differences. As Henrik Stenius (1995) has put it, for Nordic citizens "a good life implies a life in conformity, a life similar to others' life". Accordingly, the ideal way of building social policy is to assure broad popular participation in social reform. This does not exclude social struggles but, as Stenius notes, "nowhere have the struggles been more peaceful than in the Nordic countries". It is no wonder that Nordic citizens are predisposed to a legalistic attitude: "the people is lucky if it is allowed to institute laws that it binds itself to follow" (ibid.).

This conformity is neatly reflected in the leading principle of the so-called Nordic welfare model, i.e. the principle of universalism. When Nordic people state that every citizen has the right to, say, medical care, they really mean what they say. In such a context, restrictive and even repressive measures, applied for example in the field of drug policy, may be interpreted as a complicated mixture of care and control.

**Nordic drug cooperation**

Nordic cooperation in drug policy issues is well-established, indicating that there are common elements in the countries' ways of viewing drugs. The intergovernmental Nordic reaction to the drug wave of the 1960s is illuminating. As the Nordic countries were considered to form an attractive area for drug traffickers, policy-makers decided to work for a joint control policy and harmonize the drug legislation of the respective countries. This was expressed in 1971 in a
recommendation by the Nordic Council, consisting of members of the national assemblies. By 55 votes to 1, the following statement was adopted:

The Nordic Council recommends that governments of the member states step up cooperation against drug-related crime and aim at harmonized enforcement of the drug laws and that they fulfill their obligations concerning social policy in order to reduce drug abuse (Nordiska Rådets ..., 1971).

During the same year a permanent intergovernmental body, the Nordic Committee on Narcotic Drugs, was established. This committee has guaranteed a continuous bi-annual exchange of information on drug policy issues between civil servants across ministries (of social welfare and health, of the interior, and of justice). Police and customs authorities, who have established Nordic cooperation of their own, are also represented at the committee meetings.

As Copenhagen, and its "Free Town" of Christiania, developed into a Nordic Mecca for buying drugs, Finland, Norway and Sweden stationed their own social workers in this area. This practice has continued for a long time, showing that drug problems in the Nordic countries are closely interwoven and, on a policy level, regarded as an inter-Nordic issue.

In 1979 the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) was set up. NAD's mission has been to promote interdisciplinary cooperation in alcohol and drug research. The principal focus has been on research within the social sciences, including social medicine and social psychiatry. NAD has provided a network for alcohol and drug researchers and facilitated cooperative initiatives such as comparative studies, seminars, publications, etc. An additional expression of Nordic cooperation in the field is Nordisk Alkohol- och Narkotikatidskrift (NAT), i.e. the Journal of Nordic Alcohol and Drug Studies.

In addition to these particular institutional structures, drug issues are discussed from time to time in the Nordic Council (members of parliaments) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (members of governments). Yet another example of the attempts to coordinate drug issues is the fact that the Nordic countries have been acting as one block in the United Nation's drug control institutions.

All in all, Nordic cooperative efforts in drug issues can be seen as part of a long tradition of Nordic cooperation in general. Substantial
cooperation is strengthened by the fact that there is a wide agreement on prohibiting drugs and condemning drug trafficking.

**Together and apart in drug policy**

But sisters are never alike, as Nils Christie and Kjetil Bruun aptly put it (1996, 125-130). National control measures vary from country to country; this applies, for example, to the extent of criminalized activities, penalty scales and legal praxis. These discrepancies have grown wider particularly since the beginning of the 1980s (Laursen 1992). It has been a common opinion that policy discrepancies form a continuum running from the pragmatic liberalism of Denmark to the extremely restrictive control policy of Norway. The remaining countries find their place in-between these extremes, Sweden being quite similar to Norway, followed by Finland and Iceland (ibid.). This everyday belief will be critically examined at several points in this volume.

However, such a myth is partly based on valid everyday wisdom. Denmark is undoubtedly the Nordic country where individual autonomy and a non-interventionist central state are in great repute. These principles are also applied when it comes to drugs. On the other hand, the supply of treatment is frequently emphasized in Denmark, at least in public rhetoric. Norway, on the other hand, is regarded as a country with a strong feeling of togetherness, rejecting outside threats unfamiliar to national culture, such as drugs. This "unwanted guest" has to be kept outside (the "Norwegian House", as it lately has been called), by means of extreme measures if necessary. In Sweden, the question of drugs is often connected to the specific Swedish project of "People's Home", based among other things on the universalistic idea of social welfare. At times disintegrative tendencies of the People's Home have been blamed on drug use and drug users. Consequently, actions against drugs have assumed even patriotic features (see Tham 1995). In Finland, drugs have been overpowered by the extremely strong position of alcohol in Finnish culture. Due to this, drug issues have long remained a strange element for Finns. (Christie & Bruun 1996.)

In conclusion, it is reasonable to state that on ceremonious occasions the Nordic countries have tended to keep together in their views on drug policy, while in daily practice the front lines have often cracked. Since the late 1980s, the picture has become more complex. Sweden has remained restrictive, and even tightened up its attitude in international cooperation agencies. During the last years restrictive
Norway has been matched by new elements such as increasing acceptance of syringe exchange programmes, methadone treatment and treatment replacing penalties. Denmark, in turn, has more and more fixed its eyes on continental policy models (Balvig 1996). In the case of Finland, one could claim, debates concerning such issues as treatment supply, low threshold programmes and outreach work are only just getting under way.

Presentation of the articles

The book starts by setting out the legal framework for the drug control system in the Nordic countries. Through this presentation Lau Laursen lays bare the basic dynamics of the debate on drug policy carried out by Nordic members of parliaments at the forum provided by the Nordic Council. One of Laursen's key questions concerns the eternal conflict between Denmark on the one hand, and Sweden and Norway, on the other. How much did the latter actually influence the former?

From the Nordic arena Pekka Hakkarainen, Timo Jetsu and Astrid Skretting take us into the national assemblies to listen to how politicians discuss drug policy. In order to do that the authors have chosen one significant parliamentary debate from each country for closer examination.

Having listened to the popularly elected, we turn to another powerful social institution, i.e. the newspapers. Astrid Skrettin, Pekka Hakkarainen, Lau Laursen and Börje Olsson show how drug issues are mediated by the two largest newspapers in each country. They ask whether it is possible to decipher nation-specific ways of treating drug issues in the Nordic countries. And if so, are they related to differences in the drug consumption and drug policy of those countries?

In the next two articles, written by Pekka Hakkarainen, Lena Hübner, Lau Laursen and Einar Ødegård, we step from the voice of the newspapers to the 'people's voice'. These studies are rare examples of comparative works on drug use and public opinion on drugs. It is a pioneering work in the Nordic context as well. The former article deals with use and attitudes in general, while the latter focuses on attitudes towards sanctions.

The final article by Ragnar Hauge presents one further 'actor' in the drug policy reality, i.e. Nordic drug-related statistics. This article is a
comment on the intricacies in the relationship between statistical 'facts' about drug-related crime and the 'actual' drug situation in a particular country. As such, it serves as a suitable conclusion to the overall effort of highlighting the constructed character of the drug issue.

References


National Programme on Drug Abuse Control. Measures for drug abuse


Notes

1. The research team consisted of the following members: Pekka Hakkarainen (Finland), Lena Hübner (Sweden), Lau Laursen (Denmark), Einar Ødegård (Norway), Astrid Skretting (Norway) and the late Bengt Swedin (1945-1993) (Sweden). In addition, Tommi Hoikkala (Finland), Timo Jetsu (Finland), Elisabeth Kaa (Denmark) and Börje Olsson (Sweden) took part in the project for shorter periods.

2. The project has previously published comparative or national studies on the development of drug policy, the social dynamics of a media debate, attitudes towards drug policy, and the nature of compulsory treatment:

Laursen, Lau (1992): Tvang i behandlingen af stofmisbrugere — en


The legal framework and the drug control system

Pekka Hakkarainen, Timo Jetsu & Lau Laursen

To understand drug policy in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, it is useful to start with some basic facts about drug legislation and the drug control systems within these countries. Although this article does not go into an in-depth discussion of the legal framework, it does provide a useful backdrop for the articles to come.

In any discussion of legal frameworks we must bear in mind that the formal basis for national drug legislation rests on international drugs conventions. In addition, there is a long tradition of cooperation and harmonization among the Nordic countries on many legal and political issues (Lahti 1990). Having said that, there remain many differences between the Nordic countries in the field of drug legislation and in the implementation of this legislation, leading to somewhat different approaches in trying to contain the drug problem.

Drug legislation in the Nordic countries

Early drug legislation in the Nordic countries was mainly a response to actions at the international level (particularly the Hague Convention of 1912 and the Geneva Convention of 1925) rather than to the national drug situation (see Hauge 1984; Olsson 1994; Rosenqvist 1974; Winsløw 1984). However, this article includes no further discussion of international drug legislation or other cooperation in the field of fighting drug abuse and drug crime. Instead, the focus is strictly on national developments.

Domestic concerns assumed an increasingly important place in the development of drug legislation in the late 1960s when the drug situation changed dramatically in the Nordic countries. In addition to the adoption of new international agreements (Single Convention, 1961), the changes led to the reformulation of drug legislation in each country. In spite of certain differences in their stands on the individual drug user and the strategies of control policy, each country initially
followed the principle of harmonization. More recently, however, and especially since the first half of the 1980s, national differences have become increasingly striking (Christie & Bruun 1996; Laursen 1992). The main features of drug legislation in each of the Nordic countries are described below (boxes 1-4).

As the four boxes indicate, the basic features and intentions in drug legislation are quite uniform across the four countries. Different kinds of drug-related crime are defined and enforced separately. Drug-dealing and drug-trafficking are defined clearly as more serious offences than the use or possession of drugs for personal use. In all countries it is possible to transform a court sentence into treatment and rehabilitation in the case of petty crimes by drug users, such as burglary or shoplifting in order to get money to buy drugs for personal use. The newest provisions in legislation have been made against money laundering and other economic aspects of drug-related crime.

However, there are also some obvious differences between the four countries. One of the main differences lies in the definition and categorization of drug offences. Drug use is criminalized in Finland, Norway and Sweden but not in Denmark, and the three first mentioned countries have no minimum limits for the possession of drugs for personal use. Court practice shows that offences involving hard drugs are regarded as more serious than those involving cannabis in all countries, but only in Danish legislation is an explicit distinction made between cannabis and hard drugs such as heroin or cocaine. In Denmark trafficking in cannabis, irrespective of the amounts involved, can only be punished by up to six years of imprisonment, while in the case of hard drugs the full scale of up to 10 years of imprisonment can be used. Attitudes towards drug users and cannabis are thus more liberal in Danish legislation than in the other Nordic countries.

Another marked difference between the countries lies in the maximum penalties for drug offences. The maximum penalty for drug felony is 10 years in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, whereas in Norway it is 21 years. It should also be noted that all countries except Denmark have minimum penalties for serious drug-related crime, indicating a restrictive attitude.
DRUG LEGISLATION IN DENMARK

The basic legal instrument is the *Act on Euphoriant Substances* of 1955. The Act authorizes the minister responsible, in this case the Minister of Health, to prohibit or legalize drugs pursuant to Danish legislation and international conventions.

The mandate appears from a Government order including a list of drugs, the use of which is either totally prohibited or permitted because of their medical or scientific purpose. Offences regarding the possession, transfer, manufacture, import and export are punishable by fines or imprisonment up to two years. The use of drugs is not criminalized, nor has it been criminalized in subsequent legislation.

The use of illicit drugs, primarily cannabis, increased in the late 1960s. This resulted in an increased level of professional drug crime. Consequently, a new provision in the Penal Code (§ 191) was passed in 1969 to combat serious drug-related crime. The maximum penalty was six years’ imprisonment. The Director of Public Prosecutions issued a paper laying down the legal practice for prosecution cases related to the possession for own use. Fines should only be imposed in cases of subsequent offences regarding possession of so-called hard drugs. This basic structure of Danish drug legislation has remained unchanged since 1969; the only revisions have come in the form of amendments.

In 1975, the maximum penalty in the Penal Code was raised to 10 years’ imprisonment. However, this provision was not to cover cannabis trafficking, for which the maximum sentence was six years — regardless of the type of crime. In 1982, an amendment (section 191a) was introduced to cover the laundering of money related to drug-related crime. According to the provisions of the Penal Code, the maximum penalty for felonies might be raised by one-half to a maximum of 15 years.

In continuation of the Danish ratification of the Vienna Convention, the Danish parliament passed an Act in 1993 ordering banks to make arrangements for the prevention of laundering money coming from drug trafficking.

According to the Penal Code, section 49, subsection 2, drug addicts punished for offences against property, usually burglary, robbery or the like, may in some cases have their sentence substituted by treatment. The administration of those cases is carried out by the prison authorities. Since 1995 experiments have been carried out in two counties where criminal drug addicts have been offered the opportunity of treatment instead of imprisonment.
DRUG LEGISLATION IN FINLAND

Until 1972 the drug problem was controlled by the Narcotics Act of 1956. The maximum penalty for violations of this law was four years' imprisonment. Finland was the first Nordic country to criminalize use in 1966. In 1972, the parliament passed a new Narcotics Act which made a distinction between ordinary drug offences (with a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment) and serious offences (from six months to ten years' imprisonment).

Drug legislation was revised in 1994 in connection with the Penal Code reform in Finland and new international drug legislation. Provisions of the Narcotics Act were reviewed and included in the Penal Code. New provisions concerning the preparation and promotion of drug offences and money laundering as presupposed by the Vienna Convention were incorporated into the legislation.

The central provisions of drug legislation are laid down in chapter 50 of the Penal Code. According to the first section of this chapter drug offences include the manufacturing, growing, smuggling, selling and dealing of drugs as well as the possession and use of drugs. The maximum penalty for an ordinary drug offence is two years of imprisonment. Section 2 deals with serious drug offences. The minimum penalty for serious offences was raised from 6 to 12 months, while the maximum penalty remained unchanged at 10 years of imprisonment.

The preparation and promotion of drug offences as well as money laundering are criminalized in separate paragraphs. The maximum penalty for the former is two years' imprisonment. The maximum penalty for money laundering is six months of imprisonment.

The waiving of prosecution for drug users is a new provision. According to the last section of chapter 50, prosecution can be waived when a drug offence committed is of minor consequence and when it does not reduce general obedience to the law or when the person who has committed an offence can show that he or she has started treatment in an institution recognized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

DRUG LEGISLATION IN NORWAY
The basic legislation is incorporated in "Lov om Lekemidler og Gifter" (The Medicine and Drugs Act), which was amended in 1964. The description of criminal offences and the penalties were identical to the Danish legislation from 1955 with a maximum penalty of two years of imprisonment. In 1968 the section on drugs was amended and the use of drugs was criminalized. Thus, it might be punishable by up to three months' imprisonment. At the same time serious drug crimes were incorporated in the Penal Code (section 162) with a maximum penalty of imprisonment up to six years.

In 1972 and 1981 the maximum penalty was raised for serious professional drug crimes, first to imprisonment up to 10 years and subsequently in 1981 to 15 years. In both cases the arguments were centred on the fact that society wanted to demonstrate a stricter attitude towards drugs.

In 1984 legislation was amended once more, and this time the structure was also changed. The body of laws was redrawn and some of the criminal offences in "Lov om Lekemidler og Gifter" were transferred to the Penal Code. Commercial drug trafficking, which previously might by punishable according to either the basic legislation or the Penal Code, was transferred completely to the Penal Code. At the same time the penalty of fines or imprisonment up to two years for ordinary crimes was transferred to the Penal Code and formed the first article in section 162. This was succeeded by two articles, describing and dividing severe crimes into two levels. Severe crimes should be punishable by imprisonment up to 10 years, but if the offence involved a considerable amount, it was to be covered by a third article with a minimum penalty of at least three years of imprisonment and a maximum penalty of 15 years. In addition, particularly aggravating circumstances might result in up to 21 years' imprisonment.

Consequently, a new article was introduced in "Lov om Lekemidler og Gifter" to cover the possession and use of drugs, which were linked together. Possession for personal use was in practice rated as low as one dose. The maximum penalty was extended to fines or imprisonment up to six months. Possession of more than one dose should be regarded as storage and be covered by section 162 in the Penal Code.

Since 1993 money laundering has been punishable in accordance with section 317 of the Penal Code, which in general covers handling of money related to crime. The penalty scale follows the scale in the drug section of the Penal Code.

Section 12 in the Prison Act gives the option for a convicted drug addict to serve all or part of his or her sentence in a treatment institution instead of serving it in prison.
DRUG LEGISLATION IN SWEDEN

The basic legislation came into force in 1964. The new regulations were similar to the basic drug legislation in Norway and Denmark, with a penalty scale from a fine to two years of imprisonment. In 1968 the Swedish parliament passed a special Drug Penal Code. Section 1 established that ordinary drug crimes are punishable by fines or imprisonment up to two years. The two subsequent sections distinguish minor drug offences from serious ones. Minor offences, which at this time did not explicitly include the use of drugs, were punishable by fines, whereas serious offences might result in a penalty of imprisonment for at least six months and with a maximum penalty of four years.

As early as 1969 the penalty scale for serious drug offences was increased to imprisonment for one to six years. In 1972 the maximum penalty was further raised to imprisonment up to 10 years. The provisions of the Drug Penal Code are also included in the Customs Act, which governs the illicit import and export of drugs.

In 1981 the minimum penalty for serious offences was raised to imprisonment for at least two years in order to indicate a more strict attitude to serious offences. At the same time, the maximum penalty for ordinary drug crimes was raised to imprisonment for at least three years. In 1983 a new section 3a regarding gross negligence was added to the Drug Penal Code. Any person who might have known, but not realized, that he or she was participating in drug crime, may consequently be punished by fines or imprisonment up to six months.

In 1982, the Swedish government appointed a drug commission to make proposals for further initiatives against the illicit use of drugs. The commission report of 1983 formed the basis of the amendments in 1985. Two topics were discussed. The first issue was the criminalization of use, but at this moment neither the government nor the commission wanted to make the use of drugs punishable. The second topic turned on drug offences. The Swedish parliament decided to replace the description of "offence" by "misdemeanour", and the penalty scale was changed from fines to fines and imprisonment up to six years.

In 1988 the use of drugs was criminalized. The offence was punishable by fines. In 1993 the maximum penalty for use was raised to the effect that from now on, the use of drugs was punishable by fines or imprisonment up to six months.

Sweden, too, has joined the action against money laundering. The Act on Measures to Counter Money Laundering was passed in
1993. Section 34 in the Probation Service Act makes it possible to change an ongoing prison sentence for drug addicts to custodial care in a treatment institution. In addition, since 1988 it has been provided that in the case of a criminal offence by drug addicts, the court can decide that the person shall undergo a drug treatment programme instead of serving a prison sentence.

Resources and measures of law enforcement

Law enforcement plays an important role in drug control policy. A closer assessment of exactly how much importance is attached to law enforcement could be based on an investigation of the resources used in police investigations into drug-related crime in different Nordic countries. However, it turned out that hardly any detailed and comparable information was available on specialized drug enforcement. Therefore, the resources of law enforcement are here compared at a fairly general level in Table 1.

Table 1  Police resources in four Nordic countries in 1994.

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<thead>
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<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population in</td>
<td>5,206</td>
<td>5,088</td>
<td>4,337</td>
<td>8,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thousands 1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total police staff</td>
<td>10,018</td>
<td>11,186</td>
<td>10,063</td>
<td>24,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>officers (office</td>
<td>7,540</td>
<td>8,496</td>
<td>7,896</td>
<td>17,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and juridical staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excluded)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers/</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 inhabitants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specializing in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investigation of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug offences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug police/</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 inhabitants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in the table are mainly from 1994. The number of specialized drug police officers are drawn from different sources. The Danish figure is an estimation given by the police to the Center for Alcohol and Drug Research at the University of Aarhus. The Swedish figure is from 1991. The Swedish police states in its yearbook (Rikspolisstyrelsen 1994) that the investigation of drug-related crime
takes up 12% of its daily working hours, which corresponds to approximately 2,000 police officers. However, this figure does not make sense when compared to the figures of other countries. The Norwegian figure is based on an estimation by the National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research in Oslo, while the Finnish figure is provided by the Central Criminal Investigation Police in Helsinki.

Looking at the figures describing general police resources, we find that Sweden makes the biggest investment in police resources, both in absolute and relative terms. It is difficult to compare the numbers of police officers specializing in drug issues in the different countries, which in any case varies over time depending on the current number of cases. Many police officers, especially in the districts outside the biggest cities, are involved in investigations both in drugs and other criminal offences.

Although we have to bear in mind that the figures for drug enforcement are estimations, some interesting observations can nonetheless be made. As is the case with the general police force, investment in drug investigation is highest in Sweden. The Finnish figures, second highest for the general police force, are now the lowest. This may be due to the drug problem in Finland being less serious than in the other countries. In comparison with Finland, the Norwegian police authorities invest more effort and money in investigating drug offences. Denmark also has a large number of police officers specializing in the investigation of drug offences.

In addition to economic and manpower resources, measures of law enforcement are important variables when describing the size and efficiency of the drug control system. In this comparison we find that the Danish police has the right to employ the widest selection of means to investigate drug-related crime (Table 2).

The gathering of information about persons known or suspected to be drug users, dealers, traffickers or otherwise connected with the illegal drug business, is an important measure of investigation in all countries. Police authorities in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden all emphasize the significance of drug intelligence and special data registers for drug criminals and suspects as instruments that are necessary in effective drug investigation and international cooperation against drug-related crime.

Wire-tapping and technical supervision of public places are also allowed to the police in all Nordic countries, although only in serious cases and with court permission. The use of room-tapping and agent
provocateur are permitted only for the Danish police, although within certain limits. In Finland, Norway and Sweden the use of room-tapping as well as infiltration, agent provocateur and informer fees are not allowed. Unconventional police methods such as these and controlled delivery have been disputed in all the Nordic countries. If such methods are allowed, they have been developed exactly in connection with the fight against drug abuse and drug-related crime.

Table 2  Special measures used in the law enforcement of drug offences in the four Nordic countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drug intelligence</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Special data register</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wire-tapping</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Technical supervision (public places)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Room-tapping</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Infiltration</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Agent provocateur</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Informer fees</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drug tests of users</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Anonymous witnesses</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reversed burden of proof</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Anonymous tips telephone</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Narcotics dogs</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bodily search of a person</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Controlled delivery</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Done by the police in Denmark.

On the grounds of this comparison the Danish police appears to be a forerunner in the use of unconventional police methods in the Nordic countries. This is an interesting paradox in that Danish drug policy and public opinion towards drugs are normally regarded as liberal, but on the other hand the police in Denmark are better equipped than their colleagues in the other Nordic countries.
Drug tests of users in police custody are done only in Sweden. In this respect the Swedish police has invested heavily in the control of drug users after the tightening of drug legislation in 1993, when the maximum penalty for drug use was raised from a fine to six months' imprisonment. During a period of 12-15 months following this law reform, the police took a total of 5,705 drug tests from persons suspected of drug use (Tham 1996). The Swedish police authorities want to have the right to use drug tests in order to keep known users under control; to intervene as early as possible in drug abuse careers; and to show to the youth and other potential experimenters that there is a high risk of being caught and arrested by the police (Rikspolisstyrelsen 1994).

Border control occupies a central place in the drug policy of each Nordic country. Its importance is evident in the presence of specially trained customs officers or groups of officers for the control and investigation of drug trafficking. As we can see in Table 2, customs also has special measures for combatting drug crimes. Anonymous tips telephone is seen as a valuable measure in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Narcotics dogs have been used since the end of the 1960s. Bodily searches of persons suspected of smuggling drugs by examination of the rectum, fluoroscopy of the stomach etc. are a more recent addition to the range of tools available. The latest special measure in drug investigations by customs in all the Nordic countries is controlled delivery of a drug transport. It should be noted that in addition to the above mentioned measures, customs authorities also have their own drug intelligence and special data registers for drug cases. International exchange of information is another important measure of border control. The Nordic police and customs authorities even have liaison officers working in countries that are regarded as important centres of international drug trafficking. In 1993 the number of such Nordic officers was 21 (Rigspolitichefen 1993).

There has also been some pressure to change court practices in drug cases. Police authorities in particular have argued for the use of anonymous witnesses and reversed burden of proof. However, as one can see from Table 2, these measures are not allowed in any Nordic country, although they have been widely discussed in all of them.

Concluding remarks

*Current drug legislation* in the Nordic countries originates from an early reaction to emerging drug problems in the 1960s. In broad
terms, the structure of the legislation is the same in each country, built up around the prohibition of certain drugs. The scope of criminalization is identical with the single and important exception of the use of drugs, which is clearly punishable in Norway, Sweden and Finland, but not in Denmark. All countries have incorporated serious offences against drug legislation in their Penal Codes. The penalty scales are almost identical. The most important exceptions are Norway's maximum penalty of 21 years of imprisonment compared with 10 years in the other countries, and Denmark's decision not to enact a minimum penalty for serious drug offences.

In terms of legal praxis, too, Denmark stands quite clearly apart from the rest of the field. Sentences for the violation of basic legislation are three times tougher in Sweden and Norway than in Denmark, with Finland lying in-between (Laursen 1992).

Looking at Nordic drug legislation as a whole, it is clear that a line of demarcation may be drawn between Denmark, on the one hand, and the other three countries, on the other. The historical background and development of these varieties are discussed in another contribution to this volume (see Laursen, in this volume).

A comparison of resources and measures used in controlling drugs in the Nordic countries shows that Sweden has made the biggest investment in drug investigation. In all the countries the police and customs authorities have effective measures aiming at combatting drug trafficking and drug dealing. However, it is interesting to note that the Danish police seem to be better off in comparison with their Nordic colleagues in terms of the right to use unconventional methods of investigation.

References


Scandinavia's tug of war on drugs

Lau Laursen

The three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, are generally considered to have many historical and cultural characteristics in common. Likewise, mention is often made about the Scandinavian Model of welfare state, and an underlying Nordic cultural affinity, among all three countries, is taken for granted. Their mutual linguistic heritage and roots, alone, bind them together. Nonetheless, many historical developments that have taken place in Scandinavia are evidence of the contrasts and differences in the cultural and political characters of the Nordic countries. Relevantly, the Swedish journalist Oscar Hemer (1991) has insisted that in spite of many common traits, like their political superstructures and the institutions they share, e.g. the Nordic Council, the cultural and political exchange among them is not much greater than that between neighbouring countries in the rest of Europe. He further points out that, although their cultural affinity is a reasonable claim, a common Nordic culture is not (Hemer 1991, 361). Yet, Hemer's attitude appears rather rigid as although certain cultural and societal phenomena get handled quite differently in each country, still the traits Nordic countries have in common would seem to presume that they do share a mutual sociocultural framework.

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1 A portion of this article appeared earlier in the publication by Dorn et al. (1996). The coeditors of this book have contributed useful comments and criticisms to this article, as have also done: Jørgen Jepsen and Anette Storgaard from the Center for Alcohol and Drug Research, Aarhus University (Denmark), and Ragnar Hauge from the National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (Norway).

2 The Scandinavian or Nordic region also includes Finland and Iceland. However, both come up only incidentally in this article because, both now and in years gone by, they have kept to a reserved and rather withdrawn role in Nordic drug use deliberations, due mainly to two major factors: their geopolitical position and the very limited extent of drug use there.
The societal patterns and attitudes in Nordic countries with regard to inebriants, on the other hand, do give weight to Hemer’s claim of cultural and political difference. Their divergence, both in consumption and drinking habits, is very evident with regard to alcohol, the most widely used inebriant. Governmental policies with respect to alcohol in Sweden and Norway, on the one hand, and Denmark, on the other, are very different. These political divergencies clearly seem to derive from cultural differences. The same divergence is found with regard to drugs, but although their divergencies regarding alcohol policy have never developed into major controversies, drug policy has been the bone of serious contention and confrontations.

In another article contained in this book an analysis of the fundamental positions on drug policy of each of the four Nordic countries is made, based on how they have been formulated in parliamentary discussions (see Hakkarainen, Jetsu and Skretting in this book). As will be seen, the Nordic countries have points in common and in contrast, but because of certain drug policy positions, Denmark clearly stands apart in the Nordic context. It is precisely these positions, which this study strives to analyse. They come forth in the formulation of drug legislation, the interesting aspect being how the differences affect drug control legislation. Moreover, the article investigates how the Danish positions have been perceived in Norway and Sweden, and whether Danish aloofness on these issues within the Nordic circle of nations has borne any consequences on the formulation of Danish drug policy.

How Scandinavia's current drug problem arose

Throughout Scandinavia, the first official observations of young people using illegal drugs date back to the years 1965-68. At that time, it was considered a fad, connected with the period's youthful rebelliousness, rather than a social problem. During that time, illegal substances were used by a small milieu of societal groupings such as social dissidents, and healthcare workers including doctors. In Norway and Denmark, such usage was limited, consisting mainly of amphetamines, morphine and barbiturates. The situation in Sweden was different because, as early as the 1950s, it included a serious problem, i.e. the intravenous usage of central nervous system stimulants, especially amphetamines. The Swedish drug treatment
committee, in 1967, estimated that in Stockholm alone approximately 5,000 people were suffering from serious addiction, and 5,000 more throughout the country (Narkotikaforskning 1970, 73-90).

As of 1966, Scandinavian health authorities began reporting an increasing use of illegal substances as well as a change in drug use patterns. At first, cannabis became the predominant drug, but later LSD joined this rank. Cannabis gained a foothold in Sweden and Denmark earlier than it did in Norway. Survey research done in Denmark in 1968 showed that 17-18% of 15-20 year-olds had tried cannabis. This percentage was a bit higher in Sweden, but in Norway it was reported to be just 5% (Narkotikaforskning 1970, 17).

The combination of youthful rebellion and drug abuse unleashed an emotional, public debate in all three countries. This led to a completely different discussion of the drug issue, with a qualitatively new cultural and ideological paradigm, which created a framework for talking about this social phenomena. Earlier on, drug use had been defined as damaging to individuals, and that drug abuse would cause psychological and biological damage to individuals doing it. But from now on, drug use was viewed as the result of collective deviancy on the part of entire social groups, as something abetted by criminal forces from abroad, i.e. outside Scandinavia. Moreover, the consequences of drug use were supposed to be detrimental not only to the social groups involved but to society as a whole.

Drugs began to be perceived as a veritable threat to society itself, and this experience — intensified by the evergrowing number of police cases involving drug use and the medias' sensational descriptions of the phenomena's growth — meant that both the public debate and society's reaction to it all, took on a character which is very aptly expressed by the concept: "moral panic". This sociological concept was coined and introduced by Young (1971; see Gunnlaugsson 1996), and further developed by Cohen (1972) and Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994). Gunnlaugsson sums it up as follows:

The concept, 'moral panic', or, in other words, moralistic tumult, denotes the emotional tumult or fright experienced by various societal elements such as the mass-media, police or the general public in connection with law offences or other events which, of themselves, are trivial both in terms of their nature and the number of people they involve. The effect and influence of this tumult, its subjective emotional response, is therefore much greater, objectively, than the event or the unlawful deed and its consequences (1996, 14).
A series of studies on the unfolding of national drug legislation
(Goode 1990; Giffen et al. 1991; Manderson 1993; Olsson 1994)
adhere to this tradition, which is founded on discourse theory and
currents in media analysis, as well as on the theory of social
constructivism (Spector & Kitsuse 1987; Hilgartner & Bosk 1988; Best
1989).

As a result of these changes in the discussions about drugs, came a
tide of changes in and expansion of the drug use control systems in
all three countries. Moreover, the phenomena of drug abuse, which
had been seen as a medical problem with the Health Services
treatment efforts as the protagonist, came to be redefined as a
societal problem with the justice system's penal efforts taking on the
leading role (Lind 1974).

The Nordic countries agreed to join the UN's drug convention, the
so-called Single Convention, which had been drawn up in 1961. It
required its signatories to review and revise their earlier legislation on
opium. Sweden and Norway did so in 1964, but Denmark had already
passed special drug legislation through its parliament in 1955.4

In the mid-1960s, drug legislation in both Norway, Sweden and
Denmark had many common aspects. The most important
modifications in their revised legislation, with respect to earlier opium
legislation, consisted in more precise definition of what was illegal
with respect to drugs, as well as clearer rules prohibiting the presence
of such drugs. The greatest degree of legislative uniformity was
achieved in the formulation of their common proscription of cannabis,
opium and certain opium derivatives. Legislation stemming from their
adhesion to the UN's conventions set down in detail the regulations of
legal punishment, as well as clearer rules prohibiting the import and
export, purchase, sale, and possession of narcotic and euphoric
substances. The major differences to be found concerned the use of
such substances, which had already been forbidden in Finland in
1966. In Norway, criminalizing drug use was discussed, while this
approach was not yet felt to be relevant in Sweden and Denmark.
Penalties for breaking drug regulations were uniform in Norway,

4 Denmark's Euphoriant Drug Act (Lov om Euforiserende
Stoffer), enacted in 1955, Sweden's Narcotic Drugs Ordinance
(Narkotikaförordningen), and Norway's Law on Pharmaceuticals
and Toxins, section 6 (Lov om Legemidler og Gifter, kap. 6),
both enacted in 1964. Concerning this legislation see Laursen
Sweden and Denmark, ranging from fines to up to two years' imprisonment (Laursen 1992).

The years 1968-69 marked a vital turning point in Nordic drug policy. Big changes were happening in young people's culture. Long-haired lifestyle and youthful rebelliousness linked to smoking hash, became some of the key stereotypes society at large used to personify its younger generation. It was indicated in various ways, among others a growing number of police cases concerning the possession and use of cannabis, that its use was increasing. Cannabis use, in particular, became a more visible, often provocative public ostentation of the young, together with the fact that well-known people, pop musicians for example, did not go out of their way to conceal that they smoked hash, and were even sometimes charged and punished for doing so. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the urge for more restrictive drug control policy very soon became clearly expressed in stormy public debate. The political reaction to this was a qualitative revision of legislative structures whereby ordinary penal regulations were combined with special legislation in the attempt to fight drug criminality. Norway and Denmark added provisions for drug crime to their criminal law and Penal Codes, while in Sweden a separate drug law was enacted. In 1968, the maximum penalty for drug offense was intensified and raised to six years' imprisonment in Norway, and four years in Sweden where, just one year later, it was also raised to six years. Denmark, the last to raise its maximum sentence to six years' incarceration, did so in the middle of 1969 (Laursen 1992).

The simple fact that Denmark did this later is an indication of the divergence in control policy positions between Norway and Denmark. More intensive penalization was urged on in Denmark by two motivations. Firstly, to respond to Sweden's and Norway's request for legal harmonization, who held that a lower level of punishment in Denmark would lessen the effects of their more intense penalization. Secondly, Danish police and prosecution authorities feared that too large a difference in Nordic drug legislation would draw the international drug trade into Denmark. Additionally, more severe penalization would accommodate the prosecution authorities demand to conduct more thoroughgoing investigations to help contain the growing drug problem which was considered to be evident.

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While opinion in Norway, as will be shown further on, was more homogeneous, in Denmark skepticism about stricter control policy measures was clearly expressed. Skeptics were concerned that as a consequence of the higher penalties now applied, the police would have greater opportunity to use wiretapping, among other things, in order to administer justice. There were differing viewpoints about how dangerous drugs were. Another central issue was whether or not cannabis should be legalized. Denmark's highest office of prosecution, the Attorney General, acting upon a demand seconded by parliamentary majority, had to formulate a set of directives for the administration of justice in drug cases. The vital element was that mere use of drugs should not be criminalized, except in cases where the so-called hard drugs, such as heroin and the like, were being repeatedly used. Danes' more liberal attitude toward drug users was fundamentally different from the Norwegian position, which unambiguously criminalized drug use in 1968.

In spite of evident differences, there were many points of Nordic agreement both in the argumentation and, on the other hand, in the legislation that was in vigour at the beginning of the 1970s. The main argument for more severe penalization arose from a situation common to all three, characterized by the fact that judgement, on many occasions, called for the maximum penal sentence of two years in jail, and even more than that in cases that permitted it. It was presumed that the drug abuse problem would continue to grow, and that professional criminality involved in selling and importing illegal substances would become more serious. Over and above this stood an argument which was founded on the belief in the generally preventive effect of punishment, a belief that was especially expressed in Norway (Aubert 1968).

The Nordic countries' mutual viewpoint about the new cannabis culture, the instruments to be used in combatting drug abuse, together with their common fear of hard drugs like LSD and heroin, which were beginning to appear on the market, laid the foundation for a specially homogeneous Nordic position. This fundamentally consistent position was held during the following year. In contrast, the way the countries applied the various instruments of their mutual control policies, particularly with respect to the penalization of drug users and professional, behind-the-scenes drug suppliers, diverged into different implementations.

If one goes beyond the formally stated control policy of the Nordic countries, greater differences developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. With regard to treatment, methadone maintenance became a
central element in Danish drug treatment policy, while the other two countries either flatly refused to use it, or used it in very limited and strictly controlled ways. Concerning attitudes about treatment methods, including compulsory treatment, divergence can also be seen, especially between Denmark and Sweden. Major variations in the practice of court proceedings have also developed. These points of divergence have, over the past 30 years, led to extraordinarily intense and controversial debate between the Scandinavian countries.

Themes and texts

As could be expected, a consequence of this is that the character of public debate in Denmark has taken on a different appearance from that in Norway and Sweden. This study attempts to localize the differences in the drug debate discourses being voiced in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. An historical perspective is given in the effort to reveal some of the original, discursive paths in each country, and then show what connections there are between the discourse about drugs and drug control policy of the countries in question. The differences in their discourses are compared within a Scandinavian framework in order to examine how the national discourses and control policies have influenced each other. In this connection, the aim will be to find out where and to what extent the overall Scandinavian discourse about drugs has influenced Denmark's national discourse and control policy.

The theoretical fundaments and starting point of the analyses are, besides social constructivism mentioned before, discourse theory (Foucault 1973; Foucault 1977a, 1977b; Marti 1988; Purvis & Hunt 1993), which can be briefly explained as follows: A discourse is a relatively bounded set of arguments, situated within a field of debate, wherein proponents contend with one another to establish specific meanings, earn legitimacy and, ultimately, to mobilize consensus behind a belief and consequent action. One of the common modes of discourse is that in which proponents structure their arguments around various sets and poles, so as to condense what their debate will focus on, what is open for discussion, and what problems can be addressed. These fields thus become the primary sites of contention, where the proponents struggle over which poles should govern the debate, as control over them will endow some speakers to set agendas and thereby steer the direction and content of debate.
It is important to note that in its foucauldian variant, discourse does not deal with an object; it produces its own object. Rather than focusing on the actors and participants, discourse analysis looks to understand the discussions' processes and consequences, objectively. Nevertheless, both the actual discourse, its meaning or structure in speech and writing, and the contending advocates involved in it are equally essential. Therefore, the proponents' roles as protagonists and antagonists in the mutual process of debate must be understood, and the leading actors, who steer and set the agenda of discourse, brought to light and more thoroughly understood.

The modus operandi is simply to select texts and tapescripts which have proven to be epoch-making during the early stages of Scandinavia's contemporary discourses on the issues of drugs, in the period 1968-70, the aim being to observe the roots of the divergencies in discourse among Nordic nations. This discussion will serve as the background and provide a basis upon which to move on to an analysis of Scandinavian drug control policy, in the years from 1980-82, and, in particular, reveal the extent to which Danish control policy has been influenced, steered, by its Scandinavian neighbours. To illustrate the connections between their discourses and subsequent control policy, newspaper articles, especially the leading ones, together with extracts from parliamentary debates make up the most important parts of discourse to be analysed. Furthermore, these sorts of discourse and their authors, i.e. the journalists and politicians, are among the most important figures involved in setting the agenda of how society, as a whole, perceives and reacts to the phenomena of drugs. Concomitantly, the mass media, TV and radio present another arena for various other actors in the process of drug policy and control: first and foremost, the policing and judiciary systems. In this arena, the population can observe the proponents struggle for the acceptance and legitimization of their control policy measures as they are enacted and implemented in the nation's political and institutional infrastructure.

The selections of texts perform different functions and roles in forming governmental policy on how to control and prevent drug abuse. For instance, the function of a newspaper's front-page story is to create attention and announce an agenda for dealing with a societal issue. Thus, it helps people to construct an understanding of reality. The paper's leading article, on the other hand, performs a somewhat different function. Its purpose is, firstly, to compress the fields of discourse by selecting points and problems to address from what has been brought to people's attention. Secondly, the leading article provides the advocates in political discourse with 'ammunition' for
promoting their policy positions and formulations. Finally, these policy formulations are specified in parliamentary texts which, in turn, have often formed the basis for the drawing up of legislation (Eide & Hernes 1987; Laursen 1994).

An array of parliamentary debates from each of the three countries has been selected, where partly the formation of drug control policy, by itself, and partly the politicians will concerning how to deal with drug use, are studied.

To compare the findings here with discourse analyses of the countries' media arenas, the tactic has been to digest and analyse a capital city's major newspaper over a three-month period, leading up to a vital parliamentary debate. Admittedly, this hinges on the supposition that the media discourse performs more intensively in such a period, and that the interlacement of the public debate on drugs and the formulation of drug policy is especially strong, too. It is likewise presumed that the resulting public debate and political formulations become tightly woven together and that the mutual influence they have on each other tends to become especially intense. From another perspective, as often turns out to be the case, a given discourse concerning drugs may have its origins in an earlier context, but this fact is not centred on in this analysis. The three newspapers chosen are Norway's Dagbladet, Sweden's Dagens Nyheter, and Denmark's Politiken.

Scandinavia's actual drug policy took shape particularly during two waves of reinforcement of the Nordic countries' drug control measures. The first occurred during 1968-69, the second during the years 1980-82.

**Initial contradictions**

In this section, three parliamentary debates dating from the period 1968-69, one from each Scandinavian country, are exposed to content analysis. All three are concerned with initiatives to intensify Penal Code measures. Relevant media material is included in the process of analysis.

**Norway**

In May 1968, the Norwegian parliament enacted a totally new section in the country's Penal Code, which raised the maximum penalty for
drug crime to six years' imprisonment. Twenty-one MPs participated in this debate (Stortinget 1967-68, 386-399). It was characterized by an overwhelming unity of opinion concerning the necessity of and belief in Penal Code initiatives. Moreover, central to this Norwegian parliamentary debate was the position that punishment was the most important means of controlling drug abuse as well as providing a general, preventive effect on the problem of drugs. Thus, even users were to be punished. Only a few of the speakers differed from this line of reasoning, by mentioning that information and treatment, rather than punishment, would be the best way of dealing with drug users. Restrictive control policy was never even brought up for discussion and legalization of, for example, cannabis was only mentioned on the part of a few speakers, who fiercely ruled out the few drug legalization proposals that had been put forward in the public debate. Although consumption surveys showed only minor prevalence of cannabis use, and although Norwegian police had not yet produced clear evidence of international drug crime activity within Norwegian territory, politicians and other authorities regarded the situation as so threatening that quite extraordinary measures were called for by the Norwegian authorities. During another parliamentary debate in 1967, MP Erling Engan declared that

... [the persons who] inconsiderately make profit on the victims of drugs are enemies of society and must be treated as enemies of society (Stortinget 1966-67, 2099).

The danger of drugs was also a central element in the Norwegian debate of 1968. It was felt that Norwegian values were being attacked from the outside and that, therefore, the nation must be protected. This claim was expressed in the form of 'war' rhetoric and proved to be a decisive microstructural feature in the process of discourse.

Similarly, microstructural analysis of a speech by Berte Rognerud, one of the most active proponents of the repressive approach in Norwegian drug policy discourse, also reveals this type of war rhetoric (Stortinget, Odelstinget 1967-68, 390-392). Her contribution amounted to sixty sentences, twenty-one of which were characterized by war or 'danger to society' rhetoric. The following list, selected from the latter, isolates relevant sentence fragments that illustrate this feature of Mrs. Rognerud's rhetorical method of discourse:

- ... drug abuse ... and what can be done in order to stem it ...  
- ... full agreement that the evil must be combated ...  
- ... the almost explosive development of drug abuse ...  
- In my opinion, it is the dirtiest business ...
- It is a mortal act ...
- ... our young people are suffering, we must strike fiercely ...
- It is necessary to defend one's house in good time, and to remain on the alert ...
- Therefore this fight ought to be total ...
- ... give our courts the weapons they need in order to make the fight effective ...
- The fact that some people stand forward and openly justify using drugs is very dangerous because it makes prevention more difficult.
- ... then there is serious danger ...
- ... here there is a cause to start a counterattack ...

The issues of a major Norwegian daily newspaper, Dagbladet, published during the three months leading up to the 1968 debate in question have also been perused. Remarkably, only a small number of the articles deal with the drug problem. However, this might be due to various factors, the most obvious being that compared to other newspapers, Dagbladet did not refer to this very much. Another reason could be that the highpoints in the public Norwegian debate had perhaps taken place earlier.

Furthermore, no less remarkable is the fact that 90% of the articles on the drug problem in this same period appeared on the front-page, yet no debate articles were to be found. Almost all the front-page articles report police cases that reveal drug cartels trying to smuggle drugs into Norway, and the cases are always described very thoroughly.

A case in point which got long and thorough coverage for several days in April 1968 merits closer examination. Two Norwegian men, carrying an amount of amphetamine tablets estimated to be worth 4 million NOK on the retail drug market, were arrested in Stockholm by the Swedish police who believed the amphetamine to be destined for the Norwegian market. Besides the very thorough coverage the case received, a number of Norwegian and Swedish police representatives were given the opportunity to express themselves publicly as, for instance, the Swedish detective superintendent in the following quotation:

The shocking thing is that even this large lot, one of the biggest drug coups ever made in the Nordic countries, is only a drop in the ocean compared to what is pouring into Sweden. It comes from everywhere, from Finland, from Eastern Europe and from Southern Europe (Dagbladet, April 25, 1968).
With its central discourse position, even though this statement was referring to Sweden, it also performed a clear agenda setting function in Norway. This image of threat is called up again, as will be shown, in later Norwegian parliamentary debate.

Indeed, Norwegian discourse, at that time, was marked by an obvious character of moral panic. In Denmark and Sweden, the drug problem discourses were somewhat different.

**Sweden**

The Swedish parliament introduced, a few months earlier than Norway did so, an intensified drug legislation which included a doubling of the maximum penalty for drug offences, i.e. from two years’ to four years’ imprisonment.

Its debate on this legislation was unusual (Riksdagen 1968, 120-137), containing few but long arguments, the majority of which displayed a modified, analytical and technical attitude to the drug problem. The reason for this might be simply that the debate was atypical. However, comparing it with other Swedish parliamentary debates about drugs from a year earlier and over the next few years shows this not to be the case. As a matter of fact, some of these debates showed the same objective character, while others displayed much more emotional and entrenched ‘war’ discourse, rather than reasonable political debate. This shifting character of debate is very typical of Swedish drug discourse from 1967 to 1969. Perusal of the large, Swedish newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, confirms this erratic tendency. It would seem safe to say that, in the span of years before 1970, Swedish drug policy and debate were in an experimentalist phase which can be perceived as liberal, i.e. tolerant, free from the bigotry of dogmatic authoritarian attitudes. Sweden was in fact the first Nordic country to introduce methadone in the treatment of drug addiction.

Be that as it may, the main issue in this debate was the question of how to deal with drug users. A central quandary was whether drug users should only be obliged to undergo the compulsory Swedish drug treatment system, or whether their drug taking behaviour should also be criminalized and, therefore, penalized. Agreement was reached on raising the maximum penalty for serious drug crime, but almost no comments of a ‘Norwegian’ character were heard about drug dealers being the enemies of society. One can trace a
predominant optimism about the drug treatment philosophy, and in the great majority of their discourse, much time was spent on practical and technical solutions to the problems of resources and supervision within the drug treatment system.

**Denmark**

In May 1969 — a year after corresponding legislation had been enacted in Norway and Sweden — the Danish parliament introduced a new section in its Penal Code permitting up to 6 years' imprisonment for serious drug crime.

This was mainly the result of a parliamentary debate (Folketingstidende 1968-69, 3150-3171, 7866-7886) consisting of twenty contributions, in which the discourse went in many directions, both in terms of issues and positions. The debate can best be described as pluralistic and liberal, in the political sense of the words. Almost unanimous consensus was only achieved in agreeing to severe punishment for the really big, professional drug dealers. Notwithstanding this, it is still rather difficult to fathom why a single MP demanded for more severe penalization of drug offenders. The general Danish public's belief in the general preventive effect of severe penalization was not nearly as predominant as the Norwegians'. One can only feel, when viewed from the overall perspective taken by this study, that this parliamentary action was motivated either by a moral incentive or merely a pragmatic one like: "Anyway, our fellow Scandinavians have raised their maximum penalties — so why don't we?"

The position that the legal situation should not be altered and, in particular, that drug use alone should not be criminalized, was central to Danish discourse about resolving the drug problem. One MP, Mrs. Else-Merete Ross, phrased precisely the argument, which came to be and to some extent still is, in practice, the dominant position. She said:

> If the [drug] use is small, the police ignore it and concentrate, rightly, on the bigger [drug] assignments. In many cases, small-scale dealers who use drugs themselves must — for reasons of treatment — not be criminalized (Folketingstidende 1968-69, 3156).

In the debate it was agreed that the raising of the maximum penalty for professional drug crime should not have a downward effect, i.e. should not transmit more severe penalties to minor offences.
Another point was the differentiation between cannabis and other drugs, first and foremost heroin. Quite a number of the participants expressed considerable uncertainty about the damaging effect of cannabis, which led to many suggesting that it be left out of the Penal Code altogether. Many debators added that, in their opinion, punishment for illegal cannabis trafficking, including large scale professional cannabis trafficking, should be left under the somewhat milder Euphoriant Drugs Act which prescribed a maximum penalty of up to two years’ imprisonment. A significant minority of MPs present at the debate said that full legalization of cannabis should be given serious consideration. However, only a few could accept that this be done immediately. This instance of relatively liberal attitudes about cannabis use concurred well with the general trend, typical around 1970, of progressive sentiment in the Danish public concerning an array of controversial societal phenomena, such as the era’s youthful rebelliousness, the public right to free abortion, the open sale of pornographic literature, and the governmental act which granted students a say in the matters of higher educational institutions.

Perusal of the large, major Danish newspaper, *Politiken*, in the three months leading up to this debate, have yielded the following observations. The drug problem appeared many times in many different types of articles: in the third month alone there were 32 articles, nine of them front-pagers. From a discourse analysis perspective, this intense wave of journalism displays a multiplicity of positions, which resultingly blurs the issue, but which resembles the dynamic of the subsequent parliamentary debate. Nonetheless, the front-page journalism here is consistent with that in Norway. Mostly built up around sensational drug case articles, it sets an agenda and clearly formulates the wish for expansion of the drug control apparatus. Seen in another light, however, it substantiates how discrepant the Danish media’s drug discourse was at the time.

The parliamentary debate ended up, nonetheless, with an ample majority promoting a law text whose wording closely resembled the formerly enacted Norwegian and Swedish legislation, at least in spirit. To compensate, and in keeping with much of Denmark’s drug policy-making, especially the criminalization aspect of it, an instruction to its prosecution called for mild implementation, such that, a milder approach was determined with respect to the use of, trafficking in, and importation of cannabis as well as to use and small-scale selling of other drugs, including heroin.
As should be expected, this compensating instruction later became very controversial in Denmark, and met with a lot of criticism, first from Norwegian and afterwards, Swedish hardline advocates. According to them it was and still is a definitive example of Denmark's vague liberalism with regard to preventing the use of drugs in general and cannabis in particular.

The Scandinavian tug of war intensifies

During the Nordic Council's annual session in 1971 (Nordiska Rådet 1971, 261-278), several Norwegian politicians fiercely attacked drug use and control policies in Denmark during a debate about Nordic coordination in fighting drug abuse. The former attacked the latter's court practice, and urged Denmark to uphold its Nordic obligation of maintaining more repressive control policy measures and implementing them more effectively. Since Denmark forms the southern border of Scandinavia, its attitude to the drug problem is spoiling the Norwegian implementation of Nordic control policy, the Norwegian MPs claimed. The Swedish politicians remained more in the background, during Norway's contribution, but as will be shown further on, Sweden's attack on Danish drug policy turned out to be even more prominent.

This Norwegian criticism was the prelude to its tighter drug control methods and measures in 1971. Sweden followed up later with an equivalent increase in the penalization of serious drug crime, i.e. up to 10 years' imprisonment. A Swedish analysis has pointed out that the motive for enacting this increase was not so much due to an internal need of adapting this level of penalization to its law practices, but rather to an urge that was felt of coordinating penalization with Norway's (Solarz 1987, p. 24). Finland also introduced this 10-year maximum penalty in 1972.

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6 The Nordic Council is the forum for parliamentary cooperation between five sovereign states and three autonomous regions. The Nordic Council serves as the cooperation forum for 87 elected members from these various parliaments. Once a year these parliamentarians and ministers hold a meeting — in formal terms: a session — at a venue in one of the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council commenced its activities in 1952. The Nordic Council of Ministers, which was formed in 1971, is the organization for cooperation between the governments of the Nordic countries. Each of the countries appoints a member of its government, i.e. a minister, to serve as its minister of Nordic cooperation. Under the Council of Ministers there are several Executive Committees.
Initially, Denmark did not follow their Nordic neighbours’ move to increased penalization. In connection with the implementation of new drug legislation in 1969, the decision had been taken that the central issues of its drug policy would be reviewed again in 1971. This review was considered important especially with respect to ascertaining how dangerous cannabis really was, and evaluating the experience gained from having administered justice more mildly on those who were only charged with using drugs. These and ensuing debates, at first, presented no substantial motives for further changes in Danish drug legislation. True, many proponents within Denmark felt that the heterogenous state of Nordic legislation in dealing with serious drug criminality could not be tolerated indefinitely. But, in fact, largely bowing to the pressure to conform from its Nordic peer-group, Norway especially, the Danish government put forward a motion to increase its maximum penalty to 10 years’ imprisonment. The Folketing (Danish parliament) finally passed the motion in 1975. Yet, also on this occasion, the position on cannabis turned out to be a central issue. Although cannabis was redefined in Danish drug classification as an especially dangerous substance, in deliberating the new legislation it was formulated that the penal increase to 10 years should be applied in cases involving drugs like heroin and LSD, but not for cannabis (Kruse et al. 1989, 31). Thus, lawgivers again demonstrated that, in Denmark, cannabis was looked upon differently than were other drugs.

In spite of their divergent views on drug use and users, by the mid-1970s, all the Scandinavian countries had managed to put in vigour fairly uniform drug legislations. All had set the maximum penalty for serious drug criminality to 10 years’ imprisonment, with the exception of Denmark’s distinct formulation concerning cannabis. The graduation of overall penalization with respect to the various types of drug offence was also very similar, such that ordinary drug offences could be punished by up to two years’ imprisonment. The distinct aspect in Swedish legislation was, as of 1968, that it included a minimum penalty of six months’ imprisonment in cases of serious drug criminality, and for Norway’s part that, also as of 1968, the use of drugs was criminalized.

In official debates, the position demanding for more restrictive drug control policy, in the form of increased criminalization, was on the offensive. The explanation for this lies in examining various contributing factors: the patterns of growing drug use coupled with greater professionalism within the drugs market, increased availability of hard drugs, and the stern ideological and moral reactions to the phenomena of drug abuse. This urge for tighter control policy did not
make headway at the same pace in each country. Especially Norway, and contemporaneously Sweden, less prominently, were in the frontline of the general tendency towards a more stringent legal framework, while Denmark in the 1968-75 period always followed up on their precedences. It has been adequately shown that this procrastination should be blamed on a mere differentiated debate and more liberal positions with respect to certain specific drug policy items. A blatant example is that of maximum penalty regulation where Denmark could not and would not act independently with respect to the other countries practices, although it did not fully agree with them.

An assessment: the first conclusions
This first part of our study has been aimed at clarifying the general background underlying the divergencies in Scandinavia’s drug control policies. One is drawn to the conclusion that each nation keeping its drug policy in harmony with its public drug discourse has been the underlying influence behind Scandinavia’s divergencies, and that the resultant heterogeneity of Scandinavia’s collective drug discourse is the determining factor.

A review of the three countries’ parliamentary debates and the newspaper coverage of the drug problem’s issues and events, dating from the late 1960s, clearly manifests the differences in their discourses about drugs — especially between Norway and Denmark. Consequently, to find the roots of today’s divergencies in Scandinavian drug control policies, one must sift through what took place during the late 1960s.

In Norway, the overall drug policy and the repressive views behind it haven't changed much since the end of the 1960s. In fact, it has become even more repressive. Earliest of all, Norway moved into a rigorous frame of discourse, marked by a morally condemning attitude towards both the users and dealers of drugs. Drug use has been punished with a relatively high level of penalization, including cases of first offenders. Serious attempts at distinguishing different categories of drugs, or between drug use for socio-recreational motives on the one hand and heavy use on the other, have not been made. Later Norwegian policy has gained credence largely due to the moral panic that was characterized by discourse filled with fiery, war rhetoric. The views and positions of Norway’s drug control authorities, its politicians and general public have seemed to always concur on the drug problem. Comparatively, Sweden was quite indecisive in the late
1960s, but later adopted firmer views, that have turned out to be very similar to Norway's.

Turning now to Denmark, one can see no radical changes in its drug control policy since the early 1970s. Yet, one can justifiably claim that control practices have moved closer to Norway's and Sweden's. As mentioned, around 1970, Denmark's internal discourse strongly diverged from Norway's. The official Nordic debate was marked by struggles and breakdowns between different positions and views, that were accepted within their collective framework of discourse. While the core of Norwegian discourse, and later Swedish discourse, can be described as being consistently moved by moral, philosophic and ideological arguments, Danish discourse by nature was pluralistic, politically pragmatic, and marked by practical considerations of feasibility and consequences, which often became contradictory. The Danish parliamentary decision, in 1969, to instruct prosecutive authorities to follow a milder praxis in administering justice on cases of solely drug use is the best example of Denmark's pragmatic inclination and talent for compromise. This very decision has been the bone of contention that Norwegian and Swedish criticism has clung to in Danish control policy since the early 1970s until the 1980s.

In step with the development of its drug control system, particularly in the first-half of the 1980s, the scope of Denmark's internal debate has been narrowed down. The climate of debate has grown harder, although it is still possible today to propose arguments in favour of legalizing or of practical strides toward decriminalizing drug use. This would be much more difficult to do, almost unthinkable today, in Norway and Sweden.

Viewed from a broader sociocultural and ideological perspective, differences can be seen as arising from different societal traditions and norms within 'Nordic culture'. Such traditions can be noted in Denmark's fairly liberal attitude with respect to many forms of social deviance and indulgence. This confirms the observation (Jepsen 1992, 35) that public debate in Denmark has been influenced by the Danes' pragmatic or problem-solving approach to criminal justice policy, which can room both 'liberal' and 'conservative' arguments. This stands in opposition to Norwegian moralism, on the one hand, and the intellectual and technocratic 'social engineering' tradition in Sweden, on the other.

The Scandinavian developments in this field during the 1970s, described as presenting clear divergencies between Norway and Sweden versus Denmark, continued and strengthened during the
1980s. In Norway, argumentation in favour of punishment as a mutual means of preventing the phenomena of drugs has waxed and gradually converted into more and more severe penalization. Norway has set the highest maximum sentences and applies these severe penalties to all the various kinds of illegal drug trafficking offences (Thunved 1991). This restrictive approach has also been typical with respect to their drug addiction treatment methods. Norway halted all methadone treatment in 1976, and for a long time has refused to employ substitutive substances like methadone in drug addiction treatment. Indeed, only recently has Norway slackened this position and, on an experimental basis in Oslo, introduced methadone maintenance treatment for a small grouping of long-term drug abusers (Blindheim 1996).

Sweden proved to be the most adamant of a restrictive approach, and became even more than Norway the dynamic center for the formulation of restrictive, penalty-centred drug policy in Scandinavia. The following section focuses mainly on the Swedish position in the development of Norway’s and Sweden’s drug policies during the 1980s. In addition, it examines carefully the more long-term, fundamental and ideological policy changes in Sweden.

The Swedish approach

As was pointed out earlier (Christie & Bruun 1985), developments in Sweden’s drug policy and legislation have been more shifty, and confrontations between its various positions on policy and legislation have been tough. In the early stages, its parliamentary debates moved in a broad frame of discourse. Even way up into the 1970s, after heroin had entered the drug market, the acknowledged point of view held that one could classify cannabis and heroin differently. Policing efforts were primarily directed at controlling commercial drug crime, while users were offered treatment. The two leading positions in Swedish debate can be fixed to its two major poles: liberal drug policy represented by the National Association to Help Addicts (Riksförbundet för hjälp åt läkemedelsmissbrukare, RFHL), and the more restrictive one represented by the National Association for a Drug Free Society (Riks-förbundet narkotikafritt samhälle, RNS).

Around 1980, this approach saw radical changes under the influence of a campaign entitled: “No users, no use”. Accordingly, Sweden’s control policy was tightened up, respectively, in 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1988. This was done by means of more restrictive maximum and minimum sentences, intensified criminalization of those caught
trafficking drugs for purposes of gain as well as criminalization of using drugs (Solarz 1987, 25-33).

The establishment of a Swedish Drug Commission in 1982 marked an important juncture in the redefinition of Swedish drug policy. The mandate of this commission was the preparation of a cohesive control strategy plus an intensification of efforts in every field of the drug problem. The stated goal was to bring Sweden's drug phenomena back down to 1965 levels.

This commission supported the position formulated by the psychiatrist, Nils Bejerot, Sweden's most famous advocate of the restrictive approach to the drug problem (Christie & Bruun 1985, 123 f.). In a debate editorial published in Sweden's very influential *Dagens Nyheter* in 1981, Bejerot voiced the viewpoint that the liberal or 'soft' drug policy positions had been beaten down so much as to be virtually out of the question (Tham 1992, 86).

Nevertheless, in a committee report from 1983, the commission rejected a proposal to criminalize drug use alone, with the argument that this proposal was "... yet [another] initiative within the field of drug policy which attempted to show that action was being taken without actually doing anything. In general, such initiatives lead to more harm than good" (Narkotika-kommissionen 1983, 12). This argument was fundamental in changes made to the Swedish Drug Penal Code in 1985, but was swept away in 1988 when a large majority in the Swedish parliament passed a motion to criminalize the very use of drugs. From then on mere use could be punished with fines, and possession for personal consumption, cannabis included, could still incur a sentence of 6 months' imprisonment.

Criminalizing the mere use of drugs was considered to be consistent with the current redefinition of Swedish drug control strategy. The legislation enacted in 1988, marked the fulfilment of the strategy position aimed at fighting drug use and the drug trade at a 'street' level — making users a main target of policing efforts. This observation can be substantiated by two quotations from Swedish parliamentary debate on the 1988 legislation. The social-liberal, Karin Ahrland, explained the core of this strategy, as follows:

> Of course, criminalizing drug consumption is not the only way of solving the drug problem, but it is no doubt a necessary part of the whole strategy. As consumers are the central precondition of the market, and practically the only unreplaceable link in the chain of actors within drug traffic, the single person's possession
and abuse must be a central target of policy implementation in this field (Riksdagen 1987-88, 122).

The Conservative MP, Jerry Martinger, wanting to take it a step further by sentencing users to time in prison, followed up by explaining the purpose of this strategy:

A drug crime act, by which we can get users sentenced to time in prison should contribute to our intent of applying effective pressure on drug users' milieu. Thereby, we would press those who need treatment towards the necessary treatment, press those not in need of treatment, i.e. the occasional and first-time users, out of the market, and prevent as many as possible from starting to use drugs (ibid., 122).

Martinger's argument was turned into practice when, in 1993, the penalty for drug use was set as fines or up to 6 months' imprisonment. Besides criminalizing the mere use of drugs and the more restrictive practices in charging cases of this, during the 1980s, Tham sees the steadily heavier weight of policing used at the 'street' and user milieu level of drug control efforts, especially in the second-half of the 1980s, as indicators of the shift in Swedish drug control policy (Tham 1992, 86).

These developments in policy and the attitude behind them has received strong and penetrating support from the Swedish public. It is based on the vision of drugs and drug use as an epidemic, which will go on steadily spreading throughout society to more and more of its youth if restrictive attacks on it are not made. Cannabis is seen as a particularly great risk because it acts as the corridor to heroin and other hard drug use, and this, in turn, is the cause of criminality, misery and death.

Thus, both use and abuse become threats to society. This argumentation is the background to 'street' level policing efforts against drug use and users — an effort where the leading actors in Swedish drug discourse have manifestly become more radical both in form and content. To close this section, attention will be given to a couple of meaningful events and speeches made over recent years.

The Swedish police force has been a very dynamic actor in the formulation of their own role in fighting drugs, and in influencing Swedish drug policy. In 1989, they issued a Police manifesto on the battle against drug crime — Knocking drugs out ("Manifest från polisen om kampen mot narkotikabrottsligheten — Rakt på Knarket")
wherein, formulated in 88 propositions, they strive to define their roles, significance and duties. In the sections under the slogan titles "Being a pusher will become impossible" and "Being a drug abuser will be difficult", it is implied that every drug abuser is presumably a pusher (Rikspolisstyrelsen 1989, 25). Jonas Hartelius, general secretary of the Swedish Carnegie Institute, in a pamphlet entitled "Fighting Drugs on the Homefront" which he wrote for the National Police Force in 1992, underpinned the position proposing intensified policing, as follows:

A specialized group in each police district should be assigned the priority task of permanently cracking down on small-scale drug dealing. This effort can be very significant in reducing demand in the drug market, and hindering the spread of drug abuse. The entire drug milieu should be kept under heavy pressure, permanently (Hartelius 1992, 73).

Promotion of Swedish drug policy has typically been staged by setting up big, government-supported conferences, along with the continuous work of a central commission. An Action Group against Drugs ("Aktionsgruppen mot Narkotika") was established by the government concurrently with the issuing of a report in 1991, concerning the intensified efforts at all levels of authority. The report approved of Sweden's restrictive control policy, and outlined the further expansion of its already large social treatment system for drug abusers.

Sweden has steadily held to the goal of a drug free society as the guiding principle for its drug policy, which has led it to an outlook where it sees the rest of the world and other countries drug policies as a threat to itself. Drugs are seen as the adversary of the Swedish People's Home ("Folkhemmet Sverige") and its values, and as a threat from outside its borders (Tham 1992, 94).

The European debate on the legalization of drugs has, increasingly over the last few years, been seen as this ominous threatening image. The chairman of "Action Group against Drugs", Bertil Göransson, thus wrote in the introduction to the aforementioned report that

... increased knowledge about the legalization movement can help us sharpen our vigilance towards similar tendencies in our own land (Regeringens Aktionsgrupp mot Narkotika 1991, 6).

This attitude was adamantly followed up in a chapter of the report, written by the Swedish Chief of Police, Björn Eriksson, under the heading "The plea for their decriminalization is as dangerous as drugs
themselves" (ibid., 24). Hartelius reels off a number of coming threats in the drug field and thereby aligns the legalization debate with new and potent drugs like crack and ecstasy, with the spreading of drug abuse to the young, and with the contagion of HIV (Hartelius 1992, 62-71).

Sweden's preoccupation with the legalization debate has, in addition, led it on to holding and planning an array of government sponsored conference activities, including an international conference and exhibition, "Europe against Drugs", in May 1993, which was pitted against the EU's legalization debate and, in particular, against Holland's harm reduction line. According to a press release the Minister of Social Affairs, Bengt Westerberg, speaking at the conference, stated that the meeting and the exhibition

... have the goal of showing our strength in the war we are waging against drugs, and in the last two years, particularly against those who promote the legalization of drugs (Dagens Nyheter, May 25, 1993).

According to the newspaper, Bengt Westerberg referred to several European cities, presumably having in mind cities that had aligned with the so-called Frankfurt Resolution in 1990 or joined the initiative "European Cities on Drug Policy", who are all in favour of decriminalizing drug use. In 1994, Stockholm City hosted a counter-conference attended by several European cities and capitals aligned with the initiative "Cities against Drugs", who strongly oppose the Frankfurt Resolution (Stoffmisbruk 6/93, 16).

The above quoted declarations are almost undisputed in Sweden's drug discourse. The positions are official, upheld by leading authorities on most government levels, and are saliently and actively promoted in both their national and the international public context. In contrast to this, such attitudes and positions can often be found in Denmark, but they are not nearly so dominant, perhaps even isolated, in the official Danish standpoint on the drug problem.

**Nordic alarm**

Today, Norway and Sweden can be found leading the group of European countries that maintain the most restrictive drug policies. Against the background of the preceding description, it should be quite evident that the attitudes and positions that took root in Northern
Scandinavia during the 1980s would inevitably lead to consequences, both for Nordic collaboration and for Danish drug policy.

The debate at the 1971 session of the Nordic Council resulted in a recommendation proposing a harmonization of Scandinavian legislation and legal practice with respect to drug cases. During the 1982 Nordic Council session, the Swedish chairman for the social and environmental committee, Rune Gustavsson, stated that, after the harmonization of Scandinavian legislation at the same high level, i.e. ten years' imprisonment for serious drug crime, it was possible to claim, in 1975, that the recommendation of 1971 was fulfilled.

Especially Norway but also Sweden wanted to conduct an even more effective and like-minded effort against drug abuse, given the fact that in the period between 1975 and 1981 "an enormous increase of cannabis and other drugs had taken place" (Nordiska Rådet 1982, 301).

Indeed, from 1977 to 1979, various indicators of the extent of drug use and abuse in Scandinavia showed an increase. Due to this development, from 1980 to 1985, Norway and Sweden had begun reinforcing drug control and police efforts against drugs. The acknowledgement of a big increase in the prevalence of cannabis and other drug substances, which was presented at the Nordic Council's 30th session in 1982, was realistic if one presumes that increases in the traditional indicators for prevalence and use of drugs are valid proof of this assessment.

The quantity of confiscated cannabis in Norway almost tripled, from 29 kg. in 1976 to 104 kg. in 1979 (Olsson 1989, 119). In the same period, confiscation of cannabis in Sweden increased four-fold, from ca. 300 kg. in 1976 to ca. 800 kg. in 1979 (Nordiska kontaktmannaorganet ..., 1984). This concurred with that of Denmark. In Norway the number of persons charged for drug offences rose from 702 in 1976 to 953 in 1979. Those charged according to drug legislation in Sweden increased from just under 2,700 to over 3,315 over the same period (ibid.). The toll of deaths resulting from drug use is one of the most valid indicators of the drug situation. The number of these rose markedly in all three countries during this same short period, in Denmark from 62 to 125, in Norway from 8 to 35, and in Sweden from 46 to 66 (ibid.).

Resultingly, at the 1982 Nordic Council session, Swedish and Norwegian parliamentarians, representing the whole political spectrum, together with some right-wing Danish representatives,
proposed the preparation of a common Nordic initiative. In 1985, this motion was passed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, including the Danish signatories, under the designation Action Programme — Drug Free North (“Aktionsprogrammet för ett narkotikafritt Norden”).

This initiative had been adopted by the social and environmental committee of the Nordic Council, and was put forward and passed as a recommendation in its 1982 session. The recommendation consisted of three basic points:

1) All Nordic countries should actively prevent the admission of any kind of drug, except when it be indicated for medical purposes;

2) The resources for relevant police and customs services should be increased, and Nordic cooperation in fighting drug abuse and drug crime should be intensified;

3) Harmonization of Nordic drug legislation should be supported.

Norway had already extended its maximum penalty for serious drug crime from 10 to 15 years’ imprisonment in 1981, on the morally grounded argument that society must emphasize its condemnation of drug crime by applying even stronger penalties for it. Its drug legislation was revised again in 1984. While the changes in 1981 had only effected the penalization of serious drug crime, the 1984 revision included this and structural changes as well. Indeed, legislation as a whole was reorganized, such that minor drug offenses which had been judged under its Law of Pharmaceuticals and Toxins became crimes included in the Norwegian Penal Code. From now on the Penal Code included every kind of commercial activity with drugs, with only use and possession for use being left under the Pharmaceuticals’ law. Possession for personal use, in contrast to storage, which was transferred to the Penal Code, was interpreted very strictly. The distinguishing limit came, in practice, to be between one to two doses, i.e. two doses or more was rated as storage, while less than this remained possession for personal use (Hansen 1988, 28).

In 1984, Norwegian drug penalization was also extended, in general. The maximum penalty for possession and use was set to six months’ imprisonment. Thus, according to Norwegian penalization principles this offense now became a crime. The maximum penalty for the most serious drug crimes involving aggravating circumstances was raised to twenty-one years’ imprisonment, and a minimum sentence of three years was introduced for serious drug crime. The argumentation for increased penalization in Norway’s public and official debate followed, in general, the usual lines. Thus, its 1984 revision of legislation put in
practice the urge for more severe criminalization across the board, i.e. against users, pushers, and big-time dealers, whereas new legislation in 1981 had only been aimed at serious drug crime.

Concurrently, Sweden was reconsidering its own Drug Penal Code. Raising the maximum penalty for serious drug crime was discussed but not carried out. In 1981, however, the zeal for a more restrictive approach was put into practice by raising the minimum penalty for serious drug crime to a minimum of two years’ imprisonment, and by raising the penalty for small and minor cases to three years’ imprisonment. The Swedish parliament discussed raising the maximum penalty, but refrained from doing so on the grounds that the maximum sentence in the Swedish Penal Code was ten years’ imprisonment. In fact, the upper half of it was seldom applied and, moreover, the Penal Code included the possibility of even longer sentences in cases of repeated offence and other more serious crimes. Furthermore, Sweden relinquished its liberal legal practice of not raising charges in cases of possession for personal use (Laursen 1992, 78-81).

The official debate concerning the changes to be made in the Swedish Drug Penal Code in 1983 and 1985 was, as mentioned earlier, marked by the particular issue of criminalizing drug use. Yet, this change was not enacted until 1988. The Swedish Minister of Justice had raised the objection, in 1983, that the description of the punishable deeds was still not clear enough. Accordingly, certain activities, which earlier had been charged as possession, were set off as distinct activities, especially those with the intent of selling drug substances. People involved in the handling of drugs, had earlier been charged with possession, even though the handling was with the intent of selling the drugs. Consequent to this specification, the possibility of sanctioning both collusion in and attempts to sell drugs illegally were improved. A number of other activities, which earlier had not been separately charged, similarly became criminalized. Moreover, with the aim of curtailing the expansion of the drugs trade, an additional formulation was applied, making middleman activities, e.g. assisting the contact between buyer and seller, also a separate, criminal offence. What one must answer for in cases of so-called grave negligence were spelled out in a new paragraph (§ 3a) of the Drug Penal Code. For those who ought to have known but had not realized they were colluding in illegal drug trading, a penalty of fines and up to six month's imprisonment was set (Solarz 1987, 28 ff.).

The positions taken in 1983 by the earlier mentioned Swedish Drug Commission became the basis for the legislative changes undertaken
In 1985. To show clearly how serious illegal handling of drugs was, the law's specification (in § 2), drug misdemeanour, was substituted by the term "minor drug crime". Simultaneously, the penalization involved, i.e. fines only, was modified to include both fines and up to six months' imprisonment. Concomitantly, punishment by fine was removed from the paragraph concerning ordinary drug crime. The reasoning behind these changes was that it was considered important that drug users, who were repeatedly found to be in possession of small quantities of drugs for personal use, be persecuted more effectively. Nevertheless, following the passage of this modified law, the Minister of Justice gave the instruction that the penalty of imprisonment, prescribed in §2, should seldom be used and, moreover, that imprisonment should only be sentenced upon those activities which had earlier been classified as ordinary drug crimes (Solarz 1987, 76).

Thus, in the first half of the 1980s, a notable tightening of control policy in both Norway and Sweden occurred, and though the tendency in both countries was the same, the means taken to implement it were somewhat different. Norway opted to give its control policy more penal weaponry, in general, for punishing users as well as dealers and importers. Sweden, on the other hand, refined and respecified the breadth of its drug control policy, in keeping with the earlier mentioned urge for more effective control of drugs users.

**Norway's and Sweden's offensive debates on Danish drug policy**

So far, this study has only touched upon Nordic criticism of Danish drug policy. As its analyses have shown, this criticism reached a highpoint in 1971 when Sweden and Norway were about to enact more severe penalization for serious drug crime. The following analysis will focus on another highpoint in Nordic criticism which took place at the beginning of the 1980s. Indeed, starting from the last few months of 1980 until the beginning of 1982, Norway's and Sweden's criticism of Denmark's drug control policy played an important role in the development and implementation of both tighter control policy and the general upgrading of efforts to stem drug misuse in Norway and Sweden. This new episode in the Scandinavian tug of war on drugs was characterized by a wave of intensified and sharper criticism, which, as it could not be publicly launched against Danish drug control policy per se, was fired specifically at an only-one-of-its-kind
phenomenon in Danish society, Free Town Christiania ("Fristaden Christiania").

For Norway and Sweden, Free Town Christiania became the epitomizing symbol of Denmark's liberal attitude to drug policy. This 'free zone', which had earlier been the site of old military barracks, was originally founded in 1971 by a group of people whose intention was to develop an alternative way of life through societal experimentation. Ever since, Free Town Christiania has often been the hapless target of exaggerated, ideological, public debates. Up through the 70s, the Free Town gained notoriety on account of the more or less open sale of drugs there, which the authorities were loath to crack down on. Furthermore, because it is situated close to the border of southwestern Sweden, and owing to frequent reports in the media of Norwegian and Swedish young people pilgrimaging to Christiania to buy drugs, the Free Town became an obvious target for criticizing Danish drug policy, especially on the part of Sweden.

The Free Town has divided Danish public opinion into two warring camps. One camp has maintained that this area is full of crime, primarily drug crime, along with illegal settling and trade. This camp, led by right-wing parties in Denmark's parliament, the Folketing, has tried to close Christiania down several times, in particular on the grounds of the illegal sale of cannabis and other illegal drugs.

The other camp, comprising social democratic, social-liberal and left-wing parties, has tried to permit the Free Town to go on as a social experiment — but within a lawful framework. They recognized that Christiania was plagued by major social problems and that it could only survive if the Copenhagen authorities and the settlers of Christiania cooperated to normalize conditions there, i.e. by reducing the drug trade occurring within the zone.

Now and then, Free Town Christiania has been — and still is — the scene of tough confrontation between its settlers and the police. In an attempt to rid it of drugs, Copenhagen's police force has been asserting an extremely restrictive line, and resulting given the

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7 Translator's note: a literal translation of the Danish expression 'fristaden' would be 'free state' or 'free city'. However, given its geographical location, i.e. within greater Copenhagen, and relatively small surface area, it is considered more appropriate to translate this expression, both in the text and quotations, into English as 'Free Town'.

picture that conditions for police work within the Free Town are very tough.

The Danish police forces' perception of Christiania is aptly summarized in the following quotation taken from a leading article about it in their major journal:

If you look at Christiania today, you must acknowledge the depiction 'the market of misery'. The small crowd of idealists has been reduced to almost nothing, while the other group has grown alarmingly into a motley crowd consisting of more or less criminal drug abusers, male and female assaulters, alcoholics, and a substantial quota of foreigners who may have several reasons for liking Christiania more than their native countries (Dansk Politi 1981).

In the following section of this study, the Norwegian and Swedish public debates as well as debates under the auspices of the Nordic Council, will be analysed more closely.

Norway's point of view is well exemplified in the following elements and quotations taken from the Norwegian parliamentary debate in November 1981. Christiania and Danish drug policy are mentioned in about one-half of this debate's twenty-four contributions.

To begin with, it was felt to be essential to foster a clearly negative attitude to drugs and drug use, and, by means of centrally directed campaigns, to fight down any kind of acceptance of drugs. In advocating this position, the Norwegian MP, Morten Steenstrup said:

Creating a clear attitude, among everyone of us, against drugs is perhaps the most important defense against these destructive, poisonous substances. [...] Therefore, it is very urgent that we now get reports to the effect that clear weakenings in the attitude to narcotic substances have been occurring. Whether social acceptance of cannabis is growing is of special concern. We must declare a 'war of attitude' against those who try to foster social acceptance of cannabis and marijuana. The whole parliament should insist upon the fact, here and now, that such a weakening will not be tolerated (Stortinget 1981, 742).

The message comes through very clearly and unambiguously. We find the same vocabulary and rhetoric as was earlier observed in Berte Rognerud's parliamentary contributions from 1968, based on
concepts like 'defence', 'destructive', 'war', and so on. Consensus on this position is sought after as if one were speaking of a military war situation, a war situation created within the population through the obstacle of "weakenings", acceptance and leniency towards any opponents or opposition to it.

This fundamentalistic attitude has been typical in the Norwegian drug discourse. It has been manifested particularly in situations involving disagreement on drug policy whenever the acceptance of cannabis appears to be growing, and whenever an increased use and misuse of drugs is presumed to be occurring. As in the early 1970s, their positioning of attitudes with respect to Danish drug discourse and policy appears to be a basic tactic in the Norwegian strategy of debate.

The next sample shows what a useful object of criticism Christiania was to substantiate Norway's position on Danish policy, in a long diatribe by the Norwegian MP, Georg Apenes:

What the Danes have done — through the attitude of the parliament to what was supposed to be the romantic experience of Christiania — is legitimize not only the use of, but also the trade in and propagandizing for cannabis. [...] The stunning and depressing thing is that Denmark, with authorities and politicians in the lead, hangs up a carpet of smoke around a part of the kingdom, and declares this part a sort of homeland for people who do not approve of certain Danish legal regulations. This situation, wherein a piece of Danish territory is protected from the law enforcement of the surrounding State, is grotesque. Concern for the decay of Danish youth, sanctioned under the sign of pluralism and liberalism, lies outside my authority as a Norwegian MP. But in the same way as we are concerned by the fact that our physical environment is being spoiled by pollution from other countries, we also have the right and obligation to intervene on sources of pollution other than those of sulphur dioxide (Stortinge 1981, 753).

The meaning of this message is simply that Danish drug policy, accepted by the Danish authorities, is harming and corrupting Norway’s young people. And cannabis takes on the role of an enemy in two ways, in that it is also seen as something coming from outside Norway (Christie & Bruun 1985).

In condemning Denmark, Sweden's discourse was even sharper than Norway's. In December 1981, Sweden's parliament debated drug
issues specifically with reference to Denmark (Riksdagen 1981-82, 43 and 63). This debate was a sort of premonitory symptom, leading up to the passage, in May 1982, of a number of Swedish initiatives against alcohol and drug misuse (Riksdagen 1981-82, 153). At the suggestion of the social-liberal People's Party's MP, Esse Petersson, the Swedish parliament conducted the said debate under the agenda title: "About initiatives against the spread of drugs from Denmark".

This debate contained seventeen contributions, in one of which Esse Petersson set the tone for debate:

The drug hole ("narkotikaträsket") of Christiania is a stinking, disease abscess ("varböld") that is spreading infection to a large area of the [Scandinavian] Sound. This tragic reality cannot be covered up or explained away by the more or less questionable comments scattered in the Danish government's election campaign. The free handling of drugs in Christiania is not only a Danish problem but a matter for the whole North. First and foremost, the trading of cannabis, destined for the Nordic market, is being channelled to an increasing extent through Christiania. Furthermore, drugs are grown right out in the open in this so-called Free Town, and the authorities do not seem to be reacting with any further commitment to clean up the destructive drug mess which is taking place in Christiania, and of which Christiania is a symbol (Riksdagen 1981-82, No. 43 and 66).

The mood and frame of discourse set by Esse Petersson was followed up by many other speakers in the course of this debate. The criticism expressed was massive, and the MPs concentrated on these points:

1) The idea of drug legalization is gaining ground because anti-cannabis discourse is lacking in the debate;
2) Not only cannabis but also hard drugs can be found in Christiania;
3) Denmark offends international agreements when it allows the sale of cannabis in Christiania;
4) The Danish attitude towards drugs is too liberal, and its authorities are too accepting of its use;
5) 80% of all cannabis in southern Sweden comes from Christiania;
6) Danish customs control in the Baltic Sea area is too lax;
7) Denmark's punishment for drug cases is too mild;
8) Denmark — unlike Sweden — does not perceive cannabis as the 'way in' to heroin use. Regarding the hazards of using drugs, Denmark distinguishes between cannabis and hard drugs.
When this parliamentary debate is analysed in terms of the meaningful, cohesive views and statements it contains, there are three conciliatory views on the issue, all of which were stated in the contribution of Karin Söder, Sweden's Minister of Social Affairs. The first statement referred to the fact that Denmark was conducting counteractions against hard drugs, especially through an intensified effort against serious drug crime. Secondly, the difficult aspect of Denmark's geographical location as the gateway for drug smuggling to the other Scandinavian countries was underlined. It was pointed out that this situation will demand enormous resources if it is to be dealt with adequately. Thirdly, Denmark is contributing to the efforts of Nordic police coordination, namely, by making large seizures of drugs (Riksdagen 1981-82, No. 43, 74 and 79).

In spite of these conciliatory views — which only make up a very small part of the debate — it is quite evident that, on the whole, the Swedish parliament conducted a debate containing a lot of very serious and, in tone, very emotional criticism of Danish drug control policy.

These parliamentary debates in Oslo and Stockholm were a clear prelude to the passing of the recommendation for the planning and implementation of an 'action programme' entitled A Drug Free North, at the March 1982 Nordic Council session. In this Nordic Council debate, Norwegian and Swedish criticism of Denmark was just as massive, and led with virtually the same argumentation as had been used in their preceding national debates. It was a bit more subdued in tone, likely due to the fact that the Danish government, aside from a few verbal reservations, had expressed support for the thinking behind the recommendation, during a meeting of Nordic Ministers of Social Affairs and Ministers of Justice, on February 19, 1982.

What these reservations implied was that, although the Danish government was willing to agree to a harmonization of minimum and maximum penalties, it did not believe that more rigorous penalties did or would have any conclusive preventive effects (Danish Minister of Justice, Ole Espersen, Nordiska Rådet 1982, 315). Half the Danish MPs present voted in favour of, and the other half against the recommendation at this session of the Nordic Council. The recommendation was nevertheless passed by a large majority because all the Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic MPs, except for one, voted approvingly (ibid., 317).

Needless to say, the mass media of Sweden and Norway supported their governments' and parliamentarians' 'Action' for more restrictive practices of drug control.
During the six months leading up to the March 1982 Nordic Council's debate, the major Norwegian daily newspaper, *Dagbladet*, frequently focused on 'the Danish problem'.

In this period, the paper's columns were not dominated by any internal, Norwegian drug issues, presumably because Norway had already carried out its own extensions of most of the maximum and minimum drug offence penalties in 1981. Instead, much comment in the columns of *Dagbladet* was given to issues concerning Nordic drug policy collaboration and the 'Danish question'.

The debate about the Danish problem was intensified by a leading article in connection with the abovementioned Norwegian parliamentary debate, which exemplifies well the Norwegian media's viewpoint:

> To the North, Christiania is a marketplace for the freetrade of narcotic drugs. This depressing fact does not only regard Denmark. Everything points to the fact that many of the narcotic drugs that are being traded in Norway as well as in Sweden come from Christiania. Therefore, it is time for the authorities and public opinion in these countries to become aware of this (*Dagbladet*, November 26, 1981).

This leader ends with a strong appeal that the whole question be taken up at the March 1982 Nordic Council session. Afterwards came a series of Nordic, high-level, political and ministerial meetings. A discursive climax was reached in a large comment in *Dagbladet* about the debate at the March 1982 Nordic Council session, in which a leading article (*Dagbladet*, March 6, 1982) gave a conclusion to Norwegian discourse on the Danish problem, especially with regard to the harmonization of legal practices and the mutual position on cannabis:

> Denmark still represents the minimum with respect to drug penalties in the North. [...] Therefore, it is natural that Denmark now intensifies its legal practices in such cases.

*Dagbladet* did agree that Denmark's representatives might be right in saying that continuing a heavy focus on Christiania might derail the debate, but

> [...] it will be worse if Denmark's attitude to drugs and especially cannabis is ambiguous: on one hand a questionable liberalism,
while on the other clear rules against the using and trading of cannabis.

The article's own conclusion was that the passing of the Nordic Council's anti-drugs recommendation would oblige every Scandinavian country to re-examine their policies — and increase their efforts to rid the North of drugs, altogether. These two leading articles, as well as other comments in Dagbladet, clearly supported the Norwegian offensive on the Danish problem, even though this newspaper is regarded as being a liberal one. Throughout this period, representatives for the Danish government, i.e. the Social Democratic Party, and Norwegian politicians were consistently cast in the same roles: Denmark in a defensive position, with Norway waging an offensive attack. This set up was shown from an interesting angle when some Danish police force representatives showed their support for the Norwegian position.

During the six months leading up to the March 1982 Nordic Council session, there is an obvious concordance between the image of the Danish problem in Norway's Dagbladet and Sweden's Dagens Nyheter. The massive coverage of both Christiania and Danish drug policy is well exemplified by two leading articles.

One, published in Dagens Nyheter on the day after the Swedish parliamentary debate that had centred on the spread of drugs from Christiania, commented on the Danish attitude, using figures of speech like: the phenomenon was a symptom of 'rottenness' in Denmark. The only extenuating argument was that the drug trade was not limited to its starting point in Christiania — the entire North had become a marketplace for it (Dagens Nyheter, December 5, 1981).

In the Dagens Nyheter issued after the debate in the Nordic Council session, the leading article's conclusion was that the agreement on the harmonization of legal practices was especially directed at Denmark. According to it, this harmonization agreement was necessary. This was clearly put across in the following argument, which exemplifies well the essence of Nordic criticism towards Denmark:

But it is obvious that the authorities in Denmark are doing too little, and that this relative passivity is principally due to its viewpoint that there are different kinds of drugs. In a recent newspaper quotation, Anker Jørgensen (the Danish Prime Minister — LL) has said that, according to the Danish view of
things, cannabis is not a narcotic substance (Dagens Nyheter, March 5, 1982).

Anker Jørgensen had made this statement at a meeting of Scandinavian Social Democratic parties in connection with the Nordic Council session. This provoked a lot of attention, and combined with the planned ostentation of a token piece of cannabis from the platform, became the cliché of Danish indifference in the drugs issue.

The recommendation passed in March 1982, during the 30th session of the Nordic Council, was the concrete expression of the fact that the rearmament against drugs that had been achieved in Norway and Sweden in 1980-81, was now to be imposed throughout Scandinavia. In Norway and Sweden, the government, parliament, press and, apparently, the public too thought that the restrictive precautions already taken could be retained and further developed — only if Denmark changed its positions with regard to decisive drug policy issues.

And although the recommendation's proposals were meant for adoption by all five Nordic countries, a central message in it was clear, namely, that the liberal attitude prevalent in Denmark towards cannabis, in particular, and towards the use of drugs, in general, must be tightened up. Furthermore, penalization for the handling of drugs, whether individual use or the smuggling of large lots, must be raised to the Norwegian and Swedish level. In addition, drug control policing must be extended, along with intensified cooperation between Nordic countries in anti-drug efforts and programmes.

Reactions and developments in Denmark

Just as in Norway and Sweden, public and official debate in Denmark about the efforts to be made against drug use and misuse flared up strongly during the years 1980-82. Danish authorities felt they could prove the serious worsening of the drugs situation by referring to the numbers in drug seizures, drug cases and drug treatment. Thus, in 1980-81, the police racked up big increases in the number of major cases involving the trading and smuggling of large lots and of minor cases of small-time pushing and possession for own use (Rigspolitichefen 1982, 43).

The Danish MP, Ole Henriksen (Socialist People’s Party) had bought the cannabis in Stockholm.
In the following section, an attempt is made to deduce in what ways the process and formation of Norwegian and Swedish drug discourse affected Denmark's drug control policy debates, legislation and legal practices.

Starting from the period between November 1980 and June 1982, the Folketing, the Danish parliament, conducted nine debates on the subject of drugs, in which its political right wing proposed adopting a more restrictive drug policy line. Moreover, in March 1982, it held a debate concerning Free Town Christiania which focused on its future in terms of the drugs problem. Most of the bills proposed were voted down by a majority in the Folketing. Thus, the only bill that passed was the one proposing the inclusion of a new section in the Danish Penal Code concerning money gained from drug traffic. This bill had been put forward by the Social Democratic minority government under Anker Jørgensen.

The drug problem together with the concentrated discourse about it at parliamentary levels received relatively widespread coverage in the Danish media. The number of chronicles and debate articles increased manifold in the period 1979-82 with respect to that of 1975-78 (Aviskronikindeks 1975-82, Dansk Tidsskriftsindeks 1975-82). Similarly, drugs received prominent attention in the news coverage of societal problems. This can be adequately demonstrated by making a quantitative content analysis of such coverage in the Danish newspaper, Politiken, from October 1, 1981 to May 1, 1982. This period coincides with Norway's and Sweden's restrictive drug policy breakthroughs, and with the peaking of drug discourse in Danish parliamentary debates. The news coverage in this paper alone amounts to 111 articles about drugs, thirteen of which were top-stories featured on the front-page. This coverage was fully dominated by representatives of the police-based control system who appeared as leading actors in 64 out of the 111 articles.

The role of the police force as problem-finders and solution-givers with respect to the drug problem becomes even more dominant if the 13 front-page articles are taken into account. They figure prominently in 12 of these articles, and their comments never received any oppositional commentaries.

The articles' headlines are listed below:

1) He Got 46 Years in Thailand
2) Cocaine on the Danish Market
3) Too Few to Stop Drugs
4) She Knew Too Much
5) Hash Stashed in the Gutter
6) Severe Judgement in Drug Case
7) Cocaine Is the Big Problem
8) Car Carrying Hash Shipment Hunted
9) Accused of Professionally Killing Drug Prostitutes
10) Extra Drug Squad in Kastrup
11) Professional Killer Gets Life Imprisonment
12) 6 Million Kroner Drug Coup in Kastrup

These headlines reflect the panic concerning cocaine, the focus put on the drug control system’s results, and the need for development of police-based drug control. Thus, there is little to substantiate a weakening in the Danish public’s concern or attitudes, as represented by the media, about drug misuse or control. On the contrary, study of the media coverage of these issues in Denmark shows it to be more intense than that studied in Norway and Sweden.

Thus, Swedish and Norwegian criticism coincided with an exceptionally heated climate of public and official debate in Denmark. On several occasions, Nordic criticism was used by the right-wing opposition in parliament to strengthen their positions, forcing the government and left-wing opposition into a defensive stance. This, of course, made it even more difficult to question the content of Danish drug control policy. Among other things, this situation led to two minor socialist parties voting in favour of the new section in the Penal Code in spite of their critical attitude towards further penalization and intensification of police activity as a solution to the drug problem (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 5561-5568).

Norwegian and Swedish criticism was of special significance during the reading of the proposed Penal Code amendment just mentioned, in the spring of 1982, and for the debate about Christiania in March 1982. Concerning the former, during debate, the Conservative MP, Hagen Hagensen described the reaction of Danish right-wing opposition to Norwegian and Swedish criticism as follows:

If we really are to fight drug abuse, then it is necessary to start controlling the use of cannabis [...] and that there are no areas in this country where people do not have to follow the rules that are meant to be kept in other places in the country. [...] I think that an increased control effort would be beneficial, and I also think it would be appreciated in the other Nordic countries, be it simply for the reason that they say we are perhaps not guarding the North’s southern borders. [...] I would also call to your
attention the fact that the matter of our efforts within the drug field have been called into question and discussed at a Nordic level [...] and this means that we are not to weaken the fight against drug abuse, but rather we must try to strengthen this fight in order to stop drug abuse once and for all (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 1185).

Like other right-wing opposition spokesmen, Hagen Hagensen put forward the demand that violation of the new Penal Code section be punished with a maximum of ten years' imprisonment, while the government was proposing a maximum of six years. The Danish government presented the same argument for this lower maximum penalty as when arguing against higher drug crime penalties in the Nordic Council debate, namely, that when punishment reaches certain levels it loses its preventive effect. But apart from this reservation on maximum penalty levels, the Minister of Justice and the government generally supported the idea of tighter drug control practices.

On March 9, 1982, the Folketing held a debate about the future of Christiania. This took place just a few days after the Nordic Council session in which Denmark's drug control policy had been exposed to Norway's and Sweden's severe criticism. These two debates will be dealt with in parallel, which would seem the normal thing to do as many common features reveal that it was not by coincidence that Christiania took on such central importance in the Nordic Council session's debate.

There were twelve contributions from Norwegian and Swedish MPs in the Nordic Council's debate over the proposal of more intensive efforts against drug abuse. In all of these, the demand for tightened control policy was linked to criticism of Danish drug policy. These criticisms followed the earlier argumentation voiced in Norway's and Sweden's parliaments.

The Danish delegation stood divided, with its right-wing delegation agreeing with the criticisms and the special recommendation on the Council's agenda for tightening drug control, whereas the Danish centrist parties', the ruling Social Democrats' and left-wing parties' MPs all more or less rejected the recommendation.

The contributions to the debate made on behalf of the ruling Social Democratic Party, by Bernhard Tastesen and the Minister of Justice, Ole Espersen, made clear what Danes felt about Nordic criticism, and explained the reasons behind Denmark's current drug policy.
Denmark did not want any further intensification of the penalties for drug crime, basically because this would not have any conclusive preventive effect. Furthermore, the stricter penalization being proposed in the recommendation would result in more and more users ending up criminalized. And in the Danish government's view — in clear contrast with Norway's and Sweden's standpoint — "criminalization [can] in many situations (...) be more dangerous [concerning the users] than the actual drug being used" (Nordiska Rådet 1982, 303). They added that police intervention at the street level should be moderated, with users being offered professional help and treatment instead of prison sentences and police records.

Ole Espersen, Denmark's Minister of Justice, formulated an explanation of Danish drug policy in six points, which also clarified the Danish government's position on the recommendation and its attitude toward Norwegian and Swedish criticism.

To begin with, Denmark could support the recommendation's first point about rejecting any acceptance of using narcotic drugs, but it was considered unnecessary to propose this formally as no Scandinavian party had legalization in their political programme. He rebutted recent criticism by stating:

[T]here is no responsible person in Denmark who would think of accepting any kind of drug which was not justified on the basis of medical reasons (Nordiska Rådet 1982, 314).

Regarding the recommendation's second point, about increasing the resources for customs services and the police force, the Minister of Justice presented three observations. Firstly, in the last few years, Denmark had added a hundred more officers to their drug squads’ personnel, which had brought in a big increase of serious drug cases. Secondly, Danish policy was focusing more on the risk of being caught as a preventive factor in fighting drug abuse, and indeed, over recent years the number of small drug cases had increased fourfold. Thirdly, more money had already been assigned for the work of police force information services in Danish schools.

The Minister dealt with the Nordic Council recommendation's third point, standardization of legal condition in the North, by stating Denmark's two standpoints on this matter. Firstly, Danish authorities felt that increasing the minimum and maximum penalties for serious drug crime would not have any meaningful preventive effect on criminals. Secondly, the Minister rejected the recommendation's
proposal to generally increase the penalties for users with the following argument:

When the case involves minor possession for own use, then, in our view, draconic penalties, serious penalties, are likely to have no reasonable function. [...] We do not believe the intended effect will be achieved by sentencing someone to long terms of imprisonment for possession of one or two or three grammes of cannabis (Nordiska Rådet 1982, 315).

Norwegian and Swedish criticism brought about a concession on the issue of Danish legal practice being too mild with respect to possession for own use. The Minister admitted that it was fair to criticize the fact that in Denmark one could legally possess 100 grammes of cannabis for own use:

Therefore, we are considering whether to say that when the quantity is that big, the likelihood that we consider this possession for own use is perhaps quite small (Nordiska Rådet 1982, 315).

The viewpoints expressed in Denmark's mass media regarding Nordic discourse cannot be considered to have been as uniform as that of Norway's and Sweden's mass media. While the latter widely denounced the Danish attitude to drugs, that of Denmark was more nuanced and ranged from support for Nordic criticism to strong denunciation of Nordic meddling in Danish internal affairs.

The daily newspaper, Politiken, represented a broad band of Danish public opinion. At the time, this newspaper backed up the Danish government's response to Nordic criticism. This comes out clearly in two leading articles: the first, a commentary on the Swedish parliament's debate in December 1981 about the spread of drugs from Denmark; the second, a commentary on the debate during the March 1982 Nordic Council session. Below are two samples of the newspaper's sharp replies to Swedish criticism in each case:

Many speakers in the debate [Swedish parliamentary debate, December 4, 1981 — LL] openly demanded that Christiania be closed down. The demand is founded on the problematic perception that Christiania is a magnet drawing innocent young Swedes to destruction and that Sweden's society is helpless. This is an unreasonable viewpoint, and it isn't improved on by using picturesque descriptions of Christiania such as 'a stinking mudhole'. Declarations of this kind smell of something quite different, namely, the attempt to hide one's own bad conscience
by giving someone else the blame (Politiken, December 5, 1981).

The Danish 'distinct positions' were later backed up with the words:

There can be no doubt about the fact that it is an individual country's right to direct a policy along the lines it, itself, wishes to. Nor can the Danish [government] arbitrarily decide whether Christiania will remain or be closed down. Therefore the Danish delegation members were within their rights when they made the claim that Christiania is purely a matter for the Danes to settle, and that it will furthermore make no difference, with respect to the hash trade, whether the Free Town exists or not. The most that will be achieved is a migration of this trade (Politiken, March 5, 1982).

Both leading articles confirmed the main Danish standpoint: worse punishment won't help. Instead there ought to be increased police efforts, more and better means for investigation, strengthened collaboration between international and Nordic police, and common efforts to improve Nordic young people's future prospects.

As mentioned before, Christiania has often been the object of excited, angry discussions both amongst the Danish public and in its parliament. And so it was again, two weeks after the Nordic Council's debate in March 1982, in connection with a governmental report about the future of Christiania. The Social Democratic government's report was elaborated on the basis of a proposal from an impartial consultancy firm (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 3091 ff.). On the basis of this report, the Danish government and parliament decided to make the conditions and circumstances in Christiania more normal and lawful. This normalization process, based on a series of objectives, including elimination of the organized cannabis market, was to be carried out in collaboration with Christiania's inhabitants. If the objectives of normalization were fulfilled, then Christiania would not have to be closed down.

The parliamentary debate over this report in the Folketing on March 16, 1982, revealed that the two lines of thought on the issue were tightly drawn up, and confrontation lay imminent. The right-wing opponents of the government's policy demanded that the Free Town be closed down without delay, because of the cannabis trade going on there. Thus, the Nordic criticisms became very timely for those arrayed against Christiania. The speakers for the five opponent parties all referred to the Nordic criticism of Christiania positively in
their contributions, whereas the speakers alligned with the government’s policy either made no reference to Nordic criticism or else rejected it.

A few quotations of the most adamant Christiania critics depict the discursive frame of the Danish drug debate at that time:

Knud Lind, The Progress Party⁹: ”The worst thing of it though is the destruction of Nordic young people. [...] That unlucky and unsuccessful social experiment [Christiania] has become an eye-sore and a shame to our Nordic neighbours. It has become a menace not only for Denmark’s youth but also for Sweden’s and Norway’s and Finland’s. Christiania has become a sign of scorn towards the great effort that is being made in our neighbouring lands to overcome drug criminality” (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 3744).

Birgith Mogensen, Centrum Democrats¹⁰: “The whole North, including the Danish public, know that Christiania is a huge ‘poison plant’, which round-the-clock is openly selling hash to the North’s young people. [...] I can well understand the other Nordic countries’ displeasure over the government’s weak and vague standpoint on the hash problem in Christiania, but I cannot understand the politicians who defend this problem with the excuse that one can also go and buy hash in other Nordic countries — of course, one can do that, especially because Christiania is acting as a wholesaler and distributor to the whole North. The legal difference is simply that our fellow countries are fighting the hash trade more effectively with more instruments. Yet they are well aware of the fact that Christiania, to an extent, is still the hash trade’s free zone; hence their bitterness. [...] It is a well known fact that drug abuse, including hash abuse is a growing problem and a very serious societal problem all over the North, but especially so in Denmark. That’s why it seems so paradoxical to see anyone turn a blind eye to the flourishing, Christiania drug business. Therefore, I urge the Minister of Justice to consequently give the police the green light and a free hand to put a stop to the drug trade in Christiania. The elimination of that ‘drugs educational center’ is a vital part of Denmark’s crack-down on drug abuse” (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 3753).

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⁹ Fremskridtspartiet: a relatively, far-right-of-center party.

¹⁰ Centrumdemokraterne: a moderate just-right-of-center party.
The Minister of Justice, Ole Espersen, in a long contribution, rejected a good deal of this criticism along with a moving dismissal of the criticisms advanced by the other Nordic countries. The Minister's contribution serves to render the views the majority of the parliamentarians held concerning Christiania and the Nordic critique.

Among other things, Espersen pointed out that the amount of cannabis confiscated in Christiania during 1981 only amounted to 4 or 5% of the total amount confiscated in Copenhagen. It was emphasized that although Christiania should be regarded as one of the central points for the turnover of cannabis in Copenhagen, it was still mainly a retail market point. This was evidenced by the fact that the police could only, and almost exclusively, get their hands on small confiscations for personal use. In reference to Nordic criticism, the Minister of Justice declared that he shared the opinion, which had also been pronounced at the preceding Nordic meetings, that there ought not to be any place in the North where it was easier than other places to buy cannabis. The criticism levelled against Christiania and Denmark on that point was well founded, in his opinion, and he indirectly acquiesced to this by announcing that, from then on, the police would concentrate more on any cannabis selling going on out in the open in the lanes of Christiania.

But, after this, the Minister left off agreeing with the opposition, and began the end of his contribution with the remark that

... there are no grounds for claiming that Christiania should rightfully be considered a special center for criminality in the North, as has been declared in some of the newspapers here as well as in other Nordic countries (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 3720).

The Danish Chief of Police had, according to the Minister, made it clear that the major part of the drugs, including cannabis, which the police concentrated on during 1981-82, had gone around Christiania.

With this statement as a background, the Minister of Justice concluded by saying that the criticism coming from all sides of the North was clear testimony of

... what serious difficulties the other Nordic countries have got themselves into, and the problems seem so intractable that some politicians have resorted to making lofty claims about what
they think they have a right to do here, in order to nicely cover up their own social problems (Folketingstidende 1981-82, 3721).

Conclusions and considerations

Nordic discourse on drug control policy is more markedly characterized by its tendency to divergency than by a solidarity of opinion and common purposes. These divergencies stem from Scandinavians’ different views about what drugs are, and how to react to drug abuse. In particular, there is an evident disagreement, between especially Norway and Denmark, about what effect penalties and punishment will have in preventing drug criminality and the use of illegal substances. The split in opinions can be traced back to the early 1970s, and these incongruencies grew significantly, becoming even more radical, between 1980 and 1982, when Sweden sided with the Norwegians by introducing certain reforms. This led in turn to an even more restrictive direction being taken in the initiatives to develop mutual Scandinavian drug control policy. The analyses carried out in this study of relevant debates by the Nordic parliaments and the Nordic Council have exposed the discursive background which has led to control policy being made tighter and more severe in all Scandinavian countries, by means of more extensive legislation and penalization as well as more restrictive control practices in the form of intensified policing efforts.

Furthermore, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the Norwegian and Swedish criticism of Danish drug policy, which was aimed in particular at the Danish authorities’ attitudes toward Christiania, strongly effected Danish drug policy. Nordic critique played an evident role, at the beginning of the 1980s when Danish debate over the issue was especially intense, in supporting those forces in Denmark who were urging for a tighter drug control policy. Those politicians who wished to maintain a liberal policy, or even to push toward greater liberalization, were forced into a defensive position aimed at simply holding on to the status quo, which was successful only up to a point.

Nordic criticism led to progressively stricter drug control in Denmark, although of course one must also consider that, independently of Nordic criticism, a strengthening of police-based drug control was already underway. Still, the Penal Code amendments made with respect to the handling of drugs or money connected to drug trading, commonly known as drug fencing, seem to have been very strongly influenced by Nordic pressure. These amendments were passed as a
majority in spite of many critical remarks to the contrary. A clear and direct result of Nordic criticism was the change to stricter legal practice governing the possession of cannabis, whereby the amount one could possess for own use became considerably less. Reacting to Nordic criticism, Denmark's Minister of Justice authorized the police to step up their efforts to stamp out any open cannabis dealing in the lanes of Christiania. On the other hand, it should be considered that the majority of Denmark's parliamentarians only partially agreed to the recommendation passed at the March 1982 Nordic Council session.

The events in 1982 were significant in the long run, however, for the development of Danish drug policy from the second half of the 1980s and into the 1990s. Three characteristic examples of Danish acquiescence to Nordic pressure resulting from the polemic discussions of 1980-82, are presented below.

1st example

All the Danish parliamentarians, during a 1985 Nordic Council Session, agreed to a proposal from the Nordic Council of Ministers promoting the Nordic Action Plan against Drugs (Nordiska Rådet 1985, 379). On the initiative of the Council's Conservative group, this action plan had been put forward already in 1983. It was derived from the initiative for a Drug Free North, a goal which has proven to be a vital ideological fundament for the support of restrictive drug control policy. The Nordic Council approved the motion to further the recommendation dating from 1982, which included the point of harmonizing Scandinavian drug legislation as a basis for the Nordic action plan. This proposition of a drug free society has, within the Nordic context, received only limited support from the Danish authorities. Denmark's politicians opted in that situation for a pragmatic and compromising policy and refrained from taking the usual reservations. This was evident in the parliamentary debate of a ministerial report issued in 1984, concerning the drug problem, wherein the Nordic action plan is not even mentioned by name (Folketingstidende 1983-84, 4155 ff., and 5798 ff.).

2nd example

At the end of the 1980s the Danish police force changed their strategy in fighting drug abuse when, especially in Copenhagen, they began to use more resources at the street-level. This policing strategy of reducing demand was rooted in Swedish considerations at the
beginning of the 1980s, which soon became a central aspect of Swedish police force efforts. In recent years, the Danish police force has adopted this approach more and more. The earlier Police Chief of Copenhagen, Poul Eefsen, declared in a note concerning the Swedish Police manifesto War on Drugs, that

... it has also become necessary to attack the problem at the street-level, which means making the sale of drugs to users difficult by dispersing the market, doing this openly, and striving to stop drug dealing from taking place (Information, October 30, 1993).

3rd example

In 1993, the Danish Minister of Health set the substance khat on the Danish list of totally prohibited substances. Police reports issued during 1993 showed that male Somali refugees were increasingly using the substance, about whose detrimental effects there were very differing opinions. Denmark’s prohibition of khat was, at the time, unilateral within the context of the European Union where it was otherwise permitted; nor was khat on the international list of prohibited substances. The initiative to forbid it came from the Danish police, who wanted to follow up on Norway’s and Sweden’s prohibition of khat (Politiken, September 5, 1993).

Nordic discourse along with Norwegian and Swedish criticism of Denmark has affected Danish drug policy in several ways. This criticism had direct repercussions in 1982, and, in recent years, has had more indirect repercussions on public attitude and official policy toward drugs in Denmark. It must also be concluded, however, that Denmark has been able to accommodate and achieve compromise with respect to Nordic criticism on certain issues of drug policy, as well as maintain its relatively liberal policy and practices on other issues. Concerning the former one should mention such issues as the maximum penalties for drug crime, street-level policing efforts and attitudes about prohibiting drugs; concerning the latter, one should emphasize the Danish approach to cannabis use, in general, as well as to legal practice in drugs cases.

Nordic criticism of Danish drug policy has, in certain periods, been so severe that had it involved almost any other neighbouring countries, this would have resulted in diplomatic or political controversies. But, it should be noted that this has not had any long term repercussions on
Nordic internal relations, precisely because the matter concerns 'brother and sister nations'.
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Arguing drug policies in Nordic Parliaments

Pekka Hakkarainen, Timo Jetsu & Astrid Skretting

This article deals with a specific case of constructing national drug policies in the Nordic countries. We search for arguments and conceptions lying behind national policies by scrutinizing discussions in the Nordic parliaments. The key questions addressed are as follows:

- How are drug problems and their solutions defined in Nordic parliaments?
- Are there any common aims in these definitions?
- Are drug issues treated in political speech more as a national than as a Nordic problem?

Our research material consists of debates in the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish parliaments during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Parliamentary debates as research data

Parliamentary debates offer an important material for research on national opinion, particularly in countries such as the Nordic ones, where the national assemblies occupy a central position in the political system. If one agrees with Klaus Mäkelä (1977) that public opinion develops through hierarchic discussions, the parliament can be considered to be at the top of the opinion formation. According to Herbert Blumer (1971), the parliament can be seen as an arena where the process of defining and redefining social issues takes place in a concentrated form. Different claims and their supporters are poised against each other, and the claims and arguments that manage to gain most political power will be successful in the formation of an official plan of action, as well as in the institutionalization of a social problem.

Although the speech of MPs is largely a matter of political tactics and rhetorics, there is good reason to believe — at least at a general level
— that conventions and conceptions that are most important for national consciousness and morality are deeply embedded in that speech.

In our analysis of parliamentary speech we will concentrate on

- how the drug question is defined,
- the targets of drug policies, and
- the actions proposed to solve the problems.

We shall search for the most essential conventions and conceptions framing the drug problem. This means that issues on which there is a broad consensus of opinion, as well as frictional controversy will be brought to the fore. Further, we shall concentrate on the extent to which speakers make comparisons between different Nordic countries, their drug situation and policies, Nordic treaties and practices. Finally, we shall reveal how the idea of "a drug-free North"—presented within the Nordic Council of Ministers in the early 1980s—has been adopted at the national level.

The data

For our analysis we have chosen one drug debate from each country. They represent fairly recent, and rare, cases of debates involving many arguments and comments over the issue. The fact that these debates spread over a ten-year period says something important about the national basis of each debate: heated debates emerge independently in the countries studied.

The Danish debate dates from 1984. It was based on a report by the Danish government on different aspects of drug problems. In many respects it resembles the Norwegian debate of 1986, which was also based on a government report on drug policies. The Swedish and Finnish debates examined here are somewhat different in that they

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1 In 1982 the Nordic Council of Ministers recommended that national governments aim their policies at creating "a drug-free North" (NCM 1982). In June 1993 a member initiative (A 1050/j) suggested that the recommendation be widened to "a drug-free Europe".

2 The latest Danish government report is from 1994, but it did not give rise to much debate in the Danish parliament even though issues of drug policy have attracted much attention in the media (e.g. Ege 1994).
are legislative debates enacting drug laws. The topic of the Swedish debate from 1988 was the criminalization of drug use, a measure that was taken in Norway and Finland as early as the 1960s. The Finnish material consists of a debate from 1993, dealing with drug laws as part of a more extensive revision of the Penal Code. The other factor behind this revision was the introduction and ratification of new international conventions.

Table 1 describes the number of speakers and speeches included in our analysis.

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The relatively large number of speeches in the Finnish debate is explained by the large number of amendments submitted during the debate. With this single exception, the debates are relatively similar in extent. To be honest, comparison of the debates would be less problematic if they had occurred within a shorter space of time and reflected upon the same kind of issues. However, it is obviously difficult to get this kind of optimal situation with naturally occurring data.

We shall try to minimize the problems caused by this divergence by emphasizing comparison in pairs. The basis for the Danish and Norwegian debate was a government report, whereas the Finnish and Swedish debates focused specifically on the enactment of drug laws. As the time difference can also be reduced by focusing on these pairs, it seems an appropriate strategy.

Denmark: policy of selective tolerance
The White Paper of 1984

The basis for the debate in the Danish national assembly, the Folketing, was a report on drug problems submitted by the Ministry of Social Welfare (R 10/1984). According to the report the government is concerned about the seriousness of the drug problem. The number of intravenous drug users in the country is estimated at 6,000 - 10,000, and the mixed use of different substances is commonplace. Pregnancies in intravenous users and children of drug users are mentioned as a new problem causing grave concern. The government would like to see all interested parties in society join forces in a battle against drugs.

Preventive drug education, treatment and police efforts are mentioned as central means in this fight. Policing should be aimed at diminishing the supply of drugs. Measures should be directed mainly at mid-level drug dealers and at those financing the drug business. Unconventional investigation methods are thought to play a crucial role in policing the drug market. As for drug users, treatment is regarded as the most important measure. Special emphasis is given to integrated social and mental rehabilitation, referred to as "socio-pedagogic treatment". Treatment should be voluntary and also support clients who are not willing to give up drug use altogether. Methadone treatment offered by private practitioners is also mentioned as a useful solution to drug problems.

General social policy and governmental policy for families are mentioned together with enforcement methods, treatment and drug education as a way of working against the fundamental reasons leading to drug abuse. Private citizens, voluntary organizations and civic groups should all get involved. In its reports the Danish government makes it clear that it is against all efforts to legalize cannabis, underlining its acceptance of the stepping-stone hypothesis from cannabis to hard drugs use. Finally, the government promises to take action in order to prohibit the cultivation of hemp and opium poppy.

The debate

The government report gave rise to a lively debate in the Danish parliament, involving the minister responsible for social affairs as well as representatives of all nine parties. There was no attempt to deny the existence of the drug problem, and the government's figures on the extent of the problem were generally accepted. In many speeches the mixed use of prescribed drugs, alcohol and illegal drugs was
mentioned as a specific problem. Some speakers drew attention to the rising death rates among drug users. The government's concern for pregnant drug users and the rising number of drug using parents in general was also reflected in the debate: the view that the drug question constituted a family problem was crystallized in phrases like "narco-mothers" and "narco-babies". Young people as well as children were mentioned as social categories most at risk.

One might have expected to see the political slogan of a "drug-free North", coined by the Nordic Council of Ministers just two years earlier, figure in the Danish debate. However, this was not the case; a drug-free society was not even mentioned as a national goal. In fact, two MPs went so far as to define drug problems as something that society has to learn to live with:

(D)rugs and drug users represent a new pattern that society has to relate itself to (MP Anker Jørgensen, Social Democrat).

(W)e'll never get rid of the drug abuse (MP Arne Bjerregaard, Christian People's Party).

This attitude should not be taken as a justification for negligence, but as a justification for stronger prevention and help for those already using drugs. In fact, drug education and more efficient drug treatment were mentioned by most speakers. Most of the MPs agreed with the government that law enforcement should focus on the import of drugs and action against drug trade. Voluntary organizations and private citizens were mentioned as an important resource in the battle against drugs. This is in line with the general Danish attitude of emphasizing informal social control at the expense of governmental control as a means of controlling and solving social problems (Partanen 1988).

Instead of a drug-free society the Danish goal for drug policies might be defined as a "society free of drug addicts", as representative Birthe Rønning Hornbech (Venstre, which despite its name — venstre = left — is a liberal party) put it. The main problem to be solved is not to prevent trying drugs, but to prevent the actual abuse of drugs. This attitude explains the weight that was given to treatment issues in the debate. MPs agreed with the report that treatment should be "socio-pedagogic" in nature. The special feature in this concept is that a drug-free life as such is not the only goal for the client. Instead, the main goal for treatment is the rehabilitation and resocialization of drug addicts.
In Denmark *methadone maintenance* and other treatments of drug addicts using methadone goes back a long way and has an important place in the debate on drug policies (Winsløw & Ege 1985). This subject was raised by all but one speaker. Six MPs were clearly in favour of methadone, while two MPs had some reservations. One MP thought that the prescription of methadone should be restricted, although not totally prohibited. There was, however, much criticism of the quality of methadone treatment. In spite of this, the general opinion was that even when the addict would not be able to give up the habit, methadone treatment would still be able to prevent the social hazards of drug abuse such as crime, social deprivation of drug users and the growth of drug trade. Thus, the methadone discourse can be seen as *an example of harm reduction policies* in which the aim is to learn to live with the drug problem and to minimize individual and social disadvantages.

The classification of cannabis, however, caused a far greater conflict than methadone treatment. Three speakers, drawing a line between cannabis and hard drugs, were confronted by four MPs arguing that cannabis opens a gate for the use of hard drugs. The central position of cannabis in the Danish drug policy discourse is reflected in a frustrated comment by MP Birgith Mogensen (Centre Democrats): "(T)his was not supposed to be a hash-debate!" Other issues causing some dispute in the Folketing were involuntary treatment and drug information strategies. The general opinion was in favour of voluntary treatment, but four speakers called for compulsory methods in problem situations in treatment. The idea of one MP to launch an awareness campaign using shock-horror tactics, failed to win any support.

A special theme in the Danish debate was the legal cultivation of poppy straws and hemp. Poppy cultivation is part of traditional agriculture in Denmark, and at the time the value of opium seeds exports to foreign baking industries amounted to 21.3 million DKK a year (1982-83). Despite the debate no official policy line was reached on this issue.

A certain kind of tolerance is an essential part of Danish culture. This is seen even in the form of an ideology framing attitudes and the policy towards different social problems (Partanen 1988). For example, the use of intoxicants is basically regarded as a personal matter in which the state can only intervene in exceptional cases. It is characteristic that the criminalization of personal drug use seemed to gain only minimal support among Danish MPs. According to the parliament, law enforcement measures should focus on drug
trafficking, while users should get every help possible in the form of treatment.

However, the ideology of tolerance has its limits. Whereas cannabis users have been met by tolerance on this part of law enforcement, hard drug users have encountered tight and repressive police control in their everyday life (Winsløw 1984; Partanen 1988). In summary, Danish drug policy may best be characterized as a policy of selective tolerance. Moderate use of cannabis is tolerated, yes, but the use of hard drugs and drug trafficking are subjected to strict control, including so-called unconventional policing methods.

**Norway: towards a drug-free society**

**The White Paper of 1986**

The 1986 debate in the Norwegian national assembly, the Storting, was based on an extensive white paper concerning the drug situation and national drug policy, submitted by the Norwegian government (St.meld.nr. 13/1985-86). The basic ideas behind Norwegian drug policy are clearly expressed in this report. Nobody should be allowed to use drugs without causing reactions from the rest of society, nobody should be allowed to get addicted without being offered help and concern, and absolutely no-one may earn profits from illegal drug trade. The major goal must be a drug-free society. According to the white paper this goal is supported by public opinion, as well as by all political parties and concerned national organizations.

We all agree that we cannot accept drug abuse in any form (Stortingsmelding nr 13/1985-86, 6).

Drugs are defined as a serious social problem, although the government admits that the drug situation in Norway is much better than in most other countries. It is estimated that there are 3,000 - 4,500 persons who have ever used drugs intravenously, 15,000 - 20,000 regular cannabis users and a growing number of users of mixed substances. The continuing expansion of international drug

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3 It has also been stated that the ideology of tolerance may withhold the real problems from appropriate recognition (Partanen 1988). Some critics have pointed out that in practice, methadone treatment as well as social-pedagogic treatment have remained poor, unsystematic and uncontrolled (Winsløw & Ege 1985; Ege 1993 and 1994).
trafficking is seen as a particular threat to Norway. There are also fears of expanding abuse of cocaine as well as new dangerous diseases such as AIDS.

Nordic cooperation is mentioned as an important international means of combatting drugs. The basic features in national drug policies should be prevention, control and care. In Norway prevention is seen not only as a way of reducing demand; prevention also covers action against the supply of drugs. In fact, the white paper specifically states that suppressing the drug supply is the most effective way of prevention. The existing control system is thought to be fairly efficient, and the heavy penalties for drug crimes are seen to reflect the attitude against drugs in Norwegian society. The police is allowed to use unconventional methods (wire-tapping, controlled delivery, provoking evidence) in investigating drug-related crime. These methods should, however, only be used under constant supervision in order to guarantee civil rights.

It is generally accepted in Norway, as it was in Denmark, that the prevention of drug demand should be based on general welfare state policy. The central role of voluntary organizations is also highlighted. In Norway these organizations have a particularly important role because of their capability to create preventive social networks and surroundings. According to the white paper voluntary treatment is the primary form of treatment, but compulsory treatment is not ruled out out.

The government’s attitude towards treatment results is much more reserved than its attitude towards control and prevention. The growing problem of AIDS is expected to increase the need for treatment services.

The debate

The MPs in the Storting agreed with the government that drug abuse is a grave social problem, although some speakers expressed their contentment at the fact that the situation is not as bad as in many other countries. Cocaine, young people, multiple drug use, street children and drug problems in prisons were repeatedly mentioned in defining drug problems. As in the Danish debate, pregnancies among drug users were also brought up in the Norwegian debate. Half of the speakers mentioned AIDS, a new contemporary theme.

*The idea of a drug-free society* was a crucial theme in the Norwegian debate. It is worth noting that it was defined as a goal for drug policy
both by the government and the MPs. Moreover, there was a consensus of opinion across party lines on this issue.

We want to have a drug-free society! (MP Marie Brenden, Social Democrats).

(A) drug-free society — a goal we all share (MP Inger-Margrethe Presterud, Conservatives).

The basic presupposition of our drug policy must be that drug problems can be solved. Therefore, the goal must be a drug-free society (Cabinet Minister Wenche Frogn Sellæg, Conservatives).

There was a broad consensus of opinion on this goal, with only one MP explicitly expressing doubts about the idea of a drug-free society as a realistic goal of action. The same kind of unanimity could be found behind the approval of restrictive control policy.

An active restrictive drug policy must be directed against all parts in the chain of abuse: production, import, distribution and demand (MP Marie Brenden, Social Democrats).

The MPs were pleased with the results of the restrictive policy, especially when comparing Norway with countries adopting a more liberal policy line. Strong support for, or even pride in the benefits of the national policy gave rise to constant criticism against countries with more liberal views.

Our restrictive policy line has resulted in fewer abusers than in countries that have chosen less restrictive policies (MP Tore A. Liltved, Conservatives).

And therefore:

In international cooperation, when dealing with countries with more liberal policies than ours, Norway must argue for stricter adherence to and enforcement of the United Nation's international convention on drugs (MP Inger-Margrete Presterud, Conservatives).

Many of the speakers called for an increase in the resources made available to the police and customs. However, the nature of drug enforcement was not specified as clearly as in the Danish debate. Enforcement towards import and distribution were identified as a central part of customs and police work, but control measures should
also be aimed at drug users. This, some speakers suggested, was because the *user is the only irreplaceable part in the drug chain.*

On the other hand, the Norwegian MPs were strongly in favour of increasing the availability of treatment places and the improvement of drug treatment in general. The spread of AIDS was seen as a factor motivating addicts to register for treatment. AIDS was also mentioned as a justification for involuntary treatment of addicts. There were also demands for treatment periods during prison sentences.

As we can see, the Norwegian debate was altogether characterized by a *consensus* of opinion over the basic ideas of drug policy. The remark by the Chairman, MP Marie Brenden (Social Democrats), neatly captures the sense of unanimity: "We must mobilize the whole population against drugs". Another indication of consensus was the lack of actual debate or argument. There was just one MP who expressed her fear that a restrictive policy might endanger other values of a democratic society, and called for greater supervision of unconventional policing methods. However, this did not generate any further debate in the Storting.

**Comparing Denmark and Norway**

We may now establish that some aspects of the Danish parliamentary discourse on drug policies differ from the Norwegian ones. This, of course, is hardly surprising. The key words in the Norwegian debate were “restrictive control” and a “drug-free life”. Several Norwegian MPs even argued against the use of alcohol. Such arguments were conspicuous by their absence in the Danish debate, although the issue of mixed use of alcohol and drugs was touched upon. As mentioned, a drug-free society, a unanimous goal for Norwegian drug policy, was not even raised in the Danish debate. The Norwegian emphasis on restrictive control policy was consistent with the general definition of the drug problem and the superior goal attached to it, i.e. a drug-free society. Danish MPs, on the other hand, were of the opinion that one has to learn to live with the drug problem. The problem cannot be done away with, but it is still possible to alleviate and control it.

Two further differences can be traced between the countries: Danish policy decision-makers adopted a clear division of labour in actions against drugs. The police and customs should focus their enforcement efforts on the import and distribution of drugs, whereas users should be offered treatment and rehabilitation. Secondly, while the Danish debate took in forms of treatment that did not necessarily
require total abstinence, the word methadone was not even mentioned in the Norwegian parliament in 1986.

There were also certain features that the two debates shared in common. In both countries drug policies were considered within the context of general social welfare policies. Social policy, employment policy, family policy, housing policies and health services were in both countries used as examples of issues connected to solving drug problems. Thus, the far-reaching idea of a Nordic welfare state was seen as an important part of the prevention of drug use and drug problems. As one Norwegian MP put it:

The general welfare policy measures are indirectly of great significance for the drug situation (MP Karin Lian, Social Democrats).

In both debates there were references to experiences in other Nordic countries and to Nordic cooperation. Further, the importance of extensive drug education and the role of citizen groups is acknowledged in both countries. Action against drugs is not only a state concern, but a matter for civil society as a whole. In both countries there is a strong condemnation of drug trade. This may be seen at the operational level: despite the differences in general control policies, a wide range of unconventional investigation methods are at the police’s disposal when it comes to policing drug trafficking.

The Swedish model: restrictive drug policy
The Public Bill of 1988

The debate in the Swedish national assembly, the Riksdag, in 1988 was very different from the Danish and Norwegian debates. It was not a general debate on the definition of the drug problem and the emphasis of drug policies, but it was based on a proposal by the Social Democratic minority government for changes in the Penal Code, suggesting the **criminalization of personal consumption of drugs** (Regeringens proposition 1987/88:71). This specific context resulted in a somewhat less thorough debate by the Swedish MPs than was the case in Denmark and Norway.

The government proposal was a compromise. Previously, the Social Democrats had argued against the criminalization of drug use, but in this case they not only wanted to change the law but also to sharpen their drug policy. It is obvious from the comments by MPs representing the right-wing parties and the Centre Party that there
had been repeated accusations against the Social Democrats over their denial of drug problems and approval of drug abuse. This criticism was based mainly on the Social Democrats’ reluctance to criminalize personal consumption of drugs.

As is pointed out in the government proposal, there had been a lively discussion on the criminalization issue throughout the 1980s. Through this proposal, the government said, it wanted to remove the issue from the agenda and to pave way for more important and practical issues. It was argued that the never-ending debate on the criminalization issue creates a false image of sharp confrontations between political parties. In fact, the criminalization of drug use was treated as an icon of common policy against drugs. Consequently, the proposal was issued as a sign showing that the quarrel over this question had been resolved.

The proposal stated that drug policies have to be so formulated that they leave no doubt whatsoever about what is thought in society at large about drugs and drug abuse. The criminalization of drug use would not only mirror public opinion, but could also play an important role as a preventive measure among the young. The fact that drug use was already criminalized in Finland and Norway was also mentioned in the debate. The maximum penalty proposed was a fine. Importantly, the drug user could avoid punishment by seeking treatment or rehabilitation. This "release from responsibility" might be interpreted as a counterbalance to penalties. And yet, according to the proposal, the important accent of drug policy would still be on drug education and other forms of prevention, as well as treatment and social field work.

The debate

The Swedish parliamentary debate indicates that drug policy is part and parcel of Swedish party politics. This is one reason why we would like to start from the end, i.e. by presenting the results of the vote, and then turn to the arguments behind the numbers. As mentioned, the proposal was put forward by a minority government formed by the Social Democratic Party. With the support of the Communist Party, VPK, the government had a narrow majority in parliament (159+19 out of 349). However, the frontlines were shifting because of the issue debated. Criminalization was approved by a clear majority of 269 to 23 (57 absent or abstentions). Some Social Democratic MPs and all but one Communist MP voted against. Secondly, a fine was approved as the maximum penalty for drug use. This decision was made with
Social Democrats and Communist members voting against the harsher line suggested by the centre and right-wing parties (151-142). Thirdly, "release from responsibility" was approved with 184 members voting for and 108 against, as the Centre Party joined the left-wing parties.

The 23 leftists who were against criminalization had three main arguments. In their opinion criminalization would prevent addicts from seeking treatment. In addition, it would strengthen the user's identity as an addict, and drive addicts underground. According to this small opposition, the crux of the problem was to be found in the users' social circumstances and living conditions.

Many peoples' lives are characterized by loneliness, isolation, unemployment and rootlessness. Such features might generate abuse. Involvement and resources have to be mobilized to strengthen different kinds of social inputs (MP Margareta Palmqvist, Social Democrat).

We communists, in this case leaning on the traditional ideological basis of the labour movement, would prefer to consider abuse as a human and social problem, as a condition of dependence into which individuals are driven because of social dynamics (MP Jörn Svensson, Communist).

The vast majority of MPs, however, endorsed the government's opinion that society must make clear its negative attitude towards drugs and, consequently, criminalize drug use. This would certainly act to deter experimental use. Some speakers noted that the criminalization of drug use would make the task of drug education easier and help parents. Controlling the users was seen as the most effective way of limiting illegal drug trade. Without buyers there would be no sellers — a theme already highlighted in the Norwegian debate.

As the consumer is the ultimate prerequisite for drug trafficking and practically the only irreplaceable part in the chain of actors in the drug field, the possession of drugs as well as the abuse must constitute the hard core of the drug policy pursued (MP Karin Ahrland, People's Party, i.e. the Swedish liberal party).

Although involuntary treatment was not incorporated in the proposed legislation, the need for such treatment was frequently mentioned in the debate. It could be argued that this reflected a Swedish, relatively favourable attitude, designated as "paternalism", towards involuntary treatment of drug addicts (Järvinen 1994; Järvinen & Skretting 1994;
Lehto 1994). It is a distinctive feature of the Swedish belief in treatment that even MPs arguing against the criminalization of drug use were prepared to allow the use of compulsory measures in treatment facilities.

The drug situation in Sweden in general was hotly debated. During the debate the seriousness of the drug problem was never denied. In most speeches the drug problem was defined as "one of the biggest problems society has to face in our times". There was, however, disagreement as to whether the drug situation had worsened or improved over the past few years. Those who argued that the situation had improved drew attention to the declining number of new drug users and the increasingly negative attitudes towards drugs. Those who held the opposite view were particularly concerned about cocaine and crack flowing into the Swedish market. The former view of an improved situation was tucked up by reference to official statistics and information from the authorities, whereas arguments of a worsening situation were grounded on information gathered from the field, i.e. street patrols, parent's organizations, drug users, etc. The choice of view was clearly related to the speaker's political affiliation and the preferred policy measures. Those who were opposed to the government's recommendation on criminalization viewed the development of the drug situation in positive terms, and vice versa.

A drug-free society was repeatedly mentioned as the main goal of drug policy.

The target must be to eliminate drug abuse, not only decrease it. One may never accept drugs as part of our culture. Our children and youngsters have a self-evident right to grow up in a drug-free society (MP Jerry Martinger, Conservative).

It is interesting to note that this slogan was used in arguing both for and against criminalization. In the latter case it was used to advocate a general attitude against drugs.

We are fully committed to the battle for a drug-free society (MP Margareta Palmqvist, Social Democrat).

In fact, the superior goal of a drug-free society was never disputed in the Swedish debate. Many speakers drew attention to the consensus of opinion and used it as a political argument.
There is reason to stress that there is a broad agreement of opinion about the goal for drug policy (MP Lars-Erik Lövdén, Social Democrat).

A drug-free society, a goal that all parties are pursuing together but which is hard to reach (MP Karin Ahrland, People’s Party).

It is illustrative of the atmosphere of the debate that some speakers went so far as to condemn any deviating attitudes as a threat to society.

It is not common to find politicians and authorities overwhelmed by a sense of despair when it comes to drugs — implying an attitude that we never will get rid of the problem of drug abuse. That, however, is a dangerous attitude for society (MP Jerry Martinger, Conservative).

There was much political debate in the Swedish parliament about the meaning of the law reform. Conservative MPs regarded the criminalization of drug use as a benchmark for a new era, a new Swedish route, whereas the Social Democrats stressed that the Swedish route had always been based on restrictive policy. However, there was no disagreement between the Conservatives and Social Democrats about the Swedish model being a restrictive control policy. As Social Democratic MP Lars-Erik Lövdén put it:

The current Swedish drug policy is highly restrictive. We have stricter laws and applications than practically any other Western country.

**Finland: in the name of restrictive control policy**

**The Public Bill of 1993**

The Finnish material also consists of a debate on drug legislation. The basis for the debate was a government proposal on changes in the Penal Code concerning drug-related crime. The proposal was issued as part of a broader reform of the Finnish Penal Code. At the same time, the government wanted to revise the Finnish drug laws for compliance with the Vienna Convention of 1988 (Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances). According to the Convention both the preparation and promotion of drug-related crime should be included in the Penal Code. The laundering of drug-related money should also be criminalized — a
requirement also included in the treaty of the European Economic Area (EEA), ratified in 1992. The government proposal stated that international trafficking in illicit drugs and organized crime had increased to an alarming degree. However, the situation in Finland was still thought to be fairly good. Finland was not on the major drug trafficking routes, and even in the rest of the Nordic countries the situation was regarded as relatively calm. Nonetheless the government said it wanted Finland to join in the efforts to suppress international drug economies. Although the national drug situation might not require instant changes in legislation, it is important to make sure there are no loopholes in the legislation that could be utilized by international drug trade. On the other hand, the government also emphasized that Finland has an international commitment to restrict the use of drugs to the lowest level possible. The demand for drugs could be sustained by maintaining the criminalization of drug use with the present penalty scale. Other preventive measures suggested by the government included public awareness campaigns to strengthen attitudes against drugs, as well as general welfare and social policy measures to reduce the personal demand for drugs.

However, the main theme of the Finnish parliamentary debate was the penal control of personal consumption of drugs, just as in Sweden. The Finnish debate can only be understood in the light of an episode preceding the government proposal. This episode started as the committee responsible for preparing the proposal for the Ministry of Justice suggested that the maximum penalty for personal use of drugs be changed from two years' imprisonment to a fine. This suggestion received a vast amount of media coverage. When the committee eventually submitted the motion to the Minister of Justice, Hannele Pokka, she made it clear she would not take it to the cabinet (Helsingin Sanomat 19.12.1991 and 20.12.1991). According to the Minister, the more lenient penalty would signal to the rest of the world that Finland has adopted a more permissive position towards drugs, and that would entice drug traffickers and tempt young people to experiment with drugs.

The debate

The committee's proposal and the sharp criticism which followed provided the basic lines for the debate to follow. The cabinet revised the proposal leaving out the point on changing penalties, before submitting it to parliament. After a heated debate the permanent Committee of Ordinary Law of the parliament agreed with the
government. In this dispute the benefits of restrictive control policy were used as arguments supporting the government proposal.

The commission holds that a consistent restrictive drug control policy has had a positive effect on the drug situation in Finland. (...) (I)t is important that society continues to make it clear that it does not approve of the use of drugs. If the use of drugs is a punishable offence, it is easier for children and young people to understand that it is forbidden (Permanent Committee of Ordinary Law 17/1993, 4.).

The government proposal was met by many counter-motions in parliament. The counter-motions concerning the criminalization of drug use called for a more lenient penalty scale. It was suggested that the maximum penalty for the use of drugs should be either one year's imprisonment or a fine. These suggestions were defended as follows:

- The wording of the government proposal differs from normal practice. Normally, the wording of laws corresponds with actual court practice (the actual sentence for the personal use of drugs being a fine).
- A clear distinction should be made between petty crime and felony.
- Drug users should be encouraged to seek treatment.
- Two years' imprisonment means that drug use is on a par with manslaughter, for instance.
- The proposal leads to random interpretation of the law and to inconsistency.
- The Penal Code is not a suitable tool for moral education.

Drug-related crime is valued according to very specific principles, endowing this category of crime with a meaning that differs from other crimes. Such an attitude is meant to serve as a message of society's stand against drugs. If we combine this with the terminology used in the parliamentary debate, it should be just to speak of a policy of image. As in Sweden, the criminalization of personal drug use is thus loaded with an extremely strong symbolic meaning. The main agent behind this policy at that time, the Minister of Justice, did not hide her satisfaction.

I am pleased that (...) Finland maintains its international reputation as a country of strict drug control (Minister of Justice Hannele Pokka, Centre Party).

The penalty scale caused some heated debate as well, but in the end the consensus of opinion was fairly broad. Even those who argued for
a more lenient scale said they did not want to create an impression of Finland taking a more lenient stand in general. Interestingly, there were no arguments at all in favour of decriminalizing the personal use of drugs, although some MPs did call into question the legitimacy of criminalization. These doubts were, once again, grounded on a politics of image:

However, I think that decriminalization of personal use would have given the wrong message to the general public (MP Satu Hassi, Green Party, Permanent Committee of Ordinary Law, protest).

Some MPs disapproved of the way in which the image constructed by the media constrained the debate in advance:

I myself agree with the committee [responsible for preparing the proposal for the Ministry of Justice], whose work I feel the Minister of Justice was wrong to reject upon publication. That is why it created the wrong signal. It is easy to see why the government could no longer throw its support behind the committee's proposal after this happened (MP Tarja Halonen, Social Democrat).

The chairman of the permanent Committee of Ordinary Law was particularly critical of the government's position that even the slightest adjustment of the penalty scale would be regarded as a message of endorsing drug use.

It is what it looks like. That is precisely how the threat of a wrong message is created. It would have been much more important to state from the beginning that the general idea of the law reform is to tighten up drug control, while at the same time bringing drug control in line with the general principles of the total reform of the Penal Code (MP Henrik Lax, the Swedish People's Party).

The counter-motion for a more lenient penalty scale that received most support got 63 votes out of 200. Most parties allowed their MPs to vote according to conscience, but a division along party lines was still visible, as had been the case in Sweden. This counter-motion was supported by all but four Social Democratic MPs, by all Green MPs and by all but three MPs from the leftist coalition. The government's proposal was supported by a clear majority of 112 MPs, including the entire Conservative and Centre parties. In other words, the behaviour of parliament on the political continuum from right to left was similar in
Finland and Sweden (although the winner in Sweden was the left wing, whereas in Finland it was the right-centre wing).

Despite the sharp divergence of opinions there was a consensus on the actual sentences in the Finnish debate. All speakers arguing for the government's proposal held that the personal use of drugs should be punished by a fine only. In fact, the government stated that the mere use of drugs, and the inevitable possession connected to drug use, should not in general lead to court proceedings or a sentence even if the use of drugs is a punishable offence according to law.

Another point of contention was a proposal on refraining from court proceedings, stating that such a procedure could only be applied if it does not threaten general obedience of law or if the person concerned seeks approved treatment. The former part of the proposal, i.e. defining law-obedience, caused much debate, while the treatment issue was met with a favourable reception. However, the vote did not lead to any changes in the text. The final provision was thus much wider in scope than the Swedish provision of "release from responsibility", which only dealt with crimes connected to the use of drugs.

However, the vigorous debate in the Finnish parliament did not overshadow the unanimity over most of the issues. Drug trafficking in particular was strictly condemned. Similarly, the criminalization of money laundering and other provisions against drug trafficking were unanimously welcomed. There was also broad support for increasing the resources made available for treatment, developing more efficient ways of referring users to treatment and including periods of treatment in prison sentences. A few MPs spoke in favour of involuntary treatment. Only two dealt with the legalization of drugs and drug trade, while at the same time reminding that this option could not come into question in Finland.

All but a few MPs were satisfied with the general drug situation in Finland, which was seen to be under relatively good control, particularly in comparison with most other countries. Therefore the slogan of a drug-free society played no role at all in the Finnish debate. The goals of drug policy, instead, seemed to be aimed at preventing the general situation from getting worse. Only one MP referred to a drug-free society, speaking of "a drug-free tomorrow". Three MPs specifically stated that it is realistic to assume that drugs will also be used in the future.
An image play in Sweden and Finland

There is a fascinating aspect to the quality of the legislative debates in Sweden and Finland that should be pointed out. Namely, the Penal Code provision concerning individual drug use was enacted as a symbolic message to the public rather than as a provision regulating the legal praxis. The image value of legislation as a message of society's attitude against drugs was given more emphasis than other reasonings.

To be more concrete, in Sweden the criminalization of drug use was supported to disprove persistent arguments that political parties were divided on drug policy issues. This may sound like a media play, the Social Democratic party being the protagonist. For years the party had counteracted and, in practice, prevented the criminalization of drug use; now, it was willing to change its policy for this message.

Similarly, the key argument against lowering the maximum penalty for drug use in Finland was based on a symbolic reasoning. The country did not want to be labelled by others as less restrictive than before. It is illuminating that even those who were in favour of imprisonment claimed that, in practice, the maximum penalty for a drug user should be a fine.

Such an image play, of course, is a powerful example of how drug problems have succeeded in maintaining their position as a "suitable enemy" (Christie & Bruun 1985). Considering this context, it is certainly hard to get reliefs in restrictions once adopted, because even the slightest alleviation, the argument goes, would be interpreted as a sign of permissiveness. The other side of the coin is that drug problems, to an exceptionally large extent, seem to open the doors not only to unconventional police methods but also to unconventional decision-making.

Comparing national drug policy goals and measures

In order to facilitate comparisons between the four countries we need some systematization and simplification of the data. A Drug Policy Index, presented in Table 2, is developed to summarize some central arguments and standpoints offered by the MPs in the countries concerned. The index is so construed that the presence of a topic in a speech is registered as an opinion of the speaker. The next step is to divide the number of opinions by the number of MPs active in the debate. Finally, the result is proportioned on a scale from 1 to 10,
where 10 means that every speaker has raised the topic or standpoint and argued for its importance. Index number 1, on the other hand, indicates that 1/10 of the speakers has presented this opinion. "X" means that the opinion has been presented in the discussion, but the index value is less than 1. A "0" sign indicates that the topic did not appear at all. Topics chosen for the comparison are divided into four categories: general goal of the policy, general measures, specific measures and themes, and Nordic cooperation.

Looking at general drug policy measures, we can observe how the context of the debate has directed the discussion in the different countries. MPs in Sweden and Finland have tended to restrict their speeches to penal law topics and measures related to that, i.e. law enforcement and treatment. In Denmark and Norway, on the other hand, the context of the debates was broader, which is reflected in the greater number of topics. It is important to note that different drug policy measures — drug education, law enforcement, drug treatment, general welfare policy and the impact of voluntary organizations — were quite evenly distributed in the Danish and Norwegian debates. This gives us good reason to think that in a general definition of drug policy, this kind of broad employment of numerous different measures is typical not only of Denmark and Norway, but probably of the two other countries as well.

The Nordic countries are widely known as welfare states which share a basic understanding that effective prevention of social problems should be based on employment policy, social security, housing policy, educational rights, public health care, youth policy, etc. According to the speeches of the Nordic MPs, this also applied to drug problems. Even in Norway, whose repressive drug policy is firmly rooted in national consciousness, many MPs stressed the preventive impact of general welfare policy. In the Danish debate, on the other hand, the significance of welfare policy was stressed particularly in the context of socio-pedagogic treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts.

<table>
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<td>6</td>
<td>x</td>
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There are also some conspicuous national differences in the Drug Policy Index. Probably the most striking of these differences is the ultimate goal set for the national drug policy. In Norway and Sweden a drug-free society was defined as the main objective of the drug policy, whereas it was denied or absent in Denmark and Finland.

It is indeed impressive that Swedish MPs so unanimously agreed on the notion of a drug-free society as an ultimate goal of drug policy. The rejection of this notion is occasionally perceived as a threat to society, as was pointed out by one Swedish MP. In effect, as Henrik Tham (1992) observes, the slogan of a drug-free society was established as a lodestar for Swedish drug policy in the early 1980s. Among the specific measures to be taken to achieve freedom from drugs, Swedish MPs were remarkably inclined to support involuntary treatment of drug users, without any critical voices in parliament. This result could easily be added to previous findings showing that

### General measures:

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<th>Measures</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary organizations</td>
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### Specific measures and themes:

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### Nordic cooperation:

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involuntary treatment as a measure of drug policy has by far its strongest support in Sweden.

The context of the Norwegian debate differed from the Swedish one. This is clearly reflected in the table. It is important, however, to draw some attention to the similarities between these countries. As phrased by the Norwegian MPs, drug use should definitely not be accepted and recognized as part of Norwegian culture and society. Therefore, the notion of a drug-free society is used as a justification for the country's restrictive drug policy. The combination of this notion and the forceful argument that the drug user is the only irreplaceable part in the chain, legitimizes the employment of repressive control measures against the individual drug user. In fact, a corresponding line of reasoning was also presented in Sweden, reflecting the fairly strong affinity between Sweden and Norway in their support for repressive drug policy.

Danish MPs, in contrast, were less repressive towards the individual drug user. As seen, they did certainly not advocate the idea of a drug-free society. Instead, they emphasized that, to a degree, drug use is a problem with which society must learn to live. The task, then, is to try and reduce the harm caused by drugs rather than to eradicate the problem altogether. A good example was the favourable attitude shown by MPs towards methadone treatment as a specific drug policy measure. As Table 2 shows, this was one of the most frequent topics in the Danish debate, while it was completely absent in the three remaining countries. Another almost exclusively Danish theme was the distinction between cannabis and hard drugs, although the opinions on the theme were conflicting.

The concept of a drug-free society did not belong to the vocabulary of Finnish MPs, either. Otherwise, there were few parallels between the Finnish and Danish construction of drug policy. For example, there was no Finnish equivalent to the Danish tolerance towards individual drug users. On the contrary, the criminalization of drug use received unanimous support, and only one Finnish MP argued in favour of a distinction between cannabis and hard drugs.

It is no surprise that the drug policy construed in the Finnish parliament came closer to the restrictive policy of Norway and Sweden. However, the Finnish strategy seemed to be less offensive and more cautious. Unlike Norwegian and Swedish MPs, their Finnish colleagues did not declare a "war on drugs" by preaching for a drug-free society. The Finnish debate also showed no mentality of favouring involuntary treatment, as the Swedish debate, nor a
common consent to the way of defending the nation, as the Norwegian debate. On the whole, Finnish MPs were relatively satisfied with the drug situation in their country. The goals of drug policy were thought to be to confront the new threats and to prevent the situation from getting worse.

Our last item in the table, Nordic cooperation, is worth some final comments. Strictly speaking, how 'Nordic' or 'Scandinavian' are the countries studied? At first glance the results are somewhat confusing. Some Norwegian and Swedish MPs were so convinced about the efficacy of their national drug policy that they recommended exporting it to other countries in the world. It seems surprising, therefore, that Norwegian and Swedish MPs (not to mention Finnish and particularly Danish MPs) never pleaded for the slogan of a drug-free North. One explanation could be that the national assemblies simply are not proper fora for a debate on joint Nordic drug policies. Probably the only possible arenas for such a debate are the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as other bodies of Nordic cooperation.

On the other hand, and this is important, Table 2 also shows that references to the experiences of other Nordic countries were made quite frequently, while non-Nordic experiences were mentioned only occasionally. Thus, Nordic countries were undoubtedly the most natural frame when MPs compared the national drug policy of their own with policies abroad.

**Concluding remarks**

As we have seen, drug use was defined as a serious social problem in all the four Nordic countries studied. Typically, there were also many common aims in the concepts and arguments behind national solutions, and the Nordic experience appeared to be the most natural frame of reference when MPs compared national drug policies with policies abroad. However, there were clear national differences in problem definitions as well as in the final goals of the policies and preferences for the measures to be adopted to combat the problem. In addition, there were also some interesting intra-national differences in the debates.

Heated debates between opposite opinions were typical of three of the four discussions on drug policy in the Nordic parliaments. The striking exception was Norway. Firstly, only one Norwegian MP delivered more than one speech in the debate! Secondly, it was a
debate without any struggle, and it was almost impossible to trace any drug political or ideological controversy between different political parties. All in all, the Norwegian drug policy debate of 1986 was simply a veritable show-off of the unanimous national agreement about the definition of Norwegian drug policy.

In the rest of the countries there were quite clear ideological disparities. It is interesting to note that the contradictions mostly followed the demarcation line between the left wing and the right wing or centre parties. In Sweden and Finland representatives of right-wing and centre parties were in favour of higher penalty scales than leftist representatives. In the Danish debate, finally, an ideological conflict emerged on the distinction between cannabis and hard drugs. Speakers of the left wing were willing to make this distinction, while speakers from other parties argued against it.

Such a visible, and indeed traditional, ideological controversy between the Left and the Right in Denmark, Finland and Sweden implies that the definition of drug policy is not only a national question (or a 'national project', for that matter), but also a subject of true political and ideological controversy.

References


Reporting on drugs in Nordic newspapers

Astrid Skretting, Pekka Hakkarainen, Lau Laursen & Börje Olsson

The press plays an important role in the definition and construction of different phenomena as social problems. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this also applies to drugs. This article looks at the reporting on drugs in the daily press in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

A central interest in the study is to see how the newspapers in the Nordic countries relate to drugs. What kind of differences and similarities are found in terms of the angle and approach to the problem? Is there a relationship between the extent of drug use in the different countries and the coverage of this issue in the newspapers? Is the press most concerned with national aspects of the drug problem, or are the papers also interested in what is happening in the other Nordic countries and in the rest of the world?

Materials and methods

The material consists of articles and notices from the two largest newspapers in each of the four Nordic capital cities: one is a subscription newspaper and the other a non-subscription newspaper. The study covers the period between the 1st of March and the 31st of May 1990. The material was collected from the following newspapers:

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1 This article was first published in Norwegian in Nordisk Alkoholtidsskrift 9(1992):1, 17-25, titled "Omtale av narkotika i nordiske aviser". It was later translated into English and published in the English supplement of Nordisk Alkoholtidsskrift (Nordic Alcohol Studies 1994, 35-42).
Denmark: *Politikken* and *B.T. (Berlingske Tidende)*
Finland: *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Ilta-Sanomat*
Norway: *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang*
Sweden:  *Dagens Nyheter* and *Expressen*.

All the articles included in the analysis were related to drugs in one way or another.

Altogether, 625 articles and notices were collected. These were fairly evenly distributed between the two types of newspapers in all the four countries (Table 1). In addition, there were also several advertisements, particularly in Norway, in which the Customs Service carried on a major campaign to promote a newly established ‘tips’ telephone to report drug smuggling. There were also advertisements by organisations and societies involved in drug issues. The newspaper cuttings were categorized according to specific common variables. The coding was carried out in the different countries, which means that the articles may have been evaluated differently.

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<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Norway — active justification for a restrictive drug policy

Norway had by far the largest number of newspaper articles about drugs in the course of the three months. Part of the explanation may be that the subscription newspaper was printed twice a day, six days a week. On the other hand, neither of the Norwegian newspapers had a Sunday edition at that time, which all the others had. However, the Norwegian non-subscription newspaper also had more reports about drugs than the corresponding newspapers in the other countries.
Finland had the fewest reports, with Sweden and Denmark lying in between. In other words, it does not seem as though there is a clear relationship between the level of reporting about drugs in newspapers and the assumed extent of the drug problem in the different countries.

Table 2  Type of article in which drugs are reported on in the newspapers in the different countries, per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Article</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News article</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background article</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate article</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the articles on drugs were classified as news articles (Table 2). This applied to about three-fourths of the Danish, Finnish and Swedish articles. The Norwegian newspapers differed from the others in that only one-half of the articles were classified as news articles, whereas about 40% had more the character of being background articles. The Finnish newspapers also had relatively many so-called background articles. In the Danish newspapers, there was a relatively large proportion of debate articles. There were few editorials in all the countries; the Norwegian newspapers having the most with 5%.

Part of the explanation for Norway having a relatively large proportion of background articles could be the generally high profile given to drugs by the newspapers. Since there is a limited amount of news about drugs in Norway, other types of articles on this subject, which are not specifically news, must have been given priority.

In the Swedish newspapers, drugs appeared as a main subject in three-quarters of the articles (Table 3). Drugs were also the main theme in the majority of articles in the Danish and Finnish newspapers. The Norwegian newspapers differed from the others in that drugs were the main theme in only one-third of the newspaper articles.
Why are Norwegian newspapers more concerned with drugs than their counterparts in the other Nordic countries? Both Denmark and Sweden have a greater drug problem than Norway, so at least differences in the level of the problem do not provide an explanation.

Perhaps differences in legislation between Norway and the other Nordic countries are related to the level of attention given by the press to drug issues. Norway has the most repressive legislation and has, at the same time, the most active press. The message from the Norwegian press is, to a large degree, in accordance with official drug policy. Critical opinions are seldom, if ever, expressed.

Table 3  
Place of drugs in the articles in the different countries, per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Main theme</th>
<th>Subsidiary theme</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One way of understanding both this relationship and the approach and presentation of the drug theme by the press in Norway can be as follows. Sentences for drug offences are more severe in Norway than in the other Nordic countries. This implies that, compared with the other Nordic countries, the drug problem in Norway has been defined and internalized as more frightening and of greater dimensions. The role of the press as educator and notifier of danger becomes more legitimate the greater the danger appears to be. The press takes on the responsibility for legitimizing official policy and mobilizing the population in the fight against drugs. In this way, the press becomes a tool in the endeavour to achieve a consensus (Allardt 1975). A slogan from the advertising campaign run by the Customs Service can be used to illustrate this: "Four million Norwegians in the fight against drugs will give results." A population study from 1989 on the attitudes to different drugs and to drug policy (Skretting 1991a, 1991b) shows that in Norway the press have, to a great extent, been successful in achieving popular support for a drug policy. Given such general agreement, there is little place for discussion about liberalization of drug policy.
Finland — focus on drugs abroad rather than at home

In general, the newspaper reports were largely concerned with events related to domestic events; about three-quarters of all that was written concerned events which took place within the country. In the Swedish newspapers, about two-thirds referred to domestic matters (Table 4). On the other hand, only about 40% of the articles in the Finnish newspapers referred to domestic matters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own country</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own country + a Nordic country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own country + another country outside the Nordic countries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Nordic country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another European country</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia, Africa, Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 The country in which the reported event took place, in the newspapers from the different countries, per cent.

In all the four countries, there were relatively few articles which dealt with events which had taken place in another Nordic country. Such articles were found mostly in the Finnish newspapers, and very rarely in the Danish and Swedish newspapers. Even though there is extensive drug co-operation among the Nordic countries, the newspapers seem to pay little attention to drugs in the other three. Only "important" events, such as Björn Borg’s court case with the magazine "Z", evoked interest in the neighbouring countries. But even this was not interesting enough for the Danish newspapers, which hardly mentioned the case. Another event which, from a legal point of view, was much more serious, concerned one of Norway’s most prominent tennis players, who was arrested for importing a large
amount of cannabis. This was given repeated wide coverage in Norway, but was not even mentioned in any of the other Nordic countries. The main figure was far from being such a big celebrity as Björn Borg and was therefore not interesting enough to write about.

With regard to drug matters outside of the Nordic countries, the Finnish and Swedish press seemed to be more internationally oriented than the Danish and Norwegian press. As much as 43% of the Finnish reports and 30% of the Swedish reports dealt with events outside the Nordic countries, compared to under 20% of the Danish and Norwegian reports. In all four countries, by far the majority of such reports dealt with events in America.

One possible reason why the Finnish press reports events from abroad to a much greater extent than the press in the other countries, is that there is so little drug news to report about in Finland. A reasonable alternative would be not to cover the topic at all, but to concentrate on more domestic problems instead.

Perhaps one reason why the Finnish newspapers find it expedient to write about drug-related matters which take place abroad is to inform the Finnish population about the dangers of drugs and thus to try to prevent their use domestically. In the articles, drugs abroad are often associated with different social problems: for example, poverty, unemployment, crime, AIDS, political corruption, violence, and the negative behaviour of international celebrities. It is also conceivable that they write so much about drugs abroad in order to imply that drugs are something that is found in other countries and that people in Finland are fortunate not to be affected: it is better to live in Finland than elsewhere.

A third reason why the Finnish newspapers write mostly about drugs in other countries could of course be that the newspapers are, in general, more concerned about matters which take place abroad, compared with newspapers in Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

To some extent it seems that Swedish newspapers are also concerned with drugs in an international perspective. An obvious explanation is that Sweden, on a political level, has traditionally shown great interest in international drug control. However, it could also be expected that the Danish newspapers would show a strong orientation to events outside the Nordic countries, since Denmark, in many ways, is more closely connected to Europe, both geographically, culturally and economically.
Denmark — most open for debate

In all of the four countries, drugs reporting was primarily related to enforcement agencies, the Customs Service and the judicial system (Table 5). This was the case in about one-half of the articles in the Danish and the Norwegian newspapers, but somewhat less in the Swedish and the Finnish newspapers. Articles which dealt with policy were most frequent in the Danish newspapers; while articles about the health and social sectors were more frequent in the Swedish and Finnish newspapers.

Most of the articles were produced by the editorial staff in the respective newspapers. This was the case in all of the countries, but the Norwegian newspapers most clearly so in.

Table 5  The area reported on, in the newspapers from the different countries, per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police, customs services, judicial system</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6  Sources of articles in the newspapers from the different countries, per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produced locally</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produced by a national news agency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produced by another national producer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produced abroad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly one-quarter of the articles in the Danish newspapers came from Danish sources other than their own editorial staff. The most important source was a stream of readers’ letters. In keeping with liberal Danish attitudes, there was extended debate in the readers’ pages in B.T., the non-subscription newspaper, which presented arguments for and against the use of cannabis. Such a debate would be almost unthinkable in some of the other Nordic countries, where public debate is much less lively and the arguments generally follow the official drug policy line. The fact that so few liberal views are presented by the media in Finland, Norway and Sweden may be due both to the lack of people putting forth such arguments and also to a reluctance of the newspapers to allow debate that works against the official drug policy.

Sweden — keeping a high profile, with the drama toned down

A general trend seen throughout the study seemed to be that the newspapers chose at random what to write about on drugs. Although at times there were great differences in the presentation of the material in the subscription and the non-subscription newspapers, the reports on drugs were, on the whole, without a specific profile and directed by outside events.

In general, Sweden presents a high profile with regard to drug issues, both nationally and internationally. It seems therefore quite surprising that the Swedish newspapers were more similar to the Danish newspapers than the Norwegian with regard to the number of articles. The most obvious explanation is that the drug situation in Sweden has been stable for a relatively long period of time. Thus the newspapers are not so concerned with drug issues, as they appeared to be in the 1970s and 1980s. However, if something occurs which can be regarded as dramatic in one way or another, it is soon given wide coverage in the press. This can be illustrated by articles on celebrities involved with drugs (Expressen 4 March 1990, Dagens Nyheter 20 May 1990, all on the Borg case); law enforcement officers who fear that they have become HIV infected (Expressen 5 April 1990); and the so-called HIV man, whose various activities arouse public fears (Dagens Nyheter 9 March and 25 May 1990, Expressen 13 March, 10 April, 10 May and 22 May 1990).
All the newspapers concerned with cocaine

The largest group of newspaper articles dealt with drugs, in general, rather than one particular drug (Table 7). Such articles made up more than one-half of the articles in the Finnish and Norwegian newspapers, but slightly less in the Danish and Swedish newspapers.

Table 7  Type of drug reported on, in the newspapers from the different countries, per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opiates</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine/Crack</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other substances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs in general</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the use of cocaine and crack has not been shown to be widespread in the Nordic countries, there was a conspicuously large number of newspaper articles on the topic. As much as one-quarter of the Swedish articles dealt with cocaine or crack. It is true that the court case between Björn Borg and the magazine "Z" was taking place during this time, and the newspapers in Sweden, Finland and Norway gave this matter broad coverage. However, in the Danish newspapers, where minimal coverage was given to the Björn Borg case, as much as 14% of the articles were about cocaine or crack.

The fact that all four countries had relatively many articles on cocaine or crack, must be seen in the context of the general attention given to these drugs internationally. During the last years, the threat of cocaine has been a main theme on many different international fora, and expectations of a wave of cocaine is to be found in all Western countries. However, there can be other reasons why the press are so concerned with cocaine. Cocaine is often regarded as a drug which is used by people who are not "usual" drug addicts. It has, therefore, a
somewhat mythical character. Cocaine is associated with the American entertainment industry and the "American way of life" in a different way than "traditional" drugs. Cocaine is also often associated with international celebrities. Apart from this we found that articles on cannabis and opiates were more frequent in Denmark than in the other countries.

The court case between Björn Borg and the magazine "Z"

In order to conduct a more concrete comparison of how the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers write about incidents related to drugs, we shall look at an event which was reported in the newspapers in all four countries, and which, in principle, had the same source of information. The court case between the Swedish tennis star Björn Borg and the Swedish magazine "Z" provides us with this opportunity. The objection can, of course, be raised that this case was unusual in that it concerned the good name and reputation of a Swedish national hero. Another objection could be that the coverage of the case primarily reflected what the different countries think about Björn Borg and not their attitudes toward drugs. However, we have chosen to take a closer look at how the newspapers in the different countries reported on the case, since this provides the background for some interesting reflections.

Björn Borg sued the magazine "Z" because of an interview in which Jannike Björling, Borg's former girlfriend, claimed that he had used cocaine. Borg denied the claim and sued "Z" for libel. The court case was basically a freedom of the press issue, in which the question was whether "Z" had the right to print information they had about Borg's alleged use of cocaine.

In total, we found 31 articles on the court case. However, the newspapers wrote about the case in quite different ways. We chose to analyse the approach and the aspects of the case that the newspapers highlighted. Two value dimensions were used: truth versus lies and clean (sport) versus dirty (cocaine).

Of course it was not surprising that the two Swedish newspapers wrote the most (fourteen articles) about the case. After all, a Swedish idol was in the limelight. The articles in the Swedish newspapers were extensive; some covered over three pages and contained several photographs. The course of the trial was followed in detail. For example, Björn Borg's testimony was reproduced verbatim. Both Björn
Borg and Jannike Björling were interviewed several times. The court refused to consider the question of whether the information that Björn Borg had used cocaine was true or not. However, it was obvious that this was a central theme in the newspaper reports, in addition to who was telling the truth and who was lying. To illustrate this we quote some headlines and excerpts:

From Jannike's side:


I plan to tell all. Jannike's sister testifies about who was present at the cocaine parties. Zuzette Björling plans to cause a stir in Stockholm's court by giving sensational information, when she testifies about Björn Borg's alleged cocaine abuse. Björn Borg has offered me cocaine several times. The lawyer, Sjöström will get the evidence he is looking for (Expressen 20 April 1990).

Jannike and Zuzette Björling are not allowed to testify about Björn Borg's alleged cocaine abuse ... They do not want the truth to come out. They are frightened about losing ... everyone knows that it is true that Björn Borg used cocaine (Expressen 26 April 1990).

From Björn Borg's side:

Henning Sjöström, the lawyer: "We will be able to face the allegation" (Expressen 19 April 1990).

Jannike took cocaine herself (Expressen 19 April 1990).

Björn Borg's defence in court today ... Empty rumours and gossip (Expressen 7 May 1990).

I don't use drugs (Expressen 8 May 1990).

I am happy — Björn celebrates the jury's decision — Jannike cried (Expressen 9 May 1990).

The Swedish people have always loved me (Expressen 19 May 1990).

The articles in the Swedish newspapers were characterized throughout by respect and courtesy. No attempts were made in the reports to scandalize or tarnish the great hero.
Altogether there were nine articles in the Norwegian newspapers about the court case. These were also extensive and included several photographs. Apart from this, the difference between the Norwegian and the Swedish articles was striking. The following are some examples from the Norwegian press:

Sex and drugs gossip in open court. Lesbian prostitution, cocaine sniffing and persecution complex. There was no lack of piquant details and strong accusations when the court case between Björn Borg and the magazine "Z" began in Stockholm yesterday. The former tennis star fought intensely against the label of drug addict, which his ex-girlfriend Jannike Björling has given him ... (Verdens Gang 8 May 1990).

Rough battle about lies, sex and cocaine. The former tennis star Björn Borg as a sexual pervert and cocaine sniffer with a persecution complex ... (Verdens Gang 8 May 1990).

Borg's world falls apart. He was the international tennis world's idolized cool character. Multi-millionaire and idol. But seven years after Björn Borg gave up, the 34 year old's world is falling apart. Tens of millions of kroner have been lost, and this week the cool character's private life is being uncovered in all its glory in the chaotic "cocaine court case" against the magazine "Z" in Stockholm (Aftenposten 12 May 1990).

As we can see, the headlines and the excerpts give a completely different impression from that in the Swedish newspapers. The wording gives a clear impression of scandal and squalor.

The Danish and Finnish newspaper reports of the court case were rather modest compared with the Swedish and Norwegian reports. The Finnish newspapers did indeed publish six articles, but they were short reports. The question of whether or not Björn Borg had used cocaine was treated neutrally and left open.

The case received least attention and interest in Denmark. Only two short news items appeared in the Danish newspapers. In the first of these reports, it was laconically stated that the international tennis star goes from one court case to the next, and that the court cases deal with everything from economic matters to use of cocaine (B.T. 28 April 1990). The fact that the other and last report had the somewhat incorrect headline: "Björn Borg acquitted of drug abuse" (B.T. 15 May 1990) perhaps also reflects the lack of interest in the Danish press.
The way in which the court case between Björn Borg and "Z" was reported in the different countries, largely illustrates the different approaches taken by the press to drugs generally. The lack of interest in the case in the Danish newspapers could indicate that it is not considered sensational news that a person, whether or not a celebrity, has taken drugs. There was therefore no special reason to write about the case. The fact that the Finnish newspapers wrote as much as they did, can primarily be understood in relation to the conclusion mentioned earlier: that events abroad about drugs generally seem to have relatively large news value.

Generally the Norwegian newspapers write most about drugs and are generally the most shocked. When well-known people cast doubt on the idea that only drug addicts use drugs, the reaction is a feeling of shock and an attempt to find other negative aspects about the person involved.

For obvious reasons, it is more difficult to find any relationship between the way in which the Swedish newspapers reported the case and the approach to drugs generally. The newspapers seemed to be primarily concerned about whether Björn Borg's good name and reputation would be ruined. Even though there have been many scandals involving Björn Borg during the last few years, such as economic problems and parental custody of his son, these seem to have had very little effect on Borg's position as a national hero. One can, of course, raise the question of whether Björn Borg, through the court case on drugs, has contributed to legitimizing drug use in Sweden.

Closing remarks

To summarize, we suggest that the Danish newspapers seem to have a relatively relaxed approach to the drug problem. There is even room for discussion about legalization of cannabis. The Finnish newspapers like to write about drugs, but, since drugs are not a major national problem, they often find their stories from events abroad. In Norway, the newspapers are very active participants in the more or less continuous mobilization against drugs. Sweden keeps a high profile, but the drama seems to have been toned down. With a few exceptions within each Nordic country, a limited amount is written about the other Nordic countries.

Even though the material analysed is limited and there are some methodological weaknesses in the analysis of the press, the study
provides a picture of press discussion on drugs in the Nordic countries as well as the special features of each country. Of course, the extent to which one can draw conclusions, based on the scope of the study, is limited. What is presented by the press during a three-month period can be fairly coincidental. We can therefore not exclude the possibility that the trends we identified might have been different had the material been more extensive and/or the data had been collected at a different time.

References


The Nordic

Drug Survey
Drug use and public attitudes in the Nordic countries

Pekka Hakkarainen, Lena Hübner, Lau Laursen & Einar Ødegård

Introduction

Against the backdrop of the earlier analyses in this volume of official drug policies, control systems, parliamentary debates and newspaper reporting it is interesting to look at public perceptions of drug problems and control activities in the Nordic countries. Are national drug policies legitimate in the eyes of ordinary people? Does public opinion differ between the four countries, and are the differences congruent with the results reported in the other chapters of this book?

Some national data have been available, but the analysis presented here marks the first comparative study of people's attitudes and experiences related to drugs and drug policy in the Nordic countries.

Public opinion plays an important role in the construction of drug policy. On the one hand, public opinion is an essential frame of reference for politicians and political parties as well as other claims-makers trying to persuade others or claiming that they are arguing in the name of the people. On the other hand, policy-makers will also try to influence public opinion. For example, drug education, anti-drug campaigns and other demarketing efforts have been aimed at maintaining public attitudes that do not favour drugs.

Public support is a necessary precondition for the legitimation of a policy. The evidence from the field of criminal policy, for example, clearly suggests that the withdrawal of public support for the criminalization of a certain action will tend to lead to decriminalization of that action; good examples are provided by alcohol prohibition and legislation concerning abortions and homosexuality. However, for purposes of policy construction public opinion has more often been employed as a device of rhetoric rather than been an object of accurate knowing. This is also the case in the Scandinavian debate on drug policy. Even though public opinion has been used as a frame of reference for an action or as a target of control, there has been only little research in this field (Ødegård 1995). Therefore, it would be
particularly interesting to see what public attitudes look like in the light of a cross-national survey.

It should be noted that the concept of public opinion and its relation to people’s attitudes is not indisputable. Public opinion is usually understood as a collection of people’s opinions on topics of public interest which are analysed by statistical techniques using a sample from the population (Abercrombie et al. 1984). However, this conception has been criticized as overly simplistic. Pierre Bourdieu (1985) has argued that public opinion, understood as an additive collection of people’s random and unconnected opinions expressed in terms of percentages, is a poor and artificial abstraction of what people from different social class backgrounds really think. Public opinion, according to Bourdieu, is a system that is all the time being construed by tensions between different social powers. Similarly, Klaus Mäkelä (1977) has stated that public opinion should be seen as a socially structured entity which develops through hierarchic discussions in a society.

The narrower definition of public opinion in which the state and the individual are decidedly separated from each other, is typically an American conception. It appears to be connected to American individualism and culture as well as to a long and ideologically loaded tradition of public polls started by George Gallup. A critical standpoint would imply that a collective and structural nature of the formation of public opinion is emphasized over an individual one, and it appears to be more suitable in the European (and especially Nordic) context. In this wider sense of the concept, media coverage, statements of associations and individual opinion leaders, parliamentary debates, people’s attitudes, etc. are all important aspects of public opinion. Therefore, it is not possible to grasp the complicated nature of public opinion as a whole through a survey conducted among the general public. In fact, what we are doing here is merely compiling information about people’s attitudes on a matter.

The Nordic Drug Survey

A general population survey in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden was planned to cover two topics. The first and main

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1 All members of the project "Narcotics and control policy" participated in the planning of the study.
objective of the study was to investigate attitudes towards drug use and drug control in these countries. The questions addressed included:

- What do people think about drug policy, and what are the best ways to combat drug problems?
- What are the proper penalties for different kinds of drug crimes?
- Does a policy of decriminalization have any support among the general public?
- How does the drug problem relate and compare to certain other social problems?

Another concern was to obtain, for the first time, comparative data on the extent of drug use in the Nordic countries. It should be noted that national studies on the epidemiology of drug use among the general population are relatively rare even in Europe (Hartnoll 1995, 4). Cross-national comparisons based on the same data are extremely rare (Reuband 1990, 150). This being the case, questions concerning the extent of drug use are also of special interest:

- What are the prevalences of cannabis and hard drug use in the four Nordic countries?
- Would people be interested in experimenting with drugs if it were not condemned or criminalized?²

As we shall see later, personal experiences of drug use are also an important intervening variable with a certain influence on people’s attitudes towards drug policy. These two topics form the bulk of this article and are analysed in separate chapters.

Identical postal questionnaires were sent to representative samples of the general population in each country (see Appendix, pages 181-187). In Norway the questionnaires were mailed to the sample population by the National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (SIFA) in spring 1993. In Finland, data collection was carried out by

² A former Norwegian questionnaire (SIFA 1989) and a Finnish population survey (Kontula & Koskela 1992) may be mentioned as sources of inspiration in developing the questions concerning drug use and attitudes towards drug use and drug policy.
Statistics Finland, also in spring 1993. In Denmark the questionnaires were sent to the sample population by the Institute of Social Research in early 1994. In Sweden, where data collection was the responsibility of the Center for Alcohol and Drug Information (CAN), the respondents received the questionnaires in February 1995. Needless to say, the time-lag in data collection is unfortunate, for it is always possible that changes happen during such a period of time. Having said that, we may assume that at least the social and cultural differences between the Nordic countries (which are the most interesting thing from a comparative point of view) did not change in any dramatic way during these two years.

The samples were randomly drawn from the central population registers of the respective countries. In Finland and Sweden the samples comprised people aged between 18 and 69 and in Denmark and Norway people aged 19 to 70 years. A stamped addressed envelope was enclosed with an anonymous questionnaire sent to all sampled persons. A reminder was included into the design. The sample sizes and response rates for each country are given in Table 1.

Table 1  Sample sizes and response rates in the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original sample size</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded (dead, moved, abroad, etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final sample size</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,954</td>
<td>2,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>1,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents accepted</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>1,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate (%)</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluded were not registered.

The original sample sizes (3,000 in Norway and Sweden, 2,000 in Denmark and Finland) varied because of budget reasons. However, the samples are large enough for statistical purposes. The response rates were fairly similar in Denmark (69.5%), Finland (65.3%) and Sweden (64.4%), but clearly lower in Norway (54.7%). The high response rate for Denmark is probably explained in part by the intense public debate that was going on at the same time as the
questionnaires were submitted. On the other hand, the low response rate in Norway is consistent with corresponding investigations carried out earlier (Hauge & Irgens-Jensen 1981, 7-8; Ødegård 1995, 527).

The implications of the high non-response rate and the different rates for the four countries in terms of representativity and comparability are somewhat unclear. However, it should be noted that there is a higher percentage of responses from people under 40 years in Norway (53%) than in Denmark (47%), Finland (47%) and Sweden (46%). Since older people tend to have more repressive attitudes towards drugs than younger people, it seems reasonable to believe that public attitudes in Norway may actually be more repressive than is indicated by this survey (Ødegård 1995, 527).

The questionnaires in each country were identical with the exception of some extra questions in the Swedish and Danish studies, as well as some deviations in wordings in the Danish study. In this article we will give a comparative overview of the responses to the drug questions except for the four items concerning penalty scales of drug offences, which are discussed in Ødegård et al. in this volume.

Drug use among the general population in the four Nordic countries

Methodological problems in general population surveys
It is evident that the survey method involves many problems in the measurement of the actual use of illegal drugs. One serious limitation that needs to be borne in mind is that hard core addicts are usually underrepresented in general population surveys; either they are not available (they do not have a permanent address or the information about their address is inaccurate), or they are not willing to reply to questionnaires (Reuband 1990, 149-150; Hauge & Nordlie 1983; Hauge 1987). It has been argued that an adequate estimation of the extent of addiction or heavy use can only be reached by using a

---

3 The debate was triggered by a proposal for a new drug policy, borne out by harm-reduction thoughts, which was launched by the organization for general practitioners and doctors.
combination of various data (Reuband 1990, 150; for an example, see Utredningen om ..., 1980 and Olsson et al. 1993).

Another problem is presented by the reliability of self-reported drug use. Do people recall and report their experiences with drugs in an honest way? There have been some attempts to evaluate this problem. In a Norwegian evaluation, Hauge and Nordlie (1983; see also Hauge 1987) sent postal questionnaires to a youth sample known to the police as heavy drug users, and compared register data with the answers. They found that the heavy users who replied, actually reported their drug use quite accurately. On the other hand, follow-up studies of a single sample have found that responses about drug use may vary over time. For example, Fendrich and Vaughn (1994), who compared responses to questions about marijuana and cocaine use in the same subsample of lifetime users in 1984 and 1988, discovered that nearly 19% of cocaine users denied use in follow-up interviews, and nearly 12% of those who initially reported marijuana use indicated that they had never used marijuana at a follow-up four years later. However, it has been argued that postal questionnaires are more reliable measures for the use of illegal substances than personal interviews, because self-administered questionnaires minimize response effects due to social desirability (ibid., 99).

The reliability of the responses will be a less serious concern in a cross-national comparative study where the study design is similar in each country and where the countries are socially, politically and culturally very close to each other, as is the case in Scandinavia. It could be assumed that possible incorrect reporting would be at roughly the same level in each Nordic country. However, one reservation with regard to drug culture and moral climate should be made. Even when (as in this case) the respondents remain anonymous, underreporting may be more common in Finland, Norway and Sweden than in Denmark since the use of drugs, and cannabis in particular, is socially least condemnable in Denmark. People in Denmark have little to worry about in saying that they have tried cannabis. However, we feel that this survey should provide a reasonably reliable description of the relative differences in the prevalence of drug use in the general population of the Nordic countries. It can offer no exact figure for the size of the population of drug addicts and heavy users, but it does provide a comparative measure for estimating the level of drug experiences in the general population.
Prevalence of drug use

Nordic trends in illegal drug use have been regularly monitored and compared in the reports commissioned by a special body of cooperation, The Nordic Committee on Narcotic Drugs (Karlsson & Olsson 1984; Olsson 1989; Olsson 1993). These reports, based on national overviews, show that drug use has been most widespread in Denmark and least so in Finland and Iceland, while Norway and Sweden have remained somewhere in-between these extremes. In most cases drug experiences are limited to sporadic experimenting with cannabis. The prevalence of heavy drug use (the number of intravenous users) has been highest in Denmark and Sweden and clearly lowest in Finland and Iceland. (See e.g. Olsson 1993, 41-48.)

The results of our survey confirm this general picture once again, but for the first time on the basis of directly comparable measures. Figures on the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use (A), the six-month prevalence of cannabis use (B), and the lifetime prevalence of the use of hard drugs i.e. amphetamine, cocaine or heroin (C), are given in Table 2. In addition to the estimates of total prevalence, figures are also specified separately for men and women. Since missing values are excluded from the analyses, there is some variation in the N-values in different questions.

As expected, the proportion of ever-users of cannabis was clearly highest in Denmark (30.1%); Sweden (11.4%), Norway (8.3%) and Finland (7.3%) followed at some distance. The figures for Denmark, Finland and Sweden are higher than those estimated in the previous Nordic report in the early 1990s (5% in Finland, 7-8% in Norway and Sweden and just over 20% in Denmark, Olsson 1993, 42). It is impossible to say whether these figures indicate such an increase of drug use or whether they are due simply to the different methods used in these studies. However, it may be safely assumed that there has been some increase in drug use in Denmark, Finland and Sweden (for national reports see also Estrada 1994; Laursen et al. (forthcoming); Rimpelä et al. 1995). Denmark is undeniably at a level of its own. Furthermore, the Danish figures for lifetime prevalence are high even in a West European comparison (see Reuband 1995, 34; Annual Report ..., 1996, 10); in fact they are almost at the same level as the figures in the USA, where, in 1991, 33.4% of the population aged 12 or over had tried marijuana at least once (see Kandel 1993, 32).
The proportion of those reporting cannabis use during the last six months gives us a better indication of actual drug use and an estimate for the proportion of regular drug users. When we look at the figures for six-month prevalences, these were very much lower than those for lifetime prevalences, 4.1% in Denmark, 1.8% in Norway, 1.2% in Sweden and 1.1% in Finland. However, we can also observe that the actual use of cannabis is clearly at the highest level in Denmark. Surprisingly, the proportion of those reporting cannabis use during the last six months was higher in Norway than in Sweden, especially due to the higher proportion of male users in Norway.

Table 2  Self-reported drug use in the general population in the four Nordic countries by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A  Ever-users of cannabis (marijuana or hash)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(249)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
<td>(69)</td>
<td>(124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(163)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>(91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(412)</td>
<td>(93)</td>
<td>(129)</td>
<td>(215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>ns.</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B  Used cannabis during the last 6 months</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>ns.</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133
In the question concerning the use of hard drugs, Danish respondents were asked to report their experiences of amphetamine, cocaine and heroin separately. The answers were combined into a sum variable to make the figures formally comparable with those from the other countries. As we can see from Table 2C, the proportion of ever-users of amphetamine, cocaine or heroin was highest in Denmark (5.4%), followed by Sweden (3.4%), Norway (2.0%) and Finland (1.3%). This order is consistent with what one might expect on the basis of previous reports (see e.g. Olsson 1993), but the figures (especially for Denmark and Sweden) appear to be quite high for a general population survey. This seems to be due to the specific position of amphetamine use in the Nordic countries. In Denmark (where we could examine the use of amphetamine, cocaine and heroin separately), amphetamine (4.2%) was the most commonly used hard drug. Only 0.7% of the respondents in Denmark reported ever using heroin.

In the USA, 12% of general population aged over 12 in 1991 reported that they had tried cocaine at least once (Kandel 1993, 32). In Denmark 2% of the respondents had ever tried cocaine. The figures are thus at a completely different level in the USA and Denmark — and probably in the other Nordic countries as well.

As we can see, drug use was more widespread among men than among women in all countries. With just a few exceptions the differences were statistically significant, as was the variation of drug use by country. It should be noted that the lifetime prevalences of

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4 Relationships between country, gender and drug use were also tested by hierarchical log linear analysis (goodness of fit
cannabis use for men and women in Norway come quite close to each other. This indicates that men and women may be quite equally involved in the experimental use of cannabis in Norway. However, in keeping with these Norwegian figures (see Tables B and C), the research evidence shows that gender differences are accentuated with increasing degree of involvement (Kandel 1993). This, however, was not the case in Finland where the six-month prevalences for men and women were nearly identical. The gender differences in lifetime prevalences of hard drug use in Denmark and Finland were not statistically significant.

We can conclude that drug use in the general population is to a great extent limited to experimental use of cannabis. In fact, the absolute frequencies of six-month prevalence of cannabis use and the lifetime prevalence of hard drugs use were so low in each country — with the possible exception of Denmark — that there is no point in carrying the analysis of these categories any further. We therefore move on to look at the category of lifetime cannabis use in more detail.

**Age patterns in cannabis use**

Age is an important background variable in drug use; illicit drug use is typically a phenomenon of youth and early adulthood (Kandel 1993, 34-37). In this study the prevalence of cannabis use varied clearly with age, as we can see from Table 3.
Table 3  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(159)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(133)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
<td>(78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>1,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt;</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trends were similar in each country. Cannabis use was more widespread among younger than older generations. The differences between age groups were statistically highly significant. Cannabis use was most prevalent among those under 40 years. By contrast, experimenting with cannabis was rare among people over 50, especially in Finland, Norway and Sweden. However, the prevalence of cannabis use in the age group 50-59 in Denmark was almost at the same level as among younger generations in Finland, Norway and Sweden, clearly highlighting the country differences.

It should be mentioned that the overrepresentation of the younger age cohorts in the Norwegian sample has caused some distortion in the figures for the total population, as was seen in the log linear analysis. However, the association between age and drug use was clearly reinforced by this analysis.

The age group 40-49 is an interesting case. These people who were born between 1944 and 1953 represent a birth cohort known as the generation of '68, which was also the forerunner of increased drug use in Western societies. Against this background it is somewhat surprising that the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use, particularly in Finland and Norway, was not higher than reported in this group. During 1968-1971, when the respondents of this birth cohort were young, surveys among Finnish conscripts reported prevalences of cannabis use at 8-16% (Heinonen 1986); the figures for Norwegian youth in Oslo were 5-15% (Irgens-Jensen 1988). So if these people
reported their drug use correctly at this time, some of them have now either forgotten or abandoned their youthful experiments.

In any event it may be concluded that drug use, measured in terms of lifetime prevalence of cannabis use, seems to be closely involved in the lives of adolescents and young adults in the Nordic countries today. The reported prevalence of cannabis use decreases sharply in middle age and almost disappears in the elderly cohort.

A closer look at the younger age cohorts produces some interesting observations. Firstly, it appears that experimenting with cannabis is not only more common but also a qualitatively different kind of phenomenon in Denmark than it is in the other Nordic countries. In Denmark the proportion of ever-users of cannabis was almost as high as the proportion of non-users among the two youngest age groups, so in statistical terms experimenting with cannabis is quite a normal phenomenon among adolescents and young adults up to age 40 in Denmark, and certainly not a deviant act. However, as we could see from Table 2, it must be emphasized that there was a marked difference between experimenting with cannabis (lifetime prevalence) and the current use of cannabis (six-month prevalence) in Denmark as well. Statistical normalcy only applies to experimenting with cannabis.

The situation is very different in the other Nordic countries. The proportions of ever-users of cannabis were much smaller than the proportions of non-users among all age groups in Finland, Norway and Sweden. This being the case, experimenting with cannabis is clearly a minority phenomenon in these countries. When an activity is statistically limited to a minority, it is also easily predisposed to moral condemnation by the rest of society.

Secondly, it may be noted that since drug use is strongly associated with age, the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in the total population may automatically increase as new birth cohorts come to the age of drug initiation in the future. This cumulative effect appears to happen without any change in the level of drug use among the younger age cohorts. If the recruitment of new drug experimenters among young people remains at its current level and if these age groups now recall their drug experiences correctly in later surveys, then the total percentage of lifetime cannabis use will be increased in the general population without any essential change in the drug situation. The increase in the total figure mentioned earlier may also be due to this kind of cumulative cohort effect. Therefore, it would be
important to develop reliable methods for the estimation of actual drug use.

Thirdly, it should be noted that lifetime prevalences were higher in the age group 30-39 than in the younger cohort. Especially in Sweden there was a marked difference between these cohorts. In contrast to the situation with the total percentages, this may be interpreted as a sign of decreasing drug use by age in Sweden.

Regional differences

In addition to gender and age, the third background variable showing a strong association with the prevalence of drug use was the type of residential area; the figures are given in Table 4.

Place of residence was inquired differently in Denmark, where the capital city area was defined more broadly than in the three other countries as including the metropolitan region around the capital. The responses are therefore not fully comparable. The figures for drug use would have been higher in the city of Copenhagen had the metropolitan region not been included. Anyway, it is quite clear from the Table that cannabis use is an urbanized phenomenon, being most prevalent in the capital cities or capital city areas, although especially in Denmark it does also occur in small towns or in rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Denmark %</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Finland %</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Norway %</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Sweden %</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital/metropolitan region</td>
<td><strong>41.2</strong></td>
<td>311</td>
<td><strong>21.5</strong></td>
<td>130</td>
<td><strong>12.5</strong></td>
<td>224</td>
<td><strong>21.9</strong></td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City with population &gt; 20,000</td>
<td><strong>34.0</strong></td>
<td>409</td>
<td><strong>8.2</strong></td>
<td>575</td>
<td><strong>9.6</strong></td>
<td>509</td>
<td><strong>11.4</strong></td>
<td>918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area with population &lt; 20,000</td>
<td><strong>22.6</strong></td>
<td>629</td>
<td><strong>3.3</strong></td>
<td>548</td>
<td><strong>6.3</strong></td>
<td>823</td>
<td><strong>7.1</strong></td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,556</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt;</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4  Lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in the four Nordic countries in different types of residential area.*
If we also take the age variable into consideration, it may be added that the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use among those under 40 was 53.8% in the metropolitan region of Copenhagen, 30.4% in Helsinki, 17.8% in Oslo and 29.6% in Stockholm. The tendency for cannabis use to accumulate in the most urbanized areas was strongest in Finland; the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use was almost seven times higher in Helsinki than in other parts of the country (see also Kontula & Koskela 1992; Partanen 1995).

The use of hard drugs was also concentrated in the most urbanized areas. Lifetime prevalences of the use of hard drugs were 10.9% in Copenhagen, 2.3% in Helsinki, 5.2% in Oslo and 7.8% in Stockholm. The differences to other types of residential areas were statistically significant in all countries except Finland, where the absolute frequencies were too low for the test.

**Education**

The questionnaire had two items on education, but comparisons here are complicated by differences in the national systems. Another problem is that education is connected to the age variable.

Cross-tabulation of the length of education and drug use indicated that in each country, the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use was significantly ($p > 0.001$) higher among those who had a high level of education (over 10 years) than among those with less education (10 years or less). However, when age was controlled for, the effect of education disappeared and the differences between these two schooling groups were no longer significant. In other words, experimenting with cannabis seemed to be more strongly associated with age than with education. The conclusion we may draw is that those who had tried cannabis once or more often typically belonged neither to a well-educated class nor to school drop-outs, but their schooling was characteristic to their generation. Of course, this association with schooling would be different if focused on a selected group of heavy drug users.

**Cannabis use and alcohol consumption**

There were no statistically significant correlations between income and drug use in the general population. However, there was a strong and interesting link between alcohol consumption and the
prevalence of cannabis use. As a final background variable of drug use, figures describing the connections between the frequency of beer consumption and the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use are shown in Table 5. The frequency of beer consumption was included in the analysis because it clearly highlights differences in alcohol consumption in different population groups, even though beer consumption is typically higher among men than women.

Not perhaps surprisingly, the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use was highest among the most frequent beer drinkers. The proportion of cannabis users decreased linearly with the frequency of beer consumption. Differences in drug use between the different groups of beer drinkers were statistically highly significant in all countries.\(^5\) In other words, there seems to be a clear connection between cannabis use and drinking habits. Let us discuss this in more detail.

\(^5\) Because of the high level of beer consumption in Denmark, the hierarchical log linear analysis revealed associations between country and beer consumption and country and drug use as well as between beer consumption and drug use (\(p = 0.42\)).
Table 5  
Lifetime prevalence of cannabis use and frequency of beer consumption in the four Nordic countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of beer consumption</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A couple of times a week or more often</td>
<td>38.2 (142)</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>11.8 (28)</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About once a week</td>
<td>38.6 (113)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>9.7 (24)</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three times a month</td>
<td>27.9 (102)</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>8.6 (26)</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>17.3 (36)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>4.6 (13)</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very rarely or never</td>
<td>13.8 (15)</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.5 (1)</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt;</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we controlled for the age variable and examined the relationship between cannabis use and drinking habits in different age groups, we found that the connection was still there mainly among those under 40. Statistically, the connection between cannabis use and drinking habits was strongest among those between 18 and 29 years. The lifetime prevalence of cannabis use among those who drank beer once a week or more often was 61.9% in Denmark, 22.9% in Finland, 20.4% in Norway and 23.2% in Sweden in this age group. Cannabis use was also associated with drinking among those aged 30-39 years in Denmark and Norway and those aged 40-49 years in Sweden. The differences were also statistically significant when gender was controlled for (p < 0.001). The only exception was that among women, the prevalence of cannabis use was not highest among the heaviest beer consumers but among those who reported drinking beer about once a week. We may conclude then that experimenting with cannabis seems to be an element in the lifestyle of adolescents and young adults, which is also characterized by weekly consumption of beer.
Cannabis use and urban life-style: a conclusion

The results of this general population survey suggest that experimenting with cannabis is most apparently associated with the urban lifestyles of adolescents and young adults in the Nordic countries. In all Nordic countries men and women aged under 40, living in a capital city or in some other metropolitan region or sizable city, and taking part in urban amusements on a weekly basis, are most likely to have tried cannabis. Experimenting with drugs is an element in the adventurous lifestyles of urban city culture (see also Partanen 1995).

As we have stressed earlier, lifetime prevalence is not the same thing as actual current use. The six-month prevalence of cannabis use was much lower than lifetime prevalence in all four countries. For the most part, lifetime prevalence represents an earlier episode of experimenting. This view was supported by the responses to the question: If the use of marijuana or hash were not illegal, would you be interested in trying them? Only 6.3% of the respondents in Denmark, 3.5% in Finland, 4.7% in Norway and 2.5% in Sweden said yes. In other words, most of the people who had tried cannabis were no longer interested. The results show that attitudes towards the personal use of cannabis are negative among the vast majority of respondents, even among those who have tried the drug once or more often.

Attitudes towards drugs and drug policy

Public attitudes towards cannabis and hard drugs

Attitudes towards cannabis is one of the key issues in the development of drug policy in the Western world (see e.g. Becker 1963; Christie & Bruun 1985). An important aspect of the controversy has been the debate over soft and hard drugs. Should cannabis be seen as an intoxicant of its own, or as a substance comparable to heroin and other illegal drugs? Some say they do not regard cannabis as a drug at all, others argue that this is most patently the wrong attitude to take. The relationship between cannabis and alcohol use is another issue that has attracted much attention. Table 6 presents the results of this survey on public attitudes towards cannabis.
Table 6  
Public attitudes towards cannabis in the four Nordic countries.

A  
**Do you think it is possible to use cannabis without getting addicted?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,374</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>1,597</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 293.66, df = 6, p < 0.001

B  
**Do you think that cannabis should be sold freely in pharmacies or by prescription only?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prescription</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>1,606</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 32.28, df = 6, p < 0.001, Denmark excluded.

C  
**Do you think that hemp growing should be a punishable offence?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>1,871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 651.98, df = 3, p < 0.001
Looking at the answers to the question concerning the possibility of using cannabis without the risk of addiction, Denmark once again differs clearly from the other countries. The views were most positive among the Danish respondents, with 24% believing that this was possible. At the other extreme, the proportion of those who thought that cannabis use does not necessarily lead to dependence was clearly lowest in Sweden (6.2%). This is probably explained by the prominence in Sweden of the argument that cannabis is the most dangerous drug of all on the basis of the stepping-stone hypothesis; i.e. that cannabis leads to the use of hard drugs (A Resstrictive ..., 1993). Another interesting finding was that the numbers who did not know whether or not cannabis causes dependence were relatively high in Finland (21.5%), Norway (17.3%) and Sweden (15.6%).

The respondents in Finland, Norway and Sweden were also asked to take a stand on the following argument: Some people say that cannabis is no more dangerous than alcohol and therefore its use should not be forbidden. Only a small minority of the respondents — about 5% in Finland, 4% in Norway and 3% in Sweden — agreed. On the basis of this additional question, it can be said that existing legal provisions for criminalization have strong public support in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The vast majority of the respondents — 82% in Finland, 87% in Norway and 89% in Sweden — were of the opinion that the use of cannabis should be forbidden. The proportion of "don't know" responses was much smaller in this question than in that concerning the possibility of using cannabis without getting addicted.

This item was worded differently in the Danish questionnaire and therefore direct comparisons are difficult. However, it may be noted that almost 10% of the Danish respondents thought that cannabis is not at all dangerous. The majority, almost 80% stated that both cannabis and alcohol are dangerous (either that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol or that cannabis and alcohol are equally dangerous); only a small minority (3%) said that alcohol is more dangerous than cannabis. Opinions in Denmark were more liberal than in the other countries, but definitely not in favour of cannabis.

Reverting to Table 6, the wording of the second question (B) was again different in the Danish questionnaire: the Danish respondents were asked not only whether cannabis should be available through pharmacies and by prescription, but also whether it should be sold in ordinary shops and kiosks. In addition, the respondents in Denmark were allowed to choose more than one alternative. The answers from the Danish questionnaire are therefore directly comparable only for the category of disagreement.
Table 6B reveals that the legal sale of cannabis had only minimal support (and even then most probably by prescription only) in Finland, Norway and Sweden. By contrast, 16.7% of the respondents in Denmark supported the legal sale of cannabis by prescription, 9.6% through pharmacies and 5.9% through shops and kiosks (data not shown in Table). The proportions of those who were against any arrangement for legal sales of cannabis differed markedly between Denmark and the other countries. However, even in Denmark the clear majority seemed to be against the legal sale of cannabis.

In the third question in Table 6, the country differences yet again follow the same basic pattern. People in Denmark showed clearly the most tolerant attitude towards hemp growers. Although the differences between the other Nordic countries were not very big, it is worth noting that in this as well as in the other questions the Swedish respondents seemed to take the strictest attitudes towards cannabis.

What, then, were the attitudes towards hard drugs? Table 7A shows that the numbers who believed that it is possible to use hard drugs without getting addicted were very low in all countries. The difference between Denmark and the other countries not only disappeared, but was in fact reversed: the idea of non-addictive use of hard drugs was most firmly rejected by people in Denmark. However, there was still a clear difference between Denmark and the other countries in the proportion of those who are not sure ("don't know").

In Table 7B we have the same problems of comparability as in Table 6B; therefore, the breakdown of the Danish responses is described in the text. Almost one-fifth (19.8%) of the respondents in Denmark were of the opinion that hard drugs should be available by prescription, 2.7% that they should be sold over the counter in pharmacies, and only 0.9% that heroin, amphetamine and cocaine should be freely available in ordinary shops and kiosks. However, it is interesting to note that although the proportion of those advocating legal distribution by prescription is clearly highest in Denmark, the opposition to legal sales of hard drugs is almost at the same level in each country.  

---

6 Although it does not sound logical, some Danish respondents have expressed their support both for prescription policy and for prohibitive policy.
### Table 7: Attitudes towards hard drugs in the general population in the four Nordic countries.

#### A  Do you think it is possible to use hard drugs without getting addicted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>1,862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 107.95, df=6, p<0.001

#### B  Do you think that hard drugs should be sold freely in pharmacies or by prescription only?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only by prescription</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 11.44, df=6, p=ns., Denmark excluded.

#### C  Do you think that people should be punished for using cocaine once?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,094</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>1,482</td>
<td>1,862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 365.73, df=3, p<0.001

By and large, the differences between Denmark and the three other countries are significantly reduced when we look at attitudes towards
hard drugs. It seems to be first and foremost attitudes towards cannabis that distinguish Denmark from the other Nordic countries. Contrary to their fellow Nordic citizens, people in Denmark apply a distinction between soft drugs and hard drugs. In this respect the attitudes of the general public are consistent with the official drug policy followed in these countries.

The results of the item concerning punishment for using cocaine once (7C) are interesting. Namely, there appears to be a contradiction between these figures and the strong support for the criminalization of drug use. Although the respondents in Finland, Norway and Sweden were quite unanimous in their view that the use of drugs should be forbidden, many of them also share the view that people should not be punished for the use of drugs. According to this distinction, the criminalization of drug use may be seen chiefly as a symbolic measure for showing public disapproval of drug use. This was most prominent in Finland, where a narrow majority of the respondents was against punishment. In fact, Table 7C shows that the figures in Finland came very close to those in Denmark, while respondents in Norway, and especially in Sweden, took a harder position. In Sweden three-quarters of the respondents were of the opinion that a person should be punished for using cocaine even once.

Opinions on measures of drug control

The basic measures of drug control consist of drug education and prevention, treatment, border control, police work and punishments. The respondents were asked to say whether they considered each of these measures very important, important or not important in combatting drug problems. Most respondents regarded all of these measures as very important or important. Table 8 describes the proportions of those who considered the measures to be "very important" in drug control. In the Danish questionnaire views on police work and severe punishments were inquired separately for the case of users and drug dealers or traffickers.

Despite some obvious differences, we can also clearly identify similar trends in how different aspects were rank-ordered in each country. Prevention and drug education were regarded as the most important measures, law enforcement (customs, police and punishment) came second, while only half of the respondents regarded the treatment of drug addicts as very important.
Table 8 Proportions considering selected measures as very important in drug control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention among young people</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>1,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug education and information</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>1,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs and border control</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>1,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- against users</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>1,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- against dealers</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe punishments</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>1,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- against users</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>1,316</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- against dealers</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment of drug addicts</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>1,197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most interesting finding is that people put their confidence in measures that are most vague in their methods and most disputed in their effects. Clearly, people seem to prefer soft measures over police control and other restrictive measures. Probably, the tradition of the Enlightenment and the Western belief in individual rationality are reflected in these results.

The emphasis on police control and punishment was clearly strongest among the Swedish respondents, suggesting that the country's restrictive control policy has the backing not only of politicians and bureaucrats but also the general public. Relatively large numbers stressed the importance of border control in Finland, hoping perhaps that the import of drugs can be stopped at the borders. In Denmark views were divided on measures of law enforcement. On the one hand, the vast majority stressed the importance of police work and severe punishments against drug dealers and traffickers, but only a minority believed in employing such measures against drug users. In fact, according to other alternatives in the response scale ("important", "not important"), many of the Danish respondents did not seem to believe in these measures in controlling drug users at all.

Table 8 shows that prevention among young people was regarded as the most important measure, and treatment of drug addicts as the least important measure. On this basis it may be concluded that people in the Nordic countries are more concerned about the health of young people than the care and treatment of drug addicts.
The figures below examine Nordic opinions on control measures further, focusing on attitudes towards specific measures of drug control. We begin with questions concerning wire-tapping and room-tapping. Wire-tapping is a special measure that, given appropriate permission, the police may use in their investigations of serious drug offences. The method has been accessible to the police for a long time in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, but in Finland only since June 1995, i.e. not at the time of this survey. Room-tapping is only admissible in Denmark.

Figure 1  Attitudes towards the rights of the police to wire-tapping and room-tapping in the four Nordic countries.

A  Attitudes towards wire-tapping

B  Attitudes towards room-tapping
A common argument in the drug policy debate is that wire-tapping and room-tapping contravene the individual’s right to privacy. However, Figure 1 shows that the use of these measures enjoyed surprisingly widespread support in all the Nordic countries. Only about 10% of the respondents in Denmark, Finland and Norway and a few per cent in Sweden were against wire-tapping. Room-tapping was a somewhat more sensitive issue, but nevertheless the clear majority in each country were in favour. Attitudes towards the use of these measures were most positive in Sweden, while public support for room-tapping was lowest in Finland. The numbers who were undecided were higher in room-tapping, in Finland nearly 20%. Room-tapping was considered a more complicated issue than wire-tapping.

Another special measure that has been widely discussed in the Nordic countries is that of involuntary or compulsory treatment of drug addicts. As has been pointed out elsewhere in this book, there are considerable differences in the legislation and in the use of this measure between the Nordic countries, Sweden being the keenest to apply it, Denmark and Finland showing most restraint and Norway falling somewhere in-between these extremes (see Lehto 1994). So, what does the general public think about involuntary treatment? The respondents were asked, "Do you think that drug addicts should be forced into treatment?" The distribution of the responses is given in Figure 2.

*Figure 2  Attitudes towards involuntary treatment in the four Nordic countries.*
Involuntary treatment had the backing of the majority of people in all countries, but there are some country differences. The support for this measure was strongest in Norway (80.5%) and Sweden (75.2%), while in both cases less than 10% of the respondents were against involuntary treatment. The proportion of respondents who were critical towards involuntary treatment was highest in Denmark (27.3%). Indecision was again highest in Finland at 19.7%.

Figure 3 describes the results of the item in which people were asked whether they thought children of drug addicts should be taken into care. The wording in the Danish questionnaire was different and the results are therefore excluded from the figure.

Figure 3  Attitudes towards taking custody of children of drug addicts.

As we can see the majority of respondents in Finland, Norway and Sweden were in favour, although large numbers were undecided, in Finland as many as one in three. Support for taking children of drug addicts into care was strongest in Sweden (70.0%), followed by Norway (60.7%) and Finland (58.5%).
In Denmark the respondents' views were inquired separately on taking into care in principle and on the use of custody in specific situations. The latter received most support (61.0%). Although the results are not fully comparable, most people in the Nordic countries made clear their concern about the health and safety of drug addicts' children and were prepared to accept even such extreme measures as taking into care in the children's best interest.

Since the onset of the HIV epidemic, needle exchange programmes have become a very important measure of drug control. In the Nordic countries the distribution of clean needles and syringes for drug users was first organized in Denmark. In Norway, an experimental needle exchange programme was launched in Oslo in 1988, indicating at least some rethinking of the country's highly restrictive drug policy (see also Skretting 1996). By contrast, the authorities in Sweden have firmly rejected the idea of needle exchange programmes and in fact imposed tightened restrictions on the sale of needles and syringes. There has, however, been one local experimental exchange programme in Malmö in the south of Sweden. In Finland, needles and syringes have been freely available in pharmacies at a low cost. It is only during 1996, in the wake of a hepatitis B epidemic among intravenous drug users, that public debate was started on the need for needle exchange programmes. Figure 4 describes the respondents' views on needle exchange.

*Figure 4* Attitudes towards needle exchange among the general population in the four Nordic countries.
The respondents were asked whether they agreed that clean syringes and needles should be distributed free of charge to drug addicts in order to prevent the spread of AIDS. Support for needle exchange was clearly strongest in Denmark (78.5%) and Norway (70.0%), but considerably lower in Finland (45.5%) and Sweden (48.0%), where the proportions of those who were not sure were strikingly high (around 30%). In any event the proportions in favour of needle exchange were higher than the proportions of the other alternatives even in Finland and Sweden. On this basis it may be concluded that needle exchange programmes enjoy broad public support in Denmark and Norway, but also quite considerable support in Finland and Sweden.

Views on needle exchange will be discussed in more detail later; but before that we shall look at the views and definitions in the general public of a "drug problem".

**Construction of drug problem in the general public**

What kind of social problem does the "drug issue" constitute as far as the general public is concerned? How is the drug problem defined and construed by ordinary citizens in different Nordic countries? Although a survey questionnaire can obviously provide only a very rough picture, we shall nonetheless attempt to capture some aspects of the thought-models that underlie people's notions and definitions of the drug problem.

We begin with public perceptions of the causes of drug use (Table 9): the respondents were asked to say what in their opinion was the main reason for someone becoming a drug addict: was it mainly their own fault, or was it down to external circumstances beyond their control?

In each country we can detect a common thread that runs through the responses: it is felt that drug users themselves cannot be fully released from responsibility. Only very few people thought that drug addiction is chiefly attributable to external circumstances beyond the user's control. The main explanation suggested was that drug addiction was a combined outcome of own fault and social circumstances; in other words, the respondents did not want to release society from its responsibility, either. No doubt the respondents opting for this alternative had in mind such problems as unemployment, family problems, social deprivation, etc. as contributory factors in drug addiction. This line of reasoning was most common in Norway, where over 70% of the respondents were of the
opinion that drug problems cannot be blamed on individual drug users alone, but that society must accept its responsibility as well. This result could possibly reflect the strong feeling of togetherness and collective responsibility that was found to be typical of Norwegian people in a comparative Nordic welfare study (Allardt 1975).

Table 9  Causes of drug use: what makes a person a drug addict?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One's own fault</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances beyond one's own control</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>1,593</td>
<td>1,903</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=133.50$, df=9, p<0.001

Another common dimension in the definition of drug problem is whether drug addicts should be seen and treated primarily as a sick or criminal person. Table 10 below describes the breakdown of views on this issue.

Table 10  Should a drug addict be treated primarily as a sick or as a criminal person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a criminal person</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a sick person</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither as a criminal or as a sick person</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>1,585</td>
<td>1,896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=234.47$, df=15, p<0.001
In contrast to the situation with own fault vs. society’s fault, the distinction between criminal and sick was highly relevant to people in all four countries. The vast majority of respondents considered a drug addict either as a sick person or as a criminal person (and more often as sick than criminal). The proportion of respondents who regarded a drug addict as a criminal was highest in Sweden. This result is consistent with previous observations which indicate that support for restrictive measures against drug users is strongest in Sweden. On the other hand, the definition of drug addicts as sick persons is not consistent with the low priority given to the treatment of drug addicts as a way of combatting drug problems (Table 8). It seems that although drug addicts are regarded as sick persons and as such as being in need of help, the drug problem itself is defined in the general public primarily as a problem of law and order rather than as a medical problem.

In order to better understand how people perceive the seriousness of the drug problem, we need to take a comparative view and relate drugs to other kinds of social problems. The Table below examines the drug problem in relation to crime. The question of the relationship between drug use and crime has been one of the main themes in the discourse defining the drug problem (see e.g. Carpenter et al. 1988). There is abundant evidence that drug users frequently commit crimes such as theft and other types of crime against property. The assumption is that, drugs being illegal, they also promote other kinds of criminal activity. We asked our respondents whether they thought that crime rates would go up or down if drug use were legalized.

Table 11  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease 12.6</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>1,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2=1043.35, \text{df}=9, p<0.001 \]
Again, Denmark clearly stands apart from the other Nordic countries. Almost half of the respondents in Denmark believed that the legalization of drug use would reduce the crime rate. In the other Nordic countries the relationship between legalization and the crime rate was almost the opposite. It is not clear whether the Danish figures can be seen as an indication of Danish pragmatism in criminal policy, but in any event they do provide some further clues for the attempt to understand public opinion in Denmark. The figures in Finland, Norway and Sweden are consistent with the other attitudes expressed by the respondents in these countries. However, it must be noted that there were many people in Norway (43.3%) who thought that the crime rate would decrease or remain unchanged if drug use were legalized.

Figure 5 describes the respondents' views on the importance of drug crimes in relation to economic crimes, violent crimes and environmental crimes: they were asked to say which of these in their opinion was the biggest social problem.

Figure 5 Importance of drug crimes as a social problem in relation to economic crimes, violent crimes and environmental crimes.

7 The figures may also be explained by the drug policy debate that was going on at the time of the questionnaire and that gave much room to the medical profession's proposal according to which decriminalization would help to reduce crime rates.
In all countries the respondents considered violent crimes as by far the biggest social problem. However, the figures in Finland differ markedly from those in the other countries. The obvious explanation lies in the severe economic recession that hit Finland in the early 1990s and in the public debate that followed on the mistakes that had been made by decision-makers and on economic crimes. As far as the drug issue is concerned, it is interesting to observe that concern about drug-related crimes was at a lower level in Sweden than in Denmark and Norway. It seems reasonable to assume that when the drug issue is seen as a major problem, people are liable to seek new measures and alternatives to traditional police restrictions. We think that this would have been the case especially in Norway.

An important point of reference in the definition of the drug problem is provided by alcohol problems. Alcohol is widely regarded as a major social problem in the Nordic countries, particularly so in Finland. So which of these two issues, drugs or alcohol, do people consider a bigger social problem in their country? Table 12 gives the breakdowns of the answers for each country.

**Table 12**  
**Drugs vs. alcohol problem: which is the bigger social problem?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol is a bigger problem</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and drugs are equally big problems</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs are a bigger problem</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>1,595</td>
<td>1,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\chi^2 = 706.40, \text{df}=9, p<0.001\]

The general public in Finland as well as in Norway is still far more concerned about drinking problems than the more recent problem of drug use. By contrast, the drug problem is a more grave concern for people in Sweden. Comparing this result with the findings in the previous figure, it is quite surprising to see how little importance is attached in Sweden today to the alcohol problem. Given that the alcohol problem is traditionally regarded as a serious social problem
in Sweden as well (see e.g. Bruun et al. 1985), it is possible that its public definition has changed. On the other hand, the figures in this table may be explained by the high visibility given to the drug problem in the Swedish mass media. In Denmark the figures for drugs and alcohol were roughly the same; perhaps the Danish view is that drugs and alcohol constitute part of a broader problem of intoxicant abuse.

The social demography of different opinions

Cross-tabulation of public opinions with demographic variables points at numerous statistically significant differences. The discussion below focuses on the most prominent and important observations.

The clearest differences occurred in the question concerning the possibility of using cannabis without getting addicted: views were divided between men and women, between different age groups, between places of residence and between educational groups and income levels as well as between different countries. This will no doubt remain contested terrain for the construction of the drug problem in the future as well.

Age is an important distinguishing variable not only in the case of drug use but also opinions. The Figure below shows the breakdown of opinions on the above-mentioned cannabis issue in different age groups. Since it may be assumed that a person's own experiences with cannabis will influence his or her opinions on drugs, the proportions of those who have used cannabis (lifetime prevalence of cannabis use, here called "drug users") and those who have not used cannabis (here called "non-users") are given separately. As there were only few drug users aged over 50 in Finland and Norway and only one drug user over 60 years in Sweden, they are excluded from Figures 6 and 7.

As we can see there is a clear difference between the figures for drug users and non-users in each country. Those who had personal experiences with cannabis believed more often that cannabis use does not necessarily lead to addiction. This view was most commonly held by drug users in the youngest age group in Finland. However, it is interesting to note that many of those who had tried cannabis once or more often, took the opposite view. In Sweden, non-users were almost unanimous in their view that it is not possible to use cannabis without getting addicted.
Figure 6  Proportions of drug users and non-users in different age groups claiming that it is possible to use cannabis without getting addicted.
Secondly, there were also clear differences between different age groups. The proportion of those who believed in a more positive image of cannabis was smaller in the older age groups both among users and non-users. Opinions here seem to differ markedly between different age cohorts. This is even more evident when we look at the question of needle exchange in Figure 7.

In each country the proportion of people in favour of needle exchange is very high in all age groups of drug users. In this item the differences between cohorts were clearer among non-users. Respondents in younger age cohorts were more in favour of needle exchange than respondents in older cohorts. Needle exchange has been regarded as a measure typical of a harm reduction policy. On this basis it appears that harm reduction policy enjoys more support among younger generations than it does among older generations in the Nordic countries.

So what kind of control measures do older age cohorts favour? There were some minor differences in attitudes towards severe punishments, but attitudes towards police work and border control attitudes varied more consistently. The final Table shows the age-specific proportions of those who thought that customs played a major role in drug control.

Table 13  Proportion of respondents who considered customs activity a very important control measure in different age groups in the four Nordic countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>1,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt;</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Older age groups considered the role of customs more important than younger age groups. On this basis it may be concluded that older generations have greater faith in restrictive control measures, possibly hoping that the drug problem can be resolved by thrusting drugs out of the market. The younger generations, on the other hand, appear to show more tolerance towards drug users, possibly thinking that they have to live with the problem and try to minimize the harm caused by drugs and related problems.

Discussion

This study is the first ever direct survey comparison of drug use and public attitudes towards drugs and drug policy in the Nordic countries. There have not been many comparative projects of this kind in other countries, either.

Many of the results of this survey confirmed what we already knew about public attitudes towards drug use on the basis of a well-established system of information exchange in the Nordic countries. It has long been known that Denmark has the highest prevalence of drug use and the most liberal attitudes towards drugs and drug users. However, the data of this survey allow for more accurate and valid comparisons between the four Nordic countries than has been possible so far. In addition, the data throw light on aspects of drug policy and other areas that earlier have not been covered at all.

A comparison of the present results with earlier reports suggests that drug use may have increased to some extent in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. However, the increase in lifetime prevalences may be due to the cumulative effect of new birth cohorts reaching the age of drug initiation. This cumulative effect may raise the level of lifetime prevalence in the total population even if drug use in the youngest age group were on the decrease, as was the case of Sweden.

The lifetime prevalence of cannabis use in Denmark is very high by international comparison. In statistical terms, experimenting with cannabis is almost normal behaviour among younger cohorts in Denmark, whereas in the other Nordic countries it is still clearly regarded as deviant behaviour. However, it must be stressed that the Danish figures were considerably reduced when we looked at the six-month prevalence of cannabis and hard drugs use.
As for country differences in public attitudes, it was no surprise to see that attitudes were most liberal in Denmark, but it was surprising to find such consistency in the restrictive attitudes shown by people in Sweden. We expected that attitudes towards control policy in Norway would come quite close to Swedish views or even exceed them. This, however, was not the case. We do not know whether public attitudes in Norway have been changing of late, but in any event the new drug policy initiatives in the country do seem to have widespread popular support.

However, public opinion in Norway and Sweden as well as in Finland was still clearly in favour of criminalization, which is indeed the official policy line of these countries. Similarly, in Denmark, the general public made clear its support for the official policy of distinguishing between soft drugs and hard drugs as well as between drug users and drug dealers and traffickers. The public thus seems to endorse the official policy lines of their countries.

Interestingly, public attitudes in Finland sometimes came closer to Danish views and sometimes to Swedish or Norwegian attitudes. This variation, combined with the high proportions of people who were undecided in many issues, suggests that people in Finland did not have a very firm and clear picture of the drug problem, possibly because it has never been a very major issue in the country and clearly less significant than the alcohol problem. There has probably also been less public debate on different aspects of the drug problem in Finland than elsewhere.

Our survey also revealed many features that the four Nordic countries share in common. There were similar trends in the relationship between the shares of lifetime cannabis use and the six-month prevalences of cannabis or hard drugs use, in gender differences as well as in the associations between drug use and age, urban lifestyle and beer consumption. Experimenting with cannabis, as an element of the adventurous lifestyles of the urban city culture of the youth and young adults, was the most typical pattern of drug use in each Nordic country.

In terms of attitudes, too, there were many consistencies and similarities between the four countries. In each country there was a very firm attitude against hard drugs. The majority of the respondents were in favour of the police having the right to use wire-tapping and room-tapping methods in investigating drug-related crimes. Also, it was widely agreed that drug education and prevention among young
people represented the most important measures in combatting drug problems.

Finally, the distribution of attitudes towards drug policy seemed to vary by age in much the same way in each country. The younger cohorts were more often in favour of a harm reduction policy than older cohorts, whereas the older cohorts were more often in favour of restrictive control measures than younger people. It is interesting to consider whether there will also be a cumulative effect in the formation of public opinion, just as in lifetime prevalences.

References


Rimpelä, Matti; Pohjanpää, Kirsti; Terho, Pirjo; Pienmäki-Jylhä, Päivi & Poikajärvi, Kristiina (1995): *Huumeet tulleet nuorten arkeen (Drugs have become a part of the everyday life of young people).* Stakes. Helsinki.


Punishment and attitudes to the level of punishment in the Nordic countries

Einar Ødegård, Pekka Hakkarainen, Lena Hübner & Lau Laursen

Up to the end of the 1950s drugs policy in the major part of Europe was a medical issue. However this situation changed during the 1960s. The sanction of punishment became an increasingly important means for the authorities in their policy for drugs abuse. A sharpening of the penalties for breaches of the drugs legislation took place. This applied to all the Nordic countries, but to a varying degree. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have chosen different levels of punishment and a different penal practice.

The democratic vision holds that all human beings shall have the same opportunity to exert influence on political decisions and institutional implementations (Dahl 1986). Even though public opinion does not play any formal role in the creation of statutes and even though we no longer observe the ancient custom of having the whole population in attendance at the assembly when new legislation is to be passed, this does not mean that public opinion is without significance or interest. Indeed, it is not only with reference to the ideal vision of democracy that importance must still be ascribed to

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1 Thanks to Arvid Amundsen for useful comments.
public opinion. Those who are subject to the law must have confidence in the legal system and accept the legal provisions. The status of and support for any enactment is conditional upon its legitimacy. Without a certain minimum of acceptance and acknowledgement of the provisions of the law, the democratic state based on the rule of law is undermined. For this reason it may be of interest to look at the different countries’ criminal provisions and penal practice in relation to public attitudes in the country concerned. In this context there are two questions it will be interesting to attempt to answer. Firstly, are the differences in applying the penal sanction in the Nordic countries also reflected in differences in attitude between their populations? Secondly, is penal practice in harmony with public attitudes?

**Data and method**

This study is part of the Scandinavian drug survey presented and analysed in more detail in the previous article. Details on the sample size, response rate, etc., are given in Table 1 of that article.

We asked about attitudes to penal reactions for breaches of the drugs legislation. The respondents were asked both to answer a general question on whether they believed the level of punishment was too lenient, adequate or too strict, and also to suggest what the penalty ought to be for specific acts representing breaches of the drugs legislation. They were in this case presented with alternative responses that were supposed to cover what within a normal frame of reference might be considered as possible and adequate penal reactions. The alternative responses our samples were given did not include a suspended sentence of imprisonment (because the inclusion of this would have involved a set-up of alternatives that was too comprehensive and complex). Where imprisonment is given as a response alternative, it must be understood as immediate imprisonment. A suspended sentence of imprisonment represents a penal reaction of greater severity than a fine, but it is of course a less strict sanction than immediate imprisonment.

To test whether the distribution of responses was different in the four samples we made use of the Kruskall-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks. The K-W technique does not however tell how many or which samples are different. In order also to be able to test whether the distributions of responses between the four samples differed in pairs, we therefore also made use of the
Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test. When testing whether the distribution of responses was different, we excluded the "don't know" group.

To compare views of the populations on what they thought were adequate penal sanctions with what we presupposed as the de facto sentencing practice, we asked people to take a stand on three imaginary though realistic cases. In using this method we drew on the experiences of a previous Nordic workshop dealing with legislation and judicial practice in drug cases (Thunved 1991, 7-31 and 57-63).

Criminal legislation and the level of punishment in the Nordic countries

With the introduction of the Euphoria-inducing Substances Act of 1955 the maximum penalty for contravention of the drugs legislation in Denmark was raised from imprisonment for 6 months to imprisonment for 2 years. In 1969 the Danish parliament — the Folketing — passed an addition to section 191 of the Criminal Code providing for a penalty of greater severity for offences under the Euphoria-inducing Substances Act. The maximum sentence was stipulated as imprisonment for 6 years when, as it says in the Act, any person sells drugs either "to a considerable number of persons or for a considerable sum of money or under particularly aggravating circumstances". In 1975 the Danish government again proposed raising the maximum penalty for drugs offences to imprisonment for 10 years. This proposal was passed the same year in the form of an addition to section 191 of the Criminal Code, in which it says that if the sale represents "a considerable quantity of any particularly dangerous or harmful substance" or if the substance "was of a particularly dangerous nature, the sentence may be increased to imprisonment for 10 years."

The first real drugs legislation came in Finland in 1956. It is true that there was a drugs regulation on a par with a statute issued in 1942, but this was first and foremost an enabling regulation that authorised the regulation of the importation and exportation of drugs by means of decrees (Hakonen & Kontula 1988). With the legislation that came in 1956 the maximum sentence for drugs offences was stipulated as imprisonment for four years. In 1972 came a new drugs Act in which an explicit distinction was drawn between a "drugs offence" and an "aggravated drugs offence". The maximum sentence for a "drugs offence" became a fine or imprisonment for a maximum term of two years. The penalty scale for an "aggravated drugs offence" became imprisonment for not less than one year with a maximum term of 10
years. In 1994 there was a revision of the drugs legislation in Finland without any change in the level of punishment.

In 1964 came a new Act — the Medicines Act — as a replacement for the Opium Act in Norway. This Act raised the maximum sentence for drugs offences to imprisonment for 2 years. However this new penal provision was relatively soon considered to be inadequate. In a report from the Criminal Law Council, which is the government's advisory committee, it was proposed in 1967 that the penal provisions relating to the importation and sale of drugs should be moved — where more serious offences were concerned — to a new section 162 in the chapter of the Criminal Code dealing with felonies against public safety. The justification for this was that transferring these provisions to the Criminal Code would emphasise the serious nature of the acts. Furthermore it was proposed to raise the maximum penalty to 5 years. When the Act was passed by the Norwegian parliament — the Storting — in 1968 the maximum penalty was however set at 6 years, but the demand for tougher penalties continued and became stronger. In 1972 the maximum penalty was raised from 6 years to a term of imprisonment for 10 years. In 1981 the maximum penalty was increased again, this time to 15 years, and it 1984 it became 21 years. A term of imprisonment for 21 years represents the maximum penalty that may be imposed in Norway.

The maximum penalty in Sweden was from 1964 a term of imprisonment for two years regulated under the legal authority of a drugs decree, as it was called. In 1968 Sweden got a separate Act to punish drugs offenders, and at the same time the maximum penalty was raised to imprisonment for 4 years. In 1969 the maximum penalty was raised for what section 3 of the Act calls "aggravated drugs offences". From now on the maximum penalty became imprisonment for 6 years, but very soon this was also felt to be inadequate and in 1972 the maximum penalty for drugs offences was again raised, this time to imprisonment for 10 years. In 1981 there was again a sharpening of the penalty, as the minimum sentence for "aggravated drugs offences" was raised from 1 to 2 years of imprisonment and the maximum sentence for less serious drugs offences coming under section 1 of the Act was raised from 2 to 3 years of imprisonment.

There is probably no other area of criminal law in the Nordic countries in which such a dramatic increase in the penal reaction has taken place as in the case of drugs offences. However there are differences between these countries. The sanction of a penalty as a parameter of action in combatting drugs appears to be ascribed somewhat different weight. Among the Nordic countries the maximum penalty varies
today between 10 and 21 years. Norway has the highest maximum sentence. The other three countries have a maximum penalty of imprisonment for 10 years. However there is also reason to adjust this picture somewhat. Both in Denmark and Sweden the general criminal law provides for the maximum penalty to be exceeded. In Denmark, if more than one criminal offence has been committed in the same case, the sentence may be increased by half the penalty scale — that is to say that an offender may in principle be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of 15 years. In Sweden an offender may be sentenced to a term of imprisonment for 14 years for a repeated offence. In Finland, finally, the maximum penalty may be exceeded by 3 years for a repeated offence, that is to 13 years of imprisonment.

**Three offences**

The first of the three offences the respondents were asked to stipulate a penalty for was described as follows: Imagine the following situation: The police arrests a person who is using hashish. Do you think that this person should be punished, and if so, in what way? In Denmark the person concerned will either not be punished for this or the reaction will be a warning. In Finland the person concerned will be prosecuted and sentenced to pay a fine. In Norway the person will also be fined and likewise in Sweden. In other words there are no dramatic or radical differences in the sentencing practice of the different countries with a certain exception for Denmark as opposed to the others.

What then do the populations of these countries think ought to be the penal sanction for the above-mentioned act? A clear majority in all these countries believe that the act should entail criminal liability, but with respect to what would be the adequate penalty attitudes in these countries appear to be different. A majority, 55%, in Denmark want the penal reaction to be restricted to nothing stricter than a warning. In the other three countries the majority of the populations want the sanction to be a fine or a stricter reaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No penalty</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1* Attitudes to penal reactions for breaches of the drugs legislation by smoking hashish. Percentage distribution.
Using the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks we find that the differences between the four samples are significant (P < .0001). This indicates that at least one of the groups is different from at least one of the others. Using the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test for testing the difference in distribution in pairs of two and two samples we find that there is no significant difference in the distribution of responses between Finland, Norway and Sweden. On the other hand there is a statistically significant difference between Denmark and each of the other three nations — (P < .0001). We can see that the dominant response in Finland and Sweden, but in particular in Norway, is centred around a fine — the middle alternative.2 We can see that a markedly greater percentage opt for the most severe penal alternative in Sweden compared with Finland and Norway. Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests whether the central tendencies are different. Because the difference in the case of Sweden, particularly seen in relation to Norway, is balanced — there are relatively more Swedes who also support the lenient penal alternatives — one can say that this test "conceals" a difference in spread which from our point of view may seem important. On the other hand if we choose to use the chi-square goodness-of-fit test, we obtain the result that there is a statistically significant difference between Finland and Norway (P = .001), between Finland and Sweden (P = .0002) and between Norway and Sweden (P < .0001). In the light of this a reasonable summary appears to be that with reference to public attitudes, in the sense of the attitude of the majority in these countries, there is no significant difference between Finland, Norway and Sweden. However Sweden stands out in one respect in particular: a relatively larger proportion of people than in the other two countries want the act to lead to the strictest penal alternative — imprisonment for a term of two months.

---

2 It is a well known phenomenon — the phenomenon of central tendency — for judgements to centre about a neutral point, for instance an average value, as a pivot (Guilford 1954).
The difference between Denmark and the other countries becomes clear when we compare the percentages for those who wish to impose a sentence of imprisonment for smoking hashish. In Denmark it is only 10% who support such a penal sanction while in Finland it is 27%, in Norway 25%, and in Sweden 29% of the populations who want such a penal reaction. It is also to be noted that the majority in all four populations stipulate a sentence that is not more severe than what in fact is sentencing practice. We see too that the modal value — the value that occurs most frequently — for all four countries is identical with the de facto level of punishment. In spite of the difference mentioned between Denmark and the others, all these countries have in common the fact that the view of punishment in the population seems to be centred around what is current sentencing practice.

The second act was described as follows: Imagine the following situation: During a raid the police finds a person in possession of two grammes of heroin. Do you think that this person should be punished, and if so, in what way? In Denmark the penalty for such possession would be a fine. In Finland the penal sanction would also be the imposition of a fine. In Norway the person concerned would be given both a suspended sentence of imprisonment for a term of 60 days and a fine in addition. In Sweden the penal sanction would be an immediate sentence of imprisonment for a term of two months. Even though both Norway and Sweden impose a sentence of imprisonment in this situation, there is at any rate a significant difference in the form of reaction. A suspended sentence is a more severe reaction than a fine, but at the same time a more lenient reaction than an immediate sentence of imprisonment as the respondents will understand the imprisonment alternatives. There is reason to believe that Norway’s sentencing practice in this situation has more in common with Denmark and Finland than with Sweden.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No penalty</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes to penal reactions for breaches of the drugs legislation by being in possession of 2 grams of heroin. Percentage distribution.
When we make use of K-W analysis we find that there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses in the samples. When we make use of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test we find that the distribution of responses is significantly different between Denmark and all the other countries (P < .0001), and correspondingly for Finland (P < .0001). It is only between Norway and Sweden that we do not find any statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses.

Denmark stands out because there is no overall majority in the population in favour of a sentence of imprisonment — 47%. In Finland we find 55% in favour of imprisonment. Likewise there is also an overall majority in Norway — 66% — and in Sweden — 59% — in favour of the serving of a term of imprisonment for such an offence. Norway and Finland, however, differ from Finland both in that a larger proportion are in favour of imprisonment and also because a larger proportion want a severe reaction in the form of a term of imprisonment for one year.

Generally speaking there is reason to believe that in relation to the latter criminal act described there seems to be a lesser degree of harmony between public attitudes in these countries and current sentencing practice. It is true that in Denmark and Finland the modal values are identical with current sentencing practice, but in Norway and Sweden the modal values are to be found in the most severe punishment alternative. Even though it is a fine that has the highest frequency in the distribution of responses in Finland, a majority of the population want a penal sanction that is of greater severity than the imposition of a fine and thus what is the current penal reaction. In particular as far as Finland and Norway are concerned there may be grounds for claiming that public attitudes are more repressive than current sentencing practice. A majority in these two countries stipulate a sentence that exceeds current sentencing practice — respectively 55% in Finland and 66% in Norway. In Sweden, where the most severe penal reaction for the act mentioned is to be found, there is also a majority of the population, 51%, who stipulate a penal reaction.
that does not exceed current sentencing practice. In Denmark the population is divided exactly in the middle with respect to believing that there should be a sentence of greater severity than under current sentencing practice.

The third act was described as follows: Imagine the following situation: A person is stopped at the Copenhagen / Helsinki / Oslo / Stockholm airport and discovered to be carrying 300 grammes of heroin within his/her body. Do you think that this person should be punished, and if so, in what way? Concealed on the person’s body the officers find 300 grams of heroin. In Denmark this would result in a sentence of imprisonment for a term of 3 years. In Finland the person concerned would be sentenced to imprisonment for 4 years. In Norway the penalty would be imprisonment for 7 or 8 years. In Sweden the person concerned would be sentenced to imprisonment for 6 years.

Table 3  Attitudes to penal reactions for breaches of the drugs legislation by smuggling 300 grams of heroin into the country. Percentage distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No penalty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisonment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 6 months</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 8 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 10 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 15 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

%    99 100  98  99
N    1,371 1,266 1,567 1,897

When we make use of K-W analysis we find that there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses in the samples (P < .0001). When we make use of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test we find that the distribution of responses is significantly different.
between Denmark and all the other countries (P < .0001), and correspondingly for Finland (P < .0001). Between Norway and Sweden as well we find a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses (P = .0049). That there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses between Norway and Sweden may at first sight seem rather odd on the basis of the impression one gets when one reads the table. The striking factor appears first and foremost to be the degree of correspondence and similarity in the distribution of responses as far as these two countries are concerned. In Norway a larger proportion tend to want to impose a sentence of greater severity than in Sweden. In Norway 68% of the population want to impose a sentence of not less than two years. In Sweden the corresponding proportion is 60%, and at the other end of the scale 8% in Norway want to limit the penal reaction to imprisonment for six months, while the corresponding proportion in Sweden is 11%.

The population of Finland stands out as the least repressive understood in terms of the penal reaction desired there when a person is guilty of smuggling 300 grams of heroin. Thereafter the order is: public attitudes in Denmark more repressive, in Sweden even more, and in Norway most repressive. What in addition seems interesting is the fact that a majority in these populations stipulate a sentence that does not exceed current sentencing practice. In Denmark it is only 37% who can believe that the penal reaction for the above-mentioned offence is too lenient. Corresponding figures are for Finland 28%, for Norway 33% and for Sweden 28%.

Too lenient a level of punishment, severe enough sentences

We also posed a fourth general question about what people thought of the level of punishment for drugs offences: Do you think that punishments for drug-related crime in your country are generally too severe, more or less suitable or too lenient?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too severe penalties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We see that the distribution of responses in Denmark and Sweden is practically identical and there is no statistically significant difference either (P = .8920) and correspondingly between Finland and Norway (P = .9712). On the other hand the distributions of responses between Denmark and Finland (P < .0001), between Denmark and Norway (P < .0001), between Sweden and Finland (P < .0001) and Sweden and Norway (P < .0001) are statistically significantly different.

We can also see that there is an overall majority of people in Denmark, Norway and Sweden who believe that the level of punishment is too lenient. In Finland, too, the proportion of those who think the level of punishment is too lenient significantly exceeds the proportion of those who regard the penalties as roughly adequate. This result may seem confusing against the background of how people stipulated the sentences for the criminal offences indicated in concrete terms.

In two of the three concretely described criminal offences the majority of the population in the countries concerned does not wish to exceed current sentencing practice. It is only in the case of one of the three acts that the overall majority of the population in two of the countries — Finland and Norway — is willing to go further than the courts in sentencing. In Denmark there is not a majority in any of the three cases in favour of exceeding current sentencing. Nevertheless up to 67% of the population of Denmark believe that the level of punishment is too lenient. For all the concretely specified criminal offences it is only a minority of the Swedish population who stipulate a sentence that is of greater severity than de facto sentencing. Nevertheless up to 65% of the Swedish population believe that the level of punishment is too lenient.

**Discussion**

Among the Nordic countries there are differences in people’s attitudes to how strict the sanctions are to be. In Denmark we find the least
repressive penal practice in relation to the use of hashish. In the Danish drugs legislation there is also *an explicit distinction* between substances with different degrees of danger that provides for different penalty scales for purposes of sentencing (see box 1 on page 23 in this volume). In the other countries account is also taken of what substance is involved for purposes of sentencing, but here the legislation does not provide for maximum penalties for sentencing purposes dependent on the type of substance. In this sense there are grounds for stating that to a greater extent than the other countries Denmark draws a distinction between cannabis and substances such as heroin, amphetamine and cocaine. A possible and ready explanation for this state of affairs is that differences in attitudes reflect the fact that Denmark through its legislation and penal practice has sent out other norm-creating signals than the remaining countries.

When it comes to being in possession of a small quantity of heroin, Denmark and Finland have the same penal practice, and correspondingly a large degree of correspondence is found between these countries with reference to their populations' attitudes to what the penal sanction ought to be for offences of this kind. Between Norway and Sweden too we find a great degree of similarity in the populations' attitudes in respect of what the adequate penal sanction should be, but between these countries however there is different sentencing practice.

As far as the most serious criminal act among our examples is concerned, we also find evidence of agreement between on the one hand legislation and sentencing practice and on the other hand attitudes to what an adequate penal sanction ought to be.

Even though variations in legislation and sentencing practice do not unambiguously and without exception correspond with differences in attitudes between these countries, we do find a relatively high degree of congruence between legislation and the populations' attitudes to what the penal sanction ought to be. The jurisprudential attempt to justify criminal law normatively or functionally usually refers to a norm-transmitting aspect (Aubert 1972). Within Nordic legal philosophy there was a traditional belief that legislation contributes to the formation of morals. Our study *can* be interpreted as support for such a view, and in the case of our introductory question on whether the different modifications of the penal sanction are reflected in changes of attitude in the population, it seems that our *tentative* conclusion must be in the affirmative.
However, it is not unproblematic to answer our second introductory question — on whether sentencing practice is in harmony with public attitudes. In the case of the general question public attitudes in these countries take are more repressive than their legal systems in fact represent. At the same time when account must be taken of concrete cases the judgement of the people does not appear to be more repressive than current court practice. On the basis of the specific questions it may be said that in Scandinavia there is a formation into groups: a repressive and unisonant group consisting of Norway and Sweden, and a less repressive and less unanimous group consisting of Denmark and Finland — a constellation that also to a great extent may be said to relate to *de facto* penal practice. However when account is taken of the population’s attitudes a peculiar form of exchange takes place in the constellation of pairs of countries when we take the fourth general question as our basis. We seem to find inconsistency and a lack of coherence. In the light of how people themselves have stipulated sentences the distribution of responses to the general question appears paradoxical. It becomes paradoxical in a double sense when, in precisely those two countries where there was not an overall majority in favour of exceeding current sentencing practice in respect of one single one of the three questions in which one was asked to mete out punishment, we also find most widely held a notion that the level of punishment is too lenient.

According to how we ask we can interpret the results as meaning that the level of punishment is in accordance with the general sense of justice or that a raising of the level of punishment is necessary for the penal sanction to be in harmony with the general sense of justice. The different ways of asking provide the basis for conclusions that point in diametrically opposite directions, and the answers we get appear to a large extent to be determinable by how we ask. To the extent that one believes that people’s presumed sense of justice shall be what in legal terminology is called a “source of law”, that is to say that the legitimacy and application of the law must in the final analysis make reference to the will and opinion of the people, the different ways of asking may provide at one and the same time different and conflicting argumentation for raising, lowering or retaining the maximum penalty. The question then becomes to which response one ought to attach weight. What type of question provides the best answer to what we want to know?

Being inconsistent is not an unknown phenomenon. Several studies (Raiffa 1968; Tversky 1969, 1975) show situations in which we are apparently not in agreement with ourselves. What such inconsistency is rooted in — to what extent it is a question of a mental defect, lack of
clarity or ignorance of the premises — is not easy to say with any certainty, nor can we exclude the possibility that the inconsistency at least in part can be explained as an inconsistency de dicto — that is to say linked to the linguistic description - and not de re — that is to say independent of the linguistic description of the phenomenon. For example if we alter the description of the last act (the smuggling of 300 grams of heroin) to the smuggling of "3,600 user doses of heroin", this results in strong effects on the distribution of responses (Ødegård 1996).

An obvious weakness in the fourth general question is the fact that it is possible that the respondents were not familiar with de facto penal practice. We can see that the "don't know" proportion is considerably higher on the general question than on the specific sentencing questions. In order to be able to answer the general question the presupposition is that one is familiar with the actual level of punishment and current sentencing practice. On the specific sentencing questions it is Sweden that on the whole has the greatest proportion of "don't know". However we can see that the "don't know" proportion on the general question is largest in Finland. One may interpret this as meaning that knowledge of the level of punishment is poorest or that willingness to admit lack of knowledge is greatest in Finland.

A possible explanation for the lack of consistency in the response is that not sufficiently many people abstain from having an opinion on the level of punishment in general. Many people may have notions about the level of punishment that do not correspond to penal practice. Their answers to the general question may thus be based on erroneous presuppositions.

Specification leads us from the whole to the part, and an objection to interpreting the specific questions as measuring instruments of the view of the level of punishment in general will be that since the whole is something else than a part, we are also speaking of something else. This objection we are, in our opinion, able to counter to some extent because here we operate with three specifications of different offences. In spite of the fact that obviously not all relevant aspects can be integrated in three descriptions, we believe that by means of these descriptions of different criminal acts — from what is considered a less serious offence to what is considered a gross and serious crime — we provide a relatively adequate picture of what the drugs legislation covers. We tend to believe that the concretisation that the specification represents has advantages in relation to a general formulation that balance the disadvantages. Specification guarantees
that the respondents answer on the basis of the same presuppositions and the same semantic associations. Our tentative conclusion is therefore that public attitudes in these countries do not appear to represent a more repressive view of punishment for drugs offences than current penal practice in the Nordic countries.

References

Aubert, Vilhelm (1972): *Om straffens sosiale funksjon* (*The social function of punishment*). Universitetsforlaget. Oslo.


Ødegård, Einar (1996): On people’s attitudes to the level of punishment for drugs offences - what we know and what we falsely believe we know, paper presented at *The Seventh Annual Conference on Drug Use and Drug Policy* in Amsterdam.
Appendix
Nordic data on drug offences: are they comparable?

Ragnar Hauge

Introduction

One of the main sources of data used in Nordic (and most other international) comparisons of the drug situation are criminal statistics. This is not surprising. As most countries publish official crime statistics on a yearly basis, this is an easily accessible source of data. It is also a reliable source in the sense that the data on the number of crimes or criminals passing through the different stages of the criminal justice process probably correspond quite closely to the numbers actually handled. Finally, the data from crime statistics are easy to compare: the units recorded in different countries are usually the same, whether they are the number of crimes registered by the police, offenders convicted or persons in prison.

Crime statistics concerning drugs could therefore be expected to be well suited for international comparisons. This, however, is only true under two conditions. First, that comparisons are made with data that are really comparable; and secondly, that the conclusions drawn are warranted by the data.

Comparisons must be based on comparable data

The first point — that comparisons must be based on comparable data — can be exemplified by a report from the Multi-city study carried out under the auspices of the Pompidou group (Hartnoll 1994). The report is based on drugs data from major cities in Europe. Table 10 in the report represents the number of "police arrests" for drug offences in selected cities, including the capitals of four Nordic countries. The number of such arrests in 1991 (1990 for Helsinki) is reproduced in
Table 1. The rate of arrests per 1,000 population is calculated on the basis of the population figures for the Nordic capitals.

Table 1. Police arrests for drug offences in Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm in 1991 and Helsinki in 1990: total and rate per 1,000 population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Police arrests</th>
<th>1,000 population</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>9,164</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>3,756</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>7.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>3,146</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The conclusion suggested by this Table is that there are major differences between the four Nordic capitals in the number of "police arrests". In relative terms, Copenhagen has almost twice as many arrests as Oslo, more than three times as many arrests as Stockholm, and nearly ten times as many arrests as Helsinki. But are these data really comparable? Although the figures in Table 1 (according to the heading of the original table) are based on "police arrests", they actually relate to "total violations" in Copenhagen, "offences" in Helsinki, "persons suspected" in Stockholm and "cases charged" in Oslo — as is pointed out in the text of the original table (Hartnoll 1994). Since the data refer to different units — offences, charges and persons — and since they are picked from different stages of the criminal justice process, a direct comparison is problematic. Only some of the violations reported to the police (in Copenhagen) result in a charge (in Oslo), and only some of the "persons suspected" (in Stockholm) may have committed a number of "offences" (Helsinki).

Having said that, it may be argued that such data can be used to say something about the development over time. Even if the data cannot be compared directly, it is reasonable to assume that within each of the four capitals they measure one and the same thing over time and may therefore be used as (comparable) indicators of trends in drug offences. On the basis of the figures in Table 1, we have therefore in Table 2 calculated the percentage change from 1981 to 1991 (1990 for Helsinki) in the four capitals.
Table 2  Changes in the number of "police arrests" for drug offences in Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm 1981-1991 and in Helsinki 1981-1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Police arrests 1981</th>
<th>Police arrests 1991</th>
<th>Percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>2,845</td>
<td>9,146</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>3,756</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>4,513</td>
<td>3,146</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hartnoll 1994 - Table 10.

On the basis of Table 2, it may be concluded that the trend in "police arrests" during the period concerned has been most alarming in Copenhagen, where the number of "arrests" has tripled, followed by Helsinki and Oslo where the rate has doubled. On the other hand, the number of "arrests" in Stockholm has decreased.

However, the trends differ substantially depending on the kind of data used. For Helsinki, the Multi-city report provides data both on offences and persons involved in the offences, for Oslo on cases and persons charged. Table 3 shows the percentage change calculated on the basis of the number of persons involved in offences compared with the change in the number of "police arrests" taken from Table 2.

Table 3  Changes in the number of persons involved in "police arrests" for drug offences and the number of arrests in Helsinki 1981-1990 and Oslo 1981-1991.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>3,332</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hartnoll 1994 - Table 10.

As we can see the trends are very different depending on the kind of data used. Calculated on the basis of the number of persons involved
in offences, the increase from 1981 to 1990 in Helsinki amounts to 30%, on the basis of offences committed to 101%. In Oslo the situation is the exact opposite, with the number of offenders rising by 180% and offenders by 93% from 1981 to 1991. If the trends are compared for the number of offenders, Helsinki is much better off than Oslo; whereas a comparison based on offences indicates that the numbers have increased less in Oslo than in Helsinki.

Criminal statistics provide data on crimes only

International comparisons based on crime statistics are not normally concerned with differences in the incidence of drug-related crime; instead, the data are used as indicators of the extent of the "drug problem" in different countries.

But do data on drug crimes say anything about drug problems? It is common knowledge that offences committed and offences recorded in the statistics are two different things. The number of offences registered in different countries may vary because of differences in the law; for instance, Denmark does not criminalize the use of drugs, unlike the other three Nordic countries. The number of drug offences recorded may also vary because of differences in police priorities and police efficiency. Since there are no (immediate) victims in drug offences, there are rarely other people involved who wish to report them to the police. Instead, the police must bring the offences to light through proactive policing, which means that statistics on drug offences known to the police will largely be a reflection of the priority given to such crimes, the manpower allocated to uncovering them and police efficiency. Such and similar differences may lead to one country having a considerably higher number of registered drug offences than another, even if the factual number is the same. In the same way changes over time may reflect changes in law, in police activity or other changes unrelated to the rate of drug-related crime.

The conclusion could now be drawn that crime statistics are useless for purposes of comparative research. But this, to me, is not necessary. Comparisons using data from criminal statistics can make sense — provided, as was pointed out at the outset, that the data are genuinely comparable and that the conclusions drawn are warranted by the data. The following discussion looks at some of the available crime statistics from the Nordic countries in this perspective.

To what extent do comparable data exist?
The first question is whether it is possible to find comparable data from the four Nordic countries. As each country has its own traditions in terms of the data collected and the methods of processing and presenting those data, it is difficult to find corresponding data covering all countries. This is illustrated in Table 4, which maps some of the major kinds of data found in the criminal statistics in the four countries.

Table 4  
Information given in criminal statistics regarding drug offences and drug offenders in the Nordic countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offences known to the police</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>From '90</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases in offences cleared up 1)</td>
<td>Until '90</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspected persons in offences cleared up 1)</td>
<td>Until '90</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penal sanctions imposed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons sanctioned 2)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional prison sentences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons given unconditional prison sentences 2)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1) In Norway all cases and all persons suspected are counted, regardless of whether punishment can be applied or not due to lack of criminal responsibility etc., while in the other countries only punishable cases or persons are included.

2) In Sweden data on drug offences against the Act regarding punishment for the smuggling of goods are not included, because the criminal statistics combine all smuggling offences regardless of the kind of goods involved.

As we can see, there is only one single unit that is covered in the crime statistics of all four Nordic countries, i.e. offences known to the police.

Offences known to the police
Since the number of drug offences known to the police is one of the very few types of data which can be compared across the countries, let us take a closer look at them. Table 5 shows the number of offences and the rate per 1,000 population during the period 1985-1992.

Table 5  

Number of drug offences known to the police in the Nordic countries and the rate per 1,000 population 1985-1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7,918</td>
<td>2,323</td>
<td>37,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>8,829</td>
<td>1,973</td>
<td>39,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>10,594</td>
<td>2,221</td>
<td>43,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>12,985</td>
<td>1,914</td>
<td>30,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>14,161</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td>35,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13,925</td>
<td>2,546</td>
<td>28,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>17,294</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>32,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>17,863</td>
<td>3,336</td>
<td>30,729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most surprising result is that the Nordic countries (with the exception of Finland) come so close to each other in terms of the number of drug offences per capita known to the police. This is a fairly recent phenomenon, however. The development from 1985 to 1992 seems to indicate a trend towards a common denominator, with the rate in Denmark (which was at the low end in 1985) rising and the rate in Sweden (which had the highest rate in 1985) falling.

It is difficult to interpret this development. If we take the number of drug offences known to the police as an indicator of the amount of "drug problems", it may be concluded that they have been moving towards a common level over the last few years in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, while in Finland the occurrence of drug problems remains at a considerably lower level. This interpretation, as far as Finland is concerned, is supported by self-report studies and estimates of the number of intravenous drug users, which show figures much lower than in the other Nordic countries. However, self-reported drug problems and estimates of iv-users are considerably higher in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden (Olsson...
One possible explanation for the fact that the relative number of offences in spite of this is very similar between the three countries, could be that the use of drugs is not criminalized in Denmark. If offences involving only use had been removed from the Norwegian and Swedish data, the relative number of the remaining drug offences would have been lower than in Denmark.

Given the fact that the number of offences known to the police is very much a matter of priorities, another interpretation may be offered: the data may be seen as pointing at a convergence of Nordic drug policies, as expressed within the police forces. Whether this is true or not is a different matter. But whatever the reason, the earlier country differences in the relative number of drug offences known to the police now seem to be disappearing.

**Offenders sanctioned**

Many offences known to the police do not lead to penal sanctions because the offender remains undetected or his or her guilt is unproven. On the other hand, one and the same offender may commit a number of offences, resulting in a single, combined penal sanction. Table 6 shows the total number of offenders sanctioned for drug offences and the rate of sanctions per 1,000 population in the four Nordic countries in 1985-1992. The figures for Norway relate to sanctions and not persons sanctioned, since data on persons sanctioned are not given in the criminal statistics. This means that the Norwegian figures will be somewhat higher than if they had been based on persons. Data for Norway prior to 1986 are not available because until 1985 the use and possession of small amounts of drugs was classified as misdemeanours, which were not registered in statistics on sanctions.

As may be expected, the number of drug offenders sanctioned in Denmark has shown an increase, which to a certain extent mirrors the increase in the number of offences known to the police. However, when we look at the number of offenders sanctioned per 1,000 population, the similarities between Denmark, on the one hand, and Norway and Sweden, on the other, with regard to the relative number of offences known to the police, disappear. In 1992 Denmark sanctioned 1.7 persons per 1,000 inhabitants for drug offences, while the figures for Sweden and Norway were 0.6 and 0.7 offences per 1,000 population, respectively.
This means that Denmark has a much higher relative number of offenders sanctioned for drug offences than Sweden and Norway, even though the rate of registered drug offences is nearly the same in the three countries. On the basis of the relative number of offenders sanctioned, it may be concluded that drug problems are much greater in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden, while Finland remains the country with the least problems. So if offenders sanctioned is used as a measure of drug problems, the conclusion is different from that drawn on the basis of offences known to the police.

**Table 6**  
*Number of offenders sanctioned for drug offences in Denmark, Finland and Sweden and the number of offences sanctioned in Norway and the rate per 1,000 inhabitants 1985-1992.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>rate</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3,811</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>4,387</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4,976</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>5,614</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>6,272</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>6,941</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8,322</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The data for Sweden only comprise offences against the Penal drug law since data regarding offences against the Act on smuggling are not given for drugs specifically.

The reason why the Danish figures for the relative number of offenders sanctioned is so much higher than in Norway and Sweden, despite the fact that the relative number of offences known to the police is more or less the same, must lie in the workings of the police and the prosecution. It is possible that the police in Denmark are more efficient than their colleagues in the other countries in resolving drug offences and prosecuting offenders; it is also possible that the explanation lies in differences in the registration of offences known to the police. Perhaps the police in Denmark need more solid evidence to register a drug offence.
The use of imprisonment

Criminal statistics also provide information on the punishments meted out. However, a comparison of the data gives a further illustration of the problems involved in using criminal statistics for comparative purposes, even between countries so closely similar to each other as the Nordic countries.

First, as already mentioned, Norwegian statistics do not give the number of offenders sanctioned or sentenced, but the number of sanctions and sentences, and Swedish statistics do not allow a distinction to be made between persons sentenced for smuggling drugs and persons sentenced for other smuggling offences. Secondly, in criminal statistics the length of the prison sentences is classified differently in different countries, as illustrated in Table 7. If one wants to identify groups getting the same punishment in different Nordic countries, it is impossible to find completely comparable categories of punishment. The only group of sentences common for Denmark, Finland and Sweden is represented by prison sentences in excess of two years. However, this group cannot be set apart in the Norwegian statistics. (In addition, the Norwegian classification changed in 1986, making comparisons with older data impossible).

Table 7  Classification of the length of longer prison sentences in criminal statistics in the Nordic countries in months and years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>&lt;24 months</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>12-24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>24-48 months</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>24-48 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8 years</td>
<td>48-95 months</td>
<td>5-7 years</td>
<td>48 months +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 years</td>
<td>96 months +</td>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years +</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>9-11 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-13 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13-15 years</td>
<td>15-21 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, we need to mention one general problem. Offenders sanctioned for more than one offence are classified in criminal statistics according to the offence carrying the heaviest punishment. This means that minor drug offenders — sanctioned for the use or possession of small amounts of drugs — who are sanctioned for other
crimes as well, may not be classified as drug offenders because the penalty carried by the law is lenient. As regards drug offences other than the use or possession of small amounts, this is usually no problem because the maximum penalty in these cases is fairly high. But in these cases we have a different problem in that the sentence in combined cases covers not only the drug offence, but also other offences.

With these reservations in mind, Table 8 shows the rate of offenders per 10,000 population sanctioned (in Norway: sanctions) for drug offences who were sentenced to an unconditional prison sentence (in Norway: sentences) and to unconditional prison sentences in excess of two years (in Norway: sentences of three years or more) respectively in the Nordic countries.

In all four countries the rate of drug offenders per capita sentenced to imprisonment has increased over time. This is what one might expect in view of the increase in the rate of offenders sanctioned (see Table 6). Since the number of offenders sanctioned for drug offences has increased most sharply in Denmark, it is not surprising that Denmark also shows the greatest increase in the rate of drug offenders sentenced to unconditional imprisonment.

Table 8  Rate of drug offenders per 10,000 population receiving an unconditional prison sentence and an unconditional prison sentence of over two years’ imprisonment respectively in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and the rate of sanctions for drug offences per 10,000 population being unconditional prison sentences and sentences of three years and over in Norway, 1985-1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denmark Uncond. Over 2</th>
<th>Finland Uncond. Over 2</th>
<th>Norway Uncond. 3 years</th>
<th>Sweden Uncond. Over 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, even though more than twice as many offenders per inhabitant are given penal sanctions in Denmark compared to Norway and Sweden (Table 6), the number of offenders per capita sentenced to an unconditional prison sentence in the three countries is lowest in Denmark, although the differences between the countries are small. The same applies (although less clearly so) to the longer prison sentences imposed. One possible explanation is that the offenders sanctioned in Denmark have more often committed less serious offences than in the other countries. An alternative explanation could be that drug offences are treated more leniently in Denmark than in the other Nordic countries.

The severity of punishment

In an attempt to measure the severity of the sanctions imposed, Table 9 shows the use of unconditional imprisonment in relation to drug offences in the four Nordic countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare the three countries where the data are more or less comparable — Denmark, Finland and Sweden — Table 9 shows that Denmark uses unconditional imprisonment for drug offences much less than Finland, and especially Sweden. These differences are probably even more pronounced than indicated by the Table. This is because, firstly, the use of drugs, which seldom or never leads to an unconditional prison sentence, is not an offence in Denmark; if use had been criminalized in Denmark in the same way as in the other
Nordic countries, this would have raised the total number of drug offenders sanctioned, which in turn would have lowered the percentage of offenders sentenced to an unconditional prison sentence. Secondly, smuggling offences which often carry a severe sentence, are not included in Sweden. Had those sentenced for the smuggling of drugs been included in Sweden, this would probably have pushed up the number of unconditional prison sentences.

As mentioned earlier, the data from the other countries cannot be directly compared with the Norwegian data, which describe sanctions and sentences rather than the number of persons sanctioned and sentenced. However, there is reason to believe that this is of no major consequence. Sanctions and sentences correspond rather closely to the number of offenders sanctioned or sentenced because only few offenders will be sanctioned or sentenced more than once a year. In cases where the same person is sanctioned more than once, this will usually be in minor offences (which are handled in a summary way and do not lead to imprisonment) and tend to reduce the rate of offenders sentenced to unconditional imprisonment. Bearing these reservations in mind, it may be concluded that the Norwegian rate of unconditional imprisonment for drug offences lies somewhere between the figures for Finland and Sweden.

As regards the use of more severe prison sentences, Table 10 shows that the rate of offenders receiving prison sentences of over two years is considerably lower than in the other Nordic countries. Sweden represents the other extreme, with the highest percentage of offenders sanctioned receiving a long prison sentence. The differences between Denmark and Sweden in the use of longer prison sentences is more pronounced than the differences in regard to the use of unconditional imprisonment, as shown in Table 9. In Finland — where in the late 1980s the rate of long prison sentences was almost the same as in Sweden — it seems that the trend has been towards a lesser use of long prison sentences in the early 1990s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number and percentage of drug offenders receiving an unconditional prison sentence of over two years in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and number and percentage of sanctions for drug offences being unconditional prison sentences of three years and over in Norway, 1985-1992.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data for Sweden only comprise offences against the Penal drug law since data regarding offences against the Act on smuggling are not given for drugs specifically.

It is difficult to compare the use of longer prison sentences in Norway with the other three countries because the Norwegian data do not include the group of drug offences in which unconditional prison sentences of over two but under three years are given. It is impossible to say how large a group this is, but there is reason to believe that it is not insignificant. Taking this into consideration, it is probably safe to conclude that the use of longer prison sentences in Norway lies somewhere between Finland and Sweden. However, the Norwegian data point in the same direction as the Finnish data, i.e. towards the lesser use of long sentences in the early 1990s.

If we use these data as indicators of the seriousness of drug problems in the four countries — although comparisons with the Norwegian data are difficult for technical reasons — the conclusion would be that drug-related crime tends to be less serious in Denmark than in the other Nordic countries, especially Sweden. As regards the development over time, it may be concluded that the rate of serious offences in comparison with all drug offences increased in Finland and Norway in the 1980s, but has decreased in the 1990s, while Sweden saw a continued increase in seriousness in the 1990s as well.

However, the data may be interpreted not as reflecting the seriousness of offences, but rather the sentencing practices of courts of law. In this case the low Danish rate of both drug offenders sentenced to an unconditional prison sentence and drug offenders sentenced to long prison sentences indicates that drug offences are regarded as less serious offences in Denmark than in the other countries, with Sweden representing the other extreme. Further, the relative decrease in the use of unconditional imprisonment in Denmark, Finland and Norway as well as in the use of long prison sentences in the 1990s, may be due to the criminal justice system regarding drug offences as less serious. In Sweden the use of imprisonment has decreased to a much lesser extent and the use of
long prison sentences has increased, indicating that the country has opted to uphold its repressive penal policy.

Conclusion

The foregoing is not intended as a survey of what criminal statistics tell us about drug-related crime in the Nordic countries. Rather, the aim of this study has been to find out how far the data are applicable for comparative purposes, and if so, in what specific way.

The argument here is that criminal statistics are more or less useless as indicators of drug problems in different countries. This should hardly come as a surprise. Criminal statistics are first and foremost administrative tools, describing the tasks being carried out and the decisions made by different organizations within the criminal justice system. This is not to say that the figures in criminal statistics are totally unrelated to the actual drug situation. The fact that the number of drug offences known to the police and the sanctions imposed in Finland are considerably lower than in the other three countries, may partly be explained by the country actually having a less serious drug problem. However, there is reason to believe that the statistics also reflect such factors as the resources available to the police and other organizations within the criminal justice system, their priorities and the attitude they take towards drugs.

If it is true that criminal statistics say less about crime than about the administration of justice, this obviously creates problems for country comparisons of drug problems. On the other hand, these statistics may be a useful tool in comparative studies of the administration of criminal justice systems and drug policies in different countries.

Given the similarities between Denmark, Norway and Sweden in the number of drug offences known to the police, we may draw the conclusion that the priorities of the police are more or less the same. However, this similarity between the Nordic countries is a fairly recent phenomenon which is mainly due to a sharp increase in the number of offences known in Denmark. This, in turn, may be an effect of the heavy pressure that Norway and Sweden have been putting on the Danish authorities to step up their fight against drugs — and that seems to have had some effect, at least in the police force. The number of drug offences per capita known to the police in Finland is much lower than in the other Nordic countries. The most probable explanation is that the use of drugs is less common in Finland.
Despite the fact that the per capita number of drug offences known to the police in Denmark, Norway and Sweden is more or less the same, the number of drug offenders sanctioned is more than twice as high in Denmark as in the other two countries. This may be due to the Danish police being more efficient than the police in Norway and Sweden — or to their following different practices when registering offences as being known to the police.

Denmark’s lower rate of unconditional imprisonment and long prison sentences in comparison with the other Nordic countries may be seen as an expression of the more liberal attitude towards drugs in Denmark (Hakkarainen et al. 1996). However, during the 1990s there seems to have been a trend for relatively fewer offenders to be sentenced to imprisonment and long prison sentences. If this turns out to be a permanent trend, it will suggest that the pressure by Norway and Sweden which seems to have had an impact on the police in Denmark, has had no influence on the courts.

It is also surprising to see that the use of both imprisonment and long prison sentences for drug offences in Finland and Norway seems to have been reduced somewhat in the 1990s. In the case of Norway, this may be due to the criticism levelled by prominent legal scholars against the severe punishments applied in drug cases and that may have influenced the judges. In Sweden the use of imprisonment has not decreased to the same extent as in the other countries in the 1990s, and the use of long prison sentences has increased. In contrast to the other Nordic countries, Swedish courts seem to have upheld and strengthened their traditional repressive policy towards drug offenders into the 1990s.

It is open to debate whether the interpretations offered here are correct. The intention of this article has simply been to give an illustration of an alternative way of using criminal statistics — not as an indicator of drug problems but as an indicator of drug policy and the administration of justice in the respective countries.

References

Hakkarainen, Pekka; Hübner, Lena; Laursen, Lau & Ødegård, Einar (1996): Drug use and public attitudes in the Nordic countries. In this volume.

Summary

*Discussing Drugs and Control Policy (Pekka Hakkarainen, Lau Laursen and Christoffer Tigerstedt, eds., NAD publication no. 31, Helsinki 1996)* looks at the ways in which the drug issue is handled by different actors in various social contexts in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The studies included in the volume serve as a guide to the thinking that lies behind the drug policies pursued in these countries. The articles are based on empirical analyses carried out within the Nordic research project *Drugs and control policy*, supervised by Ragnar Hauge from the National Institute of Alcohol and Drug Research (SIFA) in Oslo.

Although the book is made up of separate studies, it is fair to say that these are tied together by a common thread. Metaphorically speaking, each of the studies represents a societal 'voice', be it the legal framework, parliamentary speeches, newspaper reporting, public attitudes or statistical artefacts. Moreover, a basic assumption of the studies is that these voices are socially constructed. That, again, calls for careful analysis of the social conditions within which claims are made about drug use and drug policy.

As indicated by the title of the book, the authors and editors wish to underline the discursive character of drug issues. Just as other social actors studied in this book, the scientists themselves are part of the discussion, a voice of its own.

The first two texts of the book provide a sounding-board for the articles to come. The introductory chapter begins by presenting the research project and its perspective. The bulk of this introduction, however, alludes to the proverb "sisters are never alike", which is applied to the family of Nordic countries. For some decades now, Nordic cooperation — based on an impressive infrastructure of common institutions, networks, exchange and regulations — has been taken for granted. Today, this matter of course is changed by larger contexts, primarily the European Union, gaining ground also in the North. In such a situation it is necessary to specify what the essence of this 'Nordicness' might be, in terms of history and culture, and how it is reflected in particular social domains such as drug use and drug policy.
The second background text is a short compilation of laws, acts, regulations and legal practice of drug policy in each of the four countries. Generally speaking, the structure of legislation, the scope of criminalization and the penalty scales are quite similar. The most notable exceptions are Denmark's decision not to punish the use of drugs; Norway's stipulation of a maximum of 21 years of imprisonment instead of 10 as in the other three countries; and Denmark's choice not to enact a minimum penalty for serious drug offences. It is also worth noting that Sweden has the largest drug police forces at its disposal, while Denmark has the widest selection of unconventional methods of investigation.

With this historical, cultural and legal framework in mind, the floor is given to members of parliaments (paralleled by newspaper reporting). This section of the book is divided into two separate studies. "Scandinavia's tug of war on drugs" by Lau Laursen is a comprehensive review of the emergence of the modern drug issue in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The analysis is anchored to parliamentary debates particularly in the Nordic Council but also in the national assemblies. The debates studied are significant in that they took place during two epoch-making periods, i.e. around the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, and in the beginning of the 1980s.

One of the main questions of the study is to what extent Danish drug policy has been influenced by the serious criticism levelled by Norwegian and Swedish MPs and newspapers. Laursen concludes that after some serious attempts to keep together in the late 1960s, the countries' drug policies diverged from 1970 onwards. The Nordic debate was marked by struggles between different positions and views. The Swedish and particularly the Norwegian discourses were moved by moral and ideological arguments, while the Danish discourse took a pluralistic, politically pragmatic route. In the early 1980s, these incongruencies grew significantly, establishing a sharp line of demarcation between Denmark and the other two countries.

The latter article, "Arguing drug policies in Nordic parliaments" by Pekka Hakkarainen et al., takes us into the national assemblies. Four parliamentary debates on drug policy, one from each country, are chosen for closer scrutiny. Although such naturally occurring data are not fully comparable, the authors are able to highlight national peculiarities in the MPs' ways of treating the drug issue.

Norway stands out from the rest of the countries in that its 'debate' lacks every sense of struggle. In the other countries there are clear ideological disparities, mostly between the left wing and the right wing.
or centre parties. A special feature of the debate in the Danish assembly, also in terms of party lines, is the conflict over the distinction between cannabis and hard drugs.

Having listened to the MPs, we turn to the newspapers. Astrid Skretting et al. has analysed articles and notices published in the two largest newspapers in each of the four Nordic capital cities. This material, covering altogether 625 articles, was collected in 1990.

Again, the differences between the countries are apparent. The Danish newspapers show a relaxed attitude to the drug issue, also providing space for controversial items. By contrast, the Norwegian papers actively justify the prevailing drug policy of the country, thus participating in the civil mobilization against drugs. In Finland the press certainly focuses on drugs, but only two of five articles refer to domestic matters. Sweden, finally, keeps a high profile, although the number of articles is perhaps lower than expected, i.e. far behind Norway.

Next in turn is 'the people', represented by a population sample of approximately 3,000 people in Norway and Sweden and 2,000 people in Denmark and Finland. This Nordic Drug Survey is the first ever direct survey comparison of drug use and public attitudes towards drugs and drug policy in the Nordic countries.

This section of the book consists of two contributions. The first one, by Pekka Hakkarainen et al., is a comprehensive presentation of the prevalence of drug use as well as public attitudes towards drug use and drug policy, while the second one, by Einar Ødegård et al., is particularly interested in public attitudes towards sanctions on drug-related crime.

In many respects the results support what we already know: Denmark has the highest prevalence of drug use and shows the most liberal attitudes towards drugs and drug users. However, the results of the Nordic Drug Survey are far more accurate and valid than previous compilations of national register data and comparisons of separately conducted national studies. For example, Denmark alone is on a high international level when it comes to experimenting with cannabis, but when we look at continuous cannabis use (and hard drugs use) Denmark comes quite close to the other Nordic countries. A similar pattern can be detected in attitudes towards punishment. That is, cannabis is widely tolerated in Denmark, but when we move towards more severe offences, attitudes in Denmark become more and more 'northern Nordic'.
The last article, by Ragnar Hauge, tackles a crucial problem of the book as a whole: To what extent is it possible to compare the 'drug situation' in the countries in question? However, this problem is raised from a particular point of view. Hauge asks: Are crime statistics suitable at all for a comparative description of national drug conditions?

Using the registration of drug offences as his point of departure, Hauge arrives at the somewhat discouraging conclusion that criminal statistics are very weak indicators of drug problems in different countries. This is, among other things, because drug offences are defined in rather different ways in the countries in question. Instead, Hauge remarks, indicators of drug offences might tell more about administration of justice and drug policy in general.

Drug policy has been on the move again in the 1990s. Discussing Drugs and Control Policy aims to provide analytical instruments for a better understanding of the social conditions of policy development in the Nordic countries. Such instruments are in great demand, not least when facing the ever growing influence from other (European) countries, often working within very different frameworks.

Christoffer Tigerstedt
Sammandrag

*Discussing Drugs and Control Policy* (Pekka Hakkarainen, Lau Laursen and Christoffer Tigerstedt, eds., NAD publication no. 31, *Helsinki 1996*) belyser på vilket sätt olika aktörer i Danmark, Finland, Norge och Sverige handskas med narkotikafrågor i skilda sociala sammanhang. Studierna i boken tjänar som exempel på det tänkande som ligger bakom narkotikapolitiken i dessa länder. Artiklarna grundar sig på empiriska analyser, som utförts i det nordiska forskningsprojektet *Narkotika och kontrollpolitik* under ledning av Ragnar Hauge från Statens institutt for alkohol- och narkotikaforskning (SIFA) i Oslo.


Som namnet på boken antyder, önskar författarna och redaktörerna understryka den diskursiva karaktären i narkotikafrågor. På samma sätt som andra sociala aktörer som studeras i denna bok, ingår också samhällsvetarna i diskussionen, som en röst för sig.


Den andra bakgrundstexten är en kort sammanställning av lagar, förordningar, reglementen och juridisk praxis på narkotikapolitikens
område i vart och ett av de fyra länderna. I det stora hela påminner regelverken, straffområdena och straffskalorna om varandra. De mest utmärkande undantagen är Danmarks beslut att inte straffa narkotikabruk, Norges fastställande av maximistrafette för narkotikabrott till 21 år jämfört med 10 år i de tre andra länderna och Danmarks val att inte tillämpa minimistraf för allvarliga narkotikaförseelser. Det är också vart att notera att Sverige förfogar över de starkaste narkotikapolisiära resurserna, medan Danmark uppvisar det mest omfattande urvalet av icke-konventionella undersökningsmetoder.


Den andra artikeln, "Arguing drug policies in Nordic parliaments" av *Pekka Hakkarainen et al.*, för oss in i de nationella parlamenten. En parlamentsdiskussion över narkotikapolitik från vart och ett av de fyra länderna har valts ut för närmare granskning. Trots att dylika "naturliga" data inte är helt jämförbara, lyckas författarna påvisa nationella särdrag i parlamentsmedlemmarnas sätt att behandla narkotikafrågan.

Norge skiljer sig från de övriga länderna genom att landets 'debatt' saknar varje tecken på konflikt. I de övriga länderna kan man sköna
tydliga ideologiska motsättningar, främst mellan vänsterpartier och höger- eller centerpartier. Ett karakteristiskt drag för debatten i det danska Folketinget, som också följe partilinjerna, är konflikten kring distinktionen mellan cannabis och tung narkotika.

Efter att ha lyssnat på riksdagsledamöterna övergår vi till pressen. Astrid Skretting et al. har analyserat artiklar och notiser som publicerats i de två största dagstidningarna i de fyra ländernas huvudstäder. Materialet insamlades år 1990 och omfattar 625 artiklar.

Äterigen är skillnaderna mellan länderna uppenbara. De danska tidningarna förhåller sig relativt avslappnat till narkotikafrågor och tar upp också kontroversiella teman. I Norge däremot rättfärdigar tidningarna aktivt landets rådande narkotikapolitik och deltar sålunda i den medborgerliga mobiliseringen mot narkotika. I Finland skriver nog pressen om narkotika, men endast två av fem artiklar handlar om finska angelägenheter. Sverige, slutligen, håller en hög profil, fastän antalet artiklar kanske var lägre än väntat, dvs. klart lägre än i Norge.

Näst i turen står 'folket', representerat av ett urval på ca 3.000 personer i Norge och Sverige och 2.000 personer i Danmark och Finland. Denna Nordiska narkotikaundersökning är den första komparativa frågeformulärsstudie om narkotikabruk och om befolkningens attityder till narkotika och narkotikapolitik som utförts i Norden.

Denna del av boken består av två bidrag. Pekka Hakkarainens et al. artikel ger en ingående bild av narkotikabrukets omfattning i Norden, liksom även av befolkningens attityder till narkotikabruk och -politik. Einar Ødegård et al. inriktar sig för sin del på hur allmänheten förhåller sig till straff som utmäts på grund av narkotikarelaterad brottslighet.

Resultaten stöder i mångt och mycket det vi redan vet: i Danmark är narkotikabruket mest utbrett och attityderna mest liberala. Nordiska narkotikaundersökningen förser oss emellertid med betydligt exakta och bättre underbyggda resultat än tidigare sammanställningar av nationella registerdata och jämförelser av enskilda nationella studier. Som exempel kan nämnas att experimenterande med cannabis ligger på en internationellt sett hög nivå endast i Danmark. Men så snart vi ser på mera fortgående cannabisbruk (och bruk av tung narkotika) ligger Danmark rätt nära de andra nordiska länderna. Ett liknande mönster går igen ifråga om attityder till straff: cannabis accepteras rätt allmänt i Danmark, men då det blir fråga om mera allvarliga brott, blir dansknarna attityder mer och mer 'nordnordiska'.
Den sista artikeln är skriven av Ragnar Hauge. Han tar upp ett problem som är viktigt för boken som helhet: I vilken mån är det möjligt att jämföra 'narkotikasituationen' i länderna ifråga? Denna fråga ställs emellertid i ett specifikt sammanhang. Hauge frågar: Är brottstatistik alls lämpad för en jämförande beskrivning av narkotikasituationen i respektive länder?

Med utgångspunkt i ländernas registrering av narkotikabrott, mynner Hauge ut i den något nedslående slutsatsen att brottstatistik utgör en osäker indikator på ländernas narkotikaproblem. Detta beror bland annat på att narkotikabrott definieras på rätt olika sätt i olika länder. Hauge påpekar att indikatorerna på narkotikabrott däremot kan berätta något om hur man administrerar rättvisa och vilka prioriteringar man gör i narkotikapolitiken i allmänhet.

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Det har rört på sig i narkotikapolitiken under 1990-talet. Discussing Drugs and Control Policy önskar skapa analytiska verktyg som möjliggör en bättre förståelse av de sociala betingelserna för narkotikapolitikens utveckling i de nordiska länderna. Sådana instrument är bristvara, inte minst då man beaktar det växande inflytandet från andra (europeiska) länder, som ofta arbetar under helt andra förhållanden.

Christoffer Tigerstedt
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The research team consisted of the following members: Pekka Hakkarainen (Finland), Lena Hübner (Sweden), Lau Laursen (Denmark), Einar Ødegård (Norway), Astrid Skretting (Norway) and the late Bengt Swedin (1945-1993) (Sweden). In addition, Tommi Hoikkala (Finland), Timo Jetsu (Finland), Elisabeth Kaa (Denmark) and Börje Olsson (Sweden) took part in the project for shorter periods.

The project has previously published comparative or national studies on the development of drug policy, the social dynamics of a...
media debate, attitudes towards drug policy, and the nature of compulsory treatment:


