

**The German invention of leftwing extremism in 2009 –
the importance of party-political narratives for radicalisation
awareness.**

Harald Weilnböck

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Extended Summary –

The paper values the Northern Irish 'Challenge Hate Crime' project which systematically approached issues of violent extremism and sectarianism by both developing targeted social interventions and discussing party-political and media discourses. These discourses, while being non-extremist but possibly polarizing in their effects, have proved immensely important for any on the ground anti-hate-crime and 'deradicalization' work. Most European governments, however, hesitate to address extremism, hate crime and human rights violations in a clear, bi-partisan and self-conscious manner.

Here the paper focuses on Germany's conservative party-political discourses which had always tended to deny or downplay the threat of neo-Nazism and xenophobic incidents – especially in the eastern states' rural areas and small towns after reunification. The case of Mügeln explores how and why especially local mayors are caught in denial and fear and how party-political rhetoric has counter-productive impact.

By contrast, social-democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder through his "Uprising of the Decent" initiative had launched a comprehensive federal Prevent Program against 'Rightwing Extremism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism' in 2000. However, the following chancellorship of Christian democrat Angela Merkel surprisingly decided to kick off a program against "leftwing extremism", which most experts agreed is neither un-constitutional nor does it amount to a serious threat of group-related hate crime/ terrorism in Germany today – or else is a sizable need of specialized youth social work. Moreover, the government decreed a mandatory Democracy Declaration (or "extremism clause") to be signed by NGOs. Quite irrational and insubstantial concerns seemed at work, that hate crime prevent work could 'utilize leftwing extremist means'. This effectively denigrated and alienated those civil society activists who – often at the risk of being personally harassed and injured – facilitate this kind of work on the ground.

The historic analysis of conservative party-political rhetoric since World War II can demonstrate that, while both the program and the extremism clause have quite embarrassingly failed, they followed an old and quite effective pattern of: 'Blame everything on leftwing violent extremists, and claim that rightwing extremism or neo-Nazi terror is not an issue in Germany'. This can be shown to characterize Helmut Kohl's chancellorship (1982-1998), his concept of the "spiritual-moral turn-around", the "mercy of late birth", his wreath ceremony at an SS officers cemetery together with Ronald Reagan (Bitburg 1985), and with the notorious Historian's Dispute from 1986/87 in which conservative Ernst

Nolte attempted to offset – and in part excuse – Germany’s National Socialism of the Third Reich by Stalinism and the “red army” which were perceived to precede and provoke Nazism.

As to terrorism discourses, after the 1980 Munich Oktober-Fest bombing, the Christian-conservative Bavarian CSU and its outstanding leader Strauß attempted to blame it on leftwing extremist RAF-terrorist, on east German ‘Stasi’, Russian ‘KGB’ and/or on Gaddafi, while knowing and illegally concealing (basically up to last year) ample evidence about the assassin’s close ties to the neo-Nazi terrorist Hoffmann group. The group wanted to influence the upcoming elections in favor of CSU candidate Strauß.

Tragically, through this rhetoric of Blaming-the-left and Denying-the-neo-Nazi-threat, the Hoffmann group felt so assured that it proceeded to assassinate their enemy Shlomo Levin, a nationally renowned Jewish author from Nürnberg only weeks after the Munich bombing. Already at the hostage-taking and killing of the Israeli Olympic team at the Games in 1972 in Munich by the Palestinian “Black September” movement it was widely suggested that leftist RAF terrorists helped preparing it while intelligence services knew this wasn’t the case and, instead, neo-Nazi individuals had assisted the Palestinians.

In recent years this discourse pattern of Blaming-the-left has been powerfully resurrected by the so-called New Bourgeoisie and bestselling authors like Peter Hahne who attributed all sorts of perceived and real problems (decrease of birthrate, breakdown of social welfare, ‘crisis of education’, loss of ‘roots’ and ‘values’, lack of foreigner integration etc.) on the so-called 1968 generation of the ‘student revolution’ days. Other authors of the New Bourgeoisie like Thilo Sarrazin blamed the Muslims. The New Bourgeoisie’s mostly insubstantial and irrational discourses – and resentments – coincide with the New Right, the intellectual branch of extremist rightwing organizations. Above all, when turned into actual policy-making by conservative administrations – e.g. the “leftwing extremism” program and financial cuts for anti hate crime work (the Miteinander NGO) – these discourses inadvertently have highly detrimental effects for any on the ground efforts to reduce hate crime and violent extremism especially among the young.

In consequence, when conservative politicians and New Bourgeoisie authors were busy in their discourse of Blaming-leftwing-extremists (and or Muslims) and Denying-rightwing-extremism-threats – and when renowned national newspapers began referring to anti-gentrification and similar civil society activists as “leftwing extremists” –, something unexpected and yet quite foreseeable had evolved up to 2011: A neo-Nazi murder gang under the name

of “National Socialist Underground” had been covertly active for more the ten years, committing random cold-blooded ethnic murders in execution style – which the media deplorably labeled “Kebab-Killings” –, producing denigrating videos about their victims, conducting bank robberies, and living safely in the midst of east German state Saxony amongst its support circles. Intelligence services and criminal police failed – moreover, it was found that services recently destroyed relevant files.

Despite all this, since this shocking discovery from last year, nothing has changed in governmental rhetoric and policies. The center-right government decidedly continued its controversial leftwing extremism program, and local administrations still deny any neo-Nazism threats in their communities as they have done before.

The paper ends by emphasizing how unchanging and irrational party-political and media discourses may be – even when being disproved by empirical evidence. It then formulates its key question: What could possibly be done in order to render more resilient and more responsible these public discourses in view of vitally important societal issues as terrorism, extremism, and hate crime prevention. Here the author suggests to collaborate with the newly inaugurated EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). As a first step exemplary case stories should be collect about what logic party-political discourses on hate crime and extremism(s) follow throughout different EU Member States and what consequences they have for the local prevent work – and for safeguarding human rights and free democratic societies.

1. The example of Northern Ireland – the necessity to address violent extremism by social interventions and political (media) discourses.

The relevance which Northern Ireland's Confront Hate Crime project (CHC) has for any future initiative of preventing violent extremism in Europe cannot be overestimated: For, the CHC project has been unique in Europe so far in approaching issues of hate crime on two crucial levels concomitantly: (i) on the level of specialized social work interventions in prison and community with offenders and at-risk young people – regarding sectarian hate crime in particular – and (ii) on the level of the public discourses on sectarianism and hate crime issues as they appear, most prominently, in political parties' statements and in the media. Dealing with these two sides of the issue in tandem has proven to be of crucial importance since both areas of analysis, intervention and capacity building are very much interconnected and cross-influence each other in many ways.

What is said about violent extremism by the political leaders, in media discourses, any by the administrative authorities of a country – and how issues of hate crime and human rights violations are dealt with in public speech – has often proven to be essential. These discourses immediately bear on any intervention programs that attempt to reduce hate crime and extremism on the ground. Moreover, they directly influence the amount and degree of hate crime incidents that actually occur in a society. Above all, however, political and media discourse directly lead up to actual policy making about issues of prevention and intervention against hate crime and violent extremism.

Hence, we need to understand: Acts of hate crime and violent extremism, while they are perpetrated only by few, are a systemic phenomenon. They always regard the whole society in a much more direct and intense manner than any other sort of crime does. Hate crime, thus, is interconnected with many sectors and actors of a society – and many sectors and actors have to come together and contribute in order to achieve sustainable successes in reducing extremism and radicalization and strengthen civil society's resilience.

Hence, the results of the CHC project have powerfully underlined that any European initiative on Radicalization Awareness needs to take into account the key importance that party-political and media discourses have for any initiative on the ground that attempts to promote hate crime awareness and build resilient societies. In particular, the CHC project's cooperation with the Radicalization Awareness Network (EU Brussels, Home Affairs) – and its

Working Group on 'Firstline Deradicalisation' – has made it evident: Any given country that sets out to develop a program of preventing violent extremism, recruitment and hate crime, needs to address these two aspects – developing/ implementing deradicalisation methods on the one hand and addressing political and media discourses about issues of extremism on the other – in tandem and concurrently.

In the face of this overall insight it proved particular important to recognize the fact, that governments, party politicians and the media of most European countries hesitate to address issues of extremism, hostility, and hate crime in a clear, rational, unambiguous, bi-partisan and self-conscious manner. Moreover, governments and political parties have the tendency to actively deny or downplay incidents of hate crime and extremism, in particular if nationalist and rightwing extremism and xenophobic, ethnic and gender related hate crime are at stake (except maybe of acts with an Islamist background that tend to be highlighted by the media). This has always been this way – not only in Germany and Northern Ireland but throughout most Western countries/ cultures.

Hence, denial of hate crime through public and media discourses will remain a major focus of concern for anyone who sets out to reduce the level of violent extremism and build societies that are resilient and conscious of the key importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Hence, whoever ambitions to promote a sustainable national strategy to counter violent political and religious extremism will have to make sure – like the Northern Irish Confront Hate Crime project did – that s/he devotes attention and means to working with the public discourses that regard these issues.

Following up on the example of Northern Ireland, this paper will look at current party-political and media discourses on extremism and hate crime in Germany. In conclusion the question will be raised of what kind of measures could possibly be taken not only in terms of radicalization awareness and policy making but also in terms of the accompanying party-political and media discourses – a difficult question indeed since, evidently, in a free and democratic societies we will never want to tell media and politicians what to say and how to speak in public about any issue, let alone about violent extremism.

xxx 2. Party-political discourse on extremism in Germany

The example of Germany up to the very present of the years 2011 and 2012 attests to the high relevance of political and media discourse in many ways. Before referring to Britta Schellenberg's and others' work on German rightwing extremism over the last twenty years (published in 2009), the more recent developments in public discourse and policy making need to be looked at. To be sure, the most stunning news in November 2011 that a neo-Nazi murder gang under the name of "National-Socialist Underground" (NSU) had been active in Germany committing cold blooded ethnic murders during a time period of about ten years, without being caught and even without anyone of public standing mentioning and discussing the possibility of these murders to be rightwing terrorist xenophobic attacks, has sent shock waves through Germany – which, however, have mostly abated since. And yet, the issues of political and media discourse that need to be mentioned here with regard to the last two or three years would have been all the same.

Particularly relevant to this paper are the ways in which political, administrative and media discourses tend to downplay and deny the scale of rightwing violent extremism and hate crime in various sectors of social life on the ground. To be sure, throughout post-World War history rightwing extremism, and the attached phenomena of smaller-scale everyday neo-Nazi terror on the local level, have always been downplayed or denied by the political discourses – of the 'conservative', center-right political parties, that is. For a multitude of reasons this holds especially true for the rhetoric on rightwing extremism in the new Eastern German states after reunification in 1989. In these states a significant up-search of local neo-Nazi and nationalist-xenophobic subcultures was experienced from 1989 onwards – including massive xenophobic community rioting against ethnic minorities (which already were quite small and isolated in the GDR) broadly reported on by the international media (e.g. in Mölln, Rostock, Solingen, Hoyerswerda). Since then the number of incidents with a rightwing extremist motivation has always been roughly double of that in the western states that formed the pre-reunification Federal Republic of Germany.

Especially in recent years – during which a center-rightwing government has been in office since Angela Merkel became chancellor in 2005 (until 2009 in a 'big coalition' with the social democratic party) – political and other public discourses have again increased their rhetoric of downplaying and denying the scale of rightwing violent extremism and hate crime in eastern regions. This occurred despite the fact that some 150 people, at least, were killed over the last 20 years in Germany as a result of incidents of a violently xenophobic,

hostile and/or rightwing extremist nature¹ – leaving thousands seriously injured and traumatized and countless communities at-risk, facing some level of constant anxiety. Quite tellingly, the death toll of 150 which has been determined through independent foundations' research has never been recognized by official statistics, which count roughly four dozens of such casualties. Hence, the people killed and tens of thousands injured in hate crime incidents of this kind since 1989 were not properly recognized as victims of rightwing violent extremism and neo-Nazi everyday terror – and public discourse did not properly refer to the causes of their death or harm.

Besides federal party-politics and national news media, it is above all local politics' discourses where this kind of rhetoric unfolds most intensely. Moreover, the conservative/ centre-right party-discourses which are the main focus of this paper, on many accounts almost seem to be designed to serve these local contexts – and have counter-productive effects for anyone working against hate crime on the ground in vulnerable areas of social life. In this regard, the case of small town Mügeln in Saxony in summer 2007 comes to mind as characteristic example of the rhetoric within centre-right parties' discourses on the community level – which in similar ways have occurred countless times over the last two decades: A dangerous xenophobic incident had taken place in Mügeln at that time in which eight persons from Indian decent were chased through the city (after some friction at a public city party) while Nazi slogans were hurled, windows broken, police men attacked, and Kebab stands– being perceived as Turkish places – demolished and set on fire, leaving the eight Indian persons (and two police men) in part seriously injured. And yet, the mayor of Mügeln, Gotthard Deuse, came out immediately after the incident and after the first reactions by national media and “spontaneously denied that the acts of violence in his municipality had any xenophobic or radical right-wing motives” (Schellenberg 223)². The mayor's blunt response, refuting any ethnic or group-related hostility in his community – after roughly 20 years with countless such incidents throughout eastern Germany in particular –, caused international incredulity and lead some federal politicians to distance themselves publicly.

However, the mayor did barely reflect, back-track or rectify his statements – and in that his response was indeed quite typical for many such places and small towns in which municipal representatives, when faced with racist or xenophobic hostility in their community present themselves “as a victim of a

¹ Recent figures are again rising, as do figures about extreme-right and xenophobic attitudes among pupils; see:

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/gewaltstudie-rechtsextremismus-unter-schuelern-alarmiert-regierung-a-613844.html>

² <http://www.rundschau-hd.de/archives/1101/>.

malicious (press) campaign” – in other words: blame others and claim oneself to have been wronged – and pointblank deny any xenophobic or violently rightwing motives on the part of the local population (ibid.). Rather, the incident in the mayor’s view was supposed to just have been ‘normal violence’ – whatever this means – or, should there indeed have been unmistakable neo-Nazi slogans, signs, and gestures, as reported by some, these must have come from people from outside the town. That local would have loudly assisted these slogans, the mayor refuted without having investigated it at all. In consequence of such discourse patterns, local crime victims that try to get help or press charges sometimes face great difficulties to do so and are not assisted at all in a professional manner by local authorities – especially when police officers share xenophobic attitudes, as has been found in some cases especially in eastern regions.³

The reasons for such astonishingly recalcitrant denial especially on the part of local – party-member – representatives are assumed to be a psychologically complex mixture of motivations. These reach from concerns about losing out on possible outside investors – especially international and non-European investors who, for evident reasons, view xenophobia as problematic – and the feeling of local pride about one’s home town/ village, combined with wishful thinking about its population. However, arguably the most important reason is that the party-political persons in public office are widely out of touch with many areas of social life in their community – and above all are personally incapable of even recognizing xenophobia and neo-Nazi terror as such, let alone acting adequately to counter and prevent it. In other words one main reason for this denial and incapacity is: party-political discourses, because only these would be in the position to make the party-political office holder aware of these issues and empower her/him to act in appropriate manners.

This would also encompass practical how-to knowledge about acting in the face of threat. For, other mayors or community representatives of comparable regions and small towns in East Germany report that they just don’t dare to rule against public neo-Nazi marches and similar extremist activities on the part of the local population, or that they just don’t dare to appear at the awareness raising events of some leftover civic society activists that attempt to counter neo-Nazi activities on the ground in their communities – which have been otherwise been unofficially declared to be “foreigner-free zones” by these neo-Nazis. Rather such activists have been and still are routinely harassed, listed in

³ <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/frage/wie-alltaeglich-sind-diskriminierungen-durch-rechtsradikale-polizisten-0>.

the internet, anonymously attacked and seriously injured – sometimes killed in the wake of violent assaults (Der Spiegel 24/2012, pp. 30).

Looking back historically, social-democratic party discourses on issues of extremism, neo-Nazism, and hate crime in Germany have always been different, and somewhat to the contrary – which would indeed deserve some more detailed discussion than is possible here. In any event, during the chancellorship of social-democrat Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005), the only SPD chancellorship during the last 30 years, the initiative “Uprising of the Decent” was inaugurated in 2000, after a synagogue was attacked (in Düsseldorf, West-Germany) which was found out months later to have been committed by two young men from North-Africa and Lebanon out of hatred against Israel. Nevertheless, the “Uprising of the Decent” was always also understood, by center-left citizens and social work practitioners at least, to be a – long overdue – response to the wide-spread mainstream xenophobia and numerous neo-Nazi incidents in East Germany during the 1990s. It almost seemed to have needed the slightly different symbolism provided by an attack on a synagogue in West-Germany for political reasons in order to get this initiative under way smoothly.⁴ Be this as it may, the “Uprising of the Decent” brought about a large Federal Prevent Program against ‘Rightwing Extremism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism’ which funded many interventions of Anti Hate Crime Intervention and Extremism Awareness by roughly 20 million a year⁵ (see Schellenberg for more details⁶).

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⁴ This was preceded by an “Action program against aggression and violence” launched in the 1990s by the Kohl government (with Merkel being responsible for the program) after the above mentioned internationally reported incidents of violent community rioting against ethnic minorities had taken place. Notably, in those days the practitioners were strictly advised by Merkel to completely abstract from and obfuscate the political rightwing extremism and neo-Nazi context of this kind of violence and deal with it as a neutral matter of social work and anti-violence intervention (cf. Franz Josef Krafeld [2012]: “Bedarf es seiner speziellen Pädagogik gegen rechts? Nein, aber!”, in Stephan Bundschuh, Absgar Drücker, Thilo Scholle [ed.]: Jugendarbeit gegen Rechtsextremismus. Motive, Praxisbeispiele und Handlungsperspektiven. Wochenschau-Verlag, Schwalbach.

⁵ E.g. since 2007: http://www.vielfalt-tut-gut.de/content/index_ger.html.

⁶ Britta Schellenberg (2009): Country Report Germany. In: Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe, ed. and published by Bertelsmann Stiftung (Bertelsmann Foundation), Bertelsmann Publishing.

Today, however, in a marked shift from these hopeful years of Federal Programs and Model Projects about how to reduce rightwing extremist hate crime, xenophobia and anti-Semitism especially in post-reunification eastern Germany, today's conservative government took a shift away from the social-democratic party's approach in 2010/11 – and decided to turn towards a different issue altogether (while however not daring to cut the funding for the existing programs on the federal level at least). The new government began to focus on left-wing extremism! The responsible minister came into office in November 2009 (at age 32) and subsequently decided to put out an additional multi-million prevent program against leftwing violent extremism, implicitly turning the main focus away from neo-Nazi hate crime in Germany.

Now, the government did so in spite of the fact that most experts agreed that leftwing violent extremism – if it had at all existed in the proper sense in Germany during the last 20 years – did not in the same way constitute a serious and systematic threat of group related hate crime as neo-Nazi subcultures do. Nor was it extremist in the sense of being un-constitutional on the grounds of their ideological tenets – which undoubtedly holds true for rightwing extremism. Since the far left these days holds mostly anti-capitalist views but is not anti-democratic and certainly not counter fundamental rights. Quite on the contrary it generally is all for human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles. This is not to say that there are not some more or less informal groups in some big cities, the so-called "Autonomous" – or the Black Fraction ["schwarzer Block"], which routinely get into street fights with neo-Nazis and the police. These, however, are deemed by experts to be more an issue of social work than of violent political extremism.

Also the government launched its program while experts warned about how difficult it will be to actually identify and reach a target group perceived as 'young leftwing violent extremists' and to effectively work towards the program's objectives of reducing hate crime in an impactful and economic manner. Looking back on this political endeavor in 2010 from today it can be concluded that the attempt to find and address this target group has indeed failed almost entirely – in part because the target group, indeed, does not exist empirically in the shape and form that was anticipated. Having found but one single person (in a prison) that roughly fits the expectations of the minister, the program has been criticized as ineffective, wasteful and mostly senseless even by the respected Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI) which is perceived to be very close to and is fully funded by the government.⁷

⁷ <http://www.taz.de/!88482/>

Already the party-political discourse in the narrow sense, as spoken by the ministry itself, did not make much sense and seemed quite far-fetched, from the very beginning. From the onset party and government spokespeople seemed eager to use any opportunity to emphasize the leitmotiv of leftwing extremism – also to some extent so-called ‘Islamist fundamentalism’. And while ‘Islamist fundamentalism’ in Germany is indeed a different issue altogether, a common motive in the conservative German government’s discourse about both phenomena seemed to be the loss of a sense of adequate proportion.⁸ Strictly speaking, in some instances this seems to have impaired the intact sense of ‘discourse responsibility’ vis-à-vis the social realities on the ground and of the actual needs of policy making.

The decision to launch a counter leftwing extremism program was by no means taken at the spur of a moment by a very young incoming minister. Rather, the minister just followed through with what was explicitly stated by the coalition agreement drafted when this government (CDU, CSU and FDP) came into office in 2009. Because then it was clearly stated in view of the on-going social-democrats (and the Green party’s) program to counter rightwing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, what in essence has always been any conservative German political party’s stance on this issue: The coalition decided that “the previous government’s program against rightwing extremism will be transformed into a program against extremism(s) at large including leftwing and Islamist extremism.”⁹

Now, historically speaking, the ambition to relativize German rightwing extremism and historical National Socialism of the 3rd Reich by offsetting it – and implicitly in part excusing it – with leftwing violent extremism and historical Stalinism which was perceived to historically precede it – and in a sense provoke – the 3rd Reich and the Holocaust, has always been a dominant ideological theme in German conservative parties’ patterns of thought and

⁸ Besides drawing attention to “left-wing extremism”, some likeminded party-political and media discourses have begun to foregrounds the threats from Islamist and Jihadist groups. While religious fundamentalism, without doubt, constitutes a risk of a quite serious kind it, however, doesn’t mean that one may leave behind any sense of scale and proportion. Schellenberg resumes about one case of such discourse: “Thus, Federal Interior Minister Schäuble announced when presenting the Report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in May 2007 that Islamic terrorism is the greatest threat to Germany’s stability and security, even though the report had more to say about right-wing extremism in Germany (about twice as much as about Islamic terrorism) than about any other topic. There is a danger that the issue of preventing (right-wing) extremism will increasingly be supplanted by the issues of terrorism and (internal) security” (Schellenberg 210).

⁹ <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/022/1702298.pdf>.

discourse. This already showed quite prominently when the first of the two post-war German social-democratic governments ended and was replaced by Helmut Kohl's center-right coalition in 1982 (lasting until 1998). For, the beginning of this period was marked, among other themes, by the notorious Historian's Dispute from 1986/87 (between Ernst Nolte and Jürgen Habermas) in which Nolte put forth this implicitly excusatory line of thought in view of Stalinism and National Socialism.¹⁰ This debate was preceded and accompanied by the incoming conservative chancellor Helmut Kohl coining his well-known phrase of the "spiritual-moral turnaround" ("die geistig-moralische Wende") and – on his obligatory visit to Israel – of the "mercy of late birth" ("Gnade der späten Geburt") meaning that he and his generation were born after the 3rd Reich. Shortly thereafter Kohl conducted a wreath ceremony at a soldiers' cemetery where also known SS officers were buried (in 1985, together with US president Ronald Reagan at Bitburg, Germany). German chancellor Helmut Kohl in his "spiritual-moral turnaround" vis-à-vis the German history of the 3rd Reich, evidently, banked on a new relativizing perspective that allowed for viewing Germany also as victim and not only as perpetrator of early 20th century. In particular, this worldview would see Germany as a victim of Stalinism – perceived as historically preceding National-Socialism – and then later on as victim of Moscow's "red army" occupying east Germany. Moreover, the majority of conservative post-war German population would also subsume "Moskau's communists" to be the driving force behind the 1960s and 70s student revolution.

Hence, even today, over thirty years after Kohl came into office, it needs to be seen in the context of this, quite traditional, party-political rhetoric, when government spokes persons and the young minister make somewhat vague statements to the effect that 'leftwing extremism should not be forgotten nor underrated'. Today, however, in 2010/11 these ever-lasting political themes about the leftist threat fell into a time period in which there not only was no leftwing violent extremism in the proper sense, as already mentioned above. Moreover, even the degree of – perceived leftist – rioting which had always been around especially in Berlin on the occasion of May First demonstrations had just abated substantially. Plus, this decrease in rioting might have occurred for reasons which could raise questions about what kind of extremism it really is one would need to talk about in terms of these riots. For, the Berlin May First demonstrations seem to have become much more peaceful as a result of changes in police strategy which from then on included de-escalation methods and community policing. This strategic change in policing can in turn be attributed to the fact that for some years there had been never fully

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Nolte#The_Historikerstreit.

investigated accusation by journalists that Berlin and national riot police leaders consciously provoked violent escalations at May First demonstrations so that the necessity of their current level of funding was vividly underlined for future years.

Hence, the vague and ominous statement that 'leftwing extremism should not be forgotten or underrated' seems strangely out of place in 2010/11 – as was the governmental program. Even odder seems another statement which one could hear on various occasions, namely that whenever one needs to counter rightwing extremism, 'this then should by all means not be done by utilizing leftwing extremism'. xx Now, the concept of 'utilizing leftwing extremism' in countering rightwing extremism seems quite nonsensical indeed. There has never been a method in practice which pursues human rights awareness work or hate crime prevention by means of leftwing violent extremist thoughts or actions – nor is such a method really conceivable in the first place. All the more this begs the question of what exactly motivates this and similar statements.

In any event, all these observations about the oddity, costliness, and idiosyncrasy of the conservative party-political discourse on leftwing violent extremism are mentioned here because they help to render more visible the high charge of irrationality and ideology – also of trans-generational delegations of ideological discourses onto a young minister – that was moving this governmental program from the very beginning. More precisely speaking, it makes clearer the importance and impact that party-political discourses have. For, as far-fetched and wasteful as this program evidently was (and still is), it both sprang from political discourses and in turn had lasting repercussions on the political discourse of the time. In this respect, the program had an immensely discourse-formative power on the manner in which not only conservative politicians but also wider parts of the general public and the media in Germany began to think and talk about extremism. – Above all, however, this new discourse would, as we will see further below, turn out to have quite detrimental consequences for anyone who concretely deals with radicalization and hate crime in social work on the ground.

With the rhetoric of the media it could be observed, for example, that some respected national newspapers started to refer to anti-gentrification activists – or comparable sorts of community and civil society activists – as "leftwing extremists" because sometimes damage on houses or cars occurred in the wake of their political initiative (e.g. Berliner Tagesspiegel 20.3.12, 'Linksextremisten vertreiben Guggenheim aus Kreuzberg'). Hence, the generalized blame of being a "leftwing extremists" took hold of the lingo of heretofore level-handed national newspapers. This particularly was true in the press coverage on a

series of car burnings – mostly in Berlin and Hamburg – that occurred during 2010 and 2011.

Already on the level of the statement's factuality this was not a precise reference, to say the least. Even local police forces were quick to observe and communicate that most cases of burning cars in 2010 and 2011 had nothing to do with any political activism or ideology. Rather, these acts seem to have been committed by a quite little number of singular persons from no particular political orientation, all of whom were affected by a complex set of personal and family problems. For instance, one person that, in the end, was found guilty of having put fire to roughly one hundred cars in Berlin in summer 2011 – which the press widely and sensationally reported about as acts of leftwing extremists – a couple of month later had turned out to be a workless person who was entirely apolitical but had resinous social and mental health problems. He was living with his handicapped sister and his cancer-sick mother in a little Berlin flat – and also was engaged as a missionary for the Mormons (bz-berlin.de, 3.4.12). A year later a quite similar case emerged in court trails about a middle age citizen of Hamburg being strongly suspected of having set fire to over a hundred and ten cars in Hamburg (Hamburger Abendblatt 13.8.2012). Moreover, it appeared in a recent trails that rightwing violent extremists were at least in one instance be found to have burning car enlisted in their measures of harassing human rights and anti extremism activists.¹¹

Since the issue of car burnings has been the one key issue through which this kind of political discourse about a so-called "leftwing violent extremism" connected best to a wider public in 2010/11, the government – already on this single account – needs to ask itself whether it has acted in a responsible manner when it put forth its cross-the-board rhetoric of "leftwing extremism" discourses.

xxx 3. The discourse of the 'New Bourgeoisie' and its negative consequences for radicalization awareness and societal resilience

Remarkably, the ease with which these discourse patterns – and policies – around "leftwing violent extremism" can be proven to be factually misleading, far-fetched, and out-of-touch with reality, and above all the fact that they in part can even be demonstrated to be absurd or ignorant, is quite astonishing indeed. For, politicians usually pay a price for being out-of-touch and even more

¹¹ <http://www.taz.de/Neonazis-vor-Gericht/!100011/>

so if caught acting in absurd or ignorant ways. This begs an explanation as to why such high political risks were incurred – in other words: where the political gains are in these out-of-touch discourses on “leftwing violent extremism” in Germany in 2010/11.

Having a look into the recent history of societal discourses during the last decade in Germany may provide some insight. At the same time it will once again underline the importance which party-political rhetoric has especially with regard to issues of extremism and hate crime. Above all, it will become quite clear: Whatever the political calculations were on the part of this German government, the actual losses and damages for any on the ground work of reducing hate crime and supporting societal resilience, especially among the young, are substantial.

The key sources of political gains that this conservative government may plausibly expect to tap into by its “leftwing violent extremism” theme are hardly discernible with the naked eye. For, it most probably was not its main intention to win the support of rightwing extremist organizations which did, of course, lavishly herald – and celebrate – the minister’s new program (and at least once seem to have attempted to apply for governmental funds to work against “leftwing extremism”). Rather, the key sources of political gains lie somewhat more towards the center of the political spectrum – and rarely express themselves in fully spelled out political or ideological language, or in writing, for that matter.

However, there has recently been at least one high profile author who has quite expressively come forth with a kind of political discourse which seems to resonate with certain aspects of the government’s vague – and peculiarly far-fetched – assumptions about “leftwing violent extremism”: conservative-Christian top journalist Peter Hahne in his 2006 book on ‘The End of the Fun Society’ (“Schluss mit lustig. Das Ende der Spaßgesellschaft”). This book and its arguments have then provisionally been labeled, for want of a better word, the rhetoric of the New Bourgeoisie – meaning a kind of political worldview that formerly wasn’t recognized as part of the mainstream but nowadays represented a section of mostly center-right, conservative, educated middle aged and young citizens.

Especially, this book helps to understand what might be behind the odd fear that somebody could ‘utilize leftwing extremism’ when working against hate crime and neo-Nazism. It sheds light on why that fear seems so strong and irrationally charged, almost like a panic that envisions a general leftist cultural threat that is not only extremist and violent but, in some way, even more

existentially earthshaking and all-destructive – throwing Germany and its “values” into a void of absolute nothingness. For, Peter Hahne in his best-selling book recurrently – and almost somewhat obsessively – revolves around one single hypothesis: that the so-called 1968 generation of the times of the ‘extra-parliamentary opposition’ and the ‘student revolution’ mark the beginning of the end of German culture and “roots”. Hence, in the eyes of Peter Hahne and his followers it are the protagonists of this 1968 generation that are to be blamed for every problem and illness of present German society. Because, it was the 1968ers who, through their leftist way of life – and one may safely add: through their ‘sort of leftist-extremist’ way of life – are the cause of all problems.

To mention just a couple of Hahne’s key points¹²: (i) the decline of the birth rate in Germany is due to the overly hedonistic and egotistical ‘self-fulfillment ideology’ (“Selbstverwirklichung”) of this generation, (ii) an alleged ‘crisis of education and up-brining’ was caused by the 1968ers’ anti-authoritarian education ideology which let go of values and virtues of leadership, cultural tradition, discipline, self-sacrifice, devotion, and similar values etc., (iii) the break-down of the social welfare system Hahne attributes to the inherent laziness of this generation and their reluctance to strive for high-performance and merit, and (iv) their pro-diversity pluralistic ideology is to be blamed for the evident lack of integration of ‘foreigners’ in German society, since the students’ promiscuous “Multi-Kulti”-attitude had effectively kept the ‘foreigners’ from learning German values and standards.

It goes without saying, in this world view of the New Bourgeoisie which attributes all sorts of real and perceived problems to one single root cause – here: a leftist culture since 1986 –, even violent rightwing and neo-Nazi extremism would somehow be automatically attributed to this cause.¹³ Hence, this most simple logic of discourse is: Leftists – or “leftwing extremists” – are to be blamed for everything. And should there, in fact, be both rightwing and

¹² According to Christian Ricken’s quintessential review from the 3rd Dec., 2006, on <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/wertedebatte-feindbild-68-a-453979.html>.

¹³ Another even more well-known protagonist of a similar New Bourgeoisie discourse may be seen in Theo Sarrazin and his book ‘Deutschland schafft sich ab’ (which Wikipedia translates to “Germany Is Doing Away With Itself” or “Germany Is Abolishing Itself”). However, having come from the social-democratic party Sarrazin does not narrow in on leftism but on Muslims. Sarrazin’s recurrent theme, thus, is that Germany is taken over by Muslim migrant populations which lower all standards and cause all sorts of social problems – statements which have since been proven as erroneous, misleading and far-fetched in terms of empirical reality as Hahne’s theses and the government’s assumptions about leftwing violent extremism are. But Sarrazin has received as much – or even more – public resonance in terms of leading best-selling lists and public debates in Germany.

leftwing extremism in the world, than the latter is, by nature, the far more serious problem because it is at the very root of the problem. In other words, the leftwing extremism of today – following Bolshevism, Stalinism, and other leftisms since the 19th century (as Nolte had it in his *Historians Dispute with Habermas*) – is the source from which all other extremisms and all hate crime sprang in the first place.

For a more inspirational and creative – but still quite substantial – interpretation of Peter Hahne’s book and the New Bourgeoisie’s discourse which it thrives on, one may want to click the Google pop-up rubric “It’s all the student revolution’s fault” (“68er allem schuld”). Doing so, will most vividly – and creatively – bring to mind how much these quite willful – and far-fetched – arguments about leftist radicalism tap into thought patterns of the so-called New Right, the intellectual branch of extremist rightwing political organizations like the NPD and comparable rightwing extremist parties, and, moreover, show rhetorical parallels to far-rightist and anti-Semitic discourses around emerging National-Socialism in the 1930s. For, clicking this Google rubric (in August 2012) one gets to two you-tube videos that appear right next to each other on top of the link list: (1) comedian Rainald Grebe’s satiric song on the New Bourgeoisie’s theme of the student revolution generation to be the beginning of the end of German culture and values (“Die Achtundsechziger sind an allem schuld”, ‘The generation-68 is to blame for everything’¹⁴) which gives a good summary of the gist of this discourse and (2) a video on the musical model upon which Grebe had build his song, thus drawing attention to the risks of violent anti-Semitic hate crime that seem to be attached to these kinds of thought patterns. This musical model is the satiric chanson “An allem sind die Juden schuld” (“The Jews are to blame for everything”), written by German composer Friedrich Hollaender in 1931.¹⁵

At this point, one thing becomes clear at last: The governmental program against “leftwing violent extremism” – albeit evidently far-fetched and in some respects even ignorant – really marked a decisive point in political history. For, the minister’s program marked the moment in which certain aspects of the – heretofore off-stream – political discourse of the New Bourgeoisie, and of the New Right, were transformed into mainstream discourse and thus resulted in actual policies.

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq1NXasIraA>

¹⁵ Friedrich Hollaender is one of the characteristic figures of the political cabaret scene around Max Reinhardt in Berlin in the 1920s and emigrated in 1933; his song follows a tune from Bizets opera “Carmen” and was presented by Annemarie Hase.

All the more evident it becomes how serious these issues of party-political discourse have to be taken and how much we should ask whether there is not a need to think about a concept of "discursive responsibility" pertaining to all issues of extremism and hate crime and a need to formulate a "code of ethics and discourse" regarding these issues – at least for those occasions when they are dealt with on the level of governmental rhetoric and of actual policy making.

xxx 4. Do we need 'political discourse responsibility'? Comparing the Danish context – "leftwing violent extremism" versus "far left-wing activist environment"

A somewhat more balanced and responsible approach to dealing with discourse issues of "leftwing violent extremism" is taken by the Danish booklet series on "Preventing Extremism" – produced during the Danish presidency of the EU Council in 2012. And yet, even there, some questions may be asked in terms of the implications that the booklet has regarding matters of political discourse.

For, one of the 5 booklets describes "14 cases of handling radicalization" from a practitioners' and social workers' point of view. And one of these 14 cases regards a 12-year old girl with ties to "a far left-wing activist environment". Hence, this environment is here not (!) called a "leftwing extremist" as the German newspaper quoted above labels a comparable environment in Berlin. The booklet calls it an "activist" environment – and overall foregrounds a rather empathic social worker attitude in all five booklets of the series. However, the case of the 12-year old girl – with many serious family and school troubles – is, here, still placed within a publication on "Preventing Extremism" (!). In the year 2012 this generally implies "violent extremism/ terrorism" which is aimed at abolishing human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles as Jihadism and neo-Nazism would do.

Also, the two cases which the booklet mentions before the case of the girl regard "Mentoring a young football fan affiliated with the right-wing extremist environment" and "Counseling of parents of a young man involved in an Islamist movement". Moreover, among the other cases of the booklet one finds "Mentoring and counseling of a man with an interest in militant Islamism", "Preventive conversations with a young man with extremist views

(of an Islamist nature)", and "Counseling of parents of a young man involved in Islamist movement".

Clearly, from a social worker's point of view, this doesn't really make much of a difference, because all cases regarded young people that were in deep personal trouble and are involved in causing damage – in the broadest sense of the word. However, only the girl was affiliated with a social movement which generally does not commit hate crimes or violate human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles. Rather on the contrary, as already stated above, these "left-wing activist environments" generally support human rights and fundamental freedoms – and/but, in doing so, sometimes engage in physical fights and violent action.

Now, what is almost irrelevant from a social workers point of view, is all the more important for the political discourse of a society which takes great pains to be and stay a free and liberal society – being committed to democratic principles and human rights. From the point of view of the political discourse of such societies it is, thus, of crucial importance for all actors and speakers to make sure that one does not lose out of sight what is meant by human rights and fundamental freedoms – and how to prioritize action in order to safeguard them.

Moreover, if one labels civil society activists promoting social causes as "leftwing extremists" – because some of them sometimes also get it physical struggles and use illegal means for these causes –, a left-right symmetry with "violent rightwing extremism/ terrorism" is evoked suggesting the same level of threat/ danger, societal damage and criminality. However, such suggestions obfuscate the fact that the damage which is caused by rightwing violent extremism and terrorism when compared to far leftwing activism is quite different in scale and quality. Also it ignores the fact that in Germany "violent leftwing terrorism" in the proper sense had only existed during the RAF-terrorism attacks in the 1970s and 1980s. In its effects such implied symmetry confuses the clear view of what a democratic, liberal and pluralistic society has to focus on in order to safeguard itself.

Hence, to be able and willing, as the Danish publication did, to differentiate between "far left-wing activism/ rioting" and "violent leftwing extremism/ terrorism" (e.g. the RAF murder and terrorism attacks in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s) – or "violent rightwing extremism/ neo-Nazi terrorism", for that matter (e.g. the murder gang 'National Socialist Underground', active and undetected from 1998-2011 in Germany) – seems quite important. For, such ability to engage in a differentiated, ethical, and responsible political

discourse seems directly connected with the clear vision for actual societal risks and dangers – which is necessary in order to support successful strategies of preventing hate crime and violent extremism in a free society.

xxx 5. Is there such thing as an 'extremist anti hate crime facilitator'? The German government's "extremism clause" – or: how party-politics may harm deradicalisation work

Germany today, in 2012, as represented by the current right-wing government, seems far away from such level-handedness and conceptual precision. Quite on the contrary, as demonstrated above, through governmental initiatives some heretofore off-stream political discourses of the New Bourgeoisie and the New Right – the intellectual arm of rightwing extremist political organizations –, were surreptitiously turned into mainstream discourse and actual policies. Hence, for example, a specter of leftwing violent extremism was conjured up and a largely senseless and wasteful program launched – at a time when actually a neo-Nazi murder gang was around killing foreigners. Furthermore, it was subtly suggested that some social prevent work out there in the field might actually 'use leftwing extremist methods'.

So, evidently the government seemed ready to even incur quite some risks of appearing out-of-touch and ignorant in order to promote these strains of party-political discourses. Most importantly, however, public administrations and the media throughout the whole process seemed and still seem totally unaware of how much actual damage is caused by such acts of policy making. Hardly anyone noticed how detrimental this is for any on the ground work that promotes deradicalisation and engages in prevent work against hate crime and neo-Nazi lifestyles in particular.

To make it even worse, the governmental program should not remain the last step into this direction of political discourse. Another piece of actual policy making on the part of the ministry was announced late in 2010 and then implemented; and this policy would turn out to be even more damaging than the out-of-place counter "leftwing violent extremism" program was. Arguably as a response to the massive public critique and resistance against the program – and also to its ever more visible practical difficulties and likeliness of failure – the minister seems to have, quite irrationally, reacted by stepping up the confrontation on the level of political discourse: The minister decreed that a Democracy Declaration to be signed by NGOs will be introduced in 2011. This meant that every NGO receiving public money for hate crime prevent,

deradicalisation activities and similar social work had to file what unofficially was called the "extremism clause". This clause of the funding contract contained a legally binding intelligence declaration stating that its employees, associates and volunteers are not affiliated to any extremist organization – thereby mostly implying 'leftwing extremist organizations'.

In the past ten years of the federal programmes against rightwing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism no one ever hit on the curious idea of demanding such declaration. Needless to say, there is no clear concept readily available of what a "leftwing extremist organisation" might be. Nor can be determined who would have the means and power to clearly define such concept and enlist organisations and persons as "leftwing extremist" in any legally binding way. Also it was quite predictable, as everybody knew at the time, that this clause will not be legally tenable in the end – most of all because it would imply that NGOs and grass-root organisations leaders investigate or "spy on" their co-workers, associates and volunteers in ideological terms and regarding their affiliations. In fact, the clause has recently been ruled untenable in a first instance court judgement in April 2012 – while the ministry, of course, announced to fight the judgement (and the procedure is quite likely – and maybe meant – to take longer than the next federal elections are held in 2013).

In its effects, this – purely politically motivated – decree expressed suspicion and in fact denigrated all those NGO and civil society workers as potential "leftwing extremists" who were active in hate crime prevention and deradicalisation work on the ground in difficult sectors of society. In fact, issuing the *extremism clause* implicitly denigrated exactly those enthusiastic pro-human-rights workers who act out of personal vocation and civic engagement – and who often did so in the face of quite serious risks of suffering all sorts of harassment and violent attacks against themselves and their families by local rightwing everyday terrorists.¹⁶ It weakened those civil society activists who deal with the most serious social problems of hate crime and threats to the democratic order – which the government itself, in the perception of many, had dangerously neglected for many years.

But, as we saw already above, fueling suspicion against and implicitly denigrating engaged pro-human-rights and anti-racism activists seems deeply entrenched in German mainstream and conservative parties' discourses anyhow. To be sure, these activists overwhelmingly tend to vote for center-left parties and candidates rather than for those of the center-right. Moreover, some of these activists can, already at first sight, be identified as adherents of

¹⁶ For the "*extremism clause*" also see VPN paper No. 2: "The case of Germany...".

– aesthetically vanguard – youth cultural styles (as Punk, Emo, Indi etc.) which ‘ordinary citizens’ from the more conservative societal spectrum tend to have more resentful than sympathetic feelings about. Therefore, quite a proportion of mainstream citizens in Germany – especially those that tend to feel that it all has been all the student revolution leftist generation’s fault anyhow – if comparing the risks of various youth radicalisms today are likely to hold the view that it is “better to have a young extreme rightwing adolescent who, at least, is orderly, clean and helpful to the elderly” than an awkward and filthy looking, possibly impolite Punk”.

So, there might be short-term political gains in fueling generalized suspicion against and denigrating a certain social group – even if such generalization is somewhat extremist itself by nature. Totally paradox this is, however, from a standpoint of civic values and public safety, since such “Punk” or “leftist student” is much less likely to commit targeted hate crimes (of group-related enmity) while rightwing extremism has caused tremendous numbers of victims and death casualties (some 150 killed in 20 years in Germany).

Why it is unreasonable, unwise and unethical as a government – or even as a political party – to fuel suspicions against and denigrate anyone or any societal group, should be pretty self-evident anyhow. Denigration is certainly violating human rights – and it generally leads up to even more serious violations of human rights; and fueling suspicion of such unspecific and vaguely personality and group related kind (e.g. referring to general life style) is very close to denigration anyhow. Nothing good, pro-social or peaceful will come from this.¹⁷

Should, nevertheless, the need occur to further explain and give a more lucidly exemplification why it is so unwise to denigrate a social group, especially if it is promoting human rights and democratic values, the following recent incident from Turkey may serve as a highly topical example for any ‘Western country’. And, indeed in an intellectual climate defined by New Bourgeoisie’s discourses there will always be the need for lucid exemplifications, since there always will be many people that – out of historical unawareness – tend to sympathize with “extremism clauses” – or other such governmental clauses – and views will be

¹⁷ This is especially relevant if one takes into account the research that Brähler/ Decker (and also Wilhelm Heitmeyer) did on the widespread prejudice and partially extremist rightwing attitudes within a solid 15-20% of the German population, i.e. even with those who do not vote for extremist parties and do not engage in overtly extremist actions: (1) Vom Rand zur Mitte (From the Fringe to the Center) (Brähler / Decker 2007)¹⁷ and (2) Die Mitte in der Krise (The Center in the Crisis) (Brähler / Decker 2010)¹⁷, both by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Social Democratic Party Foundation).

expressed like: 'Well, what is wrong with signing such declaration and doing a little spying on your fellows if nobody has anything to hide anyway?'

In this recent incident in Turkey (2011/12) a student born in France from a Turkish family background went to east Turkey and Istanbul for an EU Erasmus student exchange stipend. In Istanbul she was arrested by police forces on accounts of having ties to a "leftwing extremist underground organization". Given the official indictment the young woman is accused of having visited a concert in Istanbul (apparently of a leftist music band) together with tens of thousands of other young people and having taken part in a May First demonstration carrying a banner demanding free education for all citizens. The student has then been kept in prison for three months being released these days (in August 2012) only upon massive international media pressure – which hundreds of ordinary Turkish students do not have at their disposal –, but is still awaiting her trial.¹⁸

To be sure, the political situation in Germany and Turkey in 2012 can hardly be compared – and the level of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms might be quite different. Yet, the basic logic of thinking/ discourse and action on the side of the state's powers vis-à-vis its citizens does bear a particular parallel. In both cases, albeit to a quite different degree, this logic is governed by a general suspicion against – and denigration of – citizens who are perceived as threat and as "leftwing extremists", while, in reality, they are actively promoting social and humanitarian causes, fundamental rights and democratic principles. Hence, not only do these citizens not 'have anything to hide anyway' – but they have much to offer to a society which constantly has to face a certain level of risk through extremism(s)/fundamentalism(s), violence, and hate crime.

In Germany of 2012 such citizens, students or activists are by no means likely to be arrested. But they run some risk of their financial means being taken from them – and this wasn't the case just since the 2011 "extremism clause". Denigrating engaged pro-human-rights and anti hate crime activists has been a strain in center-right political discourses and policy making in Germany long before. A case in point in the more recent past is the fate of the NGO *Miteinander* in Saxony-Anhalt, a state which is just about an hour car ride from where the NSU neo-Nazi murder gang had originally formed (in Jena, Thuringia). The NGO *Miteinander* had been instrumental in implementing a state government radicalization awareness and anti-extremism/violence

¹⁸ <http://www.spiegel.de/unispiegel/studium/sevil-sevimli-franzoesische-erasmus-studentin-im-tuerkischen-gefaengnis-a-843787.html>

program in Saxony-Anhalt in the 1990s when public rioting and harassment against ethnic minorities and neo-Nazi marches were rampant in the new eastern states after Germany's reunification. Thus, the social workers and educators of the NGO *Miteinander* had, at this point, given much proof of their professionalism and expertise in the field of anti-hate-crime work and in consulting public administration during the late 1990s (when a Social-democratic state government was in office).

Yet, in 2002 the incoming center-right coalition government in Saxony-Anhalt decided – in poor judgment of the situation of neo-Nazism on the ground – to view the NGO *Miteinander* mostly as a party-political initiative of their political adversaries. The coalition agreement thus stated that “the previous government's lopsided support of politically motivated NGO/ civic associations' youth work has to be stopped immediately and the freed resources have to be put in pluralistic kinds of youth work”. In the wake of this agreement the NGO *Miteinander* lost all support and had to close its office (and/or resort to private support) for a period of time.

xxx 6. In the shadow of political discourses of denial: Hatred and terror – the neo-Nazi murder gang “National-Socialist Underground”

It wasn't until November of 2011 when it became visible to a greater public how important it would have been to support even more of the kind of work that NGOs like *Miteinander* do when they engaged in anti hate crime and deradicalisation interventions in these most vulnerable areas of German society. It also became clear how important it would have been to have such NGOs more closely integrated – not alienated – in a functional multi-agency collaboration with the state, police and intelligence services, especially in eastern Germany. For, in 2011 the neo-Nazi murder gang “National-socialist Underground” (NSU) was uncovered (by coincidence) after having committed ethnic murders in Germany – over a time of ten years! – randomly killing in execution style manner individual citizens with a migration background, mostly from Turkish decent. It must have been around the time of the closing of *Miteinander* – being labeled a “politically motivated NGO” which allegedly receives “lopsided (political) support” – that the NSU neo-Nazi murder gang, still being teenagers or young adults in the early 1990s must have gotten ready, just an hour away from *Miteinander*, for its 10 year undetected killing spree against ethnic minorities.

In those days the “National-Socialist Underground” (NSU) murder gang had sprung from a deeply entrenched milieu of violent extremist rightwing organizations – including the parliamentary NPD – which had quickly developed in East Germany after reunification. They were systematically built-up, promoted, and maintained by West-German neo-Nazi organizations which went east in the 1990s. But they also sprang from a home grown neo-Nazi subculture which had already evolved in the GDR during the socialist regime in the 1980s due to factors intrinsically connected with the military and authoritarian structure of the GDR state and society. Similar to the west, however, this neo-Nazi subculture was steadfastly denied by the GDR regime while its intelligence service (Stasi) had full insight into this scene.

Now, investigative journalists, field experts and human rights activists on the ground had sufficient knowledge about the post-reunification neo-Nazi milieu in which the NSU and other gangs¹⁹ were operating – causing fear and death around them. Just as they knew all about the nationalist youth-culture/ sub-culture which was – and is still – thriving in eastern Germany in particular, committing many kinds of everyday terrorism mostly in rural and small town communities.²⁰ But nobody would have asked them – because nobody of importance really trusted them and still not trusts them today, as we saw, since they tend to be perceived as being politically left and maybe even as “leftwing extremist”. In the eyes of the general party-political public, these activists might have resembled this one “generation” of leftists/ revolutionary students from 1970s, which the New Bourgeoisie held to be the prime cause of all problems in Germany – rather than a valuable source of knowledge and of much needed solutions for the present. Hence, the east German neo-Nazi milieu was downplayed, overlooked and/or denied (also by intelligence services²¹) so that the three active murderers of the NSU had been able to live – and act – quietly in East Germany for over ten years, being supported by a wider undercover neo-Nazi network – also producing videos about its murders in which they denigrated and ridiculed their victims.

Moreover, besides these grim facts, a specific linguistic phenomenon deserves to be noted here which regards the media coverage of the murders committed

¹⁹ That the NSU might not the only gang of this sort is indicated by other evidence; see *Der Spiegel* 31/2012, p. 112, “Nazis in Rockerkutten”.

²⁰ Also see: *The New Radical Right: Violent and Non-Violent Movements in Europe*. Dr Matthew Goodwin & Vidhya Ramalingam, Rachel Briggs (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, ISD), 2012, <https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/75>.

²¹ There have been a couple of scandals during spring and summer 2012 when it became known that state and federal secret service and intelligence agencies have destroyed sensitive files shortly after the NSU was detected dealing with issues around the individuals of the NSU or related affairs.

by the NSU during ten years. This phenomenon once again attests to the importance of political and media discourses and to the strength of the New Bourgeoisie rhetoric. For, the media had quickly come to refer to these unresolved murder cases by using the quite deplorable misnomer "Kebab-Killings" ("Döner-Morde", since some of the victims worked in Kebab stands). They did so by assuming that mafia related quarrels must have led to these murders. Yet, the police and the media had no indications or clues which would allow for assuming that the perpetrators were from the same ethnic milieu than the victims, let alone that the victims were implicated in criminal mafia activities. Moreover, they did not consider the not too unlikely possibility of terrorist xenophobic killings. The media proceeded in this way in their discourse in spite of the fact that the families and communities of the victims – which lived far from and didn't have any relation to each other (while the victims had all been killed through one identical gun) – had in a more or less vehement or subdued manner denied any mafia issues and expressed their inklings about a xenophobic motivation of the murders. None of the press had picked up on this – and thus effectively reinforced xenophobic and resentful attitudes in the population.

Hence, on the level of discursive dynamics, the psychologically quite well-known inversion mechanism of 'blaming the victims for being victimized' took hold of what was said and published about these murders by police and the media. This of course works all the more easily if the group to be blamed had already, in previous political and media discourses, become the object of a general resentment – as xenophobia and islamophobia against the citizens from a Turkish background in Germany.

Now, looking back from here to the governmental 'extremism clause' and to its inherent discourse dynamics makes us realize a basic structural congruence. In fact, blaming victims for being victimized and blaming those who work to reduce hate crime and violent extremism for being the real extremists in the first place, follows quite the same logic. This logic represents a most irrational and counter-factual manner of mental coping: It blames others for an issue or problem (hate crime, extremism, victimization, xenophobia/ islamophobia) in a way that distances oneself maximally from this issue/ problem. And 'distancing' here means concretely: to avoid facing the question of whether the issue has something to do with oneself personally and/or whether oneself personally can do anything to help resolve the issue. The emotional logic of this coping mechanism – and discourse pattern – is fear and disgust (hate crime, violence, extremism, victimization etc.) which is then turned into an aggressive form of projecting the issues of fear and disgust onto others and thus personalize them

– preferably with those persons who are closest to the problem anyhow: the victims of the issue and/or those who work in maximal closeness with the issue.

One point to be made here is: by virtue already of its irrationality, counter-factuality, mono-causality and lack of complexity, this coping mechanism – if put in a more political than psychological language – might itself be justly called ‘extremist’. This would only depend on which concept of extremism one decides to apply. Without any doubt, however, this pattern of projective blaming cannot be called a conducive or responsible manner to engage in a party-political and media discourse on vital issues of societal life. For, as all projection – and generalized blaming – it just aggravates the problem and thus fuels even more hate crime, violence, extremism, victimization etc.

xxx 7. Xenophobic murders and denial discourses: Twins of imbedded rightwing extremism in society? – A little history of German extremism discourses

The shockingly murderous dimension that rightwing extremism/ terrorism in Germany seems to have, given the discovery of the NSU murder gang – and the impact of political discourse of denial that allowed it to stay undetected for so many years – impel us to go back into the post-war history of political discourse still a bit further than we did so far. In doing so we will realize first of all, that there has always been a continuous strain of rightwing killings and bombings in post-war Germany.²² It’s just that we didn’t know, and to put it more precisely: that knowledge was kept from the public as much as possible – by way of political and media discourses that work quite along the same lines as the present governmental discourse on leftwing extremism. Hence, besides the tradition of rightwing extremist murders in post-war Germany, we realize that there also has been a tradition of party-political and media discourses that denied these murders and/or deflected from them – and instead attempted to put the blame on “leftwing extremists”. Quite notably, this we can only know for sure since last year when relevant files were opened!

Almost forgotten today, it was about thirty years ago that Germany had experienced its biggest terrorist attack ever since. The 1980 Munich Oktober-Fest bombing had killed 13 and injured about 200 people. This bombing was never fully investigated. Bavarian state government at that time had kept the federal office of criminal investigation (BKA) away from the scene – and the

²² For a list of incidents see Der Spiegel 43/2011, counting 14 in the years 1978-84.

BKA had let itself be kept from the scene. In these weeks Bavarian long-time president Franz Josef Strauß from the far-right Christian Democratic Party was running for federal chancellorship.

In the immediate reactions of Bavarian politicians and press commentators to the bombing, some at first suggested it was committed by the leftwing terrorist Red Army Fraction (RAF, which was active at the time in Germany abducting or assassinating prominent figures from 'the system' of German politics and business perceived as neo-fascist, neo-Nazi or imperialistic). After blaming the RAF didn't prove very convincing to many – the bombing was quite evidently very different from any attack that the RAF would have committed (random population, untargeted, no political claims made, the killed attacker not at all affiliated with anything like RAF etc.) – Strauß and his party colleagues personally came out indicating that an attack of this sort can only be attributed to east German secret service 'Stasi', Russian 'KGB' or to Gaddafi who was perceived to be associated with Russia and the east block. Hence, the direction of blame pointed clearly east, to "the communists" (Der Spiegel 43/2011). Any possibility of home grown connections to neo-Nazi organizations was discarded entirely. Shortly thereafter, the police investigation was finalized relatively quickly. The conclusion given was that the assassin – killed at the scene by the explosion – proceeded as lone actor, was mentally disturbed, had recently failed a university exam and did not have any network or context of supporters.

Today, thirty years later some 50.000 pages files (also GDR Stasi files) have been opened and it was reconfirmed what investigative journalism – which Bavarian and Federal mainstream would have certainly shrugged of as "leftist press" at the time – had already concluded not too long after the incident. The Munich terrorist bomber had been seen by several witnesses shortly before the attack together with a group of comrades in military outfit. He was not acting alone. Since he was killed at the scene he was clearly identified as Gundolf Köhler whom the intelligence services at the time knew quite well, which they, however, kept from the public entirely. Early on in his life Köhler was deeply engaged in extremist rightwing groups of the most violent kind (the paramilitary Hoffmann-Group, Viking Youth) and was also politically engaged with the NPD since age 14. Köhler had quickly qualified as a most devote follower of southern German neo-Nazism at the time. He collected Nazi-items, had a Hitler poster over his bed, was closely attached to an old SS-Nazi in his hometown Donaueschingen, southern Germany, and was reported to state in his late teen years that he expressively "endorsed the elimination of the Jews and the communists during the Third Reich".

In a conversation between Köhler and one of his comrades from the rightwing extremist Tübinger students' association months before the bombing, which was recorded by intelligence services, the talk was about the Bologna bombing in Italy earlier in 1980. Already this bombing was at first attributed to leftist terrorists and only later turned out to have been committed by Italian and international neo-Fascists with the objective to influence the Italian elections towards a center-right ballot – which in fact did work out in the desired manner xx. Leading German neo-Nazi Hoffmann whose paramilitary group Köhler belonged to early on, is known to have attended a meeting in Bologna together with other international rightwing extremists some time before this incident. In the conversation with his fellow student, Köhler was recorded to have said: "one could stage a terror attack just like in Bologna, this could happen in Munich, Cologne or Hamburg and after that one could blame it to the leftists – and then the people would vote for Strauß".

Köhler's activities and the ties that he had to the rightwing extremist and neo-Nazi scene were well known to several state and federal intelligence agencies at the time – even before the Munich bombing. And yet, witnesses were not interrogated, remnants of the bomb seem to have been removed from the scene the same night and traces not followed or even concealed by criminal police and prosecution. When some press and opposition parties brought up the neo-Nazi Hoffmann group which could rightfully be suspected of engaging in violent extremist crimes of this sort, Strauß personally came out in the Bavarian parliament and belittled and exculpated Hoffmann.

Internally, however, Strauß was quoted making statements that almost sounded as if he had known what Köhler said to his fellow in the Tübingen student association about "a terror attack that would eventually prompt people to vote for Strauß". Because Strauß himself seems to have said in reference to the bombing: "well, let's blame it on the leftists". Now, in all likelihood, while Strauß was certainly informed in detail about Köhler's neo-Nazi connections, he was probably not aware of what Köhler was recorded to have said verbatim. But he didn't need to at all. Statements like this were commonplace among center right and conservative party-politicians and their electorate. Strauß was just following a very common standard discourse pattern of the time that 'blames everything on the leftists/ communists' (even if one knew full well that this was not the case but rather the contrary was true) – a pattern which still seems to be at work today as we saw with the 2012 minister of the CDU.

The overall objective for Strauß and the CSU was to avoid all investigation about this – and continue the electoral campaign. And even today, in 2012, there are still undisclosed files with the military intelligence services

("Militärischer Abschirmdienst") containing direct letters between Köhler and Hoffmann from that time. Had one begun to further investigate the close ties Köhler had with rightwing violent extremism and with Hoffmann in particular, the multitude of connections between CSU/ Strauß and the German and international neo-Nazi scene would have come to the full attention of the general public – weeks before federal elections. One of these issues, for example, might then have been Strauß' participation in the so-called Africa-Seminars, in which far rightist CSU politicians, NPD members and neo-Nazi individuals from various backgrounds had regularly congregated. The common political denominator of thus seminar was that the "red danger" – i.e. "communism" during the cold war – was "the biggest threat to Germany" and it has to be countered "already at the Cap", meaning in South Africa. Strauß and the seminar then proceeded to pay sympathy visits to the South African apartheid regime in the 1970s, thus clearly following an agenda of international racism and neo-Nazism.

As is always the case, when politicians and public service representatives from criminal police and prosecution act unethical and lie to the public about issues pertaining to hate crime and extremism – and when they, on top of this, turn towards denigrating the political adversaries –, the immediate consequences are not of a merely political nature. Because then violent extremism thrives even more – and more people get killed. In this instance it was a well known German-Jewish citizen and his wife who were the victims.

Since politics and public prosecution went the way they did about the Munich bombing, Hoffmann and his paramilitary group weren't even interrogated about this at all let alone investigated, as would have been in order given the evidence that was there at the time and already before the bombing. Had the Hoffmann group been investigated by criminal police and reported about in the media, it most likely would not have happened what in fact occurred less than three months later: Hoffmann's then girl friend and his second in command went to Nürnberg and killed Shlomo Levin, the nationally renowned Jewish author, publisher and elder of the Jewish community of Nürnberg and his wife Frieda Peoschke. Levin had repeatedly warned about the activities of the Hoffmann group.²³

In this case it was not leftwing extremists who were blamed (which would have been entirely implausible since leftists, within these kinds of discourses, tend to be associated as being Jewish or pro-Jewish). But the local criminal police (the

²³ <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-81136824.html>,
<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13512120.html>.

federal office, once again, was not called on the scene) and the media fell upon another pattern of 'blaming' as defined above. In spite of the absence of any substantial kind of lead or evidence the criminal police spent weeks searching for possible perpetrators within the Jewish community. So, just like today, thirty years later, at the occasion of the NSU murders which were called Kebab-Killings police and press already then instinctively, and/or deliberately, fell upon blaming the victims, the Jewish community, for being victimized. This occurred although Hoffmann's girlfriend's sun glasses had been left at the crime scene and she was quickly identified as one possible owner. In fact the police took five weeks to actually come around to interrogate Hoffmann who by that time had been able to prepare comfortably. As a result, and since the perceived main perpetrator, Hoffman's second in command, had died in Lebanon shortly thereafter, there was not enough evidence to level charges against Hoffmann with this murder.²⁴

How much the pattern of 'blaming' and particularly 'blaming leftwing extremists' that had occurred at the Munich bombing and in several other cases was commonplace and not only due to the special situation of a Bavarian president running for federal office at that time, can be recognized with yet another instance of terrorism in Germany: The hostage taking of the Israeli Olympic team at the Games in 1972 in Munich which was committed by the Palestinian "Black September" movement (a fraction of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, PLO) – and eventually lead to the killing of all nine hostages and most terrorists.

Quite significant here again is the party-political discourse about this event at the time and since. Because it had always been suggested by political rhetoric and media reports that the PLO terrorists in Munich were supported by members of German leftwing RAF terrorism (Red Army Fraction). This didn't sound implausible at all since the extra-parliamentary opposition from the left in those days was generally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Also RAF terrorists took training in PLO camps since 1970.

Quite recently, in June 2012, the weekly magazine 'Der Spiegel' requested to see various files about the 1972 attack which have become accessible after 40 years and which subsequently gave some insight in what intelligence agencies have known all the time – and had in fact, in part, known even before the

²⁴ The manner of public commemoration of this deplorable event of German post-war history tells another quite significant story about discourse patterns. It wasn't before 2010, thirty years later that the city decided to name a street after the two victims. <http://www.nordbayern.de/region/erlangen/lewin-poeschke-anlage-erinnert-an-mordopfer-1.383868>

hostage taking occurred in 1972: There wasn't any German leftwing extremism involved at all with the Black September terrorist movement and with the 1972 attack. Rather there have been neo-Nazi individuals and networks that assisted the Black September hostage takers in their comprehensive preparation work for the Munich attack – while it is not entirely clear to what extent they assisted in actual transport of weapons or procured other relevant services.²⁵

Hence, the discourse pattern was readily laid out and the public discourse was all set when – some years later at the time of the Munich bombing – the Bavarian CSU party leader and president Strauß suggested his ever recurring explanation: It must have been “leftwing extremists and terrorists” – and rightwing violent extremism is not a serious problem in Germany anyway. He did so knowing full well that this was untrue – and that the contrary was true.

xxx 8. Party-political discourses are indispensable – their quality and resilience are key

Now, basically in this paper I had just asked the simple question of what it actually means that a young center-right minister in Germany in 2011 launched a strangely far-fetched, wasteful and quite irrationally charged program against “leftwing violent extremism”– and that she then, on top of this, decreed an ‘extremism clause’ that put socially engaged civil society and community workers as well as hate crime prevent practitioners from NGOs under suspicion of being (leftwing) extremists – and, thus, in fact denigrated them on the whole as a group. But, in the course of this paper it became quite obvious: The more one asks this simple question, the more complex and gruesome the issues of German rightwing extremism history were, that came to mind – and the more troubling were the concomitant insights about the dynamics and detrimental consequences of party-political discourses that routinely deny rightwing terrorism and blame “leftists” of various definitions to be the root of the problem.

To be sure, the young minister most likely was not aware of the degree of historical interconnectedness that her rhetoric and action was embedded in – but she sure should have been. Certainly, the elders of her center-right party,

²⁵ <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-86486649.html>, most recently there has even been documents suggesting that there have been contacts between federal agencies and Arab organizations which were implicated in the attacks and that for this reason there wasn't any prosecution in Germany about the bombing ever Der Spiegel .

CDU, who (together with the CSU and FDP) wrote the coalition agreement about extremism issues in 2009 should have been aware of this.²⁶ But they were not – or chose not to be. Hence, evidently, the party-political key persons did not know or consider the facts and meanings of the Munich Oktober-Fest bombing of 1980, and of the subsequent killing of Shlomo Levin, the nationally known Jewish publisher from Nürnberg, shortly thereafter. They seemed to have had no idea about how out-of-place and detrimental their recurring Blame-it-on-leftwing-extremists pattern actually is – and how much it translates to a dangerously erroneous There-is-no-significant-neo-Nazi-extremism-in-Germany. Hence, above all, they were not at all aware of what was and still is pretty evidently the case in terms of the violent rightwing extremist subculture and the everyday neo-Nazi violence especially in the eastern states of Germany since reunification and today in 2012.

But, to make these observations about party-politics and discourses even more disheartening: The situation hasn't changed at all! During the last year since the shocking discovery about the neo-Nazi murder gang "National Socialist Underground" was made in 2011, the political discourses seem to be unaltered entirely. Rather, it became painfully evident how rigid and unyielding these discourses are. Upon being asked to reconsider its program against leftwing extremism in view of the NSU murders, the center-right federal government decidedly stated that it would nevertheless continue with it. Also with regard to all other aspects of policy making about countering rightwing extremism, nothing substantial has happened since – be it on the national, state or local level. This pretty disquieting indeed at a time when even the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has deemed it highly likely that small local neo-Nazi terror groups will launch murderous attacks in the future in Germany.²⁷

Another case in point with regard to the local level, the government of the state of Saxony in which the NSU had lived for 12-13 years among its support network, just recently reiterated its perception that there is no serious problem of rightwing extremism in Saxony. This is stated in the face of the fact that many areas and communities in Saxony (and other eastern states) are practically under the rule of a nationalist, rightwing extremist subcultures – as was already mentioned in the case of Mügeln above. These subcultures and organizations have, in fact, effectively infiltrated nurseries (Kindergarten/ Kita), schools, and local governments. Also, they increasingly manage to appear

²⁶ The coalition agreement from 2009:
<http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/022/1702298.pdf>.

²⁷ <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/extremismus-bka-warnt-vor-neuen-rechten-terrorzellen-a-816940.html>

totally mainstream and even bourgeois – neo-bourgeois so to speak – and give an air of being socially engaged for the civic society, which they, of course, envisage to be a national German society without foreigners and minorities. Moreover, these subcultures coincide, correspond with, and/or knowingly condone violent extremist xenophobic fractions among them that pose imminent threats to any immigrants and civil society workers – or any perceived others – and create “zones of fear” where hate crime incidents are quite likely to occur.²⁸

Hence, not only are party politicians – of the center-right parties in particular – not aware of the history and the actual consequences of the rhetoric they have routinely used regarding issues of rightwing violent extremism. Not even the shocking news of the NSU neo-Nazi murder gang was able to change this and make them more self-conscious. Why is this? It is party-political discourses that do this! These discourses seem to be quite unchangeable and – extremely – irrational in their dynamic, and they seem perfectly capable of sturdily defying just any empirical evidence that disproves them. In doing so, they determine to a large – and all too large – extent the content and modes of thinking and arguing that the public and the media engage in about key societal issues.

This notwithstanding, any free and democratic society – that is built on thinking and arguing in the public space – depends on the quality and perceptiveness with which its discourses evolve. Because these discourses produce public awareness – and consequently lead up to actual policy making. Hence, we cannot and do not want to do without political and media discourses!

This, once again, brings up our key question: What could possibly be done in terms of rendering more resilient and responsible the ways in which political parties and governmental representatives speak about the vitally important issues of terrorism, extremism, and hate crime – and of effective ways of preventing it? This is a very difficult question indeed. Since, evidently, we cannot and do not want to tell politicians what to say; nor should the media be told by anybody what to write and how to write it. What still can be done, in order to render the party-political discourses less misleading and detrimental as in the example above, will thus need some serious thinking by a multidisciplinary group of people who are experts on issues of (de-)radicalization, politics, media and public discourses.

One initial activity will certainly be of great value, namely: taking stock of political discourses about extremism – i.e. collecting exemplary case stories

²⁸ Der Spiegel 24/2012, pp. 30, “Florian, wir kriegen dich”.

throughout EU Member States about how party-political discourses went and what particular impact and consequences they had for dealing with hate crime, extremism(s) and the challenge to safeguard and promote a free democratic society. Such collection of case histories about and analyses of 'party-political discourses in action' can be highly educational for many, to begin with. Moreover, they eventually might also be inspirational for our thinking about what can be done in order to secure quality and resilience with party-political and media discourses in general.

Also such case stories will by no means all be examples of the more problematic and challenging kind – as the above case of the young conservative minister in Germany of 2010-12 was. One only needs to think of the public discourse in Norway after Breivik's terrorist attack in 2011. This arguably was the most shocking, murderous – and perplexing – terrorist attack in Europe after World War II. And it can certainly not be blamed on any "leftwing extremism", although Breivik himself and others might not hesitate to find ways to point into this direction. In any event, the Norwegian king – not precisely comparable with a political party – and the Norwegian civic society in an impressive and unanimous fashion came out in those disheartening days saying that this horrible incident will not be used as opportunity to blame anyone but instead will be about coming together and reinforcing our common devotion to build free, diverse and pluralistic societies in Europe.

Political parties – on the whole – should be able to do what a king can do, and if this was only for reasons of competitions, since historically, as we know, political parties came in claiming that they can do a better job than aristocrats can. Hence, the ways in which the king of Norway and Norway's political parties and the public spoke would seem to qualify for a positive example of what political discourses can do – and might be helpful for determining how other Member States and Europe as a whole might get there in the long.

xxx 9. The example of Northern Ireland: The 'Confront Hate Crime' project – and the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network

It has thus become all the more obvious: Any systematic anti-hate crime and radicalisation awareness work needs to follow the example of Northern Ireland's 'Confront Hate Crime' project (CHC). For, the CHC-project has systematically approached issues of hate crime and violent extremism both on the level of targeted social interventions and on the level of party-political rhetoric. From its very conception the project attempted to develop and employ a preventive hate

crime intervention program in prison and community work and at the same time produce an analysis of the political parties' discourses on violent extremism, group-related hostility and on sectarianism in particular.

International exchange and best practice research further enhanced the CHC project's work on specialized interventions and political discourse analysis. This exchange was at first engaged with the German NGO Violence Prevention Network (Berlin), and then facilitated through the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) which was inaugurated directly by the European Commission in 2011 (Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, EC Home Affairs). In particular the CHC project's international exchange was promoted through the RAN Working Group 'Firstline Deradicalisation Interventions' which has started its work in June 2012. This group's international participants in particular have been struck by the realization of how immensely important the role is that party-political discourses play in all EU Member States' efforts to engage deradicalization, i.e. work on the reduction of hate crime and on supporting the society's resilience against extremism and fundamentalism.

But even the quite advanced 'Confront Hate Crime' project in many ways still is very much at the beginning. While the CHC project, by its new set-up of addressing intervention methods and political discourse awareness in tandem, clearly leads the way towards the future of EU anti hate crime work, it will only be able to continue doing so by further enhancing methodological development and international cross-fertilization.

One particular task that can be undertaken here, too, is – as mentioned above – contributing to a collection of exemplary case stories about political discourses on extremism and giving analyses of the particular impact and consequences these discourses have for dealing with hate crime, extremism(s) and – most prominently in Northern Ireland – with sectarianism. From here, and in close liaison with other states and regions of the EU, these case stories and a respective working group will further pursue the question of how, as a society, one can best develop one's culture of political discourse – so that a solid base of human rights awareness and societal resilience can be built and maintained.