Challenging Hate:
Counter-speech Practices in Europe

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Executive Summary

Context

- In recent years, there has been an unprecedented boom in online hate speech and extremism. Grave though it is, this global issue has not gone unchallenged. Rather, it has given rise to an international archipelago of organisations, civil society groups, and individuals that proactively engage in counter-speech – i.e., "a common, crowd-sourced response [that] argues, disagrees, or presents an opposing view to extremism or hateful content" – and other more direct measures, which can broadly be termed counter extremism (CE). **Adopting a comparative case study approach, this report evaluates counter-speech and CE in three European countries – the United Kingdom, Germany, and France.**

Aims

- Counter-extremism and counter-speech have come under a significant amount of scrutiny from journalists and academics alike recently, but there remains a significant gap in the research regarding practical matters. From an organisational perspective, many questions remain unanswered: How do activists conceive of and develop their programmes? From what sources do they derive funding? How are campaigns shaped and calibrated to meet the needs of particular audiences? **This review attempts to offer answers to some of these questions.**

Findings

- Based on this study, we have derived five key recommendations for counter-speech organisations in their nascent and developmental stages:

    1. **M&E Matters:** Monitoring and evaluation metrics are crucial commodities in counter-extremism work. Within reason, it would serve counter-speech initiatives to systematise M&E and make their efforts visible to the public.

    2. **Be Creative:** Activists should use their imagination when thinking about developing counter-speech campaigns. Unusual and clever campaigns invite audience participation and have a greater tendency to go viral – while these are not strictly necessary to all counter-speech efforts, they almost always bolster campaign potential and reach.

3. **Think Obliquely:** Activists must always try to think outside of the box. Too often, counter-speech activism limits itself to providing direct responses to claims made in extremist propaganda. While important in their own right, campaigns that are strictly reactive are only effective to an extent. Counter-speech initiatives should think about how they can engage in both reactive *and* proactive measures.

4. **Calibrate Carefully:** Good counter-speech is targeted counter-speech. While it may be tempting to cast the net as widely as possible with a given campaign, doing so is rarely a good idea. Instead, activists and organisations alike should make an effort to calibrate their activities as carefully as possible.

5. **Don't Overcomplicate:** No counter-speech campaign has the ability to singlehandedly solve the manifold challenges presented by extremism. Through simple structuring and realistic targeting, counter-speech activists and organisations can work together in unison, offering the holistic response required to meaningfully and systematically challenge extremism across the spectrum.

Contents

Introduction

I
n recent years, there has been an unprecedented boom in online hate speech[1] and extremism.[2] Grave though it is, this global issue has not gone unchallenged. Rather, it has given rise to an international archipelago of organisations, civil society groups, and individuals that proactively engage in counter-speech – i.e., "a common, crowd-sourced response [that] argues, disagrees, or presents an opposing view to extremism or hateful content"[3] – and other more direct measures, which can broadly be termed countering extremism (CE). Sometimes, these activities have private or public sponsors; often, though, they are entirely spontaneous and voluntary, manifestations of a popular desire to make the world a better place.

While CE in general and counter-speech in particular have been scrutinised by journalists and academics alike recently,[4] there remains a significant gap in the research regarding practical matters. From an organisational perspective, many questions remain unanswered: How do activists conceive of and develop their programmes? From what sources do they derive funding? How are campaigns shaped and calibrated to meet the needs of particular audiences?

In this review, we attempt to offer answers to some of these questions. Our approach is three-pronged: first of all, we propose a simple comparative framework with which researchers and activists can work in order to better discern organisational strengths and weaknesses. Next, we apply this framework to counter-speech and CE efforts in three European countries – the United Kingdom, Germany, and France – examining case studies from each national context. From this, we then derive a series of recommendations that can be used to help practitioners and activists develop their projects, evaluate successes and failures, and foster sustainable programming.

The study proceeds as follows. First, we describe our methodology. In the next part, which is divided into three subsections – one for each of the countries in question – we provide a brief overview of the national counter-speech and CE 'landscape,' exploring the various types of governmental, non-governmental, and civil society activities being undertaken in each. Of the examples highlighted in the overview sections, three are then examined in greater detail. After that, there

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1   Hate speech is defined by Facebook as "content that attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or disease is not allowed." See "What Does Facebook Consider to Be Hate Speech?" *Facebook Help Centre*, accessed 23 August 2017, https://www.facebook.com/help/135402139904490?helpref=uf_permalink.
2   For the purposes of this paper, a political movement is understood as 'extremist' if its belief system condones, supports or pursues hate speech in its rhetoric and messaging. A political movement is understood as 'violent extremist' if it does the above, while also condoning, supporting or pursuing violence to achieve its ends.
3   Jamie Bartlett and Alex Krasodomski-Jones, *Counter-speech: Examining Content that Challenges Extremism Online* (London: Demos, 2015), 5.
4   Bartlett and Krasodomski-Jones, *Counter-speech: Examining Content that Challenges Extremism Online*; Abbas Barzegar, Shawn Powers, Nagham El Karhili, *Civic Approaches to Confronting Violent Extremism: Sector Recommendations and Best Practices*, (Atlanta: Georgia State University, 2016); Nadia Khomami, "UK Government Hires M&C Saatchi to Fight Far-Right Threat," *The Guardian*, Feb 6, 2017, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/06/uks-government-hires-advertising-giant-as-it-fights-far-right-threat.

is a brief discussion section, in which we compare and contrast the landscapes with each other, and highlight some of the key counter speech and CE strengths and weaknesses discovered in the research process. We conclude with a brief summary, suggestions as to how this comparative framework could be expanded for future use, and a set of five recommendations for counter-speech activists and practitioners.

Methodology

In approaching this project, we thought carefully about how we could maximise its utility – not just for government practitioners and donors, but activists as well.

In the first instance, we wanted to offer a comprehensive description of the counter-speech and CE landscape in each country. To this end, we cast the net as wide as possible to generate a longlist of actors, systematically examining the Lexus Nexus news archive, social media hubs, and government websites, the sum of which enabled us to develop a well-rounded view of the counter-speech 'scene' in each state. Resources offered by the Counter Extremism Project,[5] the Radicalisation Awareness Network,[6] and the Counter-Narrative Toolkit[7] were of particular value.

We then worked to whittle down the original universe of organisations and activists that we had compiled, developing a thorough but inexhaustive selection that accurately reflected the three counter-speech landscapes. We based our national overviews on this shortlist.

For each country, we then selected three examples for further scrutiny using a comparative pilot case study approach informed by Jensen and Rodgers,[8] and Berg.[9] Our case study selections were based on distinctiveness and innovation criteria – we wanted to examine a full range of actors, governmental *and* non-governmental, in order to best convey just how varied counter-speech ecologies could be.

When it came to the individual framework for each subnational study, we opted for a rigorous but easily replicable model, structuring it in a manner that would facilitate scalable comparison as effectively as possible. We used open source research to evaluate the case studies along four lines of enquiry: evolution and programme development, monitoring and evaluation, digital presence, and scope and funding.

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5   "The Counter Extremism Project," accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.counterextremism.com/.
6   "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Delivering counter – or alternative narratives,"
     Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/
     homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/delivering_
     alternative_narratives_en.pdf.
7   "Counter-Narrative Toolkit," accessed Jul 27, 2017, http://www.counternarratives.org/.
8   Jason L. Jensen and Robert Rodgers, "Cumulating the Intellectual Gold of Case Study Research,"
     Public Administration Review 61:2 (2001), 235-246.
9   Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Harlow: Pearson, 2014).

Figure I: Summary of Findings

Case Study	Type	Evolution & Programme Development	Monitoring & Evaluation	Digital Presence	Scope & Funding
English Disco Lovers	Civil society initiative	Grassroots, student-founded	Outranking English Defence League in search results and Facebook likes	Facebook (63K)[10], Twitter (10.5K)[11], website	Low-cost, art grants
London Tigers	Civil society initiative	Founded as sports club, since expanded into CE	Study conducted by University of Essex	Facebook (3.5K)[12], Twitter (1.5K)[13], YouTube (0.5K)[14], website	Public and private support
One to One Initiative	Think-and-do tank initiative	Research and interventions conducted by Institute for Strategic Dialogue	Built in M&E metrics and post-project analysis	Twitter (4K)[15], Facebook (1K)[16], website	Supported by Countering Online Violent Extremism Research (COVER) Program at Curtin University, Australia
Datteltäter	Civil society initiative	Inspired by populist Islamist and Far Right content	Unclear	Facebook (60K)[17], YouTube (53.5K)[18], Instagram (6.5K)[19], Twitter (1.5K)[20], website	Occasional income from competitions

10   "English Disco Lovers (EDL)," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/englishdiscolovers/.
11   "English Disco Lovers," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/EngDiscoLovers.
12   London Tigers," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://facebook.com/londontigers.
13   "London Tigers," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://twitter.com/london_tigers.
14   "London Tigers," YouTube, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/user/londontigers1986.
15   "ISD," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/_isdglobal.
16   "ISD," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/ISDglobal.
17   "Datteltäter," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/datteltaeter/.
18   "Datteltäter," YouTube, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF_oOFgq8qwi7HRGTJSsZ-g.
19   "Datteltaeter," Instagram, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/datteltaeter/.
20   "Datteltäter," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/datteltaeter.

	Type	Origin	Evaluation	Social media	Funding
HassHilft	Civil society initiative	Fundraising model from Far-Right marches applied to online sphere	Based on level of awareness and money raised	Facebook (67K)[21], Twitter (2.5K)[22], website	Support from corporate partners as well as private individuals
#NichtEgal	Civil society initiative	Combination of intuition and targeted research	Unclear	YouTube (14.5K)[23], Facebook (2K)[24], Twitter (1K)[25], website	Fully funded by Google/YouTube
Stop-Djihadisme	Governmental	Not advertised	Unclear	Facebook (20K)[26], Twitter (14.5K)[27], website	Fully funded by the French government
Seriously	Think-and-do tank initiative	Counter-speech incubator developed in response to *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in 2015	Unclear, beyond macro-statistics	Twitter (10K)[28], Facebook (1.5K)[29], YouTube (<0.5K)[30], online platform	Financed by public funds as well as corporate platforms
Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme	Civil society initiative	Victims-led initiative developed in response to Cairo bomb attacks in 2009	Based on levels of activity and outreach	Facebook (8.5K)[31], Twitter (1K)[32], Google+ (<0.5K)[33], website	Funded by the French government and European Commission

21 "Hass Hilft," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/HassHilft/.
22 "#Hass Hilft," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/RechtsgegRechts.
23 "#Nicht Egal," YouTube, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/user/361gradtoleranz.
24 "NichtEgal," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/InitiativeNichtEgal/.
25 "#NichtEgal," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/NichtEgal_yt.
26 "STOP DJIHADISME," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Stopdjihadisme.FR.
27 "STOP DJIHADISME," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/stopdjihadisme.
28 "RenaissanceNumérique," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/rnumerique.
29 "Renaissance Numérique," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/renaissancenumerique/.
30 "RenaissanceNumérique," YouTube, accessed Jul 26, 2017,
    https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL8uSljzkoC6zjl_YVGpM7Q.
31 "Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme," Facebook, accessed Jul 26, 2017,
    https://www.facebook.com/afvt.org/.
32 "AfVT.org," Twitter, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/afvt_org.
33 "AssoAFVT," Google+, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://plus.google.com/104367135295010472125.

Countering Extremism in the United Kingdom

I n the United Kingdom, the counter-speech and CE landscape comprises a variety of actors and organisations that operate at governmental, non-governmental and civil society levels. In the main, counter-speech and CE groups focus on challenging Islamist extremism, though there is a growing number of established counter-Far-Right organisations, too.

The most prominent government initiative is the Home Office's **Research, Information and Communications Unit** (RICU). Operating as part of Prevent – i.e. the central government's efforts to stop "people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism" – RICU works to challenge all forms of violent extremism.[34] Little has been made publicly available about the particulars of its counter-radicalisation communication efforts, which comprise a range of government-branded and unbranded campaigns.[35]

At the non-governmental level, there are a variety of 'think-and-do tanks' involved in counter-speech and CE initiatives in the UK. The most prominent at present is the **Institute for Strategic Dialogue** (ISD), a registered charity that states its aim is to "combat extremism globally."[36] Working to counter extremism across the ideological spectrum, ISD manages an **Innovation Hub**, which brings together technology and marketing experts, and survivors of extremism;[37] the **Online Civil Courage Initiative**, a collaborative cross-sector hub funded by Facebook, which responds to online hate speech in the UK, France, and Germany;[38] the **One to One Initiative**, which facilitates dialogue between former extremists and young people at risk of radicalisation;[39] and an interactive education resource called **Extreme Dialogue**.[40] ISD also runs **CounterExtremism.org**, which supports the dissemination of counter-extremism best practices;[41] the **Counter-Narrative Toolkit**, an online resource for counter-speech activists;[42] **YouthCAN**, an activist initiative aimed at upscaling grassroots efforts in the CE field;[43] and the **Women and Extremism** project, which is "dedicated to studying the active

34 "Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales," *HM Government*, accessed May 19, 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445977/3799_Revised_Prevent_Duty_Guidance__England_Wales_V2-Interactive.pdf.

35 Ian Cobain, Alice Ross, Rob Evans and Mona Mahmood, "Inside Ricu, the shadowy propaganda unit inspired by the cold war," *The Guardian*, May 2, 2016, accessed May 19, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/02/inside-ricu-the-shadowy-propaganda-unit-inspired-by-the-cold-war.

36 "Counter-narrative Campaigns," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/counter-narrative-campaigns/.

37 "Innovation Hub," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/communications-technology/innovation-hub/.

38 "Online Civil Courage Initiative," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/communications-technology/online-civil-courage-initiative-2/.

39 "One to One," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/communications-technology/one-to-one/.

40 "Extreme Dialogue," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.isdglobal.org/programmes/education/extreme-dialogue/.

41 "Counterextremism.org Project," accessed Jun 6, 2017, https://www.counterextremism.org/about-us/counterextremism.org/.

42 "Counter-Narrative Toolkit," accessed Jul 27, 2017, http://www.counternarratives.org/.

43 "About YouthCan," *YouthCan*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.youthcan.net/index.php/about-us.

and counteractive aspects of women and extremism."[44] ISD also manages the **Against Violent Extremism** (AVE) network, which operates in collaboration with Google to give a voice to those who have had first-hand experience of violent extremism.[45]

Another well-known CE think-and-do tank is **Quilliam**, a London-based organisation that was founded by former Islamists in 2008.[46] It operates across Europe and the United States, and engages in activities from policy advice and media advocacy to creative arts outreach and university activism. In August 2017, it launched its "debut production" *Deadly Dialogues* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Composed by "an award-winning creative team" and "based on real-life experience and research by Quilliam," the play was an attempt to encourage "dialogue and debate through the arts."[47]

Neither think tank nor activist group, **Moonshot CVE** inhabits a unique space in the counter-speech and CE scene. Working with organisations like Jigsaw, Google's technology incubator, it uses "data-proven techniques to ensure [its] clients respond to violent extremism effectively."[48]

At the grassroots level, recent years have seen a proliferation of initiatives working in UK counter-speech and CE at both ends of the spectrum. **Fight Against Radicalisation Online** (FARO) attempts to educate Internet users as to the complexities of the radicalisation process, "providing [them] with the knowledge to say something before [they] have to see something."[49] Dedicated to two young boys killed by Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombs in 1993, the **Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace** works in conflict resolution, and has a range of outputs. One of its projects was "My Former Life," an educational film that shared the stories of former Islamist and Far-Right extremists.[50] For its part, **Let's Talk About It** provides practical help and guidance to the public in order to stop people becoming or supporting extremists,[51] while **Stand for Peace,** a Jewish-Muslim interfaith organisation, works to undercut the polarising ideological claims made by violent extremists.[52] Finally, the likes of **London Tigers**[53] and **Making Communities Work and Grow**[54] engage directly with vulnerable populations in the UK, working to foster community cohesion between people of different backgrounds, often through sports.

In addition to the above initiatives, there are single-issue civil society groups like **Imams Online**, which is run by **Faith Associates** and aims to educate, network, and equip Muslim leaders with the information they need to prevent Islamist extremism from taking root in their communities.[55] One of its most striking projects to date was

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44   "The Women and Extremism (WaE) network: Exploring the role of women in extremist movements," *WaE Network*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.waenetwork.org/about.html.
45   "About Against Violent Extremism," *Against Violent Extremism*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.againstviolentextremism.org/about.
46   "FAQs," *Quilliam*, May 19, 2017, https://www.quilliaminternational.com/about/faq/.
47   "Section Two," *FARO Project*, Sep 11, 2017, http://www.faroproject.org/#section_two.
48   "About," *Moonshot CVE*, accessed Sept 15, 2017, http://moonshotcve.com/#g-container-header.
49   "Knowledge Is Power," *FARO Project*, May 19, 2017, http://www.faroproject.org/.
50   "Our Projects," *Foundation for Peace*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://foundation4peace.org/our-projects/.
51   "About," *Let's Talk About It*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.ltai.info/about/.
52   "About Us," *Stand for Peace*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://standforpeace.org.uk/about/.
53   "Community Cohesion & Safety," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 6, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/community-cohesion-safety/.
54   "About Us," *MCGW*, accessed Jun 6, 2017, http://www.mcwg.org.uk/about-us.html.
55   "Who we are," *Imams Online*, accessed Oct 18, 2017, http://imamsonline.com/about-us/.

Haqiqah Magazine, an online publication that is, visually, highly reminiscent of the Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine, but that carries a powerfully delivered counter-extremist message.[56] There are also organisations like the **Muslim Youth League**, which states that its aim is to revive the authentic non-extremist teachings of Islam,[57] and the **Active Change Foundation** in east London, which has presided over a number of viral counter-speech campaigns like #NotInMyName.[58] Other organisations, like **Inspire**, have focused on Muslim women and their role in strengthening communities.[59] Operating at the other end of the extremism spectrum are initiatives like **HOPE Not Hate**, which uses public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism.[60] There is also the **Far-Right Extremism in Europe Initiative** (FREE), which provides educational resources on Far-Right extremism in a variety of countries.[61] It is partially funded by ISD.

Finally, a handful of activists in the UK attempt to challenge extremism with comedy – the YouTube channels **Islamic State Comedy Club**[62] and **Muslim Musings**[63] focus on undermining jihadist propaganda, while the **English Disco Lovers** group (which shares the EDL acronym with the English Defence League) attempts to subvert anti-Muslim groups in the UK through street demonstrations, "social media bombing campaigns," and innovative attempts to skew search engine optimisation (SEO).[64]

Below, we examine three of these initiatives – the English Disco Lovers, London Tigers, and the One to One Initiative – in greater detail.

Case Studies

i) English Disco Lovers

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: Facebook – 63K[65], Twitter – 10.5K[66]

The English Disco Lovers (EDL) was founded in 2012 as a counter-speech campaign that aimed to reclaim the "EDL" acronym from the English Defence League, a Far-Right street protest movement. Initially, the EDL used "Googlebombing" campaigns and street demonstrations to undermine its anti-Muslim acronym-sake. In recent years, though, its activities expanded to include fundraising events for other causes.[67] In July 2017, for

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56   "Haqiqah – What is the Truth Behind Isis?," *Imams Online*, accessed Oct 18, 2017,
     http://imamsonline.com/haqiqah-what-is-the-truth-behind-isis/.
57   "Who We Are," *Muslim Youth League*, accessed May 19, 2017, https://www.myl.org.uk/about-us.
58   "# Not In My Name," *ISIS Not In My Name*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://isisnotinmyname.com/.
59   "About Us," *Inspire*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.wewillinspire.com/about-us/.
60   "Our Mission," *HOPE Not Hate*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://hopenothate.org.uk/our-mission/.
61   "About," *The FREE Initiative*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://thefreeinitiative.com/about/.
62   "Islamic State Comedy Club," *YouTube*, accessed May 19, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/
     UCCCXxNfA07glso4FnbC6ATw.
63   "Muslim Musings," *YouTube*, accessed May 19, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCET7e8i3Pmzw_
     GWVbwUf_cw.
64   "Our Disco Statement," *English Disco Lovers*, accessed May 19, 2017, http://www.edl.me/about_edl.html.
65   "English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/englishdiscolovers/.
66   "English Disco Lovers," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/EngDiscoLovers.
67   "Welcome to English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *English Disco Lovers*, accessed Jun 14, 2017,
     http://www.edl.me/index.html.

example, it hosted a "Grad Week Boat Party" in Exmouth, which raised money for the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund.[68]

With their slogan of "Don't Hate, Gyrate!,"[69] the EDL attempts to challenge hatred with humour, celebrating the disco music genre as an integrationist haven for minorities and majorities alike.[70] In this sense, it sees itself as echoing the underground jazz movements that emerged across Europe during the rise of National Socialism.[71]

Evolution & Programme Development

The EDL was founded by a small group of students, most of whom have chosen to remain anonymous. After initially starting as a joke, it developed with time into a more ambitious campaign to "turn the tables in favour of equality and respect."[72] It is an organic, flexible grassroots movement that primarily operates out of intuition.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Initially, the EDL principally targeted people trying to obtain information online about the English Defence League. Essentially, it wanted to drown the group out through positive publicity, to "accumulate more likes than the English Defence League on Facebook as well as outranking them on Google."[73] It achieved both of these aims – in July 2017, the English Disco Lovers were found to have almost ten times as many likes on Facebook as the English Defence League.[74]

Besides the above, the EDL has not provided further detail on how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

While the EDL does have a website,[75] it had been inactive for a number of years at the time of writing. Its preferred platform appeared to be Facebook until 2016. By 2017, its focus was on Twitter, which it uses to promote content and fundraising activities.[76]

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68 "English Disco Lovers – Grad Week Boat Party!," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/events/383329948731520/?acontext=%7B%22source%22%3A5%2C%22page_id_source%22%3A187655488035282%2C%22action_history%22%3A[%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%2C%22mechanism%22%3A%22main_list%22%2C%22extra_data%22%3A%22%7B%5C%22page_id%5C%22%3A187655488035282%2C%5C%22tour_id%5C%22%3Anull%7D%22%7D]%2C%22has_source%22%3Atrue%7D.

69 "Welcome to English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *English Disco Lovers*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, http://www.edl.me/index.html.

70 "Middlesex graduate wins art prize for radical movement against racism," *Middlesex University Uni Hub*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/i-3-mdx/news/2014/10/middlesex-graduate-wins-art-prize-for-radical-movement-against-racism.

71 "English Disco Lovers – Don't Hate Gyrate | Chris Alton | TEDxBrighton," *YouTube*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBSvsTEsGdY.

72 Dorian Lynskey, "How to disco dance the EDL off Google and Facebook," *The Guardian*, Feb 1, 2013, accessed Jun 17, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/shortcuts/2013/feb/01/disco-dance-edl-google-facebook.

73 "Welcome to English Disco Lovers (EDL)," EDL, accessed Jun 14, 2017, http://www.edl.me/index.html.

74 The Disco Lovers had 63,834 likes, as compared with just 7,255 for the Defence League. "English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/englishdiscolovers/; "EDL – English Defence League," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/EDL-English-Defence-League-1740790609465819/.

75 "Welcome to English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *English Disco Lovers*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, http://www.edl.me/index.html.

76 "English Disco Lovers (EDL)," *Facebook,* accessed Jun 14, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/englishdiscolovers/.

Scope & Funding

The EDL does not appear to be a cost-intensive initiative – for example, its website was built for free by a web developer who volunteered for the anti-extremism cause.[77]

In 2014, one of its founders Chris Alton received a £2,000 grant in support of the project from law firm Collyer Bristow, which also featured it at the Collyer Bristow art gallery in central London.[78]

ii) London Tigers

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: Facebook – 3.5K[79], Twitter – 1.5K[80],
YouTube – <0.5K[81]

London Tigers mainly works with socioeconomically disadvantaged people in urban centres in the UK, aiming to provide them with more opportunities. Founded by volunteers as a football team in the 1980s, it received charity status in 2003 and now maintains several branches. Its initiatives often run in partnership with other voluntary or private sector organisations and local authorities.[82] Over the years, it has received endorsements from a number of high-profile individuals, such as the UK Prime Minister and a number of famous sportspeople.[83] The Mayor of London is currently listed as its Honorary Patron.[84]

Citing community cohesion as one of its main priorities, London Tigers has long been proactive in organising events that bring together people from different backgrounds. A good example of this was the Church Street Unity Festival that it hosted together with the Metropolitan Police in London.

Evolution & Programme Development

London Tigers was initially founded as a sports club in 1986, but expanded its programming in the years since.[85] The organisation predominantly works with 'hard-to-reach' communities, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Among other things, it offers specific programmes informed by research to counter radicalisation and extremism in the form of initiatives that are aimed at "developing people's understanding of theological issues and training them to become active citizens and positive leaders in their communities."[86]

77 "English Disco Lovers – Don't Hate Gyrate | Chris Alton | TEDxBrighton," *YouTube*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBSvsTEsGdY.
78 "Middlesex graduate wins art prize for radical movement against racism," *Middlesex University Uni Hub*, accessed Jun 14, 2017, https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/i-3-mdx/news/2014/10/middlesex-graduate-wins-art-prize-for-radical-movement-against-racism.
79 "London Tigers," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://facebook.com/londontigers.
80 "London Tigers," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://twitter.com/london_tigers.
81 "London Tigers," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/user/londontigers1986.
82 "About Us," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/about-us/.
83 Ibid.
84 "London Tigers," *MyDonate*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/londontigers.
85 "About Us," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/about-us/.
86 "Community Cohesion & Safety," *London Tigers*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/community-cohesion-safety/.

Monitoring & Evaluation

As part of its "Building Community Resilience" project, which delivered preventing violent extremism activities in three London boroughs, London Tigers submitted monthly performance reports to the Home Office, which funded the intiative.[87] Furthermore, in September 2016, it worked with the University of Essex to quantitatively and qualitatively establish the needs of its target communities. The resultant report identified areas in which it could improve its services, recognising that each area in which it was operating had different needs. The authors specifically suggested that it widen its appeal to include more women and older people.[88] It has since dedicated more resources to working with at-risk females, and now, according to its website, approximately one third of its network is female.[89]

Besides the above, London Tigers has not provided further detail on how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

While London Tigers has its own website,[90] as well as a presence on Facebook,[91] Twitter,[92] and YouTube,[93] the focus of its activities is overwhelmingly in the offline space, with over 20 football teams based in London, Oldham, and Birmingham.[94]

Scope & Funding

At the time of writing, London Tigers had determined that its activities were benefiting over 10,000 people in the UK.[95] The initiative was being run by a multilingual team of around 70 staff members and 100 volunteers.[96]

In terms of fundraising, it has a number of online efforts,[97] as well as a corporate support initiative called the "Champion of London Tigers," which is a scheme for people donating upwards of £2,500.[98] Its "Building Community Resilience" project – which, when it was launched in 2012, included targeted outreach, structured group workshops that focus on counter-narratives, and individual mentoring support – has received substantial support from the Home Office.[99]

87 "SFOI 9713 London Tigers PVE project," *WhatDoTheyKnow*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www. whatdotheyknow.com/request/190410/response/472041/attach/3/SFOI%209713%20London%20Tigers%20 PVE%20project.pdf.

88 Stephanie Hall, Nicole James & Amy Wood, "London Tigers Social Research Report," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/London-Tigers-Social-Research-Report.pdf.

89 "About Us," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/about-us/; "Membership," London Tigers, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/membership/.

90 "London Tigers," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org.

91 "London Tigers," *Facebook*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://facebook.com/londontigers.

92 "London Tigers," *Twitter*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://twitter.com/london_tigers.

93 "London Tigers," *YouTube*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/user/londontigers1986.

94 "Sports," *London Tigers*, accessed Aug 30, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/sports/.

95 "About Us," *London Tigers*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/about-us/.

96 Ibid.

97 "London Tigers," *MyDonate*, accessed Jun 20, 2017, https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/londontigers.

98 "Corporate Support," *London Tigers*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/corporate-support/.

99 "SFOI 9713 London Tigers PVE project," *WhatDoTheyKnow*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/190410/response/472041/attach/3/SFOI%209713%20London%20 Tigers%20PVE%20project.pdf; see also, "Home Secretary Visits London Tigers," *London Tigers*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.londontigers.org/2016/11/home-secretary-visits-london-tigers/.

iii) One to One Initiative

Type: Think-and-do tank initiative
Following: Twitter – 4K[100], Facebook – 1K[101]

The One to One Initiative is an ISD-run programme geared towards facilitating dialogue between former extremists and youths who have expressed interest in extremism.[102] During its pilot project, researchers attempted to identify a number of individuals deemed to be 'at-risk.' Subsequently, they were connected with former extremists, who proactively engaged with them through peer-to-peer messaging platforms.[103]

The first stage of the project was concluded in September 2015.[104] The report released in its aftermath determined that peer-to-peer messaging can be a powerful tool in CE.[105]

Evolution & Programme Development

The initiative was based on research previously conducted by ISD fellows, who had noted that, in years gone by, there had been a number of isolated attempts to engage directly with extremists online, but none of these had been systematised, let alone tested for effectiveness. The One to One Initiative was developed to address this gap, and test the viability of the micro-engagement approach.[106]

Monitoring and Evaluation

The project had monitoring and evaluation (M&E) metrics built in from its outset, something that allowed its operators to effectively evaluate it once concluded. Its M&E-centric approach facilitated uniquely nuanced post-project analysis. For example, researchers learned in its aftermath that over 60 percent of the messages that were sent via private social media had been read by the candidates, a number significantly higher than the average read rate of email marketing campaigns (usually only around 30 percent).[107] A further 59 percent of those who read the messages reacted in some way, with 60 percent of them engaging in a sustained conversation with the intervention provider.[108]

While the project was constrained to a short time period, some interactions indicated that a shift in behaviour might be possible when using this methodology for a longer period of time.[109]

Digital Presence

The One to One Initiative targeted individuals that had openly expressed extremist views on Facebook, which was deemed

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100 "ISD," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/_isdglobal.
101 "ISD," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/ISDglobal.
102 "Counter-narrative Campaigns," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Jun 20, 2017,
     http://www.strategicdialogue.org/counter-narrative-campaigns/.
103 "One to One Online Interventions: A pilot CVE methodology," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Jun 20,
     2017, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/One2One_Web_v9.pdf.
104 "Publications," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Jun 20, 2017,
     http://www.strategicdialogue.org/publications/.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.

to be an ideal arena upon which to launch the project.[110]
Researchers could use it to identify and access at-risk individuals
through the "Graph Search" feature, as well as the "Pay to
Message" function, which enabled direct outreach without prior
engagement.

In the report it released in the aftermath of the project, ISD
recommended that the scheme should be means-tested on other
platforms such as Twitter and Google+. It also recommended
the involvement of other messengers besides formers – such as
community leaders or survivors of violent extremism.[111]

Scope & Funding

The initiative, which was made possible by the Countering
Online Violent Extremism Research (COVER) Program at Curtin
University, Australia, was modest in its approach.[112] At the time
of writing, it was unclear as to whether the One to One Initiative
remained active.

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110 "Publications," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Jun 20, 2017,
       http://www.strategicdialogue.org/publications/.
111 "One to One Online Interventions: A pilot CVE methodology," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed Jun 20,
       2017, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/One2One_Web_v9.pdf.
112 Ibid.

Countering Extremism
in Germany

I n Germany, a relatively large number of organisations operate at both the governmental and non-governmental level, challenging extremism across the spectrum. In contrast to the UK and France, there currently appears to be a greater focus on countering Far-Right movements than Islamist extremist groups.

At the governmental level, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has been particularly active. Among other things, it has supported the Europe-wide **No Hate Speech Movement**.[113] Launched in 2016, the movement works to develop strategies against extremism online as well as provide support for victims of hate speech.[114]

The German government has also worked with the **Amadeu Antonio Foundation**, an independent CE think-and-do tank that has researched, developed and funded hundreds of initiatives to strengthen democratic civic society in Germany.[115] One of its most prominent campaigns is an anti-hate speech platform called **Belltower**, which started out as a monitoring platform for evaluating neo-Nazi campaigns, but has since broadened its focus to include populism and misanthropy too.[116]

Among the many civil society counter-speech and CE organisations operating in Germany, a number focus primarily on Islamist extremism. **Ufuq.de**, for one, is a youth organisation that works to educate people about the realities of Islam and Islamophobia.[117] One of its earliest projects – "Was postest Du? Politische Bildung mit jungen Muslim_innen online," which roughly translates as "What are you posting? Political education for young Muslims online" and was launched in 2015 – attempted to disseminate counter-narratives among Muslim teenagers.[118] Another noteworthy online effort is **Datteltäter**, which works to challenge salafi-jihadist propaganda across a variety of social media platforms, through humour, education, and satire.[119]

Besides these initiatives, Germany hosts a large number of counter-Far-Right extremism groups. They include **Kein Bock Auf Nazis**, a campaign that focuses its attention on stopping people from turning a blind eye to racism;[120] **Straßengezwitscher**, which

113 "Manuela Schwesig startet "No Hate Speech" Kampagne in Deutschland," *BMFSFJ*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/manuela-schwesig-startet--no-hate-speech--kampagne-in-deutschland/97540,

114 Courtney Tenz, "Why women tackling online hate speech are internet heroes," *Deutsche Welle*, Mar 8, 2017 accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/why-women-tackling-online-hate-speech-are-internet-heroes/a-37849796.

115 "About the Amadeu Antonio Foundation," *Amadeu-Antonio-Stiftung*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng/about-us/.

116 "Netz-Gegen-Nazis.De Wird Belltower.News," *Belltower News*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.belltower.news/artikel/aus-netz-gegen-nazisde-wird-belltowernews-%E2%80%93-netz-f%C3%BCr-digitale-zivilgesellschaft-11651.

117 "Über uns," *Ufuq.de*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://www.ufuq.de/verein/uber-uns/verein/.

118 "„Was postest Du? Politische Bildung mit jungen Muslim_innen online"," *Ufuq.de*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://www.ufuq.de/was-postest-du-politische-bildung-mit-jungen-muslim_innen-online/.

119 "Datteltäter," *Twitter*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, https://twitter.com/datteltaeter.

120 "Was Tun Gegen Nazis?" *Kein Bock auf Nazis*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://www.keinbockaufnazis.de/was-tun-gegen-nazis.

reports incidents of xenophobia;[121] **Aufstehen Gegen Rassismus**, a group that counters Far-Right activism by campaigning online and offline, through things like handing out bin bags next to right-wing campaigners so passers-by can immediately discard the extremist flyers they may have been handed;[122] **Nationalismus Ist Keine Alternative**, which attempts to educate its audience as to why racist movements are ineffective solutions to social ills;[123] **#NOPEGIDA**, which was set up with the exclusive aim of undermining the anti-Islam movement, Pegida;[124] and, last but by no means least, **Kleiner 5**, which engages in a range of counter-Far-Right activities in order to dissuade people from voting for right-wing populist parties in elections.[125] There is also the **Hooligans Gegen Satzbau**, an ironic counter-speech campaign distinctly reminiscent of the English Disco Lovers. It has appropriated the name of an anti-Islam neo-Nazi group in Germany which it challenges by "correcting" hate speech content and calling for objective discussion.[126]

Besides the above, groups like **ProKopfGeldSpende**, **#NazisAgainstNazis** and **Hasshilft** – the first two of which are run by **EXIT Germany**, an initiative launched by criminologist and former police detective Bernd Wagner and former neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach – have developed funding streams out of Far-Right marches and demonstrations.[127] The first, ProKopfGeldSpende, accrues donations for initiatives such as Doctors Without Borders based on per capita attendance at extremist marches;[128] while the second, #NazisAgainstNazis, generates donations for EXIT Germany based on metres marched.[129] Hasshilft's focus is on the online space, and is examined in greater detail below.

A number of campaigns focus their efforts on countering hate speech in general, rather than targeting one particular form of extremism on its own. These include **#NichtEgal**, a project that aims to intensify positive voices online by promoting respectful exchange of opinions;[130] the **Hate Aid** platform, which is run by **Fearless Democracy** and informs grassroots CE efforts by providing self-help guides for victims of hate speech;[131] and, lastly, **#HateBreach**, an online campaign that primarily works by offering resources and advice for people who want to counter hate speech and initiate more objective discussion.[132]

Below, we examine three of these initiatives – Datteltäter, Hasshilft, and #NichtEgal – in greater detail.

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121 "Straßengezwitscher," *Twitter*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, https://twitter.com/streetcoverage.
122 "Bestelle Dir Deine Aktionskits Gegen AFD-Wahlkampfstände!," *Aufstehen Gegen Rassismus*, accessed Aug, 2017, https://www.aufstehen-gegen-rassismus.de/aktuelles/besorg-dir-jetzt-aktionskits-gegen-afd-wahlkampfstaende/.
123 "Nationalismus Ist Keine Alternative," accessed Jun 27, 2017, https://nationalismusistkeinealternative.net/.
124 "Über uns," *No Pegida*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://www.nopegida.org/about.
125 "Portrait," *Kleiner Fünf*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, https://www.kleinerfuenf.de/de/portrait.
126 "Über HoGeSatzbau," *HoGeSatzbau*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://hogesatzbau.de/ueber-hogesatzbau/.
127 "EXIT-Germany | We Provide Ways Out Of Extremism," *EXIT Deutschland*, accessed Jul 27, 2017, http://www.exit-deutschland.de/english/.
128 "Die Idee," *ProKopfGeldSpende*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://prokopfgeldspende.de/die-idee/.
129 "Rechts gegen Rechts," *Zentrum Demokratische Kultur*, accessed Jun 27, 2017, http://zentrum-demokratische-kultur.de/initiativen/?c=rechts-gegen-rechts.
130 "Häufig gestellte Fragen," *Nicht Egal*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://nichtegal.withyoutube.com/##faq.
131 "Hateaid – Eine Neue Plattform Für Die, Die Dem Hass Entegegentreten," *Fearless Democracy*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://fearlessdemocracy.org/hate-aid/.
132 "Was Tun Gegen Hass Im Netz? Countern! Eine Übersicht," *HateBreach*, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://hatebreach.net/2017/04/27/countern-was-geht-was-tun-gegen-hass-im-netz/.

Case Studies

i) Datteltäter

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: Facebook – 60K[133], YouTube – 53.5K[134],
Instagram – 6.5K[135], Twitter – 1.5K[136]

Datteltäter was founded in 2015 with the stated aim of establishing a "caliphate of satire" on YouTube that would undermine, through humour, the Islamic State.[137] At its core, the group is administered by five young people – Younes Al-Amayra, Nemi El-Hassan, Fiete Aleksander, Farah Bouamar-Al-Sarraj and Marcel Sonneck – but, overall, its structure is fluid. External contributors from across the spectrum of Berlin society are encouraged to take part in its efforts to counter Islamist extremism, as well as to correct stereotypes about Muslims.[138]

Datteltäter's first big hit was a fake commercial for the Islamic State, in which the group produced a cheerful jingle about would-be fighters "not using their head" and pushing the button on an explosive belt.[139] The melody of the song contrasts with the terrorist's brutality, and is used to emphasise how blindly they follow their superiors and engage in violence.[140]

In June 2017, the project received the Smart Hero Award, which was organised by the Stiftung Digitale Chancen in cooperation with Facebook Germany. The category they won was entitled "against marginalisation for an open, pluralist society."[141] As part of the award, it was granted €2,500.[142] Less than a week later, the initiative received the Grimme Award for Culture and Entertainment, which is regarded as the most prestigious online award in Germany.[143]

Evolution & Programme Development

Datteltäter has stated that it gets inspiration from populist Islamist and Far-Right extremists, as well as anti-Islam polemicists that perpetuate harmful stereotypes.[144]

Its content is not purely CE-focused. In 2017, Datteltäter projects included videos such as "YouTubers Try Syrian Food"[145] and

133 "Datteltäter," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/datteltaeter/.
134 "Datteltäter," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF_oOFgq8qwi7HRGTJSsZ-g.
135 "Datteltaeter," *Instagram*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/datteltaeter/.
136 "Datteltäter," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/datteltaeter.
137 Katharina Pfannkuch, "„Datteltäter" – Ein deutsch-muslimisches Empörium," *Die Welt*, Jul 14, 2015, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article143863912/Datteltaeter-Ein-deutsch-muslimisches-Empoerium.html.
138 Ibid.
139 "Mit ISIS ins Weekend-Feeling ...," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktqFLMjj7ks.
140 Katharina Pfannkuch, "„Datteltäter" – Ein deutsch-muslimisches Empörium," *Die Welt*, Jul 14, 2015, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article143863912/Datteltaeter-Ein-deutsch-muslimisches-Empoerium.html.
141 Translation by the author. Franz-Reinhard Habbel, "Smart Hero Award für Satirekanal Datteltäter," *Habbel*, Jun 26, 2017, accessed Jul 3, 2017, http://www.habbel.de/wordpress/?p=3644.
142 "Der Wettbewerb," *Smart Hero Award*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, http://www.smart-hero-award.de/presse/index2.cfm/secid.225.
143 "Datteltäter," *Grimme Online Award*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, http://www.grimme-online-award.de/2017/preistraeger/p/d/datteltaeter-2/.
144 "Zwei Grimme Awards!! OH MY Allaaah!" *Instagram*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BWAMJDlj8G4/?taken-by=datteltaeter.
145 Translation by the author. "YouTuber probieren syrisches Essen," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21Gi-urWhKc.

"16 Things Hijab-Wearing Women In Germany Can Relate To," neither of which is overtly CE-focused, but instead attempted to foster cultural awareness of Muslim issues.[146]

Monitoring & Evaluation

Through what it terms a "jihad of education," Datteltäter hopes to bring German society closer together.[147] At first glance, Datteltäter's key target audience appears to be Germany's Muslim youth population, specifically those who seek out religious content online. However, the group targets a much broader general audience, too. For the former, narrower target audience, specific advice on theological concerns and dilemmas is offered, while, for the latter, more general content aimed at challenging polarising stereotypes is provided.

Datteltäter has not provided a precise account of how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

The Datteltäter initiative was originally founded as a YouTube channel,[148] but has since established Twitter[149] and Instagram accounts,[150] as well as a Facebook page.[151] Its website, www.datteltäter.de, is currently under construction.[152]

Scope & Funding

Besides the occasional income it accrues from competitions, at present Datteltäter appears to predominantly rely on voluntary activism rather than formal funding streams.

ii) HassHilft

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: Facebook – 67K[153], Twitter – 2.5K[154]

HassHilft, which roughly translates as "Donate the Hate," raises money for refugee projects organised by the Aktion Deutschland Hilft campaign and EXIT Germany. Its activities revolve around what it calls an "involuntary online charity initiative," an online tool that automatically organises a one euro donation for every new hate speech comment made on the Internet.[155] In so doing, it engages in a sort of counter-speech judo reminiscent of ProKopfGeldSpende and #NazisAgainstNazis, in which Far-Right extremist activities are turned into fundraising opportunities for good causes.

146 Translation by the author. "16 Dinge, die Kopftuchtragende Frauen in Deutschland kennen!" *YouTube*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDlwEJzT2pQ.
147 Translation by the author. Katharina Pfannkuch, "„Datteltäter" – Ein deutsch-muslimisches Empörium," *Die Welt*, Jul 14, 2015, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article143863912/Datteltaeter-Ein-deutsch-muslimisches-Empoerium.html.
148 "Datteltäter," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF_oOFgq8qwi7HRGTJSsZ-g.
149 "Datteltäter," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://twitter.com/datteltaeter.
150 "Datteltaeter," *Instagram*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/datteltaeter/.
151 "Datteltäter," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/datteltaeter/.
152 "Datteltäter," accessed Jul 3, 2017, http://xn--datteltter-w5a.de/.
153 "Hass Hilft," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/HassHilft/.
154 "#Hass Hilft," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/RechtsgegRechts.
155 "We're turning hate-comments into involuntary donations for refugees and against the far right," *HassHilft*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.hasshilft.de/index_en.html.

According to the HassHilft website, every time a hate speech comment is detected on Facebook, the initiative automatically replies with a pre-prepared post. Concurrently, the hate speech comment is catalogued, something that prompts an "involuntary donation" from one of its corporate sponsors to EXIT Germany or Aktion Deutschland-Hilft.[156] HassHilft's website features an anonymised ranking of the most frequent hate-speechers, and thus names and shames the most 'profitable' activists.[157]

Evolution & Programme Development

HassHilft is run by the ZDK Gesellschaft Demokratische Kultur, which is a non-profit initiative based in Berlin.[158] The project was founded by Fabian Wichmann, who has noted that, while extremist comments cannot be outlawed online, their authors can be beaten at their own game and forced into raising money for the very causes they oppose.[159] He came up with the idea in 2015, after realising that the fundraising model used to generate finances from Far-Right marches could also be applied in the online sphere.

Monitoring & Evaluation

HassHilft predominantly targets people who post hateful comments on social networks. It defines such comments as statements that "humiliate, denigrate or belittle human dignity, or incite or threaten violence, based on their actual or presumed affiliation to a social group, political views, social status or simply because of external characteristics."[160] HassHilft freerides off the attention these statements get, and uses them to raise awareness for initiatives that promote integration and inclusivity.[161]

Besides its website, which has a running tally for the number of euros raised through the involuntary donation scheme, HassHilft has not provided a detailed account of how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

The initiative has a website on which it publishes organisational information and other logistical details as to how people can help.[162] It is active on Facebook – where it works to collect donations[163] – and Twitter – upon which it lists recent activities and events.[164]

Scope & Funding

HassHilft is an ambitious scheme that requires substantial – and sustained – backing. It is supported by corporate partners and private individuals who together provide funding for the involuntary donation scheme. They include Sky, Big FM

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156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 "Hass Hilft," *Design made in Germany*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.designmadeingermany.de/2016/116092/.
160 "We're turning hate-comments into involuntary donations for refugees and against the far right," *HassHilft*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.hasshilft.de/index_en.html.
161 Ibid.
162 "Wir machen Hass-Kommentare zur unfreiwilligen Spende für Flüchtlinge und gegen Rechts," *HassHilft*, Jul 17, 2017, http://www.hasshilft.de.
163 "Hass Hilft," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/HassHilft/.
164 "#Hass Hilft," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://twitter.com/RechtsgegRechts.

and Azimo. The project is also supported by Facebook and HoGeSatzbau, and promoted by a range of celebrities.[165] On top of the involuntary scheme, supporters are encouraged to donate money via its website.[166] As of mid-July 2017, it had raised over €55,000.[167]

iii) #NichtEgal

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: YouTube – 14.5K[168], Facebook – 2K[169], Twitter – 1K[170]

#NichtEgal – which roughly translates to "it does not *not* matter"[171] – is an anti-hate speech initiative that works to counter various forms of extremism, both online and offline. It encourages its audience to engage in a respectful exchange of opinion on social media, as well as during day-to-day offline life.[172]

It was founded by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, Digitale Helden, and Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedia-Dienstanbieter, and has honorary patronage from the German Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.[173]

Evolution & Programme Development

#NichtEgal aims to strengthen and embolden positive voices in Germany, something it does through a range of activities that appear to be developed through a combination of intuition and targeted research.

As part of its offline work with Digitale Helden, #NichtEgal has organised action days in schools across Germany, in which it works to increase student awareness about the importance of freedom of expression and familiarise them with the various forms that hate can take online. Established YouTubers – among them the five core members of Datteltäter – are included in these workshops, and feature heavily across its campaigns.[174]

Monitoring & Evaluation

The initiative primarily focuses on working with young people. Its stated goal is to sensitise the students to online hate speech and provide them with tools to counter it.[175]

#NichtEgal has not provided details on how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

165 "We're turning hate-comments into involuntary donations for refugees and against the far right," *HassHilft*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.hasshilft.de/index_en.html.
166 Ibid.
167 http://www.hasshilft.de/index_en.html
168 "#Nicht Egal," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/user/361gradtoleranz.
169 "NichtEgal," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/InitiativeNichtEgal/.
170 "#NichtEgal," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/NichtEgal_yt.
171 Translation by the author.
172 "Häufig gestellte Fragen ," *Nicht Egal*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://nichtegal.withyoutube.com/##faq.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid; "Datteltäter," *Zeit Online*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, http://tc-angebote.zeit.de/nichtegal/begeistern/portraet-datteltaeter/.
175 "Häufig gestellte Fragen ," *Nicht Egal*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://nichtegal.withyoutube.com/##faq.

Digital Presence

#NichtEgal mainly operates on YouTube, with which it is formally associated.[176] That said, it also has a small presence on Facebook[177] and Twitter.[178]

Scope & Funding

The initiative is entirely funded by YouTube – the total amount of backing is unknown.[179] Its founders have in the past stated that they intend it to be a country-wide movement that is supported by a large majority of people.

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176 Nicht Egal, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://nichtegal.withyoutube.com/.
177 "NichtEgal," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/InitiativeNichtEgal/.
178 "#NichtEgal," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 3, 2017, https://twitter.com/NichtEgal_yt.
179 "#NichtEgal: *YouTube* startet Initiative gegen Hass und Hetze im Netz," *Deutsche Welle*, September 19, 2016, accessed Jul 3, 2017, http://www.dw.com/de/nichtegal-youtube-startet-initiative-gegen-hass-und-hetze-im-netz/a-19562013.

Countering Extremism in France

The counter-speech and CE landscape in France – which, bar a few initiatives, primarily appears to be focused on countering Islamist extremism, not Far-Right movements – is characterised by a relatively proactive government and a relatively inactive civil society. It should be noted that activity does not necessarily equate to effectiveness – and, as will be seen, while few in number, some of France's grassroots initiatives have significant potential.

At the governmental level, there has been significant focus on using negative CE measures like censorship. The French Ministry of the Interior for one regularly advertises these activities on social media, practices in which it has invested a significant amount of time and effort since 2014, when the government was legally enabled to employ "all measures" against extremism and block websites that "glorify terrorism."[180] As part of this, initiatives such as **Plateforme d'harmonisation, de recoupement et d'orientation des signalesments** (PHAROS) have become increasingly important as a means of streamlining reporting activities.[181]

As things stand, it is generally accepted that counter-speech campaigns in France are comparatively few and far between, with officials preferring to inhibit access to content rather than offer an alternative to it.[182] An exception to this were aspects of "**Stop-Djihadisme**," a governmental campaign launched after the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015.[183] Operating in both the on- and offline spheres, it has delivered CE programmes in prison and schools, and also engaged in sporadic counter-narrative development and dissemination.[184]

In August 2016, the French government announced that it was developing another initiative, a religious counter-speech centre that was to be launched together with the **French Council of the Muslim Faith**. It was primarily geared towards "disassembling jihadist arguments" through offline engagement with Muslim communities.[185]

180 Virgile Dall'Armellina, "France Enacts Controversial New Anti-Jihadist Law," *VICE News*, Nov 6, 2014, accessed Jul 10, 2017, https://news.vice.com/article/france-enacts-controversial-new-anti-jihadist-law.
181 "Plateforme d'harmonisation, de recoupement et d'orientation des signalesments," *Ministere de l'Interieur*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Publications/Nos-infographies/Securite-des-biens-et-des-personnes/Cybersecurite/PHAROS.
182 Séraphin Alava, "Prévention de la radicalisation : regards sur les expériences internationals," *The Conversation*, Feb 26, 2017, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://theconversation.com/prevention-de-la-radicalisation-regards-sur-les-experiences-internationales-73012.
183 "Lutter Contre La Propagande Djihadiste Sur Internet," *Stop-Djihadisme*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/que-faire/relayer-contre-discours/lutter-contre-propagande-djihadiste-internet.
184 "France: Extremism & Counter-Extremism," *CVE Project*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/france.
185 "La France organise un contre-discours au djihad," *Tribune de Genève*, Aug 1, 2016, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.tdg.ch/monde/europe/france-organise-contrediscours-djihad/story/13527560.

The French government states that it believes civil society should play a role in combatting Islamist extremism online.[186] As a result, the state has donated funds to the **Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund**, which provides grants to civil society CE projects around the world.[187] At a more local level, it has also backed the **Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme** (AfVT), an initiative that works to support the victims of terrorism and amplify their stories, thus indirectly countering extremist claims to legitimacy.[188]

One of the counter-speech campaigns to have emerged at the nongovernmental level in France is think-and-do tank Renaissance Numérique's online platform, "**Seriously**." An innovative concept, Seriously works to counter hate speech online at both ends of the spectrum by helping users formulate coherent arguments with which to rebut extremist content.[189] After its public launch in 2017, Seriously was almost immediately hailed a success by various organisations and governments.[190]

France is also home to a range of social media activists that use humour to work against Islamist extremism, such as the **Katiba des Narvalos** account on Twitter, which, as well as reporting extremists operating online, routinely mocks the Islamic State by amplifying comic tweets made about it by parody accounts.[191]

While fairly few in number, there are also activist initiatives working to push back against Far-Right extremism in France, such as **Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme** (LICRA), which has been battling racist narratives since 1927,[192] and **SOS Racisme**, which campaigns against Far-Right misinformation. Both work to challenge Far-Right extremism online and offline.[193]

Below, we examine three of these initiatives – Stop Djihadisme, Seriously, and the AfVT – in greater detail.

186 "Lutter Contre La Propagande Djihadiste Sur Internet," *Stop-Djihadisme*, accessed Jul 10, 2017,
     http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/que-faire/relayer-contre-discours/lutter-contre-propagande-djihadiste-internet.
187 "Country Reports on Terrorism 2015," *US Embassy & Consulates in France*, accessed Jul 10, 2017,
     https://fr.usembassy.gov/country-reports-terrorism-2015/.
188 "AFvT," *Counter-Narrative Toolkit*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.counternarratives.org/html/case-studies-
     entry?id=5.
189 "Seriously : la plateforme d'accompagnement des citoyens pour désamorcer les discours de haine en ligne,"
     Renaissance Numérique, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.renaissancenumerique.org/work_in_progresses/
     seriously-la-plateforme-d-accompagnement-des-citoyens-pour-desamorcer-les-discours-de-haine-en-ligne.
190 Audrey Chabal, "Seriously, L'Outil Pour Renouer Le Dialogue Avec Les Trolls," *Forbes France*, Jul 19, 2017,
     accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.forbes.fr/management/seriously-renouer-dialogue-avec-trolls/.
191 "Katiba des Narvalos," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, https://twitter.com/katnarv.
192 "Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme," accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.licra.org/.
193 "SOS Racisme," accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://sos-racisme.org/.

Case Studies

i) Stop-Djihadisme

Type: Governmental
Following: Facebook – 20K[194], Twitter – 14.5K[195]

Stop-Djihadisme is a government-run campaign that was launched in France in January 2015 with a view to combatting Islamist extremism.[196] It has attempted to use social media to spread awareness about terrorism, as well as disseminate counter-narratives that undermine jihadist propaganda and appeal to community values. Its messages comprise a range of materials – among them explainers on the French legal system, factual information on military action being undertaken by the coalition against the Islamic State, and statements from victims or even former perpetrators of violent extremism.[197]

One of its most prominent 2016 projects was "Toujours le choix," an interactive video campaign in which the user follows the journeys of two extremists, Emma and Mehdi, and is alerted to the fact that, all along their respective paths to radicalisation, there were always opportunities for them to "make a better choice" and not join the extremist group they ended up in.[198]

Evolution & Programme Development

As a governmental initiative, Stop-Djihadisme does not advertise much about how it develops programmes.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Stop-Djihadisme has a range of target audiences: young people who are confronted with jihadist propaganda online; potential advocates of violent extremism; victims of terrorism; and potential victims of terrorism. As a governmental organisation, specific details about how it operates are largely unavailable, and it is unclear how it evaluates its strengths and weaknesses, let alone measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

The initiative is most active on Facebook[199] and Twitter.[200] In addition, it has a website that provides information on radicalisation, as well as advice on how to behave in terrorist attacks.[201]

Scope & Funding

Stop-Djihadisme is funded entirely by the French government.

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194 "STOP DJIHADISME," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Stopdjihadisme.FR.
195 "STOP DJIHADISME," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/stopdjihadisme.
196 "Lutter Contre La Propagande Djihadiste Sur Internet," *Stop-Djihadisme*, accessed Jul 10, 2017,
       http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/que-faire/relayer-contre-discours/lutter-contre-propagande-djihadiste-internet.
197 "Lutter Contre La Propagande Djihadiste Sur Internet," *Stop-Djihadisme*, accessed Jul 10, 2017,
       http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/que-faire/relayer-contre-discours/lutter-contre-propagande-djihadiste-internet.
198 Flore Thomasset, "Une vidéo interactive pour mieux comprendre la radicalisation," *LaCroix*, Nov 18, 2016,
       accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.la-croix.com/France/Securite/Une-video-interactive-pour-mieux-comprendre-
       radicalisation-2016-11-18-1200804120.
199 "STOP DJIHADISME," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Stopdjihadisme.FR.
200 "STOP DJIHADISME," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://twitter.com/stopdjihadisme.
201 "Stop-Djihadisme," accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/.

ii) Seriously

Type: Think-and-do tank initiative
Following: Twitter – 10K[202], Facebook – 1.5K[203],
YouTube – <0.5K[204]

Seriously was established in March 2016 by think-and-do tank Renaissance Numérique. It is an Internet platform[205] that works to counter hate speech by helping users formulate arguments to respond to extremist content that they encounter online.[206]

The website allows users to paste in the hate speech comment they want to respond to, and then provides a step-by-step approach for building a counter-argument to it. First, the comment is categorised – for example as anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, or homophobic – before the website provides a range of relevant facts and quotes that could be used to push back against it, along with tips on how to structure the response. Along the way, the user can select their favourite facts and illustrations. The final stage of the process provides a coherent summary, so that an articulate response can be crafted.[207]

Evolution & Programme Development

The project was developed in response to the mass shooting at the *Charlie Hebdo* office in Paris in January 2015.[208] Its stated aim was to disrupt the accelerating trend towards social polarisation that had been afflicting French politics in the run-up to and aftermath of the attack.[209] Its initiation marked the point at which Renaissance Numérique became a think-and-do tank.[210]

Monitoring & Evaluation

Seriously, the programming of which is guided by a scientific advisory board, is primarily aimed at young people.[211] It intends to equip would-be activists with the rhetorical tools that they need to meaningfully counter extremist content and hate speech online.[212] Given this ambition, there is no easy way to evaluate success beyond macro-statistics like website visits and participation metrics.

The organisation has not provided details as to how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

202 "RenaissanceNumérique," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/rnumerique.
203 "Renaissance Numérique," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/renaissancenumerique/.
204 "RenaissanceNumerique," *YouTube*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL8uSjjzkoC6zlj_YVGpM7Q.
205 "Pacifiez les discussions sur Internet en adoptant la méthode seriously," *Seriously*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.seriously.ong/.
206 "Seriously: la plateforme d'accompagnement des citoyens pour désamorcer les discours de haine en ligne," *Renaissance Numérique*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.renaissancenumerique.org/work_in_progresses/seriously-la-plateforme-d-accompagnement-des-citoyens-pour-desamorcer-les-discours-de-haine-en-ligne.
207 "Pacifiez les discussions sur Internet en adoptant la méthode seriously," *Seriously*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.seriously.ong/.
208 "Agir Face À La Haine Sur Internet Dans Une Société Collaborative," *Renaissance Numérique*, Jul 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.renaissancenumerique.org/system/attach_files/files/000/000/132/original/Note_Seriously_Juillet2017.pdf?1499764513.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 "Seriously: la plateforme d'accompagnement des citoyens pour désamorcer les discours de haine en ligne," *Renaissance Numérique*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.renaissancenumerique.org/work_in_progresses/seriously-la-plateforme-d-accompagnement-des-citoyens-pour-desamorcer-les-discours-de-haine-en-ligne.

Digital Presence

Seriously has what appears to be a carefully developed website.[213] Renaissance Numérique also runs a Twitter account[214] and a Facebook page,[215] both of which are used to share news and project updates.

Scope & Funding

Seriously is funded by the public Fonds du 11 Janvier, as well as corporate platforms Facebook, Google, and Twitter.[216] Partner organisations include Parle-moi d'Islam, an inter-religious group set up to educate the public about Islam,[217] as well as the Council of Europe.[218]

iii) Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme (AfVT)

Type: Civil society initiative
Following: Facebook – 8.5K[219], Twitter – 1K[220],
Google+ – <0.5K[221]

The Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme (AfVT) was initially founded to help people who had been targeted in terrorist attacks, but has since branched out into preventative projects, too. By amplifying the stories of the victims of terrorism, the initiative aims to deliver an alternative set of narratives around such attacks, one that counters the claims made by extremists.[222]

AfVT's work comprises the hosting of conferences and debates led by victims of terrorism in schools and prisons. It also has a robust presence on social media, which it uses to raise awareness of its projects.[223] In addition to this, the initiative has produced more than 20 videos, each of which provides a voice to victims.[224] AfVT's work is not restricted to any particular kind of extremism.[225]

Evolution & Programme Development

The association was founded in 2009 in response to a bomb attack in Cairo, which killed one and wounded 17 French

213 "Pacifiez les discussions sur Internet en adoptant la méthode seriously," *Seriously*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.seriously.ong/.
214 "RenaissanceNumérique," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://twitter.com/rnumerique.
215 "Renaissance Numérique," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/renaissancenumerique/.
216 Audrey Chabal, "Seriously, L'Outil Pour Renouer Le Dialogue Avec Les Trolls," *Forbes France*, Jul 19, 2017, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://www.forbes.fr/management/seriously-renouer-dialogue-avec-trolls/.
217 "Parle-Moi D'islam – Ensemble, Comprenons L'islam À La Lumière Du Coran Et De La Raison," *Parle-moi d'Islam*, accessed Jul 27, 2017, http://www.parlemoidislam.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnubLBRC_ARIsAASsNNlLfGn9zUdffVRdFl36uGjZ8Q6W83uaRE43nrllxUgEaR_fa6_RrDwaApgHEALw_wcB.
218 "Agir Face À La Haine Sur Internet Dans Une Société Collaborative," *Renaissance Numérique*, Jul 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.renaissancenumerique.org/system/attach_files/files/000/000/132/original/Note_Seriously_Juillet2017.pdf?1499764513.
219 "Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/afvt.org/.
220 "AfVT.org," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://twitter.com/afvt_org.
221 "AssoAFVT," *Google+*, accessed Jul 26, 2017, https://plus.google.com/104367135295010472125.
222 "AFvT," *Counter-Narrative Toolkit*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.counternarratives.org/html/case-studies-entry?id=5.
223 "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Delivering counter – or alternative narratives," *Radicalisation Awareness Network*, 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/delivering_alternative_narratives_en.pdf.
224 Ibid.
225 "L'AfVT.org : une association incontournable pour les victimes du terrorisme," *AfVT*, accessed Jul 10, 2017, http://www.afvt.org/qui-sommes-nous-vocation/.

schoolchildren.[226] Its programmes appear to be developed based on a combination of intuition and research, grounded in the assumption that, at some point in time, every terrorist has to have gone through a phase of radicalisation. It is this phase that AfVT seeks to interrupt through projects like Diplomatie des Victimes du Terrorisme (DVT), which incorporates the voices of victims of terrorism into counter-radicalisation messaging.[227]

Monitoring & Evaluation

AfVT's primary target audience is young people in France, but it also works with families and prisoners.[228] It appears to evaluate success based on levels of activity and outreach, but has not provided further details as to how it measures success, whether that be in regard to challenging extremism or changing minds.

Digital Presence

AfVT has a regularly updated website,[229] Facebook page,[230] Google+ account,[231] and Twitter profile.[232]

Scope & Funding

The organisation has an ambitious mission statement, one that requires substantial and sustained funding. This it receives from the French government and the European Commission.[233] Some of its other partners have included the Fondation d'Aide aux Victimes du Terrorisme, the Mayor of Paris, and the Iraqi embassy in France.[234]

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226 Dina Kraft, "Cairo bomb: Western tourists targeted in attack," *The Telegraph*, Feb 22, 2009, accessed Jul 17, 2017, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/4783263/Cairo-bomb-Western-tourists-targeted-in-attack.html.
227 "La Diplomatie Des Victimes Du Terrorisme (Dvt) Comme Moyen De Prévention," *AfVT*, accessed Jul 27, 2017, https://www.afvt.org/actions-prevention-description/.
228 "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Delivering counter – or alternative narratives," *Radicalisation Awareness Network*, 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/delivering_alternative_narratives_en.pdf.
229 "AfVT," accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.afvt.org/.
230 "Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme," *Facebook*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/afvt.org/.
231 "AssoAFVT," *Google+*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://plus.google.com/104367135295010472125.
232 "AfVT.org," *Twitter*, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://twitter.com/afvt_org.
233 "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Delivering counter – or alternative narratives," *Radicalisation Awareness Network*, 2017, accessed Jul 17, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/delivering_alternative_narratives_en.pdf.
234 "Partenaires Institutionnels," *AfVT*, accessed Jul 27, 2017, https://www.afvt.org/partenaires-institutionnels/.

Discussion

As illustrated above, there is a significant amount of variance in counter-speech and CE practices at the national and subnational levels. In this section, we briefly discuss our findings, pointing out as we go aspects of the programmes that appear to be most fruitful.

i)   National Comparison

In the United Kingdom, the specifics of governmental activities are more difficult to discern than they are in, say, France, where Stop-Djihadisme has asserted something of a monopoly over the CE space. By contrast, in Germany, the government appears to engage in fewer direct CE campaigns, preferring instead to foster and facilitate grassroots efforts through funding initiatives. It is beyond the scope of this review to judge which model works best, but it does appear that the counter-speech and CE landscape in Germany is the richest out of the three countries analysed.

In all three countries, think-and-do tanks play a fundamental role, comprising some of the more sophisticated and ambitious campaigns out there. While the likes of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Renaissance Numérique and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation dominate the think-and-do scene, there are many others operating in the same space, focusing their efforts on more targeted downstream aspects of CE work. Differentiating think-and-do tanks from many government or civil society initiatives is their robust M&E efforts, the sum of which allows for a greater level of innovation and logistical sophistication. In short, through rigorous auto-evaluation, think-and-do tanks appear to be better able to realise ambitious programming objectives. Moreover, the better they can account for tangible effects, the more appealing they are to potential donors. It is apparent, for example, from the global scope of ISD's efforts, that there are significant economies of scale to be tapped into in the world of CE. Through business acumen and careful structuring, some CE think-and-do tanks have even been able to facilitate the entrance of grassroots counter-speech activists into the fray.

Assisted by other sectors, the best grassroots initiatives are characterised by low-cost, high-impact digital activism. Due to their indirect and fluid nature, civil society-led efforts tend not to spend much time measuring effectiveness – or, at least, they do not use M&E in the same way that think-and-do tanks do. As such, it is notoriety and general appeal that allows them optimal impact. In France, this aspect of the counter-speech landscape was noticeably less developed than it was in, say, Germany, where myriad anti-hate speech groups have emerged over the years. Based on national trends, it would appear that there is a correlation between government proactivity and societal attitudes towards grassroots counter-speech. Put simply, the more a government embraces CE messaging initiatives, and the more it engages with third party organisations to encourage and foster such activities, the deeper the roots – and impact – of spontaneous civil society activism.

ii)   Subnational Comparison

Having set out the major differences at the national level, it serves to touch upon some of the key strengths and weaknesses of each case study.

Our first case, the English Disco Lovers, is marked by its broad appeal and humorous, innovative approach towards counter-speech. As a movement that simply wanted to be better known online than its acronym-sake, the English Defence League, its ambitions are both achievable and sustainable. It is this beauty of simplicity that captures the EDL's greatest success – directly because of its simple approach, costs are kept down and it is easy to manage.

The humoristic foundations of the EDL are reflected in some of the more sophisticated CE fundraising campaigns in Germany, like HassHilft, ProKopfGeldSpende and #NazisAgainstNazis, each of which uses creative guerrilla methods to sabotage proponents of hate speech. What renders their approaches so effective is that they do not ask much of the audience – rather, participation is both invited and appealing, because the barriers to entry are low and people engage with things they find amusing. This idea also appears to lie at the core of Datteltäter's programming, which goes further than the EDL and HassHilft by creating content that educates as well as amuses.

While they serve as important social arbiters of popular non-compliance with the rise of hate speech, humour-based campaigns are somewhat limited in their overall impact. A more lasting impression is likely to arise from the research-informed, education- and outreach-based initiatives facilitated by the likes of London Tigers, the Association francais des Victimes du Terrorisme, and #NichtEgal. Operating further upstream in the radicalisation process – preventing rather than countering – the projects of these organisations are more strategic in their outlook, geared towards stopping violent extremism from taking root rather than competing with it after it already has. With that in mind, it should not come as a surprise that these programmes have online *and* offline manifestations – vulnerable communities are less easy to access over the Internet than is often assumed.

One notable exception is the Institute for Strategic Dialogue's One to One Initiative, which revolves entirely around Internet-based interaction with people who have been identified as overtly sympathetic with extremist causes. By exposing at-risk individuals to former extremists – i.e., people who were once extremists but subsequently disavowed the ideology – initiatives like this one have great potential as downstream interventions. However, while potentially effective in a small number of cases, direct outreach must be bespoke, and is thus difficult to scale.

Tangentially related to this is Seriously, Renaissance Numerique's counter hate speech website. While it alone is incapable of solving a problem as complex as extremism, it would be wrong to imagine that this is its goal. Rather, what Seriously brings to the table that few others do is a fusion of education and empowerment – through its online portal, users are not just equipped with a means of responding to individual contentions that they find abhorrent. Rather, they are also coached in critical thinking and argumentation, rhetorical tools that are invaluable to resilience-building and long-term counter-radicalisation efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This review has offered an exploratory comparative study of a range of European counter-speech and CE initiatives. The sample was deliberately varied such that readers could grasp the extent to which CE and counter-speech practices vary both nationally and subnationally.

Among other things, the review indirectly drew attention to a disparity between counter- CE activities in the UK, Germany, and France, each of which face a similarly significant challenge from Far-Right and Islamist extremism. Germany appears to have the most organic and sophisticated ecology, coupled with a relatively interventionist government. Indeed, public proactivity seems to have had a demonstrable effect on the counter-speech landscape as a whole. The German context, which is relatively similar to that of the UK, stands in contrast to France, which has a government that appears more focused on direct intervention than in seeding control to others. While this approach does have some advantages – not least the fact that it grants access to vulnerable communities in schools and prisons – it has its drawbacks, too.

The framework we developed to facilitate this study is easily replicable, and it would benefit practitioners, policymakers, and researchers alike to expand this sample such that it encompasses a larger collection of organisations and activist groups. As Jenson and Rodgers note, "comparisons [between case studies] are made in an attempt to tease out generalizations about an underlying commonality reflecting a policy, process, program, or decision."[235] It follows that an expanded sample could yield greater insights as to what factors act as enablers in the field of counter-speech, as well as what practices organisations and activists at all levels should avoid.

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235 Jason L. Jensen and Robert Rodgers, "Cumulating the Intellectual Gold of Case Study Research,"
      Public Administration Review 61:2 (2001), 238.

Based on this preliminary study, we have derived five key recommendations for counter-speech organisations in their nascent and developmental stages.

1. M&E Matters

Monitoring and evaluation metrics are crucial commodities in counter-extremism work. Where possible, counter-speech initiatives should always try to develop effective M&E metrics, ideally before their respective projects even launch. It goes without saying that, depending on the specific focus of the initiative in question, these metrics look very different – there can be no one-size-fits-all evaluation measure.

Within reason, it would serve counter-speech initiatives to make their M&E efforts visible to the public. Doing so would not only facilitate the sharing of best practices, but would also elevate the project's credibility, something that could stand to attract more attention from potential funding partners.

2. Be Creative

Activists should use their imagination when thinking about developing counter-speech campaigns. When violent extremists devise communication strategies, they think big. By prioritising creativity and favouring innovation, groups like the Islamic State have been able to use propaganda to elevate their marginal causes to global notoriety, thereby enabling them to secure recruits and donations from across the world.

Counter-speech initiatives would do well to learn from this. If they too foster and reward creativity, their ability to counter extremism could be significantly amplified. Unusual and clever campaigns invite audience participation and have a greater tendency to go viral – while these are not strictly necessary to all counter-speech efforts, they almost always bolster campaign potential and reach.

3. Think Obliquely

Activists must always try to think outside of the box. Too often, counter-speech activism limits itself to providing direct responses to claims made in extremist propaganda. While important in their own right, campaigns that are strictly reactive are only effective to an extent. Put simply, if they are only ever responding, they do not have the ability to prevent extremism from taking root in the first place. By limiting themselves to arguing with extremist claims, counter-speech groups risk inadvertently giving their narratives recognition, and thereby validating them.

In order to circumvent this issue, counter-speech initiatives should think about how they can engage in both reactive *and* proactive measures – it is not enough to just reject extremist claims on a case-by-case basis, the systems of belief from which they emerge need to be undermined too. This latter area of activism is more difficult to engage in, and requires an indirect and strategic approach, a path that may not be obvious at first sight.

4.   Calibrate Carefully

Good counter-speech is targeted counter-speech. While it may be tempting to cast the net as widely as possible with a given campaign, doing so is rarely a good idea. If the project in question is designed to have universal appeal – i.e., to resonate with counter-extremists, current-extremists and everyone in between – it will almost certainly fail to achieve this aim.

By identifying specific target audiences and limiting ambition, counter-speech activists stand to maximise their overall efficacy because they are better able to ensure that their message resonates. With this in mind, activists and organisations alike should make an effort to calibrate their activities as carefully as possible.

5.   Don't Overcomplicate

No counter-speech campaign has the ability to singlehandedly solve the manifold challenges presented by extremism. However, both directly and indirectly, the aggregate impact of counter-speech activities could make a massive difference. Activists should recognise that this the case and, as a result, be aware that their campaigns do not need to cover all bases.

Through simple structuring and realistic targeting, counter-speech activists and organisations can work together in unison, offering the holistic response required to meaningfully and systematically challenge extremism across the spectrum.

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