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ABBREVIATIONS

CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
D	Deliverable
EU	European Union
GDR	German Democratic Republic
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
WP	Work Package

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While implementing operational activities of the “EXIT Europe” project (in particular WP4), one key objective was to produce case studies over the course of exit/distancing work, and give recommendations on how to implement good practice and built up local exit programmes – and how to effectively continue and improve casework in the future, even after the life of the project.

The case studies of exit/distancing work, as developed and provided by each local formative evaluator of partner countries France, Germany, Italy and Slovakia, arguably can be seen as innovation in the European PVE/CVE field. For case studies are rare to begin with – and case studies from newly beginning local exit initiatives are practically non-existent. They offer the possibility to get a more in-depth view and thus gain more extensive knowledge of individual radicalisation and deradicalisation/distancing processes in different social and regional environments throughout Europe. Moreover, the glimpse into partner countries’ casework shows various methodological perspectives, ranging from the different methods used and the professional progress made – and provides indications on how to evaluate the process and implementation of exit work. Considering this, the case studies will not only support the continuation of exit programmes through practitioner and community networks – which have been equally established in each partner country to provide long-term after-care – but also nationally and EU wide, feeding into a multi-agency exchange among stakeholders in partner countries and beyond.

This Case Study Report (D4.1) therefore aims to inform about the developed case studies of each operational partner aforementioned.

INTRODUCTION

Author(s): Victoria Steinek (Project Coordinator, Bundesministerium für Inneres)

The key activities of the “EXIT Europe” project aim to implement exit/distancing work in all operational partner countries, which entails processes of meeting, having clearing and entrance procedures and carrying out exit interventions with clients, who show signs of radicalisation and/or group-related hatred and are referred through both community actors and law enforcement/security agencies. In so doing, the local teams of exit practitioners employ the exit work strategies and methods that they had been trained for (in particular during Exit trainings, Activity 2.3), in addition to their own local methods and resources. Moreover, the teams employ elements from restorative justice and gender-focused approaches and, in particular, make efforts to implement the innovative ‘triangular exit facilitation’ approach, hence working in diverse tandems of two practitioners with one client. Practitioners are aware of and liaise with relevant social services for potential referrals of clients in view of catering to special needs, as psycho-/trauma-therapy, anti-violence training, drug rehabilitation, inter alia.

For this matter, operational partners are guided and supervised by an independent local expert in each country, who provides formative evaluation/ consultancy based on evidence-based indicators (e.g. by the RAN Derad Declaration¹). In so doing, local evaluators follow a guiding format/ template for case studies (see Annex III), a structure developed specifically for this purpose by the Scientific Framework (WP5), while accompanying and consulting the whole process of activities locally – i.e. the development and implementation of methodology, in correspondence with trainings and consultancy from the central evaluator and the EXIT Europe Expert Trainer Pool (Activity 2.2 & 2.3).

By conducting local case conferences, the involved exit practitioners reported back to the local evaluator about their casework with clients – possibly also about parents and social context individuals – and received in turn supervision by the evaluator and, as far as suitable, the aforementioned experts providing on-the-job-consultancy in the project for purposes of debriefing and quality management. This intensive exchange over the course of individual casework has fed into the development of a respectable amount of case studies – in spite of all impediments through the COVID-19 pandemic – which was implemented in close cooperation and exchange with the involved local exit practitioners, of each partner country. These case studies may thus be considered exemplary practice analyses on exit/distancing interventions which have been performed in each partner country, showing the nature of

¹ Weillnböck, H. and Örell, R. et al. (2015) RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice (Draft version) [online]. Available at: https://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

the case, also pointing towards the local specifics of the radicalisation challenges, and illuminating the factors and prerequisites of good practice within their actual case of exit work.. Based on this, local evaluators gave recommendations for the continuation of exit and distancing work after the life of the project, thus effectively contributing to and supporting first-line practitioners to improve both methodology and impact of their casework in the future.

The developed case studies in each country, which also to some extent differ with regard to their sociocultural and –political context, let alone their local context and radicalisation issues, offer new ways of how exit/distancing work can be implemented and become more impactful in the process. Having been trained in new methodological approaches while also considering own existing local methods, exit practitioners have used a rich variety of exit/distancing strategies depending on the individual case – also by drawing on the client’s strengths and resources. These strategies range from systemic approaches and questioning techniques to biographical narrative conversations, reflective confrontations with committed acts of violence (crime reappraisal) and expression/theatre arts counselling to promote the client’s talent and thus his/her empowerment; from individual to group work; and from secondary to tertiary prevention by working also with vulnerable/multi-challenge young people in school classes. The diversity in casework can be seen in the biographies of clients and the specific progress of the case – which has been heavily influenced by issues such as getting access and being referred to clients, the COVID-19 pandemic and its confinement measures and in turn the limited time period of the project –, but also in the local teams of exit practitioners themselves. These teams ideally consist of diverse professional CSO backgrounds, having already practiced exit or similar interventions with the beginning of the project (e.g. youth crime prevention, gang exit, hooliganism, anti-violence, social/ inter-ethnic psychiatry, etc.), but also ensure gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of different ethnic, religious/ideological and training backgrounds, thus allowing for cross-biographical cooperation and emphasis on certain biographical issues during casework.

Despite the acknowledged differences in their local context, the case studies clearly highlight the potential to draw on methodological similarities and connections in various ways. Not only by exit practitioners sharing the same mission of supporting processes of deradicalisation/distancing clients from extremist, anti-democratic attitudes, but also from violence, group-related hatred and resentment (group-focused enmity) and other conflictual and prejudice-based attitudes, while also providing gender-oriented work as constant cross-sectional task of such interventions. They have all identified and employed similarly effective exit/distancing, de-escalating and preventive strategies, thus tackling issues which point towards pronounced multi-challenge situations and illustrate the key importance of providing intensive case counselling and finding appropriate solutions and new perspectives in life.

Therefore, using case studies from newly beginning exit initiatives as innovation in deepening the knowledge about these phenomena and drawing on their similarities through shared principles and

evidence-based criteria can contribute to establishing new international quality standards in this field of expertise, in particular on how to develop effective exit/distancing programmes in this respective framework. With the possibility of this outcome being adopted by other countries, new ideas on how to evaluate and improve exit work could be created.

1 CASE STUDIES IN FRANCE

Author(s): Eduardo Valenzuela, Elyamine Seytoul, Hasna Hussein, Farhad Khosrokhavar² (Association Dialogue Citoyens)

1.1 Case Study “Emma”: from family crisis to inner subjectivation, after a radicalisation journey

A) Biographical Journey

Emma is currently studying in an Art Conservatory, training to become an actress, after a Master's degree in Cultural Management at a university in a medium-sized town in France. She is 26 years old, single, without children. She received a maintenance grant and occasionally works in museums and cultural institutions. She came from a mixed Franco-Algerian couple and grew up in an environment marked by Catholicism (catechism). Her mother is of Italian origin and her family has been in France for two generations.

Emma is middle class, and several of her mother's family members have artistic practices. Her father met her mother as soon as he arrived in France as an adult, he later rejected and distanced himself from his culture of origin. The couple stayed together for less than 5 years, and the father has been known to be violent with both the mother and the daughter, since her early childhood. Emma had a difficult family life after her parents' separation, and her relationship with her stepfather has been complex and marked by conflict. As a result, she was taken in foster care at the age of 16. It was through contact with the girls in foster care that she became acquainted with Islam.

She was later, at her majority, taken in by a Muslim family and converted to Islam. During that time, she began to wear the veil and reached out to people engaged in rigorous religious socialisation of the Salafist type. When she was faced with major financial problems, Emma was able to count on the support of this very pious Senegalese family. She worked as a saleswoman in an Islamic bookstore, linked to Salafism, located near a local mosque. This development in an Islamic space allowed her to deepen her knowledge of the religion and the Arabic language. She also strengthened her sense of a Muslim identity, since she only met people who shared the same religion.

² Part A and B of these reports were written by the tandem (Elyamine Seytoul or Hasna Hussein/Eduardo Valenzuela) who did the work of accompaniment and follow-up of the client in the framework of the EXIT Europe Project, between May 2020 and January 2021. The actual presentation is the result of a monitoring and formative evaluation process and exchanges with the local evaluator, Farhad Khosrokhavar. He makes a commentary and an analysis of the elements reported in part C of this Case Study.

Emma was aware of the importance of the group-effect in her path of adopting this vision of religion. She verbalised it quite spontaneously *"it was absolutely necessary to belong to the group"*. She was also very sensitive to problems related to social, ethnic and religious discrimination. She told the tandem team to have viewed videos of Syrian victims of the repression of Bashar Al Assad or of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which appeared to have fueled the adoption of these ideas. 'The indifference of Westerners' (in her words) gave rise to a powerful feeling of injustice.

In the course of her journey, Emma showed a strong hostility towards non-Muslims because of the discrimination Maghrebins/Muslims she witnessed and experienced within French society. She explained that she was a victim of multiple discriminations and racist acts, particularly when she wore the veil in public.

At that time, she also adhered to conspiracy theories in which the world would be dominated by Jews (theory of the New World Order). In spite of this indoctrination, after a while, due to relational disappointments, she gradually detached herself from the relationships that maintained her in a rigorous religious practice and a radical interpretation of Islam.

After distancing herself from these circles, Emma's relationship with her mother showed signs of improvement. Since Emma's conversion, her mother exerted significant pressure on her: she rejected and questioned her conversion, despite her daughter being an adult at the time. After the period of terrorist attacks in France, she reported her daughter as radicalised to the authorities (a policeman is a relative of her) after spotting her wearing a niqab in town.

Emma acknowledged her mother's reactions, which influenced her disengagement process. She later resumed her studies and abandoned her sectarian view of religion. Nevertheless, peer pressure persisted, as she continued to reside in a working-class neighbourhood in her hometown, where many residents knew about her past. She has been subject to quibbles and demeaning insults from former acquaintances, who express their disapproval with her distancing from a rigid Islam ("whore" for example etc.).

Other events may have influenced this trajectory, particularly her experiences of casual racism experienced in French society. There was also the confrontation with police officers who made racist remarks following the conflict she had with her stepfather.

During the police custody that was abnormally long in view of the nature of the facts (a fight with her stepfather), a policeman reportedly called her "a good Muslim for making children in order to receive family benefits". These racist remarks made by civil servants seem to have left a mark on her as well. Her hatred was directed against the dominant society (white French non-Muslims) as well as Western states and their foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East.

Several factors seem to explain Emma's radicalisation journey. Firstly, unanswered questions about her origins and her family history appeared to be linked to her parents' violent and sudden separation. As

an immigrant, her Algerian father sought to erase all markers of Algerian culture at all costs. For example, he gave her a French first name and gallicised their surname. These unanswered questions related to identity seem to have galvanised tensions in the inner family circle.

Secondly, Emma seemed to have experienced a quest for a reassuring environment, in which she could gain recognition. Emma discussed in great detail both the material (accommodation, food, etc.) and immaterial (affection, appreciation, etc.) advantages she perceived to have benefitted from in her Senegalese foster family, which sparked her conversion. Moreover, she often related back to the influence of her girlfriends; they converted collectively almost simultaneously and continually attempted to outbid each other in religious practice and their strict observance of religious prescriptions.

During the several months in which the exit team worked with her, Emma seemed preoccupied with satisfying immediate material needs. She has been overcome by financial problems: her phone line has been cut due to unpaid phone bills. This is largely due to the fact that her summer job as a telephone operator was cancelled. She was particularly disappointed by this situation, which impacts other aspects of her life. Her stress and restlessness were particularly visible during the interviews, as she responded to the exit tandem team erratically walking around her small apartment.

In addition to this, her mother categorically refused to take her cat to the vet when it was ill. This anecdote points towards broader family problems which Emma did not wish to discuss. Emma is confident she wants to devote herself to her artistic creations, career and achieve financial autonomy through casual work. She has a school and undergraduate degree, and does not wish to pursue professional or vocational training.

Emma has been willing to put together a theatre production in order to tell her story. This idea germinated during an event she organised as part of her studies in the Master's programme in Cultural Projects. Emma seemed much more relaxed at a certain moment, after the summer time, since she has managed to find two jobs, one in a city museum and the other as the co-replacement director of a *Maison des jeunes et de la culture* (MJC) where she was in charge of registering children for cultural activities. She also managed to register at the university, which should allow her to obtain a maintenance grant. Through follow-ups with the exit team and interviews, exchanges with Emma have warmed and become more cordial. Later, these economics achievements appeared to be fragile, and subject to change as consequence of the restrictions of the pandemic prevention measures.

With regards to her parental issues, her relationship with her mother, despite their closeness indicated by their regular exchange brief calls every 4 to 5 days according to Emma, daughter and mother remain relatively distant. This seemed to have stemmed from her mother's refusal to support her when she experienced financial hardship. Her mother categorically dismissed her demands for financial or in-kind help. During the summer economic difficulties described, when Emma asked her for coffee and tea, she

replied *"you just have to manage your money better"*. This clear rebuttal has come despite being civil servant in the mayor's office and financially stable.

Her stepfather, a computer specialist, also seemed to be relatively absent. According to Emma, her mother had been out of touch and unreachable for a long time. She told the tandem team that the latter has not seen her spiral of radicalisation because at that time *"she was no longer really her daughter but a ward of the state"*. Emma perceived her mother as irresponsible and it seems she has not come to terms nor has she accepted her years of absence. Emma did not expect any behavioural change from her mother, who feels too proud to acknowledge or question any of her *"educational failings"*.

Instigating constructive dialogue between Emma and her mother remains difficult as her mother blames her radicalisation on a *"strategy of enlistment developed by Islamists"*. Beyond what she says and shows, Emma expressed to be disappointed by her mother's attitude. She regretted that her parents were not aware of her multiple professional, academic and artistic efforts she has rolled out in her quest for autonomy. Her mother justified her behaviour by referring to Emma's need to *"get her feet on the ground"* and support herself.

The team made her see that at her age (of Emma), her mother had already taken on responsibilities as a mother. Also, they let her see that she was still in a position to legitimately ask and expect things that her mother did not want to give her, despite being an adult.

The relationship with her father is non-existent, she told the team. When it was mentioned, she used the expressions *"he died in the film"* or he is *"out of competition"*. She had not seen him for ten years, and the last time they made contact was two years ago on the phone. Her reactions to this situation appeared somewhat ambivalent, as despite reporting a sense of indifference to the state of their relationship, she also expressed a sense of guilt in light of her own indifference.

Over the course of the follow-up in the frame of the project, Emma was updated on her father's situation. Her half-sister, with whom she had not been in contact for a long time, called her suddenly, and told her that her father had lost his job as a lathe and milling machine operator, probably due to cancer (to be verified).

His illness and his job-loss led him to lose his home. It seems that he lived after this problems in his car and were experiencing serious financial problems. Her half-sister, with whom her father had maintained a relationship, also explained that Emma's father had withdrawn 300 euros from his son's bank account, without prior authorisation.

Emma questioned herself about this situation and how to respond to it. She had been hesitant about rekindling a dialogue with him following the rejection he had expressed towards her (*"I don't want to see you anymore, you're not my daughter anymore,"* he told her some years ago). She also seemed uncomfortable, thus suggesting a form of guilt and fears regarding her past attitude towards him.

During a Skype meeting, Emma wrote a text which she read to the tandem team. It was a well-written piece which captured the emotions she drew from her experiences as a daughter and as a person trapped in a sectarian religious vision. The quality of the text indicates she was invested in her plans to build her personal and social life. The practitioners spent a few minutes talking about her production which seemed promising and mature.

B) The impact of the EXIT Europe project:

The tandem team working with Emma identified four areas in their follow-ups:

i. Sparking reflexivity on Emma's path to radicalisation:

Upon meeting Emma, the practitioners quickly realised that she was already in a process of disengagement. The team therefore decided to position itself as a support service responding to needs expressed by Emma, rather than offering guidance per se.

However, the tandem also identified that working through Emma's psychological issues would be helpful in ensuring her resilience against backlash. During the exchanges, the need to deepen her understanding of what happened to her when she had been radicalised was emphasised, and put forward to her. Exploring the circumstances that led her to adopt an ultra-rigorous religiosity, allowed Emma to put words onto feelings and construct a narrative surrounding her personal journey.

This *cathartic* process took place progressively during interviews and the practitioners observed that Emma confided in them with growing ease. After a while, she would initiate these meetings. She had also been looking beyond this particular period and had been gaining hindsight by writing letters to herself, which they encouraged her to do and pursue.

The local evaluator recommended that the tandem team contacts her parents, but this proved impossible. Emma did not want them to talk to her mother. The relationship with her father was almost non-existent. Moreover, the latter has entered an aforementioned downward spiral of health and financial problems.

ii. Strengthening her social and professional networks:

One of the main areas of intervention was to support her desire for professional integration and artistic creation. Following the team's positioning as a support service, the tandem team mobilised their respective networks to put her in contact with theatre professionals in the Parisian region.

For example, a first meeting was held with the director Lisa Guez³. The meeting lasted about two hours in a Café in Paris. Emma was offered strategic advice. In particular, the director stressed the importance

³ For further details, see: *Lisa Guez*, Wikipedia Article, Available at: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Guez

of having an artistic agent and developing her network in this professional environment. She also gave her advice on more technical aspects.

As a result of the meeting, the art-director offered Emma advice regarding her project. For example, she suggested it would be difficult for her emotionally to act and direct her actors simultaneously. She shared a reading-list and offered to put her in touch with other people in her network. After the meeting, Emma and Lisa Guez agreed to meet again. Emma was satisfied to have met her, with an inspiring career and felt like she had been listened to and valued by a successful professional.

The tandem team also offered her other networking opportunities and career guidance. They also helped her to strengthen her network as an actress offering to put her in contact with both actors and professionals who use theatre as a tool for educational purposes. They have given her the opportunity to participate in citizenship workshops organised by the association Dialogues citoyens, which mobilises actors who make social/pedagogical use of the theatre in neighborhoods with social difficulties. Emma was interested in this scheme, which could inspire her own work. For different reasons, this has not happened still until the moment this case study is written.

iii. Helping and promoting Emma's artistic project:

The tandem has been aiming to encourage Emma in her project. A first meeting was held with Emma's actors in order to build a foundation on the theme of radicalisation. The idea was to explain the concept of radicalisation to people who were unfamiliar with it, in order to help them understand Emma's story and the theatrical creation she was putting together.

Discussions revolved around the definition and socialisation of radicalised people, the origins and goals of jihadism and women's jihad. The discussion group was attended by six people who had graduated from National Theater Conservatories, including some professional actors. The collective interview lasted about an hour in a convivial atmosphere. The tandem team also gave Emma practical information surrounding funding resources for educational and prevention purposes.

A second collective meeting was held on November 25th 2020 between her and another professional who was helping her put together this creative project. The Skype meeting focused on how to find funding for the play as well as how to promote it.

The practitioners mentioned different sources of funding such as the *Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization* (FIPDR), and stressed the required educational value of this aid. Through this angle, a number of schools, and high schools could be interested, thus enlarging the project's audiences.

Following the example of other similar artistic creations such as *"Lettre to Noor"* by Rachid Benzine or *"Jihad"* by Ismaël Saidi, Emma's play could be presented and promoted as a tool in the primary prevention of radicalisation if it meets the subject's core tenants. The tandem team then discussed funding opportunities at the Prefecture level. They explained the rules as well as the administrative constraints that must be respected, particularly in terms of the timetable and the way to present one's application. A final meeting described in the box below was held following an invitation by Emma.

Meeting in a small town with Emma's theatre troupe, January 15, 2021 (2:30-4:30 pm)

The intervention with Emma took place on January 15, 2021 in the House of Arts for almost two hours. Emma took advantage of a theatre workshop to have the expert from the EXIT Europe project, who is also a lecturer specialising in the problems of radicalisation, serve as speaker. Emma seemed proud to have been able to mobilise an academic. The meeting took place in a dark rehearsal room with seven actresses or apprentice actresses from the theatre conservatory. As a reminder, EXIT's expert tandem planned to organise this meeting in order to help Emma put together her play inspired by her radicalisation journey. The audience was attentive and asked many questions about different aspects of radicalisation. Discussions began around the notion of Salafism. The actors wanted to understand the reality and beliefs of this religious movement. Some questions about the differences between Sunnis and Shiites were also raised.

Then several questions focused on geopolitics. Questions around the origins and the mode of functioning of the Islamic State. International dynamics were outlined.

Then the exchanges focused on the concept of disengagement and the socialisation of women jihadists. The expert spoke about his experiences of participating in brainstorming sessions with radicalised prisoners. He described the processes of de-radicalisation, emphasizing the social and theological character of this care, which is mostly carried out by prison chaplains and religious mediators. Several questions focused on the place and motivations of women jihadists. He recalled that among these women there were very disparate profiles and motivations. Nevertheless, one finds quite frequently psycho-traumatic incidences (incest, rape, etc.) and emotional challenges (family abandonment, separation, etc.) or identity insecurities. The audience was attentive and motivated. As proof of this investment, most of those present had read the book by Farhad Khosrokhavar and Fethi Benslama on women jihadists⁴. This aspect of the feminisation of jihadism is at the heart of the exchanges as it represents the central theme of Emma's play. Many questions were asked about this aspect. In the end, Emma was satisfied to have been able to organise this meeting between the EXIT Europe expert and her group of female actors. She felt valued in the eyes of her group and brought a form of professionalism to her project. She warmly thanked the expert for coming from Paris to ensure this intervention.

⁴ Khosrokhavar, F. and Benslama, F. (2017) *Le Jihadisme des femmes. Pourquoi ont choisi Daech?* Seuil.

i. Support the exit from economic precariousness:

The first steps taken between the exit team and Emma revolved around the financial difficulties she had experienced during the summer 2020, trying to support herself, particularly those regarding rent and telephone payments. The practitioners decided to provide her with short-term financial relief so that she could continue to communicate and move around to find work (telephone, bus pass).

The next potential steps for bettering her financial situation would have been to include her mother in the counselling sessions. A loan scheme could also be set up and subject to flexible repayment conditions. A definite solution is still pending and is being worked through, as the consequences of the Coronavirus restrictions have limited Emma's job search.

The team has offered Emma career guidance and help working through job applications. During some of the exchanges, Emma expressed that she was partaking in a large range of activities such as theatre, her postgraduate studies, as well as cello lessons. Given her financial situation, the practitioners strongly recommended that she managed her time around finding a stable income.

C) Comments of the Local Evaluator, Farhad Khosrokhavar:

Emma's case has the following characteristics: the crisis of the family, the uneasiness linked to her adherence to a fundamentalist version of Islam, the experience of ordinary racism within society and its "radicalisation" in contact with a state of affairs that offends her moral sense (the fate of the Palestinians, among others), and finally, a "subjectivation" that leads her to question certain dimensions of her religious fundamentalism, notably through art.

The family crisis

In other studies, researchers have been able to point out the significant role of the family, and especially its crisis, in triggering a movement of radicalisation within society. This is notably the case of the stepfamily and the situation of the crisis of authority within it; but it is also the case of the family that we qualify as multicultural (one of the members of North African origin) where visions of a different nature on the education of the child, the distribution of roles of the spouses in terms of authority within the couple and the relationship to religion often clash.

The latter can range from the fundamentalism of the member of North African origin to his or her concealment of any belonging to Islam, as seems to have been the case in Emma's family. The diversity of ethnic origins can become a "knot" in the way the offspring may later find a reason to become

radicalised. In Emma's case, the denial of Islam on the part of the couple⁵ resulted in her being given a Franco-French name to erase any reference to her North African origin.

However, this phenomenon is often combined with the absence of reference and norm and the feeling of loneliness and lack of "community of reference" on the part of the offspring. The family is no longer the unit governed by intangible norms (the patriarchal family system has lost its strength) and the new configuration of the reconstituted family is marked by an authority that is often fragmented and a feeling of inability on the part of young people to identify with it: the stepfather, ersatz of the biological father, gives an impression of duality, the mother is experienced as the one who plays the role of "breaker" of the family and the feeling of absence of a warm family unit is often the cause of the search for a substitute family.

This is the case of Emma, who found this substitute with a pious Senegalese family whose attitude, according to the secular French norms in force, can be qualified as "fundamentalist". She converted from then on to this version of Islam and ended up wearing the full veil as a sign of total identification to this form of religiosity. In this, she probably goes beyond the practice of Islam by the family that welcomed her and showed a warm attitude towards her. There are other cases of this nature where the quest for family solidarity and a strong sense of belonging marks the aspiration of young people who have lived in broken families⁶. The surrogate family becomes the place of an identification that could be called "integral": one seeks to espouse even the religion of the latter and this accentuates the feeling of belonging to the new family unit which becomes the "real family" for a time, in the face of the fallen family in which the young person grew up, not without a feeling of profound disidentification, due in particular to the parents' divorce and the absence of strong markers of belonging.

Racism and Islamophobia as aggravating factors

We are faced with what could be called an outbidding in religious sincerity, visible in many converts. This attitude also feeds on the situation of Muslims in France (and in Europe) where they can be the target of racism and Islamophobia, exacerbated by terrorist attacks in the name of jihadism. It is also nourished by the situation of Muslims in the world, in the Palestinian territories but more broadly in the Middle East (Syria). In Emma's case, we know that the situation of the Palestinians played a role in her

⁵ In the case of Zacarias Moussaoui (involved in the 9/11 attack), too, we note this state of affairs: his mother had tried to erase all references to Islam by giving her children a purely secular vision. Like Emma, Zacarias came from a family where the father had been violent and subsequently separated from his wife. See Khosrokhavar, F. (2009) *Inside Jihadism*. Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers. More generally, for an anthropology of the family in France in relation to radicalisation, see Ferret, J. and Khosrokhavar, F. (eds) (2021) *Family and Jihadism. The French Experience*. London: Routledge.

⁶ Examples of this type can be found in Khosrokhavar, F. (2018) *Le nouveau jihad en Occident*. Paris: Robert Laffont, in the section on the family, as well as bibliographical references.

religious identity as well as the racism she suffered after she joined fundamentalist Islam (the people taunting her, especially the forces of law and order towards her). Social suspicions often dissuade people from identifying with Islam, and in France, secularism pushes young girls to take off their headscarves in order to conform to social norms and integrate into society in terms of work and, more generally, social integration. However, in the case of young people in crisis, society's rejection of fundamentalism operates as an additional factor of legitimacy in the quest for identity (I am rejected with my full veil in this society and therefore I am legitimate and society is illegitimate and "unholy").

This type of attitude can go as far as total radicalisation, even jihadism or the will to become the wife of a jihadist ("jihadi bride"). This was not the case with Emma. But in her case we find the essential ingredient of a crisis linked to the strong feeling of not belonging to the family of origin and to a "cold" society and the quest for a strong and "warm" belonging, first in the Senegalese family and then in an Islamic "neo-Umma" that transcribes an essential phenomenon in the register of intimacy, namely: the restrictions in the name of faith on all levels (clothing, but also dating and food as well as sexuality) in the life of the individual, restrictions that are interpreted as positive, since they come from an absolute source, God. Fundamentalism in the case of Emma and many other young people plays this essential role: it restricts the freedom of the person in the name of faith and gives meaning to the very act of constraining the individual in reference to the Sacred. The prohibition (of non-halal food, impure sexuality, clothing without veil,...) now takes on a positive meaning in the register of the new faith that transforms the individual and gives him/her a new vocation and a way of being that brings, because of the very constraints it imposes on him/her, a meaning to his/her life. This can last forever, but in many cases, after a paroxysm, the new attitude can be questioned by the individual itself in a new quest for meaning. In Emma's case, it is clear that art and the willingness to explore the artistic meaning of life (especially through theatre) brings new meaning to her life and creates resistance to the constraints imposed on her by religious fundamentalism.

Inner subjectivation and the desire to recharge one's batteries in a new relationship to the world.

The attraction of religious fundamentalism (which is often wrongly identified with religious extremism) is in the case of many middle-class youth linked on the one hand to the crisis of the family (especially the stepfamily where authority is diluted between biological father and mother on the one hand, stepfather and step-mother on the other) and to the cultural disparity between parents of different cultural origins (one Maghreb, the other French or other combinations linked to the de facto multiculturalism of French society). Obviously not everyone who comes from this type of family or multicultural mix shows any sign of unease, but there are "elective affinities" between these phenomena and in a significant number of cases religious fundamentalism can be noted. In Emma's case, her sense of the failure of

fathers, stepfathers and mothers to do their duty and the abandonment of their offspring creates a mental void and a sense of non-belonging that religious fundamentalism filled for a time.

However, in many cases there is a capacity for action on the part of the individual to counteract the effects of radicalisation and to reinvent a new life after a period of crisis and adherence to the restrictive norms of fundamentalism. Emma is beginning to distance herself from these norms. She enrolled in university, tried to recreate her life and put an end to some of her fundamentalist activities. The indelicacy of the Islamic bookstore where she worked (she was not paid the salary she was promised) and the feeling that life has prospects that she could explore without the crutches of the fundamentalist faith now pushes Emma towards this type of experience. What upsets her is the lack of contribution from her mother, who seems insensitive to her financial problems, and the likely immaturity of her mother, who does not play the role of a mother in helping her daughter face the challenges of the new life. As for the father, he is simply absent.

In any case, Emma's case shows that if the entourage plays a positive role in encouraging the individual in question to imagine other alternatives to religious fundamentalism, many individuals could explore this path. To do so, institutional mechanisms would have to be devised to assist the individual. In Emma's case, this role was played in part by those who were listening to her and discussing her behaviour by contacting her and supporting her in her quest for mental and financial autonomy.

1.2 Case Study “Vincent”: getting out from a low-level radicalisation process after an identity crisis

A) **Biographical background**

Vincent: from peaceful life to delinquency

Vincent is a young Frenchman from an upper-middle class background of North African origin. He grew up with both his parents and his two siblings in a middle-class area. His father is an engineer, and his mother is a housewife. His two brothers both attended higher education and obtained degrees, furthering the family’s possession of cultural capital.

During his adolescence, Vincent questioned himself about his origins and his identity. Throughout this period, he rebelled against his parents' conservative upbringing and socialised with other young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods involved in drug trafficking and drug networks. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested by the police in connection with drug trafficking offenses, and sentenced to prison before he was 25 years old.

Radicalisation in prisons

Adjusting to the prison environment was a painful and difficult experience for Vincent. He attempted suicide shortly after his incarceration, despite continued support from his inner family circle. The fact that he attempted suicide shortly after his incarceration is known only through his mother; hence no specific details are available about this. Yet, it seems to have been the shock of suddenly being incarcerated from a secure middle class background, some propensity for depressive reactions and a culturally determined sense of shame which gave the impulse for suicide.

However, his extended family was never aware of Vincent's deviancy/difficulties, nor that he was incarcerated. This situation weighed heavily on Vincent and his parents.

After the attempt suicide, Vincent realised the importance of adapting to his new environment and started to build relationships with other inmates. Vincent was spotted by a jihadist, a proselytising and charismatic inmate who was, at that time, the head of an active radical group in the prison. For some time, Vincent was involved with this group and as a result, was filed as a radicalised inmate by the administration.

His motivations for mingling with this particular crowd were twofold: firstly, this group appeared as an extension of his previous identity quest. Secondly, he found relief in the sense of belonging to an in-group which also offered him protection. This analysis of his situation was reported by Vincent years later.

After some time, Vincent attempted to put the group at arms' length, as he struggled with its principles, values and its cause. Unhappy to see their prey come out of their influence, the radical group retaliated and violently attacked Vincent. Vincent was then sent to hospital with a fractured hand and suffered from further physical and mental health issues.

Prior to the aggression, Vincent had requested to be placed in isolation for his own safety. However, this demand was rejected by the prison administration. While in hospital, he decided and succeeded in carrying out his escape plan, and he broke out of jail.

Beneficial collaboration at all levels

Vincent met his new girlfriend during his escape abroad. She has been offering Vincent moral and emotional support since his return to prison, and has been appreciative of the exchanges and individual assistance offered by the exit programme.

Similarly, Vincent's mother deems that the programme and the relationship with its practitioners/experts have given her a much-needed space to talk and confide. A bond of trust has been established between the practitioner and the mother. This confidence-building took place through regular exchanges, especially by telephone during the 2020 confinement period. During these exchanges, the practitioner maintained an attitude of listening and advice, both on the judicial aspects of the son's situation and on an external positioning allowing the mother to distance herself from the family drama of Vincent's incarceration and radicalisation. Positioning herself as an "older sister", she helped to move the whole situation forward by creating a more peaceful and supportive atmosphere in the whole family and social group that surrounded Vincent while he returned to prison after his escape.

Over time, through direct and indirect exchanges, it appears that Vincent had begun to adapt to his situation and has come to terms with the prison environment. The support of his girlfriend and parents has grown stronger. His idea is that when he leaves prison, he and his girlfriend will settle down as a couple in an unoccupied family home, giving him necessary time to find a job and organise his life. It is a development that Vincent drove forward essentially on his own, from the moment he decided to return to prison on his own, and that he was placed in a different prison and that he now found himself surrounded on the outside by his family, and especially his new girlfriend. These decisions and new circumstances have given him more control on his destiny. This allowed him to change his relationship not only with the institutions (prison and law enforcement), which had calmed down, but also his relationship with himself, which had entered a phase of self-empowerment and self-construction, whereas until then he had been in a self-destructive flight from reality, in which he tested the limits of what he could do, until he was caught up by reality, both in the delinquency cases in which he was involved, and in his proximity with radicalised people whom he later met in prison.

Whilst awaiting release, he has been participating in a range of cultural and sport activities such as theatre and reading. *"I continue to read sociology books, Pierre Bourdieu and others. I go to the library every Monday morning. I also do English and sports in the afternoons. I also do a bit of theater"*, he wrote to one of the practitioners.

New beginnings with the penitentiary administration

Upon his return to prison, Probation Services offered Vincent a programme to deal with radicalised inmates. Vincent hesitated and asked about the programme from another inmate, who had met with the programme member before dropping out.

His legal situation is still pending as he awaits trial for his escape. His girlfriend and his family have been offering continued support throughout this process. In the meantime, he has applied to have his sentence adjusted so that he can complete the end of his sentence in a form of conditional release. But this sentence adjustment project has also taken time to materialise, with the departure of his probation counsellors. He has been waiting for a new probation counsellor to be designated to him for weeks, despite repeated requests, which is commonplace in detention.

Moreover, the practitioner in contact with him and the family, before the refusal by the administration, exchange calls with him once a week, in response to Vincent's strong need for dialogue and continued shared interactions. These exchanges have been interrupted as of date, due to the administration's refusal to allow visits from the EXIT Europe project team. This refusal occurred because of the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus situation, as well as the fact that the prison administration has been under great pressure from researchers and release/exit programmes. The administration has already put in place a series of exit programmes and support for disengagement from radicalisation situations, through regular national or specific calls for tender for each region or prison center. However, an indirect link with the family has been maintained.

Vincent has launched a procedure for the official recognition of his two children, and was delighted with the progress.

B) The impact of the EXIT Europe project:

As previously mentioned, Vincent was the first to initiate contact with one of the team's experts. He approached one of the practitioners because she was known as researcher on extremist propaganda and recruitment and the client sought help and wanted to work through his experience of being recruited. He also volunteered to engage in a video testimonial project but the practitioner did not go through with this in order to safeguard Vincent against the risks that come with such testimonial. Following Vincent's

entry into the programme, the exit worker accompanied a process of reflection on his intricate judicial and personal situation, which led to his return to France and his reintegration in prison, on his own initiative.

His surrender, which was not under direct judicial constraint, reinforced his ongoing process of self-reflection and disengagement. Despite a tumultuous series of events, Vincent has achieved a sense of stability by bonding with his family. In this first phase of support, the experts' exchanges with the mother also contributed to the constructive outcome of the programme.

Subsequently, through the EXIT Europe project, the exit workers have maintained a close and external positioning to both, Vincent, the main beneficiary but also to his entourage, in spite of the refusal of penitentiary administration to authorise an official collaboration with probation services and the research department, in the follow up of the client.

Whilst awaiting the official response to Vincent's request for support under the EXIT programme, the team has maintained direct contact with him through telephone interviews, following ongoing restrictions under the Coronavirus pandemic which have targeted both visits and external research in prisons.

The tandem team has also been responding to Vincent's mother and girlfriend's needs; support has consisted in legal advice towards both his family situation with his children, as well as his legal situation. Assisting his family has entailed information-giving and listening, and the practitioners' positions have remained both committed and neutral. This trust has been nurtured by the ongoing support and assistance offered by the team and their understanding of the legal and personal contexts of Vincent's case.

Over the course of the sessions, a bond of trust was undeniably established between Vincent and the member of the tandem team he had reached out to. The practitioner's follow-ups have encouraged Vincent's self-analysis, and allowed him to reflect on his personal history and experiences, encouraged by the tandem team presence and positioning. This reflexive process has allowed him to delve deeper into his life history, as shown by his decision to participate in writing workshops in prison. Writing has also helped him to come to terms with his return to prison and his environment. Furthermore, Vincent has re-kindled the relationship with members of his family which he had perceived before as a difficult relationship. Overall, his morale has been bolstered by his mother, brother and new girlfriend.

This has contributed to an evolution in his positioning: he has been opening up in sessions with the exit team and has reported that he feels more comfortable in his interactions with his immediate environment. He has less difficulties than before in recounting his daily life, and began to reflect on his future after detention, both professionally and personally, especially concerning the legal recognition of his two children.

On Vincent's return to France, the practitioners considered scheduling a meeting with Vincent's lawyers in order to gain access to his legal files. This would have allowed them to gather additional information on his situation and evaluate his situation more holistically. It would also have informed the progression of his sentence adjustment verdict. However, despite his family's approval of this plan and repeated meetings and written exchanges with the administration, the request was rejected, and the lawyers even had difficulties to get an answer to their request.

In conclusion, the follow-up and positionality of the tandem of practitioners / experts helped channel Vincent's mindset into a positive state of mind. He was more integrated with both his family members and his role within it.

Since the beginning of the programme, Vincent has been voluntarily engaged, and has succeeded in projecting himself into the future of his concrete life, despite overcoming various obstacles beyond his control which have tended to thwart and slow down his plans (lawyers, absence of the probation officer). His request for continued follow-ups with the exit team tends to show that they have enabled him to gain more serenity, but authorisation for these sessions have been thwarted by the authorities.

The tandem thinks that the EXIT follow-ups should extend beyond the end of the project outside the prison administration framework, on a basis that has yet to be determined.

C) Comments of the Local Evaluator, Farhad Khosrokhavar:

Vincent's radicalisation does not take the form of acting out, but of joining, for a relatively short period of time in prison, a group whose members were radicalised and wanted to recruit him into their gang. At first, they succeeded, but then he broke away from them and for this reason he was violently attacked by them. His story has classical aspects that will be briefly described below.

The identity crisis

With Vincent, we are witnessing a form of crisis within the family that can be called the "black sheep" phenomenon. While his brothers are successful in life, are well educated and aspire to achieve a standard of living in line with their parents (his father is an engineer and has done well in life), he goes through an adolescence crisis and rejects the family straitjacket and engages in deviant friendships, leading to drug trafficking and incarceration. His parents, of North African origin, tried to instill in him a "French-french" identity by already giving him a French first name. This type of attitude can contribute to the social integration of the generation of sons of immigrant origin, but in some cases it can exacerbate the identity crisis among young people who feel not only uprooted, but also rejected in their dual French-North-African identity.

Still, this son of an upper-middle-class family did not feel good about himself from his adolescence and, above all, the spectacle of his brothers' "success" and his personal failure to complete his studies pushed him to a mental break-up with the family. The family does not seem to be going through a major crisis (neither divorce nor a crisis of authority). Cases of this type can be found among other young people, for example in the case of the Cannes-Torcy group, where a minority of young people were from the middle or even upper-middle classes. They happened to have problems related to their schooling, academic failure and the fact that their siblings were succeeding whereas they were failing. A family environment that shields the young people from their parents' cultural past can, in certain circumstances, aggravate their identity crisis, insofar as they feel that they belong neither to the country where they live (France) nor to the country where their parents come from (North Africa, Black Africa or even countries like Laos as in the case of the Cannes-Torcy group). It is a dichotomised identity, marked by a double denial (neither French nor Algerian, neither French nor Moroccan...) ⁷.

Delinquency is an effect of the crisis, but it in turn accentuates the crisis in an exacerbated form: the young person identifies with a deviant group and the rupture with his family deepens, the consequence very often being his arrest and incarceration. This in turn accentuates the crisis, as in the case of Vincent, who attempted suicide once he was behind bars.

Radicalisation with no way out

In the hostile environment of the prison where he finds himself because of his delinquent activities, Vincent is in disarray. He is exposed to the aggression of other inmates and unable to protect himself due to his identity crisis. He is attracted to radical Islamists who try to indoctrinate him, offer him protection, and lure him. One moment he succumbs to them and goes in their direction, which ensures his protection against the attacks of the other prisoners. But then, gradually, he finds them too violent and, above all, the solutions they propose (outbidding violence and rejection by society) do not suit him. He tries to detach himself from them, but he encounters the violent reaction of the group that mistreats him and whose assaults send him to the prison hospital.

He seeks a solution after having been refused by the authorities, who deny him isolation, particularly because of the shortage of cells in remand prisons. He seeks and succeeds in escaping from prison. He goes into hiding. But gradually, he realises the impasse he has reached. He is supported by his family and, above all, by his new girlfriend who gives him self-confidence. He surrenders to the authorities and ends up once more in prison.

⁷ I have tried to emphasise this fact in a work dating from 1997, *The Islam of the Young*, Flammarion. Other researchers have expressed the same kind of idea in other forms, highlighting the identity crisis of young people.

Apart from his family, it is the practitioner group from EXIT Europe that opens a dialogue with him, on his initiative.

If Vincent is on a constructive path, he can rely on the prison's insertion and probation service and especially on his family, his mother and his brothers who never ceased to support him.

Low-level radicalisation

In Vincent's case, it is a low-level radicalisation. He was for a short time under the influence of a radical Islamist group in prison and then he broke away from it, not without difficulty. His story is that of a teenager revolt, of an identity crisis, ending up in delinquency and incarceration, the prison serving as a locus of a temporary radicalisation. If Vincent was able to overcome radicalisation, it is because of the assets that most young people who choose extremism in the name of Islam lack: he benefited from the unwavering support of his family, their upper-middle class status (he was able to be defended by an experienced lawyer paid by the family) and by his new girlfriend who helped him through the ordeal of incarceration. The two exit practitioners also helped him to exercise "subjectivation", that is, to take a critical view of his past and to develop credible solutions for the future. The family (and especially the mother) is totally open to the contribution of the exit team to help Vincent get out of the identity crisis and help him build a life project with his girlfriend, supported by his own family.

1.3 Case Study “Mary”: conversion as a solution of youth crisis and timid prospects for change

A) Biographical background:

A difficult childhood

Mary is a young teenage girl, an only daughter of a couple who separated before the end of her early childhood, with a French mother and a Caribbean father, both from a middle-class family with a Catholic tradition. After the separation, Mary was taken in by her mother and grew up in a peaceful provincial setting, far from her father who had settled overseas.

The geographical distance reinforced the distant relationship between the daughter and her father. However, Mary maintained a good relationship with her paternal grandmother, a retired school principal, who has welcomed her several times in her home mainly during the summer holidays.

Her life had been marked by this family break-up, attention disorders, and dyslexia, which made her school life challenging. Her mother believes that Mary’s academic failure was a result of her cognitive dyspraxia. Mary has shown difficulties in concentrating and learning, and as a result, was placed in a boarding school. Her discomfort also stemmed from the racism she experienced from her mixed heritage (white/Guadeloupean). At the age of 13 or 14, she was victim of racist remarks: “*One day she came home from school crying because she was told she was impure*”.

After the incident, relations between Mary and her mother became increasingly tense, and sometimes violent, according to the mother. Her maternal grandmother still remembers violent outbursts in which Mary attempted to hit her mother. Mary considers her mother to be responsible for her suffering, thus justifying her reactions.

The spiritual quest as refuge

According to the mother, it was shortly after this incident that Mary decided to convert to Islam, under the influence of a peer group at school. The paternal family rejected Mary following her conversion, with the exception of her grandmother: “*The whole family let her down. I can't let my daughter down,*” told us her grandmother.

The mother was always very present in Mary’s life and found herself overwhelmed when her daughter took refuge in a rigid vision of Islam, in the midst of an identity crisis during adolescence. At the age of 15, her mother decided to stop her daughter's schooling in mainland France to send her overseas to Guadeloupe, to live with her paternal grandmother. At the age of 16, in light of her learning and relationship difficulties, the grandmother decided to send her back to continental France to live with her

mother. Mary immediately resumed contact with the same group of young women with whom she had become radicalised.

Mary was able to conceal her conversion and her adherence to the Salafist movement. At the age of 18, she was even baptised during a big family celebration. Her mother explains: "*She was baptised when she had just converted to Islam. A great baptism with the family coming from Guadeloupe. She had been in hiding since the beginning*".

An attempt to break out of the family shell

At the age of 21, she fell in love with a young man belonging to the radical Salafist movement: "*She married him religiously after 3 weeks*" and "*left in full veil with him to live with his mother in the South of France*". They met via Facebook through her peer group. By getting married, Mary hoped to become independent from her mother and her family. It was also because she wanted to strengthen her membership of the influence group. She lived for six months with her husband, who had been abusive to her. Pregnant, she separated from him and returned to live with her mother. She decided to have an abortion. She kept her full veil despite the separation.

Back to the starting point

Aware of this spiral, her mother tried to warn and mobilise public authorities and local civil organisations, several times without any success. Despite the affection they feel for each other, the relationship between the mother and the daughter became even more tense and conflictual.

The mother has been particularly committed and willing to work with the EXIT Europe team. She has filed a complaint against one individual within the radical group she considered to be the leader and recruiter. The grandmother who lives overseas, has also agreed in principle to participate in the EXIT Europe programme. She was affected by her granddaughter's transgression of family norms. She has been involved in her life and ready to offer her support. She has attempted to mediate between Mary's relationship with her father, but to no avail even though they still occasionally communicate by phone.

Because of the geographical distance between them, Mary's close ties to her grandmother have been strained. Although she has affection for her grandmother, Mary remained quite distant from her, even though they called each other regularly to check up on each other and talk about mundane things without going into too much detail about Mary's difficult situation. Conversations were thus limited to superficial subjects.

Rupture and confinement

At the time of the counselling through the tandem team, during the confinements and de-confinements of the Coronavirus in 2020, Mary's life was characterised by family and social breakdown and even anomie. This already existed and worsened during the confinement measures. She spent a large part of her days in her bedroom sleeping and reading books with Salafist tendencies, according to the mother. From time to time she went out with her friends.

Her isolation seemed to be aggravated by the fact that she broke her mobile phone at the very beginning of the lockdown, and neither did she have access to a computer. However, she continued to interact with her radical peer group, who, according to her mother, seems to maintain a form of mental hold on her.

Her mother has expressed concern about her reading interests: "*Mary has no awareness of what she is doing and the consequences on her life. She is in a state of rejection of everything*", her mother says. She also insisted on the magnetism that her peer group continued to exert over her and her disconnection from reality: "*She doesn't want to have other friends. She lives in a fairy tale*". "*She is deeply influenced by her peers. She does not hesitate to lie. It is obvious that she finds answers in this indoctrination. She is completely in tune with the traditional role of the housewife. She is even ready to accept a polygamous husband. She is ready to accept many things. She has joined the movement to defend her cause. She is also afraid of doing something that would displease the group*". As with her school career, her professional integration has also resulted in failures. "*She worked for a month but was not renewed. She then got a small contract of two hours here and there. But nothing really stable*". According to her family, her double failure at school and at work is linked to her learning disabilities.

A new attempt at autonomy

During the period of de-confinement in summer time, the relationship between Mary and her daughter stabilised and became appeased, although some conversation topics remained sensitive: "*The atmosphere at home is calm and serene, as long as I don't broach certain subjects such as religion, the future, employment, money*" (The mother).

Mary received a new mobile phone and reconnected with her group of friends. She was still not very present on social networks and only used them to communicate with her network, according to her mother. She was going out again with her veil on. Her mother said "*she often goes out late at night without knowing where, with her (religious) 'sisters'*". Her girlfriends are the only people she really listens to. She holds her friends in high regard, and attempts to reciprocate the feeling of protection they foster.

Mary relied heavily on her group of "sister" friends to find work, which has become complicated due to her low professional qualifications and the wearing of the full veil. She trusted they will allow her to

find work opportunities. The search for casual work in particular social circles reflected her desire to maintain her full veil. She was aware of the impossibility of finding a job outside these sectors and without the help of her network with whom she shared this vision of Islam.

Therefore, the practitioner found that professional development and career advice offered an opportunity to pursue exchanges with Mary, even though her job search and desire for independence was conditioned by the fact that she could keep wearing her full veil. In France, this is a significant obstacle to professional integration. Moreover, she has not given her job search much thought in the long-term: her desire to seek employment was fueled by a search for independence rather than professional fulfilment.

During the summer of 2020, after the first confinement and despite her efforts, Mary remained in a situation of isolation and confinement. Her mother reports that she has been getting up around noon and going to bed late, spending most of the day in her room. She did not participate in household chores. She continued to see her friends and comes home late at night wearing a full veil, unconcerned with the 2012 ban of the Niqab in France.

In spite of this dress code indicating continued withdrawal, she registered with the “Local Mission”, which is a Job Centre specially targeted towards young people. Even though her career plans were not very detailed, she requested information on a youth worker training course, and expressed she wished to work with children.

She applied and wrote a cover letter where she projected her own experience onto this profession by writing that she would like to focus on children with severe learning disabilities.

A few years ago, Mary showed interest in cooking and started a vocational training course in cooking for a few months, before giving up. Over the course of the meetings with the exit team, Mary has broadened her field of job research and was later seeking work in childcare or as a cleaning lady even if she still struggled with putting together a job search strategy.

A new project

Shortly after the end of the second confinement (autumn 2020), her mother managed to convince her to go overseas to visit her paternal family. Mary accepted and prepared for a three-month stay with her paternal grandmother. The first two weeks had gone by without any incident. Her mother felt relieved and congratulated herself on this success, especially with the paternal grandmother who wanted to give her a daily feedback on Mary's state of mind and normal behaviour. The calm would not last long because from the third week onwards, Mary changed her behaviour radically and asked her mother to advance her return ticket. She reproached her grandmother for forcing her to convert to Christianity. Despite the geographical proximity, the father continued to be distant from his daughter. He only helped her on her arrival to carry out the administrative formalities related to the health situation (Covid test).

Her mother refused to change the ticket and reminded Mary of the deal between them concerning the three-month stay.

B) The impact of the EXIT Europe project:

Mary's mother reached out to one of the practitioners through her presence in media and in networks specialised in women radicalisation issues. Shortly after, a relationship based on the practitioner's readiness to listen to the mother, was established. It took several meetings with the mother to create a climate of trust - and discussions revolved around approaching her daughter with fewer preconceptions.

At some point before the summer of 2020, an appointment via Skype was agreed with the mother. Mary was in the house during the appointment, and her mother tried to present her the team, and introduced them as 'religious experts'. Mary immediately shut down and refused to speak with them. It took several weeks for the contact to be re-established. In view of the incident of this first attempt to contact the young woman, the tandem team spent a considerable amount of time analysing the different avenues to calm the relationship between mother and daughter, and secondly, to approach Mary.

The practitioners have even asked for advice from the scientific and methodological level of the project, in order to approach the client, after the failure of the meeting with the mother. A draft letter was prepared:

Hello,

we are xx and xx and work for Dialogues citoyens.

Some weeks ago your mother contacted us because she was worried about you. Your mother thought we were experts on religion which is not true. We are no experts on religion. Rather, our work is to help young people and their families in case they get into difficulties. In so doing we have also worked with some religious young people and in these instances both we and the young people have learned a lot from each other. On top of this we also are generally interested in how young people get along in today's world – and some of us do research about this.

Now, we don't know whether you and your mother really have difficulties because we only spoke with your mother and tried to help her. Therefore, we write to you today so that you have our names and emails and can contact us if you want.

Of course, we would not tell anything about what your mother said since this is always confidential. But what we can say is that your mother is concerned because it seems that there is lots of arguments and stress between you two and she fears that this may harm you in your future life. Also your mother seems worried about the impact of religion.

We do not know whether these concerns are realistic – and how happy you are with your life. But we sure would very much like to get to know you, now that we met your mother – and maybe help you, as we did with some other young people!

Therefore, if you feel that talking to us could be helpful for you, now or later, please don't hesitate to write back to us. We, in any case, would enjoy meeting you, learn how you are doing and see whether we can be of help.

In any case we send you out best wishes.

In the end, the letter was not sent because the practitioner in contact with the family decided to contact the mother directly, after the summer time. After a few exchanges, the mother recognised that the way she had presented the tandem team was misguided. It was agreed that in order to encourage Mary to reach out, the mother would ease tensions in the relationship with her daughter and clarify the nature of the support offered by the EXIT project. After the summer, the practitioners and Mary successfully entered an exchange.

After several unsuccessful attempts to reach Mary by email, Skype and telephone, the practitioner travelled to meet Mary at her home. Mary was reluctant at the beginning of the meeting but appeared more relaxed and talkative once she was alone with the practitioner. Mary enjoyed the lunch meeting at her mother's home. The mother reported: *"It is the first time that her daughter comes to eat with her guests. It's a very good sign, I think you've scored points, we'll see what happens next"*. She was reassured that she has not rejected the person. On the contrary, she seemed to have liked her.

Through continued interaction with her, the practitioner attempted to gain her trust without any pressure, by phoning her every fortnight, just to see how she was doing. Following this first meeting, Mary repeatedly agreed to new appointments for follow-up meetings, but she then became hesitant and cancelled them. She remained constantly on her guard and showed suspicion. The Skype incident before summer time reflected the constant oscillation between cooperation and tension in her relationship with her mother. This tension was palpable during the Skype meeting, during which the mother wanted to force Mary to talk to the tandem team.

The exchanges with Mary's mother focused on her perception of her daughter's feelings and personality. The practitioner encouraged her to practice acceptance on her daughter's right to spirituality and religion. She stressed the importance of recognising Mary's ability to position herself willingly, as an adult, urging her to draw parallels with her own experiences.

Finally, another, interwoven step was to help the mother to reflect on her daughter's learning disabilities in light of her recent reading habits, for example. By deconstructing some patterns, the fact that Mary

was able to read these books was a demonstration of her ability to concentrate and learn; this put some nuance to the issue of learning disability which was very dominant in the mother's view of her daughter.

In the course of the follow-up it became apparent that Mary has remained closely linked to her group of girlfriends, who seem to provide her with the comfort, emotion bonds and recognition she does not find in her inner family circle.

C) Comments of the Local Evaluator, Farhad Khosrokhavar:

Mary is a young woman with certain traits that led her to convert to a hyper-fundamentalist version of Islam, Salafism. She combines psychosomatic handicaps and a mixed-race background (Guadeloupean father, French mother) which exposes her to racism.

The family and its crisis

Like with many cases of Islamism, the family break-up was extremely traumatic also in the case of Mary. Her father separated from her mother and as a result she had a worsening teenage crisis at home. Added to this is the fact that her father has a Caribbean background and that Mary is therefore a mixed-race woman whose skin color exposes her to discrimination in daily life. A third factor is her dyslexia and her difficulty in learning, which has made her school career difficult and has led to her family considering her to be disabled. Mary's self-image is profoundly degraded as a result, the experience of racism at school and her failure at school put her in a situation where she felt deeply abandoned. Her mother, a school principal, has given her the image of a woman who has "succeeded" in life at the very time when she, disadvantaged by her dyslexia and concentration problems, the absence of the father and the omnipresence of this mother of Catholic tradition, "had failed". This created a situation where she was suffocating: too attached to her mother and without a father who would possibly remind her of rules and realities, she is truck by an unavowed feeling of rejection by her mother. Also her different skin color set her off from her "white" mother and the sometimes racist discrimination at school pushed Mary to find an alternative to her social context, which was both inaccessible (her absent father and her mother embodying a social hierarchy to which she could not have access due to a lack of further education) and too close (she lived with her mother, who probably also tried to compensate the missing father). This alternative is then found in the rigid Islam of Salafism.

Conversion as a solution to the crisis

To a hopeless situation Mary finds a solution that destabilises her whole family: her conversion to a fundamentalist version of Islam. A mother who is too "sticky" and constantly reminds her of her deficiencies is replaced by a peer group that recognises her as a full member through her conversion. She no longer has a problem of racism within the group, nor a feeling of inferiority linked to her

disability. Her faith becomes the yardstick by which her status within the group is measured. The mother tried to counteract this overwhelming influence of the group by sending Mary to her grandmother's home in Guadeloupe, but the experiment failed due to Mary's concentration and learning problems (no adequate school at hand for her disabilities) and she was sent back to her mother's home in metropolitan France.

Mary is deeply attached to this group of Salafist women who welcomed her and erased within the group her handicap, her dyslexia and her inferiority as a mestizo, declaring that for Islam all people are equal before God, provided they are pious. Mary finds in this fundamentalist group a form of consolation and preferential treatment as a convert, as the members of the group find that they will have merit before God by favouring the conversion of the follower of another religion. Belonging to the group is now of paramount importance in the eyes of Mary.

At the age of 21 she fell in love with a young Salafist whom she married after meeting him on Facebook, opting for full veil and going to live with her husband's mother in the South of France. Abused by him, suffering from violence and pregnant, she returned to her mother's home after six months. She decided to have an abortion despite the fact that according to the religion of Allah (but also Catholicism), it is forbidden to do so. But she took this decision without being forced to do so by her mother (since the mother knows how to stand up for her when she needs to).

Conversion to Salafist Islam led to her rejection by her family and in particular the paternal branch, Guadeloupe, which is marked by a more practicing Christianity than in metropolitan France, which is profoundly secularised.

The wearing of the full veil, which is legally prohibited in France in the public space, poses a problem for a Catholic mother who is trying every alternative to get her daughter out of a path that leads to deadlock, particularly in terms of paid work and a "normal" social life.

Mary is accustomed to a form of opportunism: even when she converted to Islam, she accepted to be baptised to mislead the family from Guadeloupe, this duality being justified by the strategy of "taghiah" on the religious level among some Muslims.

Moreover, her adherence to a rigorous version of Islam did not prevent her from carrying out an abortion, which reveals a significant capacity for adaptation on the part of a young woman who declares herself to be Salafist.

However, her negative marital experience did not shake her rigid faith and in particular the wearing of the full veil. The reason for this is that the Salafist female group gives her a sense of existence and dignity as a believer that she feels is profoundly lacking in real society, where her multiple handicaps and her situation as a mestizo expose her to social disregard. The group gives her the feeling of being one of the chosen ones, transforming social inferiority into superiority in faith. This "conversion"

enhances her in her own eyes and also introduces a differentiation from her mother. It offers her an opportunity to be herself by distinguishing herself from a Catholic mother who tends to draw her into a filial position that denies her existential autonomy.

Timid prospects for change

The EXIT Europe team was able to intervene thanks to the mother who seeks to help her daughter in every possible way. However, Mary does not accept too radical an intervention from her mother. Every time the intervention becomes too challenging, she perceives it as an intrusion and then she refuses to cooperate. At first Mary was reluctant towards the exit team, but little by little she agreed to exchange under certain conditions. Confinement reduced her activities, her life being spent in her room between sleeping and some reading or playing in the children's square. However, being confined did not end her relationship with the Salafist group, which continues to exert a mental hold on her. However, this should not be seen as an exclusive expression of manipulation on the part of this group. Mary satisfies her need to belong to a group in which her multiple handicaps are not perceived as prohibitive, and this group offers her the opportunity to have safe status within it. Moreover, the norms enacted in the name of Islam give her a sacred legitimacy that life in a society based on performance and methodological individualism does not grant her. For her, Salafism is a refuge and as long as there is no possibility of socialisation outside this group, she will be attracted to it. The problem is that belonging to this group in turn prevents any possibility of autonomous socialisation, depriving her of the initiative to reintegrate herself into the social fabric. The lack of consideration that her family shows towards her by calling her "disabled" and by perceiving her conversion as a consequence of her lack of judgement or even her mental deficiency, makes it even more difficult for her to detach from a fundamentalist group that gives meaning to her existence.

The practitioners of the EXIT Europe project tried to facilitate Mary's awareness by encouraging her to open up more to the world and to attempt social integration beyond the Salafist group. But this work requires a sustained relationship with the mother, which arouses Mary's mistrust. It is to be hoped that in the long run she will realise that the practitioners are not on her mother's side but want to help her become critically aware of her existential options: until now she has chosen them according to a principle of closing in on herself and her fundamentalist reference group rather than opening up to the social world in which she lives. The practitioners are trying to make it easier for her to reconnect with the real world rather than shutting herself up in a group that de-socialises her.

1.4 Case Study “Oscar”: an illness and the feeling of exclusion leading to radicalisation & a follow-up which had not begun

A) Biographical background

Oscar is a young adult of 18 years old, he lives in the region of Marseille and comes from a family of North African origin, with five brothers and sisters. His father is a blue-collar worker and his mother worked odd jobs that left her little time to care for her children.

Oscar is physically handicapped, which meant that he often found himself marginalised from his peers in his neighbourhood and in school. Following hospitalisation, at the age of 13, he was incapacitated for three months over a summer.

During this time of loneliness and isolation, he spent several months making discoveries on the Internet. He became concerned with global events and particularly those in the Middle-East. A growing obsession with injustices and events related to Israeli and North-American interventions in the area, pushed him towards critical worldviews. As he became interested in ideologies with claims to Islam and jihadism, he attempted to contact people who claimed to be the leaders of these movements through social networks.

Eventually, he created a Facebook identity, through which he got involved in social networks, with hundreds of friends who shared his content and the ideology he increasingly identified with. His positioning was open and naïve, and the recruiter he wanted to engage with did not respond to him at first, out of mistrust. He finally got a response from a contact abroad, who put him in a jihadist cell. He thus found himself involved in the preparation of a terrorist attack, which became known by the intelligence services. He was imprisoned as a minor and sentenced to five years in prison, two and a half of which were a conditional sentence. The reason was to have wanted to organise this attack in France. He also wanted to join the ranks of Daesh in Syria.

The beginnings of his imprisonment were difficult because he did not want to be followed by a judicial protection educator, in whom he saw an agent of the state (and therefore an enemy). Over time, his behaviour changed in prison and he agreed to open up to others, to participate in activities and to "integrate" which also entailed radicalisation. It is, in his words, in this particular time in his life in prison, that he began to de-radicalise.

His administrative situation, from conditional release, requires him to report to the police station once a year until 2036. He was also monitored by an educator from the judicial youth protection up until October 2020 on a monthly basis.

When he was released from prison on parole, Oscar contacted one of the team's practitioners, who specialised in disengagement; and was visible in the media concerning these issues. Oscar had expressed

that he wished to help people to disengage, as he perceived his situation as akin to falling prey to a radical discourse, from which he considered himself to be free now. Based on his experience, at the time, he wanted to get involved in work against radicalisation. He felt he had been abused and manipulated because of his youth (15 years old at the time of the events).

Oscar proved to be a good student from an academic point of view. After his release from prison, he resumed his studies to finish high school and has obtained good results in his final year. He obtained his baccalaureate and then intended to enter higher education, and more specifically, in communication sciences.

Regarding his representations, he deplored the fact that society has a purely repressive vision of the jihadist question. He perceived debates on radicalisation to be centered around protecting society from radicalised individuals/jihadists, rather than engaging with systemic causes. He saw social networks and the media as dangerous and exacerbating forces on this issue. Hence, for Oscar, the answer to radicalisation is societal, and must be rooted in social re-integration.

Oscar had fueled his resentment towards institutions that do not make all the necessary efforts to facilitate the integration of people who are considered to be "radicalised". He is critical of 'society's' viewpoint, which locks ex-jihadists into a fixed identity. He perceives the 'jihadi identity' ascribed to him by institutions as an example of the powerful stigma at work in society and in his personal relationships. In his view, society is more lenient towards pedophiles than with a prisoner convicted for having consulted jihadist sites.

He felt that this stigma of radicalisation has impacted his social relationships, as several of his friends distanced themselves from him after being informed of his conviction. He did not seem to be aware of the seriousness of the charges against him, and continues to portray himself as a victim. Although the press has not disclosed his name because of his status as a minor, many people seem to have stopped talking to him since his court appearances. Despite his awareness of what he thought to be a popularity with girls his own age, before these events, he reports he had suffered from the loss of personal relationships.

B) The tandem team's intervention with Oscar

As previously mentioned, Oscar contacted one of the project's experts, following her public appearances in the media, speaking about primary prevention policies and programmes in different regions in France.

When he was released from prison at the age of 18, he sought to contact her, in order to exchange with her about his difficulties. He felt abandoned by all and isolated after his imprisonment. Much of the information obtained in this case came from this period prior to the start of the EXIT Europe programme in France through *Dialogues Citoyens*.

Initially, the practitioner/expert responded to Oscar's request to speak out and receive advice. His interest was sparked when later, she suggested that he should work further on disengagement within the framework of the EXIT Europe project.

When a first meeting was organised with the tandem team, the result was that the confidence-building dynamic that had been growing beforehand was lost. The second practitioner attempted to gather information to define the candidate's profile and to complete the project's entrance interview template. Oscar was overwhelmed by the questioning and his sense of insecurity put an end to the work that had begun.

The practitioner Oscar had initiated contact with had focused on listening and soft coaching. They discussed his studying plans after high school, after he obtained good results in his finals.

It had been evoked that Oscar would be able to settle in a city the practitioner knew well because she lived there before and was ready to give him contacts and practical information. These preliminary exchanges, which did not tackle the issues related to his radicalisation head-on, stopped afterwards. For several months, his first contact practitioner tried to maintain his engagement by leaving the doors open for him to talk again. However, this link could not be re-established before the end of the project.

Today, through social media and social networks, the tandem team has observed that Oscar appears to be reasserting fundamentalist practices of Islam. His profile pictures show him wearing traditional Islamic clothing and a beard, but this cannot be affirmed as communication has been cut off. As a conclusion, the practitioners became aware that the beginning of disengagement work, which was undertaken with Oscar, should have been done without questioning him head-on, but rather emphasising trust-building and support – and also preparing him for the difficult path ahead and the challenges to be met. Another possible approach could have involved social and probation services, but the tandem team of the project assumed this would have been felt as even more intrusive by Oscar, as he no longer wished to begin with the exit work process.

It was the inexperience of the practitioners who overly emphasised on the entrance template protocol, that caused this case work to fail – and kept the client from engaging in the intervention.

C) Comments of the Local Evaluator, Farhad Khosrokhavar:

Oscar (he has a Maghrebian first name) is the only individual of the four cases followed by the exit team who belongs to the working class. He comes from a family of immigrants who lived in so-called sensitive neighbourhoods in the Marseille region, with five brothers and sisters. His family is of North African origin, with a working father and a mother who is a cleaning lady or does small temporary jobs to make ends meet and feed a large family. Like Mary, who has had physical problems, Oscar suffers

from a disability that has contributed to isolating him from others, especially young people, by preventing him from enrolling in the local schools.

Oscar, an illness and the feeling of exclusion

Oscar's physical handicap isolated him from other young people and, above all, locked him up in a solitude conducive to making him explore the paths of radicalisation. It was precisely during a long period of bed rest at home when he was young that he came to explore the Internet in relation to the injustice in the world and the suffering of Muslims. He became aware in his life in the working-class neighbourhoods (the 'suburbs') that there was profound inequity in the world, particularly under the aegis of the United States and Israel in the Middle East. His experience of the stigmatisation of "Arabs" (young French people of North African origin) is echoed in world politics and is "intellectualised" through the Web. Hence, Oscar suffers not only from a torn identity (neither French nor Algerian or Moroccan) but also from a handicap which accentuates his feeling of stigmatisation. He feels isolated not only in society (young people from the suburbs are rejected or distrusted) but also within the community of young people from the neighbourhood who do not want to socialise with a disabled person. In consequence, the young man is getting radicalised, starting from his double malaise, that of being the son of an immigrant and exposed to commonplace racism in society and of a disabled person who cannot even fit into the community of young people in the neighbourhood and, like his brothers and sisters, follow a normal school curriculum.

Radicalisation and imprisonment

Oscar's radicalisation process is linked to his isolation and his face-to-face contact with social networks. During his illness and hospitalisation and afterwards convalescence, he discovers on the web the justification of his double malaise by identifying the actors of evil that are America and Israel, in his eyes the causes of the suffering of Muslims around the world. Once in possession of this certainty, he turned to jihadist "authorities" via Facebook. He wants at all costs to get in touch with them directly, without taking into account the increased surveillance of national and European security services. Given the overly ostentatious nature of his approach, he arouses the mistrust of radicalised circles which did at first not respond to him. Eventually, he entered a jihadist cell more or less unintentionally and unconsciously. In any case, the preparation of an attack which this jihadist cell was engaging in, was closely monitored by the security services and this led to him being charged and sentenced as a minor to five years in prison, half of which was suspended on the charge of conspiracy with a view to terrorist action.

The stages of awareness

The prison and the presence of a specialised educator and his family situation (no other member has had any major legal problems) means that he is gradually becoming aware that he has gone down the wrong path and that it is not through violence (and in particular, by joining the Islamic state Daesh in Syria as he had tried to do) that the problem of justice in France and more generally in the world will be solved. He is well aware that the radicalisation that threatens many young men in the suburbs is a lure and those who succumb to it are in fact predisposed by the image they have of society and by the multiple challenges they face (racism, Islamophobia, i.a.). Oscar therefore seeks to make himself useful to young people like himself by promoting the fight against radicalisation. He tries to reflect on how he was abused by the Web based recruiters who took advantage of his deep sense of unease and uselessness as well as of the social humiliation he was facing; this was then channeled towards the violent struggle against society on the whole. This awareness also led him to become aware of the social prejudices against radicalised young people, whose motivations and feelings of frustration are not understood by society, especially in view of their origin and the social prejudices against Islam.

It is true that his convictions and the incarceration which ensued from it have created a social vacuum around him: those who used to mix with him now avoid him and he feels ostracised by almost everyone, including his girlfriend, who now refuses to see him for fear of being caught in the judicial stranglehold and being suspected of complicity in his conflict with the law.

Failure to communicate with the EXIT programme

In Oscar's work, he points out that the best way to fight radicalisation is not outright repression, but an attempt to ensure the social reintegration of radicalised individuals who are aware of the impasse of radicalisation. From this point of view, he agrees, without necessarily being aware of it, with the Danish authorities who try to assist young ex-radicalised people who have not committed violent attacks towards concrete projects of social reintegration through work and follow-up at the level of local associations and the neighbourhood.

Oscar established contacts with exit workers and agreed to cooperate with the pair of practitioners who were trying to understand him and to help him organise himself to engage in the prevention of radicalisation in a relationship of trust with him. But very quickly, he reacted to the requests for discussions and to the collection of personal information from him, due to his heightened sensitivity, he quickly broke off the bridges. From then on, the research group's attempts to contact him proved unsuccessful.

In the absence of links with the outside world, it seems that fundamentalist Islam would attract him as an ersatz for radicalisation. This fact is also observed in someone like the repentant Farid Benyettou, who now advocates fundamentalist rather than radical Islam, after having gone through a radical phase in the organisation of the Buttes-Chaumont group.

The problem is posed of how institutions can come to the aid of ex-radicalised people who have their susceptibilities, their Achilles' heel, and who, in the absence of assistance, can go in the direction of closing in on themselves, this time by espousing a sectarian version of Islam, admittedly non-violent.

2 CASE STUDIES IN GERMANY

Author(s): **Harald Weilnböck** (Cultures Interactive e.V., subcontracted for this project by Bundesministerium für Inneres)

2.1 Case elaboration “Client X.” including the earlier account of the so-called "Arrest Training"

Overview

The 17-year-old, male client X came to the distancing training on his own initiative. Youth welfare services had referred him to Cultures Interactive as part of the family assistance programme. Prior to this, the judge, who had sentenced him to imprisonment for bodily harm, suggested that while on parole the client should try to find an exit programme. The negative consequences of his charges, the youth detention and his soon to be fatherhood resulted in the necessity and extrinsic motivation to engage in the distancing training.

X had seriously injured a young man of about the same age by stabbing him three times with a knife in the upper part of his body. The client was under the influence of alcohol. On the evening of the crime he had been informed that a boy was seen drinking at a bus stop with a good friend's younger sister. When the client arrived on site he took the girl and left from there. However, he lost his temper upon discovering a case of beer. He then pushed the young man into the bus stop and stabbed him three times with the knife. In his self-perception he had wanted to protect the girl and punish the boy. Despite the fact he himself was heavily intoxicated, this is how he legitimised his free-floating aggressions.

The previous training

Before starting the distancing training offered by Cultures Interactive (CI), client X was in youth arrest and was recruited for an arrest training, in other words for a "reflexive competence training". The external provider of this arrest training was the association Y.

The aim of the "Reflective Competence Training" was to promote reflection and analysis of the problems of delinquency and violence as well as the reflection of the connection between right-wing extremism and violence. Youth welfare services handed out the file regarding this training to the client afterwards, which is an unusual and actually unacceptable procedure. The client then brought this file to the distancing training and presented it to the trainers. In the following, we have to refer to some - very problematic - methods and contents of this arrest training and its effect it had on the client, in order to illustrate the conditions and difficulties it caused the distancing programme presented by CI. Among

other things, the client received anatomy lessons of the human body. He should thus be made aware of the consequences of blows or knife wounds.

This emphasis on cognitive-knowledge-based teaching does not, however, correspond to the basic principles of good practice in distance and exit work.⁸ It is therefore not surprising that this approach did not fulfil the intended effect on the client. Quite the opposite occurred. Upon the client's first meeting with the new trainers of Cultures Interactive, he chuckled and said: "Now at least I know how to sever the spleen in one blow ... and how to eliminate an enemy".

The fact that X summarises the quintessence of his detention training in this manner, however, also points to deeper-rooted problems in the pedagogical method used in this case as well as the basic pedagogical attitudes the practicing colleagues showed towards the client. This is confirmed in the client's file in a serious manner, which shows that the training provider, the Association Y, obviously has and has had grossly unethical intentions with its module of anatomy instruction. An official standard letter to youth welfare exemplifies this, which is contained in the file and is presumably used with all clients. The provider of the arrest training (Y) considers the anatomy instruction as particularly advantageous, and highlights i.e. that later "as a result of it ... with a relapse it can be assumed that injury consequences are consciously accepted" and that one can accuse thus a deliberate act to the offender and pursue it accordingly as a premediated criminal act.

In this passage of the document, the provider of the detention training (Y) advertises to youth welfare, that by means of detention training the conditions are created for the client to be punished much more severe in the event of a new violent crime. At the same time, it imparts anatomical knowledge regarding the human body, which enables the client involuntarily to "eliminate the opponent", i.e. to inflict severe injuries or injuries resulting in death. This happened here with a client who had repeatedly stabbed "opponents" with a knife in an uncontrolled manner.

This attitude of provider Y in his arrest training thus not only violates his duty of care towards the client. It also contradicts the basic ethical rules of client work - especially the basic rule of do-no-harm!

In addition, this provider rated the success of the anatomy lessons with grades. X received an A+ (very good) for the "acquisition of theoretical knowledge about possible injury consequences and

⁸ Weilnböck, H. and Örell, R. et al. (2015) *RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice* (Draft version) [online]. Available at:

https://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

Uhlmann, M. and Weilnböck, H. (2017) *20 Thesen zu guter Praxis in der Extremismusprävention und in der Programmgestaltung* [online]. Available at:

<https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/radikalisierungspraevention/264235/20-thesen-zu-guter-praeventionspraxis>.

complications" and for having provided "the best possible performance of his own accord". This grade was given even though the client showed large gaps in the tests, e.g. by merely noting the cosmetic disadvantages of scarring as a consequence or risk of his violent acts.

Other elements of the arrest training, such as a visit to the Buchenwald concentration camp memorial site, also had pedagogically questionable aspects. Above all, however, the deeply rooted psycho-emotional dispositions of the client and his biographical background were not reached in this training, which is absolutely necessary for a successful distancing training. Thus, it can be seen from the entire training and the current condition of the client that he received very good grades, even though he had not at all come terms with many important aspects of his offence and motivations.

With the arrest training, the Association Y thus missed the essential goal of working on the relation between violence and right-wing extremism - in addition to the serious violations of the basic ethics of client work - and still gave the client very good grades.

This was a burden for CI at the beginning of the work with a new client. It is difficult to build on such a failed intervention, as the experiences that clients have had in previous pedagogical interventions always play a major role when starting a new intervention. The expectations of the client arise from them.

Situation and history of the client X

When the client began CI's distancing training half a year after the arrest training, his personal circumstances were such that he would soon become a father and thus faced a challenging personal development task. He had a clear idea of what he wanted to change in his behaviour with the help of the distancing training. His goals resulted from the negative consequences of his violent crime record. He wanted to avoid further imprisonment and probation at all costs in the future. X did not want to repeat the mistake of his father, who served a prison sentence during the first years of the client's life. He wanted to be there for his future child. The distancing training should also provide him with a concrete strategic advantage in credibly communicating his positive development to his probation officer (and the youth welfare office). So he once again hoped for a good grade, as in the detention training. But he also asked for support in complying with his parole conditions. X recognised the connection between his alcohol consumption and his violent behaviour. He wanted a personal change on both counts: to reduce drinking and to resolve conflicts with less or no violence. Basically, however, X did not rule out violence as a conflict resolution option at this point. In addition, he wanted to learn to deal better with the police. All of these goals were initially related solely to the behavioural level and were overly strategic in nature. At the attitude level, he initially refused to engage in any discussion of his right-wing extremist orientation: "I'm right, you're left, we don't have to discuss that."

X had a very serious alcohol problem. Prior to his imprisonment, he reported alcohol consumption on a daily basis. During his imprisonment, a doctor prescribed him a so-called cold withdrawal, i.e. the abrupt cessation of all alcohol intake. However, after his release he refused to be treated at a rehab clinic. He did not want to "listen all day" to being a "boozier". Inpatient treatment he considered to be too much of a restriction of his freedom. Although the client sought assistance from the youth welfare office, he allegedly did not receive any help as he was a minor. In the course of the distancing training, he repeatedly reported that he was able to control his drinking and drank significantly less alcohol - especially after the birth of his daughter. It was the feeling of "tingling in his fingers", the desire for violence, which he declared to be his drinking limit, which he absolutely wanted to observe. Nevertheless, he reported of two instances in which he was completely inebriated, one of which involved total memory loss.

He also reported that alcohol played a central role in get-togethers in the right-wing scene. On Hitler's birthdays, for example, there were regular heavy drinking sessions. He saw the following advantages in reducing alcohol consumption: He would not implement "stupid ideas" such as attacking an alternative house project. He had more money at his disposal, and he spent time with his daughter without smelling of alcohol. The client recognised that an alcohol intoxication not only increases his delinquency and propensity to violence, but also promotes his right-wing extremist behaviour and appearance. Throughout the entire training, however, X's alcohol consumption was an obstacle factor in distancing himself from violence and right-wing extremism.

X had no high school diploma. In the context of a vocational preparation year that started in September of that year, he planned to catch up on this qualification and prepare for a training. He found this educational measure annoying and kept his distance from teachers and fellow students. Among other things, he referred to the other students as "failures" or unsympathetic "losers". At the end of the distancing training, the client expressed the intention to start training as a warehouse clerk in a nearby large city. Financially, therefore, he remained dependent on his parents. Occasionally he earned a little extra money with odd jobs. This is why X lived in a centrally located apartment with his mother and little sister. His father lived in the same city. At the beginning of the training, X renovated an apartment in the neighbouring town where he and his girlfriend and daughter wanted to live together.

The client's mother attended one of the first training sessions. She reported that she used to be "rather left-wing" and belonged to the youth culture of the Gothics. She was bothered by her son's reputation as a "Nazi X". In her assessment of the client, however, she remained ambivalent: In some places she criticised his behaviour and attitude, in others she uncritically defended him. She made it clear that she had given X the responsibility for his actions. In her eyes, her son wanted his father's recognition and had therefore become a "Nazi". Among other things, the parents live apart because the father has a severe alcoholism problem along with a right-wing extremist attitude. X suffered from his parent's

separation. He could never stand his mother's new friends. He even tried to attack one of them with a knife. The client felt that his mother's care was exaggerated and fended off a close relationship with her.

During the first years of the client's life X's father was in prison. He had repeatedly committed right-wing extremist motivated assaults. The past and present acts of violence committed by his father filled X with pride. When the young man, whom X had severely injured with a knife, came to see X's father, the father gave him a headbutt and received a fine for it. The client is aware - not without pride - of the danger his father emanates. He claimed to keep his father away from training, court proceedings or other official appointments because of this. The client explained his father had too great a need to protect him and would therefore quickly become violent and be provocative. X refused to invite his father to training because he feared that his father would provoke with his Nazi tattoos. X did not report about his father's drinking problem. In the meantime, X states, the father is said to have withdrawn from the right-wing extremist scene. Although he was "politically still a Nazi," he was no longer active and no longer showed it. The client reports that he has little access and contact to his father, but seems to long for it. He reports that his father gives him more freedom than his mother, but also sets limits. He and his father do not talk explicitly about politics. Towards the end of the year, X reports that a half-sister who was previously unknown to him contacted him on Facebook. Thereupon he confronted his father. This message hurt X. He refused to share his father. He also decided not to get to know his "new" half-sister.

The client also has three other siblings. The two older ones live in a nearby university town, the little sister still lives with her mother. In his reports, the older brother rarely made an appearance. He does not seem to play a role for X, but his big sister does. Although she has contact to anti-fascists, he evaluates the relationship to her positively. X reported that she once brought a friend home. As this friend was a punk, the client attacked him. Thereupon his sister "showed him his place". Even when he visited her in her apartment, conflicts with punks present arose. In the meantime, however, the sister made sure that there were no more political enemies of X when he came. X did not perceive this as care, but as a gain in space and a victory for his attitude. In the course of training he saw his sister at regular intervals of 1-2 months, because she showed interest in his child. The client would like to be seen as a role model by his younger sister. Therefore she should not experience what he does. He was uncomfortable that she had experienced his arrest.

X has a bad relationship to his maternal grandparents. They are former members of the SED; (former East German socialist party) he referred to them as "red socks". A few years ago there was a political confrontation with them. Since then the grandparents have treated the client badly. He responded to this with further provocations against them, for example by showing them his room covered in right-wing extremist posters. On the other hand, X is very devoted to his paternal grandmother. She had commented positively on Hitler during TV documentaries about World War II. The client took this as a model for the upbringing of his daughter.

The client was ambivalent towards his place of residence, a town of 22,000 inhabitants. According to official information, about 1800 foreigners live there, of which about 30% come from Eastern Europe, 11% from Algeria and 11% from Syria. However, the client perceived the proportion of foreigners to be much higher. He overestimated it fivefold. He deduced that this posed a threat to himself, the right-wing extremist scene and the German population. The explanation of the officially collected figures had no discernible effect on him. On the other hand, he also saw himself and the right-wing extremist scene in a good position of power. In fact, there is a strong neo-Nazi scene in the town. In addition to a right-wing extremist store there are also spaces for concerts and other events of the right-wing extremist scene. The scene is also clearly present in the city public. Right-wing extremist acts of violence and demonstrations occur regularly. On the 1 May holiday, an unauthorised spontaneous demonstration ended in a massive confrontation with the police. In addition, various forms of action are practiced, such as right-wing rock open-air concerts or the action "Ein Volk hilft sich selbst" (A people helps itself), in which German homeless people are supported with food and clothing. Neo-Nazi stickers in the streets are part of the everyday image of the city and underline the well-known right-wing extremist strategy of "space reappropriation". The town is also home to a band under the surveillance by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The client had closer contact to the band's singers, as they attended the same boxing training. Thus, the client's local environment is dominated by right-wing and right-wing extremist youths and adults. However, the client disparagingly referred to many of them as "followers", since they would only attend demonstrations when called upon to do so or would not translate their beliefs into practice, i.e. political actions or violence.

In order to describe his social environment, especially his circle of friends in his home town, X used depoliticising narrative strategies in which he described them as persons who were not really politically motivated, i.e., who were not "real Nazis" but merely "followers". Nonetheless, his friends all had extreme right-wing attitudes and were close or closely knit to the extreme right-wing scene. Participation in neo-Nazi demonstrations, right-wing extremist motivated acts of violence and listening to right-wing rock were the norm in X's environment. By depoliticising his surroundings, X reevaluated himself. Compared to the others, he saw himself as a "real" Nazi. The client did not realise, however, that his circle of friends could be an obstacle to his distancing and deradicalisation. In doing so, he revealed a view of politics that emphasised above all the level of action and deed and neglected the level of political attitudes and views. Only those who commit right-wing (criminal) acts were to be taken seriously as politically "right-wing persons" in the eyes of X. Correspondingly, in his perception, distancing oneself from right-wing extremist actions and acts of violence is actually the decisive factor in distancing oneself from the scene. From the perspective of the trainers, however, there is no question that no real turning away from right-wing extremism, hatred and violence can be achieved without an examination of one's attitudes, but also of one's psycho-emotional and biographical dispositions.

In the distancing training, X also reported on how the right-wing extremist scene and its attitudes and (violent) acts determine his everyday life and leisure time. His activities as an "autonomous national socialist" meant a comprehensive pastime and a personal purpose in life for him. He gave this self-designation in order to distinguish himself from skinhead neo-Nazis of the 1990s, the "Kraken" (German for octopuses, a colloquial term for skinheads). The active fight against anti-fascists had become an integral part of his life orientation and everyday life. It was correspondingly difficult for the trainers to find so-called "functional equivalents" that could represent an alternative to his hateful and violent scene activities and the idealistic and sensual needs they contained. At the beginning of the training, the client stated that he liked to sing. With a guitar-playing, "politically neutral" friend he would cover songs about friendship and love. Later, however, it turned out that the two played right-wing rock. The client showed the exit counsellor a video of a relevant song in which he wore clothes typical of the scene. They performed as a duo, among other things, at a birthday party (but the guitarist was regularly so drunk that he could no longer play). X explained that he did not know of any non-right music that he liked. This was for himself a firm confirmation of his membership to the scene and to his identity.

The important search for "functional equivalents" was therefore a great challenge for the tandem team of exit workers. As X had already focused his life very much on the right-wing extremist scene and essential parts of his socialisation developed within it, all leisure time activities and interests either had a clear scene reference - or they were out of the question for the client. Also, his ability to socially communicate with groups outside the scene seemed to be very limited.

X was loosely connected to the fan scene of a third-league soccer team in the neighbouring big city. He moved within the Ultras' fan block in the soccer stadium where it came to confrontations with anti-fascist fans, who provoked him because of his political views. The factors that motivated him to go to soccer were similar to those that also attracted him to the extreme right-wing scene: Group dynamic experiences of cohesion and adrenaline-generating actions of violence in the confrontation with opposing fans and the police. The client had meanwhile given up his former hobby of riding BMX bikes. He also stopped attending boxing training when distancing training began, which used to prepare him for the use of violence on the street. Attendance of illegal street fights as a spectator was done regularly, which he no longer does.

Ideology - the attitudes of client X

The client represented a closed racist world view, which he justified (racially) biologically and expressed emotionally. He stated that he was disgusted by the skin of black people. He said that in case of doubt he would rather lose his job than shake hands with a superior Person of Colour (PoC). He would also not tolerate a PoC as a treating physician. In order to make the trainers aware of his deeply rooted disgust, he drew an inhumane comparison between blacks and spiders. The darker the skin, the more

repulsive they were to him. All black people look the same. In connection with TV documentaries, which were watched together in distancing training, he commented on a dancing PoC with the words: "That's how they all dance around the fire." This was in direct reference to linking PoCs with backward and wild things.

X' ideology was racially structured: whoever was a German patriot was decided by "race", which in turn was determined by blood. Accordingly, a black person, no matter how nationalistic he or she behaved, could never be a German patriot. He himself described his attitude as racist. For him, the term had a positive meaning. Although in other cases he had accepted suggestions for the non-discriminatory language of the trainers, he rejected alternatives to the word "negro/nigger". During the discussion he did manage to grant PoCs the status of human beings. Nevertheless, he considered them repulsive and inferior. His biological and racist ideas also extended to Jews. These could be recognised by their long nose and high forehead. As a child, he had contact with a Jew, a friend of his great-grandmother, whom he had very good memories of. Apparently, there was even a moment when X told of this positive experience of his great-grandmother's Jewish friend within his right-wing extremist scene. This, however, caused no significant reaction.

The client felt a diffuse fear of being overrun by foreigners in Germany. Although he conceded that not all people from other countries were bad, he related his rejection primarily to criminal foreigners and those who did not adapt to a German culture. However, such toning down seemed more like a rhetorical precaution to the trainers, especially since X had reported that he had learned how to tone down and camouflage racist statements at scene events and training sessions.

"Taking to the streets for the fatherland" was a motive that strongly mobilised him. For Germany, he said, he was ready to go to war under any circumstance. He felt the fight for his fatherland as an obligation resulting from his years of commitment to the "national cause." In this respect, loyalty was very important to him. He did not want to be seen as a (fatherland) traitor. For X, far-right demonstrations and violence worked as a form of struggle in defence of the fatherland. In accordance, X always associated political activities with violence and fighting against political opponents. Basically, the client adhered to a very dualistic friend-foe scheme. He revealed a cookie cutter-like thinking that recognised only binary differences. X could not grasp ambivalences and ambiguities. He rejected cognitive dissonance in favour of simplistic conclusions and opinions.

To begin with, the client vigorously refused to engage in a discussion regarding his political attitudes, but this may also have been related to the fact that the trainers initially focused very much on political attitudes. Although this resistance decreased with time, it always remained a major challenge in the distancing training of X. In the sixth meeting, the client took a clear stand on the political level for the first time and explicitly expressed the above-mentioned attitudes of right-wing extremism. In general, it could be determined that he had little well-founded knowledge about politics and his scene. When

questioned, he gave general, supposedly self-explanatory statements in response, with which he seemed to conceal his ignorance of the matter. X had picked up fragments of his right-wing extremist worldview at political training courses, during speeches at demonstrations and from scene publications (e.g. the magazine "NS heute" or right-wing rock songs). Overall, however, he found training sessions or content-related discussions boring.

The client identified the violent Antifa movement (anit-fascist) as his main opponent. Politically, he considered them to be "moronic," however he was unable to give any further reasoning for this. He reported violent confrontations with anti-fascists in the context of demonstrations, but also in everyday life or in targeted assaults. In this respect, the client seemed to display a permanent vigilance and to fear attacks in an almost paranoid manner. As a person, he was known to anti-fascists and therefore felt a constant sense of threat. For example, he suspected that the Youth Welfare Office employee responsible for him was spying on him and belonged to the Antifa, and he did not want to comprehend that a Youth Welfare Office employee would never belong to the Antifa. He considered it a disadvantage of belonging to the right-wing extremist scene to always have to look around to see if violent anti-fascists were in the vicinity. However, "Do-gooders" like social workers are not a threat because of their rejection of violence, and punks are not dangerous anyway. Only the violent Antifa was "the true enemy" because of their physical aggression.

However, X's enemies also included law enforcement agencies. In general, X distrusted the police. At demonstrations, he had experienced extreme violence on the part of the police. The officers were sometimes even "worse than anti-fascists". After his offense of dangerous bodily injury that landed him in juvenile detention, the police had arrested X in front of his little sister. For the client, this was extremely humiliating. Especially since he was anxious to make a good impression in front of her. Because of his criminal record, the client quickly came under suspicion during police checks. He often felt unjustly persecuted by the police.

X also imputed personal enmity against him and his father to the judiciary. A judge who was presiding over proceedings against X for the violation of paragraph 86a (Hitler salute) is also said to have already sentenced the father for similar offenses. To the client, the judge is said to have expressed the intention that he would "still put X's father in prison." In a way, the client sees himself in a family outlaw tradition, as X had already suffered from the actions of law enforcement during his childhood, when his father had been in prison. In his circle of friends, "hatred" of the police was widespread as well. The common enemy image of the police strengthened the cohesion among the male youths and formed a very strong factor of group and community building. According to X, the entire town hated the police. He felt encouraged in his delinquent and violent behaviour by his hegemonic rejection of state institutions.

Other institutions did not play a significant supporting role in the distancing process. The Youth Welfare Office employee responsible for the client did not understand X's multiple problems. He also did not

recognise the right-wing extremist threats on site, which was surprising given the local extent of the problem. At least he approved the financing of the distancing training within the framework of family assistance and educational support (Hilfen zur Erziehung). Contact with the youth welfare office was still very sporadic at this early stage. The client had only a few appointments there per year. He had no contact with the social workers at the school where X was completing his year of vocational preparation. He also had no interest in doing so.

The motives that led X to the distancing training were predominantly determined by extrinsic motivations. Initially, soon-to-be fatherhood moved the client to rethink his life and make some changes. However, this willingness depended very much on a good relationship with his girlfriend. In the further course of the distancing training, however, he broke up with her. As a result, the daughter increasingly receded into the background as a motivation and resource. Apart from this, the volatility and changeability of the client with regard to distancing himself from the right-wing extremist scene was a constant challenge.

Part II - the training process

The client basically seemed to be self-confident and socially competent towards the trainers (1x female, 1x male), who initially worked with X in a triangular approach. Central to the methodology of CI's distancing work is the professional relationship work in a triangular setting. Here, individual experiences and views are exchanged on the basis of respect for the person in order to increasingly encourage the client to critically examine his biographical experiences, his views and his actions. This encouraging attitude towards the client is one of the most important prerequisites for this. In the course of this procedure, the two trainers were initially able to build up X's trust. He opened up more and more and showed increasing interest in the views and experiences of the trainers. At the same time, a residual distrust always remained with X. He tried to find out more about the trainers on several occasions. Sometimes he used informal conversations before and after the meetings. He wanted to learn more about their place of residence, their political activities or personal information.

With his knowledge about the trainers, X sometimes also tried to achieve and demonstrate a position of power and independence. For example, he told the male trainer that he had seen him in photos of protests against a right-wing extremist demonstration. He then explained how his scene processes such information and, if necessary, outed and persecuted political opponents. However, as he perceives the trainers as "do-gooders," they do not represent real opponents for him. They are not a "violent threat" and therefore have nothing to fear from him or his scene. All in all, X's attempts to assume a position of power vis-à-vis the trainer were also understood, at least in retrospect, as attempts to build a relationship. In this way, the client attempted to establish contact and a relationship with the trainers, who were personally quite differently disposed from his position in life, which was characterised by fear,

aggression and hatred. Their subjectively perceived middle position as "good people" represented a great resource for the distancing process, so that it seems advisable for the future to find out more precisely how to maintain a methodology of holding a middle position.

The meetings occasionally took place at irregular intervals of one to three weeks. However, about halfway through the meetings, the distancing training was continued by the male trainer on his own. The team came to this decision after the client had shown greater openness about his political and world-view attitudes in a session he had only with the male trainer. Previously, he had always avoided such topics. Furthermore, the trainers noticed that the client seemed to have developed an aversion towards the female trainer. The trainers assumed that this aversion had to do with the fact that the critical political perspective of the female trainer was more noticeable, and that it also came from the fact that X could not perceive and recognise the female trainer, who was very self-confident and also physically strong, as a "normal woman". In this regard, there were also funny interactions when, for example, the female trainer and X had an arm wrestling fight to compare their strength in the upper arm. However, the team may not have made sufficient attempts to clarify this aversion and X's resistance in more detail and discuss it in person. Instead, the setting was adjusted so that the female trainer dropped out of the direct work. The male trainer continued one-on-one with the client from then on, the female trainer continuing to accompany the process in the background.

() Intermediate reflection

In retrospect this approach proved detrimental from a pedagogical point of view. First of all, it became apparent that the trainers' expectation of achieving an open and critical conversation about the client's political and ideological attitudes was a hindrance already at this early stage. Also, the trainers' tendency to focus on X's political attitudes and their possible change by countering or trying to confuse these attitudes had a deterrent effect on X at this stage. This stood in the way of a trustful interpersonal exchange. However, the trainers had not noticed this by this stage, which is why it was not sufficiently possible for them to leave the ideology-critical level entirely at first. They then could have chosen a consistently narrative and experience-oriented approach in order to consolidate the trusting exchange and to create the basis for personal change.

Furthermore, with regard to the setting, it would have been appropriate to discuss the basic observation that the client was more open with the male trainer even more thoroughly with him than had been done. A common and consensual perception of this could then be worked out, which would have been helpful in the work process. On an analytical level, a more extensive exploration of the relative openness regarding political attitudes towards the male trainer might have been possible and what it actually meant for this client. One question could have been, for example, whether this openness in political matters

might not have indicated the opposite of a personal opening, since such argumentative political debate can always be a means of avoiding personal contact and relationship.

Also, the component of gender role conceptions, which is always essential for violent extremism, could have been addressed and deepened in more detail. The assumption that X may not have been able to perceive and recognise the female trainer as a "normal woman" and therefore developed an aversion towards her can - if discussed with care and often - have an important impact in the distancing process.

Above all, however, it would have been important not to completely abandon the triangular setting, which is a basic prerequisite for distancing work.⁹ This is because the tensions in the triangular setting are an essential factor in the effectiveness of this method. In this respect, an attempt should have been made to set up a suitable mode of alternating between the two-person and three-person setting. It corresponds to the principle of triangular work that it is used in a dosage that fits the situation, i.e. that it can be temporarily reduced to one trainer (or expanded to a small group with additional persons). However, the orientation towards the relevant three-person constellation should be maintained in principle, even if this would mean in extreme cases that only the first and last meetings are conducted in the three-person format (and the second trainer is perhaps only partially present at the last meeting). In normal cases, this would at least make it possible that in the case of profound tensions between the three of them, the work would be done mainly in a confidential two-way conversation. This, however, would also imply that sometimes there would be an attempt to get together as a three-person group to see whether the tensions have changed or can be resolved - and whether a new interest in the three-person constellation can even arise. In any case, a client who has succeeded in completing a step of personality development in a two-person setting will always be happy to seek confirmation from a third person - or this personality development can be further consolidated by the addition of the third person.

() Further course of the sessions – “narrative truth” versus "truth”

In the further conversations, it was increasingly noticeable that the client used methods of topic hopping and provocations. This seemed to have served the purpose of maintaining extensive control in the conversation and possibly also distracting from explosive topics. The implementation of the planned methods suffered from this. The trainers addressed X several times about this speech behaviour, which led to the client recognising and reflecting on the topic hopping. He expressed the intention to do without it, which he admittedly did not always succeed in doing. But in the following, the trainer only had to remind the client of this waiver in order to return to the current topic.

⁹ Weilnböck, H. (2017) *The approach of triangular exit work - in a tandem team process*“ („Der Ansatz der triangulären Ausstiegsarbeit - im Tandemverfahren“) [online] Available at: <https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html>

In addition, the client tended to tell stories and experiences in detail. On the one hand, this was in the spirit of the biographical-narrative orientation of the training. After all, the goal was for X to relive his experiences while telling them, to process them while doing so, and to be able to make changes in the future. On the other hand, the sheer volume of often disjointed narratives also presented a challenge. Not all accounts could be given the space they needed. Some seemed questionable in terms of their truthfulness. This made it difficult for the trainers to believe and work with everything the client said. In addition, they intended to get X to compare his subjective perceptions and experiences with reality or other perspectives. However, this strategy rarely led to success. Most of the time, the client insisted on his perception. It proved to be conflictual and obstructive to criticise X's speech behaviour with the term "anecdotes". The client took this formulation negatively. He recognised the trainer's resonating doubts about the truth of his stories. It was a balancing act to maintain the relationship of trust and at the same time to question the client's account and subjective perception at appropriate and significant points.

Upon reflecting retrospectively, the trainers arrived at the following conclusion: The tensions caused by X's erratic speech and storytelling behaviour and the trainer's doubts about the truth of what was told indicate that the trainers had not yet used the attitude and technique of narrative interviewing consistently enough. Rather, they seem to have remained too much in the mode of critical and doubtful questioning of views, whereas it would have been appropriate to open up the personal experiences contained in X's reports, anecdotes, and narratives more deeply and to bring them to consciousness.

Precisely these doubts and criticism regarding the client's truthfulness or seriousness of the narrative ("anecdote", "erratic") should not lead to a factual discussion, which is not unusual in intensive pedagogical work. This causes alienation on the part of the client. Rather, these doubts should provide the impetus for tapping into the "narrative truth" behind what is said (as opposed to factual truth or comparison with reality). This can be achieved by intensifying the techniques of narrative inquiry (and also by techniques of "guided recall"). In this way, mutual trust is also strengthened. The clients feel that they are not doubted as a person and that the difficulties of exchanging and communicating with the trainers do not lead to personal criticism, but to more interest and attention. In this way, it is usually much easier to make the client aware of actual misunderstandings of realities, without the client feeling criticised or caught or may even be shamed.

() Biographical-narrative orientation of the conversation

However, the sessions were structured in such a way that the client was always given space at the beginning to talk about current events in his life: Experiences and conflicts that he considered worth telling, but also personal turning points in his life orientation from the more distant past. In many cases, X made extensive use of this opportunity to talk about himself. It was noticeable, however, that he often noted critical turning points in his life only belatedly or "incidentally" and seemed rather insensitive to

their impact (e.g. the separation of his parents, the conflicts and the break with his girlfriend and the mother of his child). Basically, X was not used to situations in which he talked about personal experiences, problems and emotions. He also told the trainers that he did not even talk about such things with his best friend. For him, opening up also meant being vulnerable and open to attack. This was countered by the client's defensiveness, which diminished in the course of the training, but would have required much more time than was available.

Following the biographical narrative approach, the focus was on the client's personal life history, with the main perspective directed toward the process of his radicalisation. The first contacts with right-wing extremism took place in the client's family environment. It was his father who had imparted a right-wing extremist attitude to him. According to X, his father taught him the Hitler salute at the age of two. Sometimes the client hinted that his career with such a father was in a way inevitable. He had also picked up comments with a positive reference to National Socialism from his paternal grandmother, to whom - in contrast to his maternal grandparents - he was very devoted. However, the personal and life-historical background of the grandmother and the experiential knowledge X may have had about her were not further addressed in the training, which in retrospect seemed unfortunate in light of the biographical-narrative approach.

With regard to his radicalisation, X reported one particularly crucial factor. A good friend was reportedly fatally injured by the Antifa in a large city nearby. However, as the training progressed, the trainers concluded that this was probably a subjective mythmaking by X, because there was no evidence of such a death in this city. It is more likely that his friend was seriously injured in an Antifa attack; and the client used the story to legitimise his future actions against Antifa individuals. He reported that he then explicitly decided to fight against Antifa persons without any boundaries and unjustly. He "didn't care about anything". From then on, he let his aggression, his need for punishment and revenge run completely uncontrolled. After this incident, he sought a violent confrontation at least every two weeks. His inhibition threshold for the use of cruel violence dropped significantly. Even when opponents outnumbered him this no longer deterred him from seeking violent conflict with them, showing a clear auto-destructive impulse. From that moment on, the fight against the political enemy took up more and more of the client's time and resources. For example, he began to observe a house project of the alternative scene. In order to intimidate an anti-fascist, he hung a rubber doll (from the sex toy product line) on his girlfriend's front door and wrote "Fuck Antifa" on it. In the training, however, X distanced himself from any attacks against women and family. "This line should not be crossed."

Violence against political opponents quickly became the focus of X's attitude toward life. In addition to the family imprinting by his father and his family, the instinctive impulse to violence seems to be the decisive personal motive for X to turn to the right-wing extremist scene. The adrenaline rush from the act of violence captivated him. The "action" at the demonstrations fascinated him, and belonging to the

right-wing extremist scene guaranteed regular violent confrontations. What attracted X to right-wing extremism was the fact that right-wing extremists had "the most enemies". The more the client took part in demonstrations and actions, the more confrontations occurred, and his ties to the right-wing extremist scene and world of thought strengthened accordingly. At first, X reported, he was afraid and stayed in the background during brawls. But the more positive experiences he had in the fights, the more he put aside his fear of injury and prosecution. This resulted in a guarantee of conflict, which the client viewed as positive. In the end, the client created situations with his open right-wing extremist appearance, in which violence and self-enhancement occurred. Only youth detention interrupted this spiral of violence and radicalisation.

In the course of the training, X increasingly gained the ability to reflect on and talk about his violent behaviour and his affiliation to the right-wing scene. In the process, he came to the realisation that the subjectively positive and satisfying (physical) experiences of violence made him completely forget the negative consequences and damage it caused. Despite or precisely because of the fear of injury, he also perceived his own health risk as an exciting borderline experience and as a satisfying "rush" for his mood. Even in the run-up to demonstrations, X was in a state of adrenaline-induced excitement. His thoughts circled around possible confrontations with anti-fascists and police. He was attracted to the uncertainty of whether he might come home injured. And these injuries in no way prevented him from continuing to seek confrontation. On the contrary, he feverishly anticipated them and seemed proud of the scars on his body because they symbolised his courage and will to fight, which he experienced as brave and manly. In the end, X summed up, "I took part mainly because of the actions and violence." In retrospect reflecting on the training methodology, a more determined narrative-biographical search for possible reasons for this action could have been conducted, for example, by talking about possible early (violent) childhood experiences.

Belonging to the scene increased the client's self-esteem in two ways. On the one hand, this resulted from the external reference. He perceived that his right-wing extremist appearance in the social environment of his small town led to a revaluation of him as a person and to more respect. In his small town he was known as a neo-Nazi, and therefore he was able to "feel big". Although unfortunately no further narrative material about concrete memories and scenes of this feeling of greatness was made available, the trainers were able to directly understand X's description from their own knowledge of this town. This was because X's place of residence had a widespread acceptance and support of extreme right-wing attitudes. In the client's everyday life, criticism of his attitude or appearance was rare.

In X's internal relationship to his scene, he was also able to increase his self-esteem through his violence. In the strictly hierarchical comradeship, X profited from his willingness to use violence for his reputation. His idea of being a protector of the defenceless or of an oppressed national community applied above all to those members of the scene who were less violent and defensible and thus, in his

perception, in need of protection. For this, he was held in high esteem by his comrades. At the marches, X appeared in accordance with his self-chosen role as an "autonomous national socialist" who marches hooded in the "black block" (the more violent group with a demonstration march dressed in black) and acts as a protector of the other participants. He proudly described how the violent male demonstrators ran on the fringes and at the front of the march because they had the task of fending off attacks and were given an opportunity to prove themselves within the scene hierarchy.

Thus, X himself also judged his right-wing extremist scene in a hierarchical manner according to the degree of violence. The more conflict- and violence-prone and the more dangerous someone's behaviour, the higher his personal significance for X. For him, neo-Nazis who were merely active in terms of content and ideology were more like "patriots" and not real neo-Nazis because they did not engage in violence. They thus lacked the active and violent action that he saw as an essential characteristic of neo-Nazism.

Due to his frequent participation in scene events and his willingness to commit violence, the scene's expectations of him also grew. It should not be underestimated how closely the right-wing extremist cadres are in contact with each other and build up pressure on individuals to use violence. Once it even happened during a training session that an important neo-Nazi of the scene called X and asked if he could participate in an upcoming demonstration. Even though X was cautious here, referring to his family and probationary sentence, it was noticeable how much the client valued precisely this close contact and cohesion in the scene. X expressly emphasised that he could rely on his comrades. They would support each other. The feeling of being socially integrated into his comradeship was extremely important to him. The clearest expression of this bond was the tattoo of his comradeship on his arm.

() The first steps towards leaving - and his own parenthood

The conversations with the trainers and X's increasing ability to reflect and talk about his violence and his extremist scene led to the first steps of a breakaway. In one session, X even told the trainer how he had once cried in juvenile detention because he was desperate. This would not have been possible in the first sessions of the training.

This incipient distancing from the right-wing extremist scene and his previous self-image as an "autonomous national socialist" also led to new self-designations. However, since the process of distancing did not proceed in a linear process, X fluctuated greatly. At times he described himself as a "patriot," then again as an "autonomous national socialist" in a reclusive position, and from about halfway through the training he sometimes described himself as a "dropout" or "former Nazi". Also in reference to the right-wing extremist scene, he sometimes spoke of "us" and sometimes of "them." The client also fluctuated in his portrayal of his role within the scene. On the one hand, he explicitly described

himself to the trainers as a very important part of his comradeship. He claimed to have participated in 200 demonstrations and about 60-70 confrontations, which, considering his age, was probably exaggerated. On the other hand, he tried to diminish his role, especially when talking about his exit process. This was because X wanted the training to have a positive effect on his probation service.

Asked about his political convictions as an "autonomous national socialist," X expressed that he wanted to "be his own man". He rejected right-wing extremist parties, because a party would only restrict freedom of expression. This by no means meant that X did not also maintain close contact with a cadre of the party "Die Rechte" (The Right) and later of the "Dritte Weg" (Third Way), both right-wing extremist organisation the latter of which encompassing highly violent persons from previously outlawed comradeships. However, the ideological and strategic debates within these parties and movements did not interest him. Ideological and political questions had only secondary importance compared to the motivation for "action" and the use of violence. X himself summed this up aptly in the reflection: "I could have joined Antifa back then." As long as the offer existed to act out highly affective forms of violence in a subjective role of protector of a group, one of his most urgent personal needs was covered.

Although the role as father posed great challenges for X, his daughter was fundamentally a very conducive factor in the process of distancing himself from the far-right scene. X was determined to be a good father to his daughter. He wanted to take responsibility. A basic prerequisite for this was, of course, that he would not be imprisoned again. After all, X himself had suffered during his childhood from the fact that his own father had been in prison for a longer period of time (for right-wing extremist offenses). Even though no further narrative evidence regarding concrete memories of situations of this temporary fatherlessness, it was understandable that X "wanted to spare his daughter" from having an incarcerated father. He realised that violent behaviour would have negative consequences not only for him but also for his daughter. Since he correctly attributed the danger of becoming a delinquent to the right-wing extremist scene, he began to distance himself from it. Thus, his daughter represented a distancing aid for him. Specifically, X used a photo of his daughter as a regulatory coping strategy. In moments of aggression, he pulled out her photo and looked at it to calm down and remind himself of her and his responsibilities.

In retrospect, it can be said in terms of methodology that a more in-depth and intensive delving into X's memories via narrative conversation techniques could have possibly helped to further strengthen his existing will to reduce his violence and delinquency.

The pregnancy of his girlfriend had occurred shortly before X was detained in juvenile detention. However, the relationship experienced an initial break early on, but X did not speak about this issue until the eighth meeting, when his trust in the trainers was already sufficiently solidified. Apparently, his girlfriend had sent nude pictures of herself to another young man while he was in prison. What this

meant in this case and what it led to was not further explored in the conversation. However, X reported that there had been a bitter argument with his girlfriend when he learned about these pictures after his release. Although it had been very difficult for him in this argument, he had been able to control himself - and he had not become directly violent. His view that violence against women was not honourable saved him from an assault. However, in this situation, he directed his rage substitutionally against a picture of his girlfriend and himself, violently hitting this picture. He was also sure that he would attack the recipient of the pictures if he encountered him. The trainer noticed that X could not express any feeling of being hurt by his girlfriend and he reported these events with a smile or grin on his face that was difficult to assess.

However, no further narrative exploration of the experiential domain of numbness or vagueness of emotions was undertaken by the trainer in this session. This would have been recommendable from a narratological point of view, especially since this emotionlessness/ numbness or vagueness is also known for the situations of direct violent behaviour by repeat offenders in the area of violent crimes.

For another instance, X behaved in a markedly de-escalating manner in this matter, which can possibly also be seen as an effect of the training. Because of his close connection to the extremist scene, his conflict became known, so that X's friends and comrades learned about the nude photos, including members of the Blood&Honour organisation. These then wanted to avenge the "deception" and restore the honour of their comrade - and planned an attack on the recipient of the nude photos. On the one hand, however, X was uncomfortable with the great attention to his cause; on the other hand, he recognised the dangerous nature of the dynamic. Therefore, he placated his comrades and insisted on sorting out the matter himself. However, the risk of re-offending that this posed for X was obviously not explicitly dealt with in this session.

However, X and his girlfriend succeeded in resolving the conflict, so that the two of them wanted to stay together and care for their daughter together. The client renovated the shared apartment in the neighbouring town. So he certainly seemed to want to take responsibility as a father. Also, one week after the birth of the child, the trainer asked X how he rated the stress level as a father on a scale of one to ten, and X answered that the stress was at level one, i.e. practically non-existent. The extent to which this may have had something to do with X not being very involved in the direct care of his child was not precisely determined in the session. Neither X nor his girlfriend fully moved into the new apartment. Only occasionally were they there as they wanted to take their time moving in together. Instead, they visited each other at their parents' houses. There they received the support of the girl's respective grandmothers. However, the client did not get along well with his girlfriend's mother as she often drank and was unpredictable. X reported that he was afraid of hurting the child. Therefore, he did not change its diapers. The daughter weighed less than other babies her age and was also smaller than average. The girlfriend had smoked during pregnancy and continued to do so. They bottle fed the child. X took over

this task very often. Despite all the difficulties of the situation, fatherhood supported his distancing from right-wing extremist circles and activities.

The relationship, however, would soon break down. The reason being a dispute about a visit of X to a fun fair. He did note that the relationship had basically been over since the story with the nude pictures and was only maintained because of the pregnancy. With the separation, X also increasingly neglected his responsibility as a father, as initially planned. But had always wanted to maintain close contact with his ex-girlfriend. According to him, he spent approximately 60% of his time with his ex-girlfriend in the new apartment and 30% with his friends. One-tenth of his time he spent at his own mother's place, when it became too much for him with the ex-girlfriend and daughter. During this period, the client started the "vocational preparation year" at school.

For the tenth session, the client was accompanied by his ex-girlfriend without prior notice. Possibly he wanted to show the trainer that the relationship was still working and that the ex-couple still wanted to be parents. Their interactions seemed pragmatic and fluctuated between relative harmony and indifference. The ex-girlfriend confirmed their joint intention to raise their daughter in a "neutral" way. She should grow up without racism and not become like her father. She addressed X with the words: "She will definitely not become like you!", which X explicitly confirmed.

The trainer encouraged and appreciated this joint decision and also had the impression that X was projecting his intention to distance himself from the right-wing extremist scene onto his daughter. The daughter should realise what he himself could not quite bring himself to do: Not to hold right-wing extremist attitudes and not to be organised in the scene. On a subconscious level, the fact that his child is a girl may also have played a role. For the female side of his family - e.g. his sister and his mother - seems to be predominantly not right-wing extremist but rather left-wing and liberal, and these women also played an important role in caring for his child. X's will to ensure a politically neutral upbringing for his daughter culminated in the statement that it would be acceptable to him if "his daughter later joined Antifa." Given the hatred X felt toward Antifa members, this was a very remarkable statement.

However, in this session, the trainer also confronted X with the idea that his daughter might later have a black boyfriend, whereupon X became unsure. While it was actually very important to him that his daughter does not notice anything of his racism, he now hesitated and said that he could not fully tolerate his daughter having a black man as a boyfriend: "I probably wouldn't let him into my apartment, or at least I wouldn't be able to shake his hand." From this it was apparent that the client's intentions of wanting to raise his daughter apolitically while continuing to remain strongly right-wing himself were in conflict with each other. However, both X and his ex-girlfriend were surprised when the trainer explained that their political attitudes naturally expressed themselves in their everyday actions and upbringing, and that their daughter would often notice their attitudes. Growing up "apolitical" for the daughter was therefore not possible as long as the client continued to have a right-wing extremist

attitude. It was apparent that they both understood "apolitical" rather as a synonym for not being organised in the right-wing extremist scene.

() Leaving for pragmatic reasons

In the course of the training, X's willingness to distance himself from the right-wing extremist scene steadily increased. After initial distrust of the trainers, X began to talk about a possible exit on his own initiative as early as the fourth session. He also began to refer to himself as a "dropout," although this attitude fluctuated. He reaffirmed the goals of the training, namely to make a fresh start and move away from where he lived. At the same time, he recognised the difficulty of the task, as residents in neighbouring towns were expected to have the same attitude "and nobody likes dropouts."

In analysing the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to the scene, X named the following as negative consequences: insecurity, since he always has to be attentive to the attacks by anti-fascists. In addition, the probability of conflicting with the law and being sent to prison increases. And in this context he can no longer see his daughter. In prison, he also fears attacks by other prisoners. He would also get into trouble with his parents for criminal offenses. Apart from these negative practical consequences, X did not mention any aspects on the level of personal attitudes and world view. At the beginning, he was not yet able to draw a connection between the right-wing extremist attitude and the resulting violence against the corresponding enemy images. The initial extrinsic motives of avoiding negative consequences were primarily effective. In contrast, the desire to be a good father represented a personal motive, although at this early stage it was still very vague what the realisation of the desire to be a good father would require.

During the fourth meeting, the client formulated specific intentions of changing his behaviour: He wanted to stay away from right-wing extremist demonstrations in the future. Furthermore, he decided not to commit any more crimes after his juvenile detention. Trying, however, to establish or seek out a non-violent environment for himself was still not conceivable for X at the moment. This was because his friends would continue to beat people up and he might be present while they did so. In order not to be prosecuted for failure to render assistance, X intended to help up the victims of his friends in the future, although it was not entirely clear how this could be done.

The intention to achieve a different attitude toward violence was thus primarily strategically motivated in order to avoid negative consequences for himself. He did not seem to view the violence perpetrated by his right-wing extremist environment critically; at least he did not want to distance himself from this environment entirely. It was also important to him that he could rely on his friends' willingness to use violence in conflict situations.

Refraining from using violence himself was, however, a serious goal for him. After all, X was able to report a situation in which a person on drugs had touched the belly of his pregnant girlfriend. X had only verbally rejected this assault and suspected that his friends - or he himself in earlier days - had immediately used violence against this person.

The client initially succeeded quite well in avoiding right-wing extremist events. His main concern was to avoid confrontation with the police. At least he now judged demonstrations, which were primarily aimed at escalation against the opponent and in which he had frequently and euphorically participated in the past, to be "pointless". Thus, in the coming months, he did not follow up on several calls for such demonstrations. The client countered the pressure from within the scene to participate by referring to his criminal record and his young daughter. Initially, the comrades accepted this as a reason for his absence. But as time went by, criticism arose. Other comrades were also fathers and had criminal records, they said, yet they took part nonetheless. The trainers supported X's communication strategy towards his scene. They may not have given X enough help though, in creating a more sophisticated "story" in order to better legitimise his absence from the actions vis-à-vis the scene.

Already in the fifth meeting, the trainers gave X a critical reflection of their perception of his training process so far. They told him that his behavioural changes so far had been motivated primarily extrinsically and not intrinsically. This was because he wanted above all to avoid further delinquency and its negative consequences. His process of distancing from right-wing extremist attitudes was therefore still very fragile. He explicitly stated he wanted to "remain political in his head", but no longer wanted to express this to the outside world. This meant, however, that he has not really changed his extreme right-wing attitudes or had not wanted to change them. Refraining from not attending right-wing extremist events and avoiding violent clashes seemed sufficient to him. But that was far completing the distancing process. Distancing or turning away from right-wing extremist political attitudes in terms of content was still pending.

() Intermediate reflection on the method and attitude of the trainers

In post-reflection, it was admittedly recognised that the trainers had partly proceeded unfavourably in client X's case. It is true that their analysis was largely correct. However, the motivation of fatherhood should not have been misunderstood as extrinsic. Rather, the topic of fatherhood could have been used to deepen the personal connection to X and his life history and to advance the narrative development of individual resources and motivations for family involvement. Possibly it was an excessive focus of the trainers and their approach on political and ideological aspects that led them to underestimate that the biographically and humanistically determined motivation to want to be a good father is also a very personal and intrinsic motivation - and that it therefore seems advisable to honour this motivation as such and to build on it in a focused way.

Furthermore, the trainers - despite all the otherwise understandable assessment of the client - very quickly and emphatically adopted a critical and demanding attitude towards X at this early stage, in the fifth meeting! They seem to have pushed the client very much in the direction of dealing with his political attitudes and sometimes expressed dissatisfaction with his efforts, that were in actual fact quite considerable. Or they pointed out how far the road still was. The measures mentioned above - confronting X with the idea that his daughter could later have a black man as a boyfriend, and emphatically pointing out that the daughter's "apolitical" upbringing would not be possible without a profound change in his own right-wing extremist attitudes - are by no means inappropriate. However, the right timing and dosage are critical with any such confrontational moves. The trainer's difficulties in dealing with doubts about the veracity of the client's statements and in working on the "narrative truth" behind what was said may have additionally reinforced this demanding attitude. These factors may have put an inappropriate amount of pressure on X and may also have conveyed too little recognition and appreciation. And this in turn perhaps led to the basic trust, which is so difficult to achieve with clients like X, being endangered - and in this case then ultimately was lost.

In all this, the relatively narrow time frame of the CI distancing programme may also have made a difference, which in the previous years had a benchmark of 15 meetings and was thus much too short for clients like X. There were also financial and funding-related obstacles that were not easy to overcome.

Another obstacle was the project-specific circumstance that CI's DisTanZ team in Weimar Thuringia was extremely reluctant to accept the "Exit Europe" project and the offer of methodology and consulting that came from it through CI's scientific director. These internal CI obstacles were initially due to ideological reasons. The distancing team assumed that the "Exit Europe" project and the CI management in Berlin were too close to security agencies (since the coordinator of the project was the Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior), although the arguments were ideological and not technical.

At that point in time, the DisTanZ team was unaware that the concerns of cross-actor cooperation (inter-agency cooperation), especially with the security forces, had become a major, consensual goal of many national and European programmes of extremism prevention for good reasons. In addition, strong internal conflicts and legal proceedings lasting several years between the nationwide organisation Cultures Interactive and the DisTanZ team of CI's Thuringian location were effective at that time, which affected the work on the "Exit Europe" project. State interests of Thuringia were implicated which slowed down proceedings.

These circumstances had undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the CI's consistent methodical approach of narrative communication in triangular distancing work was initially only partially implemented by the DisTanZ team and later on lessons learnt could not swiftly be transferred into needed corrections on methodology and trainers basic attitude.

() The progress of the training process

From this point on, X's distancing process was characterised by changeability and setbacks. The changes and challenges resulting from his attempt to increasingly distance himself from the right-wing extremist scene overtaxed him in part. And the trainers did not always succeed in the best possible way in recognising his efforts and in responding sufficiently empathetically and trustingly to X's excessive demands.

A serious consequence of the fragile relationship between X and the trainers was that they often had the impression that the client did not provide viable and credible information as to the insights and agreements he had agreed upon in the training and which had actually been implemented in his everyday life. The trainers even recognised the danger that the client would develop two personalities: the training ego and the real ego, and that these two personalities would be very different from each other. This type of personality split must always be expected in unstable young people who are under such amount of pressure.

In such a situation, it would probably have been appropriate for the trainers to first strengthen the mutual trust between the client and themselves in order to then be able to better support the client. This can be done, for example, by the trainers reducing the demands, reducing the critical questioning and developing a genuine personal understanding of the client's difficulties - especially when there are also conflicts in the client's personal family life. Building on this trust and the resulting truthfulness of the mutual conversation, an attempt can then be made to handle communication in a consistently narrative way. The situations that had arisen for X from his attempts to implement his resolutions could have found more fruitful grounds on this basis. "Mistake-friendliness" is helpful in this process, showing an open mind and interest in experiences of failure. In this way, the difficulties of implementation can be discussed, but also the experiences of partial successes can be secured and both can be used in their personality-building effect.

In the work with X, however, the trainers sometimes found it difficult to muster the necessary patience and friendliness towards mistakes and the necessary trust. The departure of the female trainer was an additional burden, especially since the reasons for this departure were not adequately reflected upon and discussed with the client. To use a term developed by CI itself: In view of the "critical attentiveness" approach¹⁰ that is absolutely necessary for distancing work, the team did not initially succeed in finding

¹⁰ As to the concept of "critical attentiveness" cf. Weilnböck, H. and Baer, S. (2010) (Civic-) *Education in times of extremism – Lifeworld-narrative group-work and the culture factor: Two model projects – and accompanying qualitative EU best practice research* [online]. Available at: <https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html>; Also: Weilnböck, H. (2011) *Violence Prevention Network & Cultures Interactive: EU good-practice research on de-radicalisation work in and community – and the factor of culture* [online]. Available at: <https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html>; Furthermore: Weilnböck, H. (2013) Das narrative Prinzip: „Good Practice“-Interventionen im Kontext des Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). In: *Rechtsextremismus in Europa*.

the right balance between criticism and support. The approach seems to have been too critical and overburdening to do justice to the client in his situation.

Nevertheless, the distancing process made considerable progress for some time: X began to politically neutralise his personal appearance, mainly in regards to his clothing. This was also important from a pragmatic point of view, because as long as he remained recognisable as a neo-Nazi, he would continue to be confronted by anti-fascists, and violent confrontations and criminal proceedings would be the involuntary consequence. Hence the training agreement stipulated to begin with that the client would not wear any clothing with right-wing extremist or violence-affirming references. As a result, X got rid of some right-wing extremist labelled clothing and symbols. And he removed some posters and stickers in his room at home. He also began to clean up his profile on Facebook from right-wing extremist content and symbols. He did this only partially at first, i.e. he was not consistently able to neutralise all symbols and labels all at once. This was not at all surprising, because the distancing training only takes a few weeks, and the fundamental change of an entire personality structure requires much more time and constant encouragement and support from the trainers. At the same time, work had to be done on the communication strategy that X would use to present these changes to his friends.

For example, it was observed that X left a music video about Hitler's deputy Rudolph Hess on his Facebook page because it was very important to him personally. The training could have gone into this in more detail - in the sense of being error-friendly. Because with media content of this kind, it is always a good idea to ask and discuss exactly what content of the song lyrics or the historical figure of Rudolph Hess was so important to X - i.e. what parallels or references X sees between Hess and his own biographical experiences. This could be done by using the techniques of the media interaction interview. Furthermore, the individual statements of the song text can be questioned - via narrative media experience interview - according to their personal relevance.¹¹ If this personal meaning is more precisely developed, it will also be easier to come back to the political meaning of Hess - and then to delete the song from the website. The personal-biographical meaning is therefore not deleted as well.

Another small incident underlined the difficulties that entailed a complete change of personal appearance, but also the opportunities that often arise from mistakes and oversights: At the sixth meeting, X appeared, contrary to the agreement, with a fanny pack that read "Spaß kostet" (fun costs/ has a price), which is the name of an extreme right-wing merchandise brand. When asked about this, however, he was believably surprised and remorseful and quickly removed the bag. This was because he was aware that the slogan could be understood as an incitement to violent struggle. Furthermore, this

Länderanalysen, Gegenstrategien und arbeitsmarktorientierte Ausstiegsarbeit. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (eds.), pp. 397-428.

¹¹ As to the media interaction interview cf. Weilnböck, H. (2008) Mila – eine Fallrekonstruktion der qualitativen psychologischen Literatur- und Medien-Interaktionsforschung (LIR). In: *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft*. (2008t) 10(2) (2008t), pp. 113-146; please see also: http://weilnböck.net/pages_en/essays.html

provided a good opportunity to talk about the experience that violence and how violence is perceived as "fun" and that very large "costs" (damage, injuries) are incurred in the process. It was not difficult for him to get rid of this particular bag.

However, the life-practical distancing from right-wing extremist symbols was consistently difficult for X - and he remained inconsistent in this, so that there were regular setbacks. This also reflected the changeability of the entire training process. Nonetheless, the trainers relentlessly insisted on unswerving adherence to the rules regarding his clothing in order to protect his safety and physical integrity as well as the progress of the training.

Especially his right-wing extremist tattoos caused X great ambivalence. In addition to right-wing extremist symbols, he had also had the slogan of his comradeship tattooed on him. These tattoos symbolised his longstanding, right-wing extremist identity and were also important to him for family reasons, in relation to his father. Removing them meant to fully break for the client - and for all to see - with his past. His stance on this issue fluctuated accordingly. At least, from the seventh meeting on, he talked about having at least the tattooed 88 removed (which means "Heil Hitler!"). However, he put this into perspective a little later by saying that he wanted to stand by his past. Also, X did not always succeed in hiding his right-wing extremist tattoos, as he had firmly resolved to do. He had no intentions of being recognised as a right-wing extremist, especially in the city where his family's new apartment was located. He went to his daughter's paediatrician wearing shorts. As a result, another patient recognised his tattoos and openly criticised him for them. At least, over the course of the training, it was possible to see how his plan to have the tattoos removed was becoming more and more a reality.

At the 13th meeting, the client confessed that he was wearing an "H8 comradeship" sweater under his work jacket. As was to be expected, the trainer criticised this and referred to the training agreement, which stated that he should no longer be recognisable to the outside world as a former right-wing extremist. In that particular situation, this was a considerable violation, as the training took place in a room of a civil society centre. The client then argued that he only wore this sweater to work. That is how he intended to wear it out. And he would not take off his work jacket here in the room.

The fact that X, not having to be obliged, talked about his sweater and explained the conditions he would remain wearing it until it wore out, represented further evidence of the trust that had grown between the client and the remaining male trainer. This trust was admittedly also put to the test here; and it seems that the trainer may have been a little too strict in his response. For X said, among other things, that he was a little sorry for having been honest - which, however, was again an open personal statement and thus a renewed commitment to the working relationship. The trainer then also explicitly acknowledged X for his honesty. X's information that he wore the sweater while working on the construction site could also be used to ask different scenic questions in narrative deepening; i.e. whether he was aware of the

signal character of his sweater, how this felt, whether there had been reactions among his colleagues, how these had proceeded and how he had experienced them (pride, fear, shame, etc.).

() The relationship to violence

In the course of the - all too short - training, the client did not succeed in fully clarifying his relationship to violence and consistently avoiding all violent confrontations. This was mainly due to the fact that the forms of regular acting out of violence, which were common among X's friends and acquaintances, were an integral part of their lifestyle - and that the violence in this case was almost compulsive and anchored in an addiction-like dynamic, partly exhibiting psychopathological traits. Almost the entire social environment of X's had a strong affinity to violence - regardless of whether the individual was organised in the right-wing extremist scene or not. However, it was especially true for right-wing extremist events that violence was an integral part of the entire experience. But even beyond this, in the everyday life of a nearby large city, X repeatedly got into violent scenes that had reached a new and frightening level of escalation even for him. There, according to X, completely impulsive, severe attacks and serious injuries of blacks or other rejected groups occurred, which had not been preceded by any cause. Members of his comradeship there carried out planned serious and life-threatening attacks on so-called "ticks," i.e., groups of people and housing projects perceived as left-wing and Antifa. Furthermore, X reported an "exaggerated action" of an acquaintance of his. The latter had severely beaten up a punk couple and set the young man's hair on fire.

These violent acts shocked the client, and he emphatically and credibly distanced himself from such actions. These extreme experiences also had a deterrent effect on him, which the trainer was able to further reinforce in conversation by using suitable conversational techniques to further develop these experiences narratively, so that their deterrent effect no longer fell so easily prey to involuntary psychological dissociation. However, X's role as a passive supporter in the social environment of such violent attacks, and sometimes in violent situations themselves, he could not yet sufficiently reflect at this early stage. A corresponding change in his social circles was therefore not yet possible for him.

Therefore, the client repeatedly got into violent confrontations during the time of the training. Already in the fifth session, X reported how he was attacked by anti-fascists and had to defend himself against a large group of them. The trainers hereupon pointed out to X that he presented himself as the victim rather than the perpetrator in such a situation. However, they took the narrative as such quite seriously, valued it, and worked with the client to further deepen his personal scenic experience in this situation. On a pragmatic level, X was shown behavioural options for de-escalation, training him to utilise them in further confrontations with violent anti-fascists in order to arrive at non-violent solutions.

In view of this violent incident, it could also be pointed out to X once again that politically neutralising his appearance was an absolute necessity. Only if he was no longer recognisable as a neo-Nazi would

the probability of an attack on him by the Antifa be reduced. However, his personal notoriety among anti-fascists and his reputation as a violent right-wing extremist would ultimately require an even more far-reaching public renunciation of right-wing extremism. The trainers' assessment that the anti-fascists could and should be informed that X had begun a process of distancing himself from right-wing extremism proved to be unhelpful and unrealistic. For one thing, X would then be threatened by his former comrades, and he considered this threat to be very serious and dangerous; and for another, this recommendation overlooked the fact that X was not yet sufficiently determined to distance himself from his previous environment. He also did not seem to be able to build up an alternative circle of friends yet and to cope with the temporary social isolation to be expected.

Nevertheless, this part of the training was very effective in that the client later reported further attacks by Antifa, during which he successfully behaved in a de-escalating manner. He also got into several violent confrontations with his group of friends, but did not engage in violence himself. He tried to calm his friends down, when they got into an aggressive conflict with security guards at a city festival. When this proved unsuccessful, he left the situation. Client X gave a very impressive account of how he managed to calm down his own aggressive feelings and sensed the "tingling in his hands" by looking at a photo of his daughter that he always carried with him.

X also refrained from his boxing training, wanting to avoid the stimulating experience of kicking his way through aggression and violence, then succumbing to the temptation of wanting to experience more of it. His boxing club was heavily infiltrated by the far-right scene. During the 14th session, a kind of climax of X's distancing process could be observed. He reported of a new confrontation with an anti-fascist. Before having to defend himself, he tried to explain that he no longer had anything to do with the right-wing extremist scene. Of course, it was frustrating for the client and difficult to bear that his positive changes in behaviour did not show immediate success. The anti-fascists did not believe him immediately and would not back off. At this point, the distancing work had the important task of continuing to express appreciation and encourage X's behavioural changes. Furthermore, detailed discussions of violent events can help the client to gain a more precise understanding of the respective situation. For example, it first had to be made clear to X that some representatives of Antifa have a similar relationship to violence as him - and that they therefore were unable to always let go easily.

Over time, however, X was increasingly able to report that the aggressive confrontations with his political opponents from anti-fascist groups, e.g. the Antifa Ultras, decreased. For example, he no longer felt provoked by Antifa Ultras as a fan in the soccer stadium. During one of his visits to the stadium, it even seemed as if X had gone there primarily to test this new behaviour on part of the Ultras. He did this in order to measure the success of his distancing in terms of the reactions he triggered among left-wing and anti-fascist people. These external measures of success were easier for X to grasp than his internal processes of detachment. He interpreted the fact that he was not attacked verbally or physically

as the result of his withdrawal from the scene and from the public. After all, the goal of "having peace and quiet" and no longer becoming involved in violence was most important to himself at this point.

But the client's hope that this would end his problems with Antifa was not fulfilled. By that point, anti-fascists had outed X online and by means of posters as an active and violent member of the right-wing extremist scene. X felt that his privacy had been violated by this and described it as an "attack". At first he did also complain about rather incidental things, e.g. that the photo used was unflattering and not up-to-date. He discussed the incident with his father, who advised him to remain calm and report it to the police. However, X had the sobering experience at the police station that his concerns were not taken seriously, since the police also assumed that X belonged to the violent right-wing extremist scene. No charges were filed.

Due to this outing on the part of Antifa, the training with X entered an unsafe phase. The outing increased the client's vulnerability and his sense of security began to waver. In his estimation, he was now even more known than before, but still did not want to hide. He feared attacks, whereby he saw "foreign boxers" in particular as a threat, in addition to violent Antifa persons. Because they were opponents of the neo-Nazis and known to be very violent. The newly posed threat also caused the client to move closer to the right-wing extremist scene again, from which he actually wanted to distance himself. He felt solidarity and protection from his comrades, as they inquired about his well-being several times and tore down the posters. Furthermore, there were firm agreements and strategies within the scene on how to react to such a case and how to protect the threatened person. Therefore, X expressed the intention to reactivate the old contacts in case anti-fascists attacked him again. At least X had no intentions of taking retaliatory action against the Antifa.

In any event, the outing also served as a further opportunity to strengthen the in-depth conversation and mutual trust with X within the framework of the training. In view of the situation, the question was raised again as to how to reactivate the old contacts. In view of the situation, the question was raised again whether and how it should be communicated to the outside world that X was participating in a distancing training. In the eyes of the trainers, this was recommended in order to reduce the current threat, to defuse old enmities with anti-fascists and to prevent X from turning back to the right-wing extremist scene in search of protection. To this end, various options with their advantages and disadvantages were considered together. X did not want to take an open position toward Antifa. He did not want to bow to his political opponent and "not kiss his ass". His pride prevented this. Moreover, he suspected that any direct encounter with Antifa would end in violence anyway. At least he initially took the suggestion to write an e-mail to the alternative house project he had raided very positively. This possibility of easing conflicts had not occurred to him at all before.

At the next meeting, however, the client appeared in a very agitated state. He immediately and vehemently made clear that and why he could not write such an e-mail to the alternative house project.

X reported that in the meantime he had had a conversation with an older member of the right-wing extremist scene whom he could trust. He had strongly advised X against communicating his distancing process to the outside world. He had made the client aware of the threat potential emanating from his own scene. Retaliatory actions against "traitors" were not uncommon. This had made an enormous impression on X. His fear of revenge nullified any further consideration in this direction. The trainers also had to realise here that the joint considerations about contacting the Antifa were misguided and would actually have put the client in danger.

() A culmination of the process of distancing

By the time of the 14th meeting, X had come to a deeper understanding of what distancing himself from a violent extremist lifestyle actually entailed and the long and difficult road that lay ahead of him. This understanding was on the one hand the result of the previous conversations, because of his own fatherhood as well as under the impression of the acute experiences around his outing by the Antifa as well as some cruel experiences with his comrades, which he could not approve of. On the other hand, the trainer did a constellation exercise with X in this session, which triggered this deeper understanding of the nature of a distancing process. In this constellation, he was asked to situate himself between his "old self" as an "autonomous National Socialist" and his new "dropout self," which included the role of alcohol consumption. Here, X recognised that he tended more toward the right-wing extremist pole when he was drunk. When he was sober, he was more of a dropout, but was still strongly influenced by his past.

In this way, X realised that distancing oneself and leaving the party is an intensive personal process that goes beyond behaviour changes and also affects one's own thoughts and views. It was not enough to stop going to right-wing extremist demonstrations. Rather, it is necessary to rethink one's worldview and change it at least in part. But "the one percent in the back of his mind" with right-wing extremist attitudes, he estimated, would accompany him for a long time: "Opinion is hard to change." This personal insight of X's is confirmed by empirical knowledge about exit processes, which says that political attitudes change late and that the level of interpersonal behaviour and practical lifestyle is the first to move.

The trainer thus assured X that a hundred percent change in a person would not always be necessary and would in any case take a lot of time. Also, one should not misunderstand the hundred percent. X has had many experiences in his life so far, which cannot be denied and which belong to his person. Many of the reasons why he went into the extreme right-wing scene were very understandable, especially in view of the area in which he lived - and then also considering the history of his family and his father. These circumstances contributed to his difficulties. In any case, with all that, he had great potential. It was not

for nothing that, with a little support, he had gotten to the point where he had persevered through the distancing training so far and made progress in the process.

Together with the trainer, X then updated the goals for further training work: any violence and criminal acts should be avoided at all costs and X should no longer be recognisable as an "Autonomous National Socialist". X announced further concrete steps of changing his appearance: He wanted to grow his hair and planned to have the right-wing extremist tattoos removed. The trainer promised him help. This offer surprised X. The meeting represented the climax of X's (self-)reflection and distancing process. The previously rather extrinsic motivation seemed to have also turned into an increasingly intrinsic and personal motivation. The client was indeed frightened by his own realisations. The now recognisable, future challenges of quitting and its long duration went far beyond his original expectations.

At this sensitive point, it would have been advantageous for the client to have been given even closer supervision and support. This is because a serious setback occurred shortly thereafter, related to personal family circumstances.

() The breakdown of the process of distancing work

After this meeting, X experienced a complete breakdown in his relationship with his ex-girlfriend and mother of his child. He reported that she was monitoring his cell phone, which he said violated his privacy. The main reason though was that X had a new girlfriend. As a result, a quarrel ensued and X withdrew from his ex-girlfriend for good. He now lived entirely with his mother again. This also meant he no longer had contact to his daughter. This personal crisis completely overwhelmed X. He was unable to cope with the emotionally extremely stressful conflict with his ex-girlfriend and mother of his child. In this crisis situation, the distancing process seemed to collapse, especially since the loss of contact with his daughter was a major impulse for distancing.

The insights gained in the previous session were obviously not yet sufficiently internalised to a point to effectively counteract this acute crisis situation. Moreover, there is a fundamental difference between facilitation an exit or distancing process and counselling a person in a situation of personal crisis. At this point, the trainers may have underestimated how much pressure the client was under due to the complications in his double development task - fatherhood and distancing from the right-wing extremist scene - and how unstable he was personally. The extent to which there would have been possibilities within the limited framework of this training format to hold and support the client until there was again room for furthering the distancing process can hardly be assessed in retrospect.

Unfortunately, it also seems to have been the case that the trainers, quite paradoxically, reacted with an increase of their doubts and suspicions about the seriousness of the client's intention to leave the scene, while the client at this point in time would have needed intensified support.

In any case, X increasingly withdrew from contact with the trainers and sought support in the familiar: He began to drink alcohol excessively again and seemed to be reapproaching the right-wing extremist scene. The next meeting with X could only take place after several weeks of repeated insistence by the trainers. During this time, it turned out, the client had failed almost all previously set training goals. There were signs that he had resumed contact with his comrades in the big city. He rarely gave open and honest information about himself. Apparently he had also had an "ACAB" with two brass knuckles tattooed on his back ("All Cops Are Bastards"). He had also resumed boxing training, in addition to his alcohol consumption. X's participation in a "funeral march" of the right-wing extremist scene was particularly problematic, according to the trainers.

At least X showed up for the meeting that was finally agreed upon. The trainer utilised the method of personal confrontation towards X, expressing his personal disappointment and irritation about the violation of the rules regarding the working relationship. What should he as the trainer now think of X, after all this, and how should their working relationship be shaped from here? These strict questions were in the room. Hereupon the client hardened and took on an attitude of resistance and defiance. Malice was part of his attitude. In response to the keyword "relationship" he replied in an angry tone that he was not in a love relationship with the trainer after all. With regard to the absent female trainer, he added that he had no intention of apologising to her for his recent actions "with a bouquet of flowers". Then he added that if the female trainer were to encounter him as an opponent at a demonstration, "he wouldn't know her anymore either," thus indirectly announcing that he would confront her just as violently as any other opponent at the demonstration. In this way, the conversation led to a quite drastic break in the relationship with the previously respected trainer.

Nevertheless, the client tried to explain his participation in the "funeral march" as a spontaneous decision that had resulted from a coincidental situation. X was visited by friends from Leipzig, had found out about the demonstration from them, then being encouraged to participate. Most of all, there was a girl in this group whom X was interested in. The trainer confronted him with his political convictions and reminded him that the motif of the so-called "Allied war crimes" and the myth about Germany as a victim of the world wars played a central role in his political and personal self-image. Looking at earlier conversations, the client also confirmed this. However, at this moment the trainers were not set to support further narrative explorations of experiences and perceptions as to what the personal and biographical parts of the client's feeling towards being a *victim of German history*.

Overall, it must be noted that the trainers had the impression their relationship with the client could no longer be trusted. The issue of mutual trust seems to have possibly been an underestimated obstacle in the work even before this crisis. Retrospectively, it was therefore considered whether a fundamental reflection and reorientation of the trainer's attitude towards the more challenging clients would not have been necessary in regards to trust-building.

In any case, the trainer made it clear to the client that the participation in the demonstration represented a breach of the agreements and a step backward in his distancing process. The client, on the other hand, expressed a different assessment of the situation and his training success. He had a reputation as a neo-Nazi anyway, which was why it was largely irrelevant in his home region how he actually behaved with regard to demonstrations. In contrast, he emphasised his renunciation of the H8 comradeship, about which, the trainers had their doubts. In this regard, X said that a complete return to his old comradeship was no longer possible anyway - and implied in vague terms that he no longer wanted it either. For he had received a visit from a so-called "inspector" of the comradeship at the end of the year. The task of an "inspector" was to check X to see if he had left and what to think of him. From this, X drew the conclusion that he was in some way considered a traitor or unreliable by the comradeship. Apart from the fact that X referred to his young family and the risks of his suspended sentence to the "inspector", the conversation with the "inspector" was not further reflected on in the training. In any case, X conveyed the impression of a half-moderated turning away from - or distancing himself from - the comradeship and wanted this to be understood as a success of his distancing training.

This positive self-assessment existed alongside the hardening that the client showed towards the trainers but also towards his ex-girlfriend and his mother. Thus, he added that he did not care at all what his mother's reaction might be regarding his participation in the demonstration. He was soon to turn 18 and would be independent of her anyway. Furthermore, his probation was to end soon and would then he would then be a "new X" without a past.

His attitude was similarly vacillating, so that, for example, he said in passing that he would now again "not care about anything" as before, when he did not yet have a child. Regardless of this, however, he was fully convinced that he had his alcohol consumption and violence under control, which the trainer must have had doubts about. In the trainer's view, X's behaviour seemed almost like an "unconscious need for punishment" (i.e., an unconscious action pattern of (self)destruction in the sense of psychoanalysis). Here the punitive and destructive impulse was actually directed towards his ex-girlfriend, but because he could not really work out the conflict with her, X directed the anger in form of alcohol consumption and violence towards himself and towards his usual enemy images. In both respects (alcohol and violence/right-wing extremism), the trainers had the impression that X was behaving like a relapsing addict.

The trainer once again described his impression to X that had hardly made any substantial changes to his overall situation so far. As a consequence, the trainer questioned the continuation of the training. Another meeting was arranged in a few weeks, for which the client was given the task of becoming clearer about his goals and motivations. The trainer emphasised how important it was for a continuation of the joint work to have sufficient motivation and clear goals in mind - and to clearly agree on these goals. The trainer also made it clear that in his function he must also prevent a training from being

abused, so to speak, by using it to maintain an inappropriate self-assessment. What was meant by this was that X could delude himself and others about his training success - and that in doing so he was also pursuing strategic considerations vis-à-vis the youth welfare office and the probation service.

X did actually show up for this meeting. However, there was no change in X's perception of the trainer's assessment. His hardened attitude still existed. Since X and the trainers assessed the success of his distancing process so differently, X ultimately also voted to end the training, which he himself still considered successful.

In conclusion, it will be possible to say that at this point the relationship of trust between trainer and client was severely disturbed on both sides. Many reasons and factors of overstrain on both sides had contributed to this - not least the limitations that affected this setting of distance work at this location (in a small town in a region strongly affected by right-wing extremist sub-cultures).

() Conclusions and recommendations

In the analytical follow-up by the formative evaluation, which in this case (because of the aforementioned circumstances at CI as an organisation) could only take place after the completion of the case work, various conclusions were drawn and recommendations for the methodology of the CI distancing work were formulated. This can be helpful for the future structuring of the work.

Moreover, the case documentation on the work with X was particularly significant for this, as the internal and external evaluation of the implementation of the DisTanZ project between 2016 and 2019 had revealed that only very few clients of the actual target group - right-wing extremist or right-wing extremist-oriented young people - had been reached at all during the entire period. The external evaluation therefore also concluded that "the project's target group had not been reached." X was one of these very few target group persons. Moreover, the process of working with X lasted a comparatively long time, 17 sessions. Although this was a considerable duration, it was by far too short compared to the requirements for successful distancing work in difficult cases which is generally said to last up to two years.

On the other hand, the average participation duration of the other DisTanZ clients was about 5 sessions, which is why it was hardly possible to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding the methodology and effectiveness of the intervention from these cases.

This fact alone (which, however, for the aforementioned reasons could not be determined by CI's scientific director until the beginning of 2020) clearly indicates that the format of the distancing training implemented by CI's distancing team would require methodological correction and readjustment in

setting, basic attitude and methodology in order to significantly increase both the achievement of the target group and the effectiveness of the intervention.

Need for adjustment in the critical attentiveness approach

The urgency of this methodological readjustment is underlined in several respects by the (reconstructively determined) case documentation of the work with X presented here: It has already been concluded above that in view of the acute crisis and the serious relapse of the client, a different basic attitude of the trainers would have been indicated. Especially since considerable early successes in the distancing process of X had been recorded shortly before, the trainers should have additionally strengthened the already fragile trust between X and them in the moment of the personal family crisis and should have dampened and moderated all dynamics of mistrust to the maximum. On the other hand, the repeated emphatic criticism of X regarding his - presumably insufficient - distancing from right-wing extremist and violent attitudes should have been reduced at this point and put into an entirely different tone.

In contrast, it would have been necessary to consistently deal with X's family and partnership situation, which was the main threat to the client and his training success at that moment. Professional couple and family counselling would have been indicated at this point, on which the distancing training could have been based. Retrospectively it was acknowledged that this crisis situation was the moment when the client lost trust in the trainers, which had already been strained before. Above all, however, the trainers had also lost trust - and could therefore no longer muster the necessary basic attitude of a critically attentive attitude towards the person.

From this, the general recommendation can also be derived that with unstable clients like X who come from difficult multi-challenge contexts of youth and family support or juvenile court support, a very supportive and less confrontational approach must first be chosen, especially when there is an acute crisis situation. With regard to the principle of critical attentiveness, this means that in such situations the trainers should use their will and their ability to show affection, empathy and support, especially if the client presents a general numbness of feelings and cynicism. This applies to this phase regardless of whether the client shows strongly entrenched resentments and extremist views (which can always be noted and criticised, but without further endangering the shaky relationship with the client). It should have been possible to bring up this attitude with X, because in the phase of his crisis his resentments and extremist views were rather in the background and the direct, personal conflict effects dominated. This could have been taken up in couple counselling, but also in the training. As the trainers were unable to provide this approach, the relationship to X was lost, who then fell back into completely uninhibited violent behaviour.

Need for adjustment in the setting I: Suspicion versus trust/relationship

Furthermore, the reconstructive review showed that the reasons for failure of the training process with X go back prior the moment of the personal crisis. They also concerned fundamental aspects of the setting, the methodology used and the trainer's attitude towards the client. From the very beginning of the distancing work with X, the basis of trust between X and the two trainers had not been sufficiently solidly developed. This trust, however, is the most crucial and indispensable component of exit and distancing work. With regard to the setting, it could be determined in retrospect that it had not been sufficiently clarified and discussed to what extent X's participation in the distancing training entailed a strategic benefit for him towards the youth welfare office, the probationary assistance, and in the relationship of X, who was still a minor, to his mother. Furthermore it was unclear as to what extent X expected a benefit from it and what effect these assumptions had on his behaviour in the training. Thus, it was not discussed openly and continuously enough with X whether and to what extent he behaved strategically or sincerely. Reflecting on this question continuously and thoroughly is an important basic prerequisite for the process of relationship-based distancing work. It is also necessary for the trainer's attitude to be based on a high degree of trust in the client - and also at the same time on trust into their own setting which they provide and can adjust (!).

In contrast, it could be observed for the work with X that, despite all mutual rapprochement and relationship building among the trainers and with the client, the necessary basic trust and the associated fault-friendliness did not exist sufficiently. Rather, a basic attitude of suspicion and mistrust had increasingly emerged, which ultimately was unresolvable. The disbelief of the client's statements, which is a natural part of all intensive educational interventions and can be managed well and safely by way of working with the concept of narrative truth, seems to have overwhelmed the trainers in this case.

This suspicion-led attitude, among other things, caused the trainers on several occasions to conduct external Internet and direct research on X's statements in order to check their truthfulness and then confront X if necessary, instead of talking directly to him about their doubts about him and corresponding direct perceptions. For example, the trainers had tried to check X's statement that a good friend had been fatally injured by Antifa in the nearby big city in the media archives. In relation to the occasion, other channels of information were also used, which could provide information about X's behaviour in his social environment, e.g. known people from X's environment, his Facebook account, Antifa documentation, etc. Furthermore, in the small-town milieu of this project, it sometimes happened that the client and the trainers met face to face, i.e. at political demonstrations or other occasions, so that direct observation always had to be dealt with.

The attitude of a suspicion-led examination of the client contradicts the basic quality standards of good practice in distancing work. These standards - openness to process, relational work, confidentiality,

voluntariness, narrativity, etc.¹² - foresee for good reasons that not suspicion and examination, but above all relational exchange, trust-building and direct confrontation are supported. Only this trust-building then makes it possible that mutual doubts and self-doubts are increasingly spoken about openly and deeply - and thus the truthfulness of what is said and the development of the personality steadily increases. Therefore, it seems advisable that the trainers generally refrain from verifying statements through external research and work on emerging doubts in the relationship-building discussion with the client. (Even taking note of the youth welfare office file brought along by client X about his previous arrest training would basically have been dispensable).

The extent to which an attitude of suspicion works against the development of trust and the progress of training can be seen in X's telling remark about his disputed participation in that "funeral march" demonstration. For he did not report his participation himself. Rather, the trainers learned about it through other channels. X then only said that he had not told them about the demonstration because he had assumed that the trainers would find out about it anyway. In this case, there was already a firm expectation that he would be investigated by the trainers, if you will, through information services, which indicates that the indispensable building of a relationship of trust was at least partially missed - and the trainers and the client had met on the basis of a clearly limited trust.

The above-mentioned ambiguity of the setting with regard to the possible strategic benefit that the client may have expected from his participation in the distancing training vis-à-vis the youth welfare office and the probation service will have contributed to the fragility in the basic trust of the trainers and promoted the suspicious attitude. After all, strategic trade-offs always limit sincerity and create suspicion. However, it also seems advisable to support the ability of distancing trainers to build up a relationship of trust even with highly challenging clients and to deal with their own feelings of mistrust in a professional manner.

Need for adjustment in the setting II:

The more consistent taking to heart of triangulated working

Another disruptive effect on the stability of the work setting was probably created by the fact that at a certain point early on in the process the basic setting of triangular distancing work was abruptly terminated when the female trainer left. This is all the more relevant because this change of setting was not sufficiently reflected and accompanied - and the female trainer continued to participate in the background (and from a leading position in the organisation). In contrast, the concept of triangular distancing work provides for a suitable mode of alternating between two- and three-person settings and a continuous thematisation of the change in setting in the case of tensions between the three. This is

¹² Cf. footnote one, as to the „RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice“.

particularly important when, as here, there are indications that a conflict issue over gender roles is partly responsible for the client. This is because gender issues are always highly relevant in violent extremism.

The unfavourable insistence on issues of political attitudes

Another burden of the disengagement work with X, which was recognised too late, resulted from the trainers' early and insistent focus on changing the client's political and world-view attitudes. As noted above, fundamental changes in political views usually occur as a relatively late step in the long-term process of disengagement or withdrawal. The trainers' tendency to focus early and emphatically on X's political attitudes and their change probably had a negative effect on his personal will to distance himself from the scene. These effects may have also been additionally reinforced by the aforementioned suspicious attitude. This is because the combination of suspicion/mistrust and examination of political attitudes, which are always difficult to assess, creates a tension that hinders the development of a sustainable working relationship.

Thus, it can be said that the setting conditions, the method and the attitude of the trainers in the work with X did not fully meet some quality standards for good practice in exit and distancing work, which were formulated in the literature or in the principles of the DisTanZ project. Nevertheless, the work with the very challenging client X could initially develop quite promisingly, before it failed at a crisis moment for X in his partnership and parenthood. All the more reason to assume that the setting of distancing work offers very good conditions for successful work in difficult social environments if the quality standards are met.

2.2 Case Study B.: Descriptive case analysis of a distancing training by cultures interactive e.V.

Preliminary Remarks - From the Hitler salute to social competence training

Client B was referred to cultures interactive e.V. by the youth welfare office responsible for him in the winter months in order to participate in a social competence training within the framework of the model project "DisTanZ". This project aims at distancing from exclusionary, hateful, extremist and violent attitudes. The decisive reason for this training was the use of signs ("Hitler salute") by unconstitutional organisations for which B was sentenced.

Although the success of the training depends on the intrinsic motivation of the client, in this case it can be assumed that it was a "quasi-coercive measure", as it was a court-ordered requirement for B to participate in the training. As a rule, however, it has been proven that intrinsic motivation can also be developed during training through appropriate pedagogical approaches.

At the same time, on a structural level, a praise goes out to the cooperation with the local judicial authorities and the youth welfare office, as such a cooperation between non-profit providers of civic education and violence prevention and the regular state structures occurs is unfortunately not a given and more than often the exception rather than the rule, primarily due to bureaucratic hurdles. This shows that the cultures interactive e.V. has made a decisive effort from the start of the model project to consider solid cross-stakeholder cooperation as a decisive indicator of success.

On the basis of the reflection sheets prepared as internal report after each session by the tandem team of specially trained professionals, made up of equal numbers of participants, the course of a distancing training session is presented and analysed as an example below. For this purpose, the concept of the so-called "DisTanZ training" is introduced in necessary detail. Subsequently, explanations regarding biographical cornerstones of the client are given, which are relevant for the analysis of the training process. This is done according to the biographical-lifeworld-oriented concept in order to carry out a dedicated analysis of the distancing impulses stimulated in the training.

About the concept of the distancing training

The DisTanZ training supports adolescents and young people in distancing themselves from exclusionary, hateful and violent extremist attitudes (of "group focused enmity"¹³). The focus here is on

¹³ For further details, see: Zick, A. and Küpper, B. (2016) *Group-focused Enmity in Europe*. Project 2016 – 2010 [online]. Available at: [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/\(de\)/ikg/projekte/GFE.html](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(de)/ikg/projekte/GFE.html); Zick, A., Küpper, B. and Hövermann, A. (2011) *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination - A European Report. An analysis of anti-*

signs of right-wing extremist radicalisation. The main features of the training are a systemic, solution-oriented approach, trust and relationship building, and civic and personal reflection. Narrative-biographical work - i.e., work based on the individual's own experiences - always serves as a frame of reference for all of these elements. In other words, the discussion of experiences, which proceeds as far as possible without moral value judgments, aims at biographical reflection instead.

Furthermore, methods of anti-violence work form an important element of distancing training. Finally, offers within the framework of human rights-oriented youth cultural work serve to enable young people to find meaningful alternatives to those of right-wing extremist identification (e.g. right-wing rock).

The primary target group of distancing work was and is young people who display and engage in attitudes and expressions of group-related hostility (e.g., sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia). Those who are also/or not yet firmly entrenched in the extreme right-wing scene, but who run the risk of moving closer to it and becoming entrenched in extreme right-wing structures. In practice, however, it is evident that the boundaries to young people who are already firmly entrenched are fluid.

In cooperation with the relevant local network actors and the client's social reference system (parents/relatives, employees of the youth welfare office or specialists such as school counsellors), specific approaches of interventions and motivation strategies as well as the institutional framework conditions are discussed. Participation in the DisTanZ training is on a voluntary basis in that each person decides after the introductory training sessions whether it is an option for them. Finding individual motivations, personal goals and thus access to the training as a support service are aspects of the introductory talks held between DisTanZ trainers and the young adult. The social reference system of the young person is included in this process.

The distancing training conceived by cultures interactive e.V. pursues a three-dimensional prevention concept that addresses the ideological, psycho-social and practical life-world levels in equal measure, thus taking into account the complexity of radicalisation processes.¹⁴ If, on the one hand, reflecting on political attitudes provides an impetus for distancing oneself, social skills are strengthened in turn.

democratic mentalities in eight European countries; Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Project on Combating Right-wing Extremism (Forum Berlin, 2011).

¹⁴ Weilnböck, H. and Örell, R. et al. (2015) *RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice* (Draft version) [online]. Available at:

https://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

Also: Uhlmann, M. and Weilnböck, H. (2017) *20 Thesen zu guter Praxis in der Extremismusprävention und in der Programmgestaltung* [online] Available at:

<https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/radikalisierungspraevention/264235/20-thesen-zu-guter-praeventionspraxis>.

Constructive ways of dealing with conflicts are practiced in order to prevent the use of violence and delinquency.

The training concept follows the following *principles*:

- the build-up of a work relationship of “critical attentiveness” (cf. footnote 2) towards the young person
- the formulation of personal goals by the young person
- the promotion of his or her intrinsic motivational factors
- the winning over of support persons from the social and institutional environment of the client
- the normalisation, articulation and processing of negative feelings, whereas hateful and aggressive attitudes and behaviours are moderated
- the reduction of inner tensions due to differences between self-image and external image.

The pedagogical attitude as a central moment of connecting civic education with building social skills and emotional intelligence

Civic education and the moderation and working-through of hateful and anti-human attitudes (of “group focused enmity” cf. footnote 1) is the central cross-sectional theme of the DisTanZ training. In particular, attribution and stereotyping processes as well as prejudice-motivated attitudes and corresponding violent behaviour are picked up and dealt with. This takes place in a human rights-based, humanistic attitude, which has also been described as an attitude of critical attentiveness (cf. footnote 2). This is because the person as such is listened to, treated with respect and encouraged, while their hateful and anti-human views and actions are criticised and confronted. The criteria of social and personal responsibility in liberal democratic societies forms the basis of this. Open-topic, narrative conversation techniques, but also precise and constant inquiries regarding the factual and ideological background of their attitudes open up a space for self-reflection for the young person. The patterns of neutralisation and rationalisation with which young people often legitimise their prejudices and acts of violence are systematically questioned and sounded out in terms of their personal motivations. This happens in the consistently humanistic, transparent and personally honest attitude of the DisTanZ trainers, which is also an attitude of relational work and joint psychological reflection. In particular, a reflexive awareness is stimulated that the devaluation of others is always a projection of one's own experiences of being devalued, disrespected and insulted, which are biographically conditioned and often have to do with the person's gender-specific socialisation and biography.

Resource-oriented approach and intensive-pedagogical civic education

Cultures Interactive e.V. has coined and defined the term intensive-pedagogical civic education for this aspect of distancing training. This is because, in addition to the element of partly confrontational political discussion, the focus in the training sessions is on the needs, desires, conflicts and resources of the young individual clients, which are tapped less in discursive and more in narrative interaction. In addition, systemic solution-oriented methods are used to address patterns, experiences and influencing factors in the peer group, family and social milieu and to incorporate them into the analysis and training process. Once the young person's challenges and resources have become clear, the next step is to help him or her develop workable solutions on his or her own. To this end, resources in the person's social environment are also specifically sought out and, if necessary, addressed.

Biographical and lifeworld profile of the client

The male client (in this case client B) took part in the distancing training when he was 15 or 16 years old. As already mentioned, this happened because he displayed the "Hitler salute" in public. Client B lives in a village in Thuringia with his mother, who has been separated from B's biological father for a long time. Client B has a relatively good relationship with his stepfather, although he cannot "get away with so much" with him. Both his mother and stepfather are very concerned about B's development, especially with regard to his political radicalisation. He has a close relationship with his grandparents (with whom client B will temporarily live in the later course of the training). It should be noted at the outset that B's great-grandfather was a supervisor in a concentration camp during National Socialism and thus played an active role in the systematic industrial mass murder of people persecuted by National Socialism. The fact that his great-grandfather held an important function in National Socialism fills client B with pride; he seemed indifferent to the mass murder. Thus, there is a very obvious transgenerational transference effect of impulses of violent and genocidal behaviour from National Socialism.

At the age of 12, B had to change school and go to a special school (for mentally handicapped children). Since then, B has more or less regularly stayed away from classes and was thus considered a notorious truant, which ultimately led to him leaving the special school without a diploma. He did, however, set the goal at the beginning of the training, of catching up on his secondary school. The change of schools represents a drastic biographical disruption for B: While he largely associates his childhood with positive memories, describing it as secure and "nice", his social problems, deviance and aggression begin at the point he changes school. His right-wing extremist ideologisation also becomes increasingly evident at this point.

This ideologisation manifests itself, for example, in listening to right-wing extremist music ("right-wing rock") as well as media that can be assigned to the extreme right. In this respect, B considers himself to be a political person who is not, however, involved in right-wing extremist structures or organisations.

In his leisure time, client B is soccer enthusiastic: He is both a fan of the first division team Borussia Dortmund. However, for him, this fan affiliation is firmly coupled with an equally strong devaluation of other soccer clubs, explicitly those clubs that have achieved success through "commercialisation." He explicitly names RB Leipzig as an object of hostility here. He also plays soccer himself in the local club. However, it is important to him that his teammates and his coach do not find out about his right-wing extremist views. He does not want to have the "Nazi stamp" put on him. However, it is difficult for client B to name other leisure activities. His alcohol consumption seems to be one of the few "hobbies" that he considers worth mentioning, although this alcohol consumption is also repeatedly accompanied by deviant and violent behaviour, which B describes as "fooling around" and "doing bullshit".

Over the course of the training, client B's life circumstances will change more or less dramatically. These changes will be discussed in greater detail in the chronological presentation of the course of the training, as this analytically reveals valuable links between social circumstances and ideological radicalisation processes.

Overview: The training process

Before a detailed description of the individual training sessions is made, a short general overview of the course and the general conditions should be given first. Different circumstances had led to the fact that the training was characterised by long temporal interruptions. Thus, the present analysis is less an ideal-typical course according to the training concept, but rather somewhat of an atypical process. This description makes it clear to what extent the social conditions in which the clients find themselves can be an obstacle to successful prevention work. At the same time, it shows that a high degree of flexibility is required on the part of the practitioners. This is an important resource in the constant relationship work which is pursued with the client.

The training started in the spring; client B was 15 years old. He was referred to Cultures Interactive by the justice system under the supervision of the responsible youth welfare office. The plan was that the sessions would take place once a week on a regular basis for approximately 1.5 hours. This plan was successfully followed for the first three sessions. A thorough getting to know could take place, creating the foundation for a trusting and professional relationship. In the third session, the first empowerment exercise could already be enacted, which served to support the young person in formulating goals for his training.

It was all the more surprising for the Cultures Interactive team that these first three sessions were followed by an interruption of the training for nine months. In view of the short duration of the training until then this came close to a closure, making a new start necessary after nine months. This is because a young person from very challenging circumstances can hardly be expected to maintain a trusting relationship that was just being established for that amount of time.

This interruption had become necessary as client B was undergoing treatment in a psychiatric clinic during this period. The reasons for this seem to have been B's increasingly excessive alcohol abuse and an acute mental breakdown, which manifested itself primarily in depressive episodes. The trainers were unable to obtain an exhaustive answer to the question of how exactly this had come about and how the placement into the clinic proceeded. This clearly shows how eminently important it is for distancing and exit facilitators to be given the opportunity to do their work across different institutions and to remain in constant contact with the client (cf. the "Declaration" in footnote 2).

After the interruption, a kind of relaunch of the distancing training followed in January of the following year. The fact that this could no longer be a continuation of the training that had started became apparent not only - as will be analysed in detail at a later point - in the client's behaviour toward the tandem team of trainers, but also because of the fact that their staffing had to change for organisational reasons. Nevertheless, it was possible to ensure that one specialist from the original team of trainers was retained. Furthermore, a female trainer was added, so that the ideal of gender parity in the tandem team could be met. Nevertheless, it was necessary to rebuild trust.

Subsequently, five more training sessions were held, which - apart from a three-week break due to vacations - took place at regular weekly intervals. The premature termination of the training after a total of eight sessions, instead of the targeted minimum of 15 sessions, was due to the fact that the client's mother had moved to a city in northern Germany in the meantime. Client B was only able to live temporarily with his grandparents following his stay in the clinic and had and wanted to move back in with his mother in order to establish a new main place of residence. Thus, a continuation of the training was no longer possible due to the geographical distance.

The distancing training: A chronological case description

Session 1: Getting to know each other between political confrontation and personal interest

According to the concept, the first session is primarily for the trainer and client to get to know each other. Furthermore, if the opportunity is given, initial agreements and "rules" pertaining to the course of the training can be worked out together. A training plan can be drafted in which the training goals are formulated by the client themselves. The first session (and usually also the second and third sessions) primarily serves to get to know each other and establish trust, which forms the basis for a professional

relationship – and relational work – between the trainer tandem and the client. For if unrecognised and unspoken antipathies form in the first phase, the training will almost inevitably fail in the further course.

In the training described here, the first sessions were used accordingly to get to know each other, which were most often one-sided. The trainers learned a lot about the client, but not vice versa. First of all, the client's self-assessment was made with regard to various characteristics, attitudes and behaviour. According to the client's hobby, this was visualised as movement on a soccer field. The guiding question was which of his personal characteristics would "bring the client forward" on the soccer field and which would rather "set him back". However, due to a lack of time, it was not possible to formulate concrete goals for the training.

What was noticeable in these first sessions was the one-sided strong focus of getting to know the client. Little attention was paid to the fact that a client who is supposed to give very personal information to two unfamiliar educators should also have the opportunity and be motivated to ask for more information about the trainers as they get to know each other. Furthermore, it is noticeable how much the description of the client's characteristics was shaped by criteria that the trainers had determined in advance, instead of gaining the description more inductively and in an open process based on the direct conversation with the client. Even before the "main part" of the session, it became clear in which perspective the tandem team seemed to see the young person in the first place. Thus, one session report states:

"[...] on the other hand, the participant was given the opportunity to reveal himself and his political views. The offense of the "Hitler salute" at school was briefly discussed. The trainers asked questions and made their own (political) attitude clear. Furthermore, rules for the next meetings were agreed upon (punctuality, openness, no drugs, no clothing with violence glorifying content or open NS reference)."

Thus, the focus on the offense and the ideology of the client clearly dominated the process of getting to know each other to begin with, which may have been detrimental to establishing the relationship. However, the trainers' (undeclared and un-reflected) need to clearly emphasise at the outset what the team understands as the "boundaries" and "red lines" of the training dominated the process. Their need to express that they and their training should be understood first and foremost as pillars of democratic society obviously prevailed in the process and prevented the crucial process of relationship building from taking place. At this point the first dynamic of polarisation (versus relationship building) as well as a so-called "labelling" of the client were probably set into motion, which in the further course would result in the relationship building to come to a standstill. This is because the insistent focusing of the client's "political identity" and legal offense at this early stage of the training process was almost bound to result in the client protecting himself from the political-ideological confrontation and blocking the process of relational work. In practice, this then usually leads to a principled anti-attitude, which makes any conversation and cooperation difficult, especially a trusting conversation about the social and psychological function that the client sees in right-wing extremist ideology.

These reaction patterns were already evident in the course of the first training session with client B, in which he virtually brags about his violence, his ethnic ideology, and his positive reference to German fascism, and becoming increasingly rigid about it. For example, client B proudly tells about his hard playing soccer style, where he "goes to the utmost (of the opponent)," as well as a violent attack on a younger child from the local asylum seekers' home, who apparently provoked him. Both the attempt to engage in substantive ideological debate and the appeal to compassion and empathy had to "come to nothing" at this point (session report), especially since the question of empathy for the smaller boy seems to have been asked in a rather manipulative and polarising manner. B reacted accordingly by expressing himself in a provocative manner as a "tough, masculine nationalist" to the two male trainers (who were recognizable to B as politically left-wing). The rather confrontational attitude of the trainers ran counter to established good practice principles (cf. footnote 2) and seems to have thwarted some possibilities of relationship building at this early stage with B.

From the analysis of the first session (which again could only be made after the closure of the case due to organisational obstacles; cf. case description on client X), the conclusion can be made that great caution is advised when it comes to confronting a (still unknown) client with his political-ideological identity. Rather, it is advisable for the trainer to present an attitude of an open narrative communication and also offer and provide information about themselves (admittedly within maintained professional boundaries) and to show a sincere interest in the client as a person, focusing less on the client's political ideologies. Reducing the client to his political identity is very likely to not only obstruct the relationship building but also leads to an obscuring of the social, biographical and psychological dispositions that lie behind the ideology. However, these biographical dispositions are decisive for radicalisation. In this respect, it is not surprising that the report of the first session concludes that attempts at political-critical intervention "have so far come to nothing" and that the client has ignored or rejected all suggestions for personal change (cf. Reflection Report 1).

Session 2: Between avoidance and self-assertion

The confrontational and polarising dynamic that was already emerging in the first session escalated into a spiral of escalation between one trainer and client B as early as the second training session. This was because in the initial "flash light" on how he was feeling today, the client reported on his antisocial and destructive behaviours in his everyday life ("hanging out with friends and fucking shit up"). These descriptions would have provided good reason to invite and share more narrative content and proceed in more explorative and experiential ways in order to tap the psychosocial dynamics that are, in a sense, "behind" this destructive behaviour. However, the conversation quickly turned into a political exchange of blows.

Thus, although client B denied the trainer's question "whether anything was going on politically", he also took the opportunity to say "that he doesn't like foreigners, he doesn't like Jews, the Holocaust and Hitler were okay, he likes Odin, and he dismisses Christians and Muslims as wimps." From this, the trainer "made his position clear", and combined this with a personal provocation by asking the client, who is a special needs student without a high school diploma, what "his status would have been in the Nazi era". This led to a mutual hardening.

The subsequent attempt to smooth the waters by changing the method and to formulate goals for the training with the client fails – which must probably also be attributed to the previously created hardening. When asked what he wants to achieve here in the training, client B replies that he "will always have his opinion and no one can dissuade him from it". The goal of achieving a change in attitude and distancing from right-wing extremism in the long-term pedagogical approach thus seemed to have receded into the complete isolation of the client already by the second session. The trainer's response that he "would not allow him to continue to act in such an antagonistic manner" and commit hateful acts in the community and that he "would not help him escape prosecution" by helping him through the training, is admittedly a humanly understandable expression of a situation of conflict escalation. However, this report should have led to an intervention by the pedagogical management and, if necessary, to the release of the trainer from working with this client. This is because the behaviour of this trainer was unprofessional and held incalculable risks of setting further destructive behaviour in motion – and have negative consequences for the client and potentially for the community. For instance, it cannot be ruled out here that this very tense and conflictual attempt to start an educational process contributed to the fact that the client had to be admitted to a psychiatric clinic a short time later. (However, this trainer also had a leading function within the local branch of Cultures Interactive and had also largely dissociated from the methodological supervision through the Berlin office.)

Significantly, the client once again moves to the political level at first during the second method of this session (the "value diamond" method, which aims to find common rules for the training process). This is done, however, less as the provocative adversary of the trainer tandem, but rather by expressing a personal need of (conflict) avoidance. The training report states:

"It is noticeable that B says in the training that he no longer wants to discuss or argue politically. I (the trainer, H.W.) say in response that that's okay and that we're welcome to try that; but it would certainly be difficult because in my experience he actually always gets political and in my opinion there is no other topic for him at all. I reinforce that I would like to talk to him about him as a person and not about politics. But I also tell him that we will certainly not be able to avoid the topic of politics once in a while."

On the one hand, the strategy that the trainer expresses here seems promising in that it now aims more at getting closer to the client on a personal level. On the other hand, it becomes apparent here, too, how

much it is mainly the trainers themselves who consistently want to talk about "politics" – and therefore project this desire for the political onto the client (who is admittedly very suitable for this). Particularly when reviewing the session reports, it is noticeable how the trainers already set the political focus from the beginning of the first session. Following the second session, the trainer tandem concludes quite accurately:

It must become clearer that the training is about the client "as a person and not about politics"; a "renewed argumentative exchange of blows" could be counterproductive to a successful distancing.

This seems all the more true as the client's reaction shows that he is already very set ideologically, which is indicated not least by his sovereign argumentative behaviour. He also rejects any contradiction as well as any non-confrontational exchange of opinions. This low level of tolerance for ambiguity is usually also a clear indicator that ideology serves as the client's psychological "vehicle", the function of which is to stabilise his psychologically very fragile identity. All the more it is necessary to try to deal with the personal concerns of the client. Yet, the process will soon be interrupted by the client's placement in a psychiatric clinic.

Session 3: Experience of self-efficacy instead of discussion

The emerging tendency in regards to client B's hardened political stance seems more than obvious in the third and last session. His seemingly depressive state of mind during the day leads to a complete rejection of any productive exchange concerning political issues. Instead, the trainers observe that client B's language and expressions become increasingly severe. Terms such as "racial defilement," "Negro," and "fucking Jew" are used. This in turn exposes the trainer duo's temptation to draw strict ideological boundaries and to continue confronting the client. In retrospect there were indications that a quasi-psychotic breakdown was in the making, which would have required an unconditional "containing," i.e., comprehensive stabilisation. Hence it was not possible to find an intrinsic motivation for client B's participation in the training. His only motivation seemed to be that the training was better "than doing community service" or having charges pressed against him.

Interestingly, a turnaround nevertheless takes place during the session, which is able to open up the hardened fronts at least to a certain extent: client B gratefully accepts an exercise that involves finding and naming his own strengths. He participates actively, even though he repeatedly brings up political issues. The trainers do not confront these so strongly at this point, but rather tried to find a connection on a personal level. The exercise to find one's own strengths seems to suit the acutely endangered client. However, it is impossible to avoid the client's mental breakdown and the admission to a psychiatric ward which the trainers did not anticipate at all.

Intermediate remark: The interruption as a chance for a new start

The distance training, which had begun in a confrontational and thus bumpy manner, was then interrupted by the client's stay in a psychiatric clinic. This information came as a total surprise to the Cultures Interactive team and only little was available about the reasons of the nine-month break until the "resumption" of the training which then literally led to a smoothing of the waters between the clients and the trainers. This was also possible because the trainer who had primarily taken the confrontational position, was no longer able to continue working as a trainer for organisational reasons; he was replaced by a female trainer, who – as will be seen – chose a much less confrontational and more relational approach.

Session 4: Resource-oriented pedagogy and ideological distancing

So, after nine months had passed since the last training session, client B encountered a newly assembled trainer duo. Remarkably, client B is extraordinarily forthcoming, possibly because the "flash" exercise at the beginning of the session is actually about him and not about the political views he holds.

He reports that the clinic stay was "not very exciting," but that it had become clear that he was not an "alcoholic, but [had merely] abused alcohol". This came as a relief to B, but also prevented him from rejecting self-responsibility for his condition. The fact that client B did not commit any new crimes since then is, according to him, due to the fact that he currently does not go out because he "doesn't care" for the people in his hometown. Because they are not loyal. Client B does not go to school or goes very irregularly; in fact, he takes a sick leave. He emphasises, however, that he "definitely wants to get his secondary school diploma so that he can get a job."

It is obvious that client B is caught between depressive episodes characterised by a lack of drive and hopeful plans for the future. The latter becomes particularly clear when he enthusiastically tells us that - as soon as his mother has found an apartment - he wants to move with her to a city in northern Germany. There he wants to "make a fresh start in school."

Another joyful perspective is client B's planned visit to his father, whom he has not seen in 11 years. What is especially interesting is his remark that his father used to be like him, "only he was not right-wing... well, I'm not right-wing now either, but...". The identification with his father, whom he had obviously missed very much, fills B with pride. He is even able to momentarily turn away from his extreme right-wing identity. However, instead of taking up this positive biographical impulse, promoting it further and obtaining a more accurate picture of his father, the trainers, here again, made a "critical inquiry" regarding his political views (thus indicating that the strong political focus of the training was a systemic problem of the CI distancing training at this time and not only associated to one leading trainer). This in turn puts B in a conflictual situation regarding his extreme right-wing

positioning. He therefore reacts evasively ("he just doesn't want to be perceived as right-wing from the outside, because then you can't find a job, etc. Besides, he smokes more pot now and that was rather left-wing"). Here, an opportunity was missed to open up the family biographical dimensions that offered themselves.

At least client B mustered the energy to produce a formulation of his training goals (in the exercise "My Training Room").

What runs through the entire first (or 4th) session, then, is a willingness to talk about these issues that move client B personally and, unsurprisingly, are closely related to his own biographical experiences. The report, quite suitably, sums up in the following bullet points:

- The client was able to engage well in the conversation with us.
- He is cooperative ("then I'd better put on a different T-shirt next week")
- talks openly about his family
- is relatively open to talking about politics, but doesn't feel like arguing with us
- is aware of the disadvantages of being identified as right-wing from the outside and wants to prevent that from happening
- seems rather insecure in his current biographical position

In retrospect, this can be seen as an indication that the young man obviously lacked an appreciative counterpart who could talk to him about "political" issues that were important to him, without moral condemnation or historical enlightening rebuke. Thus, the trainers conclude correctly at last: "When it was made clear to him that we were not primarily out to argue with him, he showed interest in talking to us about politics as well." It was then agreed for the next session "not to discuss (too much) about content, but about why politics is important for his identity."

Session 5: From emotional apathy and denial

In the fifth session, client B is visibly depressed. This dejection manifests itself specifically in a refusal to engage in any exchange about issues that are otherwise important to him. Unfortunately, in this session this resistance is combined with an inconsistent implementation of methods on the part of the trainer tandem. Here, there is a failure to clear up misunderstandings that arose during the implementation of an exercise about what rules and issues are important to B for training. Also the trainers failed to give the opportunity to try again after the misunderstood attempt.

In any case, the question arises retrospectively whether any exercise requiring systematic initiative on the part of the client would not have been too demanding, given his depressed state that day. The

summary in the report, "there was no way to get closer to his feelings or the actual core of his attitude," seems logical here, but not very productive for the distancing process.

The first conclusion to be drawn from this session is that continuous pedagogical work must always take into account the client's "daily state of mind" and thus always recognise the limits of one's own pedagogical aspirations. Supposed setbacks in the process have to be endured on the one hand, and a thorough reflection of the respective session has to be undertaken, so that the structure of future sessions can be rearranged. In the case of a client like client B, who has a psychodynamic history of phasic - and possibly bipolar - depression, an adequate session mode of holding and supporting might have been more appropriate. Practitioners of distancing interventions need to be trained in this respect.

Session 6: Biographical breaks, political identity and visions of the future

The client's dejection and the associated "failed" session was not an indicator of the overall course of training, which became apparent in the following session. Using the "timeline" method, in which the client is asked to name subjectively significant experiences in his life on a timeline and – prompted by narrative questions – to explore and reflect on his own life history, client B was able to recognise that "the break with negative factors in his life is related to the change of school and the people he met there". On a more abstract level, client B was even able to conclude that his affinity for certain interests and worldviews is closely related to his social and biographical circumstances. He realises that his right-wing extremist worldview and his affinity for violence would probably not be (so strongly) pronounced had he found a different environment.

The recognition of the contingency of his ideological imprint can be seen here as a "milestone" in the distancing process: For B's personal realisation of the "it-could-have-been-different" indicates, on the one hand, an ideological "opening" and a readiness of questioning of his own convictions. On the other hand, it shows that it was possible here to stimulate reflection of the negative consequences that the right-wing extremist views and actions had on him. The fact that the analysis of one's own biography and the resulting social environment offers such enormous potential for the distancing process seems unsurprising. By doing this, cause-and-effect relationships can be analysed that allow for a legitimate relief of responsibility in the past without denying the ability to develop and change in the future - and to distance oneself from right-wing extremism.

Biography work thus enabled the client to develop an attitude that can be summed up with the guiding principle: "There is little I can do to help me become who I am; but it is now in my hands to become someone else!" But the fact that the client was able to adopt this attitude so readily seems to have been due to a second factor that came into play during this session. For client B's euphoric mood had a reason, which on the one hand was closely linked to his past, but equally offered a perspective of fundamental change in the future. One reason being a visit to his father, whom client B had not seen for 11 years,

which was pending and meant an extraordinarily joyful prospect of the upcoming vacation for him. On the other hand, client B's mother had finally found a new apartment in a new city, which also meant that B could start his "new life" in the foreseeable future.

A doubly favorable situation arose for the distancing process: On the one hand, B's objective life circumstances allowed for a reappraisal of the family past (visit of the father), and, on the other hand, they opened up a concrete perspective for the future (move to a new city). This was the ideal starting point for the narrative-biographical conversation of the session. It put B in a narrative position that enabled him to reflect on his personal life history and to gain options for action for the future.

Session 7: Behind ideology lies experience

After a three-week break due to vacation, during which client B visited his father, the trainer team had a well-founded fear that the first session after this interruption (and penultimate session ever!) might be characterised by a renewed feeling of alienation. This impression was not confirmed at all. Instead, client B opened up both on the level of content and in his body language; both had fundamentally changed. The session report states:

"His posture and overall appearance seemed more open and less threatening. Client B was able to look the trainers in the eye and for the first time they laughed together".

Client B reports right at the beginning of the session (without being asked!) about his visit to his father. Joyful experiences, such as a visit to the big city of Hamburg, are mixed with political statements: "In city X (future place of residence), you don't see Germans at the train station and in the stores anymore", "In the center of town, people looked at me very strangely because of my hairstyle, that was unpleasant, now I am letting my hair grow longer". "In city X I can no longer walk around with my Thor Steinar sweatshirt because I get beaten up by 'foreigners'. Even Antifa gets beaten up by 'foreigners' gangs there."

In this open, experience-based conversation, the trainers were then also able to critically question some of the views expressed by B without this leading to a hardened political discussion. This represented an immense advance in conversational and critical ability as well as in psychological stability. Client B was also able to reflect on and describe his distancing process:

"He had noticed when he was with his father that he had simply adopted many opinions (in relation to his identity as a right-winger), even though he might not think it was good at all, i.e., the one about the Holocaust and that any foreigners are simply beaten up on the street. One could then also simply beat up many Germans all the same".

In this session, it was possible to establish what had already become apparent in the course of the previous sessions: the biographical events and experiences in the client's early life as well as the

influences of the current social milieu had a profound impact on his political worldview. Distancing oneself from this worldview therefore always requires a getting in touch with and reflecting on one's own biography, with breaches and disappointments and the pain associated to them. Ultimately it was also the experience of being able to bring about a change of oneself and to help shape further biographical development. It was extremely effective for client B to take a closer look at his life history and in particular the absence of his father. This decisively advanced his distancing process. One of the most important tasks of the trainer team is to recognise and use such biographical potentials and, if necessary, to specifically include family resources. If the client's life history is then sufficiently investigated and the trainers have simultaneously developed a good assessment of the current psychological stability or lability, it is also possible to intervene critically and confrontationally without impairing the receptiveness of the client.

Session 8: Conclusion and closure of the training

The training had to be terminated prematurely after the 8th session, because the client had to move to a distant city and start anew. It was important to find a successful conclusion in the last session and to reflect on the joint training accordingly.

Shortly before moving away, client B was able to make great progress in his distancing process, as compared to the difficult, unpromising beginning that was also interrupted by the placement in a psychiatric clinic. So there are good prospects. Nevertheless, it would have been desirable to continue working with client B to stabilise him even more. Although B was able to take the first important steps towards a sustainable distancing from the right-wing extremist scene, these were inevitably still very fragile. Further consolidation would have been important. Nevertheless, definite successes can be made from this training. Thus, the last session report states:

- "B.'s prejudice towards foreigners had been they always raped women, and now he had discovered that this was not true at all in this manner and that Germans are rapists too. That is why he no longer has such a problem with foreigners [...].
- B. actually has nothing against disabled people, because they can't help it that they are disabled. He feels sorry for them because they don't have a happy life. B. could not understand that someone has a child although they know that it will be disabled. He could not understand the thought that people with disabilities can also be happy and have a nice life.
- However, he was not tolerant towards everyone. Not against people who sell drugs to children, against child molesters and Christians ("they screw others!") and against gays. What bothers him is how they look and how they behave and that they have anal sex."

Obviously he is not a flawless humanist yet, however this is not surprising. This should not obscure the fact that client B has begun to question the central building blocks of his political identity (e.g. xenophobia) but also the habitual "male hardness" (lack of empathy). At the same time, he is also able to formulate these processes of reflection in front of the trainers without fearing the feeling of "losing face".

In the report, the trainers state quite aptly that B had built up a good relationship with them, making critical interventions increasingly possible. With this conclusion, the result of the present case description can be summarised, namely that a trusting relationship is not only helpful, but downright indispensable. Without it, pedagogical interventions aimed at questioning a personally internalised political identity can fulfill their goal and not lead to a possible hardening of that identity. The means of choice for developing such an approach must - as has been made clear here - occur primarily via biographical and lifeworld experience of the client himself. The fact that this can only be influenced by educators to a very limited extent must, however, always be reflected upon in order to be able to define the limits of one's own pedagogical effectiveness.

Summing up recommendations for successful dissociation work

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding analysis is that successful prevention work with young people who display hardened anti-human and anti-democratic attitudes must take seriously the biographical, life-world and sociopolitical factors that have encouraged (and continue to encourage) this turn to right-wing extremism. A professional attitude in working with right-wing extremist youths necessarily involves the balancing act of understanding the factors that lead them to join, but not accepting them as excuses or justifications. This attitude is aware of the difference between understanding and condoning and communicates this also to the client. In concrete terms, this means that, while constantly taking into account the subjective rationality behind the client's attitude, the "ability to change" is also supported with the client, and the young person is perceived in his or her uniqueness on the one hand and his or her personal responsibility (agency) on the other. This also includes recognising the limits, which are given by the societal power structures.

Moreover, it is therefore important to question and transcend any stereotypical perpetrator-victim attributions. For in the rarest of cases a person is only a victim or only a perpetrator. The fact that it is necessary to understand and address the biographical developmental conditions of the client seems only logical in this respect. For it can be concluded that these form the basis for the ideological turn to right-wing extremism and can therefore also serve as the key to turning away from it.

The obviously close link between biographical and socio-psychological dispositions and the political worldview also shows the necessity of reflecting on the limits of the effectiveness of the pedagogical

intervention: For this intervention constitutes at best a small part of the reality of the young person's life - and can therefore only serve as an impulse for the client to achieve change and development within her or his social circumstances.

What ultimately needs to be taken into account in this respect are the limits of social work and interventions, which for good reason cannot start at the level of social conditions. On this level, an understanding of the genesis of right-wing extremist movements may often risk to become tantamount to accepting such movement. However, social work with right-wing extremist youth must aim to focus on the individual, to understand him or her, and to enable him or her to self-reflect. Only when the client can sincerely be made to understand that such understanding is the purpose of the pedagogical intervention, and not a "manipulative will to change", will it be possible to offer criticism and confrontation that is based on the recognition of the young person's capacity for mature judgment.

2.3 Case description of EXIT Europe distancing work in a group setting

The process of a narrative talk group at a high school was selected for the reconstructive case description of the EXIT Europe project. The case selection was based on the following criteria:

- It became apparent that the selected group had the most content-related points of contact and the greatest dynamics in regards to active extremism prevention, which is central to the project.
- In connection with this, the selected group also posed the greatest challenges in terms of methodology and setting, which were then examined in greater detail in line with the formative design of the three level evaluation methodology.
- The interactions between the project and the school became particularly clear in this case due to the explosive content of the high school group.

This case study/ reconstruction now traces the central events in the narrative talk group. It focuses on particular questions for determining the impact analysis.

The first group sessions: Demonstrations of power and blocking strategies

The project group consists of 12 students (four teenaged girls and eight teenaged boys) from a ninth grade class. The impression the group makes on the facilitators during the first round of group talk is characterised by three phenomena in particular:

(1) The participants find a seating arrangement in the circle of chairs relatively quickly, with girls seated next to girls and boys next to boys, not at all mixed. Small subgroups form quickly. The students in each subgroup are hardly able to talk to others in another subgroup, despite the support of the facilitation. There is a great deal of unrest, and two-way and side conversations about exclusive topics dominate throughout, which neither the other participants nor the facilitators can understand. Therefore, the group facilitators try to facilitate finding common topics of conversation, e.g. by offering themselves personally for questions or by using techniques of narrative inquiry. This is done by spontaneously taking up descriptions of events and personal experiences that arise, thus promoting the conversation about these students' personal thoughts and views and experiences. Yet these measures also seem to have no effect at all on the group. Rather, a fidgety overall dynamic and a general sense of being blocked from talking openly in the group determines the picture, which only opens up sporadically.

(2) In this group, which was formed by a procedure of spontaneous self-assignment from one half of a school class, there are only four girls, who say next to nothing right from the beginning. They feel very uncomfortable in the group, according to their posture and body language. When asked by the facilitators, however, the girls hesitate to give any concrete information as to whether, to what extent and why they do not participate and feel uncomfortable in the group. This did not change even when the

facilitators support the girls through the often successful means of "mirroring the group," in which they share their overall impression of the group as a whole, formulated in a question:

"It seems like you are a group where the girls don't want to say anything and feel uncomfortable. Is that true? Is that true of the class as well?"

But no noticeable improvement can be achieved.

(3) The dynamics of this group are characterised from the beginning by the fact that four students, who apparently spend a lot of time together outside of school and on weekends, repeatedly succeed in dominating the conversation and narrowing it down to one topic. Even when the facilitators take up other topics of their own accord, these students consistently succeed in bending the topic proposals in a sometimes quite brazen manner, to win them over and block them. For these boys immediately intervene in all independent attempts and independent approaches of the group to reach a joint conversation, effectively interrupting any attempts to open up other topics and always redirecting it to one and the same recurring topic, namely their common hobby, fishing. That is, these boys dominate the group by repeatedly changing the subject and successfully insist on talking about fish, nutrias, and fishing. Moreover, this is done consistently in an allusive manner, with many insider remarks, and without being amenable to personal-narrative follow-up questions. The boys, thus, effectively use this topic as means of blocking the entire group from any development of an open and joint conversation.

This behaviour of avoiding and obstructing conversation also seems to take on a provocative and almost cynical character very early on, in that it is sometimes carried out with a self-confident grin, which suggests that a game is being played here in front of everyone who is present. At the same time these students in the group power-consciously signal and determine what is being played and that nothing in this group is possible without them, so that they effectively hold absolute power over this group. They do not even make a special effort, they simply talk about fishing, hence dominating the group.

It is also already apparent in the first session that one of the girls, who seems to be close to the dominant boys' subgroup, increasingly appears self-confident and open in this situation and repeatedly takes on a moderating role vis-à-vis the facilitators. This happens, for example, when individual remarks and "insider" comments from within the (sub)group are incomprehensible to others or the group conversation greatly falls apart.

The rest of the group lets these boys have their way with it and does not even case to moderate vis-à-vis the facilitators. Even when the group facilitators reflect – and mirror – their impression of the current situation of the group and thus invite reflection, exchange and eventual change, these attempts fizzle out ineffectively into distraction talk – about fishing.

However, towards the end of the first session, two topics arise that bring the group together for a short moment of time. The first is the school's principle. All the group members agree that the rules the school

administration sets are too strict and are too unpredictable and inconsistent, so that some even accuse it of deliberate lying and scheming against the students. Here the students speak openly about their thoughts and perceptions for some short moments. Secondly, shortly before the end of the session, it is brought up that there was an incident of cyberbullying and "sexting" during the summer vacations, which was carried to the entire student body and beyond, and about which there has apparently not yet been a more intensive (pedagogical) discussion at the school. Thus, there are signs of a need for a conversation and a desire for conversation on topics that concern a wealth of narrative fields of experience and conflict of young people living and learning together in a school and that can also be shared and discussed in the context of civic education.

Within this initial situation, the group facilitators increasingly notice that not only the girls in this group are affected by an almost complete inhibition and obstruction, but also some boys. Apparently, these boys – who are obviously subordinate within the male group hierarchy – also seem affected by the existing dynamics, because they may not belong to the inner circle of those exercising power and are not included, or only to a limited extent, in the allusions made by them. The facilitators also had the impression that some of these boys also have considerable difficulties in general to concentrate and to participate in a common and quiet conversation in a group.

However, it is precisely the student's concentration difficulties and hyperactivity that draw attention to the double pedagogical and social challenge that becomes apparent here by means of the narrative group talk methodology:

(a) On the one hand, there is the risk of a progressive disqualification and social exclusion of these boys – and of course also of the girls, who in everyday school life, can however possibly fall back on conversation skills among the girls (cf. further below). These boys will not develop their conversational and social skills under the influence of the currently very obstructive group dynamics, but will continue to lose skills; which, incidentally, also applies to the power-hungry boys themselves, who obviously develop their social intelligence primarily in the area of exercising power and obstructing any open conversation.

(b) On the other hand, there is a high risk in the perspective of democracy pedagogy – hence, a risk for the conveyance of basic skills of operating in a democratic and human rights based society. Even in the early group phase, there were indications of what was to become much more obvious later on: regional right-wing extremist subcultures have a considerable influence on some students in the group, also indirectly on the entire student body and on the part of the school processes. Despite determined efforts (parent meetings, expulsions from school), it was not possible to create a sustainably effective remedy. The fact that students, when summoned by the school administration, sometimes show the Hitler salute, as was reported in one of the first group meetings, is one thing; the subtle exercise of power and obstruction in conversation in the classes and peer groups is another.

Nevertheless, even this very challenging group reveals from the outset the potential that can always be counted on in young people, even under the most difficult conditions. For despite the very little leeway and the high pressure within this group, the effort to make the best of it is also noticeable from individual young people. In any case, the group facilitators with their completely new and open offer to have an open and unrestricted talk quickly become welcome or at least exciting conversation partners for some of the students.

Further group sessions: A (un)culture of constant humiliation and contempt

The following sessions are also characterised by great unrest, inner group tension, two and three-way conversations that get in the way, and the aforementioned dynamics of exercising power. These take up space, and obstruct conversation. In addition, a blatant lack of mutual attention and an almost obsessive tendency toward consistent gestures of disrespect and devaluation of other students are repeatedly noticeable in this group. This tendency seems to be anchored in a constant (un)culture of mutual, more or less joking humiliation and contempt, which interrupts and obstructs conversation in an extensive way. For example, in one session, the girls in the group set out to tell about a teacher's anger outburst they had recently experienced – which certainly provides a promising occasion for questions concerning anger, emotions, conflicts, relationships to teachers, school as an institution, and so on. However, when one student in the group began to speak about this issue, he was immediately interrupted and insulted by calls – "You faggot!". Hence, basic issues of discipline, demeanor and respective setting adjustments had to be worked on at first in this group.

This (un)culture of humiliation and contempt was repeatedly directed at certain enemy and hate persons among students and teachers, even across classes. Remarkably, the two most recognisable cross-class enemy and hate persons of this group are female, namely the student Michelle and a teacher named Ms. Meier. Various students can be heard speaking very contemptuously about both individuals:

"Michelle is a total bitch. I can't even look at her because she makes me sick. She's fat, ugly and lesbian or trans or something..."

Ms. Meier is addressed somewhat to the effect:

"It makes me puke just to see her, with her skirt over her pants; like a man ... she's like a cattle."

Shortly after, another student says with strong disgust and seriousness:

"I want to kill her!"

In a conversation that takes place later in the time-out area of the narrative talk group setting, the extent to which such affective states of hatred and disgust are condensed among individuals in the group becomes even clearer – revealing a right-wing extremist background as well: Faced with the project's evaluation questionnaires (where one can tick certain boxes and do ratings to give feedback about the

group work), on which, "female," "male," and a third, self-definable option are offered, one boy begins to hesitate; then ultimately it bursts out of him:

"I hate gender [trans people were probably meant], it's not proper, it's not meant to be, I just hate them, they belong gone."

What exactly did he mean by "gone"? After some hesitation he replies:

"Yeah, in the oven."

When asked if he had ever met a trans person:

"Nah, I don't talk to those at all."

As to whether he had ever burned a living being, he also denies it; whereupon another boy in time-out begins to break away:

"I'm not a fan of gender either, but I wouldn't burn them."

Furthermore, it becomes clear that trans people are often talked about in this way in everyday school life, as well as the two girls or women mentioned above (Michelle and Ms. Meier) and other, predominantly female people who are viewed with intense aversion. They trigger killing fantasies, which are sometimes expressed with reference to the Holocaust. Furthermore, it is recognisable from the group dynamics that these strong emotional thrusts of hatred and devaluation also have the group-dynamic function of softening internal tensions and rivalries and of bringing the otherwise agitated and conflicting group together for short moments (which the facilitators mirror and articulate before the students, inviting them to realise and think about this behaviour; cf. further below).

Despite the drastic nature of the content, it should not be overlooked that it is a sign of considerable sincerity and willingness to talk when such things are expressed unvarnished to the external group facilitators; and this is of great importance in order to be able to start intensive pedagogical work at all.

What is also becoming increasingly clear in this group is that factors of the individual mental impairment or of the corresponding medication can also play a role. This raises the question of the accompanying health care interventions respectively. For example, a hint from a cross-talk leads to the assumption that a student (named Karl in the further course) at least "sometimes" takes psychopharmacological drugs; however, this cannot be addressed and deepened in a narrative manner in the existing dynamic. In any case, this one, who seems to hold a dominant role among the "fishing" boys, often acts nervous and aggressive. He generally seems to be very restless, is unable to concentrate, and disrupts the group in an aggressive way, which one facilitator in his notes describes as follows: *"He keeps bombarding the others with comments"* (cf. daily report of 27.08.2019).

The considerable potential of the group becomes evident for one by the fact that even though their opposition is directed towards the external group facilitators, they generally except young adults. This makes it all the easier for the facilitators to address and mirror the group very directly:

"You all here in the group seem to be in many individual subgroups and cliques that don't want to talk to each other and don't listen to each other. Is that the case? Who belongs together here? How is it that you belong together? What do you do together outside of school?"

Along such forms of questioning, new impulses always arise even in groups like this one. A few sporadic memories of how the class was still composed differently in the seventh grade and how everyday class life was calmer back then, the class trip being a highlight. A joint conversation about shared experiences of social interaction and joint exploration of the world seems tangibly close. It then also becomes possible to go around the group by mutual agreement, in which everyone talks about their *"awesome experiences"* on this class trip and also listens to each other reasonably attentively. In this group, of course, there is a lot of talk about testing courage and making jokes, which can develop a lot of relevance for topics of civic education if there is enough silence.

Even nervous Karl becomes tangible as a person during such, still rather rare and short phases of group dynamics, and it is noticeable that he is moved by the joy of telling stories and, in doing so, reliving personal experiences. This is an indication of the natural urge to share experiences and tell stories, which the methodology of narrative group work can always count on. Nonetheless, a focused and shared storytelling and narrative inquiry in the group is not possible in this instance, yet.

Beyond the obstructive boys subgroup: a group conversation can begin

In view of the continuing unrest, disjointedness and blockages, the facilitators decide to explain to the group during the fourth session, once more what exactly the point of the time-out area is and how it works. They emphasise that the time-out is intended, among other things, for such a blocked situation, making it easier for the group as a whole to find and develop its ability to talk. After this cautious intervention of the facilitators, three of the dominant students announce that they want to go to the time-out, which was definitely intended by the group facilitators, so that this wish is naturally granted. In this way, a change of setting could be accomplished without the facilitators using a confrontational intervention against the students from whom, in their view, the blocking of the group emanates.

Although this means that parts of the boys' clique are still present, this change in the group constellation results in an initial sense of relief. In the greater calm that now returns, it becomes possible that some of the already indicated and also new fields of experience find space in the group conversation and are exchanged to some extent. For example, there is some exchange about the experience of being new in the class, initiated by a female student who is repeating the grade. Also the class as a whole had recently

been changed in its entire constellation, with many new students, which it has not been able to digest well since.

Afterwards, a new topic comes up spontaneously: *"The kids from the children's home are arrogant"*, which refers to the numerous students of the school living in a youth welfare institution. This opens up the possibility of a precise description and clarification of experiences of this group and how to create new dialogues out of conflict-laden relationships. The topic of *"children in care"* also has a great importance for social and democratic learning and for civic education. Based on this topic, for example, other experiences of exclusion were also discussed in the further course of the group.

In the group as a whole, which has been reduced by parts of the boys' clique, the ability to trust and talk is still far from the point where personal exchange is largely possible. However, in this phase, the incident of cyberbullying or sexting, which occurred during the previous summer vacations, comes up again. Some more details can now be added, and a student tells how she tried to call the affected student and ask him how he was doing – and how this gesture of care was then misunderstood by the boy.

The subsequent request to the group to recall situations in which they helped and supported each other, or where this failed, represents a classic narrative inquiry that can open up another important field of experience and topics for social learning. For this, however, the basic stability of the group must first be given. Thus, this question could initially only be given as a weekly task until the next meeting, the fulfillment of which was rather uncertain at this point in view of the dynamics of tension and disturbance. However, in intensive pedagogical processes such as these, it can always be assumed that the conversation impulses given will continue to have an effect on the following days until the next meeting and that the thematic conversation will also develop further in the smaller circle between the group meetings. This is all the more valuable because it was already foreseeable at this point that the areas of experience the students took up on their own – being new, children from child care institutions, cyberbullying, sexting, caring for one another – are all important topics of social learning and also of civic education.

The boys group in the time-out: swastikas, Reich citizens (vigilant), and nothing left to lose

The moment the three of the dominant boys from the "fishing" boys group decide to go to time-out is marked by their positive curiosity regarding this new space. It may also be due to their dominant attitude, attempting to claim this area for themselves first.

The three boys continue to display their group behaviour in the time-out area, often exchanging short innuendos and insider remarks and the usual everyday mutual provocations: *"Julius is gay."*, *"You faggot!"*. Nonetheless, they also express interest in the facilitator there, who approaches them with an open mind. In one of these time-out sessions, a presumably homosexual couple on one of the small

farms in the vicinity is discussed for a little while. Upon using the keyword gay, the possibility of a group homework assignment is considered, to seek conversation with the two men and report back to the group. This was nevertheless rejected because of the objection *"If the farm were in my village, then maybe..."*

Even in response to the facilitator's proactive inquiry about how things were with them and local right-wing extremism, there was initially little sustained exchange. At this point, the group facilitators had sufficient reason for this question. This was because they had received increasing indications from inside and outside the group work that the dominant and dissocial students were close to the right-wing extremist structures and subcultures existing in the regional environment or were connected to the Reichsbürger movement (vigilantes) through their family and milieu of origin. The hegemonic behaviour of seizing space displayed by these boys can therefore also be attributed to this circumstance, as well as to the boys' fear of criminal consequences. Despite the constant assurance of confidentiality, the boys hesitated for a very long time to say anything about their own connections to these right-wing extremist subcultures and, of course, about how these connections shape and affect the social life of the entire school.

At least, however, one of the boys interjects the moment they go into time-out by saying:

"Now we'll get kicked out again because we're the Nazis."

And the subsequent, still very erratic, halting conversation yielded two vague remarks about third parties or the apartments of friends in which, for example, the Reich war flag hung in the living room. Also the direct inquiry whether it was correct what one of the group facilitators in the team had reported, that some boys of the group and the class carried medium-sized iron swastikas, fastened to small chains in their trouser pockets (or around their necks), was confirmed by the boys, with recognisable pride. Some of them tapped meaningfully on their trouser pockets, and one of them said:

"We live in the village. It's normal there. Almost 90% are like that there."

When asked whether he was not afraid of consequences, he first mentioned that some time ago a tenth-grader had been summoned to the principal's office and then showed the Hitler salute in front of the principal's office, whereupon the father, who had subsequently been invited by the principal for a talk, defended him and even expressed a certain pride in his son's gesture. Referring to his personal situation, the student added:

"Well, it's just the way it is, I don't care, I'm getting kicked out soon anyway, I've already received 16 such letters from the school."

The question of the facilitator, who is from Berlin and has a Turkish family background, as to whether and to what extent the boy was a cruel person, because the Nazis were a very cruel business, did not

initially lead to an answer from the stunned boy, but was visibly heard, also by the other boys in the time-out.

In a further time-out session with the three boys, one of them hinted about adults of his village – presumably also his family – and how they attended *"unofficial events"*, e.g. a clandestine car market with cars from National Socialism. These cars are driven around with covered up symbols. Furthermore, that a person from the Reichsbürger movement was also involved, who had weapons and could also access them. The boy also told of another Reichsbürger who had recently been in the news and had to hand in his weapons; but that this would have been far from all. In a time-out conversation a few weeks later, when facilitators and students had gotten to know each other better, Leon, who obviously has a high social rank among the boys, reported that his father was close friends with a Reichsbürger and that he and his father collected weapons. He describes how this one Reichsbürger, sitting together in a room, simply shot his gun in the direction of the kitchen wall because he wanted to show *"what this gun is like"*.

However, all these references are rather restrained, short-winded and erratic – and the jumpiness, lack of concentration, conversation prevention and stultification prevail:

"We want to come out, in the group. We're gay, we live together..." (jokingly)

as well as the constant devaluation of other students:

"He's gay. Let alone the way he sits. Left and gay. He sits like a woman. Like this, one leg over the other. My father sits like a man, and not so gay one leg over the other. That squeezes the balls."

All in all, the "fishing" boys hardly seem to want to give personal information and exchange ideas with the facilitator and among themselves. This is respected at first – but with regard to the ability of the whole group to talk, it is better to do so in the time-out, especially since the fear of criminal consequences presumably also plays a role. Only with a more developed basic trust – and presumably only through targeted individual interventions and adjustments to the setting – could it come about in such a (sub-) group that the specific experience background of individuals in those right-wing populist or right-wing extremist milieus can be spoken about in more detail in a confidential setting, possibly also with the perspective of returning these experiences to the group, so that impulses for further development and change of the young personalities – and of the group – can be set in motion.

In the course of the time-out sessions with the boys, which lasts several weeks, the prerequisites for reintegration into the group cannot be achieved at first. Because of the anti-social and partly cynical attitude of the boys, the facilitators impose the special condition that only one of the boys at a time can return to the group as a whole – and that he must be able to convincingly explain to the group both his going into the time-out and his current will to come back and participate in the group again. At first, none of the boys makes any effort to go back to the group individually and they seem to have settled on

spending the rest of the hour in the time-out. One of them actually at some point remarkably expresses the will to join the group again and gives a simple personal reason, as he is now calmer and more interested in participating in the group. However, when the group is asked whether this would be the right moment, they say that they do not yet want to take that boy back in at the current stage of the conversation. The reintegration of the three "fishing" boys can therefore only take place at the end of the session, since the group always closes completely.

For the boys in this time-out situation, it was still far from being possible to have a coherent, trusting and shared conversation. Similarly it seemed equally difficult for these boys to have a conversation at all. And yet, the more and more lasting it should remain in the memory of the students, how the facilitators of these narrative groups lead a conversation, with individuals and with (sub-) groups. Because this kind of content-open, respectful and yet conflict-proof and regulated mode of conversation is something the students have probably hardly experienced before, at least not in school and with regard to their burning issues of connection to right-wing extremism. Moreover, many specific scenes will also be remembered by the participants. For example, Stefan and the "fishing" boys will hardly forget how Stefan shows a group facilitator with a Turkish family background his metal swastika, which he carries concealed, and faces the questions – including whether he has ever been violent and whether and to what extent he would be a cruel or hateful person, because the Nazis and today's right-wing extremism are an incredibly cruel matter. Even if, as in the case of this subgroup, it is not (yet) possible due to external circumstances to effectively address the "fishing" boys in their entangled situation in the time-out, to surround them and to resocialise them in school interaction, these shared experiences will certainly be lasting.

The “critically attentive” attitude in the time-out area opens up new approaches: argumentation and confrontation as additional elements of narrative work

In view of the previous implicit and explicit demonstrations of power by the "fishing" boys, a group facilitator with five boys in time-out decided to intervene by means of a constellation exercise in order to enter into conversation about the topic of power. She asked:

"Who actually has how much power among you five? Or on a scale of zero to ten, how much power do you have in the group?"

In the course of this, there is at least a rudimentary reflection on how the individual boys' sense of self and ranking in the relationship and power structure of this clique is constituted.

In another time-out situation, with roughly the same group but a different facilitator, the boys spontaneously suggest inviting a tenth grade student, who just has a free period, to the time-out to talk together. He is obviously known for his extremely contentious, right-wing extremist opinions and seems

to be a kind of role model for the "fishing" boys from the ninth grade. The facilitator agrees to this initiative and welcomes the tenth grader, who introduces himself wearing a bomber jacket, combat boots and a short military haircut. The facilitator sees this moment as a favourable possibility, because parts of the content and results of this exchange, after clarifying confidentiality needs, can also be brought back to the group and advance the conversation about regional right-wing extremism.

In the conversation, the facilitator intuitively decides to use a technique of critical inquiry and argumentative confrontation, which is not usually used proactively in narrative group work, except for limited phases, because narrative group work emphasises storytelling rather than argumentation. In this time-out constellation, however, the methodology of critical argumentation and deconstruction proves to be the means of choice because it is indirectly demanded by the boys and because narrative storytelling readiness does not exist here yet – but can then be built on the critical exchange.

For example, the tenth grader in the bomber jacket opens on the subject of social life and respect within the school with the remark:

"Everything was better in the old days, there was still discipline and order, teachers and students respected each other and if someone misbehaved, they got a slap on the wrist and then it was good."

From the start, the "fishing" boys express a great deal of suspense to what would happen now, which was previously unimaginable. The facilitator responds to this in a respectful and open-minded manner by asking whether, in the case of "discipline and order" based on the model of German history of the Third Reich, an independent opinion like the one he is expressing right now would be possible or whether severe punishments, including the death penalty, could be expected. This rather simple reply impresses the young man and the "fishing" boys very much, and they pay their respect, in which a basic willingness to talk and to establish a relationship is recognisable. The continuous ideological offer of the tenth grader, of regular reports regarding foreigners raping women ... and that one should lock them away for good, can be questioned accordingly. Because of course he agrees that also Germans should be punished who rape women. The facilitator's subsequent question as to whether and why it is then necessary to distinguish between Germans and foreigners at all, especially since the criminological figures give no reason to do so, also generates honest amazement and reflection amongst the students.

Such interventions, which complement the narrative group dynamic methodology, can be used as door openers and supplements, especially if mutual respect and basic trust emerge in the process. This can be done in order to subsequently exchange and recount actual experiences in this topic area devoid of opinions. Similarly, their use here was only made possible at all by the preceding group dynamic work. Without this foundation and the resulting trust that the students were able to build up with the group facilitators over time, the success of these interventions and a serious examination of dominance behaviour or right-wing extremism among this target group would hardly have been conceivable.

These episodes illustrate why the format of the narrative groups as a whole – and the time-out area in particular – is designed in a thoroughly flexible and experimental manner, despite the focus on the narrative conversation mode, and why conventional methods of civic education or pedagogical intervention can also be used and adapted in a targeted manner. The central point is that the self-dynamic group and conversation process is not overridden by an "externally determined" programme or even an agenda. Depending on the assessment of the facilitators and the existing relationship level, these interventions can also contain confrontational elements, whereby it must always be guaranteed that the facilitators mean well and want to help.

The group division into girls' and boys' groups

The fact that the core of the group, relieved of the "fishing" boys, is easily able to engage in a self-motivated, joint and attentive conversation and – with the help of the facilitator's use of the narrative technique – to further develop its ability to discuss, becomes more evident in a follow-up session. Here, there is no time-out referral (except for the "fishing" boys who are there for a longer stretch of time), but rather the entire group is divided up.

The "fishing" boys initially refuse this session when they are told that this time, for known reasons, they should go to the time-out area right from the start. The "fishing" boys – who, of course, can only ever be assigned as such by the facilitators by way of estimation and suggestion and can be distinguished from a presumed mainstream of the group – declare that they expressly only want to go to one of the two male time-out facilitators they have met so far. The unknown female facilitator, on the other hand, who was assigned for the time-out that day, they refused. Without insisting on their authority to secure the setting, which the facilitators inviolably hold, they first probe in an open-minded way the background of the attitude that the boys take in order not to let the emerging added value of the situation for the whole group go unused. They ask:

"What is it about being with our female teamer that makes you balk at the idea of being in time-out?"

"Can you remember other situations in which you shied away from women, for example, when they had a superior function?"

"Have any of you also had good experiences in such situations?"

"Can the others perhaps tell us something about this?"

But when the group does not reach a sincere and substantial exchange about these questions either, and the boys' gestures make topics such as gender roles and misogyny very virulent, the (mixed-gender) facilitators suggest that they divide into subgroups of girls and boys and continue talking in separate places. All participants are happy to comply.

The group of boys then continues to act out their restlessness, irritability and aggressiveness in the usual way and thus also moves in the border area of the need for disciplinary intervention, e.g. by initially running around the building and the courtyard or moving a table in front of the door, before they finally allow themselves to be gathered in the subgroup. There they again talk about the "slut Michelle":

"She's fat, ugly and lesbian or trans or something ... I can't even look at her because it makes me sick."

This topic was initiated by the last weekly task given to the boys, namely to try to contact this particular eighth grade girl and to find something positive about her as a person. The boys state they did not understand this weekly task, whereupon the very volatile conversation moves thematically from hate, devaluation, women, Michelle, Ms. Meier to the topic of AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) and foreigners:

"We are both already 16 and have voted for the AfD. Hahaha... Yes, we have no desire for these Kanaks (derogatory word for Germans of Turkish, Arabic etc. background). Our parents work hard and these guys get everything for free. They all have the latest cell phones and don't have to do anything for it. We vote for the AfD so that they all get out of here..."

In certain emotional situations, some of the boys are even more explicit about their right-wing extremist ideas:

"If Hitler and my grandfather were resurrected, there wouldn't be anything like that here [the narrative groups, H.W.]!", says Ben, who often sits with the boy who hates trans people so much that he has fantasies of burning them *"in the oven"*. Other boys employ more subtle strategies in this regard. Speaking about teacher-student conflicts, one of the "fishing" boys elaborates:

"The only teacher who manages to keep the class quiet is Mrs. Schmidt. That's what you call discipline... A teacher must be able to assert their power. There can also be violence. If you instill fear and respect, you get obedience. That's how it is and how it should be."

As difficult as it was at this point in the process to corral the subgroup of boys and bring them to any kind of coherent common conversation, the main function of the group division had already been fulfilled. Probing and building up a functional core of the group capable of conversation was made possible, which is assumed and sought among the girls to begin with (cf. here below). Considering the largely conversation-incapable subgroup of boys, the pedagogical potential that lies in the admittedly chaotic and often misanthropic, yet authentic and predominantly honest self-expressions is by no means to be underestimated – as the resulting workability of these aspects in the time-out area shows. If sufficient trust is developed and an intensive pedagogical setting suitable for these boys is well adjusted, such situations can work well and promise great added value for personality development and civic education of all those involved. Admittedly, the time frame that needs to be set for this should not be underestimated.

The subgroup of girls: Stories of love, sexism, and cyberbullying

In the subgroup of the girls, who meet separately in the meantime, an atmosphere spontaneously develops that is extremely conducive to conversation and is fundamentally relationship-oriented and prosocial. First, the girls inquire with personal interest about the professions of the two facilitators. Then they appreciate the relief that comes from being separated from the boys:

"Finally some peace ... it's super exhausting with them all day, at least with most of them."

What exactly is the reason for that?

"There's so much stupid talk and insults."

What would have caused that?

"They say that we're ugly or fat, or that we stink, or that we don't have breasts, and so on."

Just today Karl insulted us again:

"He's always in trouble with the teachers and then always insults the girls, and the teachers don't even notice. ... Karl is the worst of all. The others at least laugh when they insult you. He just hits you with it and moves on."

Hereupon concrete possibilities and empowerment strategies are discussed, how one can deal with such things and/or evade them. Furthermore, it is considered how this topic could be brought into the overall group so that a positive effect can come of it.

The new setting of a girls' group, still unknown in the context of this school, also makes it possible for a girl to speak for the first time who had never spoken before. She is one of children from the "children's home", who are occasionally mentioned within the group:

"Lisa, you've never said anything in the group. How come?"

"I never say anything in front of the class, because I get excited, I blush ... then all the more."

Once the class really treated her badly, pressuring and tormenting her, making her cry. That made everything worse. This had been difficult since the 7th grade, also due to the fact that she lives in an institution, and her mother works as a sex worker, which the classmates were aware of.

"Stupid things were said from the beginning."

Therefore it is possible for a student who had previously been largely isolated due to anti-social peer pressure to integrate into the group. Due to the limited time frame and this challenging group, however, this cannot be done solely within the framework of the narrative talk groups. Rather, the integration of and inclusiveness for all students regardless of background requires to be taken up by the class or the school as a whole.

Once the basic trust in the facilitator of this girls' group is established, the group candidly reports that one of the girls present, Lara, is responsible for committing the cyberbullying incident the previous summer (luring masturbation videos from Philip through a fake account). Lara and the other girls, however, are unaware of any guilt or responsibility regarding this event. It was "*the boy's fault after all*", especially since Philip is obviously a boy who "*is not nice to them*" and often behaves in a very derogatory and hostile manner. Amazingly, Lara has recently managed to repeat such an attack on the same student, obtaining videos of him and later re-sharing them and also showing them to Philip's girlfriend. The girls present agree that these videos must be considered disgusting. Smiling, the girl says:

"I then had to go to the director and pretend to be sorry"....

....whereupon all the girls laugh, as it had been so funny. And when asked what was so funny about it, they exclaim with even more incredulous amazement:

"He has one so small, it's unbelievable."

Yet, the group of girls at least shows a great deal of open-mindedness and is open to a free conversation in this first ad hoc get-together. For example, another girl contributes on an equally very personal level by talking about her ex-boyfriend, who smokes a lot of marijuana and not infrequently has health problems. In contrast, she has recently met her new boyfriend, with whom she had many long conversations, but who was already 22 years old. This initiates a more fundamental conversation about love, relationships and responsibility. The fact that this girl also brings in photos and an audio message is proof of the confidentiality within the group conversations.

The girls then share further experiences about boys/men, relationships and to some extent also about sexuality, furthermore exchanging views on issues such as contraception. Finally, the facilitator asks with whom the girls can talk about these important areas of personal experience. This would only be possible among themselves, among girls, especially since parents are completely unsuitable for this. The question of whether and how these conversations could possibly be handled in a larger and mixed-gender group of students is not asked at this point. It certainly touches on the perspective of what is aspired to and envisaged in the context of narrative groups on personal, existential as well as social and factual topics. The fact that a rich conversation is suddenly possible among the girls makes it all the more obvious how blocking and preventing the dynamics are in the entire group – and presumably also in the school class as a whole.

Admittedly, the girls are also not free of those needs for self-reflection and further development that are so glaringly present in the "fishing" boys. For example, even the girls – who are much more capable of engaging in a conversation and acting in a group – currently seem to completely lack any sense of responsibility about the act of cyberbullying committed amongst them. Even in later conversations in

other subgroups, the gloating and “schadenfreude” is repeatedly obvious without qualms and even be proudly presented to the facilitators:

"It was his own fault. And you can't believe how small he is, we can show you..."

A remarkable callousness and lack of empathy became apparent at this point. Furthermore, in view of the girls in this group, the question of their relationship to right-wing extremism as seen amongst the boys remains unanswered. Especially as Lara seems to have a good relationship to the "fishing" group, but also is regularly humiliated and insulted by them. According to them, the "fishing" boys acted as multipliers in the aftermath of the cyberbullying act committed by Lara by posting the pictures in question in a chat group with friends who do not belong to the school.

It was not possible to clarify the relationship of the girls, that is of Lara to the local Reichsbürger movement and right-wing extremism in more detail. On the one hand, the school administration did not extend the narrative talk group project, and on the other hand, the facilitators decided to concentrate on the pressing issue of ongoing cyberbullying for the time being. It became apparent that for this topic, the standard procedure of narrative group conversations alone would not suffice in bringing about timely and sustainable change in the sense of human rights-based pedagogy and prevention – and would need to be supplemented by a targeted method/exercise (cf. on this below).

Further potentials of developing conversation in the subgroup of "quiet boys"

In another subgroup consisting of four boys, it becomes clear that the group dynamics of domination and obstructing conversation set in motion by the "fishing" boys by no means exerts its antisocial, blocking effects only along gender lines. When during another group meeting, four "quieter" boys, who obviously do not belong to the "fishing" boys, create a smaller group with one facilitator, while the "fishing" boys and the girls are in separate groups, a very trusting and equal conversation also develops spontaneously among them, without the facilitator having to provide any significant support.

The four, who hardly ever speak in the group as a whole, report that they have known each other since elementary school, were in the same class together and share many mutual experiences. This also exemplifies how much the group dynamic of obstruction and blockage obviously prevented these boys with their shared experiences from coming forward as a resource to become a stable pillar within the group and this current ninth grade. Furthermore, in this subgroup conversation, the four boys talk about the fact that and how they were constantly bullied in the class, whereby the most recent case of cyberbullying is again brought up and presented in more detail. Like the girl who tried to call the student in question, the boys also expressed their concern for the same student.

Concrete observations regarding the class and individuals are exchanged, which are significant but do not seem to be openly addressable in this ninth grade class momentarily: Karl is one of the loudest and

most pushy among the bullies, and therefore the facilitators may have assumed him to be the boss of the gang so far. He is actually just a follower. In fact, he used to be bullied a lot in the class because of his fidgetiness and agility, especially by the "fishing" boys. Only since he has been so loud and massively bullied others has he gained a secure foothold in the group.

"When Stefan says something, Karl is very quiet. He does what he's told."

The boys speak about the other ninth grade class in an almost melancholic way. This class, in contrast to their own, is very tight and has a good class community, which is why there are apparently also numerous friendships with students from the other classes.

As with the girls, this subgroup of quieter boys also shows the great (democratic) pedagogical potential that lies in jointly developing and expressing such descriptions of experiences and observations – the actions of the "fishing" boys, bullying, changes in the class climate, the other 9th grade class, shared memories of earlier times, and also friendship, love, relationships and responsibility. For such observations and reflections are beneficial both for the class as a whole and for the personal and life development of all involved. At the same time, the processes of reassurance carried out by the boys regarding the value of peacefulness and solidarity to one another, in clear demarcation from the dominance-driven, pejorative and right-wing extremist attitudes of the "fishing" boys, undoubtedly strengthen resilience against right-wing extremism and group-based hostility toward people. The difficult path to this point makes it clear that this reflection requires a conflict-proof and flexible working setting of intensive pedagogical intervention. Such a setting is available in the form of narrative groups, which, with time-out, group division and a longer implementation time, offers the possibility of extended relationship building and personal conversation.

Special, situational intervention methods – the bullying mediation setting

Special methods and exercises within and beyond the narrative groups become necessary whenever a topic or a dynamic emerges in the groups that transcends the group or cannot be dealt with sustainably in the open conversation in the individual groups. This necessity now seems to exist with regard to the acute event of cyberbullying – while another obvious necessity is given by some boys' right-wing extremist affiliations which, however, cannot yet be approached at this point in time with the needed intensity. With regard to the cyberbullying issue, two important observations emerge for the facilitators from the group conversations to date: On the one hand, it is noticeable how difficult it seems to be for some students to make an empathetic change of perspective or to perceive and describe their own feelings. On the other hand, students who are close to the right-wing extremist group sometimes emerge with empathic abilities and also show interest in exchange and mediation.

In this bullying mediation setting, after a brief reminder of the multiple bullying incidents at the school, the students are asked to recall their own experiences in this subject matter and then to assign themselves to one of two sides: the perpetrators or the victims, and to sit in one of two rows of chairs facing each other. Then one experience from one row of chairs and one from the other row of chairs will be told in turn and everyone else can ask questions. In later rounds, it will be possible to assign oneself to the other position as well, because it quickly becomes apparent that many students could provide information concerning both positions. In the further course, a third position proves to be necessary, namely that of the followers, which was reserved primarily for those who had neither memories of committing acts of bullying nor of being affected by it.

The trust that has now been established between the group and the facilitators makes it possible for the group to engage in this sensitive exercise without further ado, while the three "fishing" boys remain in time-out as usual. The process between the students in the two rows of chairs then begins with two girls, including Lara, who as expected, confidently talk about their actions as accomplished cyberbullies, which they see as completely justified up to this point. As justification, they give further information about the hostile behaviour of the boy in question, who, after all, is very unfriendly and should finally change his behaviour now as a result of the attack. In narrative inquiries, the quite ambivalent emotional states and motivations are developed and comparable situations are remembered and sounded out.

This is then followed by a switch to the other side, and a male student recounts several experiences of a long history of suffering as a victim of bullying, which he shared in a very courageous and decisive manner; this visibly impresses the group:

"So it was just after all that, every morning, the closer I got to school, I always had such a bad feeling because I knew Karl was going to beat me up again about something. And I just didn't get it. Just because he doesn't like me or thinks I'm fat or my clothes are weird. Yeah, and then I always had such a bad feeling when I got off the bus."

Lara followed this – surprisingly – directly, although she was still sitting on the perpetrator's side:

"So my ex-boyfriend, when we broke up, I deleted all the naked pictures of him. That's what we had agreed on. But what I didn't know was that he showed the naked pictures of me around on the bus and in the school yard. And then a lot of people were very weird to me and said I was disgusting or ugly or something. But I didn't know anything about it and couldn't understand it. Until I found out at some point that he had done it."

The participants are visibly shocked by the details; Lara cannot finish and hides her face in her hands.

The fact that the perpetrator of the current bullying incident becomes not only recognisable but also emotionally palpable in her affected role so quickly and intensively is due to the fixed setting as well as to the attitude of the (non-school) facilitators and the relationship of trust that has been formed. Such

joint (self-)experiences are an indispensable first step if a joint change in behaviour is to be initiated in such an affective area of action. It was also helpful that at this point in time, very authentic and emotionally sincere views of the fellow travellers' perspective (the followers) – between Schadenfreude and guilty conscience – were expressed. Overall, the group, triggered by the emotional impulse of the narrative group self-awareness of their own experiences, came to the key observations (1) that the respective reason for bullying is always largely arbitrary and interchangeable, (2) that the main motives are retaliation or the desire to gain power, (3) that participation in it gives a short-term thrill of satisfaction, but this is often followed by shame and a guilty conscience, and finally (4) that bullying has long-lasting dire consequences for those involved and affected, so that the memory can trigger intense, lasting pain years later.

The personal-narrative deepening of the experience of bullying in an entirely self-determined process – the (sub-) group had come to the point in the process of the preceding conversation that they wished to have a structured exchange about this incident – again shows the potentials of narrative groups for the promotion of social and individual competence. They range from fostering narrative and group skills to developing empathy and solidarity to enabling self-efficacy experiences of being heard. This also includes dealing with pejorative and exclusionary attitudes, as well as the sustained confrontation with the strong vibes that the right-wing extremist behaviour the "fishing" boys exert on a large part of the entire group and class. This confrontation, of course, cannot take place without sometimes drastic (self-)experiences of hatred and cynicism, which are inherent in all forms of violent extremism – and which were about to come forth with the group also in respect to right-wing extremism.

From the subgroups back to the group as a whole: right-wing extremism breaks out openly and is dealt with by means of “intensified civic education”

In the session described below, in which a drastic (self-)experience takes place, three girls are not present, as they quickly moved to the time out area due to the renewed immense unrest in the group. The facilitators decide on this day not to place the "fishing" boys in the time-out from the start, where they normally work on their disruptive and domineering dynamics, but to try to utilise the potential achieved in the sub-group and make it work for the group as a whole. The facilitators keep the group largely together this time and offer a more confrontational mode of group facilitation. They do this by specifically and closely guiding the group, and repeatedly referring to the great restlessness, disturbance and also to the constant mutual contempt and disdain expressed by some of the group members constantly. Particular contents of the subgroup and time-out talks that have taken place over the last weeks are called to memory, without mentioning names:

"We and our team have the impression that the reason why you are so restless, contemptuous and disruptive is because some of you have a lot to do with Reichsbürger and right-wing extremism and such

... some of you reported this a little bit in the time-out ... And right-wing extremism has a lot to do with disruption, contemptuousness and destruction, which we experience here directly. Do you agree with that?"

This is confirmed by some with restraint. There is also the statement:

"We can't talk about it [right-wing extremism, H.W.] because otherwise we'll be expelled from school.

The facilitators repeatedly point out the existing secrecy and confidentiality guidelines that exist in the narrative groups and explain that they only have to report if criminal acts are intended or if there is acute danger to oneself or others.

In response to the subsequent question regarding situations in which difficulties of right-wing extremism arise within the school, the facilitators recalled and described the following scenes: clothing with (untaped) Nazi symbols is worn, right-wing extremist music is listened to, the Hitler salute is shown and parents are called in, sometimes even justifying such things (see above), whereupon school issues warnings and threats of expulsion. Taking it from there, the group as a whole begins to speak with greater openness for the first time. There is obviously a sense of status when talking about the fathers in question. They have known each other since school days, are closely connected and patriotic, and now participate in illegal events and weekend activities together [of the right-wing extremist spectrum, H.W.], which sometimes also involve weapons. Their sons either accompany them or they tell the boys about these weapons enthusiastically. Here, the "fishing" boys could be included more.

In this phase of the group dynamic work, the facilitators, here still in closer guidance of the group, address the silent part of the group, who are overshadowed by the now more informative "fishing" boys:

"You others haven't said anything about this yet (i.e. right-wing extremism, H.W.). What can you tell us about all this? You're all bound to hear about it somehow!"

With this direct address of the "mainstream group" beyond the "fishing boys" gang, a sensitive point seems to be hit, which the "fishing" boys might possibly feel as a threat. They see the group and class in which they move as a gang as their sphere of influence and dominance, so to speak, but also as a source of possible resistance and hostility. In any case, at first there is a gesture of prevention: one of the "fishing boys", who was also one of the swastika bearers, says firmly that he does not want to talk about it now, but would rather ask the facilitators questions. Such questions will always be taken up by the group facilitation as a welcome occasion for further trust-building, but will also occasionally be spotted as attempt to divert from conflictuous issues:

"You can always ask us questions. What is it you'd like to know from us?"

At this point Stefan enquires about the (great) grandfathers of the facilitators, whereupon one facilitator mentions a grandfather with a Wehrmacht past. Stefan, who seems to have been anticipating this topic, then takes this as an opportunity to share his knowledge and views of the German Wehrmacht in World

War II and says this grandfather must have been a man of honor. The facilitator asks where and from whom he draws his views on the Wehrmacht and her grandfather, then asking who knows or knew anyone else who can tell about the World War or another war. This is also to renew the offer of conversation that had previously been actively directed at the entire group.

The first question remains unanswered momentarily. Instead, one of the boys interjects that his great-grandmother had experienced the Second World War, but did not talk about it. When asked why, in his opinion, the great-grandmother did not talk about it, he shrugged his shoulders and said:

"She also would only get upset about my opinion" ... "What opinion then?" ... "Well, the one about the Jews and Auschwitz."

The tension prepared by the sub-group and time-out conversations, had already arisen at the moment of the group's coming together. It was further heightened by the deliberate addressing of the "mainstream group" – and its defense by one of the "fishing" boys. Above all, the topics touched upon here contribute to the intensity of this tension. This is because topics such as parents, grandparents, right-wing extremism, Reich citizens, weapons, National Socialism, world war, Jews and Auschwitz are addressed in an openness hitherto completely unfamiliar to the students in a school setting. This intense group dynamic tension leads directly to an escalation point. Not by the boy who initially describes how he talks to his great-grandmother, but rather another boy, who is generally rather restrained, whose group standing seems uncertain and whose membership in the "fishing" boys seems questionable, suddenly intervenes with a very cynical joke:

"Who is the biggest Jew? – A ten-meter-high stabbing flame!"

The entire group reacts in uproar; many hoot, all are excited and the group seems to be largely united for the moment. Two boys then spontaneously run out of the room and have to be caught by the facilitator, two other boys sign off in an orderly manner to the time-out, where the three girls are also still to be found. There the boys join in the trusting conversation, but at the request of the time-out facilitator they talk about the violent dynamics in the group and do not spare the "Jewish joke". The time-out facilitator has the impression that both boys are the main victims of the "fishing" boys in the group dynamics and are looking for protection, therefore refraining from further questions at this moment.

In the remaining group, the facilitators are initially busy reassuring the students. What has happened here? Why is it necessary and good that it is happening? And how can this be used in intensive educational work to provide holistic and sustainable civic education in an environment that is difficult to reach?

What has happened here? A so-called Jewish joke or a "Holocaust joke" was made. This happens at a dynamic escalation point of the whole group, which necessitated extensive preparation, i.e. through

time-out and sub-group conversations. Such a "joke" had not been made before, even in the smaller group settings, although there was never any doubt that the young people were continuously cultivating – more or less under their breath – a whole fund of such "Holocaust jokes" and passing them on in the student body.

Why is it necessary and good that this happens – and that it can happen without having disciplinary consequences? Because it shows everyone the authentic state of the group that needs to be worked on. The sudden appearance within the group of an anti-Semitic, cynical joke, which some of the group's (and the school's) students are likely to share among themselves regularly, leads to a moment in which the group has to face itself for the first time. Especially one of its most hidden aspects, that of extreme cynical contempt for humanity, culminating in a "Holocaust joke." Also, this (self-)experience in cynicism here concerns most of the mainstream of the group, its middle class, so to speak.

This (self-)experience in the group is made possible mainly by the fact that the narrative groups explicitly do not work with red demarcations of the unspeakable. Thus there are no experiences of content-related tabooing or permanent social exclusion due to the content of statements. Furthermore to the fact that even the hard-to-reach students – after several sessions – have gained sufficient confidence to act out. On this basis, this very escalation is able to arise and, due to its vehemence and dynamics, is likely to be a point for all participants at which they begin – albeit in part, certainly unconsciously at first – to work sustainably on developing new personal standards, or red demarcations, for themselves. The immediate recognisable emotional reactions, e.g. the many jeers, the splitting off, or the leaving of the room, clearly show that a moment of reflection on one's own attitudes was stimulated here.

Therefore for the first time, this moment of extreme cynicism can become a shared experience and an unquestionable part of the group memory, vouched for by the group facilitators' presence. From now on, the students can hardly deny or downplay the existence of this cynicism in their midst – because in this group moment, cynicism became official, so to speak, as is true for the shared experience of wide mutual bullying and denigration. This is necessary and good because, according to everything we know about secondary prevention and intensive pedagogy in the area of group-focused enmity and resentment as well as politically and hate-motivated violence, it is absolutely necessary to proceed in an experiential manner and to develop corresponding shared moments of experience, then to deepen and work through these experiences narratively and relationally. This means that the virulent contempt for humanity and the cynicism that characterise parts of the group and of the class and the school must first be experienced and re-experienced together before they can be worked with.

How is this moment subsequently used by the group facilitators? When the remaining group sits together again, reasonably calm, the facilitators first express that they are horrified by this joke and that they are always frightened when they hear such things. (Other reactions may also be appropriate as long as they are authentic and work towards further reflection of the group dynamic.) The facilitators then add that

they cannot understand how such jokes can be made. However, they admit that they know that such jokes are often used and that there are many young and old people who are not horrified by them. Therefore, they would be all the more interested to know how it comes about – and how in this case it came to this situation of the joke being made:

"Can you describe for us how it happened just now, when this joke was made, and then also what all happened afterwards?"

At first, the group cannot find an answer to this question. Therefore, the facilitators ask the group to first remember other, comparable situations in which such jokes occurred and everyone laughed, inside or outside the class/school:

"Please tell us what these situations were, what the circumstances were, what people were involved, and how else these people can be characterised, i.e., how they generally express themselves and behave, and what other experiences you have had with them."

Following the end of the lesson, the facilitators give these questions to the group as homework. It is supplemented by the detailed questions of whether, in other situations involving cynical jokes, individuals would also have distanced themselves and walked away from the situation, as those two boys in the group who went into time-out; or whether anyone even became outraged and how the outburst of this outrage or confrontation would then have proceeded in detail. Furthermore, the students were also led to think about the motivations and accompanying feelings in these situations. Did it feel cool to make such a joke? But does it also stir up apprehension? Can you count on the respect of the group? What happens in the wider environment, i.e. with the teachers? The goal of the task is to develop these situations and scenes of experience more precisely in the coming session and to reflect on them in greater depth, and thus to be able to approach one's own shared experiences.

Building on a jointly developed basis for experience and conversation, questions can then be asked as to whether and to what extent cynical jokes of this kind are not also to the sorrow of others. How do students feel who have a Jewish family background or other affiliations that connect them to the victims of the Shoa? "What do you think the David you remember from your elementary school would have been thinking at that moment, or how his mother would have felt?" Or who might possibly be affected and burdened by such jokes for other reasons. All of these questions are asked throughout as sincere inquisitive and open-ended ones, rather than morally suggestive questions. For their intention is to open up and share memories, experiences, and resulting new ideas in each individual of the group that help to understand more fully – and grow beyond – the scene at hand.

Due to further disruptive behaviour on the part of individuals and the limited time frame of the group work, this deepening could not take place in the group in the coming session (also because the school administration decided to not extend the group work for another semester, which constitutes a different

issue which cannot be discussed here at appropriate length). Hence, the questions posed to the students could at best unfold their individual effects on each of the students.

In view of any possible continuation of such a process, it is to be expected that the work could be continued in two respects: On the one hand, a more intense but also emphatic personal confrontation could be started with the boys strongly identified with right-wing extremist attitudes, for which, if necessary, external providers of distancing/exit work would be consulted (and/or also other social psychiatric, psychotherapeutic or youth/family support measures). These represent one key interface of the narrative talk group setting. On the other hand, the school's subject lessons would be able to specifically take up the topics of right-wing extremism, the Holocaust, Reich citizens, the history of the world wars in the region, etc. – this being the second key interface of the setting – and could have a better learning effect given how the personal basis of the young people's lively group self-experience has been prepared, which has now been tapped.

First visible behavioural changes: Empowerment to say no despite group pressure

In the follow-up sessions, it is at least possible to continue working with a large part of the group, while four of the "fishing" boys remain in time-out as standard. The first shifts become apparent in that some participants begin to explicitly distance themselves from the group pressure and humiliation practices of the "fishing" boys.

Initially, the conversations in the group become increasingly relaxed and rich, focusing on a whole range of life-world experience areas: The broad field of infatuation relationships, but also of corresponding rumors; what it can mean to write a diary; the rap songs one listens to and to what extent are they riddled with insults; experiences with Facebook and other social media. One boy gives a shocking account of a Facebook post:

"It was about the demonstration with Greta. Some people put up a guillotine there. I thought that was bad. There were a lot of kids there and the guillotine was real."

One of these sessions towards the end of the school semester then leads involuntarily back to the conversation about the arduous situation of the class: the conversation initially turns to dubious acts of friendship, i.e. situations in which one does something out of loyalty to friends or family but which one does not actually want to do oneself. Among other things, the students discuss when it is okay to say no and how to say no. The group also discusses domination behaviour and the high peer pressure on the part of the "fishing" boys, as the challenge of saying no is particularly acute here. This group pressure requires or tempts on a daily basis to do or to approve things, which one does not actually agree to. This might be to carry along or to bear the permanent bullying and the constant purposeful humiliations of

others by the "fishing" boys, of which one would be involved throughout in acknowledgment and complicity, e.g. by laughing along and smiling or by helplessly doing nothing.

From this, an engaged and controversial conversation arises about whether the "fishing" boys force their political attitudes onto others and how one can escape their group pressure and the more or less direct right-wing extremist agitation attempts. Those who tend to suffer and those who tend to be accomplices begin a direct exchange – as do those who alternately sometimes suffer and sometimes are accomplices – and in doing so independently take up the impulse set in the small bullying mediation exercise. This conversation then even goes so far as to consider concrete procedures by means of which one can say no in the class and intervene against the humiliation of third parties without causing unnecessary escalations.

Obviously, a maximum of awareness and group self-awareness of anti-social group pressure and bullying has been achieved in this session – up to the joint development of demarcation strategies against right-wing extremist agitation and dominance culture, but also against the cycle of bullying. This was made possible by the jointly developed framework through which this group has become so stable that, on the one hand, concrete changes in social behaviour in a pro-social direction are in prospect, while, on the other hand, it also seems feasible to go to work with the difficult area of experience of right-wing extremism and entrenched group hatred (i.e. group focused enmity). Those boys who cannot (yet) be included here are initially accepted in the time-out area, which can always also represent an interface to further external interventions mentioned above.

The (premature) termination

Although the narrative talk groups at this school were scheduled with the option of being extended for another six months – on the condition that the situation at the school does not deteriorate as a result of the group work – the project is terminated by the school management after the first six months with reference to a survey of the participating students which the team never got access to. On this basis, the school management concludes, according to verbal information, that the students now rather need a strong structure with clear rules and topics and that correspondingly tighter subject teaching should be used. From the team's point of view, this conclusion may also be due to the fact that the very open and permissive narrative talk groups appeared to be not effective enough or even questionable from a distance to some representatives of the teaching staff. Perhaps they had wished for a more prompt solution for the school's "most difficult class in a long time".

However, it cannot be overlooked that the school's intuitive leaning toward strong structures, clear rules, and tight subject instruction is remarkably in line with the motto of the "fishing" boys, who advocated that in a school class "discipline must prevail" and "a teacher must be able to assert his power" and that fear, respect, and obedience belong together. There thus is a certain tragedy inherent in this interaction

insofar as the school management is very strongly and resolutely committed to putting the obviously right-wing extremist milieus and families in the vicinity in their place. This admittedly can only succeed to a limited extent and in which, however, strong structures and strict subject teaching, hardly have corresponding effects. This process, which ended prematurely, may illustrate all the more how desirable it would be to be able to create a systemic approach to work for and consult the school as a whole, in which all those involved participate in their respective functions in the process of reflection emanating from the narrative talk groups.

In any case, the great potential of conversational ability and narrative interaction has become apparent, which is inherent even in this comparatively very challenging group and which so far has had little effect on this class. It can be considered likely that further work on this conversational ability and conversational culture would support social, emotional learning and democracy building in equal measures.

2.4 Reconstructive case description of the course of two sessions of distancing work in a group setting, conducted in a school with one half of a class of ninth graders, partly afflicted by regional right-wing extremism

Already in the third session of this comparatively consensual and pro-social group (half of a school class), the students open up personally to a very large extent and share what they normally do not share in school before teachers or adults. This group was facilitated at a “rough school”, the current ninth grade of which was called the “most difficult ever”; the school being situated in a rural community with high rates of right-wing extremism.

Hence, some of the students quickly built trust to the facilitators and begin to speak with great sincerity about their political attitudes as well as those of their families and village communities – some of which have strong right-wing extremist leanings. In many cases, the group facilitators from outside the school, coming from a distant big city, had assured the participants of their absolute confidentiality. Because of the continuous relationship building by the facilitators, the students in this group were able to develop an increasing level of confidence in this open and unbiased mode of conversation and personal exchange with the facilitators and with the other members of the group.

As a result, one fifteen-year-old uses this group session to relativise the Holocaust with a tone of conviction towards the end of the lesson. He very emphatically states that "the Holocaust wasn't that bad"; that "there weren't that many of them (killed)" and that "the Jews had always been persecuted". But, he says, that "Germany was so technically advanced ... We had the gas chambers ... and someone had to do it anyway"; and that "now only Germany has the blame for it" and "is forever being reproached". "And besides, what about the German prisoners of war in Russia? There were 270,000 of them, only 5000-6000 came back, ask yourself why that was! ... But at school you are not allowed to talk about such things anyway".

This relatively abrupt, drastic statement (evidently echoing stance of right-wing extremist groups and comradeships in the region and in the internet) can presumably be seen as an attempt by the fifteen-year-old to underpin his status in the group on the one hand and to test the trustworthiness and composure of the group facilitators on the other. The group facilitators, for their part, are given a welcome opportunity to enter into conversation and relationship through narrative interaction about a central topic of historical and civic education and thus to further deepen their work – and, of course, to prove their trustworthiness and ability to relate. At this moment, the group facilitators do not focus on contradicting or correcting the young man and bringing historical facts into the field (as experience shows that this hardly achieves pedagogical effects in such situations, but often leads to hardening). The fact that these allegations are factually false and also punishable by law in Germany and that they themselves do not hold this view is

mentioned by the group facilitators rather incidentally, depending on the personal style and need for clarification of the respective facilitator. There is also no indication at this point of any doubt within the group towards the team's attitude, visibly coming from a metropolitan area, regarding questions about German history. At a later point, the facilitators will once again raise the question of why such statements are forbidden under criminal law. They also explicitly indicate that this is regulated as such false statements can incite people, some of whom may then proceed to acts such as the attack in Halle or in Hanau. But this hint is also made at a later moment in an de-escalating manner, entirely without admonition or reproach.

At this moment, the group facilitators first express their fundamental respect for the openness with which the boy expresses himself – and then successively make an effort, together with the group, to open up the background of individual experience in which this statement is embedded. An initial, counter-provocative question, so to speak, as to whether he often provokes those around him with this or similar statements, initially only leads to the boy emphasising the seriousness of his statement. The group facilitators' attitude to the conversation is then committed to the following line of questioning: "I don't agree with you about the Holocaust, which won't surprise you. But first tell me how you came to this and who you actually are. Do you often have conversations about these topics? Tell us a little bit about the people who say this to you? Do you ever have arguments? What else do you experience with them? What questions do you sometimes ask yourself? What do you experience when you say something like that in school?" This attitude of attentiveness, curiosity and the techniques of narrative conversation follows the basic pattern of "no-but-yes,-tell-me-more-about-it"; i.e., it leads away from the level of opinions, views, and facts and tries to approach the level of personal experience and memory.

The young man does not seem to want to get involved in this yet in this session at the end of the hour. And in this behaviour he proves to be similar to those other students who display right-wing extremist attitudes and appear in other groups in a much more anti-social manner than is the case here. For this reason, the facilitators proceed as early as possible to involve the group as a whole, to counteract the polarisation and emotionalisation caused by the boy's probably intentional provocative statement, and to lead them in the direction of narrative points of contact. This proves to be hardly necessary in this case, since this comparatively trusting group brings itself into play quite quickly and is supported by the management with appropriate questions: "What can you others here say about this?" Above all the level of experience and less the level of opinion is addressed: "How do you others feel about these statements? What comes to your mind? Where else do you encounter these topics? What happens then? What is the process? Which people are involved? What do they do? What do you experience with them? etc."

At this point, a series of short, often simultaneously spoken and overlapping contributions emerge, which contain manifold possibilities for further deepening through narrative follow-up questions. Two students distance themselves, even using the technical term "Holocaust denial" themselves, thus

indicating a certain adeptness in discourses of civic education. Another boy seems to want to differentiate the statement of the fifteen-year-old and explicitly agrees that "you can't talk about this in school". Another one informs the facilitators that such statements are often heard around here, which creates further possibilities for describing other, new experiential situations in the group. Two other students speak openly and about how their classmate "would be like that all the time" and how one should thus understand what he says ("that's his thing!"). The latter then refers to it in brief reactions, indicating a relatively high degree of consensuality and communality among this group. In fact, two similar situations are alluded to, offering further opportunities for experiential immersion by narrative questions and sharing of and reflecting on situational experiences (for which there normally is no space in school).

This self-motivated, independent exchange, is led by the group in the presence of and with facilitators about this topic, speaking about their classmate as well. It leads to associated experienced scenes and considerations that are pedagogically very valuable. This is because this self-determined process supports the students' narrative, reflective, and conversational skills. Numerous cognitive, thematic-analytical, as well as social, communicative, and emotional competencies are fostered as well in the process. In addition, it can be stated that in this session the topic of right-wing extremism in the region (and in some families) was brought up by the students themselves. It was from a very personal perspective and not suggested by the educators or by a planned teaching unit. Inquiries by the facilitators that are motivated by personal interest and that aim at the experiential level are always particularly effective.

But how can this promising situation be used in the sense of a holistic civic education?¹⁵ So far, the group, in conjunction with the external facilitators, has firstly outlined its status quo in terms of Holocaust awareness and associated themes of right-wing extremist ideology. These and the interaction scenes and experiences are many and indispensable, which are due to the setting provided for this purpose. Now a development beyond this would have to be initiated – and this also because this status quo would otherwise remain merely in confirmation and reinforcement. Such further development can be initiated in many ways by means of the above-mentioned possibilities of personally interested, narrative inquiry, the subsequent illumination of the ensuing situation in the group and the self-reflection thereof (cf. above: comparable situations, which people are involved, what do they do; what do the teachers say; how do you feel about it? etc.). Each of these questions would lead to relevant exchange of personal experiences, observations and reflections, which would otherwise hardly occur in school,

¹⁵ Which can also be called an intensive pedagogical civic education; cf. Weilnböck, H. (2020) *Intensivpädagogische politische Bildung – Narrative Gesprächsgruppen an Schulen im ländlichen und kleinstädtischen Raum*. Ergebnisse der qualitativen Selbstevaluation von Gesprächsgruppen im Jahr 2019 [online]. Available at: <https://cultures-interactive.de/en/articles.html>

neither in class nor in informal student conversations – and in which the facilitators can also contribute and accentuate.

In this particular situation shortly before the end of the session, one of the facilitators decides to make the following narrative inquiry, which does not follow any of the aforementioned paths. He directly addresses the young man: "When I listen to you talk about the Holocaust, I ask myself above all whether you are possibly a cruel person. What do you mean? Can you perhaps tell me a situation from your life where you would say, yes, I was cruel – and sometimes I am a cruel person?" And because the end of the session is near, the facilitators open this question to everyone else and present it to the group as a weekly task: "All of you, think about whether you have ever, or even more often, said similar things to your classmate about the National Socialist era – and, regardless of whether you are sometimes a cruel person and what situations there might be to tell about this! ... But at the same time, we always keep in mind that we don't tell others anything about our conversations here that can be directly traced back to a person."

In the follow-up session, it becomes apparent that some of the students have actually taken this task to heart, which does not always happen in group work at the current project state. Evidence also emerges that the young people have since talked among themselves about the group's issues during recess and outside of school, probably including political discussions. In any case, the fifteen-year-old and two classmates report that they had thought about it and had come to the conclusion that they were not cruel. They could not remember any situations. However, the conversation continued to the effect that they made the observation about themselves that they did not have such strong feelings anyway, and were generally rather numb and insensitive in emotional respects.

Overall, there was quite a big change in the group conversation, both thematically and in terms of mood, compared to the last session. The latter had been predominantly provocative and boisterous. This was up to the point that the fifteen-year-old lastly attempted to explain to the others in the group how one could get access to the (illegal) right-wing extremist videos on YouTube in which his views on the Holocaust were represented (This could then be prevented by pointing out that confidentiality exists in the conversation groups, and that nothing illegal should take place. The dissemination of right-wing extremist material is also illegal, which the participants had agreed to without hesitation). In contrast, the present follow-up session, in which the topic of cruelty is taken up, is rather contemplative. Suddenly there is a lot of talk about the topic of death and dying – and also about being sad – although it is not entirely clear to the facilitators how this topic came up in the group to begin with (which does certainly correspond to the topics of the Holocaust and cruelty). Thus, the group talks about various experiences of deaths within the families but also about the death of animals, be it on the farms or of pets. It can be assumed that informal conversations among the students preceded the group meeting.

During the course of the conversation, in its free and predominantly self-determined group dynamics, the fifteen-year-old, who previously had relativised and partly denied the Holocaust leading to the question of cruelty, made an astonishing remark. The boy tells about how it was when the paternal grandmother, who lived in the house, died, and how the father did not flinch, then "did his thing normally the next day". The boy reports this in context to the theme of insensitivity and emotional numbness, that he and two classmates had observed about themselves. This also is an answer to the question about his possible cruelty. He then suddenly also makes the sober and deeply convinced statement that he believes his parents "probably wouldn't be sad if he died".

Curiously, this completely sober yet depressing presentation that his parents "would probably not be sad if he died" represents a new moment of great personal sincerity in the group conversation. It is similar to the moment of the brazen Holocaust denial, however, in a completely different way. The question is, therefore, in which respects the previous moment of Holocaust denial is related to the present moment of the follow-up session about death, emotional numbness and lack of sadness on the part of the parents. Furthermore, which pedagogical effects and potentials of holistic, intensive pedagogical civic education are contained in facilitating the joint group experience of such a sequence of moments of conversation, for the individual and for the group as a whole. And to what extent the procedure and method of narrative group work can help to bring forth such a sequence of moments of conversation.

Admittedly, the second moment had followed directly from the first with some consistency. For the striking Holocaust denial, to which space could be given in the group, leads to the question of possible personal cruelty on the part of the young man and the group. This then first sets the corresponding homework of thinking about cruelty in motion. And then in turn leads to introspections about moments of one's own emotional callousness and numbness, which then brings to light memories of moments of callousness on the part of one's parents, especially toward the topics of dying/death. At the group level, this is then followed by a general conversation about death, dying, and emotional insensitivity, leading the young man to the very striking personal assessment that his parents would probably not regret it if he died.

Without even recognising a possible connection between the young man's two statements (the Holocaust; the parents and his emotional numbness), one can assume the following: The fact that both – and similar – moments can occur and be shared in a group of students and that the views and experiences that occur can be talked about openly, unconditionally and trustingly (especially in an institution about which the students say that one is "not allowed to talk about such things here anyway") is significant for the personality and competence development of each individual in the group. This is because talking openly about essential personal, historical and political issues is of great pedagogical effectiveness for the general school curriculum of supporting intellectual, emotional and social skills.

Also the topics and issues touched upon are highly relevant for the specific curriculum in the school subjects history and civic education (also democracy education).

This pedagogical effect can then be deepened in many ways by the facilitators. First of all, they can react with compassion and as attentive fellow human beings and in this way also set an example of empathetic presence. For example by saying: "Oh, I'm sorry about your parents. That must not feel so good to think that about one's parents." This may then be followed by further follow-up questions, comments, or experiences from the young man or other youth in the group that can be recorded, further supporting psycho-social learning and the development of emotional intelligence. More detailed reflection can then be further prompted by remarks such as, "Somehow it doesn't surprise me as much now that you sometimes say things that are so cruel and you don't seem to notice." Of course, as an authentic civic education group facilitator, you can also just say what you think: "I just had the idea that maybe that's why you're saying all these right-wing extremist things, because there's this thing of insensitivity and numbness with you and your parents – and partly with you others, as well." Should the group or individuals then even succeed in recognising a psychological connection between numbness/ Holocaust denial and emotional undersupply – and one should not underestimate high school students' intuitive psychological intelligence! – then the pedagogical effectiveness of this course of the conversation would be maximally strengthened.

However, the unconditional prerequisite for this to happen is that the group conversation takes place in a completely open, self-determined manner, without setting any topics and taboos or drawing red lines, and also remaining confidential and voluntary. This must be the case so that the students can no longer say "we can't talk about something like that anyway". Most importantly, an open, friendly basic attitude must be provided by facilitators – no matter what content is expressed.

For the further course of this group session, it will come as no surprise that the topic of cruelty comes up over and over- i.e., in the rudimentary, cautious conversation about fathers "who are right-wing" and who are sometimes also cruel. And even if the topic of right-wing fathers were not given, cruelty as a topic has highest priority in regards to civic education and extremism prevention. For beyond cognitive and ideological aspects, cruelty and (group) hatred are likely to be among the central motivations of group-based hatred/ "enmity" and violent extremism, so that intensive pedagogical civic education, which also includes political emotions and affects and thus takes an intensive pedagogical approach, will always focus on the experience of cruelty.

Regarding the topic of cruelty/ numbness and its opposite, the friendly basic attitude of the facilitators, a significant remark of the Holocaust denier arises quite incidentally in a later session. For the latter says to the facilitator with a Turkish family background in passing in a very affectionate way: "As friendly as you are, you must surely be on the left...". This shows that the young man himself makes a connection between emotional coldness/unfriendliness/cruelty and right-wing/right-wing extremist political

attitudes. In this, an emotional resilience factor emerges – and the importance of promoting emotional intelligence in civic education becomes apparent.

From the perspective of civic education and extremism prevention, it is safe to assume that the greatest possible impact that can be achieved in the environment of young people with right-wing extremist milieus and families has been achieved in this group. After all, it would be delusional to believe that a young man, like the 15-year-old, could decisively distance himself from his affect of Holocaust denial through a concentrated event of political-historical education, then becoming an emphatic democrat and human rights advocate.

On the other hand, considering the course of this narrative conversation group, one may justifiably hope that that 15-year-old will hardly ever again so brazenly tread the paths of Holocaust denial in the future and then, in the long run, will no longer seek them out at all. For he – and the group around him – will always remember the conversations about cruelty, insensibility/ emotional numbness and his assumption about his presumably insensible and indifferent parents. Especially since these conversations were shared and reinforced by a group of his classmates who were important to him. They had a direct share in the conversations and were involved in them as well. In the future, the facilitators will also do their part to actively keep this significant moment of the intersection of the political and the biographical-familial in the group memory. They will do this by recalling it when the opportunity arises and by keeping the themes of insensibility/cruelty and the Holocaust as the leitmotif of their group facilitation. As for the specialised teaching on the subject of the Holocaust and Holocaust denial that should follow at this point, building on this outcome of a process of holistic, intensive civic education and continue to consolidate the results, should be all the more effective – which makes it all the more important to create a link between open narrative group work and self-reflection and formal teaching on matters of history and civic engagement. Hence, including the element of open and entirely confidential group work, practicing narrative conversation, into formal school teaching procedures (provided by independent external practitioners for confidentiality and trust-building reasons) may be key for the success of schooling in a period of increasing mainstream radicalisation throughout European societies.

2.5 Reconstructive description of a case of distancing work

Preliminary remarks on the case description

As can be seen from the title of Part I, it deals with the previous history of the young person (client) who participated in the distancing training. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, it should be said that the practicing trainer duo – as tandem team – was aware of only a small amount of information regarding the client prior to the training. The trainers received the exorbitant majority of all other information directly from the client himself, spread throughout the training sessions. Therefore, Part I frequently makes reference to the training process insofar as it involves information that clarifies the adolescent's initial situation with which he began the distancing training. Occasionally, it does so when the trainers' assessment of a situation changes significantly on some aspect during the training.

In Part II, the aim is to describe, classify and assess a part of the methodical approaches and, as complete as possible, the contents from the implementation period (15 sessions of 90 minutes each) of the distancing training. Through this, the course and the inner logic of the distancing process of the client should be made comprehensible. This part finally leads to a summary of all de-escalating possibilities of action, which were developed together with the client during the training.

Regarding the quotation marks, it should be noted that terms and sentences in double quotation marks (") are mostly verbatim quotes from the client and only in exceptional cases are quotes from other persons, which is then indicated in the text at the appropriate place. Terms and sentences in single quotation marks (') are not quotations.

In general, it should be noted that repetitions in the case description could not always be avoided. This is due to the fact that various topics as well as processes of reflection and cognition were worked on or took place in parallel during the training, making a chronological presentation considerably more difficult. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to follow a chronological order in the case study.

Part I - Prehistory

Main offense as reason for the placement in the distancing training programme

When the client was referred to the distancing training and decided to participate in the training, a court case was pending against him for the offense of "grievous bodily harm" according to §226 of the Criminal Code (FRG).

Hence, throughout the training, the client was supposed to learn in the sense of a social training course to avoid physical violence in general and to distance himself from group-related hatred (group focused

enmity). About halfway through the training period, the court case ended with the client's conviction. Part of this sentence included a requirement that he completes the training course he had started.

The client made the following statements about the circumstances of the crime and the course of events during the training. He and his girlfriend had met with a friend and another couple around noon in the spring of 2019. The couple had been known to argue constantly. The male partner also often hit the female partner. However, she had remained in the relationship with him because he had a lot of money as a dealer ("3000 euros a month"). The two had "taken pills" on the day of the crime and had argued over and over. This the client found very unnerving. Towards evening, they had gone to the client's home, where the couple had "taken even more" and the client's friend had "taken pills" for the first time. His friend had had a "strong trip" which had disturbed the client very much. The client had also been more easily stressed than usual as he had been drinking alcohol. Later in the training, he also admitted that he had used "weed" (cannabis) in addition to this.

"So that nothing breaks," they had left the apartment again after an hour. Outside, the client had continued to drink and had become "more and more annoyed" because he was getting tired and the couple had continued to argue. In the course of this last argument, the dealer then knocked down his girlfriend and left. The others then rushed to the girlfriend who was lying on the ground. An unknown, evidently drunk man then joined them. He shouted at the three of them. The unknown man interrupted all attempts to calmly explain the situation and repeatedly accused the client of having knocked down the girlfriend who was lying on the ground. The client felt extremely stressed throughout this situation. When the unknown man moved to attack the client, he pulled out his knife as a deterrent. The stranger then hit him anyway. The client got "tunnel vision and stabbed the stranger". The client was then shocked that he had stabbed him and claimed not to have thought about what he was doing. The client then "took off to his nearby home to finally sleep and finish the fucking day," he said. In the meantime, the police found his friend's health card and questioned him, whereupon "he told them everything." The client was "surprised by 10 police officers at his apartment door the next morning." He was arrested and interrogated at a police station. Here, he confessed to his crime.

Referral pathway to distancing training

In July 2019, the client was recommended by a responsible juvenile court worker of the local youth welfare office to complete a so-called "social training course" (according to § 29 SGB VIII). This conversation took place exclusively between the youth court worker and the client. The reason for this conversation was – as several times before – the clarification of his multi-problematic situation at that time. The client agreed to a non-binding preliminary discussion with a suitable cooperation partner of the Youth Welfare Office for training courses in this regard. The cooperation partner for this was the registered, non-profit association cultures interactive e.V., which had already been called in several

times by the relevant youth welfare office for the implementation of social training courses for various clients. In August 2019, the responsible juvenile court worker contacted the association and described the concern via a phone call lasting about 15 minutes. The facilitator in charge offered several scheduling options for a preliminary interview. Later that same day, the juvenile court worker in charge confirmed an appointment of this via email after coordinating it with the client and a parent. A few days later, at the weekly team meeting of the association, the trainer clarified with the other team members which co-trainer would attend the preliminary interview and, if necessary, would help conduct the training.

The preliminary meeting took place in mid-August 2019. Those present were the client, the responsible juvenile court worker, the biological and legal guardian father of the client and the two trainers of the consulted association. This meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes. The juvenile court worker opened the conversation by summarising how she assessed the client's situation. Afterwards, the trainers introduced themselves and shared basic information about the training, some of which had already been explained to the client and his father by the juvenile court worker. Central to this were examples of methods, as well as the usual time frame and, in part, the content aspects of the training. In part here means that the trainers named the content of a training on distancing from violence, but not on distancing of the client from group-related hatred and violent extremism.

This distancing is also an immanent goal of the training, as group hatred and right-wing extremism are closely linked to potentials for violence. The disclosure of this goal, however, often leads to misunderstandings and hesitation, especially in the familiarisation phase. Clients and/or guardians often fear that the training will lead to political re-education and that distancing themselves from violence is no longer seen as a core goal. This then leads to avoidance of participation in the training. In this respect, there is a transparency dilemma. Afterwards, the trainers asked the client and his father to also introduce themselves, which those did. The trainers engaged both of them in the conversation with the help of questions. This was mainly about agreeing on objectives for and expectations of the training. At the end of this preliminary conversation, the client decided to participate. In accordance with the applicable regulations, his legal guardians – specifically his father on behalf of both biological parents – applied for 'help with education through youth welfare'. This 'help' took the form of an individual outpatient measure as a social training course, beginning with individual training that can lead to group training. This application was approved after internal consultation within the team of juvenile court assistants and a final review by the cost center of the local youth welfare office. The trainers conducting the training were informed of this by e-mail in the second third of August 2019.

The start of the training was delayed by about a month due to difficulties in finding a suitable room for the training in the same district where the client lives. Experience shows that the probability of participants showing up increases the closer the training takes place to their homes, which is why the research continued here. Eventually, such a space could be booked. The training has started from mid-

September 2019. The client completed the training entirely as a one-on-one session. This was because at that time the association could no longer organise a group training session in which the client could have participated. There was a session almost weekly and constantly with the same trainer duo. In total, there were 15 sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours. In terms of content and methodology, the training was completed at the beginning of February 2020. Organisationally, the training ended in mid-February 2020 with the sending of a final report to the responsible juvenile court officer.

Registration with authorities and police

The juvenile was registered with the pertinent offices several times in 2016-2019 for repeated disregard of compulsory school attendance. For his continuous school absences, he was judicially sentenced to community service each time. He served the majority of these community service hours. On one occasion, he had to spend the duration of 100 social hours in juvenile detention as a substitute because he had not completed these hours.

Since 2016, the client regularly came into contact with the General Social Service of the local Youth Welfare Office in connection with his truancies. After committing serious body injury, he was in frequent contact with the responsible juvenile court worker of the same youth welfare office. This is who advised him and his parents with parental authority, eventually initiating the placement in the distancing training.

The client was first registered with the police in 2016 for shoplifting under §242 of the Criminal Code (FRG). Together with other juveniles, he had stolen spirits from a store. He was sentenced by the court to 15 hours of community service for this. He served these in full.

In 2019, he was registered with the police on urgent suspicion of aggravated assault under Section 226 of the Criminal Code, which he already confessed to in the course of his first interrogation. He was sentenced for this by the middle of the training in session/ towards the end of 2019. With the sentence, he was obliged, among other things, to perform 100 hours of community service and to complete a social training course. This conviction is not considered a criminal record. The client did, however, receive an entry in his certificate of good conduct. The fact that he was already undergoing a social training course in the form of distancing training had a mitigating effect on the sentence against him, as did his admission of guilt. He fully completed the community service in parallel with the training period. Likewise, he completed the training course in full.

Risks of dangerous behaviour for oneself and for others

The juvenile had never used violence against himself. He emphasised several times during the training that his use of violence was an isolated phenomenon. According to the client, he had frequently been

verbally and physically assaultive during his elementary school years (around age 6-10). After that and prior to the aggravated assault he committed, he had "gotten into fights twice," with no serious injuries to anyone. During the training period (but not in a session), there was a physical altercation between the client and his girlfriend, which would have resulted in comparatively minor physical injuries.

However, these individual case phenomena demonstrate a significant potential for violence on the part of the client.

Health Situation

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD)

During the client's elementary school years, he showed symptoms that had a negative effect on him. In the evenings, he had problems falling asleep because he still had many things going through his head. Thus, he was seldom well-rested. Therefore, but also beyond that, he was easily irritable. This had taken on such proportions that the elementary school informed his parents, but also called in the Youth Welfare Office. Because of his irritability and aggressiveness, he was treated in a clinic for three months while still in elementary school. This was, as he himself says, "not a bad time" and "it was varied" for him, but nothing had changed in his behaviour. An expert opinion was drawn up in which an attention deficit disorder (ADHD) was diagnosed. This was treated with the drug Ritalin. By taking the medication, the client had less thoughts before falling asleep and was less irritable. However, the medication also had side effects: on the one hand, he often developed an appetite shortly before falling asleep and then got up again to eat something. This ultimately delayed falling asleep again. On the other hand, the medication had made him physically very sluggish and psychologically impaired his perception. The client himself described his condition with the words: "dazed", "strange" and "strangely different". He had taken Ritalin for about 4-5 years. After that he replaced it by his own decision with something else, but not with medication. He would not have consulted a doctor about this again.

Dealing with drugs

Cannabis

In essence, the young client assumed he could replace Ritalin with cannabis. The symptom of his low irritability threshold, which is why he originally took Ritalin, could be equally regulated by the use of cannabis. The side effect of feeling dizzy, which occurred with Ritalin, was not noticeable for him when using cannabis. On the other hand, the problems falling asleep due to the many thoughts running through his head while lying in bed had returned to the same extent as before taking Ritalin.

Overall, the client has felt better for just over two years since his 'switch' and consumed "weed" almost daily. The consumption was benefitted by the fact that the use of cannabis was frequent in his circle of

friends since late 7th and early 8th grade. It was in this group that he first became acquainted with the drug and tried it for the first time. The regular consumption developed continuously until it took place daily. Preferably, he had initially consumed cannabis outdoors together with others from this group. Later, he had started to consume at home. His family members tolerated it. They did this, firstly, because the adolescent would consume "weed" as a 'substitute' for Ritalin, and they could thus gain control over the quantity. Secondly, because he would thus probably get into less trouble with the police; and thirdly, because the parents had also observed that cannabis, like Ritalin, had produced an improvement in the boy's irritability.

The client had not reported the side effects of cannabis use at home. However, he had increasingly noticed them in his circle of friends and in himself. He had noticed that the drug had made people in his circle of friends "stupid" and himself "stupid and lethargic". The client found it more difficult to think. In the last six months before the training began, he had reduced his cannabis consumption to 3-4 times a week.

Alcohol

In addition to consuming cannabis, the client occasionally engaged in "mixed use", i.e. he consumed cannabis and alcohol at the same time. This had also been the case on the day of the aggravated assault he committed.

Irrespective of this, alcohol played a role at an early stage in his life. In his circle of friends, from which the client had completely distanced himself shortly before the start of the training, beer had already been drunk from the 5th grade on. In response to a comment by the trainers that this was an early age to be drinking beer, the client replied that other children in these circles had already been drinking vodka at that time and that he had thus "belonged to the harmless ones". The client started drinking high-proof alcohol only years later. In total, he consumed alcoholic beverages 3-4 times a week. He had admitted himself after the serious bodily injury he had committed: "Alcohol makes me aggressive".

Since then, he has reduced his alcohol consumption to a few times a year by linking his consumption to celebrations such as his birthday and New Year's Eve.

The client revealed late on in the training that alcohol was regularly drunk at home by parts of his family. The frequency and quantities could not be precisely defined. However, in another context, the client uttered the sentence: "[...] when my family drinks in the evening, [...]".

Other drugs

In his circle of friends, he had been offered "pep, parts, LSD and meth". The adolescent generally rejected these. He justified this by saying that he "simply had no interest and no curiosity". In addition,

he was afraid of "getting stuck on a trip" and/ or becoming "very addicted." Similarly, he was afraid of becoming passive in his interactions with others, as had been the case with people in his circle of friends who had taken such drugs. Furthermore, it was simply "too expensive" for him.

Social situation

Place of residence

The adolescent's place of residence is a large city, which is located in the center of the Federal Republic of Germany and was formerly part of the territory of the GDR. The client lives in a district that consists almost entirely of a prefabricated housing estate. He grew up there and spent his school and leisure time in the place.

The infrastructure of the district and the various school and recreational facilities hardly differ in quantity or quality from other parts of the city and are of average standard overall. A relevant difference is that there is no youth club in the client's neighbourhood.

For more than a decade (looking back from the year 2020), this neighbourhood has been one of two in this large city that are assessed as 'social hotspots'. Both 'hotspots' have partly different reasons and are located at opposite ends of the city.

In addition, several far-right infrastructures exist in the city. None of them are located in the client's neighbourhood though. In his residential district, cultures interactive e.V. has already executed distancing trainings with several other clients, all of whom were not in a right-wing extremist context, but exhibited general phenomena of group hatred and violence. All of these young people went to the same school. The client, on the other hand, never attended this school and had no personal contact with the students.

Education

In the client's early childhood education, he had liked his kindergarten teacher very much. When she was not there, he resisted remaining at the kindergarten to such an extent that his parents had to take him back home a number of times. During his elementary school years, he initially had fun and had made many friends at school. Because of the client's aforementioned sleeping problems, he was often tired in the mornings but still had to get ready to go, which had always bothered him about school. In the 4th grade, his school grades had been so poor he was endangered of failing the grade. He did not want to be left behind, while all the other students in his class would have moved on to the next school. Therefore, he had made a special effort to improve his grades. It proved to be successful and he passed the 4th grade at his first try. Nevertheless, it was such a close call that he from then on attended a special school, which he did from the 5th grade.

The state-run special school offered two options as school diplomas: a Hauptschulabschluss and, at a higher level, a Realschulabschluss. These qualifications are achieved by passing the 10th grade and the associated examinations of the respective school branch. Had the client been able to complete the 9th grade with a certain grade point average, he would have been awarded a school diploma, which is recognised in some federal states as the equivalent of a school graduation.

However, the client did not graduate from the school at all, as he was absent from school very often without an excuse starting 7th grade, but especially from the 8th grade onwards, and did not reach the 9th grade. He justified his absences in the 7th grade by saying that there were too many lessons per school day and that he therefore frequently skipped the last classes in the day without permission. With the help of the Youth Welfare Office and his parents, an agreement was reached with the school that he would only have to attend five lessons per day. This agreement had worked and he no longer had unauthorised absences in 7th grade and passed.

The situation, however, changed again shortly after starting 8th grade. The reason for this had been that his former class teacher, who he was very attached to, had been replaced by another teacher whom he did not like at all because she treated him badly. Additionally, he had hoped to receive support from the other teaching staff in regards to his perceived bad treatment by the aforementioned teacher. According to the client, he had expressed this wish at school, although he could not remember to whom and how he had expressed it. In general, the client had difficulty reconstructing this period of his life during the training. However, he seemed certain that his wish had been disregarded since no changes had occurred.

In the training, it became recurrently apparent that these negative experiences had fundamentally shaken his confidence in school and in the teaching staff. His motivation to go to school had meanwhile been reduced to such an extent that he no longer went to school at all. His "truancy" soon reached such an extent that he was sentenced by the court to perform community service. This amounted to about 50 hours of community service per school term, i.e. a total of 100 hours of community service per school year. Those community service hours were only a minor burden for him, so that he perceived them less as a punishment and more as a lucrative exchange. It had taken him about four weeks to work off the 100 community service hours, which made up for an entire school year, so to speak.

Thus, the client did not pass to the 9th grade and was to repeat the 8th grade. In this second attempt, he also stayed away from school for the most part and was sentenced once again by the court to perform a total of 100 hours of community service. This time, however, he did not comply, so he had to serve the sentence for several weeks in a youth detention center. Once again, the client was not transferred to the 9th grade and was supposed to repeat the 8th grade. Again, the client did not do that. The serious bodily injury committed by him occurred during this period of his absence from school. In the course of the investigation that had begun, the client was briefly excused from school and never returned after the expiration of this leave of absence. This time, he was sentenced to 80 hours of community service for

the unauthorised absences before and after this leave of absence. The school year ended for the last time with his failure to transfer to 9th grade. Not only that, but in July 2019, he had completed his full-time compulsory education, according to the state's current school year count, and thus could no longer be required to attend a general education school. During training, the facilitators asked him several times if he would pursue a high school diploma. He categorically ruled it out.

Income and occupation

The client did not have a regular income during the entire training period. He received only sporadic pocket money from his father, of which the amount fluctuated.

Since August 2019, the client has been in compulsory vocational school according to federal law and the school legislation of the federal state. As of the end of the training, he had not yet begun to fulfill this obligation. During the training, the client had repeatedly stated that he wanted to go to work as soon as the court proceedings against him for the serious bodily injury had come to an end and he had completed the expected sentences.

It was clear to him though, that without a high school diploma and with the expected entry in his criminal record, it would be difficult for him to find a training position or a job. In general, the client had only vague ideas about where or what he could actually work as. In general, he had hardly received or gained access to any information regarding his career or job prospects. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the client had not acquired various competencies for finding a profession, among other things, because he had missed school. For example, he had not learned how to write a job application and had not completed a single school-based internship.

In principle, the client had nevertheless had minor vocational or work-related experience. For example, about a year before the training began, he had delivered newspapers for a friend as a substitute for a week, for which he received a small wage. Likewise, he had become acquainted with two different fields of activity through the recurring performance of his community service. One was simple office work, the other involved disassembling equipment and transporting light and heavy objects. The latter became his regular place of work, so to speak, for the completion of his community service hours. The connection to this had already been established in such a way that his father had saved the telephone number of the corresponding company in case the client was again sentenced to perform community service. This contact was subsequently utilised several times. In contrast to internships during a school period, this was exclusively about performing work activities without evaluation interviews and work reports.

Daily life, hobbies and interests

Since the client had not attended school for many years before the distancing training and was no longer in full-time school during this time and was not pursuing any kind of work or similar, his leisure activities determined the main part of his life. The completion of community service, his time in juvenile detention, appointments in court and the training sessions were only short interruptions.

At the beginning of the training, the client described his daily routine of the past three years as follows: He got up at noon. Then he waited until the early afternoon until people in his circle of friends and/or his girlfriend had finished their school days. He would then meet them outdoors. They would "hang out," as the client called it. They used to go to a soccer field in his neighbourhood to play ball, but that had diminished over time. In the late evening and sometimes at night, the client would go to his home, usually without his girlfriend. He would occasionally watch movies or a series. He mainly spent several hours watching/listening to rap videos/rap songs on a popular video platform. In doing so, he had started rather randomly with a video/song and then let the platform's automatic playback run for several hours. Finally, he went to bed late at night or early in the morning. He then laid awake for a while because of his sleeping problems, until he did manage to fall asleep. At lunchtime, the client would then wake up and the daily pattern would start all over again.

On several days per week, this was accompanied by the use of cannabis at different times of the day. He did this at home with the knowledge of those present there and in his peer group.

Peer Group

The client had social relations with many people of the same age, which included his girlfriend, who was involved in the same circle of friends as he was. Thus, he spent significant parts of his daily life meeting people the same age for years.

However, in the first sessions of the training, he told the trainers about a drastic change in this regard. He had completely stopped contact with this former circle of friends virtually from one day to the next. Various drugs had played a role in this former circle of friends from an early age, and their consumption had become increasingly intensive over the years. As early as in the 5th grade, he had spent most of his free time outdoors with his friends, drinking beer as well as energy drinks. This would have made him "one of the harmless ones". Other children in these circles were already drinking vodka.

In about the middle of the 7th grade, his former circle of friends included other people of the same age, whom the client had met "outside by hanging out together". Here, daily cannabis consumption had been the rule. With parts of this group he had stolen tobacco and alcohol at the age of 14. All perpetrators were sentenced to 15 hours of community service, which the client worked off in three days during the following school vacations. For a long time, there had been an agreement in this circle of friends that no

other drugs besides alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis were to be consumed, which had been adhered to for a long time. However, this soon changed and "pep, parts, LSD and meth" were taken. The client had consistently refused these drugs.

The breaking of this agreement, as well as the side effects of the drugs on many people in his circle of friends, had increasingly disturbed the adolescent. Finally, the serious bodily injury committed by the client had also occurred in connection with persons from this environment. This overall situation had led the client to distance himself from his circle of friends. His girlfriend had supported him in this and had also distanced herself. His "old friends", as the client occasionally called them, had also not contacted him again and contact had thus really come to a complete standstill.

In the first training sessions, the client stated that he and his girlfriend had therefore often been alone with each other. On the other hand, both had already started to build up a new circle of friends. It was noticeable that the first person in this new environment was a person several years older. The client said in this regard that he got along much better with this somewhat older person than with people of the same age. The young person later mentioned something similar again when he talked about his "colleagues" with whom he did his community service. These were almost all older than himself and thus "more mature", as he put it.

Partner

The client's girlfriend was already mentioned several times in the previous section. The two had been a couple for about a year before the training began. During the training, it was noticeable that the client could not name any best friends in amongst his group. Often the client's descriptions seemed as if his partnership was not exclusively a romantic relationship for him, but also fulfilled the 'function' of a best friend.

The trainers were able to meet the client's partner in person when she spontaneously attended a training session about halfway through the training period, both on her own and at the client's request. During this session, his partner expressed concerns that her partner/client was occasionally too irritable and that she wished the training would change that. This irritability was mainly directed against other people whom the client did not know so well. She herself had a calming effect on him. In general, the two seemed harmonious with each other, and their partnership gave the trainers the impression that it could positively benefit the training.

The impression the trainers had of the partnership of the two changed significantly in the last quarter of the training. This was because during the break in training at the turn of the year 2019, a violent altercation had occurred between the two, which was followed by mutual police reports from their

respective parents. The trainers were informed about this by telephone by the responsible juvenile court officer after the first training session in January 2020.

The distancing training was part of a help plan for the client that existed between the client, his legal guardians and the youth welfare office. Thus, sharing the information about the present report with the trainer duo was legitimate. Regardless of this, the information about the report was very important for the trainers, because this avoided mistakenly focusing too much on the client's existing partnership as support for the distancing process. Instead, the focus was now more on how the client could deal with his multi-problem situation more independently - i.e., if necessary, without his partner.

The trainer duo discussed how to deal with this information during the training. There were no valid reasons to keep the information to themselves. Therefore, the trainers decided to address in the upcoming meeting that they were informed about the charges pressed against him. This was not to come across as reproachful. So it had to be made clear to the client that the first thing was to hear from him how the incident went from his point of view. If the client remained closed, it would have to be considered whether it should be discussed again in another session and/or what the reason was that the client did not want to talk about it. If, on the other hand, an open conversation were to develop, the incident could serve as an example that could be used to identify concrete advantages and disadvantages of the client's actions. From this, de-escalating courses of action should then be derived.

In the following session, the trainers brought it up as a topic. The client seemed surprised, but only briefly. It was sufficient to inform the client that in urgent cases – and reports related to the content of the training are among them – the trainers would be informed by the youth welfare office. The client seemed to accept this and an open conversation about the course quickly developed. Reflecting on this, it became clear that there had already been a physical conflict between his girlfriend and him prior to the training, but that this had not resulted in any charges being filed at the time. The young person also explained that there were situations between the two of them about every two weeks in which they shouted at each other. He said this occurs mainly when they spend a lot of time together. In this most recent physical altercation, the juvenile's partner scratched him on the neck and he subsequently kicked her in the side at the level of the pelvis. Besides scratch marks and a bruise, there had been no other injuries. For the client as well as his partner, the matter was already settled and they would meet again. If it was up to them, there would have been no mutual reports. Those charges were withdrawn by both parties shortly before the end of the training sessions, and the investigation was discontinued.

Family

Prior to the initial interview, the trainers received a few bits of information from the juvenile court worker in charge, namely, who had custody of the client and what their living situation was. The trainers

learned most about the family members from the client telling them about his family more frequently in the training. At one point, the family members with whom the client lives were involved by the trainers in a homework assignment in the middle of the training, which they also largely complied with. In this task, they were asked to articulate their expectations for the adolescent's life path. In addition, the trainers were in direct contact exclusively with the client's father.

The client's biological parents have been living separately for many years. Both of them have custody. At that time they decided that their son should live with his father, which was the case and remained so until the end of the training.

The client has his own room in the apartment. The father's girlfriend of many years also lives in the apartment, along with the girlfriend's son / the client's somewhat older stepbrother, who also has his own room, and his father and girlfriend's daughter, the client's half-sister, who is a toddler. She does not have her own room yet and sleeps with her parents.

The father is employed. He was present in the initial interview before the training began and had articulated wishes for his son and hopes for the training there. He had wanted his son to "start talking about himself" with the help of the training and hoped that his son would "get his life together". When his father said this, the client looked down and grinned. What that grin meant was never clarified. It appeared that the client reacted that way because it was not the first time he had heard it. With regard to the training organisation, the father was always available for the trainers even during his working hours, e.g., if the client did not show up for training at the agreed time and could not be reached on his cell phone. His father then reached him on the landline phone or was able to designate whether his son was already on his way to the training location. In addition, the father personally brought the client to the first training session to the entrance of the building where the training took place.

In the conversations during the training, the client mentioned his father several times. His father played a significant role for the client in the process of distancing himself from group-based hatred, as will be shown in more detail later in this case description. To anticipate, for a long time his father appeared to the trainers as a mere support for the work. Only in the last quarter of the training did it become apparent that the father was recognisably a contributory cause of the client's need for distancing work now (in respect to group hatred and resentments). According to the client, this was because the father had numerous inhuman and anti-democratic attitudes, and in part, wished for the GDR ("German Democratic Republic") back as a state.

From the client's narratives, it became evident that his father's partner also took on educational tasks and had influence on corresponding decisions in relation to the client. When asked directly, he once referred to her as "sort of mother," but otherwise spoke of "girlfriend [or] partner of my father". As the client related, she did not share his father's prejudicial and resentful attitudes. She is also employed, but was home on parental leave at the time of the training.

His stepbrother is the biological son of the father's partner. The client rarely spoke of him. He mentioned that his stepbrother was in vocational training. Several times he referred to him as "mentally handicapped", but not in the form of a derogatory phrase or similar, but in the sense of an actual existing limitation.

The client mentioned his significantly younger half-sister only briefly, when he explained that he occasionally took care of her by feeding her, baby-sitting her at times, and playing with her. The client's birth mother, he said, had been in a new partnership for several years. For contingencies, the trainers had been given the birth mother's phone number, but not from her, but from the client's father. In the training context, the client rarely mentioned his birth mother and almost never mentioned her partner. One exception was when it came to group-related hatred in the family. Here, the client described his biological mother as "very right-wing", among other things.

The client's somewhat younger half-sister lives with the biological mother and the child's father, the mother's partner. The client spoke of her only once in detail, but did not mention her before or after that. At the same time, he was very critical of her. He reproached her for sometimes acting much too risky. For example, she would sit on a windowsill in a multi-story building with her legs hanging out.

In the last quarter of the training, the client mentioned his uncle for the first time. Several times he referred to him as a "Nazi". In addition, he had a tattoo of a swastika on his upper body and "often fights with foreigners". The client had seen the tattoo himself. He had never been present at the fights himself and did not want to be, because it was "too violent" for him and he did not want "any trouble with the police".

Part II - Distancing work and the process of the training

Intentions for training participation

On the one hand, the young client's motivation for participating in the training was based on opportunistic considerations regarding his criminal proceedings. On the other hand, a credible personal interest to seriously deal with his multi-problem situation and to find a better way of dealing with it was already evident from the first training session.

Opportunism and self-protection

The client had already followed a systematic pattern with regard to his truancy. He hardly perceived the community service hours imposed on him as a punishment, but mainly as a beneficial substitute for school attendance; thus, he continued his school abstinence. He hoped that his participation in the training would reduce or even avoid pending sanctions from the court for the serious bodily injury he

had committed. In the end, his participation in the training actually had a mitigating effect on the sentence. The sentence could have been even more lenient if the client had, for example, made an effort to find an apprenticeship or a job or something similar. However, he had only become aware of this when the judge criticised him once during the trial for not having made such efforts before and during the trial period. In a training session held a few days later, the client said that he would have complied with this if he had known beforehand that it could have a mitigating effect on his sentence.

Also in terms of offending, but looking to the future, the client's motivation seemed to be primarily to protect himself from judicial punishment. As the juvenile court worker in charge had told the trainers in a conversation before the training began, the client had been frightened about what he had done (aggravated assault), and he had felt sorry for the person involved. That he had been frightened, he repeated in the training. The client did not say once during the training that he was sorry. It is possible that he did not express his sympathy for the affected person to the male trainers because of traditional notions of masculinity. However, it is equally possible that the client was simply not sorry and only regretted the act because of the upcoming punishments.

The client clearly stated that he wanted the training to ensure that such an act would not happen again, so that he would not have to fear criminal charges or sanctions in this regard in the future.

Interest in knowledge, training objectives and collection of topics

Objectives of the client

Already in the first training session, the client states that his goal was to learn "not to become so agitated". Improving his impulse control and helping him manage his aggression thus became the transparent main goal of the training and was worked on as an ongoing theme in all sessions.

The client had difficulty formulating further training goals. However, when he talked about his life situation, he emphasised certain issues. The trainers therefore suggested that working on these issues should also be included as training objectives. The young person agreed to this approach. Thus, it was added that his boredom, cannabis use and job search would be talked about and dealt with in each case.

Goals set by the trainers

Logically, a general goal of distancing training is to support a process of distancing clients from group-related hatred and violence as well as from extremist, anti-democratic attitudes. This client deviated from the previously known pattern though. Usually, clients have been noticeable in the run-up to a training to varying degrees by expressions of group hatred (group-related enmity) or right-wing extremist views, be it in symbolism, words and/or deeds. This client had no previous history of such

acts. Only in the last quarter of the training did it become apparent that he had been exposed to such motives.

Therefore, in the early phase of the training, the trainers definitely asked themselves whether they should continue the distancing training with the client or whether a 'classic' anti-aggression training would make more sense. The trainers decided to continue the distancing training because there was a high risk that a client with such a pronounced multi-problem situation would eventually turn to the ideologies, opinions and behaviours of violent extremism. Thus, on the one hand, the distancing process should yield a distancing from aggressiveness and violence. On the other hand, the client was supposed to work out solutions to the many challenges he faced, so that he would not hope to find such solutions in (right-wing) extremism.

However, in the last quarter of the training, to the surprise of the trainers, it turns out that parts of the client's family showed attitudes of group hatred and right-wing extremism which had become entrenched and there had also been physically violent attacks. Thus, the support of the client's distancing process suddenly became apparent as an acute necessity. It turns out that the client had so far used techniques to keep these family attitudes and behaviours away from himself to a large extent. Admittedly, he had nevertheless adopted many things that then had to and could be reflected upon and worked on in the training.

Goal and topic processing in training

Boredom as initial topic

In the first session, the trainers asked the client to describe his leisure and daily activities. As it turned out, the young client had "nothing to tell" about his daily activities and that his "life was boring". This method was actually designed to find out more about the client's hobbies and interests and how he implements them in his daily life. In the further course of the training, access to the client is built up through this. In other trainings, this was almost always successful. Instead, the client's boredom became the main topic of conversation. As it is, this approach was also suitable for gaining access to the young person.

The trainers opened each training session with questions aimed at a weekly review of the client. Overall, this gave the trainers more information about the client's daily and weekly rhythms to determine the origin of his boredom. Through systemic work as well as numerous biographical narrative conversations over several sessions, significant causal relationships of his boredom were identified. The more thoroughly the client told about his story using reflective questions from the trainers, the more his perspective broadened. From this, a coherent picture of the problem of his boredom emerged by the end of the first training quarter, which is summarised below.

For years, the client had made mostly hedonistic choices, that is, choosing to do what he felt most like doing. He did not do much more than hang out with his circle of friends or with his partner, smoke pot with others or alone, and watch videos on the internet alone. Compared to going to school, which would have otherwise dominated significant portions of his day, his lifestyle has basically been almost entirely leisure time. Various sanctions associated with his lifestyle had represented brief interruptions, but were unable to change his behaviour.

When it became apparent that he would not complete the 8th grade for the third time, he had felt some pressure to change. The client was "treated differently", as he described it. This had occurred more frequently for him due to "shooting the shit" in the home environment, among other things. It had always been about the topics: whether he wanted to go to work and move out of home. He had also been approached by the Youth Welfare Office on numerous occasions about his professional future. The adolescent had heard all this, but had not understood it as an appeal. He could not derive any expectations from it. The young man wanted to leave home and live with his partner in a rented apartment. But this necessitated a regular and sufficient income. At that time, his partner had just started her education and had only a small income. His family would not have been able to give him money for his own apartment. Because the youth is under 25 years old and there were no legally recognised reasons, he could not finance an apartment through government rent transfers/subsidies.

Without being fully aware of it, the young client felt powerless and overwhelmed, as it was not foreseeable how or if he would ever be able to support himself. Even before his third attempt at 8th grade, it was probably clear to him that he would not be going back to school. The aversion to it was too great. So he knew that he would finish his schooling without a high school diploma. He also knew that without such a degree, he would have "no chance on the job market anyway". The young person did not see any possible solutions. His situation stagnated and he continued his everyday life as before. He, however, no longer felt the same joy for it, because the daily routines bored him and his inner despair increased continuously. During this time, he committed serious bodily injury.

As it turned out in the further training, the client already drew first consequences directly after the crime. He initially blamed his circle of friends for the fact that the crime could happen. Therefore, he withdrew from it completely from one day to the next. His partner supported him and did the same. At the beginning of the training, both had started to build up a new circle of friends together. Furthermore, the client had reduced his cannabis use from daily use to now 3-4 times a week.

After the client named these changes in his daily life, the trainers asked him if he was happier now and no longer bored. The adolescent responded that although he currently felt better, he was still bored. He still lacked meaningful alternatives.

Taking initiative vs. avoidance behaviour

As stated in the previous section, prior to the training, the client had already set a life goal of leaving home and moving in with his partner. Thus, there was no lack of a basic and medium-term life goal setting. Through the training discussions in dealing with this, it became apparent to the trainers that the young person knew that in order to achieve this, he had to find a job with a regular and sufficient income. He had, however, not yet taken any serious initiative to do so in his lifestyle to date.

In the second training quarter, this was discussed cogently in several sessions. This was the most arduous period of the training, during which progress was slow. This was because the client kept avoiding all possible initiatives.

Professional perspective

The client reported about the court case against him, which took place the same time as the training. The judge told him, among other things, that he should have gone to school and also taken care of his professional future. The youth replied that he had now fulfilled his compulsory schooling. In addition, it would not have made sense for him to look for a job or an apprenticeship at this time, as he would not have known the court's decision. If he had to go to jail or prison, he would have had to stop his work or training.

The trainers did make it clear to the client that he would benefit in any case if he continued to seek training and work. Even if he were to serve time in detention, the youth would be able to use the results from the training sessions as a guide afterward. As in a previous session, the client said that he did not know in which professional direction he should orient himself at all, since he had also not done any internships due to his absence from school.

The trainers presented him with a concrete possibility at a local vocational school. There, he would have two out of five working days of schooling under special school conditions – in terms of attention and degree of difficulty – and the remaining days would be spent working in a company. This would take two years, and in addition to vocational preparation, he would receive his secondary school diploma. There was also the option of adding a third year of schooling, which would then certify him as having valid vocational training and, if his grades were good enough, he would receive his “Realschulabschluss” (9th grade high school diploma). His compulsory vocational schooling would be completely fulfilled.

The client refused because he basically did not want to attend school anymore. In two further interviews, it became apparent that it would hardly be psychologically possible for the client to ever attend school again.

Coming to terms with his school days

The solution options consistently failed because of the client's intensified aversion to school. The trainers tried to engage with him in order to examine where this categorical rejection comes from, and then to find solutions for him if necessary.

In his opinion, school generally starts too early, which is contrary to his current daily routine, in which he sleeps until noon. Even if he could cope with getting up early, he would probably encounter schoolchildren on the streetcar on the way to school who would be too noisy for him. He would need his rest early in the morning. He avoided solutions to this problem, such as wearing headphones. In addition, he would not know anyone at school. The trainers pointed out that this would probably also be the case at a new job. While the client acknowledged this, he weighted it as "worse" for school. "Worse" was because he needed support from the beginning when his classmates "stressed" or "bugged" him. The client was concerned about losing control and freaking out at such times. Because of his previous experiences, he did not think teachers would be very helpful at this. It was not possible for the trainers to find out more about the specific experiences. This was because the client became very resistant to discuss further matters concerning school. The openness that the adolescent usually cultivated during training was not present when it came to the topic of school.

The categorical refusal of school seemed to have an almost psycho-traumatic hold over him. The trainers stated that the client could not be reached through school channels.

Similarly, attempts to get the client to visit the local vocational information center (BIZ) or to present himself at the city's employment agency, where he would have been entitled to help and support, were fruitless. Thus, there seemed to be a very extensive incapacity for reality with regard to school, training and looking for a job.

To describe this avoidance behaviour with an example: The client did not visit the BIZ during the entire training period. He gave different reasons for this. One of the reasons being he did not know where it was, information the trainers could then provided him with. Then he claimed not knowing what to say once he was there. The trainers replied that he was certainly not the first person to feel this way and that the employees were trained to provide assistance. Now the reason being the BIZ was too far away for him. The trainers replied that there was a public transportation stop nearby. However, the client did not have money for the transportation costs. The trainers asked if he could not get it from his father for this purpose, which the client thought was possible, but was not entirely certain. Asked about it later, he would have forgotten it. When he even had a weekly public transport ticket paid for, the lack of a winter jacket would now have been the problem and he could not go out too often without catching a cold. The trainers then made an urgent appeal that it should not fail because of a winter jacket and that it was important to inform himself in order to achieve his own goals. When the trainers approached him about

the BIZ for the last time, the participant justified it this time by saying that he had not felt like going there.

Social expectations as a starting point

In this difficult situation, a so-called 'headstand method' was attempted. The client was first asked to formulate his expectations of society. The trainers hoped that the client would be able to deduce that society also has expectations of him. In response to the opening question about what society means to the client, he shared that for him it is people who surround him. He named, "friends, family, acquaintances, girlfriend [/partner], colleagues, strangers." The next question the trainers asked the client was what expectations he had of the society of which he was a part. He was able to state his expectations for all the groups of people he had previously listed as society. After that, the adolescent was asked to tell what expectations these groups of people might have of him. Here, the client found it considerably more difficult to commit himself and answers wavered. For this reason, the trainers gave him the homework assignment of asking people in his environment what they expected of him. The client complied by asking family members at home.

In the evaluation discussion, the following core contents were recorded: He had never seriously thought about what others expected of him. Nevertheless, he would prefer that society does not have any expectations of him. He had, however, realised that he had to meet expectations. He justified this in one example by saying that otherwise he would not be able to move out of his family home. He was now able to relate more to when his family members "shot the shit" regarding his job and future.

In addition, he was unsure if people in society had expectations of him at all, because they "had their lives together and their own problems" and he did not think "they cared what happened to [him]". By asking questions, the trainers were able to get the client to think about this statement. It seemed to have been more the case that the client only recognised offers of support as such when he was directly involved by them. He himself did not seek out such offers, thus did not recognise support and concluded that there would be little interest in him. By discussing various examples, the client seemed to become aware that there was very much interest in him. In the end, he drew the conclusion that there are also social expectations of him, for example, in the form of various public services (school, youth welfare office, employment agency, etc.).

Based on the client's statements, the trainers had the impression that he had become more aware of some unconscious dynamics and had achieved insights. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned and parallel attempts with regard to his professional future remained without much progress.

Shortly before the middle of the training period, the trainers refrained from further active attempts to identify perspectives and possibilities with the client with regard to his work perspective and made this transparent. They explained to him that a lot of attention had now been paid to this topic, that various

options had been offered, and that he was now challenged to use these himself or to find his own. The client accepted this.

The trainers then began to focus on the client's psychological patterns of managing his daily life.

Problem identification vs. solution search

In retrospect, it can be assumed that the majority of the above-mentioned statements made by the client regarding searching for a job were evasive behaviour encouraged by very strong fears and aversions. One particular theme though, became very important as the training progressed.

The connection with the aversion to all schools and getting up early in the morning had already been addressed. The client was now made aware by the trainers that the starting times of many jobs are also usually early in the morning. The client referred to his sleeping problems in connection to this. He said that he worried a lot before falling asleep. When asked, he named numerous concrete difficulties. It was about seemingly banal things, which seemed to pose great problems for the client. When talking about it, the client often tried to explain why something just could not be solved. The trainers did not want to be dissuaded from finding a solution and remained patient with each of the client's objections until they were able to develop very concrete possible solutions with him. The following table illustrates what was involved in detail.

Client's problems falling asleep

- TV helps the client to fall asleep, but should be turned off when he is asleep
- he sets a timer accordingly, but it is sometimes too early
- he cannot extend the timer because his remote control is broken
- a cell phone app for this does not work on his cell phone

Possible solutions

- he buys a new remote control for 10 Euros

Client's problems falling asleep

- he often eats very late in the evening, sometimes at night
- then he stays awake for a long time and only then lies down
- in the night shortly before falling asleep he has to go to the toilet
- he is outdoors a lot and therefore cannot eat at home earlier
- eating outdoors is "unfair to others", whom he then "eats in front of".

Possible solutions

- 18/19 p.m. make dinner together with girlfriend and/or friends
- 21/ 22 o'clock go to bed

Client's problems falling asleep

- he receives messages on his cell phone that keep him awake
- he is worried that something important might come up
- a landline is available, but he would not hear it in his room
- in the past, this happened perhaps twice and could have been settled the next day
- some people write to him late regarding appointments the next day

Possible solutions

- everything could also wait until the next day
- in case of emergency, his family members would hear the landline
- so turn the cell phone volume off

For the trainers, it became apparent shortly before the middle of the training that the young person tended to have a deeply scrupulous attitude towards all daily procedures, in which he often blocked himself and saw the world as an abundance of tricky problems. This made it difficult for him to find solutions, even to problems that were actually minor. Obviously, he was also not used to seeking help. But when he has no support and cannot find solutions himself, he represses the problems and falls into stagnation.

The trainers mirrored this behaviour to the client. He could understand what was meant and wanted to change it in the future. From then on, the trainers reminded him of this observation whenever he again switched to scrupulously piling up many non-existent problems instead of focusing on finding solutions. The training gained considerable speed as a result of this approach.

The trainers also intuitively recognised that, from a psychodynamic point of view, the picture that emerged was that of a person who had received little care and support in his early years, subsequently showing signs of neglect. However, not very much could be learned about the early years and especially about the client's mother (whom the client once described as "very right-wing").

"Excess energy" and hope for more productive structures

The faster pace of the training now created space for more reflection and insight processes – also regarding the client's sleeping difficulties. As just stated, there were mundane-seeming things that were limiting the adolescent's sleep. In a further conversation, there was another aspect regarding this. The

client spoke of an "excess of energy" that would keep him from falling asleep for a long time. When asked what caused this, the client said that he lacked activity that challenged him. He was "not exhausted" enough to be able to fall asleep well.

Also, before falling asleep, he often thought about how his life would continue and what was not working for him at the moment. In his more solution-oriented thinking, the client now came to the conclusion that his sleeping problems could certainly be solved if he had more regularity and activity in his daily routine, which consumed more energy than before. He did not only mean hobbies. He did not just want more physical demands, either. He was looking for more meaning in his daily routine. So basically it was a lack of regular productive and meaningful occupations that was causing him great dissatisfaction and insomnia.

For the trainers, it became obvious once again that the search for meaningful occupation could be the essential 'driving force' for the client's distancing process. At the same time, this was precisely where the risk lay in that an open search for meaning very often is picked up on by extremist actors. Therefore, the trainers had placed this issue at the center of their procedure. Attempts to start looking for work and training proved futile at this point, which is why the trainers postponed efforts in this direction. However, it was clear that the crucial issue of finding a job would have to be addressed again later, and more long-term support might be needed.

Sudden change due to external changes

Around midway through the training, the client's circumstances suddenly changed. He was sentenced to a total of 180 community service hours for the aggravated assault he had committed and for the last unauthorised absence in his full-time compulsory education, among other things. The young client wanted to work off the hours as quickly as possible. In fact, he began working them off just one week after the sentence was made and was now working 28 hours a week. He completed the community service hours where he had worked previously. His father took care of arranging the community service.

Work started at 8 o'clock in the morning. This put to the test what had been discussed in training regarding the client's sleeping issues. This was successful and also changed the training significantly. Almost all aspects that had previously been addressed in the training and had shown little progress had now acquired a practical relevance for him. Solving his sleeping difficulties had helped the client to be able to fulfill the community service well.

From the first training session after starting community service, the client claimed he enjoyed the activities. In addition, he now comes home "exhausted" and no longer feels a "surplus of energy". He also worries less before going to sleep. Overall, he was much happier than before.

With regard to the job market, the client became increasingly optimistic. If there was no other way, he could imagine continuing to work where he had just completed his community service. In addition, his father had found another job for him, which he could start in about a month after completing his community service and training. He had not yet received further details from his father because the client was first to concentrate on coping with the current tasks. In addition, the responsible juvenile court worker offered the client to participate in skills training looking for a new job if the other search was not successful. Thus, aftercare following the training seemed largely assured.

At this point from the middle of the training, the processing of the issues of boredom, job search and future was thus completed; it emerged exclusively in retrospect, but no longer as a present problem on the part of the client.

Impulse control

Anger management was an issue that needed to be worked on throughout all sessions. As has already been shown, complex life history factors underlay the client's aggression. However, it also became apparent that anger management and impulse control are not the same thing. Impulse control is a part of anger management. In the following, we will first discuss how the training showed in which situations the adolescent tends to escalate outbursts, i.e. due to which impulses he loses control. Then it will be described how the adolescent was stimulated to reflect on and gain insight into this during the training.

Dealing with his main offense

Since the serious body injury had been the reason for the client's placement in the distancing training and his potential for violence had been expressed most strongly through this act, the reflective confrontation with this act had high priority.

In the second training session, this became a topic for the first time, as a conversation about it arose spontaneously. The client recounted the act a total of three times. Each time, the contents hardly differed from each other. The choice of words and breadth of elaboration, however, was not identical. The trainers concluded that the client gave a credible account of the events and circumstances of the crime and that it was possible to work with this.

In the fourth session, the trainers specifically used a method in which the client was supposed to describe the circumstances of his crime in detail (crime reappraisal). The client was asked to describe the course of the day before and after the crime as well as the course of the crime itself, including his emotions. The trainers asked if anything was unclear to them or if the level of emotions was not sufficiently described. In addition, a special visualisation was made showing the course of his aggression as a curve on that day. The y-axis represents the 'level of tension', the x-axis the course over time.

It is noteworthy that the adolescent had had a typical daily routine before the crime, which was very much characterised by the usual boredom and dissatisfaction. The 'aggression curve' started at about the middle of the day on the x-axis and at the middle of the y-axis, so there was already tension there. The client said that his activities that day repeatedly did not give him the distraction he had hoped for. On the contrary, being with friends had annoyed him a lot, and he had been irritable. Thus, the 'aggression curve' continuously rose. Then the client felt enormously provoked by the intransigence of the drunken man whom he threatened with the knife. The latter did not react at all to his knife. This caused the 'aggression curve' to rise very steeply. When it came to the scuffle, his threshold of irritation was completely exceeded, then stabbing the man with his knife. The peak of the 'aggression curve' was reached. Shortly afterwards, the client was very frightened; he left the scene in a hurry and ran home. The 'aggression curve' decreased rapidly at this point. Fright as the emotion was still existent once home. He was also afraid of what might happen now. Considering the entire course of the day, he had felt worse after the crime than in the course of the day before the crime. The 'aggression curve' reached a low point, which was therefore lower than its starting point. Since he was very exhausted, he finally was able to fall asleep despite the many thoughts. The 'aggression curve' ends there.

At the end of the method, the client was given feedback by the trainers that this was a relatively typical aggression curve with regard to an outburst of violence. For the client, this method was completely new, especially the reflection of emotions.

In all the conversations surrounding his crime, the client did not express empathy for the victim. Here it became apparent that he used two techniques of neutralising feelings of guilt. For one, he said that the crime would not have happened if he had not spent the time with his friends who used drugs. Secondly, he constantly referred to the person involved, who was drunk and had provoked him. Whether the client felt pity regarding the young woman lying on the ground, who had been knocked down by her boyfriend, and whether this pity turned into aggression, could not be clarified exactly.

Furthermore, through this reappraisal of the crime, as well as through the previous conversations on the topic of 'boredom', it became apparent that there was a connection between his chronic dissatisfaction and the violent outburst, and that this could easily happen again.

Addressing other situations of impulsivity

This was the reason it did not suffice dealing only with the client's main act. Rather, other exemplary situations in the client's daily life were sought in which he "ramped up", as he called it. Targeted examples were drawn from two categories. First, those in which the client could no longer maintain control and physical or verbal escalation occurred. The trainers identified crucial 'trigger' situations of these examples and helped the client to look for alternative actions. Secondly, they looked for further

exemplary situations in which the young person had managed to avoid escalation. From this, the most effective strategies for countermeasures were derived.

In the first half of the training, the search for examples proved difficult. This was because the client had spoken of his irritability mostly in the past tense at the beginning of the training. Only by mid training did it become apparent that his low aggression tolerance was still very present. This was particularly evident when his girlfriend attended a training session and complained about her partner's/client's mild irritability. The client agreed with his girlfriend's comments. From then on, the search for examples was much easier. During the conversation, it did however become apparent that the client had always compared his other moments of "becoming enraged" with his main act. Measured against this, they had initially had little significance for him. Hence, he believed that he did not need to mention these moments. In this session with his partner, the client was able to realise that even these supposedly insignificant situations were relevant and needed to be taken more seriously.

From the middle of the training, some examples of both mentioned categories could be worked on. This was done partly in open conversations and partly using specific methods. Particularly productive was the method of 'pro-contra analysis', in which the clients review existent actions as well as alternative courses of action for their advantages and disadvantages on the basis of a concrete problematic situation. In addition, the client was regularly encouraged to reflect on his techniques of neutralising responsibility, which he had shown in the conversations about his main act. In this way, he was to learn more about his own responsibility with regard to loss of control and to conclude insights for his future actions.

Through this approach, the following findings could be gathered:

What excites the client? When does he lose control?

- When he encounters "persons in a bad mood."

He himself later admitted that it was sometimes he himself who spreads bad moods, and said that it is quite human not to permanently be in a good mood.

- If "a person is continually abusive, then apologises afterwards, only to be abusive again soon after".

The client attributed this to his former circle of friends, in which this had occurred several times. He took it upon himself to avoid social relationships with people with this behaviour in the future.

- "Smart-ass," "know-it-all," "bossy"

The trainers reflected to the client that all of his points were not at all uncommon and that many people were like him. So these factors of his loss of control could be worked on well in the training.

How does the client react to such irritations?

- He is silent and does not react.

From the client's point of view, however, this only works to a certain extent. Occasionally, people who irritated him with their behaviour would actually stop talking to him, and the situation would dissolve. At other times, the other people tend to get angry and the situation gets worse.

- He walks away / leaves the situation.

Compared to silence, he has had better experiences with this, since the situation ended for the time being. However, sometimes an attempt would be made to bring him back if other people did not consider the situation to have been resolved. Now and then he would get involved and the conflicts could then be settled. It could also lead to him then "getting worked up" again with no solution, in fact only a worsening of the situation.

- He gives "funny answers that have nothing to do with the matter".

This works to a certain extent. Occasionally, everyone laughs and the situation relaxes. In other cases, however, it leads to a worsening of the situation.

From the points mentioned so far, it becomes evident that the client has behavioural abilities with which he can maintain his impulse control. Furthermore, he was aware that not all of these actions achieved the desired effect in every situation.

Other patterns of the client's actions become apparent that promoted escalation and therefore urgently needed to be worked on. Especially from the third quarter of the training, the client was very open to working on these risky patterns and proactively involved the trainers. The client seemed to recognise the trainers in their role model function and readily accepted hints and criticism.

- He sometimes says, "I'm annoyed. Stop or else ..."

The trainers asked what came after the "or else ...". After a short evasion, the client shared, "[...] I'll go" and "[...] I'll hit". He usually does not say the latter though. Even more, he hoped that it would not come to hitting, i.e. he was bluffing here. The client understands the thought process that such a bluff could make the situation considerably more risky. The client finally concluded, with only a little input from the trainers, that it was better to threaten to leave than to hit.

- He becomes abusive to make it clear that he will not take any crap.

This often goes back and forth until the other person strikes so that he can then strike back. This can lead to fighting "until someone is down on the ground".

The following sentences by the client are important:

- "I never started fights on my own."
- "Blow follows blow."
- "I behave towards people as they behave towards me."
- "You can't avoid every problem. Sometimes you have to fight. Otherwise, everyone thinks they can treat you however they want."
- "I don't agree with it, but sometimes there's no other way."
- "Women should not be hit"
- "Men settle their problems differently"

Above all, the phrase "Women should not be hit" was an indication that methods of gender-oriented work should be applied. Of course, not insofar as women should also be beaten (what actually had happened shortly before his own criminal offense), but with regard to the possible reverse conclusion that women may not be beaten, but men may be. The client's sentence, "Men settle their problems differently", indicated that he was likely to draw such an inverse conclusion.

Furthermore, something became apparent with this client as with almost every client of distancing work so far: the application of the principle 'an eye for an eye' (here: "A blow follows a blow"), which was also based on a misunderstanding of the concept of self-defense.

Deepening gender-oriented topics

This topic is only briefly addressed at this point, as gender-oriented work is in any case a constant cross-sectional task of distancing training. This is because in the syndrome of group-based hatred, as well as in violent extremism, there are almost always conflictual and prejudice-based attitudes about gender roles, which mostly express themselves as sexism and homophobia. Therefore, when corresponding statements are made, the clients are always proactively encouraged to reflect their perspective, share and reconsider their gender-related experiences and progress towards a more gender-aware and less resentful attitude. In addition, the tandem team of facilitators is always concerned with reflecting on their own gender behaviour.

Initially, methods were used in the training to approach the topic in general and with caution. Then, specific statements made by the client were targeted ("Women should not be hit" and "Men handle their problems differently"). In the case of the client, the trainer's simple counter-question, "Do men hit men?" had a major impact. This question occupied him for a long time, and he realised that he had legitimised his willingness to use violence against 'men' through ideas about masculinity that were actually questionable. Furthermore, the client was reminded that he himself had been violent towards his girlfriend, and she towards him. Above all, he was reminded with great effect that his serious act of

violence had a direct antecedent in which a young woman was beaten to the ground. The client ultimately realised that a comprehensive avoidance of violence towards all and everyone is necessary.

The 'an eye for an eye' principle and misunderstanding self-defense

The client presented it as legitimate to retaliate by using the means of the other person, even if he actually rejected them. In addition, the client assumed that if he was hit first, hitting back would always be a permissible self-defense. Like other clients, he also ignored the previous events and his own contributions to the situation, i.e. his drug consumption on the day of his main crime or the provocation of his opponent with the knife.

For this purpose, the trainers gave the client homework to find out what is meant by the principle of 'an eye for an eye'. In the evaluation of the homework, the client was able to summarise this principle very succinctly by saying that "you are allowed to do to the [other] exactly what was done to you by the [other]." In the spirit of deontology (ethics) and the so-called categorical imperative, the client was then asked by the trainers what would happen if everyone did it that way. The client said: "then there would be no more people".

Further inquiries revealed the following: The client also talked about "revenge", which he actually dislikes. This is because he is worried that the principle of revenge would one day also be used against him. He himself admitted that he had already used revenge himself. However, this led to the fact that he now constantly has to avoid some people because he is not sure whether they would in turn take revenge on him. Several times, the client concluded that revenge "doesn't do any good". He was able to relate his phrase, "A blow follows a blow," to the principle of 'an eye for an eye'/ revenge. When asked what he now thought about this sentence, the client shared that he did not know what else to do in appropriate situations.

At this point, a positive transition was possible by talking with the client about his understanding of self-defense. The trainers pointed out that action can be taken not only when a situation escalates, but also beforehand. The trainers also expressed direct criticism of the client's understanding of self-defense, which the client was able to take positively. He shared that he had deliberately brought about a physical confrontation in this way a few times in order to then be able to take revenge by using violence. Now the focus of the further work was put on how the client could act in advance so that it would not come to an escalation in the first place. These de-escalating and preventive action strategies were then identified and evaluated step by step with the client during the training.

Relapse

As already described in Part I in the section on the client's girlfriend, the trainers had initially believed for quite a while that the partnership of the two could positively benefit the training. The assessment then had to be changed in the third quarter of the training. This was because an acute physical altercation had occurred between the two. In addition, the trainers learned that there were heated verbal arguments between the two almost every other week. The partnership as a support option for the distancing process had thus become relativised. Nevertheless, there was an opportunity to conduct another pro-contra analysis of the conflict situation, this time concerning an intimate relationship. Again, this was very successful and several possible courses of action could be worked out as alternatives to the use of violence, which the client had not been aware of before.

The possibility of working with both of them in the sense of couples counselling or referring the couple to appropriate couples counselling was no longer a possibility due to time constraints in the duration of the training.

Group-related hatred (group focused enmity) in the family

In the last quarter of the training, the trainers examined the extent to which the syndrome of group-based hatred and latent right-wing extremism and populism played a role in the client's aggression and violent behaviour. This was because these factors were evident in the social environment. For a long time, there had been no indication of this in the training, so the trainers initially regarded this test as a routine measure. In the end, however, it turned out that the topic was much more explosive than the trainers had expected.

The introduction to the topic was done through a question-based method on the keyword 'groups'. The client was asked whether he knew and encountered certain groups or people from groups. He answered in the affirmative and named "punks" as one of the groups. He came to talk about this group because he was currently working with a punk while doing his community service. When asked what he associated with this group, the client replied, among other things, that they were against "rights". When asked if he also knew any "right-wingers", the client immediately answered in the affirmative and said that there was also "a Nazi" at his workplace. He had a tattoo of a black sun on his upper arm. When asked by the trainer, it turned out that he had recognised the symbol correctly. The client had also known the symbol before, namely from his uncle.

In the further course of the conversation he called his uncle a "Nazi" several times. He had a tattoo of a swastika on his upper body and "fights with foreigners". The client had seen the tattoo himself. The client himself had never been present during these fights as they were "too violent" for him and he did not want "any trouble with the police". Then the client came to talk about his other family. Surprisingly, he said, "Actually, my whole family is right-wing."

What was astonishing at this point was how hidden this topic had remained until then, compared to other distancing cases. This was not problematic from a methodological point of view because distancing work always addresses the issues that the clients present first, in an open process manner. Furthermore, it has often been shown in practice that an early insistence on the political aspects and especially in dealing with right-wing extremism has hardly proved successful, because this often leads to resistant behaviour on the part of clients where this topic was obviously recognisable (cf. the case studies on X and B).

In this and the next training session, the main focus was on this aspect of the client's family situation. In the process, he himself changed the designation of his family from "right-wing" to "Nazis". First of all, it was narrowed down who of his family the client meant by this. He was mainly concerned with his biological parents and partly also with relatives from these family branches. Others would largely stay out of this. In particular, his father's current long-term partner was not meant, nor was his stepbrother, because he was "mentally handicapped and therefore neutral". It should be mentioned that the family lived in a region of eastern Germany that is heavily affected by right-wing extremism across the board.

The trainers then asked the young client how it was noticeable that his family were "Nazis". He described this as follows: "When my family drinks in the evening, it's all about the topic of foreigners and politics," which also added the topic of alcoholism in connection with group hatred and extremism. The trainers asked what was said about foreigners. He replied, "The problems one has with them". The facilitators asked if he had problems with foreigners. He explained that there were "such and such". However, he had had "enough stress with Germans, too". The trainers inquired what was said about politics. The client replied, "That they [politicians] are incapable and foreigners cause problems." In addition, the client again reported his uncle's great aggressiveness, but expanded on his observation. His family "often stresses senselessly," he said. "With some [of us], one look is enough, then they cause stress" and aggression; by this he meant eye contact with supposed 'foreigners', which often led to "stress" and aggression towards them.

The client's relation to group-related hatred

Dealing within the family

The young person described his own reference to this topic as follows: He always leaves the mentioned 'drinking rounds' pretty soon because they "annoy" him. He himself was not interested in politics, therefore had "no idea" and mostly stayed away from these topics anyway. When the trainers followed this up, the client added that he had "no problem with people, as long as they left [him] alone". The trainers asked what he thought about people getting upset about a group such as "foreigners". He replied, "Then they will eventually start to provoke that group." It was amazing and important that the client was

able to come to such a conclusion despite his environment. He had already succeeded on his own to distance himself decisively from aggression and violence based on group-related hatred.

Adopting phrases

Nevertheless, socialisation by parts of his family had left its mark on the client. For he had adopted some attitudes of group resentment and group-focused enmity and corresponding phrases, which can be exemplified in the following conversation:

The client said, "But when I ride on the streetcar, you have to admit that Germany has too many foreigners". The trainers then used a targeted question-and-answer phase to stimulate reflection: "What is the proportion of foreigners [locally]?" "Like in Germany?", "Is the streetcar Germany?", "How do you recognise foreigners?" "What does foreigner mean to you?", "What does "Überfremdung" (taking on too many foreigners) mean to you?", etc.

The trainers spent the longest time on the last three questions. The client said that it is not decisive for him what passport a person has. If people did not correspond to the majority of society in purely visual terms, then they would not be Germans for him either. At the same time, however, he emphasised that this made no difference to him as long as he was left alone.

The client did not initially provide any justification for the assumption that more stress could be expected from 'foreigners' than from those whom he would not classify in this way. However, he came back to the topic of 'streetcars'. He was constantly stared at in these situations in the 'streetcars', "but only by foreigners." The trainers then asked follow-up questions in a friendly tone – but persistently – aimed at an irritating effect, which the client answered patiently. One question was whether "Japanese people" looked at him particularly often in the streetcar. Somewhat indignantly, he informed us that he had "never had any problems with Japanese people". Based on this, it was possible to take a closer look at the term "foreigner" and to deconstruct it. The client admitted that he had never thought about who was included under this term. He would apply the term primarily to "southerners". The trainers then asked in a deliberately confusing manner how he could tell if someone is from "San Marino". After briefly explaining what that was and where it was located, the client deflected to the term "refugees". After further confusion he suggested the term "foreigners" and again later he spoke of "Syrians". Since he could not answer how he could distinguish them from people from Afghanistan, he finally said that there were people in the streetcar "who had darker skin" and that they would always stare at him.

The trainers then suggested that they all search for reasons why these people might be staring at him and why this seemed to make him nervous. The idea came up that perhaps he himself was seen as a minority and considered sort of a stranger. The trainers also referred to his appearance, especially his "hairstyle" and "sweatshirt". The client started to reflect. He looked down at himself and said, "That's right. They might think I'm a Nazi." This was because the client had only worn the same two hoodies in all the

sessions. While these were not of a 'Nazi brand', they could easily be misconstrued as a far-right brand because of the killer dog motifs. The trainers asked what effect this might have on the aforementioned people in the streetcar. His answer was, "They might be afraid." Talking about this, he was able to independently recognise that people observe other people they are afraid of because they fear that they might be attacked in an unobserved moment.

The client apparently did not like this idea. He expressed that he had no intentions of harming others. He did not want to be judged on appearances. This is where the circle was completed, and the trainers asked, "Do you judge others by appearances?" There was a silence for about 15 seconds. Then the client said, "Yes." Further questioning made it clearer that he was judging by appearance when he classified people who did not look 'German' to him as "non-German," but he reiterated that this was judgmental behaviour on his part. The trainers followed up with, "Is *Überfremdung* (taking on too many foreigners) a judgment?" Again there was a silence for about 15 seconds. The youth then said, "Yes, it is, somehow." The client acknowledged that he had not thought of it that way before and that he had picked up the word "*Überfremdung*" primarily from home.

Historical knowledge gaps

The client reports: Sometimes his father claims that the GDR was better than the FRG ("Federal Republic Germany") nowadays, and some in his family would agree.

In this respect, the client showed great historical knowledge gaps, which were expressed by questions he asked the trainers. Among them were questions such as, "What kind of currency was there in the GDR?" After answering this question, he then wanted more details and assessments from the trainers, e.g., "Which was better, the Ostmark or the Euro?" and "When did the Nazis become the GDR?" (sic!). It therefore seemed appropriate for the trainers to give the client a brief introduction to the history of the German state at that time. In doing so, the client was encouraged to ask questions in between, which he did with interest. Here it became abundantly clear that the adolescent had completely missed history lessons on these topics because he had hardly participated in school classes from the 8th grade onward.

Finally, it remains to be noted that the family situation described here underscored all the more why the client intended to move from home as a timely life goal. By doing so, he seemed to want to create a place of retreat where he could escape the sphere of influence of parts of his family. Since a sufficient and regular income was necessary for this independence, in retrospect it seems to have made all the more sense to have spent a large part of the first half of the training in finding a job. At the same time, however, this also makes it clear that in the event of failing to find a job, the greatest risk for the client is that he would not be able to maintain his previously largely successful process of distancing himself from group-based hostility and right-wing extremism.

Distancing process put to the test in real terms?

Shortly before the end of the training, the client described a concrete situation that he had experienced on a day between the last sessions and that indicated a stabilisation of his distancing process.

The client was sitting with his partner and a friend of hers in front of his apartment block. That friend was talking on the phone and loudly said, "Well, then get your ass over here!" Another young person who happened to be passing by heard this, felt addressed by it and thus felt provoked. The client called this young man "the Romanian" or "the Romanian guy". He then "came over and started to annoy them". He chose not to believe that the words were not directed at him, but into the phone. Shortly thereafter, the young man called his friends and they soon appeared. There were "about 30 foreigners," according to the client. The client informed the trainers that the group had already "taken off their belts" and "wrapped them around their hands," as impact weapons. In spite of this, the client was able to remain calm throughout the situation and had explained to "the Romanian" several times that the exclamation was not directed at him. The client was successful in this difficult mediation. Because he finally succeeded in convincing "the Romanian". The latter then "left with his group of friends".

On the one hand, this 'story' sounded somewhat exaggerated to the trainers. On the other hand, the client told it in two training sessions without inconsistencies and had not stood out in previous sessions for implausible 'stories'. The trainers decided to take this 'story' as a given and continued working with it. Whether it was true or not, the client had described a situation in which he had managed to remain calm – at least in his imagination – despite great stress. The trainers asked the client how he thought he had managed to do this. He listed that there had been too many people and that he could not have done anything anyway. But the thing that stopped him the most was that the situation took place in front of his house. He did not want the neighbours to notice anything, nor did he want anyone to call the police. Therefore, he was concerned that this "thing be settled quickly".

The trainers then asked him how he had managed to settle the matter so quickly. He replied that it worked because he "explained everything calmly and if the others didn't understand something, then he repeated himself". On taking into account what the client had communicated in previous meetings about earlier incidents, this was a considerable contrast. He clearly described on several occasions how he 'got worked up' quickly when he had to deal with people who were in a bad mood. The trainers also asked, "Would hitting have gone that fast?" The client said, "No. That would have gone wrong."

Later, the trainers tried to clarify with the client whether he had all these thoughts which kept him from using violence within the stressful situation, or if he was thinking all of this right now during the training conversation. After comparatively much time he said that he had had these thoughts in his head in the situation. If this is so, that the adolescent can think these thoughts in such situations, he is apparently also able to solve situations without escalation or to some extent apparently de-escalating.

Furthermore, the client would not have used the term "the Romanian" in a derogatory way to refer to the latter's migration background. He had only used it to identify the actors involved, because he did not know the person's name. He did not derive any recognisable generalisations or devaluations from it, neither about persons with Romanian citizenship nor about 'foreigners' in general.

Whether this 'story' happened this way or not was less decisive for the trainers. The story had a 'narrative truth' in any case. What was more important was how the client experienced himself in this story. For this experience and behaviour was fully consistent with the goals of the distancing training. It also more or less proved the stability of his distancing from physical violence and group-based hatred.

View on drugs

The client had talked about his drug use in the description of his serious crime as well as in other situations. The distancing training does not see itself as addiction counselling and this would also exceed its possibilities. However, the use of addictive substances is relevant when it clearly leads to endangering others or to endangering oneself. The issue of addictive substances is also relevant if the distancing process is impaired by the use of such substances.

In order to examine those points, the client's drug use, especially his use of cannabis, was repeatedly questioned by the trainers as a cross-cutting issue. This was facilitated considerably by the fact that the client was very open about this topic and frequently brought it up himself. The trainers explained the possible negative consequences of this use, which the client himself also recognised. A danger to others and to himself was therefore no longer apparent. Nor did his current drug use have a negative effect on his distancing process.

Consumption of cannabis

The client had consumed 'weed' on a daily basis before his main offense. The last six months before the training started, he had reduced his cannabis use to 3-4 times per week. During this time and with the start of his community service, he had limited this consumption exclusively to the weekend. The frequency of use had thus decreased significantly during the training period.

This has two advantages for the client's distancing process. First, he saves money that he could invest in an earlier move to his own apartment, if necessary. Secondly, the client had initially used cannabis not only as a substitute for Ritalin, but later also as a means of calming himself down in escalative situations. The less cannabis he used, the more room was given to the other de-escalative possibilities for action that could be worked out with the client in the training.

Likewise, he had firmly resolved never again to use cannabis and alcohol simultaneously in his life, knowing that he could then quickly lose self-control.

Consumption of alcohol and other drugs

With regard to his alcohol consumption, the client had had a significantly changed approach to it after his main offense and only rarely consumed alcohol. This was viewed critically by the trainers in the two training sessions after New Year's Eve. Here, according to his statement, the client "drank close to nothing" because he was more easily irritable under the influence of alcohol, "had too much energy that had to be released" and became "thoughtless" and "angry more quickly". This then "comes out of nowhere". He generally does not drink liquor because he then loses self-control. He also finds it unfavourable that he has already lost things several times ("keys, cell phone and wallet"). He had drunk "six beers" on New Year's Eve, of which he had noticed "no effect". The facilitators questioned this to the extent that three liters of beer is not "almost nothing" according to their perception. In the follow-up session, the client asserted that this took place over a period of about "ten hours" and that he "drank slowly" each time to be able to assess the effect. In general, the client wanted to drink alcohol in the future exclusively on such celebrations as New Year's Eve and on his birthday.

Even before the training, the client had had no intentions of using drugs other than those named. He had had enough opportunities to do so, but had consistently refused each time. The trainers praised the client for his consistent behaviour. They emphasised this as an example of his ability to make thoughtful decisions and stick to them even in 'tempting' moments.

Summary of all courses of action

This case study makes it evident, that there was not one method in which all courses of action were identified as alternatives to the use of violence and group-based hostility. They were developed one by one in each appropriate occasion, and each was assessed by the client as to which of them he thought could be implemented. The following overview summarises all of these possible courses of action. This overview was handed over to the client and formed the conclusion of the distancing training.

I can do it differently!

My solutions to keep things from escalating:

Avoid stress:

- Don't just figure out problems, but address the solution:
 - become active yourself
 - persevere
 - keep at it
 - talk to others about the problems and look for solutions

- let out the excess energy:
 - o go for a spin, walk or run
 - o look for a job, find a job and go to work
- pay attention to the circle of friends
 - o no hard drugs
 - o no people who are aggressive
 - o no people who spread bad moods by getting upset all the time
 - o no people who insult and then in turn apologise
 - o stay away from "know-it-alls", "smart alecks" and "bossy" people
- accept all people as long as they do not cause stress
 - o do not judge people by their appearance
- drink little to no alcohol

If it starts to get stressful for me, then do the following early on

- try to stay calm
- take time to think and react thoughtfully
- think about the consequences (up to jail)
- have a lifeline ready (why is it not worth using violence)
- ignore (do not answer/no reaction)
- tell other person what bothers me
- if something is not clearly understood, it is better to ask for clarification
- ask the other person to stop
- walk away
- sometimes stay away

If it does get too stressful for me:

- walk away from the situation that is stressing me out
- talk to people I like
- have a smoke
- smoke a little dope, preferably only in case of emergency

3 CASE STUDIES IN ITALY

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3.1 Case Study S.: The Young Conservative

Exit work practitioners: Andrea Zummo and Yasmine Refaat

I

S. is a 17-year-old Italian boy who lives with his older sister and mother. His parents separated at the age of 4. His father has been mostly absent throughout S.'s life. Over the past two years, they resumed the father-son relationship once a week but they do not have a deep and open dialogue. S. has indicated several times to the exit practitioners that he would like to have a strong father-son relationship, in order to discuss some painful episodes of the past. S. would like to tell his father that he forgave him, though he still feels anger over the abandonment. However, their relationship reached a 'status-quo' in which they engage in small-talk, go shopping or drive through the city. There is a lack of ease on both sides to discuss openly and talk about themselves.

S. has often expressed the need to reframe the family and the social ties and emotions behind such relations. He frequently reminisces and romanticises the past, mentioning a sense of 'nostalgia' of its traditional values. As reported in part III, our client considers that in the past, people had stronger family values, followed one leader and had more faith which 'saved' them and made them morally superior to the current generations.

According to the social workers, S.'s mother was depressed by the separation and other traumatic events including her brother's death during an accident and often neglecting her tasks with her two children. All maternal behaviours seem to obstruct the development of her children's autonomy and independence. After the parents' separation they lived in another city in southern Italy for some years, when S. was attending primary school where he was bullied. The second most relevant tragic event of his life was the divorce of his parents. These two traumas and the lack of parental support were probably at the origin of his online "self-help" and "self-education" which ended up becoming a "self-radicalisation".

The exit team has no official information on the legal proceedings of the case or the specific charge. Therefore, the following information is anecdotal and based on discussions with the social worker and the occasion of a multi-agency meeting with police and magistrature. In 2018 and 2019, S. engaged in violent extremist behaviours that resulted in him being charged: he stopped attending his secondary school classes and began to express anti-conservative behaviours and attend the International Neo-Nazi forum on the web, where the Italian police spotted him. He is under investigation for having instigated

and possibly planned violent acts that would have harmed himself and others. Police investigations have shown S.'s frequentation of international far-right online forums, a far-right youth social centre and a 'paramilitary' gaming activity ('Softair': the police confiscated rubber bullets from his apartment because it is no longer permissible for minors to own them). His intention to sacrifice himself and others' lives for his ideals was elaborated on in an ideological manifesto posted on Telegram.

So, in the summer of 2020, S. was referred to the probation service by the juvenile judge and, in late summer of 2020, he started a probation programme – as agreed with the judge – including the exit programme, the educative and the neuro-psychiatric activities, in the period before the end of the investigation, and the beginning of the trial.

II

Periodic meetings are held between the exit local evaluator, the exit workers and these three institutions involved in the probation programme: the social worker of probation service, the educational worker of the city social services and the child neuropsychiatrist of the public health services. A rather useful collaboration both in exchanging info and evaluation about the client.

They all agree to help S. to develop his intelligence on the emotional and relational levels, and to increase his social interaction with positive peer groups, such as local volunteer associations. A relevant point for all the practitioners is related to his adhesion to Catholicism. In fact, from the beginning of the investigation to the beginning of the probation programme, S. attended several meetings with a lady, a friend of our client's family, of a Christian Catholic association, that seem at the origin of his shift from the neo-Nazi ideology to the Christian Catholic religion.

The social isolation dimension is the common ground at peer, family and environment level so S. enjoys reading, writing and playing videogames. S. would desire to play a sport; however, he is constrained at the moment by his health conditions. Based on their encounters, the exit practitioners took note of S.'s health related needs including the client's insomnia, severe and frequent stomach colic for which the client is not seeking medical attention. This was referred to the social workers for follow-up. The client is also awaiting a medical procedure for the removal of an anal fistula.

The client probation programme foresees his enrollment in second year of a high school that offers evening classes; hence, most students tend to have morning jobs. In S.'s case, the reason is linked to health issues: insomnia and severe and frequent stomach colic in the morning. He is enjoying school and trying to overcome the previous social isolation. S. was recently nominated as Class Representative by his classmates. During the Fall of 2020, he was gradually establishing new acquaintanceships and friendships with his classmates, but the second wave of COVID-19 and the relating social distance measures, since November 2020, have thrown S. back into a social isolation dimension. S. enjoys school

and studying and his grades have been quite good (an average of 7.5 out of 10 in most subjects). He also enjoys being nominated as Class Rep, thus he can engage with students and professors (presumably without expressing any political or religious judgement or ideas) and sometime he substitutes teachers when they are absent. However, during COVID's new lockdown measures he stopped engaging and going out with his classmates.

After her first meeting with S., in summer of 2020, the child neuropsychiatrist, describes him as a very lonely and fragile boy, easily manipulable with many theoretical but confused ideas in mind. She meets with S. every ten days. In her later reports to the team, she observed his high level of intelligence, his high self-control in expressing emotions and his capacity to manipulate the others.

According to S. he suffers from general anxiety. Interactions with the mother by both exit workers and social workers suggest that she, too, suffers from some sort of anxiety disorder, possibly agoraphobia, depression and covert/inverted narcissistic personality disorder. Exit practitioners suspect signs of narcissism in S., as well, combined with signs of a possible lack of empathy; however, this is by no means a formal or medical diagnosis as only a specialist would be able to fully confirm this.

III

On the occasion of the first encounters, exit workers asked the client to list the most negative events in his life that he would like to tackle during the sessions. Specifically, S. was asked about the most painful episodes of his life and his strength points that he wanted to tackle during the sessions. Exit practitioners also asked him to rate these in terms of importance. He indicated the following:

- 1) Previous history of school bullying
- 2) His parents' separation
- 3) General social malaise
- 4) Solitude
- 5) Difficulty finding a girlfriend who shares his values

His strengths:

- 1) Self-determination and curiosity/vigour towards life
- 2) Nostalgia towards the past and past values
- 3) Firmness of his ideas

Several exit sessions were dedicated to the bullying episodes that S. faced as a child and teenager. The episodes included physical abuse (being pushed, hit, shoved, a child 'stabbed' S's face with a pencil) as well as verbal and mental abuse (another child asked him to come to school with a lipstick).

All these bullying episodes seem to have given S. the awareness of playing a scapegoat role: a victim persecuted by the peer groups in which he is involved. The awareness of carrying a stigma emerges in the choice to tell the exit workers a short novel by a dramatist he is studying at school: "La patente" by Luigi Pirandello. The Sicilian Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1934 describes the character considered by his fellow citizens to be a "iettatore", i.e. a bearer of the evil eye (what is known as Peeping Tom in the American culture). At the end of the novel this character will ask the judge to have a license ("la patente") to be officially paid to stop exercising his evil power towards its fellow citizens.

The exit partitioners showed him a scene from the film "Io non ho paura" (I'm Not Scared) by Gabriele Salvatores. A nine-year-old boy named Michele and a group of his friends set out on a race across scorched wheat fields to a deserted farmhouse. Michele and his sister are the last of the group to arrive at the farmhouse, which means that she and Michele must pay a penance. However, the leader of the group, Skull, chooses the only girl in the group apart from Michele's sister to pay up instead. He instructs her to expose herself to the boys, and she looks to the others for help, but they refuse to meet her gaze. The girl reluctantly and hesitantly begins to take off her clothes when Michele pipes up that he was the one to arrive last and he should be the one to pay the penance.

A persecution scene towards a randomly chosen innocent scapegoat, to which S. comments by explaining how Skull is the classic bully in a group of wing-boys who go along with him out of fear. He adds that the bully is inclined to make people suffer because he has probably been a victim of abuses in the past. The client presents an awareness on the circle of violence in which he can see his life reflected. In fact, S. appreciated the role of the hero, Michele, in the scene, who stopped the abuse of the girl, "because he is not egoist"; but, he added that ten years ago he would have recognised himself in the girl, while today he would recognise himself in Michele and would have said to Skull 'stop it!'. Then, the exit workers asked S. whether he had received any expressions of solidarity, of closeness from any of his schoolmates on the occasions of the abuses he suffered. He answered that he only happened once in his life, during his childhood with a boy who became one of his few friends. In fourth grade, a classmate, probably of Albanian origin, started to 'protect' him, trying to prevent further violence: S. says that he felt happy that someone stood up for him and was able „to resist“ bullying. Their friendship was brief, because S. then went to southern Italy.

It seems that this probation programme put an end to the social isolation, thus making him open to discuss personal and social topics that otherwise he would not have been able to discuss with anyone else. This is what he indicates as what he enjoys the most from the meetings with exit workers. In fact, he had never reported the bullying he suffered to the teachers or to the parents: only this year (2020) he told his mother.

Bullying exists, says S., because there is a collapse of faith, a lack of humility and trust in others due to the responsibility of the generation of our fathers who allowed society to become individualistic, corrupt,

selfish and degenerate. S. argues that he was an atheist and therefore wanted to take revenge, to be the scourge (he uses this very expression!) of the bullies/perpetrators. But this desire to revenge has now changed as far as he became closer to Catholicism.

S. is passionate about history, and between the ages of 12 and 14, he had rediscovered the values of the past and began to develop nationalist and nostalgic feelings towards the past: B. Mussolini, F. Nietzsche, A. Hitler, H. Himmler, R. Guenon were among his readings on the web where he spent lots of time, mainly after he abandoned school at 15-16 years.

S. sees all aspects of modernity as a perversion of the past's traditional values and social ties. More recently, he abandoned the most extreme right-wing ideology because of his interest in Catholicism. However, his vision of the world is still radically black and white, a battle between good (of the past) and evil (of the present).

According to him, the three most important values are religion, the state with one leader and the family. The client researches in relationships with the opposite sex, the same traditional values: he says nowadays "it's rather impossible to find a girl with good and healthy morals". It can be assumed that there is a certain level of misogyny (typical of the online Incel subculture which defines itself as unable to find a romantic partner interested in building a traditional family). The exit practitioners tried to explain S. the utopia behind the traditional values, particularly in the family frame, by telling him personal experiences; but we could also see that the rigid framework of his thinking offers him security of his identity.

Following up on the theme of family, when talking about his parents' separation, S. recounted of the day his father left the house with his mother (laying on the ground after his father had hit her). S. exploded in tears while telling the story. This was the most relevant event that happened during the exit session in which the client explicitly showed his strong emotion.

As to exit practitioners' relations to the client, until now there are many indications of the positive and trust-based relationship. One of these proofs of the personal trust-building, confidentiality, narrative interaction is, exactly when S. told the exit workers about the above-mentioned domestic violence scenario he was crying about. For he said that the exit work setting was the first time ever that he opened up about this tragic event. Evidently, dealing with the most traumatic events in his life, in a protected setting, allows the client to lose his strong emotional self-control and express his feelings.

Conversely, during the exit sessions online, in November and December 2020, all of S.'s coldness and emotional distance resurfaced. As part of the sessions, exit workers asked S. to explore groups that are different from him and how he would categorise them (as people who he would be friends with, others who he would speak with but not befriend and people he would totally avoid). He included a long list of persons: Jews, Muslims, immigrants, black people, drug users, 'easy girls', party goers, LGBTQ

persons...etc. During these online sessions, exit workers explored the ideas and feelings S. feels towards these people and where he ever met any. As a way to explore if he would like to speak to anyone from these groups, it was agreed to organise encounters with a Rabi and an LGBTQ activist to which S. expressed interest. The speakers were invited to discuss with the client about stereotypes related to Jews and LGBTQ community. After S. politely interacted with them, surprisingly, the prejudices towards the two groups remained entirely unchanged while he also showed a rather alarming lack of empathy and lack of feeling in general. Moreover, the client started to withdraw from the exit workers after these two experiences and an extra effort to keep the process going was needed.

After these sessions, the exit practitioners realised that S. was overtaxed by this encounter with the two civil society representatives and that this intensive method was too challenging and too early for him. As a follow up, the tandem team would recognise the full degree of mental health issues of S. in the area of emotional dissociation and lack of empathy and capacity of relationship. S. would hence need a more prolonged work within the safe space of the exit work setting where he did prove to be able to open up to narrative methods.

IV

We face an adolescent with above-average cognitive skills, but closed in stereotypes and unable to cope with emotional obstacles, none of which seem particularly serious. He is closed into an exclusive and protective relationship with his mother. The ease of online research and the "reassuring" stability of propaganda and conspiracy theories have accelerated the process of approaching ideologies and groups organised on these emotional grounds, offering a safe enclave where to build his heroic identity of revenger of the bullied. In that sense, although from the very beginning it seemed that the client has already left behind the risk of violent behaviour, but extremist thinking is still well present in his mind-set. The enemies, the bullies/perpetrators, he views as being both the most extremist members of the traditional scapegoat groups (Jews, Muslims, immigrants, black people, foreigners...) and an expression of modernity (emancipated or 'easy' girls, drug users, LGBTQ persons...).

As far as it concerns his strengths, highlighted since the first exit meeting, his lucidity is interesting in referring to self-determination and curiosity/vigour towards life, nostalgia towards the past and past values and firmness of his ideas. All these points seem to be proudly directed towards constructing a strong moral and intellectual identity made of sense of purity. This is a purity that in his recent past he expressed by his willingness to sacrifice himself and his enemies; but a purity that now has the shape of Catholicism. The 'conversion' of S. is a theme that returns periodically among the topics of the exit meetings. The most relevant topics according to the local evaluator, are those of forgiveness both in relation to himself, as former hater of bullies/perpetrators, and in relation to his father, who abandoned him

Both directions of his forgiveness seem to be key factors in the development that the client will be able to accomplish, but they also seem to be in a state of stalemate, of fixity. The elaboration of his past as a hater is hindered by the need to maintain prejudices (confirmation bias) towards out-groups: prejudices that have the advantage to keep his identity firm and solid. The development of the relationship towards his father clashes with the stalemate situation, of fixity, in which resides a family nucleus deprived of communication skills. S. says that he has recently forgiven his father but he is unable to tell him. The social worker of the probation service, who met S.'s father once, reported having met a person who was unaware of everything concerning and revolving around his children.

In the following sessions these points were discussed and deepened using narrative activity and other tools coming from the Exit Europe training¹⁶ and manual¹⁷ and the practitioners' personal experiences.

V

After five months and 17 meetings with S., we can point out a positive trend in the client's personal development in the first two months and a regression in the last two: those followed the new social distancing rules because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During December 2020, exit practitioners and social workers – as well as probation, educational and neuropsychiatric practitioners – met and discussed S.'s case. The entire team noticed an increased lack of engagement of S. with the whole team, sometimes also combined with a lack of detachment and delineation from them. A lack of engagement worries the team because it seems to push S. back into a social isolation that was once the dimension of the past years of his life.

The impression is that S. has returned to a narrow social isolation state: a new withdrawal into the virtual environment. On the occasion of a recent meeting (January 2021) with the other practitioners working with S., it was confirmed by all participants that the client expresses a growing loss of interest towards the activity foreseen in his probation programme. Furthermore, S. seems less aware that this probation programme gives him the concrete benefit of alternative measures when the legal process will start. On February 2021, the investigation on our client will be closed and the judge will decide to continue the probation programme or to start the trial.

As to the factual causes of the slowdown of S.'s emotional progress, the fact that the family ties so far are unchanged causes a stalemate of the situation: the family is closed in a very crystallised setting in which the client's parents seem incapable of giving any support to their children in emotional and educational terms. The network of practitioners around S.'s probation programme is trying to work on

¹⁶ EXIT Europe Project Activity 2.3, the report on the exit training, which took place in Turin, Italy on 29th – 30th October 2019, can be found in: Meilicke, T. (2020) Exit Training in Italy, In: Steinek, V. *Project Meeting Report 2*, EXIT Europe Project Deliverable 1.6, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ Weilnböck, H. and Meilicke, T. (2020) *EXIT Europe Training Manual*. EXIT Europe Project Deliverable 2.1.

the family dynamics and the effort, in particular of the educational service, will be addressed in supporting S.'s sister. A support that in the future, we hope, could push a positive development even to the brother.

Trying to keep this ongoing relationship with S. and trying to valorise his skills, the local evaluator pointed out his writing skills to him and in particular his interest in writing a book on his experience as former hater - an idea that S. referred to in an email to the probation social worker at the very beginning on last summer. However, during the last meeting with the exit workers in January 2021, S. did not seem to be so interested in this anymore and in sharing personal narratives of experiences. He preferred to discuss different themes that concerned him. His tendency to escape from the emotive dimension of storytelling and intellectualise the facts of his life is thus confirmed, as his neuropsychiatrist told us, since the first call conference among the practitioners team.

Nevertheless, when the exit workers gave him a narrative task (in October 2020) – to write two letters in which he gives voice to himself from a position of his past and then from a position of the future, the results were interesting and promising axes of his potential skills appeared. The first letter, from the past, is addressed to the “world of predators”, we can read this sentence: “... the World has attacked me and I don't trust it anymore. My fortress will be under siege forever, I feel it in my blood! It will be attacked continuously and will slowly collapse, but I will be safe inside it as long as it holds. World, this is what you created: an iron monster! ...”.

The second letter, from the future, is addressed to his current self; here we can read: “...You are so lonely and sad, you cry every night for your loneliness, and yet you do nothing to change. But I tell you, dear S., get up and take up your Cross. Look for the resistance of the Good, look for the Light in this dark tunnel, don't give up! ... learn where the Good comes from, (that is, from) the Tradition, which you so much want to preserve: because all this comes only and uniquely from God. Your Paternal lack made you suffer a lot, but believe in the Father of the Principle, know him, love him, praise him! ...”

We can observe that the emphasis on despair of the first letter, in which the victim portrays himself as the future monster who will dissolve trying to take revenge against all bullies/perpetrators, in the second letter gives way to a dimension of resurrection: a return from death to life, with reference to the biblical story of Christ and the Last Judgment.

In commenting on these two letters with the exit workers, S. describes his current situation as an intermediary between the two extremes described in the letters. He claimed to be more at peace with himself but not yet to the point of no longer feeling anger.

Both the local evaluator and the exit worker tandem agreed to evaluate that the main challenge is probably to help the client cope emotionally with the 'monster' that inhabited him in the past years.

A ‘monster’ has returned to the headlines recently, when further information on S.’s criminal case arose from the media in relation to a second investigation. In a nutshell, the Italian police arrested a youngster in another city in northern Italy in 2021. He had launched and led a new group, in touch over chats with like-minded people in other Italian cities, in order to disseminate right-wings ideologies and discuss potential attacks in Italy. The news also reported the involvement of another person that, we soon discovered, was S.

These media news have created great alarm among the practitioners working with our client. The suspicion is that S. could be the ideological ‘father’ of this group with a more relevant leadership role than the older boy arrested. The local evaluator believes that such alarm is the result of an overestimated social perception of facts related to a time two/three years ago. However, most of the social workers are afraid of the future risks and they now have suggested to request a psychotherapy support for our client.

Further evaluation on the client will be considered in the coming weeks (after the EXIT Europe case study needs to be finalised) when the school and the activities in the probation programme will restart in presence. Since the week of 18 January 2021, S. resumed school by attending classes every other day as per ministerial decree. He informed exit workers that he would resume his connections with classmates asking them for coffee, but in the meantime his mother was admitted to the hospital with cardiovascular problems and the media started to write about his former friend who is now arrested.

Although the activities are not finished yet, even if in exit sessions were used all the “principles of good practice”¹⁸, it is not yet the time to evaluate their effectiveness since the necessary case work seems to have barely started, in light of the complexity of this case. However, it is possible to indicate the themes to be explored in the exit work in the coming months:

- The client’s adhesion to Catholicism and the relevance of the meetings held by S. with the lady, a friend of the family, before the probation programme. The pivotal function of religion in terms of protection, feeling of belonging and identity could be a key factor for the future developments.
- The client’s relationship skills in interacting with girls, in order to understand if S. is really an ‘Incel’ as the 22-year-old friend and accomplice declares and what the potential of relationship with the other sex is for S.

¹⁸ Cf. Weilnböck, H. and Örell, R. et al. (2015) *RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice* (Draft version) [online] Available at: https://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

- To develop narrative tools and tasks that may allow to deeper analyse the client's lack of empathy, as well as to help him to deeper analyse his 'monsters' and the capacity to "forgive himself".
- To increase the client's social interaction with positive peer groups, where he may find a community, a network, a values-based reference, in collaboration and coordination with the other institutional actors of his probation programme.

3.2 Case Study I.: The Lonely Justice Collaborator

Exit work practitioners: Ilaria Zomer and Elena Sonnini

I

I. is a 22-year-old boy from a North African country who arrived in Italy at the age of 8 to reunite with his family.

Assigned to social services for the second time, he had to serve an additional probation period of four months during which he is in the responsibility /care of the Logos project of the Office Pio San Paolo, in charge of his employment, and the exit work of the Exit Europe project.

I. has a recent past of crimes related to a gang that committed thefts in crowded public places, including a particular one that caused tragic events with a wide national and international echo. It is about a juvenile gang in which he had all his friends, including his first friend he met when he had arrived in Italy; thus, it was a group of affection and protection, a peer group with the same ethnic origin but no common traits in their mind set in political, religious or sexist are apparent. At the time of his arrest, he cooperated with the judicial authorities because he was placed in a repatriation centre for emigrants (CIE). Thus, he risked being repatriated (deported) to his country of origin, where he no longer had any family.

From the very first meetings, one understands how the bravado that characterised him three years ago at the time of the crimes committed, when he was traveling with stolen money, has given way to a boy capable of being ashamed. Although reluctant to talk about his past and his crimes, he felt the guilt of having betrayed his family, forcing his parents to suffer a heavy social stigma and spent money on his legal defence. The most dramatic fact—the point of no return—was the moment of his arrest, when, detained at the CIE, he found himself having to choose between saving his gang friends or saving his family. He chose the latter one, finding himself now deprived of relationships with his mates who had isolated him and from whom he had walked away in an attempt to gain an existential redemption.

The most difficult family relationship was the one with his father, but trust and affection between them have never been completely deteriorated, despite everything. During the first period of "probation", having to choose between work and school, I. would have wanted to work to compensate the family, but his father asked him to continue his studies. Thus, he earned his diploma.

Also, the tandem team of exit workers who have worked or are still working with I.—and also the psychologist who followed him after the first arrest, the educator of the Logos project, and the social worker of the juvenile probation services—described him as a reserved boy with a strong personality who is in some contexts even charismatic; a boy who still meets the expectations of his family and the social workers of his probation programme; a boy who is worth investing in; who in the path of job

insertion devotes himself with commitment to the training steps and internships as a warehouse worker; a boy who has responded clearly and with candour and energy to the tests to which he has been subjected.

The psychologist described him as a reflective boy, suggesting that his crimes were premeditated rather than impulsive. However, in the last year, the psychologist's reflection has been directed to build his future and repair the damage to his image caused to himself and his family.

Because of this turn of events, I. still feels uncomfortable in his home neighbourhood: he has the impression that everyone points at him for his criminal past. He cultivates a passion for travelling, to start a new life far from the places of his cumbersome past. The psychologist emphasised some negative aspects like loneliness, resulting from losing his friends, all co-defendants for crimes committed together. In this social marginality, imposed by himself, there are depressive aspects, particularly when he resumed attending school. In fact, according to the psychologist, in addition to the reticence to face his past as an offender, I. avoided encountering his classmates outside of the school because he was weary to go back to offending or to find himself in situations at risk of illegality. The theme of sentimental relationships was also banned by I. in the therapeutic sessions.

II

At the end of October 2020, the social worker of the Juvenile Probation office (USSM) proposed to include the exit work in his programme. The project includes around 15-18 meetings during the next four months (until March 2021). After the preparatory meeting with the social worker and the Exit Europe project's local evaluator, the first meeting took place on October 29, 2020. In this meeting, it was agreed to start first with three meetings and after that I. will decide whether or not to continue with the next ones; since it is about an activity in which the voluntariness factor is fundamental.

After the first three meetings, it was immediately evident that an informal and almost friendly atmosphere was established between the client and the two exit workers. Therefore, starting from each other's stories, immediately it emerged that I. needed to be listened to and have a space where he could express his emotions and be treated as an equal without prejudice. In the third meeting, although it was short and remote due to the Covid-19 pandemic problems, I. informed the exit workers that he is willing to continue the process with them, provided he will be at ease and pleased with the process.

In the following meetings, the exit team set out the following goals:

- To increase the relationship of trust with the exit practitioners to allow I. to express his thoughts, emotions, concerns, and his experiences;
- To offer space to I., to process his past and explore his future through storytelling or forms of expression that suit him best;

- To explore the discomforts that led him to a certain isolation and process his emotional and psychosocial journey toward his current socialisation difficulties;
- To create together with I. a prioritised list of strengths and weaknesses to be addressed and managed them during the meetings with the exit workers. Through practical suggestions and cognitive-behavioural exercises, to reinforce his 'skills', positive abilities, and help him to question his “cognitive bias” or prejudices, including the emotional ones.
- In agreement with USSM, verify the additional social support to I. of peer groups from the world of associations and local volunteers.

After nine meetings, the exit workers noted a good triangular relationship with I.. Although it remains challenging the path towards his re-elaboration of the crimes, and then towards his past, the desire for rehabilitation, social redemption, and the impetus to rebuild his life is such as to respond very proactively to the inputs and exercises proposed by the exit workers in the various sessions.

In the first meeting, I. told about his life, and after, the exit workers did the same thing.

I. was born in a North African country, where he lived until the fourth grade. At that time, his father was already in Italy, so he lived with his mother and two siblings (a brother of 18 years old and a sister of about 13) in his maternal grandparents' house together with his grandmother and aunt. I. pointed out that his mother, in that situation, was treated like a servant; however, he described his childhood as happy.

When they arrived in Italy, their economic situation was initially very difficult. They lived in a tiny studio apartment, but later the economic situation improved, and today, the father has an excellent job in a company. I. started spending time with boys from his neighbourhood or classmates. In this environment, he began to assume deviant behaviours by using drugs and having repeatedly failed in school.

Soon after began the judicial process that sentenced him to three months in an expulsion centre for foreigners (CIE) and one year and eight months of house arrest. The period in the CIE was told with much fatigue and pain. From his voice, one perceives that I. strives to forget and remove that period of his life, even though flashbacks come back to him from time to time, probably related to traumatic memories. For example, he witnessed daily inmates trying to commit suicide, particularly by hanging themselves. The Muslim religious practice was of great help for him in overcoming and surviving the imprisonment experience, although he had not practiced much before (his parents are practicing Muslims). Religion is an essential protective factor for the boy, support in terms of hope and regularity in managing his days.

Exit workers confirmed that even today, I. sometimes feels lost, depressed, and apathetic, and in the neighbourhood where he lives, he feels the weight of the criminal stigma. Also a mild anxiety of persecution and observation afflicts him.

In the second meeting, the practitioners and I. filled out the "Wheel of Life"¹⁹ and spoke about the scores. This moment was very useful for continuing the mutual understanding and creating a climate of trust. I. gave fairly high scores, although his emotional state continues to be apathetic with depressive tendencies. In particular, the economic wellbeing and social relationships did not score high enough: he would like to be economically independent, which is still a long way off, and currently he has no strong friendships and relationships. He put eight in the box on hope for the future, which is an important fact because it signals his strong motivation and willingness to work on his life and reach new goals. Therefore, his sociable character has emerged, his ability to create contacts, to unite people, which he lost in recent times because he has less confidence in people and probably in himself. This skill has been recovered in the working dimension, as confirmed by the Logos project operators. From the discussion on the Wheel of Life, a further characteristic of I.'s personality emerges, i.e., his ambition.

In remote online mode, due to the pandemic social restrictions, subsequent meetings marked a stalemate because I. tended to lose concentration and be less involved in the proposed activities. The relationship returned to fruitfulness from the meeting of December 10, 2020, when the meetings in person have returned. On that occasion, I. reported that he refused the proposal of a new session with a psychologist, motivated by the fact that he did not feel at ease. However, in that session, when he was faced with some film scenes, he demonstrated high emotional and relational intelligence and also to have "good empathic abilities" —as the exit practitioners write in the report—as well as the reflective capacity of self-control—as the psychologist emphasised.

Particularly interesting was the next meeting in which the exit practitioners proposed to I. a work on the "identity molecule"²⁰. We asked him to list and represent in a molecule all the aspects of his identity with circles that are larger or smaller depending on whether the identity aspects are more or less important and characterising. The result that emerged is a list of his identity as male and African, the values that he considers very important, like freedom, things he likes to do such as sports, having fun, and character elements such as being sociable. Neither friendships nor ideological or political affiliations were mentioned; not even faith, which in other meetings were mentioned by him as a source of comfort during the detention period. When this fact was pointed out to him, he seemed to be struck by the fact that he has omitted it and told the exit workers that for him, it is an important thing, but in fact, it is not one of the primary aspects of himself that he thinks of representing in the exercise. Family, on the other

¹⁹ Vf. Weilnböck, H. and Meilicke, T. (2020) *EXIT Europe Training Manual*. EXIT Europe Project Deliverable 2.1.

²⁰ for further details, see Keshet (2009) *Identity Molecule* [online]. Available at: <http://thedfi.org/toolkit/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/identity-molecule.pdf>

hand, plays an important role in terms of both values and belonging. We believe that his attitude not only justifies but also helps to motivate his choices, in a certain sense, to defend and protect his family network.

It is also significant to note that in the molecule of I. does not appear the past nor any identity linked to peer groups, confirming the difficulty of elaborating on the period of criminal activity with the gang. A removal that today does not help him to face the situation, but instead induces him to remove.

In a later passage of the exercise, I. was asked to transform the molecule concerning how he would like it to be in the future. The family always occupies a prominent place, and work acquires importance, but also travel and personal well-being, and finally, also love acquires importance. This is a countertendency to the first meetings in which I. said he was having difficulty with sentimental relationships.

The theme returned in the meeting held on January 6, 2021, when I. said that he dates a girl but that he is not sure to establish a relationship. He is uncertain because, at the same time, an ex-girlfriend has shown up with him. These confidences to the exit workers are certainly a sign that the client is in a setting where he is at ease and allows him to open up to aspects that no other social worker in contact with him has ever dealt with before.

III

The theme of the last two meetings in January 2021 was the future profession. I. was sure that he would have six months of apprenticeship as a warehouseman. He confessed to the exit workers that he is not enthusiastic about the job. His ambition would lead him to different desire paths: from resuming his studies at university to the entrepreneurial idea of opening a pizzeria in his hometown.

The exit workers then presented to I. some opportunities of European mobility, not only to travel but to make professional learning experiences and short- and long-term solidarity in Europe. I. appeared very interested, confirming his desire to change his life, which he had expressed since the first meeting, i.e., to go where nobody knows him and start over. He was suggested the possibility of doing a gradual approach to one of the voluntary organisations specialised in the field of initiative, in order to compare himself with those who have already done it and be able to understand if it is an experience that suits him and is compatible with the other ongoing activities in the Logos project. This perspective would be coherent with the objective of resocialisation at the end of the exit process: a follow-up towards which the client seems very interested, but on which accompaniment must be maintained to ensure a second objective, i.e., the elaboration of his past.

At the state of exit activities, one can therefore hypothesise in the coming months the following:

- a) pursuit, after the end of the judicial measure of probation, consisting of a takeover by civil society organisations that facilitate his integration into peer groups towards which the client feels affinity;
- b) pursuit of the meetings with the exit workers, focused on elaborating of the past and the feeling of shame in the relationship with the family and the father in particular: central is the nexus guilt/shame in elaborating on his current multiple identities. Attention can also be paid to the role (or absence) of religion or any form of spirituality in this phase. This work could be facilitated by a "mediation" activity between the client's social worker and his father, which the local evaluator proposes to the former. In fact, I.'s fear "that he does not know if he will ever regain his father's trust" could have a resolution from updating him on the positive path his son is taking both with the exit work and with the Logos project. An update that could facilitate his awareness and perhaps a reconciliation, which would be very helpful for both of them in reworking the period of criminal life spent.

3.3 Case Study E.: Pride & Anger

Exit work practitioners: Luisa Pignata and Andrea Zummo

I

Born in 1997, E. arrived in Italy from a North African country at ten years of age with his mother and two brothers to join his father who was already working in Italy. His father returned every year for a few months to visit them. E. grew up with the myth of his father, and he, being the eldest son, had to take on heavy domestic responsibilities from a very young age on, such as when he went to work in the fields.

When he arrived in Italy, E. attended middle school, then two years of a technical high school. During his third year, he began using narcotics and drugs and dropped out of school. From 2013 to 2016, he hung out with what he calls the "wrong people" who used and dealt in drugs. They were all kids with the same North African ethnic background as himself, who frequented the same city park.

In the first meeting with exit workers, E. said that he was never able to detach himself from the group because he was succumbing to a habit that brought him every day to them, where he was able to receive his drugs. Today, he continues the story, realising that it was a "useless" time, a "lost" time that flew by without him realising it, while he lost the opportunity to build a normal life, find a job and buy a car. Sometimes he did not come home for a week and slept on the street. His father's effort to help E. was useless: when he found E. a job in a sandwich shop, the boy abandoned it after a week.

In 2016, when E. was already of age, he was arrested on charges of brawling and robbery and in the following trial, he was sentenced with a penalty of two years and seven months in jail. Subsequently, for an episode of violence when he was still a minor, in the fall of 2020, he was entrusted by the magistrate to the social services of the juvenile justice system with a probation programme that includes exit work, a work internship and volunteer work with a civil society organisation. The team of EXIT Europe decided to begin working with E. because, while he did not show evident signs of group hatred or extremism, he belonged to a group that is sometimes recruited by extremist organisations. Especially in prison, drug addicts with a lot of religious guilt feelings about their addiction are sometimes helped to quit their addiction by religious groups who then recruit these individuals.

II

During the first meeting with the tandem team of exit workers, E. recounted his experience as a detainee, starting with an episode of bullying from which he was able to defend himself. The amounts of abuse of the weaker inmates he was witnessing in prison, drove him to lead a secluded life. This sort of life

was further motivated because of E.'s fellow detainees, with whom he shared the same ethnicity and minority status compared to other African ethnic groups, towards whom E. still maintains feelings of hatred. This kind of inter-ethnic polarisations are a well-known phenomena developing within prisons. The inmate seeks protection in the group that is culturally close to him/her, but if the group's numbers are a minority compared to other groups, the survival strategy falls back on mild and low-profile behaviour.

So, E. defined his time in prison as "his salvation" because there he began to reflect on his past. In prison, the client realises the lost years of his life, thus fearing having compromised his future and his relationship with his family. The bond with his family was very strong. Also, E. recounted when his mother would visit him – with his brother whom he considers his "twin" – and they would cry together. According to E.'s statements (e.g., "my mother is everything, I would like something to happen to me rather than to her," "my family is everything"), the exit workers classified his relationship with his family as rather "obsessive". Moreover, his tattoo written in English, "Love my Family", made during detention, further emphasised the worker's observations. An "obsession" that, as we will see, in the course of later encounters becomes a hypothesis of "new and old addiction".

E.'s second tattoo, in Arabic, "no trust in men", embodies his lack of trust in his drug friends – whom, according to E., "put him in jail" – and others in general.

At the end of the first meeting, E. related that as soon as he got out of prison, he would spend four months without talking to anyone: isolated and depressed with fits of rage in which violence exploded against objects. Subsequently and slowly the client claimed to have been able to leave the house again and to distinguish between trustworthy and deceiving people.

It seems that the only new bond of trust after his experience in prison was with his girlfriend, whom he has been living with for a couple of years and with whom he seems intent on laying the foundations for a new family.

The bond of E. with this girl was one of the issues addressed in an assessment meeting that the local evaluator asked the tandem of exit workers for: the social worker of probation services and the tutor of the vocational training. That occasion revealed that usually E. showed up at meetings, with the social worker or the tutor, accompanied by his girlfriend. The latter defined her as an emotionally and a psychologically stronger subject than the client, with a relevant support function towards him. We also learned that the probation measure is applied to the client's current domicile with his girlfriend, because the judicial authority has noticed an environmental degradation in the family of origin.

We know little about this girl of Italian origin. The social worker points out that she has separated parents and has had an experience in a community for minors (which are safety venues that host children without

parents and/or are affected with drugs addictions, usually managed by civil society organisations). The girl has a good level of social integration in the territory.

In the encounter between practitioners, suspicion emerged about the truthfulness that E. did not have male friendships with past links. On the one hand, the social worker recounted that in a recent meeting with the client and his girlfriend, in which they argued in front of her, she complained that E. goes out home in the morning and comes back in the evening. Since his job at a coffee shop is part-time, it is unclear where and how the client spends half of his daytime. On the other hand, one of the exit workers accidentally met the client on public transportation near the city park he frequented in the days before the arrest.

The impression that the client gave to all of his interlocutors involved in his probation programme is that of a serious boy: reserved and motivated to achieve a positive change that could gratify himself and his family. Moreover, out of the above-mentioned meeting emerges a double-standard, when he tells different things to his different interlocutors, and – above all – the persistence of a feeling of anger, the aggression of which could be difficult to control by the young man.

The confirmation was given at the end of the second exit meeting.

The theme addressed with the client at first was that of social relations. E.'s close relational network components are as follows: his brothers, his girlfriend, his mother, father, and two boys, with the same ethnic origin. E. considers the latter as “brothers“, a notion that he prefers to that of friends; however, he does not seem connected to religious relationship. Instead, like the other members of his network of relationships, it seems that the common characteristic lies in the symbiotic and exclusivist nature.

In discussion with the client, obstacles to opening up to new relationships with peers emerged. On the one hand, E. was afraid of meeting the “wrong” people who would lead him back to the “wrong path”, to new illegal situations; rather, he recognised in himself a feeling of guilt and shame. The client was afraid of talking about himself and his past, because he felt judged by the interlocutors. Significantly, E. told the exit workers that in his country of origin, the boys who end up in prison are called “jail faces” and, when they get out, they have no chance of finding a wife. So, the client was very proud of his girlfriend and equally explicit about the results of the stigma towards ex-prisoners, like him. In fact, in front of the expression of prejudices towards his past, he claimed to be able to become “another person”, up to becoming “violent”.

The work setting is sufficiently protected and comfortable to allow the client to express himself with a very high degree of trust towards the practitioner tandem. At the end of their second meeting he explained his difficulty to manage anger. E. talked confidentially about a recent episode of anger that led him to an act of violence. His girlfriend reported to him that a black boy molested her. The episode

did not let him sleep, so he decided to confront this boy personally, but words turned into threats, and finally to actions when the client slapped him.

Law enforcement does not seem to have been an option in the approach of the young couple. Although E. asked his girlfriend why she did not go to the police, when the exit workers asked him why he did not go to the police, he answered that "it is not necessary: they put them in jail one night and the next day they are out again." Thus E. argued that instead it was necessary to give a lesson, so that such subjects did not repeat the abuse.

E.'s level of awareness on his own difficulty of managing anger emerged in this story, when the client pointed out the very moment of confrontation with this black boy: he felt the anger take him over, to the point of pushing him to a violent reaction.

III

After the first two meetings with the client, the objectives of the exit work in the next future will be directed towards three areas of intervention:

- (a) The reframing of the past, guilt and offenses to allow the client to share experiences and committed acts with others without feeling shame; also developing a level of acceptance and forgiveness towards himself that enables him to manage the stigma that weighs on his past as detainee;
- b) The development of the ability to manage anger and conflict. The two exit practitioners pointed out that E.'s anger is the result of two things: 1) The dimension of dependence that E. tends to reiterate in interpersonal relationships with people close to him, whom he trusts; 2) The previous events of violence, included, f.i. when on holiday in his country of origin, E. found himself at sixteen years old at the center of a street fight following an attack on his cousin.
- (c) The broadening of E.'s social relationships outside the represented comfort zone of his closest relationships. Although his probation programme already includes a "voluntary" activity (socially useful work) within an association that manages spaces and workshops for young people, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic to social activities in public have almost prevented the client from starting this commitment.

The client turns out to be a particularly delicate case in that the elements of risk, linked to the loss of self-control in the attacks of rage, can jeopardise the future towards which he would like to proudly land. From the point of view of his legal position, possible recidivism would not only result in a return to prison, but it would also affect the possibility of having a residence permit in Italy and expose him to the real possibility of being sent to his country of origin.

The most critical issue is related to the timing of the exit intervention. As established by the judge, the period of probation is only three months, so the work of exit will be limited to the same period: until the end of March 2021. A period of time that may prove to be too short for the three goals mentioned above.

3.4 Case Study D.: Female Bullying

Exit work practitioners: Serena Olivetti and Andrea Zummo

The intervention of the BIT team in a secondary school in the Turin hinterland was solicited by a teacher in whose class D., a schoolgirl, was first the victim of a violent clash with a rival and then perpetrator in a second clash with her boyfriend against the rival, in the classic love triangle, but in the variant with two female poles. The school, as well as D.'s class, is mostly frequented by girls. In the BIT team's preliminary meeting with D.'s teachers and the school's psychologist, in January 2020, the students of the school were described at eighty percent as expressions of discomfort, poverty, or social marginality. It is thus a school in which expressions of arrogance, manipulation and praise of antisocial behaviour are a widespread and frequent phenomena.

In particular, D.'s class is defined as agitated and inattentive, comprised of several subgroups of students with established friendships, in a dynamic of periodic and mutual polarisation and disagreements. Besides the girl's case involved in the double role victim/perpetrator in that act of violence for which the BIT team was initially called, there were also reported verbal tensions between a boy and a girl, whose violence could have caused the boy's parents to report the girl to the judicial authority. Moreover, there was also a handicapped girl who needed the support of a special teacher; the girl was isolated by other classmates, thus remaining alone.

In their first meeting, held on February 5, 2020, the exit workers' tandem explained to the students the path and the rules of the activity they were going to follow. After that, the team started some breaking-ice activities, aimed to build an informal and trusted atmosphere. The first activity was to introduce themselves and to name a place in the world they would like to go. For the second activity, the students played the Dixit cards²¹, which is an illustrated card game in which everyone chooses a card and then, if they want, tells the others a sentence related to the image depicted. Almost all of the students chose the option to comment on the card they chose. Afterwards, there was a brainstorming activity starting with the word "emotion", with the possibility for each student to write words related to it on the blackboard. Many concepts emerged and it also happened that a girl asked one of the exit workers if she could write the word "bullying", mentioning the fact that she herself had been a victim of it several times. From the concepts that emerged, a general discussion began focusing on the topics of interpersonal relationships, love affairs, and LGBT rights. During the discussion, one girl stated in front of the entire class that she was bisexual. From the reactions of students, the exit workers immediately noticed that some of the girls already knew this detail, while others had different reactions, including a

²¹ For further information, please see: *Dixit card game*, Wikipedia Page [online]. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixit_\(card_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dixit_(card_game))

classmate who found it unacceptable to be bisexual. As a result, this last statement kickstarted a discussion between two students, one of them using very strong language that demonstrated either the confidence of her opinions, or rather a low ability to dialogue. Also the topic of theft emerged during the discussion, and the exit workers observed some jokes made among the students, which suggested that some of them may have committed theft.

The exit workers described the second meeting as more difficult than the previous one. The meeting took place at two o'clock in the afternoon, a challenging time to keep the students' attention. Moreover, the news that the boy, who had had a violent altercation with the girl, had changed classes and perhaps this weighed on the class's mood as well. At the beginning of the meeting, each student received the entrance questionnaire which includes a "Wheel of Life" self-assessment. To maintain order while filling it out, the tandem team had to remind the students of the rules they had applied at their first meeting: the habit of interrupting the activity by commenting on whatever impulsively crosses their minds was not tolerated. The schoolgirls stated that they were aware of their limitations but claimed that they could not control themselves. The answers of the entry questionnaire showed that the existing difficulties in relationship are within the class with the other classmates (in six cases out of twenty-one), more than in the family or in another setting. This is probably an underestimated fact as attributable only to the self-perception of the subjects who were victims of the conflictual climate and not to those who perceived themselves as stronger. This was confirmed by the "Wheel of Life" results of the under the heading, Moral or Spiritual Well-being, which is below average (six) in eight cases out of twenty-one.

After completing the questionnaire, the exit workers summarised the first session for those absent on that day and arranged the students into pairs. They asked each student to tell the other an anecdote that would have raised emotions. In turn, the receiver would (re)tell to the initiator the same anecdote through his/her words, sensitivity and "filters". Despite some difficulties in some pairs, the activity continued with a phase of restitution. The exit workers asked the students about their impressions of the mutual exchange of stories. Some pairs responded and animated a brief discussion at the end of the meeting.

The end of February 2020 marked the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and the necessary lockdown measures. Teaching proceeded through remote modes and connections; thus, the exit activity was halted. The entire BIT team agreed that it was impossible to replace personal exit meetings with online sessions. However, the exit workers maintained contact with the teacher to update the team on the progress of school activities. On May 25, 2020, an online meeting was held with the school's psychologist, the local evaluator and the Exit Europe project's team and local coordinator. The psychologist was concerned about the possible "nest syndrome" (excessive isolation in the protective dimension of the home) in which some students could have fallen. However, the teacher was positively surprised by the recovered students' high unity level in D.'s class; but the teacher did not receive any feedback from the students on the two exit meetings. On occasion, the BIT team proposed the teacher

to allow them to conduct an online meeting with the students before the end of the school year, in order not to lose contact with them. Therefore, on June 8, 2020, the tandem of exit workers met online with half of the class and asked them how they passed the last three months. The dynamics of quarantine at home emerged: those who experienced it with difficulty (e.g., living with parents, fear of infection, or inability to get out and see friends); but also those who took the opportunity to learn new skills (e.g., fitness exercise, cooking, engaging in new relationships). They then discussed distance learning and the following topics: the exhaustion of online lessons; teachers' inability to listen to their students' needs; the longing for socialising in a "lively" way in the classroom (e.g., "to make a mess", to joke, to spite the teachers).

At the beginning of the new school year, in September of 2020, the exit workers resumed the contact with the teacher for updates on the school's in-person and remote activities progress. The instructional organisation that prevailed throughout the fall was the online one due to the second pandemic wave.

On December 9, 2020, the BIT team held a new online collegial meeting with the teacher. The teacher described the D.'s class as very different: the number of students dropped because almost all the "more problematic" students had left, possibly because they did not have proper computing facilities (two have dropped out of school). When working from home, they were disciplined, and they did the homework and studied. However, while present in class, they were very argumentative and agitated with constant verbal attacks. The teacher also reported a case of acute anxiety disorder that led a student to hospitalisation. It was decided to try to resume the exit activity as soon as an in-person classroom setting was possible. We proposed to meet online with a small representation of the students, to understand their current needs.

On December 22, 2020, the exit workers met four students who initially claimed that the class was calmer and more grown up. However, they recounted a series of episodes that occurred almost all outside of school, whose protagonist was always the same schoolgirl with whom "the classmate doesn't get along well". It was understood that she refused her companions' friendship because she did not want to submit to their determinations and to be part of their in-group, up, in at least one occasion, to the physical confrontation. Since the four girls excluded the possibility of pacifying the conflict with her, the exit workers tried to induce some reasoning, not to exclude a priori the possibility of managing a "cohabitation" in and out the school. A type of unity in the school class that did not necessarily imply a close bond of friendship among all the students. After 15 minutes of discussion and common reflection, the exit workers concluded that the female students "appeared less categorical with respect to their exclusionary positions"; hence, the local evaluator believed that there were risks that the in-group could have identified the isolated girl as a scapegoat on whom to continue to project internal tensions in the future. The tandem team took this basic mechanism of uncontrolled malicious projection and

scapegoating as indicating a risk of polarisation, radicalisation and group hatred – and set out to have a closer look at this phenomenon in the future interventions.

At the beginning of January 2021, the government's decisions impeded the possibility of resuming in-person classes and school activities, in almost all Italian schools, for another month. However, contacts with the teacher have continued to try in settling a meeting schedule that would harmonise with the complex organisation of D.'s class activities. Thus, with the end of January 2021, one-half of the students will have in-person classes, whereas the other half would be remote on alternate days.

The current perspective is to hold four exit sessions focused on conflict dynamics and management, with at least part of the class present, between February and March 2021.

4 CASE STUDIES IN SLOVAKIA

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4.1 Case Study: Group work in a school setting

Case history:

In this case, there are two classes, corresponding to two study fields, from the Secondary technical school in the small town, situated in the south-eastern part of Slovakia, involved in the EXIT Europe project. Both classes consist of ten male students and we conducted the group work together with both classes, hence, the group consisted of twenty members. We were meeting in school, since a space in the timetable was made for us by the director and the class teacher. We were visiting the school at various times, approximately twice a month.

Some students from these two classes have shown signs of radical and group hatred behaviour. We have been introduced to this school by an organisation, which had been working there and focused on the general themes of tolerance and respect as the fundamental pillars of a democratic society. The organisation provided us with a contact to the school, since their preventive work was set only on the level of primary prevention, while our expertise and preventive work was more specific. The previous organisation focused more on work with information, attitudes and values, they do more educational work. Our work is more about emotions, social skills, work with trauma and narrative communication about experiences shared. We are a team of social workers (or other helping professions) and we focused more on social skills development, group work, social and personal counselling. The first contact was made in April 2019, when the former US American neo-Nazi Sammy Rangel was invited to Slovakia by The U.S Embassy in Bratislava, Slovakia. He gave a lecture in this school about his life in a gang and subsequent decriminalisation – the boys were highly interested in the lecture, some of them were recalling this moment throughout the whole period, during which we were working with them. In the next step, field research was performed (May 2019 – August 2019), due to which we analysed the environment and organised meetings with a psychologist from the local psychological counselling centre in this town and the members of the police force. Moreover, we were conducting our regular visits and activities within sessions and group work with the school. The director was a bit reserved during our first meeting, however, in the end, he has become more open towards the cooperation. It looked like the financing was quite relevant, too, and thus, after realising it would be for free, the director became more co-operative.

In September, we organised a workshop for teachers, which was focused on activities, approaches and work with this target group. On October the 4th, 2019, we organised the first group session. Since then, we visit the school regularly, excepting the corona crisis period.

The region, which the boys come from, is situated on the south-east of Slovakia with a high concentration of Roma population. There are several Roma settlements nearby and poorer districts, where the Romani live, too. Moreover, the migration rate of people is quite high in the region, too. Many people leave the country and go abroad to do lower-qualified jobs with better salaries, as the local salaries are really low. There are several subcultures in the town, which include the drug addicts and the young, who are becoming radical. However, most of them do not come from the town. They either come from the nearby villages or live in the hall of residence.

Their class teacher (who later becomes a head of the school) and the teacher of history and ethics are the significant persons, who see the potential in our actions and thus, they are still inviting us to the school. Both of them have got close relations with the students and are worried about them, when they behave hazardingly. The class teacher is strict towards them – if they violate the rules, she shouts at them. The students like their teachers and respect them. In school, they are industrious and do not commit violence, they behave well.

During our first visit, we were talking about the problematic issues in the classes. The teacher of history mentioned that some students had problems with the police and went fighting in their free time and weekends, too. Moreover, there are two boys, who are members of the People's Party (Ľudová strana) and are becoming radical and also some other students adopt such opinions. They are also members of the group of football fans and get involved in fights. Supposedly, they organise fights with the Antifa group by SMS messages, about which they even boast to their teacher.

The elements of radicalisation and extremism could be identified by the opinions of the participants – e.g. they believe the third world war is going to happen soon, they praise Hitler and fear migrants. They often talk about the Romani as they are less valuable human beings. They want labour camps to be built for the Romani to force them to work, because they think, the Romani do nothing and just receive benefits and are on the dole. Hence, coexistence with the Romani minority would be the core theme. As in this area, except the integrated Romani, there are also people from the Romani ethnic group, who live on the outskirts of the society in the excluded settlements, there are common stereotypical opinions and prejudices in the society. Furthermore, the boys often reflect on the problematic coexistence of the Romani and non-Romani people also through a concept of social justice. According to them, while they and their families live in poverty and must work, the Romani do not. Hence, they are perceived as those, who exploit the social system. The theme of coexistence with the Hungarian minority is also a topic, concerning the group hatred behaviour, as a considerable part of one of the classes consists of Hungarians with the Hungarian mother tongue.

Considering motivation, students are motivated to discuss mainly the themes concerning migrants and the Romani. Moreover, they are interested e.g. also in the theme of hooliganism. One of the participants has even found out on the website that the organisation that we come from also work with this target group and thus asked, whether we would prepare a presentation on this topic, too. We never did, because during meetings other interesting topics popped up, which we consider as more important: also during the first and second wave of the corona crisis, we had to discontinue our work, so we did not have enough time to go back to this topic.

By the end of our activities, within one group session, we informed them about the EXIT Europe Project. We told them that the European Commission is interested in their views about radicalisation and extremism and topics such as migration and Roma issues: hence we would like to anonymously share their views, beliefs and attitudes. The consent forms are supposed to protect them in case of violation of their rights, or if they want to complain about our possible inappropriate behaviour. We also asked whether they would be interested in becoming a part of an international project and we also assured them of the protection of their personal data and anonymity.

Considering the first time, they seemed rather insecure and did not trust us. They reacted with silence, one of the participants asked, whether they had an option to reject the participation. They were not sure what it would be about. This happened before the corona crisis. Subsequently, we began visiting the school again (after the summer 2020) and again opened the topic of participation in the project. Since all of them were eighteen at that time, we did not need signatures of their parents. After such break, they have become more open and understood that what they were signing should protect mainly them and their interests and thus, it would provide them with a choice to turn to a third party, if they felt their rights were being violated.

During the continual work with the boy group, their needs and interests which were first entirely hidden, emerged only very scarcely. Hence, we were not able to name these needs and interests explicitly and in a mutually agreeable manner. We encountered the need of belonging somewhere, being accepted by a group, being known and having an impact. Furthermore, we have perceived quite marginally that their hatred towards the Romani is based on particular displeasing experiences with the Romani.

We do not have information that any of these students were participating in the other type of social or (mental) health care service or counselling.

Narrative part

Process

The first meeting was dedicated to the activity “Heroes”, which focused mainly on investigating the value hierarchies of the participants – what is important for them, what they appreciate and admire with

themselves and with others, too, and who their hero is. An introducing activity preceded. Yet in this activity, we noticed they sat down according to their study fields. However, we did not notice any tension between these groups – they did make fun of each other – as it is usual in classes. The main aim of the activity “Heroes” was to tell who is a hero for them and for which qualities they consider the person a hero. Many of them mentioned their parents. One of the participants ironically mentioned liberal Slovak president Zuzana Čaputová. The practitioner says: “It think this was sarcasm and a provocation, and therefore I responded to you that I have the feeling that it was sarcasm and that I did not understand it. And if we should communicate with one another, it would be useful to understand each other. And added that he should explain to me, how he meant it. He paused in surprise and was shocked and said he wanted to give space to someone else.” (session report 4.10.2020). The second interesting moment in this activity happened, when someone said that they considered “him, who died in a bomb shelter” a hero – they meant Hitler. As it was not completely clear who said it, we could not work with it at all. Among the hero qualities, it was generally mentioned: “not being afraid to express one’s own opinion, power and willingness to fight for truth”.

After this first meeting, we found out that the time of our meetings did not suit the boys, as they had to stay at school on Friday afternoons, some even had to return from their practical lessons back to school. Thus, they went to the director to complain and reasoned that they “did not want to learn about faggots“ (in this argument, they mistook us for the organisation, which had operated in the school before us). Their class teacher and the teacher of history were angry because of this incident, because boys did not go to them and complained directly to the director. Hence, we tried to be helpful and rearrange the meetings to an earlier time.

A methodological debate in the team about the possible ways of group work followed. We debated whether to work with boys in a rather therapeutic way – to seek what is hidden behind their hatred, their need for violent behaviour or their radical opinions. This would be a way of submerging into themselves, with the first step of creating a secure space for sharing. The second option was connected with providing some information and discussion about the themes, which the boys are interested in or we think they could be (e.g. The Second World War, a war conflict, migrants, the Roma people). We have decided to use both of these ways and switch between them at occasion. After some time, we made clear in the team, that even if we brought a theme to a particular meeting, the lecture would take maximally 20 minutes and then the space would be given to the boys. We have learnt this from one meeting, when the lecture took longer and we did not have time to talk neither about the boy’s perception of such theme nor their opinions about it.

Thus, we tried to implement this method – to sometimes switch over to a more therapeutically oriented mode of interaction – by which we encouraged participants to think about their understanding of and background experiences with certain topics and the personal reasons why they perceived them in such

way. Alternately, we would then also pursue an educational/informational mode, by which we provided a lecture or theme, which was usually prepared by our external co-worker. We prepared two themes – “War in Iraq and humanitarian help” and “Symbols”. The group session “Symbols” was about forbidden symbols of extremist groups, for instance Nazi symbols like swastika, Nazi war eagle, Wolf’s Hook, communist symbols or symbols of terrorist groups like the ISIS flag.

The activity “Heroes” started first. Furthermore, we regularly prepared activities, which aimed to build a relationship with the students which is based on trust and safe space. Concerning this, as the first step, we explained why we were here. We asked them how they perceived extremism and whether they considered themselves extremists and subsequently, we talked about the fact that some people considered their behaviour extreme and that this was why they had called us. The activity “Secrets” followed and also contributed to strengthening safety and trust. Within this activity, they had an opportunity to anonymously talk about issues, which had been bothering them. Or else they wrote down issues to talk about with somebody else (like a secret) on small papers and then put them into a mutual pile. Then, the lecturer picked the papers from the mutual pile one by one and all boys were asked to express themselves on the particular problem – how they would feel, how they would perceive it, how they would react in a similar situation, whether they heard about the similar problem and how they solved it. We introduced the activity “Secrets” as we would like to focus on getting to know each other and building trust, because we jump on topics about extremism too early (as they said).

With this activity, we tried to create space, where the boys could talk about their fears, interests, emotions. They could learn about problems of their classmates and find out solutions together, maybe find out that they are not alone with the problem. They were excited from the beginning, because they were curious. They wrote their problems on the papers. They were very open, did not make fun of it (some of them may have been racist – for instance somebody expressed a problem with Roma schoolmates “because they stink”). They also shared private and intimate topics with us. We found out that the problems which bother them are typical teenage topics beyond their radicalisation and extremist views. We made clear in the team that it was worth it to deal with such topics. The conclusion was that our concern over their everyday life beyond radicalisation enhances the relationship, because we get in touch with their everyday identities/roles (son, brother, student), not only with the radicalisation process of a person and after that they feel more secure to talk about topics of radicalisation.

Somewhere in the middle of the process, in the time of the parliamentary elections, we presented a theme and activity connected with elections. The themes, which the participants themselves opened up throughout the year and which we reflected on include e.g. the theme of migration, migrants and Islam – those derived from the lecture about Iraq.

Continuously throughout the year, also the theme of the Romani was occurring – but we did not develop it further. The theme of fighting, violation of laws, disinformation and hoaxes, the theme of drugs and

relationships with girls were the other continual themes. During the last session, we encountered a theme of sexuality – wanted and unwanted sex (sex with consent). We continuously developed some of the topics, which were not explicitly connected with the topic of radicalisation and extremism, because on one hand we consider them as a good tool for development of safe space and safe relationship, and on the other hand this topic belongs to a more general theme about violation of human rights. For example, topic about sexuality, wanted and unwanted sex is connected with violation of women rights. We had an activity called “moral dilemmas” where they are supposed to think about how they would react in certain situations. One story was about a girl on a party, who was forced to have sex with a guy she likes. She does not want to have sex with him, because she does not feel prepared. We discuss, if it is not weird if a girl likes a boy, but she does not want to have sex with him.

Changes of behaviour of the individual students

X. is the only one from his class, who had a relation with the radical part of another class. From the beginning, he was introduced to us as the only one, who is influenced by the radical students. He seemed to want to talk about the problems connected e.g. with the Roma minority. However, during the second meeting, he was disgusted and complained about our way of work, because we had not prepared specific activities and wanted them to suggest what they wanted to do. Moreover, he was specifically disturbed by our direct question whether the students are extremists and why their teachers are concerned about them in terms of radicalisation. He demanded that we should tell them what extremism is. After a half-year of work, the cooperation had deepened from his side – he understood he would gain what he invests in the group work. He participated in the activities, he was the first one who wanted to be a volunteer, when we asked for one. He even started sharing the intimate issues from his personal life, e.g. that his father was an alcoholic. Unfortunately, we do not know any other details about his situation at home. In other situations, he also admonished classmates not to disrupt and tried to make them more disciplined. In the session, in which they were asked to do an exercise and establish a political party and prepare an election programme, he was open for discussion and even considered some of our alternative solutions of the Romani problem useful, for example, sufficient sexual education in schools and that accessibility and affordability of contraception could prevent the Romani from having many children in conditions of poverty.

Y.: During the process, we heard that his name was connected several times with radical and hazardous behaviour (fights), the teacher even talked about his problems with the police. He was absent from school a lot of times. But we noticed that there was a big discrepancy between his behaviour at school – in the session and what we heard about his behaviour outside the school. He was quiet cooperative and mature in our sessions, for instance in the activity “Secrets” he suggests his classmates mature solutions for their problems. For example, if somebody wrote down problems with addiction, he had an

idea that this guy needs to find help or go to a gym to substitute taking drugs for another activity. But outside the school he has a lot of problems, he was involved in fights and behaved dangerously. **Recommendations for future work:** In individual work we could engage the topic of risky behaviour with him, involvement in fights, different behaviour outside the school.

O. was a boy, who we consider to be the most radical. He is mostly silent or in an opposition, expresses himself mainly by neo-Nazi propaganda rhetoric. For example, when someone leaves a conflict situation, he considers it “an escape from fight”. O. feels secure and expresses his neo-Nazi views only when he is surrounded with his closest friends and only through strict comments. He feels insecure and was not self-confident enough to represent himself in front of the group in a meaningful manner – for example articulate his developed opinions. **Recommendations for future work:** In subsequent work, we would try to get closer to him, maybe at some trip or another activity we do together. Divide them into small groups because reaching him in a small group was more possible, or put him in a couple with somebody cooperative (peer learning) or start to work with him individually on the individual topics, for example insecurity, self-confidence.

D. was more closed off in the beginning, he was joking, he disrupted the sessions and did not talk seriously with us. He was the clown of the class. Gradually, he became more open and started sharing his problems – alcoholism of his father, disqualification from driving because of marihuana. We assumed, that it was because he appreciates our respectful approach – we do not moralise and criticise him, for instance when he went for a cigarette during our session. He found out that we are not typical teachers and he can talk with us about problems which bother him.

V. rather talked about others than about himself. This was his self-defence against sharing something from his personal internal world. He aimed to shock and surprise us several times or test our limits. For example, during one of the meetings, he said that his classmate Y. owned a pocket knife, roused conflicts and cut the palms of several people. Y. denied this. **Recommendation for future work:** It would be good to find out what is hidden behind his desire to shock us – which could be done by further narrative questions. e.g. about situations in his life that had to do with pocket knives and with being cut (possibly in the palm) or with being shocked.

Development of the safe space, group dynamics and the relation based on trust

In the beginning, only some boys wanted to talk – the second half (one class) rather did not participate and ignored themes we had offered. However, gradually, they started to participate, too, and during the penultimate meeting, all of the students expressed themselves on the asked question. This shows that the atmosphere in the group has become open and at ease and that the safe space of the group and the individuals has been created.

Moreover, we see the progress also in the development of trust between us and the boys. While in the beginning, they wanted to discuss rather general themes, which enabled them to hide behind arguments and propaganda, in the end, they became open to talk even about their personal world of thoughts and feelings and several boys shared quite intimate issues. During the last meeting, they even opened up the theme of sexuality and relationships with girls and a debate arose. Opening these intimate themes for instance about relationships with girls, was a sign for us that they feel safe and secure in our presence. It also enables us to discuss the topics of human rights (especially women rights) in everyday life situations.

Compared to the first meetings, they stopped hoping they would gain complex and ready answers from us as they were used to in school. They have learnt that we want to know about their opinion and their personal experiences and background.

The practitioner later on commented in writing about the changes in the behaviour of the students: “The reactions in the group were more balanced – also those who usually did not talk – e.g. J. (a Hungarian speaking boy) – started to share their opinions” (session report 17.2.2020).

Moreover, a progress could be seen also in the fact that they were looking forward to our meetings and asked when we would come again. In the penultimate session, they also gave us feedback – they assessed positively that they were allowed to talk about the issues, which had been bothering them and also got to know each other better.

Analytical part

Process supporting factors:

Stimulation of group dynamics: Group cohesion and development depend on the time, which the group has spent together in school and also the time, which the group spend together with us. In the beginning, we left the decision to participate or not to the students. However later in the process, we decided to address boys and ask them, if they can share their thoughts/ questions with the rest of the group. This was effective for better supporting “the group talk” and also it provided space for those, who talked less in the beginning and thus, they got used to speaking before the group.

Questions focused on the reflection of the inner world /motivate them to submerge to themselves:

“How do you consider it?”, “How do you perceive it?”, “What is your opinion?”, “What does it mean for you?”. These were really effective questions in the process of reflection of their personal internal world. The students increasingly understood how we mean these questions and got increasingly apt in responding and unpacking personal reflections. With these questions we motivate them to think about their opinions, beliefs, feelings and values.

Equality and pleasantly spent time:

Creating equality among us and students and providing a pleasant experience were important factors in the process of building the relation based on trust. We tried to approach boys as equal, we were interested in all their opinions, and they were able to choose themselves what we would mutually talk about. They were allowed to actively participate in the group sessions, we did not bring ready-made answers, facts or knowledge, we tried to seek them in a mutual process together with them, we did not want to be in a role of “a know-all”. We always talked about how we perceived it and that our opinions were not the absolute truths and we also shared some of our thoughts and experiences behind the opinions in order to inspire the students to do the same and open up more to each other and to us. For example, we share details about our relationships with men, or about our life, when we were teenagers. Also we did not moralise, neither condemn the boys for any of their opinions, behaviours or deeds, for which they normally get reproaches from adults (fights, swearwords, problems with the police). Rather we asked them to tell more about their background experiences and reflect on the motivations and on the problems they then had with this. This all then led to bigger openness. Moreover, we did not try to give the students advice, neither tell them how they should live their lives. We rather talked about the fact that they could decide freely, what they would do, but we pointed out that there would always be consequences of their decisions, which they need to take into account.

We also laughed a lot in the sessions in the sense of laughing about funny incidents and/ or about ourselves (and not cynically laugh about others) which may well be considered a pleasant form of being self-reflective and thus strengthen resilience. Moreover, we played games and talked about general everyday-life issues – both joy and concern – which also contributed to building a relationship based on trust.

Work in small groups:

This is a type of group work which was probably the most effective – it dispersed the group and the boys stopped showing off before the big group and started to work on a specific theme. We used it in the activity “Parliamentary election”. The task was to create a political party and its election programme. In the programme they should offer their solutions on the most intractable problems of our country, for instance poverty, big regional discrepancies, issues concerned ethnic and national minorities. We divided them into couples – triples and after that they write down the programme on the poster and present it to the voters. Some of them were racist and offered simplistic solutions, some of them have been thinking hard about problems of our country and try to resolve them. But all of them worked properly, were active and did not interrupt the session.

Hindering factors in the process:

Firstly, insufficient intensity of meetings was limiting the process. Although we met every two weeks, some meetings were cancelled for various reasons – so sometimes, it was even less than once in two weeks and this reduced the quality of the talks. When we met after a longer time, we felt like the development of the relation regressed. And in the middle of the process, the corona crisis broke out. So we had not seen each other for approximately half a year. Since then we are thinking on how we can also include a video conferencing tool in the future in order to offset such situations – and also to increase the intensity and reduce travel effort (the teams need to travel several hours to reach south-eastern schools); it would then be a question of how to integrate life and video/ hybrid sessions and what level of trust needs to be built in life sessions in order to also sometimes switch to video settings – and also observe confidentiality requirements. We offer this design to the head teacher, but because most of the boys do not have proper internet connection because they live in small villages, or a computer at home, it was impossible for us to run the sessions virtually. Alternatively, we think of exploring to set up a video screen in the school and do hybrid sessions.

We have been working with the clients in a school environment and not in their natural one – in which they grew up and spend their free time after school – we have not ever met their parents, nor relatives. This somehow limited our work. We work in a school setting so we could not imagine inviting parents to school – most of them are from different villages more or less distant from town. One possibility could be individual work with parents as part of parent-teacher's meetings in school. On the other hand, we would appreciate if we could have more time to actually work with students, gain more trust between us and to create an even safer environment. So without it, we think it would be more difficult to involve parents into this process.

The students speaking Hungarian had bigger problems to speak before the group because of their language barrier. They have a strange accent when speaking in Slovak, so they were shy to express themselves in front of the group. A recommendation could be to make a tandem between Hungarian and nonhungarian students, or call upon Hungarian students to teach Slovak students some Hungarian words as an entertaining activity.

Turning points:

The first turning point happened in the second meeting, when we opened the theme of extremism. We asked whether they understood the term of extremism and whether they considered themselves extremists and how they felt, when we discussed this theme with them. The practitioner has written in the session report: “The question has caused chaos, discomfort and irritation. They did not answer. Several of them said something at the same time, but no definite answer of how they perceived themselves was given. They got nervous. V. just mentioned that both left-wing and right-wing

extremism existed. X. demanded an answer to that question about extremism from us. He wants to know what we think extremism is and who is extremist for us.” The practitioner answered: ”The word extremism is nowadays overestimated, everyone who says something about differences between people or questions multiculturalism is suddenly extremist“ (session report 15.10.). We did not want to discuss it, nor argue. However, they desired a ready-made answer, as they were used to in school. Later, they wanted to discuss the Romani question – we made ourselves clear that we wanted to hear their experience and not lead argumentation wars with them. This was important, because we set boundaries and expressed that we were interested in their opinions and attitudes to the issue as well as in their personal experiences about it which we invited them to share whenever they wanted. We assured them that we did not want to persuade them of anything or make them adopt our truth; rather we would like to understand how they see the world. We wanted to know, if they understand why we are here. At the same time, we offer them alternatives and a safety space where they could meet their needs.

Before this activity there was very big discussion in the team if it is fine to discuss extremism and radicalisation in the second session. Some of us were cautious, some of us think that transparency is the key.

The pre-Christmas activity “Secrets” – in which they had to anonymously write down things, which had been bothering them on small papers and then put them into a mutual pile – was another turning point. Then, the lecturer picked the papers from the mutual pile one by one and all boys were asked to express themselves on the particular problem – how they would feel, how they would perceive it, how they would react in a similar situation, whether they heard about the similar problem and how they solved it. This moment of anonymous sharing caused that the subsequent meetings were different, concerning the level of the atmosphere quality, as students became more open to talk about themselves and their experience.

Except of these, two more turning points, concerning compactness and cohesiveness of the group, occurred right after Christmas break. After the new year started, the behaviour of one student changed, as we did not see each other because of the winter holidays. X. started to cooperate more and participate in the activities. The others, in contrary, were not willing to cooperate and there was chaos in the meeting – as if we regressed in our relation. Nevertheless, in the next meeting the cooperation was better – the boys felt safer in the group. After a half year break because of the corona crisis, a great turning point occurred and the group seemed to be more cohesive than before and more willing to cooperate. They even agreed and signed their participation in the project without serious opposition, suspicion or questioning. We assume that it was because we express our interest in their opinions and thoughts, we emphasise, that they help us understand and that these consents serve to their protection. We said it very clearly, simply and conclusively.

There were turning points also within individual meetings, also within certain situations – e.g. when we were talking about hoaxes and disinformation. Firstly, the boys defended the hoaxes as real, but then, after a while of free conversation – with us not taking any sides nor telling true or false – things got more complex and one of the clients said that he did not even know whom he should trust (V.).

In another session, X. – who tended to radical and strict views – was suddenly willing to discuss with us that the prevention of the higher number of children born to the Romani families could be reached by quality sexual education in schools and accessible and affordable contraception.

In the penultimate meeting, D. was sharing with us during the break his troubles with the police, losing his driving licence because of being under marihuana influence. This shows that some boys built strong trust towards us and were willing to share their private struggles with us.

4.2 Case study “Martin”: The client in the probation process

Case history

The client was suggested for the project by a given ruling of The Special Criminal Court Office. He was accused and found guilty of misdemeanour – expression of sympathy for movements directed at the suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms according to Section 422 (1) of Criminal Code. Moreover, according to Section 55 (1) and Section 51 (4g) of Criminal Code, an obligation was imposed on the accused to undergo an educational programme in association with a probation and mediation officer. Our practitioners told him that our organisation takes part in an EU project, which focuses on support of people endangered of radicalisation and extremism. We offered him participation and told him, that because of this EU project, we need him to sign a consent form. He read the text, did not have any additional questions, and signed the papers. Our practitioners did not condition our cooperation or fulfilment of obligations imposed by the court with this signature. Report from the sessions was read and approved by the client. Then he sent the report to the probation officer.

Mr. Martin was brought to justice based on the fact that he had got a 'forbidden' tattoo, which was identified by a member of the Police Force during a different act. After detention, it was proved that he got several tattoos and thus, he was accused and condemned to the sentence described above. The client's main argument for this tattoo was the fact that he liked such symbols aesthetically (he has got more tattoos). He likes ancient runes and symbols for example. With a practitioner they went through a book about Nazi symbols and he liked several of them. He mentioned that most of them had existed before Hitler's era, which was his argument against its illegality. In the present day, he has got the inappropriate symbols removed/retattooed.

After the client had undergone our programme, we have offered him subsequent cooperation. However, it was left without a response. Concerning the participation in the programme, he has expected a fulfilment of the set condition by the court. He completed our programme, hence he fulfilled the court requirement.

Concerning professional training, the man is a machinery mechanic and works as a metal machinist. He grew up in a small town in south of Slovakia with his parents (until today they live together), he is the second of three sons. The other two brothers stay and work abroad. Currently, he has a girlfriend and they have a baby daughter. This situation is a bit complicated, as according to the words of the client, the parents of his girlfriend (mainly the father) do not agree with their relationship and meetings, and thus obstruct him to contact his girlfriend and daughter, too. Paternity has not been declared yet. However, the client and his girlfriend have interest in being together, they aim to move to the client and his parents' house. His parents look at this option with favour (or at least agree with it). Concerning this,

the client often stated that he was afraid of the impact of such decisions on his girlfriend, whether her father would not have a big problem with it.

From his social net among friends, he named just one important person. Besides the limited social network, the client's personal resources consist of the interests – electronics and cars.

Narrative part

Process and changes in the client's behaviour or thinking

Three meetings, which were set by the court, were completed with the client, together with subsequent mail communication after a month period with an aim to find out, whether the client needed something, which was responded negatively. Within the first meeting, we focused on the themes which constituted his life milestones, also the periods, in which the first tattoos were realised. The practitioner tried to talk to him about the possible reasons for the particular placement of the tattoos on his body, but the client points rather to their aesthetic dimension than to the ideological one. He claimed he did not know what the symbols meant, that he just liked the pictures.

To the second meeting, the client came with a friend, who was wearing a T-shirt with a Nazi war eagle as a symbol of the Slovak fascist state. He introduced him as a friend who is also interested in this topic (radicalisation and extremism). At the beginning, he went to the toilet and was there for a very long time. After that, he came back and the session has begun. The practitioner has defined the meaning of the symbol on his T-shirt and remarked that there was no need to beat about the bush. During this meeting, the client felt relatively safe and hence, they talked about extremism quite openly. The client confessed he knew what the Nazi symbols meant – and also admitted that he had read ideological books in this area. The practitioners wondered why he brought a friend today. Their speculations were that maybe he felt more comfortable with somebody he knows well, that he knew he would meet two practitioners so he brought support, or else the friend was supposed to stop him if he talked too much about staff, which could put him in a position of disadvantage in the court. But the practitioners decided to not talk about this question yet in order to see where the development of the conversation was going.

In the second meeting, after a detailed entrance case history, the strengthening of the client's focus on the important people in his life followed. The client and the exit worker talked about the fact that he should consider and reflect on his decisions for the future, mainly about those, which could influence him and his close ones negatively. They concluded that the client would decide himself what to do, but that his decisions and actions would always have certain consequences. In the second part of the meeting, we focused directly on the questions connected with The Second World War, the personality of Adolf Hitler and other actors in this violent period of history. The client was actively participating in the discussion. We worked mainly with a focus on the client's relativisation of historical facts and supported

him to solve the decision-making paralysis the client has often been found in. Once the client and practitioners had a reasonably stable relationship, the practitioners asked him questions about contradictions between his world view and Hitler's world view, which put him in difficulties argument-wise. After that, the client admitted: "We don't know how it was, nobody was there." or "There are so many history scenarios/interpretations that I don't know which one to choose, so I follow the simplest one" and "no one knows how it was precisely". We strengthened the client's ability to think critically and to gain information from reliable sources and in the case of contradictions, to rather not have an opinion than to follow the scenario, which could deform history or lead to hatred towards some groups of the population. We gave the client a detailed presentation on how to spot disinformation and conspiracies on the Internet. Furthermore, we provided him with a list of relevant tools that can help him to check the reliability of his sources.

In the last meeting, we were talking about the development of the family situation, which was positive, and we also provided further cooperation, if he considered it necessary. Moreover, we gave him space to ask and familiarise himself with the content of the report, which he afterwards sent to the probation officer.

Subsequently, after a half-year, we addressed the client, whether everything was all right and whether he needed any help: "I am just writing, whether everything went well with the report from our meetings. In case something was not right, do not hesitate to contact us." The client replied that everything was fine and that he had sent the materials to the probation and mediation officer and since then, no one replied, the procedures were probably halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analytic part

Factors supporting the process

Interest in the client's life – not just in life connected with radicalisation

Already in the first meeting, we underwent the activity "path of life", which touched the theme of radicalisation and extremism only very slightly. The activity aimed at helping the client to talk about his life-history and all the events that had influenced him in a certain way. He was surprised that we were researching out to more personal issues than what he had been sent into the intervention – i.e., not just extremism. This affected building a relation based on trust, which also built a greater openness in expressing himself.

A big step forward in the trust relationship between client and practitioner was caused by the interest in his everyday life, which differentiated the practitioner from other persons involved in his case (police

officers, judge, probation officers etc.). It showed the client that practitioners would like to get in contact with identities/ roles of his everyday life.

Family counselling is the key element of exit work, that is why we try to discuss with clients their everyday sorrows and joys, to be in contact with their social roles/ identities besides the role of radicalized person or extremist. And we find out that this approach is effective because through these everyday roles/identities of being a partner, father, son etc. we get closer to the clients and their lives and it is easier to communicate about and eventually help change the role/identity connected with radicalisation. Therefore, one part of exit work, or exit programmes should also deal with relatives, neighbours and the whole societal environment of clients, of course if it is possible.

Openness and naming the issues

The client was willing to talk about radicalisation and extremism after the mentor mentioned the symbol of a Nazi-war eagle on the T-shirt of his friend. The client opened up about his view toward WWII after the mentor asked again and again about his motivation to have a swastika tattoo and what it meant for him. At first he claimed he just liked the looks of it but later during discussion he admitted he liked how effective and united SS were and that he even read “Mein Kampf” because he did not understand why Hitler hates Jews so much. The practitioners and the client did not talk about Jews. His adoration for the effectiveness and unity of the SS stem from very early days, when the client as a toddler always wanted to have everything in order. He knows the historical circumstances pretty well, and it is the orderliness and discipline which he found attractive about the Nazi area.

So one of the factors supporting the process was, that the practitioners named the thing with their proper names – for example, Nazi eagle on the T-shirt of his friend, without judging and criticising, which also differentiate the practitioners from other persons involved in his case (police officers, judge, probation officers etc.).

A contract arisen from the ruling

Since it was clearly stated from the beginning – because court imposed it – how often the meetings would be organised, how long they would take, what the themes of the meetings would be and what the client's duty would be, the process of sharing and talking about such topic was accelerated, because the client and the practitioners did not need to spend much time in preparing the setting – frequency of meetings, topics of discussions, rules, duties etc.

Factors holding back the process

Obligation to visit the meetings

Since the obligation to visit the meetings was imposed by the court, the meeting (mainly the first one) may have looked untrustworthy and thus, the client felt the need to test the mentor. For example, with bringing the friend with the Nazi war eagle on the T-shirt.

Turning points

The second meeting, during which the client discussed openly the theme of extremism and his personal opinions on history, Hitler, the Second World War and concentration camps, was an important turning point. The presupposition is, that this breakthrough was caused by the practitioner's interest in the client's everyday life in the previous session and naming the things (Nazi eagle on T-shirt of his friend) with proper names without needlessly criticising them in a moralistic or judgemental way.

4.3 Case study “Karol”: Distancing work with a former member of a radical group

Case history:

The client was invited to cooperate based on a magazine article with an interview with him as a former member of a radical group.

He is a 30-year-old man, with secondary education. He did not graduate from the academy of the armed forces; however, he achieved a master’s degree from history. He was interested in pursuing a PhD degree, but his application was not accepted. He works as a carpet salesman. He is fond of martial arts and military trainings.

He lives with his girlfriend. He grew up in shared custody – he lived with his mother, but sometimes he stayed at his fathers. The relation with his father is considered as positive, although his father did not have time for him, as he had a girlfriend during his childhood and adolescence. We do not know the details of their divorce. But the practitioners noticed that he missed his father during upbringing, in one situation he appreciated a nice father-son relationship, when they played a videogame. The videogame was about a strong father figure who teaches his son how to fight, hunt and take care of himself (small report 8.10.2020). The father used to work at a military administration in the kitchen; now, he is retired. The client feels the lack of social bonds and friendships outside of the radical group. He has no experience with social services.

His extremist career started during adolescence when he tried to fit in somewhere. According to his own words, he picked a wrong group. He was fascinated by allegiance and coherence of German National Socialists described in books and documents: namely, the Sturmabteilung units and their determination to fight for the Fuehrer and their beliefs or the coherence of the Waffen-SS units, who fought devotedly and fearlessly during the World War II. The fear from his group, following the direction which he did not like (fights and violence), outweighed the need to belong somewhere and so he decided to leave. He was scared because the group organised fights and his friends from the group take a part in these fights. Karol from the very beginning condemns violence, disagrees with hurting somebody who is weaker, or because of appearance. He was interested in ideology and intellectual superiority of the movement, not in aggression and fighting. He was afraid that they can hurt even him. On the other hand, he felt that he was doing something wrong – the police was chasing him for his tattoos. Another reason for his exit was anxiety, that he disappointed his parents and his father might lose his job in military services. Last but not least, he also feared that he would lose contact with the outer world, with previous “normal” friends. His history studies also made him more aware – his eyes opened, and he started approaching things in a more reasonable and critical way. This finding got in confrontation with ideas from group members – he started to feel superiority even to them. He left the radical group in 2013. Later, in

interviews, he stated two reasons for this. First, the hypocrisy, as once he met pals from the group totally drunk in a pub at 2 pm. He realised that they call themselves the elite of the nation and still behave like that. The other reason was that they beat his classmate from the secondary school because he had long hair. While they claimed it was a fair fight, one on one, the classmate told him he was attacked by five – again, our client was troubled by unfairness of the whole situation. His parents did not know about his membership in the group, but his mother guessed something was going on, so she was worried about her son and she used to hide his shoes and clothes in order to prevent him from going out, as she was worried he would engage in fights. Currently, he no longer shares the neo-Nazi ideology, but he still has contacts with people from the radical group. When the Notre Dame Cathedral was on fire, he showed us the picture of laughing Muslims, insinuating that they could have lit fire, but he was open to counter arguments. He admits having problems with alcohol and handling aggression.

The practitioners offered him services of our organisation – social counselling and taking part in the Exit programme. When the practitioners met the participant for the first time, he had no longer been a member of the radical group, he did not share its norms, values and philosophy. In the client's phase of de-radicalisation, it is important to support re-socialisation. Considering the fact that the client has no longer been a member of the radical group, it is not our duty to support him while leaving the group. Based on his own reasons and circumstances, the client decided to leave the group on his own; therefore, it is our job to be supportive and facilitate the process of re-entering the society. As mentioned earlier in the text, the main reason for his exit was that he condemns violence, the cowardice of his co-member and he considers them as uneducated and uncultivated, because they drink and use drugs, hence felt intellectual superiority over them. This social environment did not stimulate his intellectual needs, despite the ideas which attracted him. He had a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong – so when the group crossed the line such as beating up a teenage boy with long hair, somebody who is weaker and outnumbered, he saw it was not fair.

The first agreement on mutual objectives presumed that he could share his experience with the radical group to students within high-school lectures. It was our initiative to organise closed door discussions with students, because we would like to support prevention, and in regard of developing the client's abilities, we would like to stimulate his social and communication skills and helped him cope with his past. He made a statement, that he agrees with us and said he does not want other young people to make the same mistakes and go through the same experiences as he had.

We were sure that his exit is further stabilised when he joins a local group of a liberal political party and is a volunteer for them. The practitioners were supportive of finding new friends, being active in his passions – he started history lectures for public and the practitioners came to his first sessions to support him.

Recommendation about the following case work – issues we planned to focus on: He expressed the need to help him with finding a new job, as he had not felt well in the current one. There he has a colleague, with whom he did not get along very well. Some situations, which he had experienced in the radical group repeated themselves to him at work. For example, he fights with people at work because they do stupid decisions, then he gets angry about it and has aggressive reactions (hits with the fist to the ground).

Then, there was also the request to manage his aggressive behaviour and conflicts with people – he was offered psychotherapeutic assistance of our external colleague. After he started therapy, it was easier to talk with him about anger management issues – that he has lot of conflicts with people and what it causes.

Other defined issues were complicated relations with women and in particular his mother as well as concerns about a friend who meets the wrong people in his opinion. First of all, he could not find a girlfriend – he thinks that every woman is the same and he started to be skeptical, because it has never worked out. His mother is overly caring and controlling, she criticises every woman he has brought home. She requires constant attention for herself without boundaries.

Narrative part

Process

The practitioners would meet the client approximately twice a month, sometimes more often, and during the corona crisis, the communication was conducted mainly online, through Messenger. The issues brought up by the participant were initially related mainly to his job dissatisfaction, studying history and his military trainings. The practitioners attended one of the re-enactments of Slovak National Uprising he took part at (re-acting some historical events on public). This performance was organised by the Club of military history. Relationships are particularly important for the client – friendships, romantic relations, but also the relations to his mother and father – who is more distant than he would like. Generally, he is angry when people do not behave according to his imaginations – his mother is too critical, friends drink too much and believe in conspiracy theories. The problem identified in the second half of meetings is handling emotions, especially anger – for example, he beat up a homeless man. Another issue is the client's relation to the radical group he used to be with. He poses himself against the group and its opinions and talks about them in a truly angry and contemptuous way. We understood it as his own resentment for being a member of the group and inability to forgive himself, which was later confirmed by the client.

Changes in the client's behaviour or thinking

Handling aggression

The most important objective achieved while working with the client was his understanding of handling anger and relating to emotions as problematic. His behaviour to others was inappropriate, if the others' reactions were different from what he expected, or when he did not understand them; then he became aggressive – showing anger and screaming. He started to realise the problem especially with beloved ones (mother, girlfriend) – they always argue and shout at each other. His reaction was sometimes, that he hits the wall with his fist. He started considering the troubles that it produces in relations to his dearest ones. During the session, on November 20, 2019, the practitioner formulates the issue in the session report: „He was talking about not being able to control himself – to handle his anger, e.g. he beat up a homeless man: He gets on the tram and there were two homeless men drinking wine and were loud. He tried to speak fair, but they didn't listen, so he started to scream, even hit one of the guys and forced them to get off. People sitting around didn't get the point - they defended homeless men and consider them victims, they thought, that he acted inappropriately. He was completely angry about it.” Therefore, he decided to enter a therapy with our external colleague, which was offered to him on January 20, 2020. Simultaneously, practitioners continue the counselling with client, where they discuss the ways in which he could address people otherwise, not just with anger and aggression, and why he is so angry with people not conforming to his preconceptions (e.g. they cannot be persuaded by reasonable arguments).

During the initial meetings, it seemed that the client had troubles with reflecting on and defining his emotions, e.g. when a practitioner pointed out something that attracted his attention and he started to be excited or upset but was not able to reflect that or talk about how his emotion is in that specific moment, so most of the time he changed the subject or kept quiet. After several sessions, he was more relaxed and did not avoid such reflections. The client has also been observed to be overly critical towards other people – e.g. he often takes part in online debates and criticises people, formulates counterarguments, and then feels angry that other people are angry and do not listen to reason. During the final sessions he admitted he is mainly angry when people close to him believe „such nonsense” like conspiracy theories because he is worried about them.

Consequently, the practitioners suggested the client to replace criticising and anger with talking about his worries and defining his emotions to his close ones. They supported him in setting the boundaries in the relationship with his mother – when she wants something unexpected on the last moment, they teach him to be assertive and explain to her, that if she wants something it is necessary to ask for it in advance. They try to activate his thinking about his way of communication – how he escalates the conflict with his way of communication.

At the same time, the practitioners managed to bring the client back to himself and his emotions with the help of *I statements* – to make him talk about himself and his feelings and not about the others. Also, they strived to explain that the only thing he can control is his own behaviour and that he cannot force people to behave according to his imaginations. However, he can always express his imaginations and hopes to the other people and listen to what they have to say about this and then further pursue the personal exchange in which he may also share some of his own experiences with these issues in the past (conspiracy theories, aggression, membership in radical group, relationship with parents).

He admitted that he is still a member of online FB groups with neo-Nazi ideology, but mainly to argue with its members that their beliefs are wrong. One of the moments when the practitioners realised he is making the progress was after one year of regular sessions, when he mentioned that he does not argue that much with the members of this groups anymore, and he now considers it as waste of time. He does not feel so triggered by them and he feels less angry – which shows that he is making peace with his past.

Moreover, he opened up during the final sessions and said that instead of criticism, he would like his mother to ask him how he is and what is new in his life.

Work and social counselling

The issue of work was brought in by the participant from the very beginning. He said he was not satisfied with his life. He was offered social counselling right away – as he was not satisfied with his life, he should do something about it, and we could help him. During the whole process, the team strived to work with him on his idea of a job which would be interesting, and was also supportive in finding such a job. The practitioner proposed volunteering or an internship. His ideal job should be related to history studies somehow, which is why the practitioner suggested to him to ask about volunteering/internship in organisations focused on the memory of Slovak nation or at the Sereď Holocaust Museum. The client said he was interested in working at Carnuntum, a Roman settlement where there was no Slovak tour guide – he is interested in the Roman Empire. He was fascinated with power, exclusiveness, excellence, valid rules, high level of education of the Roman Empire. He knows a lot about it, he likes to hand on this knowledge and views, it contributes to his self-esteem and self-image. Eventually, the client decided to apply for PhD studies in history which is why he did not send internship applications. However, his PhD application was not accepted, which was extremely hard for him to accept. During the session after the corona crisis, after his application had been rejected, he was quite burned out in relation to his work, and he was advised, in one of the sessions, to take care of himself and take some days off, which he did.

Limits of relationship and security

Initially, the client's approach to practitioners was cautious. When they earned his confidence, he started substituting the absence of friendships through them. Therefore, it was necessary to define limits – since practitioners cannot be a client's friends and they will not grab beer with him. Sometimes, they can talk about less grave issues, but it is not their duty to make him relax. During one of the meetings (November 11, 2019), approximately in the half of the process, the client opened up and spoke about how he left the radical group. According to the practitioner, this was the breakthrough in the development of their relation.

The topic of professional boundaries popped up also in another situation. At the beginning, the practitioners tried to support the client with their attendance in one of his lectures about history and they saw that he felt a little hurt when they did not continue showing up for each of his lectures, when they were busy.

Analytical part

Factors supporting the process

Transparency

From the beginning, the practitioners were transparent with the client, and in that they also talked about the goal of the work as helping him present his story to the public. When the client started to challenge the client-professional boundaries, the practitioners articulated their intentions precisely – who they are, what they want, how they can be helpful and what they cannot do. This transparency was rare for the client and he appreciated it, as he spoke several times about other people just pretending to be able to do something.

Interest

The personal interest in the client and his story proved to be an efficient factor of the exit work. The breakthrough moment was the interview about the client's past and about him leaving the radical group. After that he started to share with the practitioner his private struggles with the girlfriend, such as “showing affection to her in the right way”. Once he chuckled her on the head, and thought it as a sign of his affection to her, but she did not understand it this way and started to cry since she thought it is aggressive.

Acceptance

The client often spoke about things that make other people judge him or avoid him. Hence, it proved crucial to accept and value the client as a person (and possibly confront his views or acts).

Direct description, confirmation

What substantially helped the relation and counselling was when the practitioners put diplomacy aside and named things frankly – thus, they reflected the client's behaviour. For example, when the practitioner illustrated that the client always talks about people and their excessive criticism and aggression, but he behaves the same way. Or that it is legitimate to complain about weariness he feels in connection with his work and it is okay to relax and take some days off, because he does not have to be strong all the time.

Therapy

Entering the therapy and its process made him relax – then, he was able and willing to discuss things addressed in therapy and counselling even on the sessions. We can see benefit in the combination and alliance of psychotherapy and social counselling process. In the psychotherapy process, the client could go deeper into his inner world and process his traumas from his past and maybe gain more skills in how to deal with them. And in social counselling, we were able to train these skills for his practical and social life (how to communicate with people, how to change his aggressive expression into something more effective etc.)

Accountability

The space we gave him and the clear sense of accountability for his own participation in the conversation and the discussions which he was given, also strengthened the work relationship both in its intensity and in its delineation.

Factors holding back the process

Expecting some other type of relationship

The client had originally expected a different type of relationship – not professional or consultancy-oriented. In the beginning, he thought it would be merely a friends relationship, filling the absence of friends in his life. Therefore, it was inevitable to set boundaries and define the function of the professional work relationship and how it has to do with the fact that a welfare state and social services are provided within a democratic and solidarity based society. The refusal of providing a friends relationship first caused some reluctance on the part of the client, but subsequently strengthened the relationship.

Turning points:

The crucial meeting was held approximately in the middle of the process, on November 9, 2019, when the client discussed his leaving from the radical group openly, with a single practitioner. When they

were finishing the session, he also started confiding to her about intimate details related to his girlfriend and invited her to grab a beer together. This could be caused by the fact that the practitioner was alone with him, and by her interest in his life and leaving the radical group, which was still without closure for him. This strengthened the relationship, but also blurred the boundaries of the professional relationship. Later, the practitioner arranged a follow-up meeting where she explained rules/boundaries of their cooperation and asked him in very straightforward way what the problems are he would want to work on. He stated anger management and mentioned problematic situations for him when he lost his temper and beats up someone.

After the first wave of the corona crisis

There was a meeting after a longer break (after corona crisis), on August 8, 2020, when the client was totally tired after work. Together with the practitioners, they agreed on starting the work on handling his aggression towards other people and meeting more often.

4.4 Case study “Miro”: The member of a paramilitary group

Case history:

The client grew up in a complete family, his parents have worked in a puppet theatre. He is the oldest of four siblings. He grew up in a relatively big town in Central Slovakia. During his high school times, he used to have a friend to play airsoft with; they were both interested in weapons and military. They had been friends since the primary school. This friend proposed him to join a new organisation, aimed at training with weapons in the framework of first aid and topography/ home land geography. He was always fascinated with weapons and would like to learn how to handle them. They have used expansive weapons and he felt important, when he was able to put a picture with weapons on the Facebook. The client and other friends were interested, so they joined the organisation. It was one of the units of a paramilitary organisation, and the client became its member. His friend eventually became a leader of the unit. According to the client, the membership in the unit enriched him with many new skills and information; however, there was also a dark side of it as it offered various fake news and pro-Russian conspiracy theories based on diverse doubtful websites/magazines. They have forbidden to talk about politics, but in the locker room, under the tent or by the campfire they have informally conversed about their world views influenced by conspiracy theories, shared pro-Nazi and pro-Russian opinions. As for violence, there was only verbal violence, when they made fun of and derided each other, but there was nothing significantly traumatising for the client.

His parents knew almost nothing about him and the organisation – only what he decided to tell them. The name of the organisation was not known yet, they had just perceived that their son went to the woods and learned some interesting issues (first aid, geography, etc.). He did not talk with them in detail. Then, when the organisation, Slovenskí branci, became better known and started to be associated with neo-Nazi propaganda, the client did not belong to them anymore. However, the parents have never questioned or doubted the organisation, only his father started to be afraid it could negatively affect his son's future career.

The breaking point in his attitude towards the organisation was when the leader of the far-right extremist party Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (ĽSNS) was elected a governor of a region. Other members of the unit started looking up to him, as his ideas, especially the pro-Russian orientation, were close to them. He was disappointed with the popularity of the ĽSNS leader among his group members. The client was disturbed by this leader's nationalism, although he partly shared the pro-Russian attitudes. They read conspiracy websites, they supported for example the Russian annexation of Ukraine and believed that in Donbas the Russians were saving Russian speaking Ukrainians from Nazis and fascist from Kiev. They adored Russian nationalism, because Slovaks are close to Russia – they believe in Panslavism and that “we all belong to one nation”.

The parents also influenced the client in his opinion against ĽSNS, as they were aware of the fact that the governor rather harmed the field of culture while in office – he cancelled many grant schemes for performances which did not conform to his conservative views.

The other motivation for leaving the paramilitary organisation was the activity of a high school teacher of civic education and the kind approach this teacher showed. He did not judge students' opinions or forbid them; he strived to develop their critical thinking and show them that they were explaining complex social issues by very simple theories. For example, they used to read an article from one of the conspiracy websites/magazines during the lesson, and then, they analysed it through the Socratic dialogue (asking questions). Eventually, it convinced the client that he had been perceiving the world in quite a simplistic manner. Therefore, he decided to quit the organisation. His colleagues, friends and superiors were disappointed, but nobody held him there against his will. He left to study law in another town, so he lost the contact with the organisation. However, during his studies, he met some older colleagues who perceived the world differently. He was surrounded with people with better critical thinking skills, which challenged his political views and in the discussions with them he realised that Russia is actually the aggressor. He started to reconsider his opinions, reading mainstream media and was able to distinguish between factual news and disinformation.

Our contact with the client was initiated when our colleague found an interview with him – as a former paramilitary unit member – in a magazine. She contacted him and asked him to cooperate. He cooperated with us in several public discussions and also took part in an audience meeting given by the President of the Slovak Republic. The client expected from the cooperation that he would be able to publicly share his story in order to let people know about the dark aspects of the membership in such organisations and to prevent young people from being lured by such organisations. At the same time, he wanted to motivate his former colleagues to quit. This has not happened when taking the whole organisation into consideration; however, the unit he used to belong to does not exist anymore or exists only in a very limited way.

Critical thinking and the wish to live a normal life and to be included in society are the client's main resources.

Narrative part

Process

The main part of the work with the client included organising the public discussions while a number of sessions were held to exchange on issues of life history and on past and current motivations. Two discussions and a meeting with the President were carried out; the sessions with the client which followed were used to reflect on the discussions and engage in further reflections. Moreover, Miro's

story became a part of a promotional video. The goal, set in cooperation with the client, was to inspire people like him to share their stories publicly, which should eventually affect young boys and prevent them from participating in paramilitary organisations. In the beginning, during the first lecture for teachers, he stayed anonymous. Then, he revealed his identity.

Two of our practitioners also met the client beyond the framework of the discussions to prepare him for possible reactions of the audience and his former colleagues. During the first discussion, the client was anonymous. He acted professionally, in a dignified manner, content of his speech which was interesting for teachers, especially the story about the civics teacher who changed his attitude towards the world.

Changes in the client's behaviour and thinking

During the first discussion, the client was anonymous, and then, in our activities (a discussion with the President, video recording), he clearly articulated his identity. The cooperation with us gave him courage and opened space for sharing his story with the public, even though he was worried about the negative attitudes of what he perceived as the majority of the audience; the cooperation also helped him to overcome the fear of the reactions of his former colleagues. Besides the cooperation with us, also the fact that some other former members of the organisation revealed their identity proved to be helpful.

Analytical part

Factors supporting the process

Creating a space for the client for sharing his own experiences, opinions and values, proved most effective. At the same time, we assured him that he is a positive example for others, as his story may serve for prevention. For example, when he shared his story with teachers from different towns, they suddenly learned/ realised what specific approach might work with students in risk of radicalisation. With his story about his high school teacher, he encourages them not to shut students up, but instead develop the conversation and discuss. Learn them that it is crucial to maintain a kind and respectful approach, ask questions, but do not make statements and judgements. And, when he quits anonymity, his story would be even more preventive.

Factors holding back the process

The process was hindered by a low intensity of the contact – it was mostly built on discussions and the strategic planning of further events with teachers. The process was not strictly about counselling. In a regular counselling, we could have gone deeper and strengthen the client-practitioner relationship – and uncover more about the attraction of weapons and similar issues. We offered him counselling, but he did not feel any need and observed no problems in his personal and professional life. He is a successful clerk in a law firm. Therefore, in the beginning, the process was held back by the client's fear of being

exposed. Hence, the emphasis was to organise and contextualise public discussions and media appearances for him.

Turning points and milestones

Before the elections, he left his anonymity and became public when one of the former members of his organisation published on Facebook that he had been a part of it. When other former members spoke about exiting from the group on Facebook, it gave courage to our client and he publicly disclosed his former membership in this organisation. We have never contacted and developed cooperation with other former members of the organisation.

Also, the first discussion was an important milestone due to the client's certainty that he could talk publicly and with no harm about his story and inspire others to leave or prevent them from joining the organisation. The organisation and operations of Slovenskí Branci are very similar to those of a regular army. They have created an internal hierarchy with defined ranks, they group their members into units, or divisions, the number of which has now reached seventeen. Members are recruited regularly and undergo training which is inspired by Slovak armed forces. Recruits are trained in survival, combat tactics, Guerilla warfare, use of weapons, first aid, geography and even basic CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence) operations.

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ANNEX I: Template for Session Reports

Template for Session Reports – in the Exit Work Process

1) General Information

File reference:	Pseudonym of the client:
Date:	Exit Worker(s):
Type of consultancy <input type="checkbox"/> face to face <input type="checkbox"/> by phone <input type="checkbox"/> mail	

2) Risk assessment from a social worker perspective

Is client registered with security services?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
The case should be handled...	<input type="checkbox"/> urgently	<input type="checkbox"/> regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/> infrequently	
Danger to her/himself				
<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> not any	<input type="checkbox"/> no statement possible
Danger to others				
<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> not any	<input type="checkbox"/> no statement possible
Comment:				

3) Objective in consulting/ exit work with this client

Main Objective	
Sub-target for the meeting	

4) Current developments

--

5) The issues of the session – and the course of interaction during the session

Which methods were used?

6) What did I notice in particular? (emotional state of the client and myself)

--

7) Assessment/ conclusions about the session – and further steps/ agreements (questions, exercises, tasks for the client until the next session)

--

8) Agreed upon next appointment

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, Justification:

ANNEX II: Template for Entrance Interview(s) Reports

Template for Entrance Interview(s) Report

A minimum of two sessions should be held before concluding on further procedures; all entrance interview sessions are reported in one single template.

1) General Information

Pseudonym of the client: File reference/ number:	
How was the client referred? (no names and no specific organizations named!)	
Dates:	Exit work practitioners:

2) Risk assessment from a social worker perspective

Is client registered with security services?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
Previous/ current mental health issues?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, ...		<input type="checkbox"/> No	
If yes, was/is the client in therapy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, ...		<input type="checkbox"/> No	
The case should be handled ...	<input type="checkbox"/> urgent	<input type="checkbox"/> regular	<input type="checkbox"/> infrequently	
Danger to her/himself				
<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> not any	<input type="checkbox"/> no statement possible
Danger to others				
<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> not any	<input type="checkbox"/> no statement possible
Comment:				

- 3) Are there particular incidents which may have led to the client's (self) referral to the exit program? If yes, describe.

- 4) Can essential needs of the client be identified (economically, personally)?

- 5) What is the client's motivation to participate in the exit program? Does the person expect any concrete benefits from participation?

- 6) Do family and friends know about the client's referral to the exit program? If yes, what do they feel about it?

- 7) How would you describe the client's social environment (family, peers and relationships, work environment)?

- 8) Which ideologies, opinions and/or behaviours of group hatred/ Group-focused Enmity and/or violent extremism does the client show (cf. Exit Europe Manual)? Please specify in detail.

9) As far as you can tell at this point, which are the causal factors (biography/ environment/ particular incidents) that have prompted the client to adopt these ideologies, opinions and/or behaviours? Please specify in detail.

10) How would you describe the client's current life situation (education, job, income, residence, hobbies, interests, ...).

ANNEX III: Template for Case Studies

Template for Case Analysis in Distancing and Exit Work

Pseudonym of the client:

File reference/ number:

Exit work practitioners:

The following questions do not have to be filled out separately, however, notes and sketches maybe filled in here.

Rather, the case analysis should be given as continuous text and reconstructive narrative (as in social science case analysis) which, however, follows this structure and/or encompasses all these items mentioned in the questions.

Part I - The pre-history of the client – and the general situation of the client when taking up distancing and exit work

1. How come the client was referred to or applied for the program? (no names and no specific organizations named)

2. What is the current situation of the client in terms of (a) being registered or not with security services, (b) previous/ current mental health issues and therapy, (c) risks of dangerous behaviour for others and her/himself?

(d) How would you describe the client's current life situation with regard to education, job, income, residence, hobbies, interests?

(e) Can essential needs of the client be identified (economically, personally)?

3. Are there particular incidents which may have led to the client's (self) referral to the exit program? If yes, describe.

4. What is the client's motivation for and expectations of participating in the exit program? Does the client expect any concrete benefits from participation?
5. Do family and friends know about the client's enrolment to the exit program? If yes, what do they feel about it? Particularly, are there any security risks for the client?
6. How would you describe the client's social environment (family, peers and relationships, work environment)?
7. Which ideologies, opinions and/or behaviours of group hatred/ Group-focused Enmity and/or violent extremism does the client show (cf. Exit Europe Manual)? Please specify in detail.
8. As far as you can tell at this point, which are the causal factors (biography/ environment/ particular incidents) that have prompted the client to adopt these ideologies, opinions and/or behaviours? Please specify in detail.
9. Is there support or counselling from other institutions (employment office, social welfare services, psychotherapy/ counselling etc.)
10. What individual resources does the client have, intellectually, with regard to personality, educationally, socially/ family, economically or in other ways – which could be helpful in the exit work process? How could these resources possibly be activated during exit work?
11. Are there specific risks and challenges which are likely to endanger the exit work process?

Part II - The process of distancing and exit work

The following questions do not have to be filled out separately, however, notes and sketches maybe filled in here.

Rather, the case analysis should be given as continuous text and reconstructive narrative (as in social science case analysis) which, however, follows this structure and/or encompasses all these items mentioned in the questions.

(1) Narrative perspective

- a. When looking at the progression of the sessions, what were the topics/ issues and the personal experiences which were shared and spoken about in the sessions? How did the interaction between you and the client evolve from one topic/ shared experience to another and from session to the following sessions?
- b. In your view, along these topics/ issues/ personal experiences, what sort of personal development and change did the exit work process trigger in the client?
- c. (Here you may compare the entrance interview sessions with the sessions at the end of the exit work process; you may also focus on particularly relevant incidents or dialogues in specific sessions.)
- d. How do these developments/ changes relate to leaving behind violent extremism and group hatred, be it in thinking and/or behaviour?
- e. What were the signs/ indicators by which you recognized the client's development/ change, be it in the client's behaviour and/or thinking – be it inside exit work session or in real life behaviour?

(2) Analytic perspective

- a. In your view, which factors of your handling of the client were effective and contributed to the client's development (the setting, your way of interaction, the methods applied, particular events/ circumstances)?
- b. In your view, were there hindering factors which impeded the client's personal development/ change in the process of exit work (the setting, your way of interaction, the methods applied, particular events/ circumstances)?

- c. As to the effective factors in your work with the client, do any of these factors correspond to the “principles of good practice” (cf. the RAN Derad Declaration) – for instance, the factors (a) personal trust building, (b) respect, eye’s level, equality, participatory process, (c) confidentiality, (d) voluntary participation (incremental commitment), (e) narrative interaction/ sharing of personal experiences, (f) focus on social skills and emotional intelligence (conflict, anger, shame, and anxiety), (g) emphasis on gender issues/ gender identity conflicts.
- d. In particular, have there been notable moments of personal trust and narrative interaction/ sharing of personal experiences, which seem important for the process? Have there been recognizable challenges of trust and narrative sharing?
- e. When looking back at the whole process of exit work sessions, did you notice any specific turning points?