



Mainstreaming, Media Literacy and Patterns of Mass Media Communication in Austria

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	German	English
DÖW	Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes	Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance
EU	Europäische Union	European Union
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Austrian Freedom Party
HiNBG	Hass-im-Netz-Bekämpfungsgesetz	Act against online hate speech
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austrian People's Party
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Austrian Social Democratic Party
VfGH	Verfassungsgerichtshof	Constitutional Court
ZARA	Zivilcourage & Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit	Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) with the goal of moving towards the measurable evaluation of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include the person's sense of being victimised, of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures, and of coming under the influence of 'us vs them' identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation in order to test practical interventions geared towards prevention, inclusion, and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of 17 nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering the strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing, and devising solutions to online radicalisation will be central to the aims of the project.

Executive Summary

In this report, we provide an overview of gendered radicalisation traits in Austria. We focus on the most pronounced strand of radicalisation in the country, namely right-wing extremism. We analyse (radicalised) narratives that revolve around misogyny, homophobia, sexism and transphobia in the media, production and circulation of media objects by prominent stakeholders of radicalisation, and the attempts to counter these narratives by stakeholders of de-radicalisation and by citizens in the context of communication.

Our results show how right-wing extremist protagonists use online platforms to reproduce their misogynist, anti-feminist, and anti-egalitarian worldviews. Gendered radicalisation traits online are thus a continuation of offline battles that are not confined to online spheres. We see how offline networks and alliances are mirrored online within all groups that we have studied. Here, online activities create opportunities towards political confrontation, as well as new forms of engagement with like-minded others, rather than creating platforms of dialogue.

Despite the significant numbers of followers that the accounts of stakeholders of de-radicalisation have, comments and responses are rare if not non-existent. This can be explained by the approach followed by de-radicalisation stakeholders to educate and raise awareness on certain topics. Agents of radicalisation, by contrast, build upon interaction with their followers and successfully trigger reactions by posting statements that provoke collective outrage. Although they refer to each other and counteract each other's narratives, there is no interaction between agents of radicalisation and agents of de-radicalisation. Online communication between stakeholders of radicalisation and stakeholders of de-radicalisation in Austria therefore follows the principle of talking *about* each other, but not talking *to* each other.

1. Introduction¹

In this report, we provide an overview of gendered radicalisation traits in Austria. Building on the insights of previous reports (see Haselbacher et al. 2021; Haselbacher and Reeger, 2022), we will focus on the case of right-wing extremism, which is one of the most pronounced strands of radicalisation in the country, displaying a long history. The goal of this report is to study the relationship between mediated hegemonic gender presentations on the one hand, and violence and extremism on the other. This is done through the analysis of online drivers of radicalisation as well as online counter-narratives presented by stakeholders of de-radicalisation and ordinary citizens. The role of the media has undergone significant changes in the last decades. These are due to the effects of privatisation and commercialisation but also due to the mediatisation of politics (Sauer et al. 2017; Pajnik and Meret 2017). In today's hybrid media systems (Chadwick 2017; Šori and Vanya Ivanova 2017), the on- and offline sphere is entangled, and digital media provide several actors with the possibility to spread their ideas and messages directly, providing "space for racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia and violence, which would be rejected by standards of journalism" (Pajnik and Meret 2017:52). We therefore focus empirically on the online media presence, production and circulation of media objects by various stakeholders of radicalisation and de-radicalisation, to see how these actors navigate the online sphere, how they disseminate their messages, and what narratives and counter-narratives they employ. Using the examples of three collective agents of radicalisation, we analyse the role of hegemonic gender representations in the online promotion of radicalised ideas to discover whether (radicalised) narratives revolve around misogyny, homophobia, sexism, and transphobia. This is contrasted with online counter-narratives of collective agents of de-radicalisation and with citizen communication. While the first pertains to state and non-state organisations involved in de-radicalisation, as identified in previous reports (see Haselbacher, Mattes and Reeger 2021 and Haselbacher, Josipovic and Reeger 2021), the latter refers to influencers, activists, and ordinary citizens.

In the context of D.Rad, we understand radicalisation as a process involving the increasing rejection of established law, order, and politics as well as the active pursuit of alternatives. Radicalisation may result in violent forms of extremism. We are, however, particularly interested in the early steps towards the building blocks of radicalisation, which are conceptualised through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation). In this report, we are particularly interested to see whether the media objects that we have studied bolster feelings connected to the I-GAP spectrum. When speaking of de-radicalisation, we refer to processes countering such rejection at the individual (micro), organisational (meso) or societal (macro) levels. Such programmes and activities aim at a shift from violent to nonviolent strategies and tactics. They can be grouped into primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention as well as intervention measures.

¹ This chapter partially is a synopsis of the D.Rad 3.1 and the D.Rad 5.1. reports. For an overview of stakeholders of (de)-radicalisation in Austria, see Haselbacher, Mattes, and Reeger, 2021. For an overview of cultural drivers of radicalisation, see Haselbacher and Reeger, 2021.

Compared to other countries, violent incidents connected to extremism were rather seldom in Austria and fatalities remain the rare exception², whereby the Vienna terror attack in 2020 marked a caesura. Right-wing extremist activities are mostly connected to the field of hate speech, e.g. verbal abuse or racist graffiti and insults. Rightist ideologies remained politically represented and partially incorporated in the political system throughout Austria's post-war history (Ager 2014; Pirker 2020) and far-right networks have strong ties across all segments of society. Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer (2020) therefore use the term 'far right' as an umbrella term for different groups and their varying ideological positioning. The authors argue that right-wing extremism and right-wing populism are not mutually exclusive but should be used as analytical tools to study the ideological positioning and political mobilisation strategies of groups within the far right. These debates on terminology and conceptualisation are highly relevant for the Austrian case, which is characterised by a variety of groups, actors, and strategies. On the one hand, the electorally successful right-wing populist party FPÖ must be mentioned. On the other, there are well-established structures that predate World War II, such as nationalist fraternities or *Burschenschaften* (Weidinger 2014). The close cooperation between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary right-wing extremism has steered right-wing extremist activities in Austria. Although some argue that populist parties channel the hatred, resulting in low levels of actual physical violence (Schiedel 2007), the peculiar continuity of right-wing extremism in the Austrian political system has normalised right-wing positions and made them socially acceptable (Pelinka 2012). The FPÖ and its leading figures – among them Jörg Haider, Heinz-Christian Strache, and Herbert Kickl – have continuously shifted the boundaries of what can be said (Wodak 2020), resulting in high levels of xenophobia.

In Austria, the relationship between traditional media and the far right, especially right-wing populism, is ambivalent. It is characterised by a battle for attention and by power struggles on discursive sovereignty and sovereignty of interpretation. As is the case in other countries, right-wing populist leaders frequently speak out against so-called mainstream media, which are considered part of an elitist system that is dominated by the left. Nevertheless, it is especially right-wing populist actors who have been successful in drawing media attention and in gaining coverage due to targeted provocations. The rise of leading figures was closely tied to their continuing presence in the media, which is used to spread narratives and to mobilise followers (Goetz et al. 2021; Sulzbacher 2021; Weidinger 2021). In order to be independent from traditional media and to communicate directly with sympathisers, the right-wing scene in Austria has successfully established its own media network. Several magazines and online platforms, such as *Die Aula*, *zur Zeit*, or *info.direkt*, fulfil the function of linking various groups with each other (ibid.). The individual media take on different functions, being either explicitly ideologically oriented and tailored to a narrower target group, or more broadly diversified in order to reach several societal segments and recruit followers.

The rise of the internet has changed patterns of political communication, as online media foster populist communicative practices, ranging "from mobilization and campaigning strategies to

² The anti-fascist Ernst Kirchweger, who was killed in 1965 by a right-wing extremist during a demonstration against the antisemitic university professor Taras Borodajkewyczis, was often considered

³ the first victim of political violence in Austria after World War II (Bruckmüller 2018). Most noticeably, the right-wing terrorist Franz Fuchs killed four people and injured 15 in bomb attacks in the 1990s (El Refaie 2004). Furthermore, there have been fatalities in connection with police violence (Amnesty 2009).

promoting own ideas and ideologies, including the (mis)use of the Internet for spreading fear, anger and hate against ‘others’” (Pajnik and Sauer 2017: 1). Right-wing extremist groups have discovered the possibilities of social media rather early (Conway 2017). Brodnik (2021) illustrates how right-wing actors easily adapt to new platforms and how populist speech corresponds well with the fast pace and the emotional nature of online debates. The internet provides an easily accessible platform to share (violent) extremist content as well as political and radicalised worldviews, to engage in strategic exchange and networking activities, and to recruit followers and young people with whom they can directly interact and communicate through chatrooms, commentaries, or forums (Aly 2016; Conway 2017; Marone et al. 2019; Miller-Idriss 2020). While extremist groups have frequently developed their own websites or turned to online channels that are sparsely monitored, such as Telegram, Bitchute, or Odysee (Bloom et al. 2019; Urman and Katz 2020), mainstream platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, or Instagram remain popular due to their greater range. Studies on right-wing extremist content on YouTube demonstrate how radicalised groups mix mainstream interests with far-right ideology to create and diversify their audiences (Munger and Phillips 2020; Ottoni et al. 2018). Furthermore, radical groups increasingly turn to pop-cultural elements in order to appear more moderate and have an impact on the overall social discourse (Meiering, Dziri and Foroutan 2020). Empirically, we take this diversification of platforms into consideration and include examples that cover the whole range of online activities of right-wing extremist groups.

The following chapter presents the methods and the methodology of this report, before we discuss mediated hegemonic gender representations and their relationship to radicalisation in Austria in chapter 3. The heart of the report is the analysis of media presence, production, and circulation of collective agents of radicalisation (chapter 4), collective agents of de-radicalisation (chapter 5), and ordinary users against radicalisation (chapter 6). For each of these, we will analyse examples of three different actors that are representative for the case of Austria and that provide valuable insights into the dynamics of radicalisation and de-radicalisation in the country. We conclude the report with a comparative discussion of our results and concluding remarks that help us to understand the relationship between mediated gender representations and extremism in Austria.

2. Methodology and methods

In this report, we combine multi-platform analysis (Doyle 2014; Jordan 2018) with multi-level analysis (Highfield and Leaver 2015). This mirrors contemporary online engagements, as users and suppliers of online content alike are usually not active on singular platforms but follow multi-platform strategies, which resulted in a vast expansion of online content (Doyle 2104). Regarding online platforms, we aimed at covering the whole spectrum of online engagement of right-wing extremist groups and thus chose to include examples from a) mainstream social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook), b) less-monitored platforms (Odysee), and c) traditional platforms (websites). We however did not include platforms or online forums that are for registered members only but restricted our research to publicly accessible data.

The research process consisted of several steps. In the first step, we collected information on online activities of right-wing extremist groups and monitored several platforms for two months to identify groups and platforms. In a second step, we chose the items for analysis and

selected content that explicitly contained gendered radicalised ideas. Based on these items, we searched for reactions and counter-narratives from de-radicalisation agents and ordinary citizens. All items and, if available, comments were saved for analysis (see Appendix).

Analogically to the D.Rad 5.1 country report (see Haselbacher and Reeger 2021), we followed a practice-based media research methodology (Couldry 2004), which includes audience practices as well as the question of agency into the analysis. This allows us to be aware of the discursive construction of “us” and “them” dichotomies and to pay attention to the role of media in nurturing feelings that are relevant for the study of the I-GAP spectrum: injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarisation. Regarding the levels of analysis, our focus was on the aspect of representation, which includes stereotypes, cultural assumptions, ideological discourses, myths, and folk tales that are transported in the media object. Furthermore, we concentrated on narratives, i.e. medium-specific structures of language, cultural codes and conventions, metaphors, symbols, as well as technical elements of narratives, i.e. aesthetic elements, cinematography, camera angles, costume, voiceover, anchorage, sound design, and editing. To study circulation and consumption, we harnessed different types of data, on the one hand, comments and user reactions, on the other public reactions in the form of articles, blog-posts, etc.

Most of the items are multimodal, as they include a textual message, pictures, codes and sometimes sounds. The items mostly relate to each other. Some are closely connected to concrete offline events, whereas others are historically embedded in long-lasting conflicts revolving around the topic of cultural hegemony in an age of changing gender norms. The variety of items and sources allows for a comparative analysis that helps us to identify the main gendered radicalisation traits in Austria.

3. Mediated hegemonic gender presentations and their relationship to radicalisation in Austria

In this chapter, we introduce the literature on hegemonic gender presentations in Austria to provide the context for the analysis of mediated gender representations online in the following chapters. While the following section gives a general overview on historical developments, political milestones, and socio-cultural role models, the second section examines connections between (right-wing extremist) radicalisation and hegemonic gender representations.

3.1. Culture of hegemonic gender presentations in Austria

Formally, men and women have equal rights in Austria; these are stipulated in Article 7(1) of the Constitution, according to which gender privileges are prohibited. However, this formal equality has not yet led to a transformation of society and political institutions or procedures (Sauer 2017). Different approaches to gender equality policies are closely related to political majorities and the ideological superstructures of the dominating parties of the Second Republic: The Social-Democratic SPÖ and the conservative ÖVP. While the conservative ÖVP and the right-wing populist FPÖ tend to emphasise the issue of family, the SPÖ and the Green Party more specifically focus on women's rights (Rosenberger 1992; 2006).

Two-gender hegemony and classical role models dominate the Austrian discourse and determine the hierarchical gender order (ibid.). Austria is therefore characterised by a

“separate gender role model”: in a typical male-breadwinner state, females, often at the expense of their participation in the labour market (Buber-Ennsner 2015), perform the overwhelming share of private care work. In comparison with other European countries, Austrian public policies are considered “de-familialistic” to a limited extent (Cho 2014), with reference to Esping-Andersen’s concept of familialism (i.e. households must carry the principal responsibility for their members’ welfare; Esping-Andersen 1999:51). On average, the economic conditions for women are worse than for men, including a comparatively large pay-gap between the genders, a higher share of poverty risk, lower income, and pensions (Statistik Austria 2021; see also Schneebaum et al. 2018; Schneebaum et al. 2014).

These social-economic inequalities are mirrored on a political level through a gender gap in the distribution of positions and departments, which is especially true on a federal level, where decision-making and negotiation procedures structurally exclude women (Sauer 2017). Male domination in democratic institutions is reflected in policy making, where outcomes primarily represent the interests of a male elite that structurally masks unpaid care work (for the topic of care work see also Appelt and Fleischer 2014; Aulenbacher et al. 2021; Hammer and Österle 2003; Pfau-Effinger and Geissler 2005). We want to underline the importance of intersectional approaches in this context, as migrant women are particularly affected by the effects of the (unequal) distribution of labour and capital described here (see Appelt et al. 2010; Bauer et al. 2014; Wiesböck 2011).

Major steps towards gender equality date back to the period of sole government by the SPÖ during the 1970s and 1980s (Dohnal 2007). During this period, the ban on abortion, educational and employment discrimination, as well as patriarchal family relationships were publicly criticised, and a window of opportunity emerged, which led to the establishment of equality institutions (Sauer 2017). In 1997, the first Gender Equality Petition (*Frauenvolksbegehren*) included 11 claims for gender equality and was signed by 11.17 percent of the population (Zach 2021). Despite this high support for the initiative, most of the points have not been fully implemented by 2022, such as wage justice or full-day childcare. Also, in the political sphere, equal representation has not yet been reached, with a share of 39 percent females as members of parliament and 43 percent females in government in 2022 (Parlament der Republik Österreich 2022).

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) lists intersecting inequalities in Austria and publishes the annual Gender Equality Index. In recent years, Austria ranked 13th and was below the EU despite making fragile gains in gender equality, rising from a score of 65.3 in 2019, to 66.5 in 2020 and 68.0 in 2021. Current research on equality policies thus speaks of an “erosion” of achievements in the context of conservative and right-wing populist governments (Bendl, Clar and Schmidt 2021; Löffler 2018). For example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has neither been sustainably anchored institutionally nor adequately funded, which resulted in frequently changing institutional responsibilities. While women’s affairs used to be represented by an independent ministry, it is now part of the portfolio of the Minister of women, family, youth and integration. Kreisky and Löffler (2004) ascribe the revival of conservative family ideologies to societal crises, which in turn give rise to neoliberal, nationalist, and (neo)conservatist trends (ibid.; Disslbacher and Schultheiss 2018; Tálos 2001).

Despite conservative backlashes, gender roles have changed over the past decades. Recent surveys demonstrate that the idea of gender equality is widely supported (Höllinger 2019) and over the past years, prejudices against homosexuality have receded significantly (Aichholzer

et al. 2019). However, reports also reveal that discrimination and hostile as well as abusive incidents directed at LGBTIQ+ people have been rising in the past years (SOHO 2020; Hunklinger, forthcoming). Milestones in achieving equal rights are often tied to mobilisation, social movements, and/or court rulings. One example is the establishment of equal marriage rights in 2019, which only took place due to a ruling of the constitutional court (VfGH) (see Mautner 2018; Fischer-Czermak 2020). Socio-political disputes over “marriage for all” (*Ehe für alle*) are yet another example of the fact that gender roles are contested and that both gender equality policies and LGBTIQ+ rights remain a battlefield. The heteronormativity of the state thereby remains unquestioned and the fight for equality and emancipation remains a continuous struggle that requires “radical solidarity” (Hunklinger, forthcoming, 53).

3.2. Hegemonic gender presentations and radicalisation

“The shared far-right narrative might be summed up as follows: ‘gender ideology’ – a vague notion that includes policies of gender equality, sexual education, gender-neutral language and public reference to homosexuality – is mainly spread by elites, and aims at abolishing the two distinct sexes, and hence at destroying the complementarity of men and women.”

(Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2020:106)

Research on group radicalisation has demonstrated that heroic masculinity and anti-feminism serve as bridging narratives across various groups, as described above, or, as Meiering et al. (2020:14) formulate it, “models for perceiving the world and narratives to foster identity”. This indicates the importance of mechanisms of interaction in the process of radicalisation. These take place within the group, among different groups, or with reference to the state. In this context, heroic and toxic constructions of masculinity are paired with anti-feminist ideologies and construed conceptions of the adversary, which result in the “fabrication of an enemy as well as specific conceptions of hierarchical social orders” (ibid., 1).

Right-wing extremist ideologies have always incorporated anti-feminist elements and anti-feminist attitudes are even said to be a “constitutive ideology” of Austrian right-wing extremism (Klammer and Goetz 2017). Besides the construction of feminism as a threat and an enemy image, familism has dominated the discourse (Meiering, Dziri and Foroutan 2020; Kemper 2014). Familism refers to “a very limited, population-biological, national and normative image of the family that seeks to marginalize or combat families that do not correspond to this model” (ibid., 9). As the awareness of gender inequality increased, conservative Christians, right-wing populist and right-wing extremist actors in Austria made the fight against equality their cause. Through strategically misinterpreting gender theory, they constructed a narrative that unites “positions directed against legal equality for LGBT, against women's policies, gender mainstreaming and gender research as well as criticism of sexual education and gender-sensitive pedagogy” (Sauer and Mayer 2017:23).

The topic of gender thus remains a battlefield for right-wing extremist narratives. The successful right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) views traditional heterosexual family as “the only legitimate form of family” (Olteanu 2017). However, they also emphasise gender equality, women’s rights, and freedom of choice as part of their anti-Islam agenda (Ajanovic et al. 2016). In this context, the FPÖ and its allies like to propagate freedom, democracy, and equality as “Austrian” and “Christian” values in order to distinguish themselves from Islamic countries and Muslim people. “This endorsement of self-determination and gender-equality is

somewhat puzzling given that the populist radical right continues to embrace a conservative ideology as regards family values and gender roles, and is usually opposing feminism” (Hadj-Abdou 2017). Martin Reissigl (2020) summarises the representation of gender relations in right-wing populist discourse as "calculated ambivalence."

This ambivalence has also been discussed as “alter-progressivism” (Foster and Kirke 2022) and is analysed as a strategy to attract LGBTQ+ voters. It means that an abstract commitment to equality is made, while anti-feminism, as well as xenophobia and Islamophobia, remain part of the ideology. Michael Hunklinger and Edma Ajanovic have analysed political attitudes of LGBTIQ+ voters of right-wing populist parties in Austria and Germany and have outlined how these voters support racist and anti-feminist statements, which they describe as “homonationalism”. Similar to Foster and Kirke’s (2022) study on the British radical right, the study on the Austrian case shows that LGBTIQ+ voters of the radical right are predominantly white gay men who tend to hierarchize among LGBTIQ+ groups (excluding trans-, inter- and queer groups). They also distinguish between men and women. Consequently, neither radical right parties nor their electorate challenge traditional gender norms, but rather support the dominance of hegemonic masculinities (see also Connell 2005 and Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015).

This ambivalence also has intersectional implications when the discourse on gender is intertwined with discourses on migration and race (Mayer et al. 2014; 2020). It is especially Islam and Muslim immigrants that are construed as an existential threat. This represents a fear that is tailored towards LGBTQ+ anxieties (Foster and Kirke 2022) evolving around the alleged homophobia of Islam or violent immigrant masculinities in general (Mayer et al. 2020). Birgit Sauer has described populist strategies of gendering racism as “intersectionality from above” (Sauer 2013), where “sexism, gender inequality and homophobia are projected onto Others, while ‘We’ are constructed as an enlightened people that has already secured gender equality” (Mayer et al. 2020:109). Furthermore, migrant women have either been sexualised based on their ethnicity and/or politicised in populist right-wing discourses. This is especially the case with Muslim women. It can be best observed in debates on the headscarf (see Gresch et al. 2008). The binary construction of gender into mutually opposing entities corresponds with “the essentialist construction of ‘race’” (Hammer and Goetz 2017: 82). An analysis of radicalised hegemonic gender representations in the context of the far right will therefore always be an intersectional one.

4. Media presence, production, and circulation of collective agents of radicalisation

In this section, we analyse the media presence of collective agents of radicalisation, as well as the production and circulation of media objects. We furthermore enquire after the role that hegemonic gender representations play in the promotion of radicalised ideas in social media. In report 3.1 (see Haselbacher et al. 2021), we have identified right-wing extremist networks, using the exemplary case of the Identitarian Movement to outline connections and linkages between various groups on the far right. It is important to note that linkages and connections often remain obscure and that only some of them are publicly known. The FPÖ, for example, has repeatedly distanced itself from extremist groups such as the Identitarian Movement. However, financial support and overlaps in personnel have been documented in the past.

Our case selection builds on these networks and includes three different actors which exemplify the heterogeneity of the right-wing extremist scene: The first case is the nationalist fraternity *Teutonia*, the second is the *Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend*, the youth organisation of the FPÖ, and the third is Martin Sellner, a right-wing extremist activist who is part of the so-called “new right” and who has been banned from traditional platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. Based on this case selection, we are able to cover the whole spectrum of the far right in Austria, which is operating inside and outside institutionalised politics. The examples furthermore illustrate the variety of online activism of right-wing (extremist) groups, which ranges from websites to Facebook to the less-censored platform Odysee.

4.1. Nationalist fraternity Teutonia

Right-wing extremist fraternities are one of the most traditional branches of right-wing extremism in Austria. They often date back to the 19th century (Peham 2014) and are the “main link between organised neo-Nazism and the right-wing extremist parties in parliament” (Klammer and Goetz 2017:83). Fraternities are men’s unions for students and academics with a strict and secret code of conduct that build on “male bonding and gender segregation” (ibid.). These closed and elitist networks are formed for a lifetime. Members often have high ranking positions in society and are well connected in the right-wing extremist scene in the whole German-speaking area. Right-wing extremist fraternities are characterised by their German nationalist ideological foundations that build on the idea of a racially constructed ethnic community that centres on pan-German ideas (*Volksgemeinschaft*³) (Schiedel 2007). Furthermore, they participate in academic fencing, meaning that members duel each other, which is visible through a duelling scar in the face. The so-called *Mensur* serves as a barrier against feminisation, is supposed to teach subordination and fulfils sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic and racist functions (Klammer and Goetz 2017:83f.).

The fraternity Teutonia is exemplary for right-wing extremist fraternities in Austria and Germany. The Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW), an organisation that monitors right-wing extremist activities in Austria, has classified it as right-wing extremist with a proximity to neo-Nazism due to the organisational form of the fraternity and its network, as well as public statements and revisionist, anti-Semitic, anti-feminist and/or racist incidents. The fraternity for instance made several references to the “*Ostmark*”, published anti-Semitic leaflets, and advocated for the secession of South Tyrol from Italy and its reunification with Austria (DÖW; Peham, 2014).

For our analysis, we included a picture taken from the website and a recent posting from the Facebook page of the fraternity. Although concrete activities and the code of conduct remain hidden, the website reveals the self-understanding of the fraternity and serves as a communication platform through which the fraternity presents itself and where outsiders can gain some (pre-selected and tailored) insights. In the section “History”, there are several references to German nationalism, for example: “The development of the fraternity is closely connected with German history since 1815 and with the struggle for a united and democratic nation of all Germans”.⁴ The section “Links” lists the network of the fraternity, which comprises

³ The term *Volksgemeinschaft* can be translated as “national community” and is based on biological and racist premises (see Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer 1996 and Peham 2014).

⁴ All German texts were translated by the authors.

known right-wing extremist organisations, including a rubric “*Auslandsdeutschtum*” (German Foreignership), as well as more general links to universities and newspapers. In the section “Discover”, we find several pictures in which we see men on different occasions wearing a uniform⁵. The picture we chose for our analysis (see Appendix 1.1.) shows eight men photographed from below, looking towards the ceiling. They are all wearing the uniform of the fraternity, with hats, sashes and ties in the colours of the German national flag. The three men standing in the middle hold their duelling sabres and one man is kneeling in front of the group holding the coat of arms. The picture thus immediately gives an impression of the ideological inclination of the fraternity, its militarised self-image that is closely connected to a specific form of masculinity (see Miller-Idriss 2017), and the celebration of the duel as a German national and a male tradition.

While the website gives rather intriguing insights into the organisational form, appearance and self-understanding of the fraternity, the Facebook page is full of ideologically charged political statements and codes, which are published on a regular basis. In the self-description of the page, we find a text that exposes the image of masculinity of the fraternity: “*The Viennese academic fraternity Teutonia (...) has set itself the task of (...) educating its members to become men of character. This also includes the support of our members in all situations of life and the manly advocacy for our homeland and our people* (Facebook). The page has around 1,280 likes and there is not much response to postings besides likes. The postings themselves often display an anti-feminist background. Words such as “woke”, “left” and “rainbow” occur frequently. The screenshot included in the Appendix shows a caricature of a woman shouting at a man with the caption “Frustration, because 50 types of gender have been invented but none of them fit”. It thus makes fun of gender diversity while at the same time revealing elements of grievance and injustice, as the text in the picture refers to the alleged prejudgement of right-wing actors and to leftist opinion leadership.

4.2. Freiheitliche Jugend

The second actor that we have focused on is the *Freiheitliche Jugend*, the youth organisation of the FPÖ. The Austrian Freedom Party FPÖ has been described, inter alia, as right-wing populist (Luther et al. 2011; Pelinka 2019), as forming part of the radical right (Mudde 2007) and right-wing extremist (Bailer 2021). Key actors are known for making use of anti-immigrant and nativist sentiments in populist speech (Wodak 2020) and the party generally rejects the idea of equality, promoting an androcentric ideology (Wimmer and Goetz 2016). As a harsh critic of traditional media channels, the FPÖ has discovered the possibilities of social media quite early and has successfully established its own communication channels (FIPU 2020). *Freiheitliche Jugend* is primarily active on Facebook, where they have recruited over 49,000 followers.

Unlike the Facebook page of the fraternity, the channel of the FPÖ youth explicitly aims at provoking reactions of its users. The post we chose for the analysis reveals the intersection of migration and gender in right-wing extremist discourses. In the picture accompanying the post, there is an anonymous woman wearing a headscarf and burkini, pictured from behind. The visual language is thus exemplary for the way in which right-wing extremist groups tend to instrumentalise Islam and the symbol of the headscarf. In the text accompanying the picture,

⁵ The uniform is called *Wichs* in German, the hats *Deckel*.

the FPÖ criticises a civic initiative that organised female-only bathing days at a spa near Vienna. The action had no connection to Islam, nor was it about Muslim women, but it criticised the male gaze at public baths and aimed at creating a safe space for women. The caption and visual language (the heading "sharia compliant"), place the initiative exclusively in the context of Islam and refugee migration. It obscures the fact that it is a bathing day for all women who might be interested in attending. Furthermore, not the entire spa was reserved for this purpose, but only a certain area.

The posting provoked almost 1,900 likes and more than 850 comments. It clearly had polarising effects that were based on the indignation over the apparent and unjust preferential treatment of Muslim women. We analysed the first 100 comments. Among them, the overwhelming majority clearly rejects such a bathing day, though with differing, mostly racist lines of argumentation consistent with right-wing attitudes. There are calls for adaptation and integration, with the latter being used synonymously with the notion of assimilation. "Our country, our rules" points into this direction, with some commentators fearing the "Muslimisation" of Austrian society. It is believed that the goal of these "uninvited guests is that we should assimilate to their culture, not the other way around". An extreme form of othering can be found in comments dealing with issues of hygiene or rather a lack thereof, arguing that they themselves would "not go into this stinking water anymore", that it is unhygienic to wear clothes while bathing, that germs would be spread, and finally, that the women should wash their clothes somewhere else. Some commentators issued a call to boycott the public bath where the event took place. Only a few posts attempt to defend the action and stated, for example, that the people have not understood the purpose of the action.

4.3. Martin Sellner (Identitarian Movement)

Martin Sellner is known as the head of the right-wing extremist Identitarian Movement. In July 2020, YouTube blocked his channels, due to a violation of the Hate Speech Usage Policy of the platform. At the time, Sellner managed three channels, with more than 100 videos and 38 million views (DÖW, s.a.). His attempt to take legal action against YouTube and to re-establish the channels has failed. As a consequence, Sellner now engages on a variety of less-regulated platforms, among them Telegram, Odysee, Parler, and D.live. He uses these platforms, among other things, to campaign for financial support. For the present analysis, we have focused on Odysee, where he regularly shares videos under the heading "Martin Sellner live". Recently, his focus has been on anti-vaccination demonstrations. Despite the dominance of the topic, there nevertheless are videos covering the whole spectrum of Identitarian politics.

The video we chose for the analysis explicitly centres on the topic of gender diversity and homosexuality. It is a review of an issue of the German right-wing extremist magazine COMPACT, entitled "*Globohomo, transhumanism, and the rainbow terror*". Compact is led by Jürgen Elsässer, a German activist who is known for making antisemitic statements. Since December 2021, the magazine has been classified as "secured right-wing extremist" by the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution, due to its "positions and statements that are clearly to be assessed as *völkisch*-nationalist as well as anti-minority".⁶ The video is

⁶ <https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/mediasres-deutschlandfunk/bundesamt-fuer-verfassungsschutz-zeitschrift-compact-als-gesichert-extremistisch-eingestuft/deutschlandfunk/95787290/>

therefore interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, it displays how various right-wing extremist narratives are rhetorically intertwined, while on the other it reveals the dense networks within the right-wing extremist scene in both Germany and Austria.

The 16:56-minute video shows Martin Sellner sitting in front of the picture of a skyline, talking into his microphone and going through the articles of the magazine one by one. It starts with the focus of the issue, but soon drifts into conspiracy theory and right-wing extremist threat scenarios, which are rhetorically intertwined with references to philosophers and political theorists such as Gramsci, Nietzsche, and Adorno. Various quotes are taken out of context to give right-wing extremist ideologies an apparently serious and scientific undertone. It is especially the term “hegemony” which is reinterpreted and instrumentalised. Threat scenarios include the motif of “imperialist corporations”, “leftists”, “migrants”, and the “Globohomo”. All of these threat scenarios are rhetorically intertwined and place in relation to “gender madness” and the “hegemony of gender diversity”, which represents a “sick image of man” and a “general attack on manhood”.

Martin Sellner then successively presents the articles in the magazine. Several of them focus on the “gay republic”, a pejorative term that is used throughout the issue to point to the alleged dominance of gender equality policies and symbols (especially the rainbow flag). One of these articles focuses on the purported 'best practice' example of Hungary, which is framed as a political role model due to repressive policies. The rest of the articles touches upon other topics, such as sexual violence committed by asylum seekers and John McAfee’s death, which has given rise to widespread conspiracy theories.⁷ This rather wild mixture of right-wing extremist discourses reflects the entire I-GAP spectrum, including elements of injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarisation. Despite Sellner’s seemingly neutral and intellectual analysis, he uses defamatory and strong words which have a clear and explicit homophobic undertone. The imminent “rainbow-terror” is thus claiming global power and is threatening heteronormative gender roles, or, to use the words in the video, it is “about the destruction, the dissolution of homo sapiens”⁸.

5. Media presence, production, and circulation of collective agents of de-radicalisation

In this chapter, we analyse how collective agents of de-radicalisation address or reveal hegemonic gender norms. We chose stakeholders and media items that correspond with the examples discussed in the previous chapter, as they are either direct reactions or somehow related to the issues described above. The first one picks up the topic of right-wing extremist fraternities and supports the call for a demonstration against the assembly of striking

⁷ The British-American entrepreneur and software developer John McAfee had committed suicide in a prison cell in Spain on 23 June 2021, upon which people questioned and doubted the official cause of death. Conspiracy theories concerning John McAfee’s death were especially popular among Q-Anon followers, which were fostered by certain tweets McAfee had posted while he was in prison.

⁸ <https://odyssey.com/@MartinSellner:d/compact0821:3>

fraternities⁹ at the University of Vienna. The second stems from the Instagram profile of a petition for gender equality and points to intersectional aspects of gender violence, and the third represents the counselling centre “Hate on the Net” and the corresponding Hashtag #GegenHassimNetz (#againsthateonthenet).

5.1. Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft, Universität Wien

The first actor of de-radicalisation is the Austrian Union of Students (ÖH) at the University of Vienna. The National Union of Students is the legal and political representative body of university students, offering numerous services for students and providing them with information on topics related to life at the university. In addition to the federal body, each university has its own ÖH. The ÖH at the University of Vienna has traditionally been dominated by leftist groups and has taken a critical stance on several topics pertinent to the present analysis. According to the self-description of the ÖH Uni Wien on its website,¹⁰ social conditions are characterised by “ideologies of inequality, structural discrimination against women*, racism, homo*trans*interphobia, heterosexism and the fundamental marginalization of the socially disadvantaged”. The declared goal of the ÖH Uni Wien is therefore not the mere criticism of society and higher education policies, but the “fundamental change of underlying conditions”.

Right-wing extremist fraternities and the left-leaning ÖH of the University of Vienna have a long history of disputes and confrontations. Throughout the years, the ÖH has published several sets of information on right-wing extremist activities in the context of the university on its website and in print. These mostly have an informative character, aiming at raising awareness, deconstructing myths, and preventing students from associating themselves with these groups. Furthermore, they seek to monitor right-wing extremist activities and to advocate for their ban off university grounds to create an “anti-fascist” university.

The post that forms the basis of our analysis stems from the Instagram account of the ÖH Uni Wien. It issues a call for an anti-fascist demonstration that takes place each year on 27 January, which is the date of the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The so-called *Budenbummel*¹¹ is organised and supported by several de-radicalisation actors and left-leaning activists. It starts at the ramp leading to the main entrance of the university, before moving to several premises of the fraternities. The university ramp is not chosen by coincidence, being the place of assembly for right-wing fraternities each Wednesday at noon.

The first picture of the analysis (see Appendix 2.1.) shows hooded demonstrators holding a banner that is not easily readable. The picture is captioned “No room for Nazis at the university.” The following three pictures simply show a red background and short textual statements that contextualise the activities of right-wing extremist fraternities. In the text accompanying the pictures, the ÖH speaks of fraternities as “the backbone of Austrian right-

⁹ So-called 'striking' fraternities are such that practise duelling and incising the 'Mensur'. Non-striking fraternities, who exclude these practises, are commonly seen as politically more moderate

¹⁰ <https://oeh.univie.ac.at/wer-wir-sind>

¹¹ *Bude* is the term for the club premises of fraternities and *bummeln* is an Austrian term for taking a leisurely stroll.

wing extremism”, because FPÖ politicians as well as leading figures of the Identitarian Movement stem from their ranks. It portrays fraternities as “elitist cliques” that, “in the old male fraternity manner, provide their right-wing comrades with influence and jobs” and finally warns that fraternities use university grounds to “to recruit members and intimidate dissenters by appearing in couleur”. In these statements, the ÖH thus a) points to the linkages of the right-wing extremist scene; b) emphasises the elitist character of fraternities as male bonding societies; and c) addresses the aspects of recruitment and intimidation.

5.2. Frauen*volksbegehren

The Austrian Gender Equality Petition (*Frauen*volksbegehren 2.0*) took place in 2018 and consists of nine demands that range from broader socio-economic and political requests, such as the legal entitlement to childcare, to more specific ones, such as the expansion of specialised facilities for women and children affected by domestic violence. The petition is closely connected to the call-for-equality petition from 1997, which was one of the milestones in achieving gender equality. The Frauen*volksbegehren acquired 481,959 votes and currently ranks 13th among all petitions ever filed in Austria. The petition was supported by a number of famous people from politics and society and has a vivid engagement online using various channels. Main information about supporters and the demands of the Frauen*volksbegehren can be found on the website,¹² while Facebook, Twitter and especially Instagram are used to raise awareness and disseminate information, or to engage in networking activities and the building of (online) alliances. The Instagram profile of the Frauen*volksbegehren has over 14,4k followers and has an informative character, whereas user interaction besides likes is generally low.

The post we selected for this analysis consists of three pictures, which we chose to illustrate the interconnectedness of discourses on gender-related violence and femicides and to outline how various actors of deradicalisation cooperate to increase visibility. It was part of the action *#16tagegegengewaltanfrauen* (*#16dayscombatingviolenceagainstwomen*), which took place at the end of November 2020. Initially, it aimed at drawing the attention to physical and psychological acts of violence against women as well as femicides, as gender-related violence increased during the pandemic. However, as the action took place shortly after the Vienna terror attack and during a time of increased anti-Muslim racism, the post discussed here focused on the situation of Muslim women.

The post we included in the analysis centres on Asma Aiad, an activist, youth worker and artist who is herself very active on Instagram. She is also a spokesperson for the Black Voices Anti-Racism Petition that was running at the time of the post. The post draws attention to experiences of violence by (visibly) Muslim women. While the caption offers a general explanation on the Hashtag and the Black Voices Petition, the three pictures show Asma Aiad and three quotations by her. For example, the second picture is accompanied by the following quote: “The struggle of Muslim women against violence is twofold. On the one hand, they are combating the well-known violence against women: Domestic violence, sexual violence and sexist discrimination. We share this struggle with all women. In addition to this, we also experience racist violence as Muslim women, often as visible Muslim women”.

¹² www.frauenvolksbegehren.at

The post thus points to the intersectionality of racist agitations and is an example of awareness raising at the interface of misogyny, migration, religion, and racism. It furthermore demonstrates how agents of de-radicalisation actively engage in networking and how they successfully build alliances. In this case, it is a cooperation between Asma Aiad, who brings her own audience, and the two petitions, which were mutually supporting each other to create audiences and increase their online presence. This is also mirrored in the number of Hashtags that are included in each caption revealing the linkages of stakeholders of de-radicalisation, who further each other's campaigns. Finally, it is an example of how these stakeholders use their online presence to raise awareness on the effects of misogynistic, sexist, and racist discourses as well as extremist acts of violence that explicitly target women.

5.3. ZARA Counseling Center #GegenHassimNetz

ZARA Zivilcourage & Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work) is the main NGO in the field of anti-racism work in Austria. The NGO operates, among others, the Counselling Centre against Hate on the Net (using the hashtag #GegenHassimNetz, #Againsthateonthenet), which serves as a contact point for victims and witnesses of hate postings, cyberbullying, and other forms of verbal and psychological violence on the Internet. Online, it is present via its website, its Instagram account, and Twitter.

Victims of hate on the net are predominantly women. Such attacks in the context of online debates often appear to be targeted and orchestrated. Perpetrators frequently use various channels during periods of sharply increased, intense hate postings (also referred to as shitstorms), bombarding victims with messages via email as well as through their social media platforms with the goal of silencing them. In many cases, women were forced to deactivate their social networking sites temporarily. The content of such messages is usually very explicit, loaded with sexist comments and offensive language. Users tend to remain anonymous, which lowers the threshold for perpetrators (Brodnik 2013). In this context, victims have reported that anonymous users have threatened to rape or kill them or people related to them, such as their children. While hate on the net is a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be ascribed to a specific form of extremism, its undertone is sexist, misogynist, and racist. For a long time, victims remained unsupported, and there were no national laws against this specific form of hate speech. The publication and collection of these incidents draws attention to the topic, resulting in expressions of solidarity.

The name of the Counselling Centre itself is a hashtag. Whereas the centre does not present much content on Instagram, the hashtag was and often is used on Twitter. Based on an analysis of the hashtag on Twitter using Mozdeh software,¹³ we have found three different uses of it. The first group consists of well-known personalities, often politicians but also journalists, who used the hashtag to narrate their own experiences with online hate speech and who promoted the hashtag. The second group consists of "ordinary" users who have used the hashtag to report hateful content posted online. The third and rather small group comprises people who oppose the hashtag and who either make fun of it or use it to spread counter-narratives stating that laws combatting hate on the net are in fact a threat to the freedom of expression. This heterogeneity in the usage of the hashtag is a good example of how a campaign that was originally initiated by a de-radicalisation agent and furthered by politicians

¹³ We have excluded all comments that were not associated with the Austrian context.

is now used by ordinary citizens, serving to raise awareness and connect affected people with each other and with the corresponding organisations.

6. Media presence, production, and circulation of ordinary users against radicalisation

This chapter sheds light on the media performance and presentation of so-called citizen communication. It aims at presenting audience reactions to radicalised hegemonic gender representations online from the perspective of “ordinary users”. As this is an almost infinite field and difficult to capture, given the vast extent of content that is daily distributed online, we chose three strands that are exemplary for the variety and diversity of online engagement and which form part of the discourses of the previous chapters. The first is a collective that is styled as a female-only *Burschenschaft*, the second is a hashtag that was created to celebrate the pride parade during the pandemic and the third represents the influencer who organised the bathing day for women discussed in section 4.2.

6.1. Burschenschaft Hysteria

Burschenschaft Hysteria is a female-only collective that focuses on the establishment of the “golden matriarchy”. Centring on the symbol of a hyena, Hysteria copies the organizational form and the aesthetics of right-wing fraternities and satirically addresses hegemonic gender representations in right-wing extremist fraternities by reversing the internal logic and the ideologies of these groups. Hysteria has successfully established its own aesthetics, including a uniform, a logo and the creation of a founding legend revolving around empress Leopoldine, it furthermore has strict membership rules and a secretive code of conduct. Hysteria appeared in the public with performative acts (e.g., carrying men's suffrage to the grave), performative demonstrations (recurring public comradeship marches; *Kameradschaftsmärsche*), or disruptive actions at gatherings of right-wing extremist fraternities (Bempeza 2020). Each of these events was carefully orchestrated, using banners and uniforms, music and textual fragments that reproduce the aesthetics of right-wing extremist fraternities. Hysteria thus uses “appropriation, mimicking, fakes and over-identification as methods to distort socio-political phenomena” (ibid., 2), which “provokes the white male dominance pursued by reactionary and far-right political groups in Austria” (ibid., 22).

Similar to right-wing extremist fraternities, Hysteria has built up its own network, including prominent female artists, who have increased the visibility of the *Burschenschaft*. The publicity-generating enactments of the group have been documented and disseminated online. In addition, the group uses its online channels to post and comment in “an ironic but serious, playful but also provocative way” (ibid., 22). Through this satirical approximation, the idea of right-wing extremist fraternities as such is deconstructed and the group unmasks underlying misogynist and sexist ideologies.

The example we included in the analysis (see Appendix 3.1.), shows the picture of a young man who is smiling into the camera with the heading “Too beautiful for a duelling scar. Against the disfigurement of our men”. The posting was put online shortly before the *Akademikerball*, a right-wing extremist ball and networking event. The text in the caption refers to this ball and also takes up the topic of academic fencing:

“It's prom season again! That exciting time for men when they get to dress up and we proudly present them. Unfortunately, a new-fashioned trend of self-disfigurement is rampant among particularly sensitive young boys - confused men carve scars into each other's delicate cheeks to prove an allegedly endangered "masculinity".

(Facebook Burschenschaft Hysteria, published 2019/01/25)

Hysteria thus copies the style and the aesthetics of right-wing extremist fraternities but reverses gender roles and satirically mimics their anti-feminist ideologies. As in several previous examples, although there is much approval, there is little interaction in the context of the posting besides sharing and/or liking the post.

6.2. #Fensterparade

To illustrate mobilisations regarding LGBTQ+ rights, we have focused on the hashtag *Fensterparade*. In 2020, the pride parade could not take place in the form of a public event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the hashtags *#fensterparade* and *#fensterparade2020* were created. The term *Fensterl* is a dialectal diminutive of the German term *Fenster*, which means window, together with the word parade. It was initiated by the Viennese LGBTQ+ community to take back public space and increase visibility.¹⁴ It centred on the symbol of the rainbow flag, which was prominently staged in the pictures. For one month, people decorated their windows and balconies with flags, posters, and slogans. Symbols that are associated with the LGBTQ+ community as well as slogans and banners were thus visible all over town. On social media platforms, people posted pictures of either their windows or of themselves celebrating the pride month.

The *Fensterparade* started as an offline event, which soon expanded to the online world through the creation of the hashtag. The symbol of the rainbow flag is the dominating motive on the pictures included in the appendix. While many people are anonymous users who either want to show their belonging to the LGBTQ+ community or to declare their solidarity, there are also politicians who published pictures on their Instagram profiles using the hashtag (these pictures were not included in the appendix). The politicians in the pictures belong to the Green Party or the Social Democratic SPÖ. We also see one of the spokeswomen of the *Frauenvolksbegehren*. Unlike before, where agents of de-radicalisation cooperated with influencers, we here see how politicians make use of a grassroots citizen initiative to position and distinguish themselves politically.

6.3. Dariadaria

The third example of citizen communication is an Instagram posting by *Dariadaria*, or Madeleine Darya Alizadeh, that is directly connected to the posting of the *Freiheitliche Jugend* discussed in section 4.2. *Dariadaria* is one of the most famous Austrian influencers (over 300,000 followers on Instagram). In addition to fair fashion – her main topic – she addresses the topics of racism, masculinity, body positivity, and also is active in several networks (i. a. the *Frauenvolksbegehren* and the Black Voices Petition). *Dariadaria* initiated a women's only bathing day in a thermal bath near Vienna. This caused a wave of rage expressed online by

¹⁴ <https://www.fensterparade.org/fensterl-parade-e.html>

right-wing extremist actors. In reaction, she summoned several supporters to meet at the thermal bath and to go bathing together. The post we focused on consists of a picture from that day and a text in the caption, which reads as follows:

“Thank you to the 160 people who made today special. It was a beautiful, relaxed, liberated and self-determined day that I will never forget. Thank you to everyone off- and online who made a statement today against objectification, discrimination, and sexism towards FLINT. The discourse does not end here and it will not end for a long time. We want to be heard, seen and understood, even if there is still a long way ahead.”

(Instagram Dariadaria, published 2021/09/03)

The picture shows Dariadaria in the thermal spa together with three other female influencers from Instagram. Two of them, Asma Aiad and Amani Abuzahra are activists in the field of anti-Muslim racism, the fourth woman in the picture is Ina Holub, a fat acceptance activist according to her self-description on Instagram. The posting is thus a good example for the building of alliances and solidarities online that demonstrate strength and cohesion vis-à-vis radicalised ideas. The activists explicitly address the topic of hegemonic gender representations and, although they have all suffered from hate speech online, direct their statement against radicalised groups stating that they will stand up against being silenced and intimidated.

The post was met with much support, generating almost 46,000 likes and more than 700 comments. The first 100 of 707 comments are almost exclusively positive, with many posts consisting of emojis only, such as hearts and applauding hands. Some commentators took part in the event themselves and talked about what a relaxed, happy event it was and how much they enjoyed the safe space. Others called for further similar events, or were simply interested in the supply source of swimwear. Comments are thus affirmative, but they hardly resulted in substantive debates or the exchange of ideas.

7. Discussion and conclusion

In this concluding chapter, we aim at summarising our analysis and drawing some conclusions that would help readers to understand extremist narratives revolving around misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia in the Austrian context better.

The analysis of right-wing extremist online engagement revealed the importance of networks and the intersection of narratives across groups as well as across country borders. Many of the topics addressed in the postings and the analysis are relevant for the entire German-speaking region, including that beyond the Austrian borders. This is especially true for right-wing extremist discourses, which are highly alike in Germany and Austria as they refer to the same ideological superstructure and partially propagate pan-German ideas. Symbols, narratives, and often wording, too, are thus rather similar. The analysis of right-wing extremist online activities in chapter 4 has revealed the linkages of right-wing extremist groups who engage in networking activities in both countries. These linkages have a long tradition offline. Online platforms facilitated the exchange of ideas and codes not only for leaders but also for ordinary users who are prone to following radicalised ideas. Cross-cutting issues are border security, migration, and Islam as well as left-wing policies, traditional gender roles, and transphobia. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a new dynamic, which opened

up opportunities to recruit and mobilise new followers. Besides linkages and networks, we found an intersection of right-wing extremist narratives. Threat scenarios and enemy images centre on migration, race, gender, homosexuality, and transsexuality. The common denominator is the fight against equality and the construction of an enemy. Most often, these narratives are rhetorically intertwined and linked to each other.

Networks and joint campaigns are also highly relevant when considering agents of de-radicalisation. Here we can find hashtags and topics that are relevant in the entire German-speaking region and that even go beyond that, such as the topic of femicides or hate on the Net. In our analysis, we furthermore saw how agents of de-radicalisation make use of their networks to promote each other's campaigns and actions and to create audiences, i. e. through collaborations between NGO's and public figures. In addition to the educational approach applied by most de-radicalisation agents, we exemplified how citizen communication that aims to contest the aesthetic practices of certain right-wing extremists (Bempeza 2020) use satiric approximations and other new aesthetic forms.

Regarding the creation of audiences and consumption patterns, we find striking differences between stakeholders of radicalisation, stakeholders of de-radicalisation, and citizen communication. While agents of radicalisation build upon interaction with their users and aim at recruiting followers by posting statements that provoke collective outrage, stakeholders of de-radicalisation do not seem to be successful in achieving interaction among their users. Although the accounts of stakeholders of de-radicalisation have significant numbers of followers, comments and responses are rare if not non-existent. This can be explained by their approach of educating and raising awareness on certain topics. Many posts by stakeholders of de-radicalisation thus do not pose any open questions, but rather inform, present facts and figures, promote joint actions, or deconstruct radicalised narratives. Consequently, they have the character of educational information pages that encourage passive forms of interaction (consuming content and liking it but not sharing or commenting on it).

Citizen communication and ordinary users follow a different pattern of interaction. They contribute to (de)radicalising discourses in their everyday posts by using certain keywords and/or hashtags. Thereby they are able to connect even when they do not have large audiences, and react in one form or the other to concrete events or larger discourses. Influencers on the other hand usually aim at increasing traffic and online engagement with their profile by communicating directly and in a targeted way with their followers. They are able to promote hashtags and they often collaborate with other profiles to advocate or advertise certain campaigns. While topics of citizen communication and agents of de-radicalisation are often similar, the form and pattern of communication differ. Both aim at deconstructing and countering extremist and misogynist narratives and they thus act as allies. Their media production, circulation, and consumption however are only marginally similar.

More importantly, there is no interaction between agents of radicalisation and agents of de-radicalisation. Both refer to each other and counteract each other's narratives. They however never interact directly or respond to one another. Similarly, online communication between stakeholders of radicalisation and stakeholders of de-radicalisation follows the principle of talking *about* each other, but not talking *to* each other. This communicative pattern has polarising effects, resulting in separate echo chambers or online bubbles (Boulianne et al. 2020). Based on algorithms and personal preferences, users usually consume and produce homogeneous content. They typically interact only marginally with profiles of people and groups who are not like-minded.

Summarising our results, we find a strong discursive overlap between ordinary users and stakeholders of de-radicalisation, although their communicative online strategies differ. Online activities open up space for political confrontation as well as for new forms of engagement. We furthermore see how offline networks and alliances are mirrored online in all groups that we have studied. When looking at the I-GAP spectrum, we see how injustice, grievance, and alienation play an important role in the recruitment of followers and help to spread radicalised ideas. Polarising tendencies are observable due to the lack of interaction between radicalised and non-radicalised groups and individuals. Especially in the realm of right-wing extremist content online, de-radicalising agents and ordinary users are construed as enemies through their assumed affiliation with the leftist scene. Finally, we see how right-wing extremist protagonists use online platforms to reproduce their misogynist, anti-feminist and anti-egalitarian worldviews. Gendered radicalisation traits online are thus a continuation of offline battles that are not confined to online spheres.

Appendix: Items for analysis

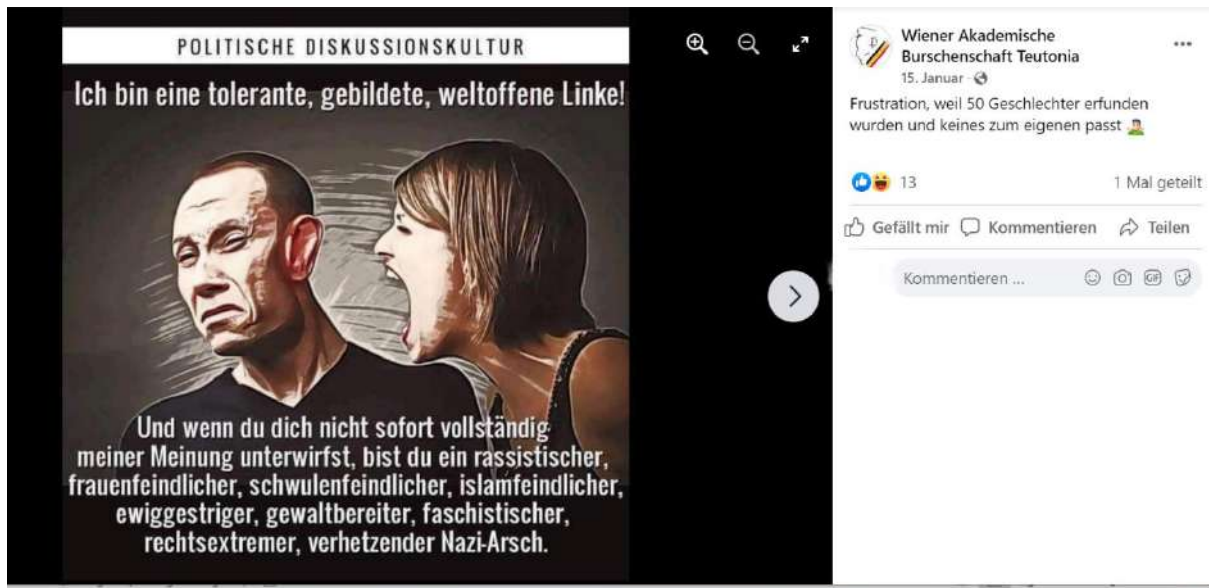
All items were stored using Snipping Tool. All translations of German texts were made by the authors.

1. Collective agents of radicalisation

1.1. Burschenschaft Teutonia



Snapshot taken from the website <http://www.teutonia.at/> [no date, retrieved 2022/02/22]



Snapshot taken from Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TeutoniaWien/>.

[published 2022/01/15, retrieved 2022/02/22].

Translation picture: political discussion culture. I am a tolerant, educated, open-minded leftist. And if you do not submit immediately to my opinion, then you are a racist, misogynist, anti-gay, anti-Islam, die-hard, violent, fascist, right-wing extremist, inciting Nazi-ass.

Translation caption: Frustration, because 50 types of gender have been invented but none of them fits.

1.2. Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend




Snapshot taken from Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/FJOesterreich>

[published 2021/08/31, retrieved 2022/02/22].

Translation picture: Sharia-compliant: Thermal spa Vöslau organises bathing day for women only.

Translation caption: At the Vöslau thermal baths, there will be a bathing day just for women in September. “Especially in summer, many places, especially outdoor pools, are places that are not safe for many female-read people”, explains Madeleine Alizadeh, an Iranian-born Viennese “influencer”, who organizes the bathing day. “Beauty standards, body standards and ‘male gaze’ are not allowed to enter”. Entry fees will be donated to an Afghan women’s club. Alizadeh had assisted migrants on their way to Austria during the 2015 asylum crisis.

1.3. Martin Sellner



"Globohomo", Transhumanismus & der Regenbogenterror | COMPACT REZENSION 08/21

Snapshot taken from Odysee <https://odysee.com/@MartinSellner:d/compact0821:3>
[published 2021/08/03, retrieved 2022/02/22]

Translation title: “Globohomo”, transhumanism and the rainbow-terror | COMPACT review 08/21

2. Collective agents of de-radicalisation

2.1. Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft der Universität Wien



All snapshots taken from Instagram https://www.instagram.com/oeh_uniwiien/
[published 2022/01/21, retrieved 2022/02/22]

Translation picture: No place for Nazis at the university. ÖH Uni Vienna.

Translation caption: We also support the anti-fascist demonstration on Thursday, 27.01 at 18.30 o'clock at the university ramp!

(The rest of the text in the caption is a copy of the text on the pictures)



Translation picture: As an ideological training ground for new cadres, *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) are the backbone of Austrian right-wing extremism. From their ranks stem FPÖ politicians as well as leading heads of the Identitarians or convicted neo-Nazis.



Translation picture: *Burschenschaften* are an elitist clique that, in the old male fraternity manner, provide their right-wing comrades with influence and jobs.



Translation picture: At universities, they want to recruit members and intimidate dissenters by appearing in couleur. It is necessary to put an end to the *völkisch* activities of the diehard fraternity members at the university and to their social normalization.

2.2. Frauenvolksbegehren



All snapshots taken from Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/frauenvolksbegehren/> [published 2020/11/27, retrieved 2022/02/22]

Translation picture: Just like a miniskirt is not an incitement to harassment, neither is a headscarf.

Translation caption: Asma Aiad is an activist, youth worker, and artist. Among other things, @asmaaiad deals with the topics of construction and deconstruction of racisms. She is also a spokesperson* for the Black Voices Anti-Racism Petition that can already be signed. More info at: @blackvoicesvolksbegehren

We are using #16daysagainstviolencewomen this year to draw attention to the experience of violence by visibly Muslim women*, which has increased significantly since the terrorist attack. Show civil courage and sign @blackvoicesvolksbegehren because to solve structural problems, political measures are needed.

#blm #blacklivesmatter #feminism #feminist #againstracism #againstislamophobia #endviolenceagainstwomen #endviolence #orangetheworld

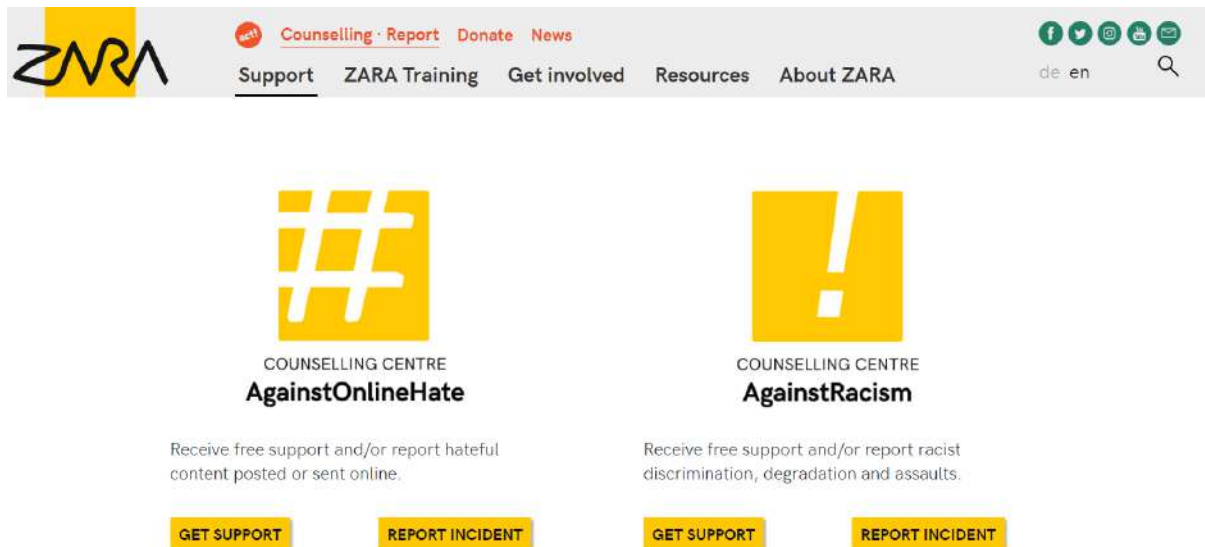


Translation picture: The struggle of Muslim women against violence is twofold. On the one hand, they are combating the well-known violence against women: Domestic violence, sexual violence, and sexist discrimination. We share this struggle with all women. In addition to this, we also experience racist violence as Muslim women, often as visible Muslim women.



Translation picture: I oppose all rhetoric and attitudes that make the elimination of violence through behavioural change the task of those affected. Fight violence against women. Always. Everywhere. Without exception.

2.3 ZARA Counseling Center #GegenHassimNetz



Snapshot taken from the website <https://zara.or.at/en/beratungsstellen>
[retrieved 2022/02/22]

3. Citizen communication

3.1. Burschenschaft Hysteria



Snapshot taken from Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BurschenschaftHysteria>
[published 2019/01/25, retrieved 2022/02/22]

Translation picture: Too beautiful for a duelling scar. Against the disfigurement of our men.

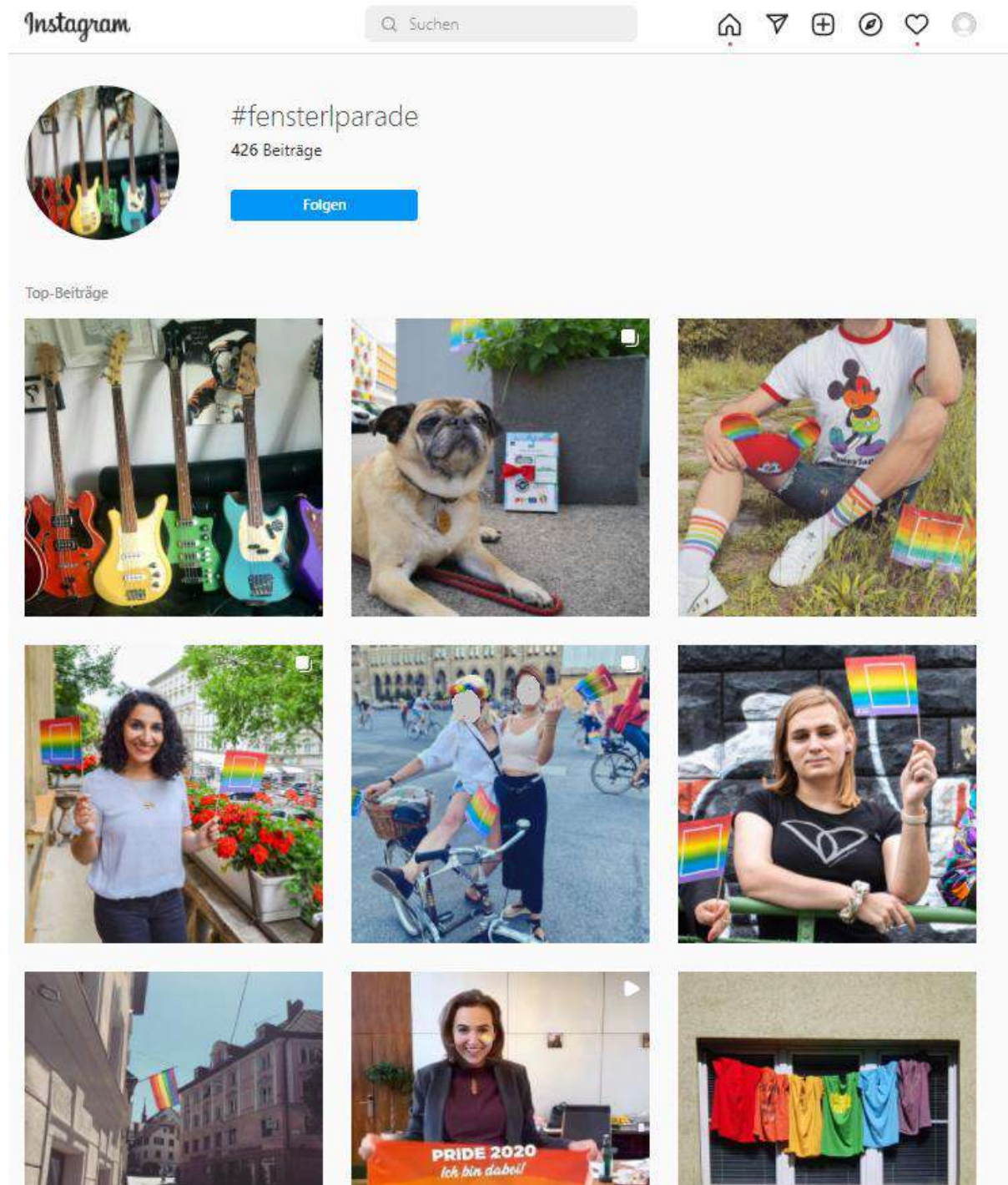
Translation caption: It's prom season again! That exciting time for men when they get to dress up and we proudly present them. Unfortunately, a new-fashioned trend of self-disfigurement is rampant among particularly sensitive young boys – confused men carve scars into each other's delicate cheeks to prove an allegedly endangered "masculinity". The fraternity Hysteria therefore appeals to all women to watch out for the following signs of this moral and aesthetic neglect in their men and to prevent participation in so-called "male bonding societies":

1) tendency to sad thoughts, corners of the mouth pulled downwards

- 2) lack of interest in babies and small children
- 3) consumption of alcohol and tobacco cigarettes
- 4) bizarre dress-up meetings with colourful ribbons and caps beyond the carnival season.
- 5) retarded imaginative vocabulary, conspicuous tendency to garrulousness.
- 6) galloping physical senescence (impotence!)

Intervene resolutely! We will not let our handsome men be disfigured. They are too beautiful for a duelling scar!

3.2. #fensterparade and #fensterparade2020



Snapshot taken from Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/fensterparade/>
[retrieved 2022/02/22]

The image shows an Instagram post for the hashtag #fensterparade2020. At the top left is a circular profile picture of a man in a black t-shirt. To the right of the profile picture, the hashtag #fensterparade2020 is displayed in a large font, with '504 Beiträge' (504 posts) below it. A blue button with the text 'Folgen' (Follow) is positioned below the post information. Underneath the button, the text 'Top-Beiträge' (Top posts) is visible. The main content of the post consists of six square images arranged in a 2x3 grid. The top-left image shows a man in a black t-shirt holding a small rainbow flag. The top-middle image shows two people holding larger rainbow flags. The top-right image shows a person holding a sign with a rainbow heart, with another person behind them. The bottom-left image shows a dog sitting on a ledge holding a rainbow flag. The bottom-middle image shows a person sitting on a ledge with a large rainbow flag draped over them. The bottom-right image shows a building facade with several windows, each displaying a rainbow flag or sign.

Snapshot taken from Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/fensterparade2020/> [retrieved 2022/02/22]

3.3. Dariadaria



Snapshot taken from Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/dariadaria/> [published 2021/09/03, retrieved 2022/02/22]

Translation text: Thank you to the 160 people who made today special. It was a beautiful, relaxed, liberated and self-determined day that I will never forget. Thank you to everyone off- and online who made a statement today against objectification, discrimination, and sexism towards FLINT. The discourse does not end here and it will not end for a long time. We want to be heard, seen, and understood, even if there is still a long way ahead. Thank you for your solidarity, support and being.

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