Cutting through complexity
Evaluating countering violent extremism (CVE)
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Programmes and interventions to counter violent extremism (CVE) have become widespread across Europe. CVE is a relatively new and very complex phenomenon. The term itself has become a – contested – catch phrase for a broad array of interventions targeting different populations at different stages in the radicalization process. The complexity of CVE has resulted in a serious lack of evaluations in the field. Those few evaluations that we can draw upon are very heterogeneous, both in terms of evaluation method and the type of interventions that they address. It is therefore impossible to make any grounded statements on the effectiveness of CVE. Academia thus has little theoretical basis for adequately advising the policy and practitioner community on the best course of action.

We are in need of an evaluation method that can accommodate the complexity of CVE, while providing an authoritative basis for new evaluations and at the same time exposing incorrect or too limited, normative assumptions in CVE policy. We also require a ‘meta-analysis’ method for synthesizing the variety of evaluations available to produce generic insights.

This study applies and further develops realistic evaluation and realist review to provide an evaluation and synthesis method for complex social programmes such as CVE. The end result is heuristic development of the realistic evaluation method which provides a basis for future CVE evaluation studies. The dissertation also provides insights on relevant contexts and mechanisms in CVE, which will help policymakers further develop their CVE programmes.

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Cutting through Complexity
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Contents

1 Introduction
1.1 The complexity of violent extremism and challenges for evaluation 9
1.2 Policymaking and societal debate: The repercussions of neglecting complexity 13
1.3 CVE as an essentially contestable concept 19
1.4 Realistic evaluation and realist review 23
1.5 Research focus and approach 29
1.6 My role as a researcher 32

2 Countering Violent Extremism: A Realist Review for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances and How?
2.1 Introduction 37
2.2 Evaluation methods and CVE 38
2.3 Realist review 41
2.4 Realist CVE synthesis 47
2.5 Discussion and conclusion 56

3 Lessons from a Realist Review of Countering Violent Extremism: Development of Refined Heuristic Guidelines for Complex Social Programmes
3.2 Heuristic guidelines for realist review of complex social programmes 59
3.3 Applying realist review to CVE 63
3.3.1 Step 1: Clarify the scope of the review 64
3.3.2 Step 2: Searching for primary CVE studies 68
3.3.3 Step 3: Quality appraisal 69
3.3.4 Step 4: Extracting the data 71
3.3.5 Step 5: Synthesizing the CVE studies 73
3.3.6 Step 6: Dissemination of findings 74
3.4 Adapted heuristic guidelines for realist review for complex social problems 75
3.5 Conclusion 77
Setting, duration and frequency 137
Ground rules 138
Professional guidance 138
Organizational design of family support 139
6.4.2 Mechanisms (M) of group-based support for families of foreign fighters 141
6.4.3 Outcomes (O) of group-based support for families of foreign fighters 142
6.5 A realistic ex-ante evaluation method and heuristic guidelines 144
6.6 Conclusion and reflection 145

7 Conclusion 149
7.1 Recap 149
7.2 Realist review 151
7.3 Realistic evaluation 153
7.4 Realistic policy design 156
7.5 Methodological contribution 158
7.6 Contributing to the CVE policy and scientific community 160
7.7 Recommendations for CVE evaluation 165

References 171

Author contributions and publications 185

Summary Cutting through Complexity. Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) 187

Nederlandse samenvatting 201

Dankwoord 227