



Countering Oppositional Political
Extremism through Attuned
Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit

Five Country Good Practice Case Studies Report



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**Five Country Good Practice Case Studies Report in
facilitating social dialogue for resilient democracies,
including depicting successful social dialogue practices that
may dissolve tendencies of polarising and extremism**



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Executive Summary

Building on research case studies and community-based practice activities in Turkey, Germany, Portugal, Bosnia and Serbia, **this report presents a set of good practices that contribute to more resilient living democracies characterised by high quality social dialogue that attunes everyday extremism.**

Under a broad umbrella of ethnographic methods, we identified 6 practices that can diffuse tendencies of polarising and everyday extremism:

- 1) collaborative ethnography:** the practice of ethnographic work with one or more insiders in/of the community being studied to co-create knowledge
- 2) autoethnography:** the ethnographic study of a culture through a process of self exploration, with the goal of providing an insider perspective
- 3) ethnographic gamification:** the transformation of the results of ethnographic work into context-based participatory and co-constructed games that feedback into both research and action, fostering self-reflexiveness, dialogical thinking and democratic engagement.
- 4) narrative group work:** the practice of building emotional political intelligence and social skills for group-dynamic dialogues
- 5) psychoeducational workshops:** structured learning sessions designed to develop and strengthen essential cognitive, emotional, and social skills in participants, with the goal of addressing specific psychological or social challenges, such as preventing youth radicalisation and promoting resilience.
- 6) capacity building training for non-violent communication and conflict resolution:** provides young people with knowledge in the field of youth work, youth activism, and conflict resolution, to empower them to engage in their communities as youth social workers

Drawing from OppAttune's conception of **everyday extremism** and **narrative dialogue** and further developed in WP5 Framework Paper, D5.1, this report advances the conceptualisation of: **1) social dialogue, 2) living democracy, and 3) attunement.** In brief:

- **Social Dialogue** refers to dialogical engagement with others (and their different perspectives) whereby the views and experiences of the 'other' is understood, recognised and considered.
- **Living Democracy** refers to the ways democratic principles are enacted and how they are experienced by people through social dialogue and other relational practices.
- **Attunement** (a working definition) is the democratic capacity of citizens to orient towards the other in public dialogue within oppositional politics, grounded in the ability to detect and reject phenomena of everyday extremism and polarisation such as those often found in expressions of hatred, enmity, prejudice, inequality and xenophobia.

The report theorises how these three key concepts relate to one another, and it **offers important insights that can be tested in the later stages** of the OppAttune project (WP7 and WP8).

Although each of the country-cases discussed is vastly different, our research revealed a common feature of everyday extremism as emerging **when people have experienced severe societal transformations and/or personal traumas that result in profound feelings of uncertainty or what is sometimes called “ontological insecurity.”** Narratives about economic crisis - a perceived and/or real lack of material resources or a sense that there is “not enough” - combined with feelings of one’s identity and personal value being threatened or diminished. Everyday extremism rises when augmented by oppositional us/them thinking. Immigrants and other groups of perceived others may then provide a ready scapegoat for such fears. **Drawing on these insights from our ethnographic fieldwork, we developed grounded, evidence-based participatory innovations - methods of attunement - that contributed to reducing and dissolving everyday extremism and finding common grounds and solutions through practices of dialogical engagement.** We argue that discovering and mobilising these good practice strategies of attunement is essential for those hoping to equip citizens to deal with extremist oppositional thinking in a moderate and constructive way.

In addition to successfully facilitating social dialogue, each of these practices is also **feasible, sustainable, participatory and adaptable, making them likely to be useful for researchers and practitioners working on the topic in any country.** The key to their successful adaptation will lie in a **contextually nuanced approach.** Thus, the report also discusses the **social and political background of each country** in which we adapted the good practices as a guide for practitioners of **what is likely to work** in their cultural context. The good practices discussed in this report and the methodological tools (discussed in detail in D5.3, forthcoming) identify the anthropological level and then go beyond to show **how to track and diagnose the social, historical and cultural narratives** augmenting everyday extremism and polarisation. **Ultimately, we show that a sense of equality and fairness, recognition, legitimacy and belonging are necessary preconditions for thriving living democracies.**

1. Introduction

1.1 WP5 Aims and objectives

Building on a transdisciplinary collaboration between social scientists, humanities scholars and practitioners from the fields of psychology, anthropology, politics and international relations, and cross-community dialogue, WP5 takes an ethnographic approach to everyday extremism. Titled ‘Extremism and Living Democracies’, this WP studies narratives embedded in what is considered by most people to be the common-sense or accepted notions of “daily life.”

More specifically, we focus on narratives and patterns of thought and behaviour which we consider examples of “everyday extremism” as they (re)produce hostile oppositions against the 'other' implying their fundamentally lesser value. Through in-depth research in five different national contexts, we obtain a grounded understanding of how these narratives and patterns emerge and flourish, as well as strategies to counteract them – and perhaps even to reduce and dissolve them. By focusing on local systems of meaning and practices that support dis/engagement with/from the ‘other’, WP5 aims to identify support possibilities for social dialogue and attunement. Thematically, this WP focuses particularly on immigration, inter-community relations, group-focused enmity (Zick et al. 2011, 2023), and political mistrust as case studies in each country as these issues have all been particularly salient in our fieldwork and connect with OppAttune’s broader themes.

The “other” vs. others

In this report, we differentiate between "the other" and others.

The “other”: This term refers to individuals or groups that are othered. It emphasises the stark differences that set these groups apart.

Others: This term is used more generally to refer to other people without implying any significant differences.

WP5 has the following objectives:

FIGURE 1. WP5 OBJECTIVES



Our goal in brief

WP5 aims to identify, understand and support possibilities for social dialogue in cases of heightened polarisation across selected local ecologies in Turkey, Germany, Portugal, Serbia and Bosnia.

1.2 Aims and scope of the report

In this report, we add specificity to the concept of everyday extremism via an **ethnographic approach** that explores the local, place-based ecologies of everyday extremism. We map out familiar, routine tropes and practices *and* explore ambivalent and oppositional meanings within them. Doing so enables us to shed light on the barriers to engaging with others in everyday life as well as the ways through which people bypass these barriers and connect with ‘others’ across difference via social dialogue.

Ethnography as a Good Practice

In the context of OppAttune, ethnographic work provides an important contribution to mapping narratives of everyday extremism and developing site-specific and contextualised interventions that counteract the emergence and spread of these narratives in a tailor-made fashion. For this reason, this method was widely employed in all contexts and cases under analysis in WP5. Ethnography created the rationale for the development of participatory and co-constructed good practices that we present, with ethnography, therefore, also itself a good practice for attunement.

While violent extremism or “direct violence” is different from everyday extremism, the strategies and methods for successfully attuning everyday extremism can be expected to be quite similar due to the phenomenal similarity of the two subjects (cf. RAN Derad Declaration 2016, Uhlmann & Weilnböck 2017, CEE Prevent Net 2020, Policy Brief 2021). As we show below, guidelines for good practice in the area of youth (social) are particularly helpful in effectively preventing and facilitating moderation of everyday extremism since youth (social) work always had to deal with everyday extremism both in the context of various

forms of delinquency and as a general issue of democratic personality formation. Similarly, in view of adult populations, we show that the good practice principles, which have been established in the area of systemic counselling, i.e. systemic couples and family counselling as well as community conflict counselling are useful (DGSF 2020). **We found that adapting established strategies from both youth social work and systemic counseling can help to foster resilience against everyday extremism across different age groups and social contexts.**

Similarly, ethnography is a proven method for studying extremism, and in OppAttune we combine it with participatory action research (PAR) approaches, such as collaborative ethnography, autoethnography and ethnographic gamification to experiment with practices for attuning everyday extremism. Ethnography helps us to map the narratives through which the drivers of everyday extremism can be identified, understand their emergence and spread and assist with deconstructing and transforming them. We see the narratives identified in ethnography and PAR as a dialogical method for transformation, and in this dialogical capacity, it is a metric for successful enhancement of the capacity for dialogical engagement or attunement.

Why is Ethnography a Good Practice?

An ethnographic approach can enhance understanding of societal polarisation, cultural violence and everyday extremism in different contexts because it offers a lens into the subtle, daily interactions and cultural practices that other research methods may overlook, allowing for a deeper understanding of the social environments where extremist narratives take root.

The report explains how ethnography was used in each case and then describes specific innovative approaches, including,

- 1) collaborative ethnography,
- 2) autoethnography,
- 3) ethnographic gamification,
- 4) narrative group work,
- 5) psychoeducational workshops, and
- 6) capacity building training for non-violent communication and conflict resolution.

Prior to introducing each approach, we provide an **in-depth account of the context** in each country where the approach was tried with a focus on the major drivers of everyday extremism there. This contextual background is key for **understanding the specific forms of everyday extremism** we confronted as well as how to diffuse them. After discussing the good practices, we examine **what each of the ethnographic cases taken together tells us** about the major causes of everyday extremism. Namely, we found that **everyday extremism emerges out of traumatic historical experiences and widespread feelings of societal insecurity**. The **next sections** of the report discuss **our principles for determining good practices** in the first place and lay out the **theoretical background** of the major concepts we employ (**everyday extremism, social dialogue, living democracy, attunement and violent extremism**). A further discussion of these concepts can be found in 5.1.

1.3 Principles for identifying good practices

In our understanding, for a practice to be a ‘good practice’, it must have been proven to have worked well – in terms of results produced. A combination of the two would render it to be a model worth emulating; or put differently, a ‘good practice’. Having proven to be a successful experience, in a broad sense, it merits being shared, such that it may be usefully adopted, and put into practice, by others. For a practice to be a ‘good practice’ for facilitating social dialogue, there are a certain set of criteria that it must meet (or, at the very least, strive to meet):

- **It is successful** – in terms of being effective at achieving the objective of facilitating social dialogue that will eventually dissolve tendencies towards everyday extremism
- **It is feasible and sustainable** – in terms of being amenable to adoption and usage in the present, without hindering or compromising the future
- **It is participatory** – in terms of allowing for and supporting a sense of collaboration
- **It is adaptable** – in terms of having the potential to be put into action towards meeting similar objectives in different contexts, as tailoring to local needs is vital.

Participation as a Good Practice

A good practice in a living democracy should not be a top-down approach having a 'delivery model' whereby one person uses it and one person has it used upon them.

Part of the objective of putting together good practices from across the various contexts that WP5 has been working in (Turkey, Germany, Portugal, Bosnia, Serbia) is to figure out the lessons that can be learned across those contexts by participants engaged in participatory fieldwork and research. What we expected to be apparent, as it was in the course of the fieldwork itself, is that the success of any particular initiative could not and should not be reduced to a single good practice; rather, it is the combination of a number of different elements

in the practice that make the difference. Furthermore, as we discuss in this deliverable and the subsequent methods handbook (D5.3), context is paramount in the success of the implementation of a good practice. Put differently, while ‘adaptability’ is a crucial criterion for a good practice, the work of further adaptation at point of contact remains key.

1.4 Key concepts used in this report

In **this section** of the report, **we provide further detail about the major concepts** we employ. For a more in-depth theoretical background, please consult 5.1, Framework paper on emergence of opposition drivers across sites and shared dialogical interventions.

Everyday extremism

Extremism is “the belief that an in-group’s success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an outgroup” (Berger 2018 p. 44). In its **everyday form**, extremism is related to prejudice, intolerance, xenophobia, devaluation, and possibly even dehumanisation, and the subtle and insidious narratives and practices that manifest these in daily life. It involves frequent symbolic violence, which “does not kill or maim like direct violence or the violence built into the structure.

Everyday extremism

The ‘ordinary’, everyday narratives and practices which (re)produce hostile oppositions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and state or imply a lesser value of ‘them’ and/or ‘the other’. Extreme everyday narratives are part of what may be understood as common-sense, manifest, often normalised, in everyday discourse and interaction. What makes such narratives extreme is not their ‘abnormality’, but the fact that they communicate an us/them opposition built upon a requirement for hostility to the other side(s), to the extent of ascribing a lesser value to them, potentially also dehumanising them. In dialogical interactions, oppositions in perspectives can be productive, but everyday extremism, as a form of symbolic violence, poses a challenge to democracy because it limits dialogue, or the scope thereof.

However, it is used to legitimise either or both, as for instance in the theory of a *Herrenvolk*, or a superior race” (Galtung 1990: 291). This symbolic violence is in itself harmful; put differently, the problem with symbolic violence and everyday extremism is not only that they provide a discursive justification for physical violence but that they are, in and of themselves, a form of violence.

Furthermore, these symbolic narratives bear material expression, insofar as they become the rational, moral and cognitive justification for

physical violence against the ‘other’ to emerge, and it is necessary to understand and counteract them if we want to address direct and visible - as well as everyday - forms of extremism. A full theoretical background to the concept of everyday extremism and the entirety of WP5 research can be found in D5.1 "Framework paper on emergence of opposition drivers across sites and shared dialogical interventions."

Social dialogue

As described in more detail in D5.3 – the "Five Country Methods Handbook" – the OppAttune research in WP5 builds on the findings of the WP2 through WP4 by developing the following working hypothesis: **Functioning, thriving democratic societies that are resilient to everyday extremism rely on good practices of "social dialogue".¹**

Social dialogue refers to dialogical communicative practices among people with different perspectives in which the views and experiences of the ‘other’ is understood, recognised and considered. Social dialogues involve people engaging each other in the most effective and inclusive way possible, in all kinds of social constellations, about all kinds of issues, and also in situations that are personally and/or politically challenging.

Processes of narration and narrative communication - which in OppAttune are understood as complementary to concepts of “the narrative” - play an important role in social dialogues. Since narration is understood as the expression of subjective accounts by people (live narrators) to their interlocutors (co-narrative listeners) about specific experiences they have personally lived through, such narrative processes serve as frameworks through which individuals interpret information and structure and construct worldviews, identities and social perspectives (Hühn et al. 2009) Therefore, the telling of any actual story involves listening and understanding as well as dialogical negotiation between the narrator and the interlocutors/ audience regarding its factual and moral meaning or evaluation; it may also involve processes of selection and erasure. Different audiences may understand and interpret narratives in varied ways based on their social contexts and experiential backgrounds. Processes of narration and **dialogical negotiations in thriving living democracies require a space and quality of social dialogue in which the widest possible variety of narratives are respected.**

Social dialogue can emerge and develop at all levels of society, especially at the community level, and in different settings and contexts. **Below**, we discuss how it can be explored and also supported by various good practices as part of nurturing living democracies.

Living democracy

Living Democracy has two meanings. It first refers to the everyday spaces and places where democracy takes place in that people talk to each other on more or less controversial, political or experiential/ personal subject matters - democracy at the level of everyday experience. It also refers to democracy as a practice in itself beyond episodic political events or milestones traditionally associated with democracies (e.g. voting, rallies, petitions). Our approach to living democracy takes into account that democracy is a political regime and there can also be the lived reality of un-democracy, characterised by practices of inequality, misrepresentation, exclusion, devaluation and hatred of groups of ‘others’. Therefore, **living democracy is a test for democracy as a regime: does democracy in principle and in law translate to**

¹ In European Commission terminology, “social dialogue” refers to employment relations, specifically, to: “all types of negotiation, consultation or exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic, employment and social policy.” We adopt a broader social science informed understanding of social dialogue which draws on the tradition of G. H. Mead. In particular, as per D5.1, we understand this concept in terms of the relational qualities and power balances between different social actors in instances of intercultural encounter. Social dialogue refers to: “Dialogical engagement with different perspectives whereby the perspective of the ‘other’ is recognised and considered. Engagement with the perspective of the ‘other’ can also be non-dialogical (e.g. violence, oppression of various forms) (Gillespie, 2008; Jovchelovitch, 2007)” (Andreouli et al. 2024, pg. 8).

democracy in practice - in 'real' life? (See Figure 2). We explore living democracy further in D5.3 and 5.4.

Democratic Ecologies

Living democracy can reflect a thriving and sustainable or a fragile democratic context:

- We define **thriving and sustainable democracies** as the ones where people recognise each other as a rights-bearing citizens with a voice and a stake in public matters, feel secure coexisting, but disagreement and dissensus is accepted as necessary. A thriving and sustainable democracy includes dissonance, difference and oppositional dynamic.
- A **democracy is fragile** when the capacity for dialogue and the readiness to share and listen to each others' experiences and perspectives is lost, when the capacity for multilateralism and consensual policy-making is impaired and there is a move towards majoritarianism, unilateralism, nationalism, populism and polarisation. This vulnerability can be expressed through conspiracy theories, hate speech and disinformation. When the capacity for social and political dialogue is lost, the potential for violence is increased.

Our principles underpinning the idea of a thriving and sustainable 'living democracy' follows those laid down by Asenbaum et al. (2023) who define a living democracy as one that:

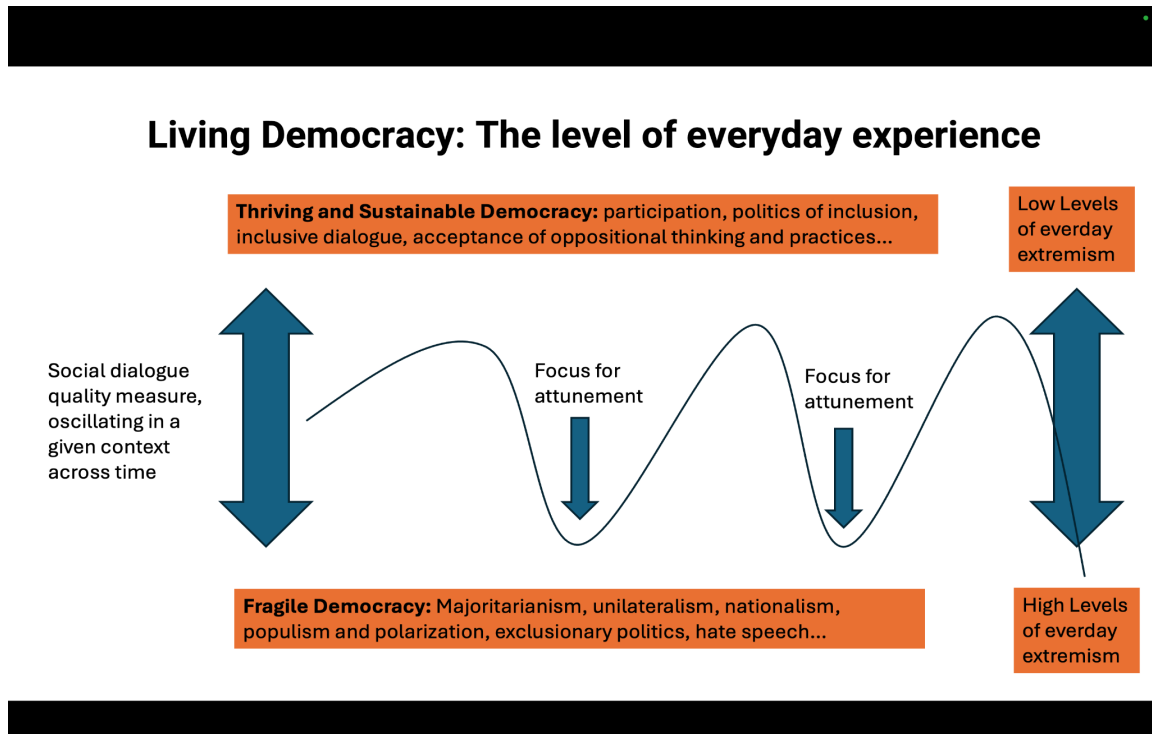
- (1) **safeguards the existence of all humans and nonhumans**
- (2) **nurtures a diversity of perspectives**
- (3) **fosters social and planetary connectivity**
- (4) **enables self- and collective transformation**

Living democracy is not a static or neutral space. Dialogue and oppositional friction may co-exist in a context where all are recognised as equal and fully human; diverse perspectives are legitimised; and people feel safe and nurtured - belonging. In this view, total consensus can even be seen as an indicator of the lack of democratic capacity. **The ability to maintain and nurture mutual contact, and exchange personal experience across social differences, and to deal with different narratives, worldviews and identities in a constructive, non-violent way is one defining feature of healthy or living democracies.**

Our understanding of living democracy accepts changes of the social and political order as part of keeping democracy resilient. Indeed, the ability to effect some change, even at an individual level, can be understood as an expression of 'democratic agency', wherein a 'self' transformation is always already linked to the transformation of society itself. As Asenbaum et al. (2023) put it, "a living democracy...goes far beyond institutional reform and roots democracy in the everyday lived experiences of the diverse perspectives of the demos." Such a 'living democracy' – amenable to and interested in change and adaptation – could and should also be considered as one that is resilient. With the caveat that within the scope of the project, our remit does not quite extend to nonhumans and to the planet as a whole (though our

aspirations do tend in that direction), we find these principles to be useful guidance. Living democracy as a concept does not seek to present a final understanding, but to provide a useful starting point (Enwezor et al. 2002).

FIGURE 2. LIVING DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Attunement (a working definition)

OppAttune’s main objective is track, attune and limit the spread of extremist narratives in the everyday level and a major tool for this is “attunement.” Attunement is defined as the democratic capacity of citizens to orient towards the other in public dialogue within oppositional politics, grounded in the ability to detect and reject phenomena of everyday extremism and polarisation such as those often found in expressions of reject extreme narratives of hatred, enmity, prejudice, inequality and xenophobia.

How to Attune?
 Attunement entails navigating oppositional us/them thinking, narratives, practices and political environments. It is about orienting to the other and diffusing potential hostility.

A main goal of WP5 is a diagnosis and assessment of everyday extremism that can contribute to identifying good practices for attuned social dialogue and further specifying the meaning of “attunement.” Our work shows how to amplify local voices and build dialogues that may be used to intervene and attune at later stages of the OppAttune project. We explore this further in 5.3 and WP7 will be testing an Attunement Model based in part on WP5 findings designed to limit the evolution and spread of everyday extremism.

Violent extremism vs. everyday extremism

Already early observations and exchange between the researchers and practitioners in WP5 from the five different countries indicated that many characteristics of successful ways to set

Building on Prior Knowledge

WP5 researchers' and practitioners' common acknowledgement is that quite useful national and European resources had already been provided, which OppAttune may benefit from. The main challenge for WP5 would be to collect and reflect on these established good practice principles in light of our different areas and settings of work, in order to ascertain which principles are most helpful in guiding research and practice in attuning everyday extremism through social dialogue.

off and facilitate social dialogue – in a way that helps to attune and eventually reduce and dissolve forms of everyday extremism, prejudice and patterns of group-focused enmity (Zick et al 2011, 27-42) and devaluing others – are quite similar to what has already been identified as principles of good practice in neighbouring fields of social and educational work as well as psychosocial counselling (POYWE 2016, KCS 2024, DGSF 2020; DBSA 2014/2021). One of the most relevant of these synergetic resources lies in the neighbouring field of prevention of violent extremism and so-called deradicalisation, i.e. rehabilitation

from violent extremism. But, it is important to be very clear about what we mean by violent extremism, radicalisation and how these are different from everyday extremism.

Is Everyday Extremism Local or Universal?

In this report, we argue that everyday extremism must be defined locally, meaning that the definitions are always grounded on/bounded to context. Thus, we can only determine the drivers of everyday extremism in the holistic socio-cultural context that we are studying. Yet, we do not mean to say that everything is culturally and locally relative. For example, any tendency of ascribing a lesser value to some groups of 'others' may be a trans-cultural hallmark of everyday extremism.

Therefore, although everyday extremism is local and contextual in its manifestation, **we advocate for a universal definition based on cultural violence embedded into narratives of hostile opposition against the 'other', including prejudice, racism, xenophobia, group-focused enmity and practices of devaluing others.** We consider having a low level of hostile oppositions to be universal values for inclusive societies and our concept of living democracies

Many scholars attempting to differentiate violent extremism and radicalisation, argue that the sanction of violence is by definition extreme, but radical ideas can be part of the everyday life and the conversations of neighbours, friends and family members. Yet, there is clearly a slippery slope in this formulation, with some radical statements supporting violent extremism as when they devalue others and may be considered hate speech. The concept of violent extremism is not necessarily more self-evident than radicalisation. For example, the UN Secretary-General describes “violent extremism” as “a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition” which is “neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief” (UNDP 2021). It is not clear that we should lump those who support or even advocate violence together with those who are actively violent. Moreover, it is left unclear if there are not significant differences between all various sorts of phenomena that have been called violent extremist. Some of them might not even be extremist in any profound and stricter sense of the term. For example, much of what is now commonly referred to as left-wing violent extremism

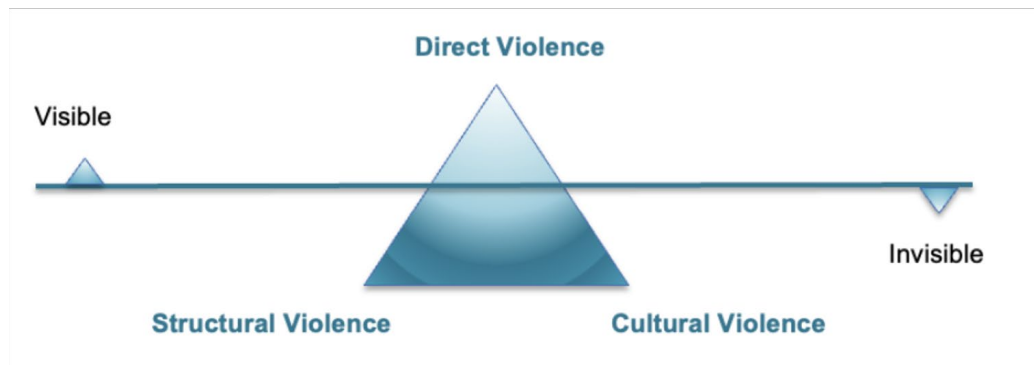
does not subscribe to ideologies or practices that devalue others, does not use targeted violence against groups of people, and does not oppose the democratic constitutional order and rule of law as such (a criterion often used by security agencies in their definition of extremism). Many anthropologists and psychologists would argue that violence is a common and universal cultural practice (Whitehead 2004), meaning that violent extremism is not bound to any particular time, place, or culture. As such, how does it differ from any other “violent” and/or “extreme” cultural practices, such as painful bodily modifications, sorcery, warfare or sometimes deadly coming-of-age rituals? Further, all cultural practices are relative to the perspective of the observer and can take on different meanings from within or outside of the culture. Thus, who will decide (and how!) what counts as “extreme” or “radical” or when the everyday is itself permeated by the extreme. Put differently, extremism is not a ‘fact’, a ‘thing’, but an assessment, a cultural construction which depends very much on who gets to say what is extreme. The definition of extremism can be a political weapon and what we do in this WP is take a step back and instead of categorising behaviours as extreme or not extreme in and of themselves, we look at what particular narratives ‘do’, the effects that they have on others, and the effects that they have on how democracies are (un)lived

These are thorny issues that our concept of everyday extremism helps us to navigate. Everyday extremism has to do with experiences and actions in daily life that can be distinguished from direct violent **events**. It is important to differentiate what we mean by “extremism” in our concept of everyday extremism from traditional approaches to extremism commonly expressed in PCVE literature. We are not interested in extremist episodic violence, which is most of the time not an “everyday” occurrence in the realm of visible, disruptive actions. We want to understand the much-less studied narratives and interactional practices that are supporting extremism and which have to do with how we are at home, at school, at the market, at the coffee shop and at work - as we live our lives every day.

Everyday extremism as a concept requires a nuanced understanding of violence. Here, we follow the tripartite theory of Johan Galtung (1967) who distinguishes between direct, structural and cultural violence. The first one is the type of violence that is visible, in which there is a subject exerting physical violence against another and this most closely defines violent extremism. The other two are within the invisible or less visible spectrum, referring, respectively, to social injustices and to social norms, meanings, symbols and practices that create the cognitive, rational, intellectual and moral justifications for violence to emerge. The latter two are sometimes referred to as micro-aggressions and they are part of the routine, banal daily experience of some members of societies, especially racial, ethnic, religious or other minority groups. (See Figure 3)

Violence in Extremism vs. Violence in Everyday Extremism Traditional concepts and approaches to extremism in the preventing or countering violent extremism (PCVE) literature tend to disregard less visible forms of violence and to overlook extremism in its manifestation or embedding in non-episodic common-sense narratives. Thus, the conception of violence within extremism for those working in this vein is radically different from our conception of structural and cultural violence in “everyday extremism”. In our view, this work can fail to grasp where extremism comes from, treating it as an almost essentialised form of terrorism. OppAttune's approach allows us to move beyond this formulation and to understand the root causes (or drivers) of these phenomena, to attune and limit it before it becomes violent extremism.

FIGURE 3. VIOLENCE PYRAMID



Galtung, Johan (1969) "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.

Everyday extremism falls into the realm of structural and, more clearly, cultural violence. What makes narratives extreme is not their 'abnormality', but the fact that they communicate an us/them opposition built upon a requirement for hostility to the other side(s), to the extent of ascribing a lesser value to them, potentially also dehumanising them (Kelman, 1973). Everyday extremism may be connected to events such as political rallies or earthquakes, it may be impacted by political leaders and the media, and it may stem from or lead to violence. But it should be manifested or enacted in those daily, ordinary interactions at our favorite places - where everyone knows our name - or on the busy street corners - where we walk by quickly because we are perceived as the threatening "other".

Who is an everyday extremist?

We argue that we all have the potential to disseminate everyday extremist narratives. The question is not *who*, but *how* to identify the drivers of the narratives and to build more democratic capacity in ourselves and others.

The **next section** examines **how we identified everyday extremism** narratives and interactions, including **how to identify the mechanisms and drivers** of the narratives and interactions, in the specific socio-political contexts in which we worked.

2. Country Cases

2.1. Overview of case studies

WP5 consists of five country-based case studies conducted in selected localities in Turkey, Germany, Portugal, Bosnia, Serbia by WP5 researchers. What follows are accounts of how each researcher **mapped their field anthropologically**, according to his/her ethnographic case and approach to “thick description” (Geertz 1973). This mapping process was vitally important to developing the good practices and also illustrates how and why they work in a specific context. **Context is always essential for ethnographic work**, which involves **deep and specific exploration of diverse lifeworlds on a micro-level**. However, for the study of symbolic violence, which takes the form of **everyday extremism**, and may even involve silent narratives, we feel this is even more vital. It is only through a **close look at the broader circumstances** of how people see their worlds that we can understand the drivers of opposition to “others” and how to address them.

2.2 Social and political context of Germany

OppAttune field research on everyday extremism – and effective social and pedagogical measures to attune – in Germany was conducted in East Germany in the state of Saxony Anhalt (with young people in a school of the city Halle/ upon Saale) for various reasons. Firstly, most indicators for antidemocratic and (right-wing) extremist mindsets and behaviour have generally shown double the rates in East Germany than in West Germany especially in rural areas, according to different measures of right-wing populism/ extremism, as well as instances of everyday discrimination and racism also among people who place themselves politically or economically in the middle (Hans Böckler Stiftung 2024, Zick et al. 2023, p. 84). Secondly, there are evident geographical, historical and ideological parallels of East Germany to neighbouring eastern European countries, e.g. Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary (i.e. the former East Bloc) which have been seriously struck by intense struggles to uphold a basic democratic and human rights-based order of social life and politics since the 1990s.

Somewhat belatedly by European standards, Germany is now experiencing significant voter turnout for an increasingly radical and hateful right-wing extremist party.

Furthermore, during recent years, a constant increase of right-wing populist parties and far-right groups (including vigilante groups and small decentralised right-wing extremist militant comradeships) has been observed in East Germany in particular. Most prominently, the political party AfD/ “Alternative for Germany” has swiftly gained influence, particularly in East Germany, since its foundation in 2013 – and has sharply radicalised in its programme and rhetoric, while numerous party leaders have been ousted in the course of the last 10 years and replaced by even more extremist individuals. Currently, some of the AfD Eastern state chapters are officially designated as right-wing extremist and unconstitutional by Federal intelligence agencies and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

Saxony Anhalt is one of them and has been the key driving force of radicalisation within the AfD, with both its main candidate (Björn Höcke) and the party chapter being designated right-wing extremist, likely awaiting a political and legal procedure of investigation and potential

banning of the party (Fürstenau 2024, Cultures Interactive 2024). Moreover, the key right-wing extremist think tank behind the AfD and various other right-wing extremist formations is placed in a village in Saxony Anhalt (the “Institut für Staatspolitik”, founded by Götz Kubitschek and his wife Ellen Kositzka). Even within East Germany, the state of Saxony Anhalt has repeatedly witnessed the highest degrees of “group focused enmity” (Heitmeyer 2005, Zick et al. 2011, 2023) and violent right-wing extremism and “authoritarianism” (Decker et al. 2022) across the federal republic and East Germany. Most notably, investigative journalism has recently uncovered secretive policy plans by high-ranking representatives of the AfD, well-known right-wing extremists/ neo-Nazis and business people which resemble in many ways what has become known as the “Project 2025” in the United States during 2024 (cf. “Corrective Recherche” 2024) – individuals from Saxony Anhalt seem to have been involved as well.

The assumption that characteristic German forms of everyday extremism would also rank high in Saxony Anhalt is also based on past and current voting behaviour of the population. The AfD today stands a good chance of becoming the strongest parliamentary faction in three state elections in eastern Germany in fall of 2024, with poll results of around 30% of the votes, Saxony Anhalt being one of them, aside of Saxony, Thuringia. This is due to an ongoing process of increasing normalisation and mainstreaming of right-wing extremist rhetoric around various policy issues (as for instance migration, gender equality, climate, health/ vaccinations) – which also implies forms of everyday extremism. Since polling shows that part of this development is connected to the so-called “Monday Demonstrations” of the PEGIDA movement (“Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West”; cf. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pegida) it seems that some parts of the pro-Western resistance movement of 1989 that brought about reunification seems to have now invested in antidemocratic movements today.

Some of the former GDR resistance movement that brought about reunification in 1989 is now investing in anti-democratic movements

This increased populist appeal - and the successful camouflaging and mainstreaming of right-wing extremist policies - has increasingly reached women and young people in particular, which was not the case with women about ten years ago, when right-wing extremism was still perceived as a rather brute force of political action which was predominantly masculine. **This new and wider appeal of right-wing, antidemocratic populism can be taken as a signal that everyday extremism has been widespread for some time and now tends to merge with violent extremism - also underlining our assumption that there are partial and structural correspondence between violent extremism and the more mundane and normalised phenomena of everyday extremism.**

Hence it seemed promising to research everyday extremism in Saxony Anhalt - in particular with young people, adolescent students since with them the local forms of everyday extremism may be even more easily accessible than with any adult population. Particularly promising seemed to turn towards a school which shows a high degree of social and ethnic diversity, including refugees from various regions of the world – and also witnesses a high level of interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

Driving factors for everyday extremism in (East) Germany

In addition to the obvious general driving factors in the above description of far-right political populism in this state, there are other specific factors. **An increasingly important component of populist discourses is an attitude of fundamental distrust of all media and so-called elites, and a tendency to distort, disregard, and dispute undeniable facts and instead promote conspiracy myths, thereby also instrumentalising real existing crisis situations (such as the Corona virus pandemic, the war in Ukraine, or the climate crisis).** This is an important problem when considering the education of young citizens in schools and beyond, which are supposed to impart a basic understanding of scientific facts in the history of the European Enlightenment.

More specific driving factors for extreme oppositional attitudes and anti-democratic behavior, also among young people in Germany, seem to lie **in the school system and its fundamental pedagogical deficits with regard to the key task of teaching young people the skills of democratic practice and facilitating democratic personality formation.** To begin with, many schools do not have the capacity to deal efficiently and sustainably with the multifaceted phenomena of (cyber) mobbing among their students, accelerated by social media, even if these do not directly correspond to extremist ideologies (JIM Studie 2023). The infrastructure for building social and emotional intelligence, media literacy, and personal self-reflection in young people is far from being developed in most schools to meet the major challenges of today's beleaguered democracies.

It starts with (cyber) bullying among students and goes all the way to right-wing extremist subcultures in schools

In particular, school systems often do not seem sufficiently equipped to deal with existing subcultures of right-wing extremism in schools, or youth cultures of any other form of extremist oppositional ideology, including subcultures of online gaming. For example, in 2023 there have been media reports about the (exemplary) school in the city of Burg in the eastern German state of Brandenburg (g) where two dedicated teachers did not receive sufficient support when they reported right-wing extremist activities among their students. Part of the challenge seems to have been their colleagues in the school's teaching staff and education policymakers in the relevant ministry. Even after the teachers published an urgent letter to the media as a last resort to raise awareness, the situation could not be resolved. On the contrary, the two teachers ended up leaving the school after half a year as a result of personal resentment and mobbing against them and insufficient support from the school administration and education policymakers (Lemm, Jonah & Wells, Sebastian, 2024). **Hence, this corresponds with the OppAttune German project team's observation that teacher training, professional supervision and process development among teachers and in schools do not seem to be where they should be given the challenge. Also, many schools were not adequately staffed and equipped to successfully mediate and benefit from the influx of refugees from African and Arab countries.**

A closely related driving factor is the often inadequate availability and quality of community family and youth services in the school districts concerned. Many of the cases of extremist oppositional attitudes and related problems among youth can be traced back to psychosocial and affect-related conditions within their families and social contexts. This implies a high demand for youth and family support, often including mental health support, which is not easily

met by existing community infrastructures. **In particular, mental health care appears to be too pharmaceutical in nature, and resources for psychosocial support for family and relationship issues are not nearly as developed as the existing demand in many places. As a result, there are often high levels of social and economic stressors, unresolved family and relationship tensions, and (mental) health problems, leading to higher levels of aggressive behavior and everyday extremism.** The growing infrastructure of school social work is a step in the right direction, as is the increasing awareness of state education policymakers. However, resources are still scarce and a lot of awareness-raising and infrastructure building remains to be done.

Insufficient public skills vis-à-vis everyday extremism and toxic politics in contemporary political culture

Across various sectors of public discourse and contemporary political culture, there is much evidence of a lack of discursive and interactional skills when it comes to interacting effectively in situations where everyday extremism is expressed, polarising dynamics are promoted, and/or forms of toxic politics and political bullying are implemented (including gaslighting, lying, disingenuous strategies, slander). Journalists, politicians and comparable actors in the public sphere show profound insecurities in dealing with disingenuous interlocutors and situations that differ from debating equally legitimate positions and policy ideas. This became most evident in Germany when the right-wing extremist party AfD was elected into state governments and it became inevitable and necessary to interact publicly with AfD representatives in parliaments and media forums. As a result, there is a dearth of public examples of how to effectively and moderately refute everyday extremism, neutralise toxic politics, and "stand up to bullies" in the political arena (as a recent campaign slogan of U.S. presidential candidate Kamala Harris wisely suggests).

Germany's well-funded civic education infrastructure is not effective in engaging and impacting on hard-to-reach groups

Similarly to the point above, the specialised field of civic education and prevention of violent extremism that has been developed, expanded – and to some extent industrialised – in Germany over the past 30 years, has, in some key respects, remained part of the problem rather than part of the solution. For this field has proved largely incapable of developing and promoting methods and approaches that effectively reach and engage hard-to-reach groups. Above all, it seems to be the inability to let go of set agendas, ideological positions, and methodological formats of information, explanation, instruction, and persuasion – however subtle – that prevents this sector from being more appealing, inclusive and impactful in terms of its core purpose: facilitating democratic character formation and behaviour among the most diverse groups of addressees.

In this respect, the perspective of OppAttune WP5 research on advanced social dialogue practices – which are open-process, open-ended and do not set agendas – seems most promising to provide needed solutions.

Socio-economic factors, increasing inequality, (perceived) discrimination – and the disempowering shock of German reunification

More recently, findings have shown that socio-economic oppositional drivers were particularly relevant – and chronically underrated – as factors of antidemocratic and resentful mindsets also in Germany, thus fueling emotions against perceived foreigners (“All strangers out here!”) rejection of key civil liberties and freedoms (“Stop early sexualisation through education!”) as well as familiar racist and anti-Semitic stereotypes.

Groups that were largely decoupled from the positive income development of the last 25 years leaned particularly strongly towards the AfD (Lux 2018) as well as towards right-wing populism and group focused enmity (Hans Böckler Stiftung 2024, Heitmeyer 2005, Zick et al. 2023). Radicalisation studies in the narrower sense were often so impressed by the complexity of individual cases - and also biased towards ideological and psychological factors - that they overlooked the pivotal meaning of socio-economic circumstances in a general climate of rapidly increasing inequality. Thus even in the most recent edition of the basic paper on “Root Causes of Violent Extremism” the European Commission’s Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) did not even include a single economic criterion in the “kaleidoscope of factors” (Ranstorp & Meines, 2023).

While the factor of economic disenfranchisement is key to everyday extremism, EU radicalisation analyses sometimes do not include a single economic criterion

Moreover, especially in East Germany, these important socio-economic factors are closely intertwined and reinforced by socio-psychological factors, resulting from the transformation phase since German reunification in 1989. **It has become clear in broader social research, and has been confirmed by the research focused on by OppAttune in WP5, that the long-standing differences between the attitudes of the population in East and West Germany are due to very different historical experiences, economic standing, views, and mentalities.** Particularly with regard to the GDR era, the "Wende"/reunification, and the transformation period since 1989, there seems to have been an under-articulated and under-discussed experience of collective shock on the part of many in the East about the biographical realities of reunification and the subsequent effects of disempowerment, lack of self-worth, and dignity - which were passed on to the youth through mechanisms that social psychology has called transgenerational transmission. As to reunification, according to Steffen Mau (2024), German unity was a mesalliance between two very unequal partners: “The asymmetrical preconditions for reunification have now become quite stubborn inequalities.”, i.e. the inequalities in social structure, economic standing, demographics, and culture.

With regard to economy, i.e. the “socio-structural under-privileging” of the East it suffices to highlight a few key figures: Household wealth is twice as high in West Germany, only two percent of the total German inheritance tax is paid in East Germany. In 1989 it had been promised to East Germans that West German conditions would just be extended into the East – with widespread prosperity, secure industrial jobs with collective wage agreements – whereupon East Germans agreed to a fairly unconditional annexation of their structures and resources. The plans for a third alternative (between the system of the GDR and the West German system) were thus entirely rejected as politically not feasible. Today, however, 30 percent of East Germans work in the low-wage sector and the East German states bring up the rear in terms of collective bargaining leverage of trade unions. For large parts of the Eastern states, industry is elsewhere. In a word, the perception is that East Germans had been fooled –

which is not an inappropriate view to take at all, aside of the massive social welfare support spent in East Germany.

Demographically in a nutshell: East Germany is shrinking, West Germany is growing – with a strong boost to emigration from the East, which has been compounded by an unprecedented drop in the birth rate of over 50 percent. Each 100 retirements are met only by 50 new career starts. The fact that it was mostly young and well-educated people – and mostly women – who left had tremendous economic and cultural consequences. Among 20 to 29-year-olds, for example, there are over 130 men for every 100 women in some Thuringian districts while right-wing extremist Björn Höcke from the AfD (ironically coming from West Germany) just won state elections in Thuringia in September 2024, by advocating an urgent need for “a new kind of manliness”. **Logically, this has consequences including masculinity norms and a tendency towards violence, says Mau, which once again underlines the pivotal importance of the often underrated gender (role) factors in both violent and everyday extremism** (WomEx 2014, Baer, Posselius & Weilnböck 2015)

Yet, it is important to note: these socio-economic and demographic factors apply not only to East Germany, but also to other shrinking societies: “The fear of a ‘quantitative’ loss of importance and majorisation [of being taken advantage of] by others strengthens a wagon-castle mentality and reduces openness, which could be so useful” (Mau). A vicious circle – which also applies to West Germany - and other European regions: “Economically weak regions with high unemployment, an aging population and a lower level of education are also more susceptible to the (right-wing extremist party) AfD in the West,” Mau points out. However, the "urban-rural divide" is even greater in areas of eastern Germany and eastern Europe.

The biographical and psychological impacts of German reunification

Aside of the socio-economic and demographic factors, the key psychological factor in East Germany seems to be cultural in nature, going back to the experience of reunification and the subsequent period of transformation: The frequent observation that East Germans have not been able to internalise the democratic mindset – and are thus more prone to both everyday extremism and violent anti-democratic attitudes – is due not only to the undemocratic and repressive GDR, but also to the experience of how the "peaceful revolution" turned out. For after the "first democratic experience of the East Germans" – after the fall of the wall – the phase of democratic self-empowerment with "round tables" and highly participatory forms of doing politics and practicing social dialogue was immediately and harshly followed – "voluntarily and with eyes wide open" – by a massive experience of disempowerment as a result of the top-down course set by politics and the economy for rapid unification.

The aftermath of German reunification since 1989 has amounted to a collective shock of disempowerment, lack of biographical self-worth and violation of personal dignity

This resulted in a massive loss of trust in West German political parties which were not able of gaining a foothold and earning trust in the East – especially with younger people. According to Mau, the parties do not provide a reliable link between politics and the population. Instead of party dominance, people in East Germany would like to see greater consideration given to the “original and direct will of the people”, for example in the form of plebiscitary involvement.

In sum, the people of eastern Germany largely feel that they have been deceived, betrayed, and robbed of their resources and dignity – aside of their relatively well economic standing; they feel that they are viewed as second-class citizens. This is fertile ground for all kinds of resentment and everyday extremism, ranging from conspiracy theories to forms of group-focused hostility to organised violent extremism.

As the GDR dissident movement anticipated in the 1980s, eastern Germany could become a testing ground for new forms of social dialogue and democratic participation

On a more positive note, though, even Steffen Mau sees a potential, which seems to anticipate what OppAttune conceptualises as social dialogue: “Eastern Germany may even be predestined to become a laboratory for participation”. Specifically, Mau suggests relying more on open and participatory formats of “citizens' councils”. A randomly assembled and heterogeneous group of citizens engages in an intensive exchange of views on political issues and, in the best-case scenario, arrives at a common, balanced position. This position could gain greater general acceptance than laws that have been devised “by those at the top”. In this respect, “citizens' councils could or should not replace representative democracy, but complement it”. These thoughts resemble concepts of deliberative democracy and historically refer back to the short period before and after reunification in which the “Neue Forum” was inaugurated by leading figures of the GDR dissident and peace movement of the 1980s. The New Forum called for a dialogue on democratic reforms with the aim of “reshaping” society with the widest possible participation of the population. The new Forum later formed an association with the Green party, building the party “Bündnis 90/Die Grünen” (Alliance 90/The Greens) which is the name of the Green party up to the present. Mau’s thinking behind this is that citizens' and people’s councils could help to curb populism – and every day extremism – because they involve “the people” in a fundamental way.

2.3 Social and political context of Turkey

Everyday crisis

Local communities in Turkey are grappling with a multifaceted crisis, blending political disempowerment, financial deprivation, and social trauma. People in Turkey have strong patriotic and nationalistic attitudes (World Value Survey, 2018), but there is a high level of political polarisation stemming from a sense of injustice, grievance, and alienation for different groups. The main cleavages are connected to a so-called secular/religious divide, political party support factions (AKP vs. CHP, etc.) and a myriad of ethno-national and religious tensions tied to minority rights/oppression of Kurds, Alevis, Greeks, Armenians, Suriyani Christians and others (Celik et al. 2017; Guney 2022). A sense of threat is a prominent structure of feeling for the national body and means that those who are not Sunni Muslims may be viewed with suspicion as lesser citizens. Economic challenges have exacerbated these political tensions. Since the 1980s, Turkey has frequently experienced economic crises, with the situation becoming particularly acute since 2018, marked by a severe devaluation of the Turkish lira and high inflation (Hubbard 2022). Locals are also frustrated by the perceived scarcity of resources in education, healthcare, and employment (Ozerim and Tolay 2020).

This confluence of challenges has led to a deterioration of living democracy. **Theories developed to explain political violence and xenophobia that stress uncertainty regarding one's place in the world, ontological insecurity, a sense of loss, victimisation and vulnerability** (e.g. Giddens, 1991, p. 37; Gotzsche-Astrup, 2018; Hogg and Adelman 2013; Molinaro et al. 2021) seem highly relevant for explaining contemporary Turkey (Saracoglu and Belanger 2019: 368) and as we explore below, **everyday extremism**.

Against this backdrop, over 3.6 million Syrians have sought refuge in Turkey since the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, making Turkey the largest host country for refugees worldwide. Initially, Syrians were welcomed; however, in recent years, dominant media narratives have shifted, increasingly depicting Syrians as societal outsiders expected to return to their homeland (Rottmann 2020). While some research finds no overall negative economic impact from the arrival of Syrians (Mahia et al. 2020), other studies identify moderate employment losses among native informal workers, suggesting partial job displacement by refugees (Tumen 2016). Cultural tensions have surfaced, with many Turks focusing on perceived differences between themselves and Syrians (Rottmann & Nimer 2021). While Syrians express "cultural intimacy" with Turks (Rottmann & Kaya 2020), Turks often homogenise Syrians as "Sunni Arabs," overlooking the diversity within the Syrian population, which includes Turkmens, Kurds, Druze, Arab Christians, and Yazidis.

Driving factors for everyday extremism

The Turkish government's policies toward Syrians have been inconsistent, oscillating between open-door refugee policies and calls for their repatriation, which reinforce public uncertainty and hostility (Mencutek et al. 2023). Political leaders often use refugees as scapegoats for economic woes, further deepening anti-Syrian sentiment. Syrians face significant discrimination in daily life (Durukan and Ozerdem 2023; ICG, 2018; Ozcurumez and Mete 2021; Ozduzen et al. 2021; Saracoglu and Belanger 2019). Mob violence against Syrians emerges from time-to-time and most recently resurfaced in several Turkish cities in the summer of 2024. Although such violence often goes underreported in mainstream media, it remains alarmingly common (Hubbard and Timur 2024). One focus of our research is a neighborhood in Istanbul that has witnessed violent riots in 2019 and 2022 and remains a key site of everyday extremism.

Discrimination and violence can be clearly linked to a number of extreme narratives on Syrian migration that can be found throughout Turkey in daily conversation, social media and mainstream political discourses. Many of the most common anti-Syrian narratives can be considered automatic speech (narrative that is repeated unreflexively).

These narratives, as previously noted in the literature (Ozcurumez and Mete 2021; Ozduzen et al. 2021; Saracoglu 2019; Saracoglu and Beranger 2019; Sivis 2022), can broadly be summarised in terms of:

- 1) Anti-Arab Sentiment**
- 2) National Loyalty and Militarism**
- 3) Economic Perceptions and Misinformation.**

We found these narratives in our field research as well, but present them here as background information and focus on the specific ways they operate and the meanings they hold in our local context as part of describing good practices for research below.

The idea of the “Arab” as a distinct ethnic group, potentially threatening to Turkish national identity is a dominant discourse throughout Turkey. Although Turkey is multi-ethnic and there have always been Arabs in Turkey, prominent nationalist discourses define the nation as mono-ethnic and based on Turkish racial lineage and cultural identity (İçduygu & Kaygusuz, 2004; Guney 2022; Kuzu 2019). There is also a prominent belief that holds that Arabs betrayed Turks when the Ottoman empire transitioned into the Turkish republic (Finkel 2007). This leads to commonplace claims that Arabs are untrustworthy. Arabs are also associated with a Middle Eastern, Islamic and backwards identity that is opposed to a Western, European or modern identity in some discourses, meaning that “being Arab” is negative and is accompanied by a strong assertion that Turks are not Arabs.

On the other hand, the state has engaged in a concerted effort to become a cultural and political leader in the Middle East by reviving an Ottoman-Islamic past that included rule over and inclusion of Arabs and some aspects of Arab culture (Ergin and Karakaya 2017). The Turkish state’s desire to attract Arab investment and tourism, which plays a crucial role in economic recovery, contrasts with the widespread societal rejection of Arab refugees. This contradiction highlights a tension between national economic interests and cultural fears rooted in historic and political narratives (Ergin and Karakaya 2017). Thus, Syrian refugees encounter entrenched narratives about Arabs that predate their arrival and shape how they are perceived in Turkish society.

Another dominant national narrative throughout Turkey is the masculinist idea that Turkey is a military nation and all men must fight for the nation (Altınay 2004). The whole society is highly militarised (like Israel, Lebanon, Palestine) with masculine ideals such as honor, patriotism, and bravery embedded into nationalist culture (Sivis 2022). Syrians who do not engage in combat, which is the dominant and not necessarily accurate view of refugees, are viewed as disloyal and unmanly. One interviewee described Syrian disloyalty as follows.

They don’t submit to their government. Take Turkey as an example. Many years ago and throughout the years, the situation wasn’t good for a lot of reasons, but none of us left the country and look what happened. Finally, President Erdoğan came and a lot of things changed for the better in Turkey. Now the economic situation is not good in Turkey, so should we be hanging Erdoğan because of that? Or should we start a civil war like what happened in Syria for that to change it? No way!

This strong emphasis on military service and loyalty to authority thus reinforces the exclusion of Syrian refugees, who are perceived as failing to embody these nationalistic and masculinist ideals.

A frequently heard narrative throughout Turkey is that Syrians are in a good economic position, in the context of a bad economy for locals and a lack of local government resources (Morgül and Savaşkan 2021). Many locals believe that Syrians receive disproportionate benefits, including direct financial aid, free healthcare, and preferential treatment in state university exams. However, these claims are often based on rumors or misinformation. Despite perceptions, research shows that most Syrians live in precarious

conditions and face significant barriers to economic integration (Morgül and Savaşkan 2021). Official statistics show that aid to Syrians is limited, and much of it is externally funded by the EU (Karasapan 2022). The economic anxieties expressed by locals, though based on misinformation, are symptomatic of deeper societal issues like unemployment and reduced public spending (Morgül and Savaşkan 2021).

Everyday extreme anxieties

These everyday extreme narratives circulating throughout Turkey reflect deep-seated anxieties about Syrian refugee migration management, but also broader societal tensions. The value of Syrians is diminished via narratives promoting long-standing notions of ethnic difference, refugees lacking a militaristic national identity, and economic unfairness and competition. Anti-Arab sentiment, fueled by historical narratives of betrayal and a desire for a modern, Western identity, has shaped the perception of Syrians as untrustworthy outsiders. The dominant national narrative of Turkey as a military nation casts Syrians, particularly men, as disloyal for not engaging in the conflicts from which they fled. Finally, economic concerns, often amplified by rumors and misinformation, contribute to the view that Syrians receive disproportionate benefits at the expense of locals.

These narratives perpetuate a climate of hostility. Understanding these automatic, unreflexive narratives is crucial for addressing the underlying fears and ontological needs that fuel discrimination and violence against Syrians. Yet, what is the good practice for doing so? What our multi-sited collaborative ethnographic research revealed (discussed below) is the **importance of attending to culture and place when interpreting how these narratives operate**. Thus we focused our work on three diverse research sites that capture complex cultural dynamics and socio-historical differences within Turkish society.

Three strategic research sites: Istanbul, Şanlıurfa, and Hatay

The arrival of Syrian refugees intensified pre-existing societal fractures, with both historical and contemporary factors contributing to the perception of Syrians as outsiders and competitors for limited resources. In regions like **Şanlıurfa** and **Hatay**, and in certain neighborhoods in **Istanbul**, the presence of Syrian refugees has further complicated local dynamics. Economic pressures, combined with ethno-religious tensions, have fueled narratives of exclusion and resentment, exacerbated by political polarisation and anti-immigrant rhetoric. While some groups have found cultural commonalities with the refugees, many see them as threats to their economic stability and cultural identity.

Our research focuses on the narratives that support everyday extremism and specifically, how they resonate in these three culturally and historically unique places. We found that it is vital to consider the characteristics of specific places, such as: 1) whether the place is at the center or periphery in the national story (i.e. Istanbul vs. Sanliurfa) 2) the ethno-national, religious and historical trajectory of local places (i.e. Sanliurfa vs. Hatay) and the potential effect of high numbers of migrants where they may exceed numbers of local minorities. These local, place-based understandings are vital for reducing the driving factors for everyday extremist narratives in Turkey.

The three sites we selected reflect the country's rich ethno-national diversity and allow for a more nuanced understanding of interactions between locals and refugee populations.

Istanbul is the largest metropolitan city in Turkey and hosts the highest number of Syrians (530,243) as of 2024. A mega-city of 16+ million people, it is the financial and cultural hub of Turkey. It is a prime destination for Arab tourists and investors, for international migrants from across the world, as well as Turkish citizens who migrate from rural areas of the country for employment opportunities. Syrians are just 3% of the population of Istanbul, but they are concentrated in particular neighborhoods, so their presence is visible to locals.

Sanliurfa, with a population of 2.2 million, borders Syria and hosts the third largest Syrian population, with 289,240 Syrians, constituting 12% of the total population of the province (DGMM 2023). Although official population statistics are hard to come by, the region is known to have a Kurdish majority population and a minority of Arab and Turkish locals. The Kurdish population in Turkey has historically struggled against marginalisation, discrimination, and efforts to suppress Kurdish cultural identity. These historical injustices have left deep wounds (Sen et al. 2023).

Hatay (pop. 1.5 million) is a border city with Syria, hosting the fourth largest population of Syrians with 273,389. The region is characterised by the ethno-religious diversity of its local population, consisting of bilingual (Turkish-Arabic) Alawis, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Alevi and Sunni Turks, as well as a small number of Armenians (Can, 2019). The province has faced economic restrictions as well as a number of assimilationist language, education, and population policies. In February 2023, Hatay was partially destroyed by one of the largest earthquakes in the region's history. Millions of people were left homeless and the confirmed death toll stands at 59,259: 50,783 in Turkey and 8,476 in Syria. Alawites are an oppressed minority that might seem to share connections with Syrians as both are Arab speakers and are mistreated by the Turkish state in certain ways (Yonucu 2024). Yet, although Alawis tend to see themselves as victims of the Turkish government, they feel proud of being Turkish in a republican sense - they're proud of the language, culture, education system, and even the modernist values of Atatürk. For some local Alawis, the Sunni background and gender and religious norms of Syrians are threatening.

2.4 Social and political context of Portugal

In April 2024, Portugal celebrated the 50th anniversary of the *Carnation Revolution*, which ended the 40-year-old right-wing dictatorship, the longest in Western Europe. It was a country facing serious development challenges, governed by a corporatist, authoritarian regime under the banner of *God, Fatherland and Family*, which constituted core organisational principles of social and political life. Portuguese society was culturally closed, with education levels far below those of its Western European neighbors and organised around patriarchal structures, with a strong presence and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. **Although the country underwent considerable change in the past decades, nostalgia of its imperial past and the longing for social order and traditional values often resurge as antidotes to feelings of anomie and social unrest.**

The 1974 democratic revolution inaugurated what Huntington famously termed the third wave of democratisation in the modern world (Huntington, 1991). The revolutionary program was epitomised by 3 D's: **democratisation, decolonisation and development** (Carvalho, 2009). Portuguese decolonisation was a haphazard process, which is explained by competing decolonisation strategies among different Portuguese elites, as well as the variegated social and political contexts in the different colonies (Moita, 1985). The process entailed the return of

massive numbers of Portuguese nationals to the metropolis, which prompted socioeconomic pressures and new waves of emigration (Costa Lobo et al., 2016). The decolonisation process remains an important issue to Portuguese nationals that lived in former colonies. The relationship between Portugal and its former colonies has a special place in the country's foreign policy. The creation of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), an international organisation that joins countries with Portuguese as its official language, aims to strengthen the bonds between them. Portugal has since developed strong bilateral ties with its former colonies, namely important emigration and immigration fluxes. Today, immigrants from CPLP countries constitute the lion's share of Portugal migrant communities. In recent years, migration of South Asian countries and Eastern European countries slightly changed the Portuguese migration mosaic, creating new integration challenges (AIMA, 2024).

Joining the then European Communities became a national ambition. The end of its imperial status turned Portugal towards the European continent (Manuel, 2010). **However, the turn of the century has not been especially auspicious for Portugal.** Entry into the euro area did not promote the economic convergence expected, and the faulty Economic and Monetary Union was at the heart of economic imbalances that led to the sovereign debt crisis in 2008-09. The troika-led adjustment process that took half of the 2010s was a socioeconomic painfully period. When the country was picking-up after adjustment, the Covid-19 crisis threatened once again economic recovery and social welfare. The post-pandemic period has been marked by housing and inflation crises, punctuated by a sharp increase in migration. **In the last 5 years, Portugal has witnessed an exponential growth in extremist discourses and politics, in line with the broader tendency in Europe.**

Driving factors for everyday extremism

In Portugal, everyday extremism is present in discourses about politics and governance, socioeconomic conditions, security and migration. These are illustrated by trends or events that often run in parallel and across each other, leading to several rearticulations. The meteoric rise of the far-right politics in Portugal has shattered the argument that Portugal remained somewhat immune to the rise of political extremism in Europe (Carreira da Silva & Salgado, 2018; Mendes & Dennison, 2021). Given the imminently contextual character of these events, this section presents a snapshot of the OppAttune ethnographic research as well as its most prominent findings in terms of the narrative drivers for everyday extremism.

Corruption: a key issue plagued by cases

What angers me [...] is to be working and paying so much in taxes, and then hearing about these news stories, when I get home and turn on the TV [...]. We work to contribute and half a dozen of politicians just go around stealing and doing corruption. [...] We are all working, contributing, and these events [corruption scandals] make all Portuguese folk sad. It is a shame. Timóteo, 2024

Corruption is a leading concern of the Portuguese people (GRECO, 2024). Over the years, a series of high-profile cases have widened the perception that corruption runs rampant throughout the country (Eurobarometer, 2023, 2024; Público, 2024b). In recent history, the country has been surprised by a litany of judicial investigations and trials for corruption involving high level decision-makers and individuals of economic elites. In 2014, José Sócrates, a former PM from the Socialist Party was arrested and spent a year in detention, in a

corruption case which has still to see its day in court (Jornal de Negócios, 2024). Since then, judicial cases targeting high profile politicians at the national level have included a former PSD Minister of the Interior, who quit after being charged in a corruption process concerning the country's golden visa program, and who ended up being acquitted of all charges (Observador, 2019). Concerning local government, corruption investigations, rumors and charges also abound. These include the case against the former Minister of Finance of the PS government, Fernando Mediana, who is also the mayor of Lisbon (Diario de Notícias, 2023).

In October 2023, a series of police searches conducted in the framework of an investigation against corruption targeting high governmental officials, including the Minister of Energy, found a sum of 75.000€ in cash hidden at the office of the premier's chief-of-staff, the socialist António Costa (Observador, 2023). The event created a political crisis that led to the prime minister's resignation and the call for legislative elections. They were held on March 10th 2024 and on March 26th, one month and one day short of the country's 50th anniversary of democracy, the far-right populist party Chega (CH) was filling 50 seats, out of 230 seats available in the Portuguese parliament. Five years after its inception, CH become the third largest group in the Portuguese parliament, more than quadrupling the number of seats it had won in the previous contest just two years earlier. The trope that Portugal constituted an "oasis" amid a European desert ridden with rising extremist, populist or anti-democratic parties collapsed. Corruption was a key issue in CH's campaign, and it certainly finds adherence in national discourse.

Ethnographic data retrieved in Portugal in the context of OppAttune project confirms that corruption, whether real or perceived, ranks high in Portuguese public opinion, which can be explained by years of high-profile judicial cases, being one of the main drivers behind the growth of far-right politics in the country. In fact, the Chega party has mobilised these perceptions of corruption in its electoral campaigns, being one of its key slogans "clean Portugal" (a sentence that serves many purposes from corruption and institution to migration control). In our ethnographic interviews, corruption was a major concern related to the state of the democratic regime and the country's future. Although high profile cases were mentioned by those we spoke to, including Operation *Zarco* (an anti-corruption operation in the isle of Madeira), Operation *Influencer* (the process that led to flash-elections) or Operation *Marquês* (a judicial process that involves the country's former PM), a salient feature identified by our interviewees, especially those living in the countryside from small or medium size locations, was the importance given to *cunha*, i.e. having access to someone in a position of power that can facilitate access to a public service or a favorable decision by the public administration, especially concerning access to the civil service career. **Therefore, although corruption is a driver found throughout the country, ethnographic research reveals how context shifts perceptions about it and its social value.**

Corruption breeds disillusionment with the broadly democratic system in ways that promote everyday extremism. Ethnographic research allows for the capture of fleeting moments when those being interviewed reveal elements of their emotional and affective states, and how these impact or co-constitute drivers of extremism. For example, when discussing the March 2024 legislative elections, Clara, a college educated librarian working for a municipal library, declared at the time that she had not made up her mind about for whom to vote. When asked if she shared some of the ideas or projects by CH she stated:

Clara: Look, it's like... Sometimes I find myself thinking, even if for a brief second, that he [André Ventura, leader of Chega] is right about some things. Just for a

fraction of a second. Just as quickly I declare that I am against [him] and that I do not share the same ideas, sometimes, I find myself thinking just like him...

Interviewer: Which are the moments... Not the moments but the issues, let's call them that, in which you identify with some of his policy proposals?

Clara: I would rather not say [laughs].

Interviewer: That's ok... You have mentioned that this identification lasts some seconds...

Clara: Yes... Sometimes, when I am faced with grave injustices. Maybe being an extremist could solve a series of deviant behaviors... Maybe not... However, sometimes, as you don't see an end or solution to things, maybe extremism would be the ideal solution. Maybe not...

Interviewer: And yet, after those brief moments...

Carla: Afterwards the rational part [of me] returns, and [I realise] things cannot go in that direction [laughs].

In conclusion, the way our respondents made sense of the phenomenon of corruption reveals that this is a key driver for everyday extremism insofar as these narratives are associated with attributing external blame/scapegoating, mis-/dis-information, hostile oppositional thinking and feelings and the sense of mis-/dis-trust in institutions. Feelings of helplessness, disillusionment, injustice, anxiety and fear about the future, including living conditions, access to jobs and opportunities and the overall governance, at the national and local levels, mobilises a discourse of us/them from which extremism brews. The traditional populist dichotomy between politicians/the people, elites/common folk, is articulated in ways that reveal the absence for political participation and representation. In the absence of solutions, the figure of the providential ruler (Carla, 2024) or the dream of non-conflictual politics sustained by a state-supported and institutionally imposed “common sense” (Santiago, 2024) take root.

Material drivers and socioeconomic conditions

[Politicians] should be subject to a six-months crash course of living in the countryside, in remote locations, so that they can appreciate how hard it is. They do not know, they live in a different world, they have no idea what is the real world. Alice, 2024

Since the turn of the millennium, the Portuguese economy has struggled economically. Even though Portugal has been converging with its EU partners and presenting positive employment and economic growth levels, challenges persist. Although the minimum wage has grown in recent years, average wages continue alongside witnessing a downward pressure towards the minimum wage (Ferreira et al., 2022), while purchasing power is eroded by inflation. Labor markets are also increasingly more flexible and precarious. Upward pressure on housing and rent prices, alongside the rise of interest rates by the ECB, has put further pressure on household budgets. Another effect of crisis years in the Portuguese economy was the weakening of provision of public services across the board, but especially salient in health services, which have not been properly built-up to pre-crisis levels (Weise, 2020).

While material conditions are widely assumed to have a direct impact in extremism (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Piazza, 2006, p. 159), existing literature has yet to find a direct, causal relationship between these two variables (Allan et al., 2015; Berger, 2018; Franc & Pavlović, 2023; Piazza, 2006). **Ethnographic research is therefore a valuable tool for making sense**

of how grievances support oppositional thinking around socioeconomic realities, beyond rational-choice and methodological individualism and which are the narrative pathways that contribute to the individual and societal perceptions and representations of these events. Ethnographic research in Portugal shows that although neither strict conceptions of wealth i.e. how much it was produced, nor purely material self-interested distributional issues, i.e. how much each group or individual gets of the available pie, these constitute essential elements in oppositional thinking, contributing to map the variety of material drivers of everyday extremism in this context. Populist rhetoric was often used to articulate material grievances with extremist discourse, especially by those concerned with access to public services. For Alice, a senior retiree living in the countryside, politicians in Lisbon have disregarded the country's interior and devoted it to abandonment and oblivion. She added that private interests were capturing state resources with the permissiveness of political elites, to whom they really answer to. Corruption and disillusionment with democratic representation was articulated with material deprivation.

Another articulation between material conditions and oppositional thinking is produced around migration, showing how these elements cannot be taken in isolation to each other insofar as these narratives intersect to create a broader understanding of the individual's context. More prevalent for people interviewed in the great cities (Braga, Lisbon, Oporto), but also shared by individuals who adhere to the far-right narrative, we recorded instances of “welfare chauvinism”, i.e. the argument that state welfare resources should be first and foremost reserved to nationals (Bell et al., 2023, pp. 301–302). This view is well illustrated by Santiago (2024) who argued that:

It is [morally] right to help others. I see nothing wrong with it. However, we must know our own limits. I cannot be providing housing, a subsidy to an immigrant while those who are [from] here become unemployed, or have a handicapped child, or are themselves handicapped, or [who have] had a work-related injury and are not receiving proper support. That is why I have my own reservations. It is not that I don't want to help the others...

Lack of economic and social prospects was another issue raised in our ethnographic accounts. Here too the role of ethnography provided the ground for making important distinctions across regions, age, education and place of origin. Santiago, a young adult living in the countryside and working in a medium-low paying job, is currently living in a one-bedroom apartment. He blames the recent increase in housing on immigration and the fact that migrants accept living in overcrowded dwellings. Bernardo, himself of Brazilian origin and a migrant, living in a large city with a considerable migrant community, shares the opinion advanced by Santiago, and supports stricter migration laws. The housing crisis has also put a target on refugees, alongside migrants, to whom the Portuguese authorities seem to benefit against Portuguese nationals. These views are widely shared, especially by young people, in both small and large population centers.

On the other hand, many older interviewees from the countryside had a very favorable opinion concerning migrants. Catarina, a senior citizen, finds them respectful and a positive influence in the “dying” and demographically depressed territory where she lives, as well as a much-needed workforce in times of near full employment. Clara, identified above, welcomes the diversity brought by her Ukrainian refugees-turned-in-migrants neighbors, as well as the “new life” brought by the Brazilian users of the public library where she works. **It is our contention that ethnographic research has allowed not only to map the way differences in drivers of**

everyday extremism, but also to provide the much-needed context and reasoning for how material conditions take their place as drivers.

Migration: from public safety to ontological insecurity

[Living conditions] Have gotten worse. They do not sift... Hey, you have to sift. I am a migrant myself. But say this because I have lived throughout the better times... and now... It is difficult, man...] Bernardo, 2024

[Migrants] Have never disrespected me. They pass by and they greet us, in their own ways, "Hello, lady", and if we carry any bags, they help us out. There is a textile factory nearby where a lot of Indians work: they see an old lady carrying a bag and they run to help her out. They are very helpful, I have nothing to say against them. Catarina, 2024

“Portugal is a country of emigrants”, is a widely shared and ingrained trope in Portuguese contemporary discourse (Lusa & Público, 2022). Portugal is today the European country with a larger share of emigrants as a percentage of its population than any other country (Expresso, 2024), although in recent decades globalisation and its effects have balanced the scale between incomers and outgoers (INE, 2024). Throughout the last decade, immigration increased substantially, with traditional countries of origin, like Brazil and African Portuguese-speaking being today complemented by migrants from South Asia countries, e.g. India, Bangladesh or Nepal (AIMA, 2024). The number of migrants has risen considerably in the last five years, with the country now converging to EU averages (Eurostat, 2022). At the same time, young, increasingly more educated adults are leaving to establish themselves in other EU countries (Pordata, 2024). **Portuguese society is getting increasingly multicultural, and the way migration is conceptualised differs according to context and profile, which makes it a good fit for ethnographic work. How migration is perceived as a threat depends on individuals’ or group contexts.** Young, low-income individuals and groups see migrants as economic threats, to both their incomes and housing opportunities, in both urban and rural areas. On the other hand, older strata of the population, especially those retired and living in rural and demographically depressed areas, tend to see them as sources of economic and social vitalisation. In urban centers, both older and newer generations, especially of lower-education status, tend to see migrants as sources of ontological insecurity.

Feelings of insecurity associated with migration are rising, especially against marginalised populations and migrants who are often *perceived* as involved in criminality, even though Portugal is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world (IEP, 2024). Even so, deteriorating working conditions, including but not limited to pay conditions, have put considerable pressure on decision-makers. The Portuguese far-right has been at the forefront of defending “cops rights” against criminals, with some journalistic works demonstrating worrying signs of prevalence of hate speech on online police force *fora* (SIC & Consórcio de Jornalistas de Investigação, 2022). In the end, feelings of insecurity in 2023 have slightly increased against 2017 levels, which at the time represented an important drop in relation to 2012 levels (APAV-Intercampus, 2023). In our ethnographic research, we were able to capture the imbalance between perception and hard, real numbers when it comes to criminality.

In line with arguments advanced in the previous section, migration becomes a security concern when articulated with material conditions. The notion that “they are not like us, and it is getting dangerous” creates a fallacious migrant-security nexus which reinforces narratives and practices of everyday extremism. Bernardo, living in Braga, blames unchecked migration for rising housing costs, demand push-inflation, and rising public insecurity. He claims that the “[Portuguese authorities] have opened the faucet for too long.”, and that “hordes” of criminals might be entering the country, especially from Brazil (a view shared by Benjamin, himself married to a Brazilian migrant, and Santiago and Salvador). These individuals shared the opinion that some migrants, especially those of Arab and Southeast Asia origins, constituted a threat not only to public safety, but also to the Portuguese way of life. Islamophobia is used to conceptualise migration as a threat to the Portuguese culture and mores, connected with crime and risks of terrorism. Finally, respondents feared migration due to its deleterious effect on Portuguese identity, creating a feeling of ontological insecurity. These fears are compounded by the idea that state institutions, most specifically police forces, are losing their authority and have become unable to fight crime, because they lack support from political authorities. This is at odds with studies about trust in public institutions, and which rank police forces at the top of most trusted institutions (OECD, 2024).

2.5 Social and political context of Serbia

The Republic of Serbia is located at geostrategic and geopolitical crossroads in the so-called Western Balkans region, which significantly contributed to its turbulent history characterised by radical political and societal changes. **The potential for everyday extremism in Serbia is greatly shaped by past events that generated internal divisions**, the most recent being the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. Following the ousting of Slobodan Milošević, Serbia started comprehensive democratic reforms. The country has been granted the status of EU candidate in 2012. **In line with the efforts to comply with the EU standards, visible improvements in national legal and policy framework have been made through different reforms. However, many setbacks, particularly those in the field of human rights and freedoms, remain to be obstacles to democratic progress and thus a risk factor for everyday extremism.**

Introduction to the context

Actual trends and forms of everyday extremism in the Republic of Serbia have their historic roots in growing nationalism, ethnic and religious animosities and secessionism which undermined the sovereignty of Socialist Yugoslavia over multiple decades. Piled up problems between the former Yugoslav republic, Slovenian and Croatian desire for independence, as well as the tensions among ethnic groups in certain republics escalated during the 1990s with the dissolution of Yugoslavia and wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the end of armed conflicts and the signing of Dayton Agreement, another flashpoint emerged in Kosovo and Metohija² (the southern province of the Republic of Serbia) where conflict rose between the Serbian majority and secessionist Albanian minority that constituted the majority in this part of the state.

Even during the 1980s, Kosovo Albanians demanded that Kosovo be given the status of a republic, and Albanians (then treated as a minority) be given the status of a constitutional

² The full name of this part of the territory is Kosovo and Metohija, in the continuation of the text we will use only Kosovo

ethnicity within the Yugoslav Federation (Meier, 1999, pp. 8-9, 28). On that occasion, mass demonstrations were organised in Kosovo in 1981, that forced Yugoslav authorities to declare a state of emergency and send the military to maintain the constitutional order. Subsequently, rioting erupted and the demonstrations were put down with violence, during which a few dozen Albanians died. This event led to a greater divide between Serbs and Albanians, and the period that followed was marked by repression over the Albanian minority and revoking a broad autonomy that Kosovo had until then (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, p. 10). Meanwhile “as many Serbs started leaving the province amidst growing anti-Serbian prejudice, as well as for economic reasons, the question of Kosovo also became increasingly politicised in Serbia” (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, p. 10).

Following the outbreak of conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, came the radicalisation of the situation and growth of the secessionist movement which advocated for the independence of Kosovo (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, p. 10). Among the secessionists there was also an irredentist stream that advocated for the unification of Kosovo with Albania. In the meantime, ethnically motivated violence, both by the Serbs toward the Albanians and by the Albanians toward the Serbs, was growing increasingly. By the middle of the 1990s, a terrorist organisation named “Kosovo Liberation Army” (KLA) began to act through coordinated attacks on Serbian police and their compounds (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, p. 10). Following the escalation of the conflict and NATO bombardment of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, Kumanovo Agreement³ was sign stipulating the withdrawal of Serbian security forces and United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established through the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1244.⁴

After the end of the conflict with NATO, came the so-called “5th October Revolution” in Serbia that led to democratic changes and the fall of Slobodan Milošević’s regime. According to the accusations for crimes against humanity during the war in Kosovo (issued by the International Criminal Court for Former Yugoslavia in 1999), Milošević was arrested and extradited to the Tribunal in 2001.⁵ The same fate befell to the Serb war leaders in Bosnia (Radovan Karadžić i Ratko Mladić) as well as other prominent Serb leaders from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia which had participated in the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Events from the 1990s are key to understanding the most prominent examples of radicalisation which the Republic of Serbia faces today, and which we will deal with in this report according to the WP3.1 Country Reports Guidelines.

Above all, the most prominent cases of **ethno-nationalist and separatist radicalisation** are related to the spillover of conflict from the territory of Kosovo to southern municipalities of Central Serbia, predominantly populated by Albanians (Medveđa, Preševo and Bujanovac). Following the end of conflict in Kosovo, Albanian irredentist guerillas the “Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa“ (LAPBM) was formed in these municipalities (FHP Izveštaj, 2003, str. 39). During a period of almost two years, this organisation conducted a series of terrorist attacks on Serbian security forces and civilians. Although this part of Serbia

³ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9, 1999.

⁴ United Nation Security Council Resolution 1244, June 10, 1999. Available at: <https://unmik.unmissions.org/united-nations-resolution-1244> (Accessed: 26. February 2021).

⁵ The Indictment of Milosevic et al., Case IT-99-37-I, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, May 24, 1999. Available at: https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/ind/en/mil-ii990524e.htm (Accessed: 26. February 2021).

is without violent incidents for a prolonged period of time, political tensions between Serbian authorities and local Albanian political structures did not vanish, and secessionist and irredentist ideologies are still present and occasionally stirred by Albanian political structures from Kosovo and Albania (ICG, pp. 2004, p. 11-17).

When it comes to the activities of radical Islamist, their arrival to the territory of the Republic of Serbia is also closely related to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this conflict, foreign fighters (mujahedeen) from the Middle East countries and Afghanistan not only fought on the side of Bosniak Muslims, but had also conducted a pro-zealot activity by converting local Muslims (who until then practiced “softer” Hanafi Islam) into the supporters of “harder” Salafi Islam (Bećirević, Halilović and Azinović, 2017, pp. 9-12). In such a way, firstly in Bosnia and then among the Bosniak minority in Serbia, Wahhabi communities were created which were not included into the religious institutional system of local Islamic communities. Although among Salafis (both in the Western Balkans and in the world) there are those who lead a peaceful life in accordance with the fundamentalist interpretation of their religion (Petrović, Stakić, 2018, pp. 12-13), Salafism is without a doubt an ideology that encouraged those more radical among them to terrorist attacks (Esposito, 2002, pp.105-111) and which inspired Muslims around the world (including Serbia) to join jihad in Syria and Iraq in recent years (Bećirević, Halilović and Azinović, 2017, p. 3).

The legacy of the wars of the 1990s is still one of the main inspirations for the members of the local **radical Right** but also the Left. Right-wing organisations which have been active in Serbia during the past two decades almost as a rule base their programs as revanchist national platforms that advocate the return of Serbian territories lost in these wars (primarily Kosovo and the territories of the former Srpska Krajina⁶ in Croatia), as well as the unification of all “Serbian lands” (that include Serbia, Republika Srpska,⁷ Montenegro and Macedonia). Likewise, these organisations actively participated in protests against the arrest of Karadžić and Mladić, and do not recognise the verdicts issued by Hague tribunal to the accused Serbs, that they glorify as national heroes (Srđić, 2020, p. 21-44).

Serbian radical Left, which will not be elaborated in great detail in this report due to their small numbers and lack of activity, also show great interest in recent history, and frequently attribute the dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia to a capitalist conspiracy. The Left is prone to propagate the socialist idea of Neo-Yugoslavism, thus fiercely clashing with the Right-wing that propagate the aforementioned Pan-Serbian nationalist project (Ristić, 2013, p. 59).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the two events that had unfolded on the micro-plan, and that significantly contributed to the radicalisation of certain structures in Serbia, primarily those in the ranks of the Far-Right. Those of course are the Migrant Crisis and the COVID-19 Pandemic that have contributed to the rise of xenophobia and nativism among the Serbian Right-wing, but have also strengthened the influence of certain Right groups that combine their national revivalist projects with conspiracy theories. We will mark them as “new school” Far-Right that, besides the nationalist agenda, increasingly includes questions of global interest and that dominantly bases its *modus operandi* on the displacement of their activities on social media and networks.

⁶ Original name of this unrecognised state is: “*Republika Srpska Krajina*” meaning the *Republic of Serbian Krajina [Frontier]*.

⁷ *Republika Srpska* is one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Translated into English the name of this entity is *Serbian Republic*.

Driving factors for everyday extremism: The 'Us vs. Them' dynamic in Serbian society

Kinnvall's (2004) concept of “ontological security further enriches this analysis, as it explains how personal and collective identities shape people's responses to perceived threats. Ontological security theory suggests that threats to 'self' are often projected onto 'others,' creating a cognitive need for secure identities through social boundaries. This dynamic has manifested in Serbian society through heightened xenophobia in border communities, exacerbated by populist narratives framing migrants as destabilisers. In light of recent studies and insights, a deeper examination of public sentiments and socio-economic drivers reveals that narratives around extremism are often shaped by a sense of systemic disenfranchisement and mistrust. For example, the tendency to isolate or ignore migrants is frequently grounded in larger national grievances about economic scarcity, discrimination, and lack of equitable legal structures. Research by Vucicevic and Jovic (2020) highlights how these themes are compounded by rising nationalism in southern Serbia, where religious and ethnic affiliations become barriers to social integration.

Research has shown that everyday extremism in Serbia is also fueled by narratives of injustice (Tatalovic, 2021; Vucicevic & Jovic, 2020). These narratives contribute to a form of passive extremism, where intolerance and hostility toward outgroups become normalised in everyday interactions. This phenomenon is particularly evident in ethnically diverse communities, where intergroup tensions are perpetuated through social exclusion and discriminatory practices. **The media's portrayal of young male migrants as security threats further exacerbates these sentiments, shifting public perception away from empathy and framing migrants as sources of instability.** Such portrayals align with Kruglanski's findings on the psychology of extremism, where environments perceived as unjust or unstable foster authoritarian attitudes and closed-mindedness.

Findings from the OppAttune project in Serbia have underscored how **everyday extremism is deeply intertwined with systemic issues such as economic insecurity, political disenfranchisement, and social fragmentation.** For example, economic precarity amplifies frustrations within local communities, creating fertile ground for scapegoating vulnerable groups, such as migrants or ethnic minorities (Jakovljević, 2021). Furthermore, OppAttune identified the role of **community influencers—such as local politicians and religious leaders—in either perpetuating or countering divisive narratives,** highlighting the need for targeted interventions at the grassroots level. This resonates with Kinnvall's (2004) concept of ontological security, where individuals facing uncertainty gravitate toward exclusionary identities and ideologies to reassert a sense of control. In Serbia, addressing everyday extremism requires a multi-layered approach, combining economic reforms, inclusive education, and community engagement to disrupt cycles of intolerance embedded in daily life.

The Yugoslav wars in the 1990s created a breeding ground for many extremist movements, in less developed parts of the country. One of the least developed regions is Sandžak, a multiethnic and multireligious region in South-West Serbia (Petrović and Stakić, 2018). Muslims are the dominant religious group in the region. The youth in Sandžak are characterised by “more traditional patterns of thought, long-established value systems and customs, and a more patriarchal, homophobic, and violent behavior” in comparison to the youth from the capital Belgrade and other parts of the country (Ludescher, 2021). The social, economic, and political situation in the region is favouring the negative trend of rising

extremism. According to available data, Serbian citizens who went to Syria and joined ISIS were mostly from the Sandžak region (CT, 2014; Petrović, 2018). Furthermore, the highest unemployment rate throughout the country is in Sandžak, especially among youth (CeSID, 2016; Petrović and Stakić, 2018). Besides youth unemployment, other important radicalisation drivers are political apathy among young people, feelings of discrimination and social isolation, low trust in state institutions, and high religious identification, further exacerbated by the ongoing refugee crisis (CeSID, 2016; Petrović and Stakić, 2018; Ludescher, 2021). A specific driver in this area is the divide in the Islamic community (Kostić, Simonović and Hoeflinger, 2019). Moreover, “there are often tensions between the different ethnic groups, especially during times of political turmoil and election cycles” (Ludescher, 2021). In Serbia and similar regions, this often involves Serbian, Bosniak, and Albanian communities, each with distinct cultural and historical backgrounds. These tensions are heightened during political turmoil or election cycles, as political parties might leverage ethnic differences to gain support or inflame group loyalty (Ludescher, 2021).

As the social, economic, and political context concerning the Sandžak region has been described in the previous case study, there is no need to further dwell on that aspect. Regarding identity politics, the Sandžak question was prioritised during Yugoslav disintegration in the 1990s (HO, 2020). **The Sandžak region remains to be treated as a high-security risk area, especially due to Wahhabis and people who joined ISIS during the Syrian conflict.** The negative portrayal of Bosniaks in the media is an important radicalisation factor, as well as the different treatment of pro-Ukrainian fighters and anti-Syrian fighters from Sandžak by Serbian courts (HO, 2020).

2.6 Social and political context of Bosnia

The wounds of war from the 90s are still visible in Bosnia and Herzegovina even almost three decades after it ended, physical wounds in terms of destroyed different types of infrastructure, but also regarding the social distance among people of different ethnicities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Everyday extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is visible in different aspects of social life and as research (Pečković 2018) shows is fueled by five main factors: Ethno-Nationalistic political discourse, exploration of war trauma to influence ethnic relations, sense of injustice in Bosnia-Herzegovinian society, corruption, and apathy among young people.**

Everyday extremism

The war that happened in the first half of the 90s and the Dayton Peace Agreement that stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has left almost clean ethnically homogenised territories that are based on military war lines during the war. Leading ethno-nationalistic politicians are using this to create the sense of fear among people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The common point for all extremist groups, we often hear about in the media, is believing that values such as multiculturalism, democracy, tolerance and inclusive society need to be changed, albeit by force, without choosing the means. Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception where extremist groups and terrorist attacks are concerned. Let us just remember the attack by Mevlid Jašarević on the American Embassy in 2011, and the Nerđin Ibrić attack on the police station in Zvornik. Then, as far as the extremist organisations are concerned, there have been gatherings of the Chetnik (Serb nationalistic organisation) movement in Višegrad, the organisation Serbian

Honor, headquartered in Niš (Republic of Serbia), and a branch organisation in Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Keep in mind that these are not the only ones. **Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon; however, certain globalisation processes, technological progress, political discourse and new communication possibilities, have provided extremist groups with new tools and ways of acting, which made them much more dangerous on the global level.** Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country which came out of a war more than 20 years ago. However, there are still strong ethnic tensions reflected in its educational system and political discourse, which support ethnic segregation within society. As such, it represents a fertile ground for radical movements to recruit young people. According to Azinović and Jusić (2015), around 330 recruits from Bosnia and Herzegovina have joined radical Islamic groups in Iraq and Syria. Unfortunately, there is no actual database with exact numbers to confirm or deny this. There are several reasons for this, one of which is the decentralised police force structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Ethno-nationalistic political discourse, segregated education, a high level of ethnic distance among the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and several other factors have contributed to the ongoing ethnic tensions and various forms of radical political views and actions in the country, even almost three decades after the official end of the war.**

According to Azinović (2018), the youth population is particularly vulnerable to being involved in extremist and radical activities (p.8). Pečković (2018) states that 4.5% of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina justify radicalism and terrorism under certain circumstances, such as state occupation, targeted mistreatment of specific groups (religious, ethnic, national), or when state institutions fail to serve the greater good of the people (p.30- 31). The citizens' anger towards the political establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina was evident during the mass demonstrations that took place in several cities in 2014, where parts of the Bosnian presidency building and other institutions were burned down. Institutional corruption and economic decline were the motives for citizens to seek justice on the streets. While the protests initially began peacefully, some citizens eventually resorted to stone throwing and burning of state institutions (Džidić, 2014).

To counter these phenomena, both foreign and domestic non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mostly funded by foreign donors since 1996, have endeavored to **establish programs that focus on young people and provide alternative narratives to radicalism and extremism.** NGOs, particularly youth organisations, in Bosnia and Herzegovina address a wide range of topics including peace building, social justice, human rights, and social inclusion of young people. Despite their diverse areas of focus, their common goal is to improve the status of young people in Bosnian society. Importantly, **these organisations operate independently of the state apparatus and strive to identify and respond to the needs of young people in the communities they serve.** As previously mentioned, most of these organisations secure funding through project proposals, which are either approved or rejected. The duration of these projects can vary from a few months to several years. Given their reliance on foreign donors, it is challenging for local authorities to exert control over their work. This provides youth NGOs with the opportunity to respond to the needs of young people without being influenced by ideological or other types of influence from local authorities.

Types of radicalism

Islamic radicalism

The reasons that people of the Islamic religion join Salafists groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina (some have joined groups such as ISIS or committed terrorist acts in Bosnia and Herzegovina), can be explained through a religious and ideological prism: **people felt that they were fulfilling their Islamic duty of helping their “brothers” in their fight against the oppressors**. One of the messages of Muhammad — in Islam believed to be the messenger of God — is that “all Muslims are brothers” and has been compared to a wall “in which each stone supports the other” (Azinović & Jusić, 2015). The volunteers who go to Syria are headed there to fulfill their Islamic duty and help their “brothers”, oppressed by “unbelievers.” However, this is not their only goal. Another one of their goals is to overthrow the constitutional and legal order within the countries in which they operate, such as Syria and Iraq. This is to be done by introducing Shari‘a, without which, according to them, an Islamic state cannot function. Therefore, they invite all Muslims who live in “infidel countries” to immigrate to the Islamic State.

An additional reason for people to join Islamist groups is material concerns and in particular, youth unemployment. As already mentioned before, Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the leading countries in terms of youth unemployment, which means that young people have a lot of free time and are not able to provide for themselves and make sure they lead a safe and comfortable life on their own. On the other hand, in Syria and Iraq, if they get married, they are gifted with houses — something people of their economic status can, hardly ever, achieve in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Interviewed ISIL fighters who returned from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, talking about their motivation and reasons for going there, stated that they believed that the world in which they live in, is not theirs, and that they want something better, but when they came to Syria the situation was not as it was promised. Ibro Delić, a Bosnian citizen who went to Syria and fought there for 53 days, explained his reasons for returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina where he was arrested and prosecuted: “I was in Syria for 53 days. I noticed, inside the opposition, some disagreements and even murders. Before there was a Sharia state, I realised what the situation was, and that it would not end well” (Detector, 2020).

Right-wing radicalism

Although the media, academic and political communities are dominated by a global fear and discourse on Islamic radicalism and terrorism, **there are other radical movements which are no less radical than Islamic ones, when it comes to their core attitudes and values. There are various radical nationalist movements, white supremacy movements, Nazi movements, anti-immigrant movements, etc. — whose aim is ethnic or national homogenisation.** The biggest refugee crisis in the European Union, since WW2, has shed light on the fact that people within the European Union have different views about who belongs. Moreover, it has shown that some countries violated the main principles of the European Union, in particular those concerning human rights and freedom of movement. Right-wing populist political parties, such as the National Front from France, the Independent party from the United Kingdom and the Danish People’s Party, base their policies on the migrant crisis, whereas the migrant crisis itself contributed to the strengthening of radical movements in Europe.

The economic crisis, which occurred in 2007-2008, is considered to be the catalyst for the right-wing radicalism strengthening in the world, along with the feeling of losing national identity, and the latest refugee crisis in Europe. Furthermore, it can be argued that multicultural values have been imposed, that democracy does not work, yet that global neoliberalism played a large role in strengthening of right-wing radicalism, causing individuals to gain wealth, while the general population is impoverished. Consequently, right-wing populist political parties grow stronger and base their politics on discourse focusing on “preservation of purity of a nation” and anti-immigrant policies, trying to bring together people from the lowest layers of society, along with those belonging to the working class, in order to achieve their goals. The solutions the right-wing populist parties offer for current problems of the population, include conservative values, traditionalism and nationalism — automatically creating animosity towards immigrants, the LGBT population and other marginalised groups, along with the values the European Union stands for, such as multiculturalism, democratic values and others.

One of the most prominent examples of right-wing extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Chetnic movement from Višegrad and their annual meeting in the same town (Višegrad, a town in eastern Bosnia on the border to Serbia). After the WWII. Chetnic ideology was strictly forbidden by the ruling Communist Party and all Chetnics were considered traitors because of their collaboration with Nazis and Italian Fascists. As the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina broke out in 1992 many Serb ethno-nationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia endorsed the ideology and iconography and Chetnic movement as it was no longer forbidden. In Serbia, Draža Mihajlović was rehabilitated and put in same rank as Tito, the leader of Partizan movement in Yugoslavia, which clearly indicates the ethno-nationalistic direction of the Serb political elite with president Vučić as its leader. The annual event that Chetnic NGOs organise in Višegrad each year is commemorating the arrest and execution of Draža Mihajlović, the Chetnic leader during the WWII. Višegrad is a town in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina where Serb army following the Chetnic ideology committed several war crimes. One of the most famous atrocities committed in Višegrad was “live fire” when in July of 1992, 70 Bosniaks (Muslims) were closed in one house and burned alive. Two officers of the Serbian army, Milan Lukić i Sredoje Lukić, were prosecuted and convicted to 27 years in jail.

3. Good practices for resilient democracies

OppAttune WP5's research is focused on mapping and understanding the emergence of everyday extremist narratives in local ecologies, aiming to develop evidence-based innovations that amplify local voices into policy strategies and inform the Attunement Model (WP6) and OppAttune Event-Implementation (WP7).

These innovative tools are presented here as good practices to track, attune and limit the rise of everyday extremist narratives, practices and behaviors, with their success being defined in terms of their ability to enhance social and political dialogue, which promotes attunement in different levels. In times of increasing polarisation and hostile management of difference, the

Ethnographic research provided the in-depth understanding of each specific context and allowed for the tailor-made development of other derivative participatory action research innovations and good practices across these contexts, including collaborative ethnography, autoethnography, ethnographic gamification, narrative group work, psychoeducational workshops and capacity building training for non-violent communication and conflict resolution.

construction of thriving and sustainable societies entails equipping citizens to deal with oppositional thinking and practices in a way that does not end up being violent. Grounded in participatory action research methods, these innovations are also defined as good practices as long as they are feasible, sustainable and adaptable, allowing for their reproduction in way of lessons learned in other locations

providing that the inductive and contextual aspect of their design is accounted for. **The participatory and co-constructed character of these good practices is what renders them the ability to be impactful and transformative, contributing to dismantling of the narratives that drive the emergence and rise of everyday extremism.**

3.1 Ethnography

Ethnography is an in-depth research method **centered on observing and participating in the daily lives of people, often over an extended period of time, to understand their practices, narratives, and interactions.** Conventional research methods that are part of ethnography include observation, participant observation, interviews, and analysis of documentary, archival, mediated or scholarly materials. Traditionally, ethnographers try to live like the people with whom they conduct research and record detailed fieldnotes about activities and conversations. They want to know what people say and do and how what they say they do differs from what they actually do. Most ethnographers today realise that this process has its challenges, and they use reflexivity to address concerns about the power dynamics of field relationships, their position vis a vis locals and the politics of representing groups outside of their contexts. This reflexive concern with position and power is not seen as a weakness of the method, but rather as the essential ingredient that adds nuance and depth to ethnographic accounts.

Research focusing on macro-levels or on particular extremist political events, such as elections favoring far-right candidates can miss “the everyday spaces of sociopolitical reproduction” and thereby “the generative role of space in producing political positions and feelings and the quotidian conditions, consequences and processes underpinning the politics of hate” (Santamarina 2021). Further, neglecting the everyday spaces of interaction risks failing to

understand when and why violence erupts. “Far- right violence does not erupt suddenly. It is activated within spaces that we inhabit as we go about our daily lives...the expansive and spatialised impact of the far-right must be recognised” (Dossa 2021). If we focus only on events or political leaders, we may miss the factors that make those very events - even violent events – conceivable and “normal.”

In the sections that follow, we show that by combining immersive ethnography with participatory action methodologies, researchers and practitioners can explore narrative emergence, worldviews, and historical, local and national conditions that drive certain extremist or anti-democratic thinking.

Germany

In Germany, good practices in social dialogue were explored and further supported in the context of schools using a Narrative Group Work approach that will be further explained in section 3.5 of this report. This is a highly flexible and adaptable methodology carried out by independent (non-school staff) practitioners from civil society who invite students to engage in open conversations in a safe space during school hours. Practitioners reassure students that these group conversations run parallel to social, language and creative subjects – and while quite different in nature from classroom instruction, are equally important. The field research conducted in East Germany in the state of Saxony Anhalt involved a series of narrative dialogue groups of one hour per week, for at least one school term. The groups consist of existing classes of 15- to 16-year-old students, from which up to four smaller sub-groups are formed, each with its own room, facilitated by five NGO practitioners. Preferably, these practitioners are of mixed gender and socio-culturally diverse backgrounds, so that sub-groups can form spontaneously, reflecting gender or other social criteria, or even group dynamics. The recognition and conscious exploitation of the positionality of facilitators is an intentional method aiming to contribute the emergence of diverse narratives and difference. A time-out room with another facilitator is available so that participants can temporarily withdraw if necessary or to protect the group conversation.

Narrative Group Work as an ethnographic participatory action research approach

Narrative Group Work served as both the means for data collection and also as a means for a better understanding the context of emerging narratives of everyday extremism. It is also a methodology for countering these narratives and promoting attunement through non-violent social and political dialogue.

Group dialogue facilitators are trained to facilitate open-ended, narrative group conversations in which only the students in their group determine the topics they want to share, thereby removing external controls and constituting itself a grounded ethnographic approach. Instead, facilitators focus on narrative dialogue, encouraging and enabling students to talk about individual experiences, to share their own personal observations, and to listen to others. Such subjective perceptions are the experiential underpinnings of more political views and opinions, which on their own can lead to heated arguments and rhetorical escalation that often disrupts social dialogue.

Why does it work?

If students are given a space in which they can calmly learn about each other's individual experiences, personal views, and circumstances, they will also learn to be more understanding and honest with each other and with themselves – and thus further develop their skills for improved social dialogue. Such a practice and educational approach can be particularly valuable for students who have been alienated from, or who have never experienced, democratic and human rights-based dialogue and ways of life; these are students who urgently need to be re-integrated into democratic society.

Turkey

In Turkey, the ethnographic methodology employed by the OppAttune team was focused and rapid ethnography using a collaborative methodology. Sites were selected as strategic places for “focused ethnography” (Kelly 2022),

Good Practices for Rapid Ethnography

Successfully conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a short time-period has its limitations, particularly in highly polarised settings where gaining the trust of participants can be challenging, so we addressed this by employing field workers who were intimately familiar with their field sites (Istanbul, Şanlıurfa and Hatay), fluent in local languages (Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkish), with an “ethnographic knowing” (Pink and Morgan, 2013) far beyond the time they dedicated to OppAttune fieldwork.

for “focused ethnography” (Kelly 2022), which allows researchers to quickly dive into specific issues, without needing to conduct prolonged, multi-year studies. The goal of OppAttune research in Turkey was not an ethnography of all of Turkey, nor an entire neighbourhood or specific way of life, but **an ethnography of a specific set of narratives within a cultural milieu**. We suggest this method to be a good practice, given its utility in capturing urgent or evolving social dynamics that might spread rapidly. Further, the ethnography takes the form of “rapid ethnographic assessment”

meaning short-term (less than 2 months) intensive research that is easier to implement and learn from than long-term field projects (Sangaramoorthy and Kroeger 2020).

In three separate field sites – **Istanbul, Şanlıurfa, and Hatay** – three separate researchers – **Yousef Salih, Ibrahim Uğraş, Maria Kanal** – undertook qualitative fieldwork involving observations of narratives (30+ hours) and (10+) interviews in daily life, meaning that the total time of fieldwork was approximately 6 months.

Portugal

In Portugal, the method of focused and rapid ethnography was employed in selected localities in which recent electoral results have pointed to a changing political landscape. A series of thirty-one ethnographic interviews were carried out in different localities in the interior and the littoral, including small villages (maximum of 10.000 inhabitants), medium-size towns (up to 100.000 inhabitants) and large cities and metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Oporto. Interviewees were selected at random in the public space or in their business venues, with the aim of reach a wide variety of individuals without previous profiling.

In each site, adults of all age groups, with different educational and professional backgrounds, and belonging to different classes and professing different faiths were interviewed. The

interviews lasted for about an hour and a half and were carried out from January through July 2024, covering the period of political campaigns for the country's anticipated national legislative elections as well as the post-election period. This ethnographic approach allowed for a solid understanding of the relationship between the context and individual experience on worldviews, political preferences and attitudes.

From Ethnographic Mapping to Gamification

Coupled with the already existing knowledge of mainstream narratives of the historical past and memories, as well as the discourses by political elites and the media, the mapping of narratives of everyday extremism in the Portuguese context contributed to the development of ethnographic gamification as a good practice that will be further discussed below.

Serbia

Ethnographic research in Serbia draws from the current work developed by the NGO ISAC. From August 2019 to September 2020, under the STRIVE Global Programme, the NGO Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN) implemented the project Youth for Change: Building the resilience of Serbian youth through engagement, leadership and development of their cognitive and social-emotional skills in two regions of Serbia - Belgrade and Sandžak, with Novi Pazar and Sjenica being the target cities in this region. **The cities were selected with an aim to ensure religious and ethnic diversity and obtain different views from both majority and minority groups in the country** (Psychosocial Innovation Network [PIN], 2020a). The target groups were young people aged 15-18 as they are at high risk of radicalisation and extremism. Regarding their socio-demographic characteristics, the vast majority were females (in both regions), predominantly Orthodox Serbs in the Belgrade area and Muslim Bosniaks in the Sandžak region (PIN, 2020a).

The rationale for selecting this project for a case study was **the multifaceted, multisectoral, comprehensive, and evidence-based approach to preventing youth radicalisation**. The project covered both the attitudes of the national majority and national minority in different regions of the country, which resulted in valuable insights and recommendations. The project had two phases, which will be presented below, predominantly addressing the fields of education and community engagement. Furthermore, the aims of the project were, inter alia, **developing different skills important for building youth resilience, tackling down stereotypes, prejudice, and intolerance, promoting inclusiveness, facilitating the social integration of young people and strengthening peer support, offering alternative narratives and a place where youth can express the challenges they face, as well as providing exit strategies** (Ludescher, 2021). The added value of this project is that it contributes to the realisation of goals envisaged in the National Anti-Terrorism Strategy, especially addressing specific goals related to eliminating hate speech, creating conditions that will decrease youth participation in extremist groups, improving knowledge, and raising awareness on radicalisation influences via social networks.

The researchers relied upon previous good practices and prepared a baseline study. This study included questionnaires filled out by 288 students from both regions to determine their skills, beliefs, attitudes, and whether they feel isolated or integrated into their local communities, intending to identify risk factors and radicalisation potential. To assess the susceptibility to radicalisation, the researchers used a battery of psychological instruments and a three-dimensional Militant Extremist Mindset (MEM) scale that evaluates 1) the readiness to accept, use or justify violence; 2) belief in God and divine power; and 3) belief that the world is bad and desolate (PIN, 2020a, p. 5). The baseline study results provided recommendations on necessary interventions addressing social isolation, inter-group relations, issues in the family and school environment, and negative attitude towards the world (PIN, 2020a, p. 7).

The findings of this study can be summarised as follows

- Serbs and Bosniaks have in general positive attitudes towards each other and there were no extreme attitudes regarding rejection of a certain group, but young people from both regions tend to mostly communicate with their own ethnic group;
- youth from both regions expressed higher level of animosity and distance towards the Roma population, while the group from Belgrade expressing a higher level of rejection towards Albanian ethnic group and Bosniaks from Sandžak towards Croats as well;
- belief in divine power is present in both groups to some extent, but far more in the Sandžak region;
- youth from both regions perceived to a larger extent the world as hostile and miserable, but this belief was more present among young people who were exposed to violence in their surroundings (home and school), especially in Belgrade area;
- limited pro-violence tendencies were identified in both regions, though youth from Belgrade had a higher level of acceptance of violence, which is linked to psychological factors and the feeling of social isolation (PIN, 2020a).

Bosnia

Ethnographic research in Bosnia was developed through the participatory project YouVolution – Youth for Change, implemented by the PRONI Centre for Youth Development. This project **aimed to both map the emergence of extremist narratives and provide young people with alternative narratives to extremism and radicalism, empowering them to affect positive change in their communities**. Participants in the PRONI Academy of Youth Work received the necessary knowledge and skills to plan and implement various activities, negotiate with local authorities, and manage youth clubs and organisations. In addition to these aspects, the project facilitated cooperation with local authorities, enabling young people to become active members of society and agents of change. Furthermore, it equipped them to plan and implement projects at the state level, a co-constructed and participatory activity.

The curriculum of the PAOR A training focused on the basics of youth work, working with groups, management and organisation of work in a youth club, non-violent communication and conflict resolution, prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation, and youth work in practice. The curriculum of the PAOR B training focused on the promotion of tolerance, accepting difference, public communication skills, individual work with youth, protection and safety of children and youth, conflict transformation and training skills. By completing level PAOR B, participants become qualified to facilitate trainings for youth. The curriculum of the PAOR B+ training focused on development of interpersonal skills, project management

(including Erasmus+ youth), management of social networks, counseling skills in youth work, lobbying and advocacy methods, and management of skills and human resources in youth clubs. Upon completion of the training, the youth had the opportunity to test their knowledge and put their skills into practice by conducting peer-to-peer workshops and research in their communities while under the supervision and mentorship of PRONI trainers.

Youth from the PAOR A training conducted a total of 17 peer-to-peer workshops in pairs, while youth from PAOR B conducted a total of six workshops. Topics of the workshops were: prejudices, business training for youth, freedom, tolerance, photography, youth rights and responsibilities, youth activism, violence, volunteerism, and rights of persons with disabilities, among others. Youth from PAOR B+ conducted four focus group discussions and two surveys to research the needs of youth in their communities. Through these activities, the participants in the Academy were able to mobilise around 200 peers.

The good practices included in this project were aimed at increasing the capacities of youth to establish, manage, network and ensure the sustainability of youth clubs

Specifically, BRHI supported the PRONI Academy of Youth Work to implement training at three levels of youth work: PAOR A, PAOR B and PAOR B+. PAOR A (Basics of Youth Work) is intended for youth workers, PAOR B (Training for Trainer in the field of Youth Work) for youth trainers and PAOR B+ (Training for Managers of Youth Clubs) for youth club managers. The project was funded by the International Organisation for migration and it started in 2019 and ended in 2022. A total of 73 youth from 20 communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the academy.

3.2 Collaborative ethnography

Through the Turkish team's research, we found that **collaborative ethnography** - when it involves working closely with the community or research participants to co-create knowledge - **further enhances in-depth analyses needed for studying the everyday effects of extremist narratives**. Collaborative ethnographic research has gained popularity in recent years (Banks et al. 2019; Childs et al. 2017; Hong 2021; Moog 2021) as it is "imagined as more creative, and more valued, than work produced individually or within institutions" (Riles 2015). It is perceived to be a "panacea for the ethical challenges of ethnography" (Weiss 2016), although unequal power dynamics of field and writing encounters are still acknowledged (Hong 2021; Low and Merry 2010). There are a wide variety of modes and styles of collaboration, ranging from senior faculty working with students, to individual researchers working with research assistants or researchers involving the subjects of research in their fieldwork and analyses (what is often called participatory action research or PAR).

Collaboration in Anthropology

In many ways collaboration is nothing new: anthropologists have always used "key informants," friends, relatives, gatekeepers and cultural guides, but the credit they are given for their involvement and the scope of their inclusion in ethnographic analysis was typically limited. What is new in recent years is an explicit emphasis on collaboration and a more open discussion of how collaborations are formed, organised and implemented methodologically. This transparency about the formation and value of using a collaborative team to study everyday extremism is a central goal of the good practice case study described

In the context of OppAttune, collaborative ethnography in Turkey involved working with three individuals (Salih, Uğraş, Kanal) **chosen to leverage the benefits of outsider/insider statuses for research** (Court and Abbas 2022). Salih is a Syrian refugee living in Istanbul since 2013, Uğraş is a Turkish citizen of Kurdish descent from Şanlıurfa and Kanal is a Polish national whose in-laws are Alevi Arab Turks from Hatay. Salih has an elementary school education, while Uğraş and Kanal are pursuing PhDs in political science and psychology, respectively. Our aim was to **deliberately and explicitly emphasise collaboration** "at every point in the ethnographic process without veiling it – from project conceptualisation, to fieldwork, and especially, through the writing process" (Lassiter 2005, p. 16; see also Lassiter et al. 2020).

In the next subsections, we discuss how our collaborative ethnographic approach represents a good practice for uncovering the circulation of everyday extremist narratives within the specific socio-political and historical contexts of Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Istanbul.

Uncovering local roots of uncertainty and insecurity collaboratively

As discussed above, uncertainty, ontological insecurity, a sense of loss, victimisation and vulnerability (Giddens, 1991, p. 37; Gotzsche-Astrup, 2018; Hogg and Adelman 2013; Molinaro et al. 2021; Saracoglu and Belanger 2019: 368) help explain the rise of extremist sentiments in Turkey: people widely fear that their home and way of life are under threat of being erased. Yet, the drivers of this fear differs in Hatay and Şanlıurfa where Syrians have integrated into Arabic-speaking Alawi and Kurdish-speaking Kurdish communities in these places. For instance, the fear of losing national resources to Syrians in Hatay and the resentment over perceived inequities in Şanlıurfa are rooted in long-standing experiences of marginalisation for Alawis and Kurds. These contexts bring continuing grievances regarding access to resources, linguistic rights, and population dynamics to the forefront. Yet, despite state oppression, many Kurds and Alawis in these regions take pride in their Turkish identity, particularly in the republican ideals of culture, education, and Atatürk's modernist values. They feel that they have struggled and succeeded to belong. Thus, Syrians, as outsiders, are viewed with suspicion. Furthermore, the proximity of Şanlıurfa and Hatay to Turkey's southern border heightens concerns about cross-border security threats, making them immediate and tangible rather than abstract fears.

Collaborative Knowledge Acquisition

The ethnographic insights of Salih, Uğraş, and Kanal revealed how ethnic struggles, concerns about state governance and migration-related tensions are locally situated.

Our team's reflexivity was crucial in contexts like Hatay and Şanlıurfa, where ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities play a central role in shaping how locals perceive Syrians and national security threats (Durukan and Ozerdem 2023). For example, Kanal's deep experience with the Alawi community allowed her to explore how they navigate national belonging as Arabs who are not Sunni Muslims and how this impacts perceptions of Syrian migrants. Locals in Hatay identify as ethnically "Arab" because of geographic proximity to Syria and the language they speak, which is Arabic, but they do not express feelings of belonging with other Arabs.

This sounds like the dominant narrative one hears across Turkey that Arabs are disloyal and not sufficiently militaristic. Yet, there is also a local resonance in Hatay. Even though Alawis

criticise the political regime ruling the Turkish Republic now, rebelling against the government (like the people of Syria are perceived to have done) is something that they think should be treated with the utmost suspicion as they have decided not to rebel against the Turkish state, despite their very real difficulties. In other words, **like many in Turkey, they place a high moral value on loyalty to the nation and the state.** This narrative provides “ethical and moral directions and religious or political explanations of what holds the world together” (Gotsch and Palmberger 2022) and is a narrative that could only be accessed, given Kanal’s experience in the field; highlighting the value of collaborating with fieldworkers who can leverage insider/outsider status as a good practice.

Yet, they also feel insecure. Locals in Hatay and Şanlıurfa do not trust the state to respect their religious and cultural differences as minorities due to past historical experiences. For example, the Turkish government recently built a mosque for Sunni Muslims in an area of Hatay called Arsuz where there are mostly Alawis, Christians, and vacationers. There is already a small

The value of collaboration as a good practice

Our researchers in Şanlıurfa and Hatay were able to access how regions that have experienced historical assimilation campaigns directed towards minorities, such as Kurds and Arabic-speakers, can result in complicated manifestations of solidarity and opposition towards newcomers for similar and different reasons.

mosque in Arsuz, which never gets even half-full for Friday prayers. In Hatay, where the building of a mosque is a symbol of Sunni religiosity and the government’s oppression of people, the government’s project of inviting Sunni Syrians is perceived along the same lines. In this narrative, culture and religion

overlap, creating a strong sense of identity threat. Social psychologists theorise the importance of group-based social identities (Berger 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) or group-focused enmity (Heitmeyer 2005, Zick et al. 2023) for explaining polarised oppositions and conflict.

Collaborative insights about material drivers of resentment

As discussed above, the entire country faces an economic crisis, but this crisis affects lower class, poor workers more starkly (Morgül and Savaşkan 2021; Tumen 2016). In Şanlıurfa, conflict over resources between local Kurds and Syrian Kurds is more severe than competition between Turks and Syrians elsewhere. Like many regions in south-eastern Turkey, Şanlıurfa is economically underdeveloped compared to other parts of the country, with low wages and limited job opportunities. **The local Kurdish population, which faces long-standing challenges in securing stable employment, perceives Syrian refugees as an added strain on an already fragile economy.** In sectors such as agriculture and construction, where employment is often insecure and wages low, employers may prefer to hire refugees willing to work for lower wages. The local population views the arrival of Syrian Kurds as exacerbating job competition, reducing their bargaining power, and limiting their access to basic necessities. **Although economic concerns about migration can be found throughout Turkey, for many local Kurds, who already experience socio-economic exclusion, Syrian refugees are in fact threatening their precarious access to employment in Şanlıurfa.**

Although research has shown it is difficult to directly link material drivers to violent extremism (Vidra & Zeller, 2020; Franc & Pavlović, 2023), our research in the region allows us to suggest that **material concerns are closely tied to narratives of opposition and resentment in Sanliurfa**. In other contexts, researchers have argued that economic and political exclusion can lead to a sense of emasculation for men, which extremist groups often exploit (Kimmel 2018).

Uğraş’ positionality in the region, and the use of collaborative ethnography as a good practice, provides us with a perspective that is otherwise often missed in the literature on extremist views and social policy.

These groups then offer men who feel humiliated by their socio-economic circumstances a way to reclaim their status, using the allure of extremist ideologies to channel their frustrations. While we are not dealing with an analogous situation in Turkey, Uğraş found that some Kurdish men feel humiliated about their economic position, which they blame on Syrians and which leads to a rise in everyday extremist narratives about them.

In conclusion, some narratives focus on the insecurity of the group, on threatened identities and spaces and on the belief that Turkey is burdened materially. By exploring the dominant narratives discussed above (Anti-Arab Sentiment, National Loyalty and Militarism, and Economic Perceptions and Misinformation) locally, we are able to understand the importance of the historical context and its relationship to the broader national framework. **The good practice of collaborative ethnography – employed in Hatay and Sanliurfa – demonstrated the importance of contextual means of everyday extremist narratives.**

3.3 Autoethnography

In line with the collaborative ethnographic approach described above, autoethnography was also a good practice applied in the Turkish context. Autoethnography is the study of a culture through a self, with the goal of providing an insider perspective (Khosravi 2010; Reed-Danahay 1997). Differing from autobiography or memoir, the aim of autoethnography is ethnographic knowledge production. As Chang (2008) notes, “stemming from the field of anthropology, autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (p. 43).

The Value of Autoethnography:

This approach enables researchers to connect personal experience with broader cultural phenomena, potentially challenging objectification, trauma-gazing, and securitisation/threat discourses. Crucially, it allows participants to control what and how they share their experiences, thereby promoting agency.

Uğraş's reflections on his Kurdish identity, intertwined with his interactions with Syrian Kurdish refugees, illustrate **how personal narratives can yield critical insights into broader societal issues, such as ethnic discrimination, belonging and everyday extremism.**

In his reflections, Uğraş noted the parallels between his own experience of grappling with Kurdish identity in Turkey and the struggles of Syrian Kurdish refugees. A main theme of his writing was the sense of dual identity that both Turkish Kurds and Syrian Kurds share where both groups do not belong in Turkey. He reflected:

Just as I struggled with my Kurdish identity in Turkey, I found that Syrians struggle with their belonging to the country. A sense of dual identity was a recurring theme in my interactions with Syrian Kurdish refugees. Many struggled

with bureaucratic barriers to acquiring Turkish citizenship, intensifying feelings of otherness. This dual identity, feeling neither fully Syrian nor fully Turkish, complicated their integration and affected their daily lives.

Uğraş vividly describes what he terms "everyday extremism" for Turkey's Kurds in order to understand what it might be like for Syrians in Turkey:

For me, everyday extremism is often a subtle moment that reminds me that I am different, that I don't quite belong where I spend my life....Everyday extremism is exhausting because it is not about large acts of discrimination, but about the constant continuation of small exclusions and the never-ending calculation of how much of myself I can show at any given moment. It is living with the knowledge that ethnic identity is always under scrutiny, even in the smallest, most mundane aspects of life.

Research has found that ethno-religious similarity can ease Syrian integration in Turkey broadly (Rottmann and Kaya 2021), and more specifically, that Kurdish Syrians find it easier

Autoethnography as a Good Practice

Uğraş used a deep autoethnographic look at his identity to understand the dynamics of everyday extremism towards Syrian Kurds in Şanlıurfa. He reflected on the fact that both local Kurds and Syrian Kurds experience discrimination and marginalisation; however, these shared experiences have not cultivated a stronger sense of community belonging for the two groups. This then became another topic to be explored also with regards to comparison to the other research sites and the role of threats to identity and place belonging, demonstrating both the value of Uğraş' work and the significance of the good practice of autoethnography.

to socialise with Kurds while religious Sunni Syrians feel comfortable with the Sunni Turkish community (Jacoby et al. 2019). Yet, Uğraş' employment of autoethnography revealed **persistent everyday extremism in Şanlıurfa, with many locals using narratives that**

position Syrians as "other," unequal, and lesser citizens. While local Kurds and Syrian Kurdish refugees in Şanlıurfa share an ethnic identity, Uğraş noted that differences in political allegiances, cultural practices and social status exacerbate tensions.

Similar to the situation in Hatay, some local Kurds see themselves as the rightful inhabitants of Şanlıurfa and perceive Syrian Kurdish refugees as foreigners who threaten their dominance in the region. Even when groups have similar ethnic backgrounds, they may emphasise differences to maintain a distinct identity and assert their superiority. By examining the Kurdish and Syrian Kurdish experiences in Şanlıurfa autoethnographically, Uğraş was able to show why a context of shared ethnic background does not inherently foster unity. Even though the two communities were only separated by a porous border before the war, they have been shaped by the broader cultures surrounding them. **This case study shows how autoethnography can reveal distinctions in political context, cultural practices, and lived experiences that exacerbate existing divisions, complicating efforts toward shared belonging and living democracy.**

Autoethnographic Insights about “Turkish” vs. “Arab” Culture

In Şanlıurfa, Turkish culture and in Syria, Arab culture are influential over the two groups. This includes differences in traditional music, dance, clothing, and cuisine. For example, traditional Turkish instruments like the drum and zurna often accompany local Kurdish weddings in Şanlıurfa. The music is filled with Turkish influences and encourages everyone to participate in a traditional dance called halay with great enthusiasm. Street weddings are very common. Uğraş explained differences for Kurdish Syrians,

Once, I attended the wedding of a Kurdish family who had migrated from Syria. Their dances resembled Arab traditions with fast and intricate footwork. Cuisine, a significant expression of culture, also showcased differences. In Şanlıurfa, kebabs and lahmacun [spicy flat bread pizzas] reflect Turkish tastes in terms of use of spices and cooking techniques. Once during a visit to a Syrian Kurdish family’s home with my mother, I saw them consuming dishes like mablube, which includes ingredients and spices more common in Arab cuisine than Turkish cuisine.

3.4 Ethnographic gamification

Gamification is a technique widely used in educational settings and, more and more, as a science communication tool, in which game elements are used in serious contexts to address certain topics or consolidate information. It entails developing activities in which participants can test their knowledge, interact with other and the topic of the research and learn through an active rather than passive way. What we call ethnographic gamification is the construction of context-based games which reflect the results of the research process and are also aimed at participatory action research.

Put differently, **ethnographic gamification is more than an end of process science communication activity, being also headed towards ongoing research and co-creation, insofar as it is based on grounded data and can be improved with the feedback of participants.** With the purpose of fostering attunement through dialogical interaction, the Portuguese team made use of ethnographic material to create a trivia card game called **The Attunement Game**. Through a process of gamification, they fostered dialogue, promoted critical thinking and raised self-awareness about knowledge limitations and preconceptions. The **next section** discusses a set of **good practices that arose in the phase of game development as well as during gaming sessions.** The same dynamic was observed in the organised gaming sessions.

The Value of Ethnography

The richness brought by ethnographic fieldwork to the study of everyday extremism in Portugal showed how context and personal experience shaped the ways individuals construct their worldviews, opinions and attitudes. In addition, the ethnographic work allowed the team to identify and collect a considerable number of misconceptions and preconceptions, disinformation, or disregard for or unawareness to detail and complexity.

Making sense of ethnographic data to promote attunement through dialogical engagements

Difference is a cornerstone of human societies. Engagement with the “other” can be a productive and illuminating effort insofar as difference is recognised and reconsidered. We claim that dialogical engagement is a strong avenue towards attunement, i.e. towards the

recognition of different worldviews, thoughts and sentiments about the world. **The articulation of ethnographic research with gamification constitutes an important method in the toolbox of limiting extremism and fostering social dialogue.** The gamification, through a trivia game, of drivers of everyday extremism, specifically those that rely on snippets of misinformation, disinformation or lack of knowledge, as well as misconceptions and preconceptions found in tropes, became objects of dialogue between participants and facilitator(s) throughout the game. In **this section** we explore the **good practices** we have identified in the employment of our trivia game.

The first step of creating the game involved categorising and organising snippets of information and gamifying them, i.e. turning them into multiple choice and true or false questions, some of which were illustrated by widely circulated online content, namely Twitter/X, TikTok and Facebook publications. In multiple choice questions, the process involved inserting tropes, stereotypes, prejudices or widely spread misconceptions into the

Oppositional Narratives and PAR

Throughout our ethnographic research, it became clear that oppositional narratives were often supported by misconceptions, preconceptions, disinformation and lack of knowledge or sensibility to nuance about specific issues. These have been recognised in the literature as important elements in the dissemination of extremism (Hogg, 2014; ISD, 2019; Wodak, 2021). In considering gamification, we were inspired by principles of Participatory Action Research, namely the idea that research and action should be co-determined and shaped by researchers, individuals and communities alike (MacDonald, 2012).

multiple choice options, many of which were inspired by, and in some cases a clear transposition, of some of our respondents' own words. This work was conducted alongside a process of research and analysis, to create a body of evidence in support of correct answers. The process led to the creation of an "Answers booklet". Finally, we designed a set of rules to enforce a game mechanic that promotes both competitive and cooperative behaviors. Like with a

traditional trivia game, the individual or team which gathers the higher number of points becomes the winner. On the other hand, all other teams must achieve a predetermined threshold (70% of correct answers) for the game to be valid. The introduction of prizes to the entirety of participants (a hypothesis which remains untested) might provide further incentive for cooperative behavior.

Finally, the game included a procedure for challenging questions and answers. **Given the contested nature of concepts, as well as issues of interpretation, players were able to challenge the facilitator if they considered any element of the game (questions and/or answers) to be problematic.** In that case, participants are given time to individually, or in groups, conduct their own research and present their reasoning, using all the means at the time. All participants take a final vote to decide on the issue for the ongoing gaming session.

The game was first put to test on September 27th 2024 at the European Researchers Night (ERN) in Coimbra, Portugal. Afterwards, three more sessions were conducted, two with college students from the university of Coimbra and one in a familiar setting of one of the authors. The **next section** discusses what we consider the **good practices** for gaming sessions to foster dialogical engagement.

Facilitating and promoting dialogical engagement: From competition to dialogue

During the game's presentation at the European Night of Researchers, which took place from 5pm to midnight, in a busy street in downtown Coimbra, several sessions were carried out, with people from different backgrounds, levels of education, countries of origin and age participating. **Right from the beginning, it became clear that players were inclined to ignore the competitive aspect of the game. Once questions were posed, they abandoned traditional competitive behavior in trivia games**, e.g. thinking in silence or hiding their answers from competitors (which they were asked to write on small, digital drawing boards). Instead, participants first demonstrated a tendency for thinking out loud, making their reasoning known to both the facilitator as well as their competitors, sometimes even some audience members and passers-by. In many cases, this monologue was rapidly substituted by open discussion with the other competitors. This behavior became a common practice we chose to foster and accept in subsequent gaming sessions.

Even though trivia games are competitive in nature, our experience demonstrates that loosening the game's dynamic away from rigid TV-format gaming shows, and letting participants wander in free conversation, promotes dialogical engagement. Our first two gaming sessions were conducted with participants from the University of Coimbra, including students and staff. During the first gaming session, composed of two teams of two players, right after the first question was made, members of the same team started discussing the issue at hand and formulating hypothesis and conjectures out loud, while their adversaries observed attentively. Shortly after, all contestants were discussing with each other, ignoring their team affiliations, and exploring arguments together. In the second gaming session, conducted with three participants, competing individually, the same dynamic sprung right from the start: one of the contestants started discussing multiple-choice answers one-by-one, and expounding his reasoning out loud. A friend who his promptly engaged with him. After reaching a dead end and before asking for players' final answers, the facilitator asked a seemingly reluctant third player, a stranger from the two others, to kindly express her thoughts, which she did. From thereon, she became progressively more comfortable with interjecting in the conversations.

Finally, a family gaming session took place, which was composed of six participants who formed three teams of two players. **In this case, the competitive dynamic was abandoned almost immediately and replaced by open, free discussion.** Curiously, when debating the very first question, a strange alliance between players from different teams' emerged, passionately arguing their positions.

Ethnographic Gamification to Attune

From our experience, a good practice in ethnographic gamification for social dialogue is relaxing the games' rules for the benefit of free, inclusive and open debate between participants.

Engaging dialogically: The role of individuals' knowledge, context and personal experience

Throughout the game, **the moment that follows the formulation of each question becomes a space of dialogical interaction where players explore important dimensions of the propositions they are confronted with.** Participants often mobilised and put to test not only their knowledge on specific subjects - sometimes openly admitting the lack of thereof - which originates from traditional sources of information, such as news or academic resources, but also their lived experience and personal stories. For example, in a question concerning the supposed "lack of control and open borders policy" that existed before the center-right

government was elected earlier this year, a PhD student used his own personal experience to reinforce why he thought a Twitter post issued by CH on the issue was misleading.

In another session, players were asked to evaluate if the information provided by a Twitter/X publication was true or false (a case of disinformation). The publication claimed Portuguese police forces had dismantled a terrorist organisation and apprehended several homemade explosives; it claimed that traditional media outlets had ignored the incident. When discussing the publication, players focused on different elements to justify why they thought the publication was false. A player argued that she lived near the place where the police action had supposedly taken place, and that she had not heard about the incident, thus making her skeptical. Another player dismissed the information as outright false, focusing on how it was framed and the language used. Finally, another player rejected it on the grounds that he had already been in contact with that fake news story.

An Example of Attunement

An adult female from Azores, who was on vacation in continental Portugal explained during the game that she thinks that migrants essentially live off of social benefits. When presented with the facts of real benefit levels, she explained that she was a social worker and that her personal experience ran against our research. Even though her own husband was siding with the facilitator, explaining that the question referred to national aggregate numbers and not particular cases, she claimed that her knowledge about it was also valid. It became clear to the facilitator that she needed to be heard and her experience to be recognised. After exploring the issue together, the dispute was settled when after recognising that although personal experience and context matters, she became convinced that given the very low unemployment rate in continental Portugal, her experience in Azores was probably not a good lens to assess the situation in the rest of the country.

A question inspired by welfare chauvinism asked players whether they thought migrants were net contributors to the Portuguese social security system; which as a matter of fact they are (CNN Portugal, 2023). When discussing the answers, different reasonings emerged in the process of trying to make sense of the issue. A player declared that given her belief that many migrants might be working in the underground economy, their contributions to the national welfare system ought to be reduced. A majority of players were aware of the news about the status of the migrant population as net contributors to social security. A Brazilian female student, ignorant about the issue, was surprised by the correct answer, and proceeded to recall how she had been witnessed to talks of welfare chauvinism by two Portuguese neighbors of her who. Although not in a confrontation manner, they hinted to her that the Brazilian community was living off the Portuguese social security system.

Addressing dissension through dialogue in a safe and fun space

Several times, dialogue did not lead, in the end, to consensus among players: and that is not the ultimate purpose of it. In

A Problem or An Opportunity for Social Dialogue?

We believe that issues with game design or disputes over interpretations are opportunities! They allow us to explore misconceptions on the part of participants, as well as limitations and blind spots brought by researchers to the table and thus they directly foster attunement.

many ways, these were moments when intense debate and interaction ended up taking place, and which included interrogating and debating with the facilitator itself. We believe

that given the fact that **fostering dialogical communication is our main purpose**, the individual guiding the activity should be open not only to discussion and disagreement concerning many facets of the game but also be open to recognise the potential limitations and shortcomings of the activity.

In order for gamification to be a successful social dialogue strategy, **it is essential for the facilitator to have solid knowledge on the issues being explored, with careful attention to nuance and detail**. For example, a debate emerged around the concept of wealth when referring to a country. In a question about whether Portugal was a wealthier country before or after becoming a democracy, several players, in two different sessions, asked for further clarification on the concept. A debate followed on what people consider wealth to be (answers included the amount of gold reserves; the existence of a strong welfare society; state debt and deficit numbers; or both private and public capital accumulation and debt). Before the final answer, but not after the end of the debate among players, the facilitator presented the conceptualisation traditionally used to measure wealth (GDP/per capita), giving players time to adapt their answers. Some players disagreed with the prevailing solution and the facilitator recognised the grounds for disagreement.

Another interaction that demonstrates the importance of being able to engage with dissenting viewpoints was a learning moment at the ENR. **Questions were raised over whether public school administrators are benefiting migrant children when enrolling. Recent publications by Portuguese newspaper factcheckers demonstrate that the criteria for school admission excludes nationality. However, given the high influx of migrants with children, the number of non-national students in public schools, especially in large cities, has risen considerably**. During the event, we often ended up playing the game with children, while their parents were exploring other scientific presentations. One time we were playing the game with an 11 year-old girl (a quite perceptive child), accompanied by her mother, when the aforementioned question popped up. Her mother instructed her to answer that there was a clear advantage for migrant children when enrolling, which led us to flag the response as wrong. Her mother strongly disputed our decision, raising her voice and adopting a tone of defiance. While we were trying to make our case, making use of the resources we prepared in the “Answers booklet”, she revealed herself to be a teacher at a public school. She proceeded to tell us how, in her experience, those procedures are involved in secrecy, how school administrators allow no contestation of their decisions and how they refuse to reply to any inquiries made by parents with grievances about the process. She claimed that administrators shield their decisions on data protection law to either hide their incompetence or to carry out a hidden, unpopular agenda dictated by the Ministry of Education, that favors migrant integration over her conception of fairness.

Given the facilitator’s lack of evidence to disprove her allegations and knowledge about that specific case, he adopted a posture of receptiveness, recognising that mandatory guidelines are one thing, but that school practices might, in some cases, violate the law. **At the same time, this interaction gave our investigation further insights about how perceptions of unfairness can contribute to the arsenal of drivers. Lack of**

Validating Participants as a Good Practice

When a conflict emerged between a participants’ personal experience and facts in the game’s answer book, the facilitator demonstrated a good practice, by recognising that a participant’s experience of the subject was different than factual research, and that further dialogue was warranted.

accountability and transparency in public administration decisions might be weaponised by anti-migrant discourses.

Fostering critical thinking and awareness

Playing the game has an impact on players' self-assessed knowledge and perceptions on several subjects: as the game moves progresses, the activity fosters critical thinking skills and leads to players to challenge what they once took for granted. **Players become aware of how the game tests their (lack of) knowledge, preconceptions and misconceptions. As a response, they adopt a more critical, sometimes skeptical, attitude towards new questions.** Because what once seemed certain suddenly becomes contested, new questions force individuals to rethink their previous judgments and to collectively gather and explore information together. For example, we asked players if the Portuguese government had invested any money in its national airline company (TAP) between 1998 and 2020. Because the issue of TAP has been widely discussed in the press and subject to intense political debate (in half a decade, the company was partially privatised, renationalised and plans for reprivatisation are being discussed now) players assumed a high degree of confidence in their response that the government had injected, in that period, several millions of euros in the company. No contestant has correctly answered the question. Other examples of successfully showing how taken for granted, absurd or implausible information might in fact be correct occurred in questions related to the relative number of Police officers, the size of the migrant community and the value of the Portuguese national minimum wage, all in comparison with the EU average.

The Benefit of Ethnographic Research for Gamification

We believe that because many of the issues discussed in the game emerged from our ethnographic research, they disturbed preconceptions. Playing the game provoked a reaction to what might have otherwise been obvious, straightforward questions, fostering self-reflection and skepticism towards one's own beliefs. This led to even more debate between participants, with players suspending judgment and reflecting harder on what they effectively knew about the issues.

We also tested the role authorship might have in how people make sense of information. Facebook and Twitter/X publications, as well as direct quotes from controversial figures, especially deputies from CH, were almost immediately rejected as false information. However, **when participants were faced with cases where information from unreliable sources was truthful, they became aware of the risks of blindly accepting authorship as a device for accepting information.** In one case, when a player tried to approach what was being said instead of who was saying it, the rest of the group dismissed his effort and moved to the default stance of labeling the statement as false. As mentioned above, as the game progresses, players adopt a more defensive, self-critical stance, paying attention to both what is being said as well as who says it.

Finally, participants often self-assessed the causes for their ignorance or prejudices when answers were disclosed. **When discussing the question about the volume of state aid the Portuguese national airline had received, many participants justified their misconceptions with the way the issue has been represented by the media, political commentators and leaders.** On issues of migration and security, many recognised that the rhetoric of CH and day-to-day discourse had influenced them on how they perceived security and the prevalence of migration, especially those found throughout social network pages.

Participation, co-construction and adaptation: Taking feedback into account

After playing the game, contestants were asked to answer a short questionnaire about their experience. We were interested in gathering information about the effect of their participation in the activity as well as on their take on questions' pertinence and suggestions for improvement. Many contributions were also collected during gaming sessions (especially **concerning gaming presentation, but also on how certain questions were phrased**). Participants (n=17) were asked, in a 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) scale whether they agreed with a set of questions. Results showed that participants found the game to both reflect their individual concerns ($\bar{x}=4.23$), as well as the ones faced by the Portuguese society ($\bar{x}=4.52$). Scores were lower on whether participation had had an impact on players previous beliefs and ideas ($\bar{x}=3.76$), as well as on its ability to clarify erroneous presuppositions or ideas ($\bar{x}=3.41$). Players considered the game's difficulty (1-3 scale) to be medium/adequate ($\bar{x}=2$), while considering the questions made to them to be of interest (1-3 scale) ($\bar{x}=2.76$).

Finally, we surveyed participants on what they believe to be pressing issues, what causes them and what the path forward might be. This information will now be used to support further

PAR as a Good Practice

Following the PAR model, we believe that creating a feedback loop between research and action provides a good pathway towards both meaningful research and also attunement.

ethnographic research as well as to complement the trivia game with new categories. Younger audiences mentioned **their interests on gender issues and the environment, and interest on the issue of inequality and culture was also salient**. Finally, a participant noted that the **absence of questions based on left-wing fake news or conspiracy theories**, a shortcoming we are currently addressing.

3.5 Narrative Group Work (NGW)

Narrative Group Work is based on widely applied principles of narrative interviewing and self-awareness group sessions from social therapy. Flexible group divisions and a staffed time-out area ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the process. An interface with youth welfare interventions, such as deradicalisation/exit work services, and the school curriculum supports the impact of civic education.

NGW as a Good Practice

The overarching perspective with NGW is to foster "emotional political intelligence" and democratic resilience, especially among hard-to-reach youth susceptible to violent extremism.

A series of narrative dialogue groups was conducted in a special school in a small town in Saxony-Anhalt (cf. 2.2) a structurally weak region of eastern Germany with the aim of attuning everyday extremism and building skills of personal communication, social interaction, emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. The team was informed beforehand that there were sometimes "major problems" in terms of psychosocial challenges at the level of family and youth welfare needs, as well as incidents of anti-democratic and hostile behaviour, especially right-wing extremism. In fact, three members of this group of 15-year-olds (two boys and one girl) classify themselves as "rather right-wing", which de facto includes some right-wing extremist attitudes, although they do not (yet) belong to a corresponding organisation or comradeship. Two others explicitly dissociated themselves.

The following (narrow) selection of particularly significant dialogic sequences within the group exemplifies how the tool of narrative group work functions to attune everyday extremism – which, in the case of one 15-year-old female student, F01, corresponds to full-fledged right-wing extremism, at least on the level of verbal expression.

A Note about Pseudonyms

Several NGW sessions are presented by referring to the students with pseudonyms, which can be briefly explained here.

- F01 seems to be the most ideologically extreme (female) student;
- M01 (male) was apparently also strongly right-wing;
- M01's best friend M02 (also male) seems to be somewhat more flexible in his attitudes. He would not describe himself as a "Nazi" and also distances himself from "F01", who made impulsive right-wing statements in the very first session of the group.
- F02 and F03 (both female) position themselves politically as "the opposite of this", but do not call themselves "left-wing" and are initially rather reserved and shy.

F01 is very provocative, shocks and threatens others in the group, stating in the first session:

"You should gas all foreigners / get rid of the cattle stuff" and "Hitler is hot, I adore this guy!"

In the first group session, she demonstratively sits in the circle of chairs facing outward and eventually declares: "I'm not in the mood for this shit. I'll be sick next week!" In fact, F01 would miss three weeks of meetings.

In this first session, changing the subject at least for the moment, a somewhat calmer exchange and personal contact with F01 was possible and she revealed that she only gets along well with one teacher. This teacher sometimes tells her the answers to exam questions. With the other teachers she is rather "rebellious" and often insults and abuses them, which the others in the group confirm. When the facilitators ask her – in a narrative open way – "how come you insult the teachers so often" and whether she would like to tell about such a situation, F01 just turns away, sits down in the circle of chairs facing outwards, grins and says nothing more in this first session.

In the debriefing, the facilitators suggested that F01 could have been given more support in this and other situations, and that her participation and behaviour in the group should have been more explicitly valued, since it was already apparent that, despite all her provocative behaviour – and despite or because of her sometimes quite right-wing statements – she might have been one of the most fragile members of the group, who might not easily find her way to continuous and constructive participation. As a matter of fact, F01 did not show up to the group for the next three weeks unexcused, leaving it open whether she would come back at all.

During this time the group shared experiences and views on violence and fistfights between groups of boys, some of whom are seen as 'foreigners' and/or are in fact from migrant or recent refugee background; feelings of pride and fascination with fighting; experiences of drug dealing by 'foreigners' and others; observations and experiences with local groups of young people who are visibly neo-Nazi; some shared that they had seen a film about Anna Frank and "the boy in pyjamas", although they had not yet had proper history lessons on these topics ("Yeah, that's lousy, just because she didn't like that Hitler, she had to live in such a hole. ."), and thus also admitted to their historical uncertainties ("What was that back then? Anyone who wasn't blonde was killed? Or was it the other way round?"; "Who was it again that wiped us out (in the Second World War)? Was it the Russians with the atom bomb?"); fantasies about becoming a resistance fighter, etc.

Social Dialogue addressing violence

Experiences of chronic conflict and violence in families were shared, often for the first time during NGW. For example, we learned about violent encounters with F01's family: "Just don't go there, because her mother will take out her axe again! – I went there once with my jukeboxes and her mother (obviously an alcoholic) wielded an axe because of 'noise pollution'" said one student. Other experiences of parental mental health and addiction problems came to the fore for the students.

In the third week, as the group talk became even more trusting, F03, who was usually very reserved and quiet, began to participate more actively – talking about her boyfriend who lives as a trans man, and also talking a lot about the difficulties and hostility her boyfriend experiences in relation to his trans identity. Her fellow students who had not known about this were perplexed and interested:

"What's it about? I didn't get it! So, your friend is a girl, but she wants to be a boy?" Whereupon she replied: "No, my friend is a boy in a girl's body".

Another boy of the group who associates closely with his more right-wing classmates, began to recount how and in which instances he often thinks about his own role as a boy and young man and how he sometimes finds his 'masculine behavior' problematic which was something that neither he nor his group had ever discussed before.

Local Context is key for NGW as a good practice

Each group of students in socially disadvantaged areas, especially in eastern Germany is different and has its own issues around violent and everyday extremism that warrant to be addressed through enhanced social dialogue, e.g. through narrative group work.

When F01 finally returned to the group, intrigued by what she had been told informally about the group's progress, she was also perplexed and taken aback by F03's relationship with a trans man: "Ugh, that's disgusting." F01, however, had become much more pro-social and interactive, and also took a leadership role in the group, encouraging and sometimes forcing others to participate. Asked later about her fascination with Hitler, she said in passing:

"No, no, I'm not interested in that anymore. I don't really like Hitler and stuff like that anymore". Pressed further, F01 said she had since seen a film about Hitler: "It was horrible and shit of him to gas everybody just because they didn't like him".

She also seemed to disassociate herself from a group of young people with right-wing extremist leanings.

In another group, a boy had started to talk provocatively about the Holocaust in the most inhuman and cynical way ("it wasn't that bad"; "there weren't that many by far"; "the Jews had always been persecuted"; "someone had to do it anyway"; "Germany was so technically advanced"; "... we had the gas chambers...", etc.). In the group there were reactions of laughter, fear, hesitation, various small comments. In this group, asking the boy and the others the relatively simple - but narrative - question of whether they thought they were cruel people and whether they could recall any personal experiences of their presumed cruelty had a quite impressive long-term effect. Having this question as a weekly homework assignment, the boy and two of his friends came back with the conclusion that they were not cruel people, but that they sometimes felt "callous/ numb" ("we often do not have strong feelings"). Shortly afterwards, the boy made a remarkable statement about his family and the loss of his grandmother: "My father did not flinch at all... he went about his business the next day as usual", adding that he was deeply convinced that his parents would not be sad at all if he died. The facilitators acknowledged his contribution and added: "Somehow we're not so surprised anymore that you sometimes say such cruel things and don't seem to realise it".

During the rest of the term there wasn't a single far-right provocation in this group. On the contrary, the subject of right-wing extremism came up in a critical way in conversations, among many other topics, including critical observations, e.g. about fathers who are "right-wing" and "sometimes cruel" (Weilnböck 2024 a/b).

What else is Social Dialogue good for?

It should be mentioned that a method of enhancing social dialogue – and by that always also supporting the build-up of key personal skills in the area of social communication and emotional stability – is in no way restricted to topics of extremism. The method has the same impact also through dealing with all sorts of other issues that pertain to the young people in life world.

3.6 Psychoeducational workshops and youth leadership programs

Three projects implemented on a regional and local level in Serbia to prevent and intervene against radicalisation through fostering social integration can be considered good practices. The two main techniques which were applied in a combined manner were psychoeducational workshops and a Youth Leadership Program. **These techniques were designed based on the findings of the ethnographic fieldwork research in Serbia in which the narratives promoting hostile opposition against the 'other' and the drivers of everyday extremism were identified in context.** The aim of promoting resilience to violent extremism and leadership is intended to empower youngsters to think critically and transform their own contexts.

Combining Approaches as a Good Practice

By merging social psychological approaches with participatory and constructivist educational frameworks, these projects allowed for a deeper understanding of the root causes of everyday extremism in Serbia while at the same time provided fertile ground for intervening and promoting positive change through social dialogue with youth.

Regional case study: Youth for Change

Following the good practices from previous programmes and baseline study results, PIN developed a programme specifically tailored to Serbian context titled **Building Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism (BYRVE) Program**, which encompassed ten modules: Identity; Strengthening self-confidence; Assertive communication; Constructive problem solving; Perspective-taking and conflict resolution; Empathy and acceptance; Stereotypes and prejudice; Discrimination; Cultural similarities and differences; Culture and identity (for more details on each module, see PIN, 2020b). **The focus was on self-confidence and identity, that is, building inclusive social identity and respect for inter-group differences. The psychoeducational workshops aimed at developing and strengthening a set of skills (cognitive, emotional, social) important for preventing youth radicalisation and making young people more resilient to negative influences** (PIN, 2020b). The workshops gathered over 250 students aged 15-19, which is the most vulnerable and susceptible group to violence and adopting extremist views as they are in search of their identity and therefore easily influenced (Petrović and Stakić, 2018; Ludescher, 2021). The students from four secondary schools participated in ten 45-minute workshops for five months.

The methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of the BYRVE Program relied upon the comparison between the experimental group (166 students participated in BYRVE workshops) and the control group (122 students did not participate in the programme) (PIN, 2020e, p. 6). Out of 288 students who participated in the baseline study, 251 participated in the end-line study and the comparison could be made for 111 students (PIN, 2020e, p. 6). As noted by the researchers, the response-rate between experimental and control groups differed significantly in the Sandžak region. When comparing the results of baseline and end-line study between experimental and control groups, several important conclusions can be drawn: **the workshops resulted in a significant decrease of the pro-violence attitudes of youth in both regions**, which is especially visible in the Belgrade group; **a decrease in right-wing authoritarianism was detected**; an increase in **accepting different ethnic groups was identified** - Belgrade youth had higher acceptance level of Albanians and Bosniaks in Sandžak had a higher level of acceptance of Croats (PIN, 2020e). However, the programme **did not produce important changes regarding youth's attitudes for the other two MEM dimensions** (divine power and vile world) as these are deeply rooted and not easily changed beliefs. As highlighted by researchers, the progress regarding isolation and loneliness was not present mainly due to the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (PIN, 2020d). "Based on program evaluation results, it can be concluded that students found the entire BYRVE program to be useful, pleasant, interesting, and adjusted to their needs and expectations" (PIN, 2020e, p. 57), and the modules dealing with identity and cultural awareness were evaluated with highest marks. In that context, one of the participants said: **"The workshop was useful because it helped me see situations from a different perspective"** (PIN, 2020d, p. 12).

While BYRVE workshops gathered a large number of students, another important activity carried out within the second phase of the project included only 18 students. This activity is called **Youth Leadership Program** and the students who attended it had previously participated in the workshops. They were elected by their colleagues from workshops through a participatory election process and “involving them in the process of a democratic election was an opportunity for them to experience and understand democratic values as well as taking an active role in the program” (Ludescher, 2021).

Components of a Good Practice Leadership Program

A special training developed for this Leadership Program was conducted online through nine modules: Self-expression and public speaking; Communication; Goal setting and personal motivation; Small group facilitation skills; Organising and planning skills; The power of peer and community-based support; Responsibility; and understanding and countering violent extremism (for more details on each module, see PIN, 2020c, pp. 5-26).

The online training lasted five days (Monday-Friday), each online session lasted for an hour, and two webinars were held per day. Moreover, the participants filled out tests before and after the Online Youth Leadership Program in order to

measure the training impact and also to measure the level of their satisfaction and evaluate the training (PIN, 2020c). The results showed an improvement of 25% as the knowledge on the topics increased, especially regarding radicalisation and community engagement (PIN, 2020d, p. 17). **The training showed the gaps in formal education regarding these topics, which is why it is important to develop more similar programmes and include them in the formal and informal education of adolescents.** The focus was on training these 18 young people to become community leaders who will make positive changes and help prevent the radicalisation of youth by engaging different actors (their peers, teachers, and other relevant local stakeholders) in activities aimed at raising awareness on radicalisation and violent extremism as well as providing alternative narratives to extremist ones (PIN, 2020d). “Ability to influence others, ability to motivate others... ability to be a role model for others... respect for cultural and individual differences among peers and the wider community” were some of the goals of the youth leadership training (PIN, 2020c, p. 4).

The programme was evaluated positively by students - all modules received high marks (over 4.6 out of 5) (PIN, 2020d, p. 18). Instead of organising youth events in their local communities, the youth leaders filmed a video on the project sharing their knowledge and experience (Ludescher, 2021). The video is available online, which enables better visibility of the project and reach to the target population (PIN, 2020d). Based on the assessment of students’ progress and evaluation of the programmes, the researchers concluded that the project was very successful. Based on the project insights, **it is recommended that some modules, such as Identity, Discrimination, Culture and Identity, be discussed in more detail and that more time be dedicated to sensitive topics.** In general, 45-60 minutes were not enough, so the time spent on each module should be doubled at least (PIN, 2020d).

The following can be considered good practices implemented to develop this program

The workshops were gender-sensitive, inclusive, and interactive, including role-plays, presentations of participants, brainstorming, learning games, and other techniques (PIN, 2020d). They were thoughtfully prepared having in mind different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds of students and experts established a good relationship with participants as everyone had the same opportunity to actively engage in the activities. Therefore, the programmes offered participants constructive ways of dealing with grievances and responding to peer pressure, and empowered them to understand and accept cultural differences, inter alia, which is vital for the prevention of youth radicalisation and building resilience to extremism.

To conclude, the project offered **valuable insights into radicalisation tendencies among youth in both regions thanks to the baseline study carefully prepared for the target groups and regions**. The project did not just apply previous good practices, but it also tailored programmes to the Serbian context and regional/ local specificities. Both programmes resulted in significant progress regarding the prevention of youth radicalisation and building their resilience. The participants were thrilled with the modules and activities. As the video was made available online, the project's visibility increased.

Local case study: Promoting Tolerance

The project **Promoting Tolerance: All Together** in Sandžak was implemented by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HCHR) on a local level in three cities of the Sandžak region—Sjenica, Tutin, and Novi Pazar, having high school students and their parents, teachers, pedagogues, and psychologists (employed in high schools) as target groups. The project, which lasted 12 months (March 2019-February 2020), encompassed a wide variety of activities that aimed at early identification of radicalisation and extremism among young people and building their resilience through understanding the mentioned phenomena in the general context of discrimination, stereotypes, human rights and freedoms (Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji [HO], 2020).

The rationale for selecting this project for a case study has been its **multi-sectoral and holistic approach that targets youth at the local level in the context of secondary prevention to radicalisation leading to extremism, also involving their parents, school educators, and religious leaders in order to empower them to better identify the early signs of radicalisation and tackle down the drivers**. The mentioned activities address the issue of radicalisation in a wider context of human rights and focus particularly on identity policies as a radicalisation factor, which is an added value of this project. The outcomes of the project are focused on empowering adults (parents, school educators, religious leaders), strengthening youth's self-confidence and critical thinking through the promotion of values and acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity, raising general public awareness regarding radicalisation and the relevance of identity-building concept (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights [HCHR], 2020, p. 1). Also, the project directly benefits more than 5,000 high school students, 24 teachers, and 15 psychologists in high schools trained in preventing radicalisation and countering extremism, as well as 12 religious leaders participating in the promotion of diversity and tolerance (HCHR, 2020, p. 1).

The project included **capacity building activities and community outreach events** (HCHR, 2020; HO, 2020), including three three-day seminars on “Understanding and prevention of violent extremism”; a workshop for developing creativity, critical thinking and self-confidence of youth was held at which young people from Novi Pazar prepared and distributed leaflets and promotional videos for the theatre play *Nathan the Wise*. Young people promoted tolerance through different street performances (such as free hugs campaign), and they also organised Human Rights Week and painted five murals with messages promoting tolerance, empathy, solidarity, and human rights; the youth involved in the project also produced a video on the theatre rehearsal and they prepared a documentary *Let Us Understand Each Other* dealing with gender stereotypes in the local community; the youth organised a debate with their peers on different vital topics for countering extremism, and the topics of LGBT community and hate speech gained special attention; a workshop was organised following the debate in order to enable young people to gain knowledge on cultures of different ethnic groups that live in their local communities and to evaluate the tolerance of youth to diversity.

Theatre for Attunement

The theatre play, *Nathan the Wise*, was carried out by young people in front of 250 people in Novi Pazar, Sjenica, and Tutin. It was developed using the real life experiences of extremism in their local communities and the main theme was the suffering of the Jews during the Second World War in Novi Pazar.

The findings and recommendations of seminars for adults and youth activities can be summarised as follows (HO, 2020):

- though the participants of seminars (parents, school educators) were motivated for participating in such activity, **many had a high level of knowledge and experience on extremism**, so future similar seminars should focus more on those with a greater need for such content; organising separate seminars for more advanced participants is useful;
- seminars’ participants rated their prior knowledge as average, but the evaluation showed that their prior knowledge had been lower than self-estimated;
- the **interactive nature of seminars** was positively evaluated as the participants showed great interest in active participation;
- organising seminars in three different cities, that is, away from the place of living or working of participants, proved to be a positive practice because it removed participants from their daily environments, fostering open dialogue and engagement in a neutral setting, encouraging networking among diverse groups, and enhancing focus and commitment to the program’s objectives.; **using different approaches and methods by various educators during the seminars was successful because it catered to diverse learning preferences and created a dynamic and inclusive environment**. This variety not only sustained participants’ attention but also made sensitive topics more approachable, as differing perspectives and teaching styles helped to reduce resistance by presenting challenging issues in multiple, relatable, and less confrontational ways; topics;

- the seminar revealed that the topic of radicalisation and extremism remains highly sensitive in these local communities; while participants expressed hesitancy or cautiousness during open discussions, many used informal settings (such as coffee breaks) or smaller isolated groups, to

Good Practices for Diverse Communities

Muslim participants were dissatisfied with the fact that the far-right extremism was neglected and that only Islamic extremism was highlighted as the main issue; in that context, many participants denied having radicalisation and extremism issues in their communities as they were afraid that the prejudice might be intensified. This shows that even a useful activity may need to be reconsidered in terms of how it essentialises particular social groups.

candidly share concerns and experiences from their cities. This highlights the **importance of fostering these unofficial debates in the future** to provide a safe space for open dialogue on such critical issues;

- Muslim participants have been dissatisfied with the fact that the far-right extremism is being neglected and that only Islamic extremism is being highlighted as the main issue; in that

context, **many participants denied having radicalisation and extremism issues in their communities as they were afraid that the prejudice might be intensified;**

- in general, the participants of seminars were very satisfied and evaluated the programme with high marks (4.7 out of 5); on average, around 80% of participants said that the seminars completely met their expectations and the progress was visible in terms of acquired knowledge; the most important session dealing exclusively with Islamic extremism was rated lower than others, which was expected due to expressed resistance of participants. Therefore, we conclude that while the seminars were overall highly successful in meeting participants' expectations and enhancing their knowledge, **the session on Islamic extremism highlights the continued sensitivity and potential discomfort surrounding this topic.** This indicates a need for more nuanced and culturally aware approaches when addressing such themes to foster greater openness and acceptance among participants in future sessions;

- the programme of seminars encompassed a wide variety of radicalisation and extremism examples and cases, without stigmatising certain groups. The programme of seminars encompassed a wide variety of radicalisation and extremism examples and cases, aiming to avoid stigmatising specific groups and promoting inclusivity. However, despite the organisers' efforts to ensure all groups were equally represented, **discussions around Islamic extremism led to perceptions of stigmatisation** among Muslim participants, highlighting a gap between the intended inclusivity and the lived experience of some attendees;

Social Dialogue was sometimes shut down, showing that some chosen practices are not always effective

During one seminar, one participant who identified himself as the member of SNS and fiercely denied the existence of extremism in Serbia claiming that the social, political, and economic situation in Serbia is excellent, including the highest possible respect of human rights and freedoms; also, he started expressing prejudice towards Roma people and the LGBT community; this event caused that other participants to be less active in debates.

- participants emphasised the **rise of non-violent extremism in their communities**, stressing the role of the media in such negative tendencies. Media outlets often sensationalise certain topics, framing specific groups in a negative light, which fosters distrust and deepens social divides. Additionally, unchecked online platforms provide a space for extremist ideologies to

spread covertly, further normalising exclusionary attitudes and contributing to the growth of non-violent forms of extremism in communities;

- the seminars showed that the participants have **prejudice against different social groups, Roma and LGBT community especially** (though it was not the topic discussed in detail in the seminar), so the sensitive topics should be discussed in more detail in future seminars;
- the workshops for youth showed that young people lack critical thinking, particularly due to the activities of religious leaders and religious instruction in schools; in that context, the youth often gave learned responses - **the answers that were considered acceptable** in their cultural and religious surroundings;
- during the workshops (including the theatre rehearsal), the youth (especially males) had strong psychosomatic reactions (these reactions reflect the inner tension and "fight" between their personal beliefs and the socially or religiously imposed identities, indicating a deep-seated conflict that surfaces when faced with sensitive or controversial topics) to some topics considered sensitive in their communities (such as the position of women in the society or the right to abortion) or contradictory to religious dogma; **these young people have an inside "fight" between their personal beliefs and imposed clericalised identity**;
- young people were thrilled with **art as a way of exposing and understanding different issues in their community**; the creativity of workshops was particularly praised by young participants;
- as per the answers of the youth involved in the project, **they learned to accept diversity and to be more tolerant towards different ethnic groups in their communities**, as they learned a lot about their history, religion, culture;
- it is very useful to **mention the real-life examples of extremism in the local communities as it raises awareness significantly**; the examples should not prioritise the concrete type of extremism or stigmatise any group; despite the resistance of some participants, it is a good strategy; Mentioning real-life examples of extremism in local communities is indeed a highly **effective strategy for raising awareness and fostering understanding among participants**. These examples provide concrete, relatable contexts that help participants recognise the manifestations of extremism in their own environments, making the issue more tangible and urgent. By connecting theoretical discussions with lived experiences, participants can better understand how radicalisation processes unfold and how they might address or mitigate these issues. However, it is crucial that **such examples do not inadvertently prioritise one type of extremism or stigmatise specific groups**. This balanced approach ensures inclusivity and avoids alienating participants who may feel targeted. Instead, it encourages a comprehensive understanding of extremism as a broader phenomenon that can affect all communities, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or ideology.
- It is very important to **choose the terms used in the agenda wisely** as the words *radicalisation prevention* and *violent extremism* resulted in less interest of locals to apply for these activities.

The importance of carefully selecting the terminology used in program agendas cannot be overstated, particularly in contexts like OppAttune, where **fostering inclusivity and building trust within local communities are central to its mission**. Terms such as "radicalisation

prevention" and "violent extremism," while academically accurate, can unintentionally discourage participation by evoking feelings of stigmatisation, fear, or discomfort among locals. These terms may create a perception that participants or their communities are being labeled as problematic, which could alienate them from engaging in such initiatives.

This observation aligns seamlessly with OppAttune's broader goals of promoting dialogue, understanding, and cohesion while addressing divisive narratives. By using more neutral and constructive language—for example, "community resilience building," "social cohesion workshops," or "peaceful conflict resolution training"—**programs can better align with the lived realities and concerns of participants**. Such language not only minimises resistance but

The Importance of Examples and Language During Interventions

The team found that it is very useful to mention the real-life examples of extremism in the local communities as it raises awareness significantly. The examples should not prioritise the concrete type of extremism or stigmatise any group. It is further very important to choose the terms used in the agenda wisely as the words radicalisation prevention and violent extremism resulted in less interest of locals to apply for these activities.

also emphasises positive outcomes, fostering a sense of shared purpose and collaboration.

Furthermore, this approach reflects OppAttune's commitment to **foregrounding democratic dialogue and addressing** EE in a non-confrontational, inclusive manner. It ensures that the

terminology itself becomes a tool for engagement rather than a barrier, encouraging broader participation and trust-building among local stakeholders. This insight highlights a practical adjustment that could significantly enhance the reach and impact of future initiatives within OppAttune and similar programs.

3.7 Capacity building for non-violent communication and conflict resolution

In Bosnia, we can highlight three examples of NGO activities that serve as good practice examples for preventing radicalism and extremism:

- International Organisation for Migration (IOM): Reintegration of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTF) and their Families from Conflict Zones;
- PRONI Centre for Youth Development: Youth Countering Violent Extremism;
- PRONI Centre for Youth Development: YouVolution - Youth for Change.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM): Reintegration of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTF) and their families from conflict zones

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s "Reintegration of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTF) and their Families from Conflict Zones" project was designed to deal with the fact that between 2012 and 2017 approximately 1,000 citizens from the region travelled from the Western Balkan (WB) region to Syria and Iraq, many with the suspected the intention of joining the Islamic State (ISIL) and participating in the conflict in combat and non-combat roles. Smaller numbers of Western Balkan citizens have also been recorded participating in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. With ISIL strongholds defeated in mid-2019, a large number of (Foreign Terrorist fighters) FTFs and their associated family members were imprisoned or detained. Many of these fighters remain imprisoned awaiting return to their countries of origin, including to the Western Balkans region. The first returns occurred as early

as 2014, however, a large number of FTFs remain in Syria, and awaiting government administered voluntary return. Countries of the WB region have made legal, logistical, and service oriented preparations for their repatriation but more work remains to ensure adequate legal, policy and operational infrastructure is in place to facilitate the effective return of FTF and their families. In order to respond to the fact that foreign terrorist fighters and their families are returning to the countries of origins, the International Organisation for Migration has started the project “Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Resocialisation of Returnees from the Conflict Zones” in 2019 with the aim to **help returnees to reintegrate into Bosnian society and become active members of society.**

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that experienced several hundred of its citizens fighting on the side of ISIS and other extremist organisations who moved to Syria and other countries with their families, we believe that the project such as the one described as an example of good practice, are **crucial for mitigating extremist behavior in Bosnia and Herzegovina since number of fighters and their wives and children are returning or have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina presumably indoctrinated by the extremist ideologies and in need to return to normal lives.** Still, this process is still on going and IOM as an organisation consider this to have a potential for, possibly, creating a huge problem in terms of increasing radical and extremist behavior, especially among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The project included several components:

- **Trainings for relevant institutions** on local level in order to provide them with skills needed to work with people returning from foreign war zones (Centers for Social work and Centers for Mental Health);
- **Adjustment of legal frame work** relevant for providing help for people returning from foreign war zones;
- **Establishing a fund** for in-kind support to returnees and their families (cloths, medication, medical help, machines for work, cattle, and other).

At this stage the project includes seven families of returnees from war zones who have not been prosecuted from Bosnian or other legal institutions. Persons who are under trial or actively serving a sentence cannot be part of this project. It is important to mention that at this stage all the returnees that are involved in this program are returnees from Syria and Iraq, however, **the project can support work with returnees from any other conflict zone, subject to coordination with the government authorities.** What International Organisation for Migration did in order to achieve the goals of the project is conducting research on existing legal and institutional capacities of governments, capacities, strengths and weaknesses of host communities, and vulnerability profiles of returnees, institutional capacity building of state and civil society actors and assistance to RFTF and capacity building of host communities.

Multidisciplinarity as a Good Practice

As the project is still ongoing, it is difficult to discuss its results at this stage. However, it aligns with several research findings that advocate for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing radicalisation. The Radicalism Awareness Network has issued a manual of responses to returnees as a tool for practitioners working with returnees, emphasising the importance of informing and involving local authorities in their reintegration and rehabilitation.

The two main lessons of this project are:

- **Importance of community engagement:** During the project it was noted that it is highly important that the institutions involved engage with communities in order to reduce stigmatisation of returnees, especially women and children. Institutions, especially on the local level, such as local authorities, schools, centers for social work and others, play crucial roles in the reintegration of the returnees to Bosnian society as they are in direct contact with the population. Training them to do so is also a high level of priority.
- **Importance of interdisciplinary approach:** Approach coordinated by experts from different relevant fields (psychologists, pedagogues, sociologists and other) will help analyse the possibilities for resocialisation of returnees from different aspects and possibly find the best possible approach to deal with the resocialisation of returnees and their families into Bosnian society in order to affect their beliefs and help produce prospective members of society.

PRONI Centre for Youth Development: YouVolution – Youth for Change

The second project described in this report is YouVolution, which is referred in the ethnography section above as the **main vehicle for ethnographic research and mapping everyday extreme narratives in Bosnia**. PRONI Centre for Youth Development staff claims these are the learned lessons from this project:

- PRONI's proven ability to mobilise youth can be used to further improve the capacities of existing youth clubs, support the establishment of new youth clubs and strengthen the network of youth clubs.
- **The presence of at least four PRONI representatives performing different roles** during the online training contributed to successful implementation of the activity. This could be replicated in other similar activities as well, as the capacities among BHRI awardees to conduct online trainings and use online platforms vary. It is also recommended that PRONI shares all the benefits of Zoom and other online tools features with other awardees.
- To overcome the challenges with low attendance rates, **more time should be ensured between the two training sessions and opportunities to meet in-person increased**. The involvement of youth from the same communities will also ensure higher attendance rates, as youth can motivate their friends to attend. Special attention should be paid to participants in different BHRI activities.
- Offering youth **the opportunity to listen to recorded training sessions** can address some challenges related to attendance.
- As part of this activity, the trainer has slightly modified (added topics or curriculum content that is more suitable to the specific group in order to the training content and the topic itself to be more understandable for the participants) the training curriculum in order to meet the needs of PAOR B+ level training participants who lacked skills in the area of project proposals, while at the same time these skills were vital skills for youth to be able to successfully develop and implement projects. This has proven to be a great practice.

Fostering Active Participation

Participants who were active beyond this activity showed more willingness to share opinions, thoughts and concerns without fear of encountering a bad reaction and seeking clarification of certain tasks. This should be considered when selecting participants in similar activities. By “active beyond this activity” we consider participants who already have experience in youth work working on other project that aim to contribute to improving lives of young people in their communities.

· While PRONI training includes both theoretical and practical components, the trainer at the PAOR B level focused primarily on acquiring a set of skills and knowledge in the 13 fields of training for trainers in the field of youth work, promotion of tolerance and acceptance of diversity, communication with the public and other. Teaching approaches towards skills acquisition need to be ensured in similar activities in the future.

PRONI Centre for Youth Development: Youth Countering Violent Activism

The third project presented in this report is Youth Countering Violent Activism, which directly raises awareness about the existence of radical and extremist organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It involves **conducting research to understand the current attitudes and perceptions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards radicalism, extremism, and terrorism**. The project also includes an international expert's conference to identify the current types and state of radicalism in the country, as well as workshops for youth workers on mitigating radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. As part of the project, an online platform was created to spread awareness about these phenomena and provide tools for mitigating them.

The main objective of this project is to **support and enhance young women's and young men's participation in activities aimed at preventing violent extremism by prioritising meaningful engagement mechanisms at the local and national level**, as laid out in UN resolutions 2178 and 2250; and provide a physically, socially and emotionally safe and supportive environment for the participation of young women and men in preventing violent extremism. The project was funded by Facebook through their adventure partner's campaign.

The project included 4 main different activities:

· **Organised National conference and advocacy campaign for changes in laws** that regulate Hate speech online in Bosnia and Herzegovina (April-July 2018)

PRONI Center for youth development in cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, organised a conference "Youth Countering the Violent Extremism" held on June 12, 2018. in the premises of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. The conference was attended by a large number of representatives of local, regional and international civil society organisations, BiH ministries, representatives of local self governments, embassies, media, police, students, representatives of the academic community and practitioners in the prevention of violent extremism among young people. Participation in the conference included 75 listed representatives.

· **Organised series of meetings (live and online) with youth from both BiH entities and Brcko District** in order to create National youth body for No-hate speech (April - September 2018). PRONI Centre organised more than ten meetings with youth councils from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska, with youth organisations that are members of new youth council of Brcko district B&H, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of FB&H, Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of Republic of Srpska, Department of professional and administrative affairs of Brcko district Brcko district B&H and Department for EU Integration in Brcko. PRONI was the initiator and the most responsible organisation that carried out the most activities resulting with the creation of Brcko District Youth Council. We needed to implement this activity as presumption for the start of the National youth councils in BiH inclusion in this project, and it could be done because of Youth Law in Brcko that was accepted thanks to PRONI passed projects and initiatives.

· **Organised advanced human rights and advocacy trainings from 30 youth representatives** for Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska Youth

Councils and 10 organisations from both entities (September 2018 - Jun 2019). Representatives of Youth Council of Republic of Srpska and members of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in two-day training in the area of advocacy, which was implemented by PRONI Center for Youth Development in Brčko (Bosnia and Herzegovina). All participants had the opportunity to hear and learn more about advocacy, techniques, advocacy models, and ways of advocacy realisation from practical examples.

- **Conducted qualitative and quantitative research on youth radicalism in BiH** (March - May 2018) Research: “Contemporary young people in Bosnian society: Challenges and attitudes of young people regarding radicalisation and extremism” collected 551 youth answers, age 15-30 from 60 municipalities from Bosnia aiming to examine the attitudes of young people toward extremism and radicalism. Since the activities that were implemented during this project were diverse in the sense that they had the goal to raise awareness among young people and wider public and influence their beliefs, capabilities and actions, it offered plenty of opportunity for different kinds of lessons.

Lessons those participants and PRONI staff finds most important are as follows:

- It is necessary to **work on building a "civic identity"** among young people, which should become a key tool for preventing and countering extremism and radicalism among young people.
- More **intensive engagement and cooperation of all key actors** in the fight against violent extremism is necessary in view of the phenomenon that young people globally are increasingly attracted by extreme ideologies.
- Further efforts need to be made to raise **awareness of the "fight against hate speech on the Internet" and "media literacy of young people" through education and training** of staff and through multisectoral cooperation and involvement of as many key actors as in the formal and informal education sector in BiH.
- In the long run, against violent extremism and radicalism among young people, we can fight the most efficiently through the **further democratisation of society**, by promoting fundamental democratic values and human rights.
- **Local approach - to form and / or support existing structures** at the level of municipalities and cities for the fight against hate speech and violent extremism in the youth that would act or act through a form of civic activism that acts and react proactively to the observed cases of hate speech and violent extremism in youth at the local level.

Good Practices to Assist Youth Confronting Everyday Extremism

This section of the report has provided insights into **three projects** that represent civic education measures that are meant to prevent radicalism among young people, but also the general population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are all **multidisciplinary** in nature and give young people a voice and agency over their lives and communities. All three projects, especially the latter two, have **included young people in the process of planning and implementing them**. This approach provides young people with an opportunity to participate in the lives of their communities and address issues they perceive as important.

4. Lessons Learned About Successful Social Dialogue Practices

What our five country cases taken together tell us is that a major cause of everyday extremism is historical trauma and societal insecurity.

The five cases each have unique features, due to their **political and social developments**, but they all struggle with **a major upheaval at a specific point in time that has profoundly unsettled the sense of stability and security for its members**. For example, for Germany, Serbia and Bosnia, the fall of socialism in Eastern Europe was a major point of transition that changed people's sense of belonging. The results differed: Germany became a unified East and

The Role of the State

These findings suggest that the state plays a critical role in addressing everyday extremism. Although we focus on the specificity of local narratives and experiences, it is essential that we do not expect local populations to single-handedly resolve extremist sentiments unless they can also be sure that their culture, religion and very survival is valued and supported by the state.

West, while Serbia and Bosnia separated according to ethnic and religious confession. Despite differences, all three countries bear scars from the experience that impacts the development of everyday extremism today. Both East Germany and Bosnia have been sites of rising far-right extremism. In Serbia, we observe political apathy among young people, feelings of discrimination and social isolation and low trust in state institutions. Portugal and Turkey are also shaped by massive socio-political transformations. For Portugal these transformations were the end

of colonialism and joining the EU and the eurozone, while for Turkey a key transition was from the Ottoman Empire to a Republic, which affected ethno-national and religious identities into the present day. Concerns about religious belonging and European identity loom large in Turkey and Bosnia as both countries seek a place at the European table.

In all five country cases, the causes of everyday extremism are linked to economic/material concerns, ontological insecurity and social identity conflicts.

Concern about migrants is important in all countries but less so in Serbia. Educational inadequacies and challenges for youth are mentioned in Germany, Serbia and Bosnia, but not Turkey and Portugal (though youth was not a subject of research in these countries). Whether youth or adults are considered, it seems clear that improved critical thinking abilities, civic education and skills for democratic reasoning are needed to act and react proactively to everyday

extremism. Bosnia and Turkey are heavily polarised with strongly ethno-nationalistic political discourses. In Serbia, Bosnia and Portugal people

Requirements for Living Democracy

What this research shows is that living democracy requires equality, fairness, and respect of people as members of society; in other words, belonging. Human needs for recognition, legitimacy and belonging have different expressions across contexts but are everywhere and always necessary for healthy social dialogue and democracy in principle, in law, and in practice.

are concerned about corruption and we see narratives of injustice and a lack of faith in institutions. People in Portugal are disillusioned with democratic processes. Many people in Turkey also share a sense of being neglected by the state whether or not they link this to corruption. These are clearly different issues in each country with their own particular

meanings for people in the places that confront them, that need to be excavated via careful research.

Our work in WP5 has shown that **ethnography is both a good practice on its own and a baseline for the development of other innovative methods** for promoting social and political dialogue and counteracting violent oppositional thinking in combination with practices grounded in already existing techniques such as gamification, group work/psychological interventions, educational workshops and training.

Unmet Basic Human Needs and Conflict

Edward Azar and Benjamin Burton's (1986) protracted social conflict framework refers to unmet basic human needs as the main cause of conflict (not just international conflict), but also all identity-related conflicts. The basic human needs are recognition, legitimacy and belonging. This fits well with what we discovered through our research in WP5: that poorly managed historical trauma/ narratives influence the present state of society and the intersubjective relations with the 'other,' which in turn impacts acceptance of everyday extremism narratives (or cultural violence). Unmet basic human needs provide moral, intellectual and cognitive justifications for violence against the 'other' to emerge and for living democracies to deteriorate in quality.

Ethnography works as a good practice because it is simultaneously holistic and it helps to reveal the importance of local spaces and places for driving narratives that lead to everyday extremism.

Whether the aim is academic research or community intervention, ethnography helps to tailor the approach to local specificities and enhances in-depth analyses needed for studying the everyday effects of extremist narratives. In particular, it helps to reveal how the meanings of everyday extremism can only be understood in specific places. We can illustrate the effectiveness of ethnographic work in our five countries as a good practice by noting that it revealed the importance

of material drivers -people's life conditions-for explaining everyday extremism cross-nationally. This is an important finding because much radicalisation research tends to highlight that material drivers cannot be explanatory for extremism because not all "extremists" are poor.

Ethnography is particularly effective when combined with participatory action research (PAR) which allows for the subjects participating in the research to contribute to the research design, the direction of the questions, the outcomes of the research and to learn with and from the research (alongside the researcher). PAR has a highly transformative potential due to its self-reflexive approach, which is dialogical in essence. The activities conducted by the teams, including collaborative ethnography, NGW, ethnographic gamification, and the inclusion of young people in the process of planning and implementing activities, encourage participation, dialogue and curiosity, which are essential for democracy.

Autoethnography - the study of a culture through a self - is effective because it leverages personal narratives to gain insights into broader societal issues, such as ethnic discrimination, belonging which drive everyday extremism. Autoethnography can offer insights into the ways that extremism is experienced on a personal, everyday level. Interestingly, it also explained the persistence of everyday extremism alongside some dynamics of greater tolerance, such as shared ethno-cultural identities.

As a practice method, Narrative Group Work is an effective method for helping students to be more understanding and honest with each other and with themselves – and thus further develop their skills for improved social dialogue. It fosters the "emotional political intelligence" that is needed for healthy democratic resilience.

Psychoeducational workshops are effective because they foster the development and strengthening of a set of skills (cognitive, emotional, social) that are proven to be important for preventing youth radicalisation and making young people more resilient to negative influences. Our work showed that the interactive nature of seminars was also positively evaluated with participants who showed great interest in active participation.

Finally, capacity building training for non-violent communication and conflict resolution is a good practice when it incorporates a multidisciplinary approach to addressing radicalisation and has a sufficient inclusion of local level institutions. Further, the creation of "civic identity" - as an extent of how much a person regards civic matters as important to oneself and how much is oneself ready to be involved in civic matters with the aim of improving the life in his or her community – is critical.

Fostering Social Dialogue Skills for Youth

When young people have opportunities to be involved in the social and political lives of their communities, they may gain access to alternative narratives that foster social dialogue.

A consistent constraint across our good practices is the **time-frame**. For a good practice to be a 'good practice', it needs to have stood the test of time as well. We can only speak to the salience of these good practices within a limited time-frame. However, **given that the WP members responsible for distilling these good practices from the current fieldwork have previous experience in the field and have incorporated their lessons from the aforementioned experience**, we can attest to the viability of these practices. We will further continue carrying out the evaluation of these good practices, outside the scope of this deliverables, for the duration of the project, and beyond. **These good practices and lessons learned will also be fed into the OppAttune Model (WP6) and tested in their implementation (WP7).**

5. Conclusion

Everyday extremism happens in a context which is widely defined as being in **permacrisis**, a situation which is exacerbated by the **poor treatment of memories and narratives of the past** - either associated with **war and division**, which is the case of Germany, Bosnia and Serbia, or **with the relationship with the ‘other’**, such as in Portugal and Turkey. This context impairs citizen’s capacities for social and political dialogue and contributes to increased extremism and political radicalisation.

The Drivers of Everyday Extremism

OppAttune’s fieldwork points to a twofold dynamic influencing acceptance and growth of everyday extremism narratives: 1) material drivers, what can be called the political economy of everyday extremism, and 2) symbolic drivers, associated with the feeling of ontological insecurity and social anxieties derived from the latter as well as other threats to recognition, legitimacy and belonging.

This report points to ontological insecurity and material and everyday life conditions as common denominators for the rise and spread of everyday extremism narratives across cases and contexts. In most cases, corruption (or perceived government corruption) also appears as central to the lack of trust in institutions and a heightened proneness to relate with such narratives. The fear of the ‘other’ or the societal mismanagement of difference associated with the sense of lost

opportunity or scarcity of resources, frequently mobilised by political elites’ discourses, stands out as a critical process through which the ‘other’ is turned into a rhetorical scapegoat for deteriorating economic conditions.

OppAttune’s ethnographic research in five contexts that span central Europe (Germany), Western Europe (Portugal) Eastern Europe (Bosnia and Serbia) and Europe’s border (Turkey) strongly points to the role of perceptions of injustice, inequality, stolen opportunities, an excess of migrants and increased migration flows, and more as the fuel that influences this process. Political elites also play a significant role in mobilising and weaponising narratives that augment these feelings.

Information and Everyday Extremism

Our findings also point to the role of mis- and dis-information to accelerate the spread of these narratives in the everyday context. In OppAttune, this is mainly studied in the context of WP4 research.

Our ethnographic and participatory good practice techniques for fostering social dialogue and promoting attunement lead us to the conclusion that countering and limiting the rise and spread of everyday extremism involves deconstructing perceptions through increased and positive social dialogues that foster critical thinking and attune societal misbeliefs. A local approach to form or support existing structures at the level of municipalities and cities is critical for fighting against hate speech and everyday extremism. Doing so requires embracing and recognising the specificities of each case and being knowledgeable about the specific narratives of a society in order to develop tailor-made approaches that speak to its concerns. Involving citizens in the research process and project planning from early stages - from the design to implantation and remaining flexible and open is important for success.

In the long run, the further democratisation of society – the promotion of fundamental democratic values and human rights – is the best way to lessen everyday extremism. Whether

the issue is economic inequality or the injustice of state institutions or politicians, a major cause of everyday extremism is clearly the sense that some have more opportunities for “the good life” than others. Moving forward, it is crucial to foster dialogue that attunes everyday extremism, while addressing the economic and social challenges faced by all communities.

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