The ART of Seeing PROMISE over RISK

Perspectives from the European Practice EXchange (EPEX)

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EPEX Organisations and Members:

BERATUNGSSTELLE EXTREMISMUS *(Vienna, Austria)* Myassa Kraitt

KOSOVAR CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES – KCSS *(Pristina, Kosovo)* Vesë Kelmendi

NORWEGIAN CORRECTIONAL SERVICE, MENTORING SCHEME *(Oslo, Norway)* Gazi Mikail

NORWEGIAN CORRECTIONAL SERVICE EASTERN REGION *(Lillestrøm, Norway)* Sikke Folgerø

INDEPENDENT MEMBER *(Tunis, Tunisia)* Eya Jrad

LUTON TIGERS *(Luton, UK)* Shaz Zaman

MJD *(Groningen, Netherlands)* Niels Harbrink

RESCUE ASSOCIATION FOR TUNISIANS TRAPPED ABROAD – RATTA *(Tunis, Tunisia)* Mohamed Iqbel Ben Rejeb, Mouna Jendoubi

THE RECORA INSTITUTE *(Birmingham, UK)* Yousiff Florey-Meah

REVIVE YOUTH & FAMILY FOUNDATION – RYFF *(Luton, UK)* Sahra Dhirie

TGS SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE CONSULT-ANTS/STEP IN STEP OUT - SISO *(London, UK)* David Otto, Hurso Adam

STAND UP LUTON *(Luton, UK)* Simon Philbert

UNIVERSITÉ PARIS DIDEROT *(Paris, France)* Annabelle Jaccard

VIOLENCE PREVENTION NETWORK *(Berlin/ Frankfurt a.M., Germany)* Ariane Wolf, Julia Reinelt, Husamuddin Meyer

VIOLENCE PREVENTION NETWORK DENMARK *(Bryrup, Denmark)* Mette Schramm Pedersen

WIJ GRONINGEN, ACTIVATION PROJECT SOMALIS – APS *(Groningen, Netherlands)* Iris Engelsman

A Glimpse into the EPEX-World

One Network, MANY Levels of PRACTICE

ILLUSTRATION
Elena Hadulla

One of the things that have been most beneficial in our exchange were the different levels that the participating practitioners were working on. There is not just one type of practitioner, but rather we see a combination of skills differing with the respective area of activity. However, all of them have one thing in common: The people we are working with are at the center of our efforts.

School

Municipality

Iris

Gareth

Research

Yousiff
Shaz
Sahra

Annabelle
Vesë

Community

Mouna
Mohamed
Iqbel
Myassa

Niels

Husamuddin

Prison

Sikke
Gazi
Mette

NGO

Ariane
Jule
David
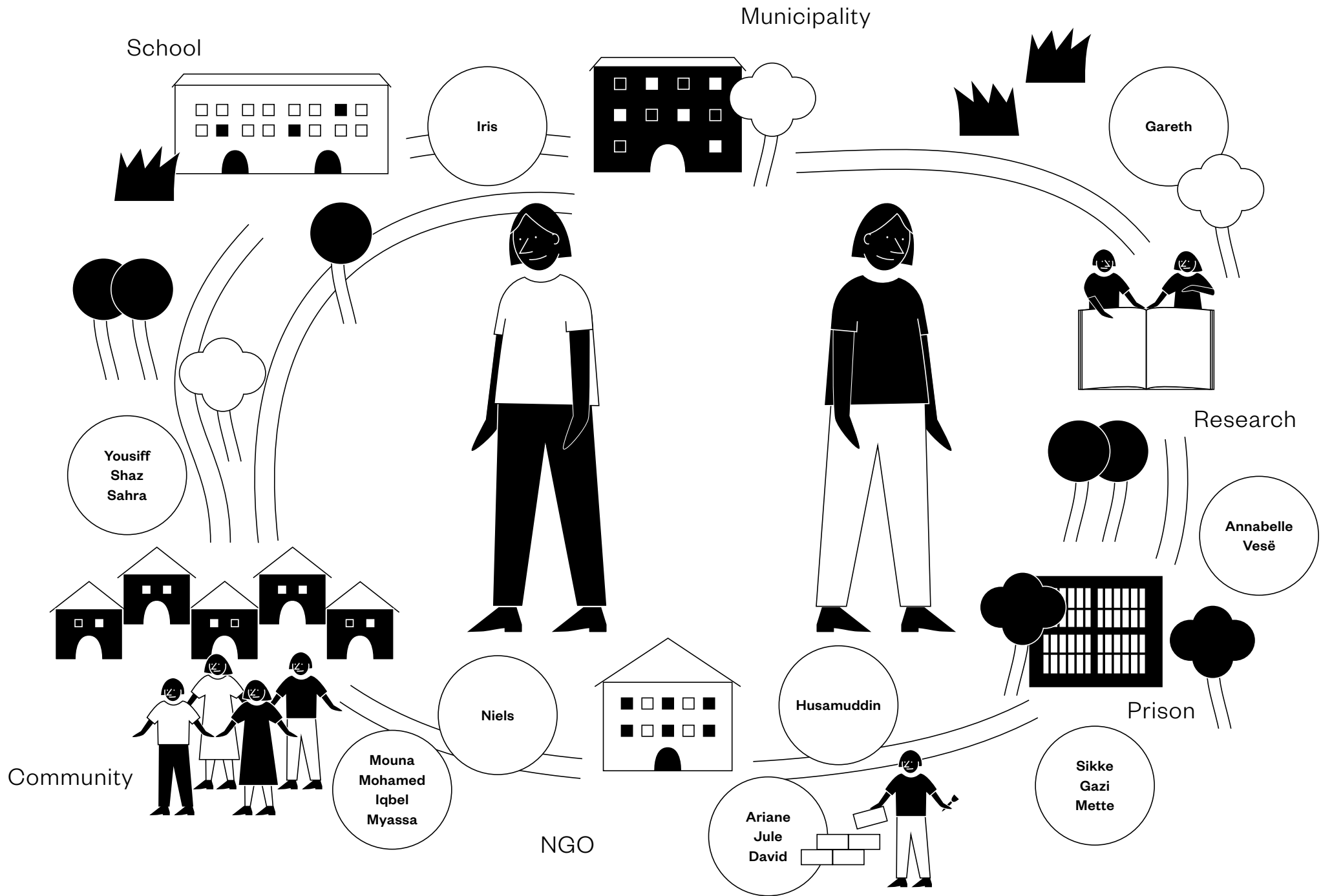
Executive SUMMARY

How can we create a peer-to-peer network for those working in the prevention of radicalisation that offers a space to their (shared) topics and interests? What if, based on this, practitioners wrote a book together?

The European Practice EXchange (EPEX) aspired to take up the challenge of amplifying, strengthening and connecting practitioners' voices. EPEX is a small international network of organisations and individual members working in the fields of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of radicalisation and exit work both within and outside of prison.

This publication is the outcome of our intense three-year exchange. We created *The Art of Seeing Promise over Risk* in a prototype methodology – our prototype methodology to enable and support practitioners to select topics and produce content together.[1] The publication was written as much for other practitioners as it was for those who are curious to hear the voices of professionals with first-hand expertise.

In developing new methods for practice-based exchange focusing on an intimacy, on repeat exchanges and relationship-building, the EPEX project highlights that practitioners bring a specific perspective to the debate of radicalisation and deradicalisation. Yet, practitioners do not all speak in one voice. The term "practitioner" implies a great and enriching plurality. We hold that this wealth and diversity of experience-based knowledge and practice-based expertise is not, or not sufficiently, reflected in public and political discourse, academic literature, media debate, topical conferences or the existing networking events. We seek to address this lack by stressing the need to look and act beyond a one-sided, securitised perspective. With this publication, we seek to add and broaden views upon a wide range of extremisms in order to get to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the challenges we face.

The authors selected a wide range of topics relevant to them and their daily work. In reading, you will find that this publicaion is not about simply replacing one perspective by another. It is not about giving or knowing all the answers. Rather, *The Art of Seeing Promise over Risk* provides insight into some of the highly debated topics within the network. It shows pathways to asking better questions, opening up a space in which unsolved problems and tensions can be addressed, and to seeing these issues from different practitioners' vantage points. It is this process- and practice-oriented approach that makes up the enriching diversity of the EPEX network.

Chapter Breakdown

CHAPTER 01 emphasises the importance of self-reflection as a method to achieve clarity on one's own blind spots but also values, roles and pro-

fessional tools to maintain a nuanced view on violent extremism despite prevailing discourses that induce fear and call for securitisation.

CHAPTER 02 highlights the importance of investing in prison staff and other professionals working with radicalised inmates – in form of ongoing supervision to enable practitioners to do the best job possible.

CHAPTER 03 is about recognising the potential for change brought about by key influencers. It encourages organisational changes to provide adequate remuneration and support to value their work.

CHAPTER 04 interlinks all these aspects in our shared methodology, explains reasoning and experiences with our different formats (e.g. Job-Shadowing Visits). It highlights the need of building relationships of trust and horizontal structures of exchange and mutual learning to improve the working environment of practitioners and their clients. It shares insights from organising and maintaining a collective writing process for those who might aspire to do the same.

In sum, this publication centres on a methodology of amplifying practitioner's voices and organising practice-based exchange – valuing the experiences and promising potential of each individual to bring about positive change, instead of letting one's views and agency be captured by possible risks.

EPEX is an initiative of Violence Prevention Network and RecoRa. It is hosted by the Network of European Foundations (NEF) and supported by Open Society Foundation, Robert Bosch Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation and Fritt Ord Foundation.

Introduction

Introduction: SEEING Things Differently

Ariane Wolf, Julia Reinelt,
Yousiff Florey-Meah[1]

1) The authors are (or were at the time of the project) working at The RecoRa Institute and Violence Prevention Network.

2) Within this publication we understand (first-line) practitioners as persons working in direct exchange with individuals and / or communities to address and deal with issues related to radicalisation and violent extremism. Although practitioners can also have academic knowledge about the subject, the specific expertise referred to here is firmly based in practice and experience rather than on theory – from working with and meeting those deemed to be "at risk" or "radical".

3) An often deeply entrenched distrust of state structures and actors is a central part of many of the extremist ideologies we encounter in our work. This, however, can be mitigated by above-average levels of perceived legitimacy of state institutions and trust – as we observe in many Scandinavian countries.

Terrorism as a tactic to bring about political change is not a new phenomenon, but our understanding of the boundaries of this problem and the actual contexts from which violent extremist views and actions emerge in today's world is limited. Research was and is being conducted in various disciplines and across a broad range of political contexts to assess what motivates people to adopt extremist ideologies and commit terrorist acts. Over the years, progress has been made in our understanding of what moves individuals to support and engage in terrorism. Both policy-makers and academics now agree that "radicalisation" leading to a person's engagement in extremism and / or terrorism has to be defined as a process. This consensus led to considerable efforts of developing programmes, schemes and policies to successfully prevent or reverse radicalisation. Yet, radicalisation and deradicalisation remain complex developments where a multiplicity of influencing factors need to be considered and addressed. There exists a variety of approaches but no certainties about how to respond to these questions and challenges that extremist ideologies and action pose. This publication shows that the response also depends on the point of view from which you ask the question.

Large investments have been and are still being made in conferences, exchanges and events with the aim of constructing a concept of "good practice" and to discover "what works". Some of us have been invited to and involved in these events. For many of us practitioners[2] working either directly with individuals deemed to be radicalised and / or within communities considered to be "at risk" of radicalisation, the picture emerging from these investments does partly not match with our experiences grounded in practice.

Policy-makers across Europe have recognised the need to engage civil society actors in the efforts responding to the (global) challenge that radicalisation poses. Especially on the level of primary (and to a much lesser degree sometimes also in secondary) prevention work, there has been acknowledgement that civil society organisations (CSOs) can be perceived as more legitimate actors, compared to governmental institutions. Attempts have hence been made to engage in these events and meetings those working close to the concerned individuals and communities.[3] However, the attempt to involve practitioners often suffers from a lack of meaningful incorporation and operationalisation of their perspectives. Differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention when it comes to CSO involvement

accentuate this experience: The more security-relevant the cases (are perceived to be), the stronger we see civil society's and practitioners' expertise side-lined.

Grounded in our daily work experience and exchanges with the individuals and communities concerned, we as practitioners who came together during the European Practice EXchange (EPEX) defend a broad perspective on possible causes and solutions of multiple forms of extremism. Therefore, we have come to wonder: Why does security rather than cohesion dominate the view from which we are looking at prevention? What lies behind the sometimes exclusive focus on violent extremism while discarding activities that address more prevalent forms of extremism? With these questions, we voice our concern that a restrictive use of the notion of extremism defined by a perspective of securitisation neglects other causes, manifestations and stages of radicalisation. Furthermore, it results in a strong stigmatisation of already marginalised groups and communities while overlooking the broader social, economic and political environment from which extremist ideologies might evolve.

> Why does security rather than cohesion dominate the view from which we are looking at prevention? What lies behind the sometimes exclusive focus on violent extremism while discarding activities that address more prevalent forms of extremism?

Over the past years, many of the EPEX member organisations met increasing difficulties to get programmes against right-wing extremism and related ideologies funded. At the same time, governments finance activities of primary prevention in entire communities that were identified as being "at risk" of radicalisation towards Islamist extremism. We consider this policy-driven identification process as problematic as it mostly operates with categories of religious and / or supposed "cultural" backgrounds. Such generalisations reinforce mechanisms and feelings of exclusion. By providing arguments to right-wing, mainstream and Islamist strategies alike, they further prove to be counter-productive to any prevention work against extremism.

Many of the conversations taking place over the last three years in the EPEX project echoed a shared frustration that practitioners remained

seemingly unheard and unable to effect change or alter the prevailing ideas being discussed among experts as well as in the media. There appears to be an overreliance on public services, security personnel and researchers.[4]

One of the reasons is the way knowledge and information are produced and circulated. Oftentimes, the settings of conferences, meetings, and other events dealing with extremism entail formal restrictions of time and space to share information horizontally, discuss topics in detail or build sustainable relationships of cooperation. Matters of radicalisation and extremism are spoken about, but not discussed in depth; the flow of information is linear and top-down; the complexity of the topic cannot be sufficiently addressed.

The challenges for practitioners to participate in these meetings are manifold and depend on the organisational context and country setting: Those who are employed by an organisation or in the frame of specific projects might have difficulties to plan for the necessary time and mobility to attend the events. When being involved in community work, it is often preferable to stay on spot where problems must be solved immediately rather than talking about the very problem elsewhere. Access to financial resources required to attend the meetings can also pose a challenge.

Based on this experience, we believe that if we seek to improve the practice of prevention and deradicalisation within this policy area, then we need to rethink the ways information is transferred and exchanged.

> *"The key issue for practitioners is that for knowledge transfer to happen and be useful for practice, we need more than superficial discussions."*

It is within the above contexts that the European Practice EXchange emerged and seeks to make a difference.

What is EPEX?

The European Practice EXchange is an international network of organisations and individual members working in the prevention of radicalisation, deradicalisation and exit programmes.

In promoting the aspiration to develop a European-wide network of practitioners, Violence Prevention Network (VPN) and RecoRa acted on the understanding that practitioners bring a different and specific perspec-

tive to the debate. While this perspective often stands in strong contrast to the securitised approach referred to above, our concern is not to simply replace one perspective by another. Rather, we want to stress the need to look and act beyond a securitised perspective by combining all the different and complementary views upon a broad range of extremisms to get to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of this challenge.

EPEX HAS THREE CHARACTERISTICS THAT PROVED TO BE ESSENTIAL TO ADDRESS THIS NEED:

01.

5) The organisations are briefly introduced in the back. The illustration on page 04 gives an impression of the variety of structures within organisations. This is to say: it matters which kind of work the people involved in an exchange do.

Our EPEX members are at the core of the project. They shaped the project, our relationships and the peer-to-peer exchange. On a human level, EPEX therefore encompasses the thoughts and opinions of all practitioners involved. A list at the end of the publication and our diagram on page 04 provide an overview of our members, their personal work and day-to-day engagement. [5] We want to highlight that practitioners do not all speak in one voice; the term implies a great and enriching plurality. The EPEX members' diverse working contexts range from prevention and social work in a broad sense, advising and supporting families, engaging with returning foreign fighters, running mentoring programmes in prison to analysing methods across different regions. Furthermore, there is a great variety of organisational set-ups: From public service background to well-established organisations with links to statutory institutions, to new initiatives and informal grassroots groups sustained by the commitment of voluntary activists. This variety of individual approaches, points of view and expertise has been a great resource in creating a platform of shared learning to improve practice. Patterns of similarity found across these differences are partly captured in this publication. They illustrate how practical involvement shapes a shared perspective (on the challenge of radicalisation) across boundaries. Our practitioner-led process of exchange required significant organisational flexibility which was made possible by the project's funding structure.

We want to highlight that practitioners do not all speak in one voice; the term implies a great and enriching plurality.

02.

EPEX was hosted by the Network of European Foundations (NEF) and supported by Open Society Foundation, Robert Bosch Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation and Fritt Ord Foundation. In supporting EPEX, our funders not only shared an understanding of the importance of valuing the practice-based expertise. They also shared the perception that in the end, working on prevention of violent extremism as well as working on deradicalisation comes down to human interaction and exchanging with individuals. This means that recommendations and concerns of practitioners – who are closest to how the problem of radicalisation displays in reality – are valuable and should be equally taken into account. Furthermore, this publication would not have been possible without the flexible funding structure.

03.

6) See Chapter 04: "An Exploration of EPEX Methodology – Amplifying Experience-based Practice".

Finally, EPEX is also a methodology [6] that has been developed over the course of the EPEX project. Our methodology is something that we learned by doing and evolving, sometimes deviating from the plan – rather than from a set of methods fixed prior to the start of the project. EPEX tested methods of exchange and knowledge transfer that enable a discussion to delve deeper. By engaging a diverse range of practitioners in an intimate and long-term exchange we identified as well as challenged elements of good practice. More importantly, we think we discovered an alternative way of capturing the voices of practitioners more effectively, and – by means of this publication – disseminate their input to amplify their voices in the overall debates. Finding these alternatives was not without challenges, nor without mistakes we made. Still, we deem it worth engaging in the process and encourage its continuation. Within EPEX we had the freedom of trying out different ways and captured the learning we produced by thorough evaluation.

7) Ibid.

It is a methodology that we believe led to the success of this project more than the original ideas that helped conceive it. We devote a whole chapter to this alternative methodology [7] as it illustrates a way for governments and other funders to more adequately collaborate with those of us who are closely in contact with individuals, groups and communities we want to support.

Appreciating Practical Perspectives

8) A fifth chapter on the use of social media in prevention work related to violent extremism was planned for this publication. Due to tight schedules and difficulties in communicating about time lines, individual tasks and responsibilities during the writing process, the chapter remained a draft and could not be included in this publication.

9) See Chapter 04: "Collective writing process".

The following chapters reflect the combination of improving practice by comparison, value differences while stressing shared concerns of practitioners. They constitute an outcome of the practitioner-led process identifying overarching themes and challenges. [8] The publication is the product of collective writing which intensified in-depth discussion of each chosen topic. [9] The fact that a very diverse group of people came together to write created equally diverse texts which are not necessarily meant to be read at once. They reveal many shared concerns but also show disparities. Our goal was not to resolve those frictions and create consensus on every aspect of the chapters' content. We rather deem it important to open up a space for naming unsolved tensions and state problems without pretending to immediately know the solution. One of our insights therefore was that these problems often have cross-boundary relevance while profound analyses and understanding of them always need to consider the specific context. However, all the chapters show practical ways of appreciating the knowledge of practitioners working in the field of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and their immediate as well as long-term results.

To conclude with, it can be stated that policy determines practice, but policy without an understanding of practice is less likely to succeed. In turn, practice without effective and sustainable relationships will rarely make a difference. Only if a multiplicity of vantage points is accepted, can complex phenomena like violent extremism or terrorism be addressed. The manifold voices of practitioners introduce us to such vantage points. This also means that our shared perspective rooted in practice is one that cares for social justice and the creation of alternative spaces instead of using violence to bring about political change. It enables to see the problems that the respective individuals we work with have, instead of the problem they might pose. It focuses on the unique potential of everyone. It also focuses on relating to or building relationships with radicalised persons without approving their (violent) behaviour. In other words: This point of view masters the art of seeing promise over risk.

Policy determines practice, but policy without an understanding of practice is less likely to succeed.

Chapter 01

Who Defines the RADICAL and Why Does it Matter?

On the Impact of DEFINITIONS and the Necessity of Self-Reflection

GROUP LEADS
Myassa Kraitt, Niels Harbrink

WRITING GROUP
Simon Philbert[1]

This chapter reflects on the impact of public debates around extremism and radicalisation (e.g. in politics and media) on the work of practitioners. It calls for a critical examination of definitions and underlying ideas of extremism and "the radical" by asking professionals to take a self-reflective and clear stance. It is argued that three principles of self-reflection and reflexive partiality – named as clarity on roles, empathy, and promise over risk – help reaffirming the practitioners' professional capacities and foster a relationship of trust and confidence between the client and the practitioner.

1) The authors are (or were at the time of the project) working at Extremism Information Center, MJD and Stand Up Luton.

| radical | extreme | normal |

Introduction
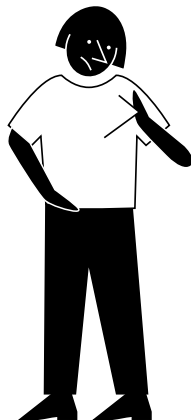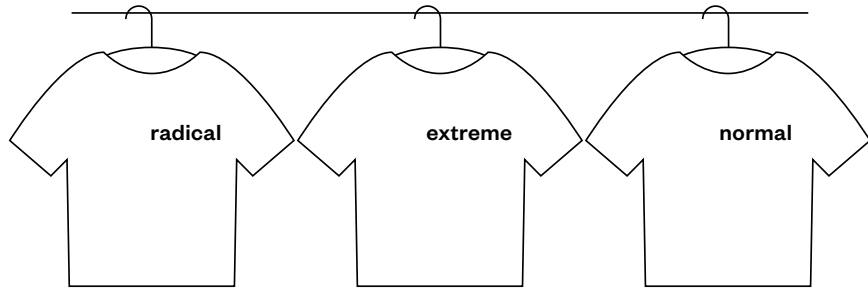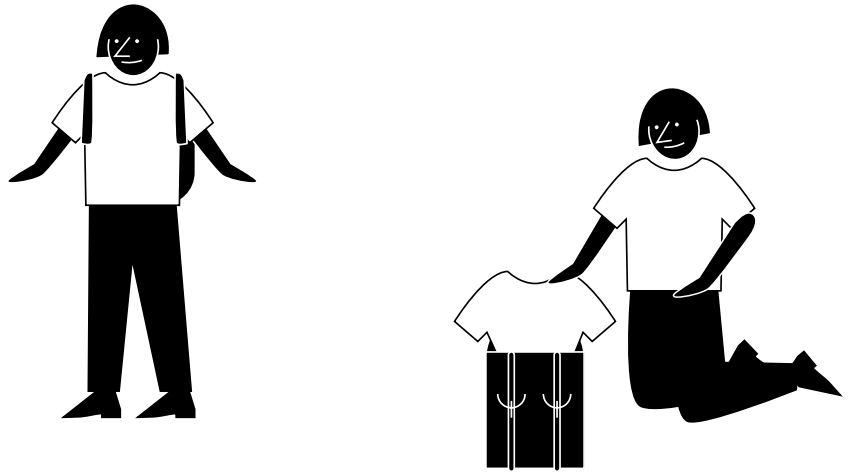
After 9/11, media coverage and societal debates shifted to increasingly connect Islam and terrorism. 17 years later, we see a vast amount of academic publications looking at Islamic religious extremism and radicalisation. Most of the perspectives we see represented in both media and academia can be described as situated within a (state) security framework. The way knowledge about extremism is claimed and (re-)produced affects us and our work environment. It bears meaning for our understanding of what extremism is and suggests there is an easy and clear-cut definition of the phenomena.

The development of how "extremism" and "radicalisation" are framed and perceived after 2001 is just one example of how these terms (across different historical periods and contexts) become associated with stereotypes of certain (marginalised) groups. Brought into circulation as an issue detached from their interdependency with socio-economic, geo-political and historical contexts, extremism appears to be located at the fringes of society and disconnected from the political centres. Yet, ideologies of injustice like racism, sexism, and homophobia underpinning many extremist narratives are not just emerging suddenly at the margins of society but exist in reference to the very middle of it. [2]

2) Even if we look more specifically at violent extremism in Europe, violence of right-wing extremism outnumbers actions and membership rates of other forms of violent extremism by far. Without suggesting that these phenomena should be easily compared or hierarchised, the public attention and sometimes intended misinterpretation of Islamist extremism and radicalisation are obviously disproportionate.

It reminds us that what is seen as normal vs. radical and why, are – in our understanding – inherently political relations constantly shifting. Therefore, taking politics and power structures out of the picture of "extremism" or "radicalism" does not lead to objectivity. It rather risks ignoring the lived realities of the people we work with.

As professionals working in the field of radicalisation and extremism we carry both the responsibility to intervene critically and raise awareness when public debates operate with generalised judgements instead of seeing the complexity of a problem and the responsibility to work on the real existing problems of radicalisation and violent extremist actions. It is important to state that these two dimensions must not be confounded. Both dimensions might create moments of uncertainty for practitioners, but we need to defend a differentiated view that does neither neglect how the power of words shape social reality, nor relativise the real existing problem of violent extremism. A self-aware, clear stance knowing one's own values, background, and capacities is key.

Part 01 — Why is Self-reflection Important?

Looking for ways to improve and professionalise the navigation effort between public discourse and our own positioning in the field of work, we identified the need for a process of self-reflection on two levels:

01 — How do the definitions we (are obliged to) work with impact our practice? Where does our personal understanding of certain terms come from? Is it in line with our own values?

02 — How can our personal biographies both impede and enable our work?

During our exchange, we understood that whenever we speak about understandings of extremism, we also need to talk about power relations[3] and those structures which enable a certain group of people to define a phenomenon and determine the use of the wording to describe it. A social justice-oriented reflection between the members of EPEX was stimulated. It was inspired by the differences across age, gender, social, cultural and professional backgrounds among us. We experienced that no definition could be taken for granted, which made it necessary to make ourselves visible as to where we stand and how we define and use terms. Furthermore, if the way we ourselves inside a group of colleagues valued, judged and framed certain terms differently led to vibrant debates and emotions amongst us, why then shouldn't it have an even deeper impact on our clients and their lives?

"I am a Salafist! What do you mean by Salafist radicalisation? Members of my family were killed by Boko Haram," one of the practitioners said in the first meeting and caused radio silence. He simply referred to his understanding of ultraorthodox Sunni practice but for others in the group Salafism was a fundamentalist ideology connected to violence. While for him Salafism was framed in a peaceful way, for others it meant a reactionary way of thinking standing in opposition to certain democratic values and societies.

Such exchanges made us think about the "radical" and "extreme" in our different societies. Another member stated:

"If it wasn't for feminism, I wouldn't stand here today. It was a radical ideology once, but one that is connected to social justice. Who gets to decide what is legitimate resistance and illegitimate terrorism?" During our discussions, we all started to ask ourselves questions like: What does

3) Carole Hagemann-White (2002): Gewalt im Geschlechterverhältnis als Gegenstand sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung und Theoriebildung. Rückblick, gegenwärtiger Stand, Ausblick. In: Dackweiler, Regina-Maria/Schäfer, Reinhild (Eds): Gewalt-Verhältnisse, Feministische Perspektiven auf Geschlecht und Gewalt. Frankfurt am Main, Campus, pp. 29–52.

extremism have to do with me and what made me work in the field of extremism? How do I look at different kinds of extremism? Do I make different value judgements about them? And if so, what are they based on? Where do my norms and values come from and how do they affect my work and relationship to clients?

The characteristic feature of EPEX to assemble multiple forms of knowledge in dealing with forms of extremism also proves that self-reflection and reflections on language are never just academic exercises. Our work is embedded in the social reality shaped by powerful debates in politics, academia and media and the real existing problems that lead to radicalisation and violent action. Having to deal with very different understandings and definitions of extremism creates an additional dimension of uncertainty. There is a range of perspectives and lack of clarity about the many definitions of "radicalisation", the "extreme", and the "radical" used across different professions and sciences. We are not saying that there is a need to come up with a definitive idea of what extremism means. Quite the opposite: there should be a continuous dialogue between the various definitions reflecting their context. We should be conscious about how we as professionals approach these terms. The tension between too narrow a definition which limits your perspective

Where do my norms and values come from and how do they affect my work and relationship to clients?

and too wide a definition that makes it blurred needs to be acknowledged. Reflection helps us navigate this tension and transforms frictions into reasserting democratic values in yourself and form a differentiated view on complex problems. Our blind spots can be an impediment to our work but making the effort to acknowledge them can be a source of strength.

Let us consider an example we discussed during the EPEX project where the necessity of self-reflection becomes manifest:

> *"My 11-year old student told me that he does not want to write any exams because the Prophet Mohammad did not write any exams. Is he radicalised?"*

This was the question a teacher in Austria was concerned about after the attacks of Charlie Hebdo and which made her call an Austrian helpline offering counselling on extremism. Particularly in the aftermath of

violent attacks in some European countries, we witness a rise in helpline call volumes and general worry about radicalisation.

Through undifferentiated public debate and populist media coverage, acts of violent extremism become connected with Islam only through a small minority of violent extremists invoking religious ideology in relation to their political goals and violent means to achieve them. Thereby mainstream debates render the peaceful majority of Muslims into a suspect community. By doing so, a broad group is placed under general suspicion while other phenomena of violent extremism are given much less attention in public space. For instance, since the elections in Austria in 2017, we also observe a rise in helpline call volumes concerning right-wing extremism. Yet, this severe problem is only occasionally discussed in the Austrian media landscape.

These filters of perceiving real problems in a medially transformed way can become an impediment to our work and professional ability to recall our roles and skills. The charged atmosphere of suspicion related to a generalised image of Islam provokes a "freeze state" of the professionals' capacity to reflect on their own position and how they would normally address a similar situation. Maybe the teacher would have been able to see the position of the student from multiple perspectives through his or her usual pedagogical stance and experience as educator.

While this example refers to pedagogical work in general, the dominant state security perspective shows impact on other professionals too – more specifically in the field of radicalisation and extremism:

When it comes to the level of secondary or tertiary prevention, we as EPEX members see a tendency of over-emphasising the need to have specialised experts to single-handedly work with people who sympathise with violent forms of radicalisation or extremist ideologies.[4] One forgets that the professionals who work directly with radicalised individuals – such as dedicated teachers, social and youth workers, educators, or activists from grassroot organisations – have valuable expertise that contributes essentially to our understanding of radicalisation.

We argue that there is a role for all types of expertise, but that no single group of experts should be privileged at the expense of other voices. There is no unique approach that could encompass all the factors involved in radicalisation.

Yet, those who get to be known as experts in dealing with radicalisation and extremism often speak from a position of theoretical insight into the problem (e.g. coming from the field of religious studies or conflict

4) See Chapter 02: "Stating the Obvious: A View From behind Closed Doors".

5) See Ulrich Schneckener (2005): "Die soziale Konstruktion des 'Terrorexperten'. Terrorismusforschung zwischen Medienlogik und Politikberatung" Beitrag zur Tagung "Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft, Gesellschaft und Politik", 17–19 March 2015, Berlin.

and security studies). Their concepts and frameworks often suggest that there is this one particular way of solving the issue of extremism. Such an approach fits well into the logic of and the political and economic interests in securitisation. Therefore, these voices are often amplified in public discourse while others are less audible. According to our observations, persons involved in violent extremism, their social environment, victims of violent extremism, but also practitioners are oftentimes not given the same weight in the development of problem solving strategies. In opposition to this, we find that we need a multitude of approaches to respond to a broad variety of cases, causes and needs.

To sum up the context of the problem: We face an unhelpful simplification of a very complex topic.[5] Furthermore, feelings of general insecurity may affect the professionals' realm of action. It inspires fear accompanied with an easy definition stigmatising and simplifying the explanation of drivers for radicalisation. Anti-Muslim racism and islamophobia are manifest effects of this trend and, in turn, can contribute to the radicalisation of individuals as well as groups (on the political right-wing and central spectrum as well as in religious communities) instead of preventing it. Many professionals are left with the impression that they do not have any answers nor tools to

Many professionals are left with the impression that they do not have any answers nor tools to tackle behaviour they perceive to be connected to radicalisation – without reflecting on whether or not there is, in fact, a problem that is outside of their set of competencies.

tackle behaviour they perceive to be connected to radicalisation – without reflecting on whether or not there is, in fact, a problem that is outside of their role and set of competencies.

We do not position ourselves outside of or above this debate – we are part of it. Talking about our fears and insecurities is important to stay aware of our own position and political stance and to keep in clear vision our values and definition of what is normal, extreme or radical. This awareness helps avoiding a conflation of public debate and the concrete reality of people we work with while maintaining clarity about our own position and values. Ultimately, this keeps up our agency and allows us to check base in our respective fields of work.

Part 02 — How Can We Deal with this Problem and What are Practitioners' Tools?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN "BACKPACK" — The experiences discussed in the first part show that professional pedagogical work cannot deem itself disconnected from political contexts. While it is conventional to ask practitioners to be objective, we believe it is more promising to ask for reflexive partiality. There are different well-known methods with similar goals from various disciplines and methodological angles, such as the systemic approach or multiple reflexivity. [6] In our understanding, reflexive partiality means that instead of asking practitioners for objectivity, people are encouraged to understand and reflect upon their subjective positions and their personal relationship to the topic: Imagine you are carrying a backpack of your own experiences, opinions and positions. All these deeply held stances can have a profound impact on a practitioner's work. They can influence our interactions and shape our relationships to clients. On one hand, the tools in our backpack can weigh us down while we are trying to climb up a hill, but on the other hand, to open this backpack and understand what is in it bears the potential of transforming it into a toolkit or a package of resources for our work. This implies that, in a first step, we need to separate all the things of unnecessary weight – such as stereotypical thinking and unconscious othering – from those elements and tools that give us strength to face the challenges of our work. In some professional contexts, such as for social workers or therapists, it is common practice to self-reflect and know that one can have many perspectives. It should not be something new. The difference we want to highlight here is the loss of agency through the above-mentioned uncertainties experienced when working in the field of extremism and, in return, how exercises or reminders of self-reflection reinstate professional agency. The question, we asked ourselves was: What do I need in my backpack to feel like I can address the topic of radicalisation?

During our EPEX discussion on reflexive partiality, we identified three primary elements of empowering and strengthening the capabilities of practitioners to deal with complex biographies influenced by violent extremism. These are: clarity on roles, empathy and focusing on promise over risk. Indeed, self-reflection and the application of these guiding principles can help professionals beyond secondary and tertiary prevention in assessing: Is there a problem in the first place? And if so, am I equipped to deal with it? [7]

Returning to the first example and putting ourselves in the teacher's position, we find alternative solutions for the situation by keeping in mind these three concepts of self-reflection.

> *"My 11-year old student told me that he does not want to write any exams because the Prophet Mohammad did not write any exams. Is he radicalised?"*

Certainly, the requirements when working with clients in the environment of violent extremism are different and can be more challenging. Nevertheless, the same tools prove to be helpful as basis for self-reflection.

CLARITY ON ROLES — Part of the self-reflection process is to let surface competencies and tools that we already have for using them (more) consciously. If you are clear on your role, you are a stable, honest and productive component in the relationship with your client and yourself. A professional relationship requires transparency and the same degree of visibility on both sides. At this point especially, our biographical experiences play a role as major part of our identity which cannot be separated from our professional role and function. Transparency, in this context, also means to keep your goal of working together and each side's tasks in the process clear at all time. During EPEX meetings, the experience from workers in the pre-exit phase highlighted the different perspectives of participants on the objective of the exit work itself: Is it enough to disengage or should the work aim at complete deradicalisation? What we are aiming for in practice is in turn connected to what

6) Multiple partiality is an approach that recognises the perspectives of all the actors involved, i.e. to try to see in everybody's backpack or at least consider that everybody has a backpack.

7) And, if the problem is outside of my professional role and skillset: Where can I get help? By realising what our scope of action is, we can get better at also acknowledging the boundaries of our professional role and ask for help where needed.

CLARITY ON ROLE

"I am a teacher with a Christian background and have no idea if Mohammad wrote exams or not, but I have seen x students who did not want to write exams and therefore found sometimes funny excuses."

"I am in a position of authority. The student tries to counter this authority by the way of another (religious) authority."

"Everyone speaks of Islam as a violent religion. But does my student really behave different than his school mates? Or am I just doubting my own capacities because Muslim habits are foreign to me and all the news start making me feel afraid?"

"My job is to simply explain that exams are necessary if he wants to advance in his learning and school life."

EMPATHY

"When I was at school, I hated chemistry and found non-sense excuses several times when I didn't do my homework."

"I can understand that he is not motivated, especially since the result of the last exam was not very good..."

PROMISE OVER RISK

"If he is interested in Islam, maybe I can motivate him by letting him explain to me how the Prophet learned and how school was organised back then."

"If he finds interest in the subject and understands that certain rules are necessary in school, he will find no difficulty to learn and write an exam."

8) After all, without radical movements in the past, many of the rights we take for granted today and which are now also threatened by extremism would not currently exist.

we perceive as radical. [8] It also depends on the goals and tasks you agree on with your client.

Another aspect of clarity concerns personal safety and security. In working with potentially radicalised persons we need to consider safety for the person him- / herself but also for the people around them. A practitioners' understanding of security therefore differs from the securitisation trend in policies and public discourse. Self-reflection helps to see the context, evaluate if a danger is real, and include other, more individual and practical notions of security in everyday life. It is very important to keep a clear distinction between the practitioner's role and the role of law enforcement agencies. While in some scenarios, practitioners may need to link with actors from law enforcement, our experience has shown that the best way to approach this necessity is by being transparent about it with our clients. They need to know and be sure that we are there to work with them and not to convict them. We need to secure an essential confidentiality, so they can trust in our support during the process of working together. The fear of doing something wrong can provoke the above-mentioned "freeze state" of professional capacities. But if you trust in your professional tools and you see the person who is radicalised as just another client, you create a more open and transparent relation with the client. This entails stronger self-confidence on behalf of the practitioner, enlarging the ability to act for the better on both sides. There is a strong need for a change in perspective that comes from looking beyond securitisation: *I work with someone who is in trouble and is bound to make bad decisions. Not just with an extremist.*"

EMPATHY — A corollary of trust-building and change in perspective is to gain a wider understanding of where the people we work with are coming from. Not only do we unpack our own backpack, preparation time is equally essential to ask and study what might be in the backpack of the person we are about to meet and, in case of secondary or third prevention, on the background of the group that radicalised him or her.

Our work centres around the lived reality of our clients. This requires empathy for clients of different age, background, biographical history, religion, social status, etc. Empathy and working with the lived reality means seeing and understanding – but not necessarily sharing and agreeing with – the content of your clients' backpack. Keeping our own political position and values clear and transparent means providing an honest source of friction during an open discussion. Only then can we address the issues that are important to the client, no matter what they are. For instance, if religion is an important part of your clients' life, you need to work with what this means in their life and personal value system. You don't have to share the same religious beliefs.

Different types of *understanding* were identified to make the relationship a successful one: emotional and cultural understanding, as well as understanding of different topics are considered key steps towards empathy (in contrast to sympathy).

PROMISE OVER RISK — Applying the concept promise over risk means showing the client that you believe in his or her potential as well as their ability to change and to make better choices in future. Working together on a positive perspective directed towards the future requires and intensifies the trustful working relationship that was developed through clarity on roles and empathy. Promise over risk demands a sincere interest in the clients' personal view on their past, present, and future life. A helpful tool is the method of "not knowing" – a variant of self-reflection and an approach used by systemic therapists.

By going into this understanding, the practitioner can create a so called "cognitive opening". Once this opening is achieved

BIOGRAPHICAL AWARENESS

"Biographical Awareness" is one tool among others for a communication that fosters trust. Personal disclosure on why we come to work in this field may act as an important gate opener. Instead of discussing topics like the importance of education and training for your future employability on an abstract and theoretical level, you can broach such issues by illustrating these with concrete examples of your own life. Clients may relate much better to narrative examples than to stating vague appeals. It also helps building your relationship because you reveal something about yourself, which makes it easier to relate to you and break through hierarchies.

"Not Knowing" aims to place the practitioner in all different contexts of a specific situation to reveal the different points of view involved (of the clients themselves and the persons around them). To know and learn about the client's perspectives – leading to a multidimensional understanding referred to above – requires reciprocally being clear about one's own vision. Again, this does not mean objectivity but to acknowledge what informs our perspectives. It is also not about asking questions with ignorance but about developing a state of mind in which you distance yourself from, but at the same time recognise your own biases. You will be able to understand why this or that ideology is important for identity and life of the client. Analysing how certain ideological elements contribute to the modus operandi of a person provides a more productive view on realistic possibilities of disengagement and shows concrete ways to replace rigid ideological frames by other sources of self-confidence and self-esteem for the client's daily life.

(not only by "not knowing" but also the building of mutual trust), there is room for speaking about uncertainties within the certainties of the client (ideological / religious / political views etc). This is the promising starting point for a sustainable change in behaviour.

At this point, and to conclude with, we can understand that moments of uncertainty do not stand in opposition to self-awareness and confidence in one's own personal and professional capacities – neither on the side of the client, nor on the side of the practitioner. Self-critique and self-esteem should rather be seen in a constellation of productive and promising exchange. The various methods of self-reflection in our field of work help us using this constellation – which necessarily includes awareness for the surrounding context – to achieve openness for other perspectives and value systems while holding our ground of personal and professional skills, values and beliefs.

Conclusion

This chapter started by describing the increasingly narrow definition of extremism, resulting from contemporary debates and policies around security. By doing so, the effect of how public discourse influences the work we do was exposed: Feelings of insecurity and uncertainty are created by media and political debate, by violent actions, and by the collision of very different definitions of extremism. There is a risk of amalgamating these different levels which can destabilise our professional capacities. Clarity on personal values and roles prevents this risk. It can be achieved by self-reflection – understood both as a pedagogical and a political tool.

Even though we defend a broad definition of extremism across all political, religious and ideological spectrums, we also had to speak about the conflation between violent Islamist extremism and Muslim religion based on simple and generalised stereotypes in order to critique public fear-inducing from our professional position. At the same time, we re-evaluate our own personal definitions while taking a clear stance against violence and not losing the capacity to analyse the present problem and dangers of extremism.

EPEX aims to occupy and open up a space for alternative views and discussions by combining the expertise of practitioners with the knowledge of experts in theoretical solutions. The diversity of its participants and the relationships of trust and intimacy facilitated such processes during the EPEX project, but it also brought certain tensions to the surface. In some ways, self-reflection is not about having the answers but knowing what questions to ask.

Doing our work in an open and transparent way – conscious of our own blind spots, but also our values and beliefs – we can approach the people we directly work with, their topics of concern, and our colleagues in a way that avoids a repetition of social divisions between us which sustain and perpetuate extremist world views. Ultimately, this leads to a very different and promising idea of security; an idea which cares about individual and collective personal security. It builds on clarity, empathy, trust and a healthy balance between the certainty of one's capacities and values and the openness for uncertainties to accommodate new visions. Instead of scientific or clinical subjectivity we ask practitioners to adopt a position of partial reflexivity through which they examine presumptions, opinions and norms – the contents of their "backpacks" – that they bring to practice. Yet, we must avoid the danger of reproducing the idea that it is possible to "leave our backpack" at the door and in doing so turning a simple process of self-discovery into a tool.

01 — You should know what is in this backpack and what components are personal and professional and where they overlap: What would radicalise you? When would you notice that you are radical? When would your family and friends notice that you had been radicalised?

02 — Practitioners need to be clear about their professional task. Recommendation: Discuss the case with your colleagues. Clarify your task in a team.

03 — Practitioners need to know what tools are suitable for what task. What you need in one context as opposed to another will vary.

Stating the OBVIOUS: A View From behind Closed Doors
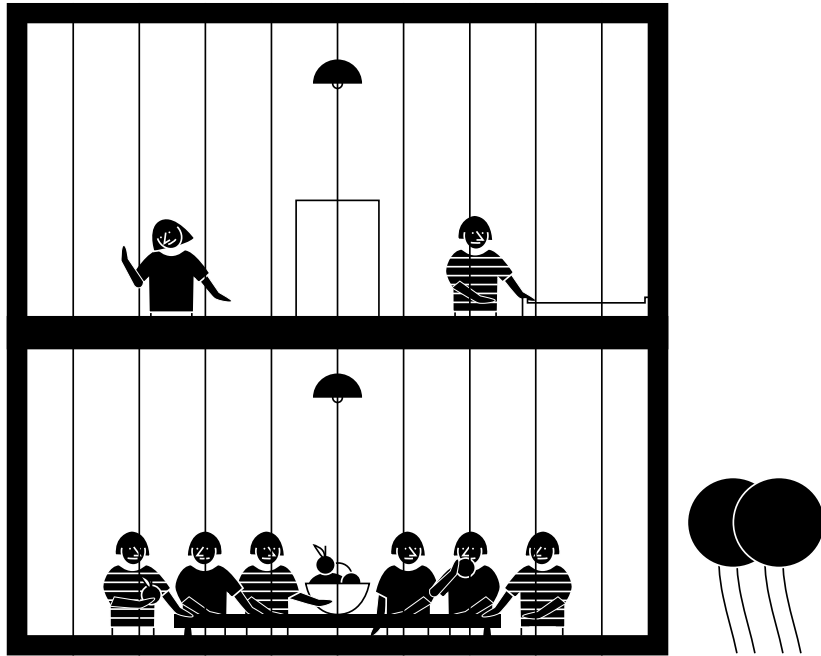
GROUP LEADS:

Mette Schramm Pedersen,
Vesë Kelmendi

WRITING GROUP:

Ariane Wolf, Gazi Mikail, Husamuddin
Meyer, Sikke Folgerø [1]

1) The authors are (or were at the time of the project) working at KCSS, Norwegian Correctional Service Eastern Region, Norwegian Correctional Service, Violence Prevention Network and Violence Prevention Network Denmark.

2) The method of Job-Shadowing Visits is further explained in Chapter 04: "An Exploration of EPEX Methodology – Amplifying Experience-based Practice". Job-Shadowing Visits are a format of practice-based work exchange designed to foster peer-education by observing colleagues' workflow and directly experiencing their work environment.

This chapter is a direct outcome of EPEX Job-Shadowing-Visits [2] in various European prison facilities. It stresses the importance of supervision to create a pro-social climate in prison by providing continuous support to practitioners and prison staff, in particular when working in the field of deradicalisation.
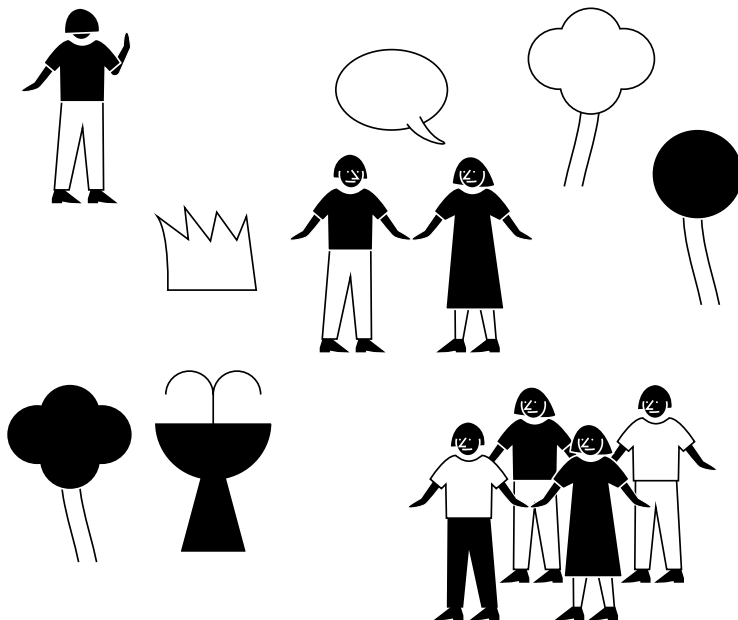
Introduction

During our EPEX visits in prisons, the main shared challenge we identified from a practitioners' perspective was the impact the carceral surrounding has on the people working there. While it is undoubtedly the prisoners themselves who suffer the most from and know the most about the prisons' influences on your being, the effects on some professionals as well as volunteers should not be downplayed. One member described it as "the prison effect": *The longer you spend time in prison the more the prison itself imprisons you.* Another member made the remark that oftentimes they felt as though *they were in prison without having committed an offence.* The impact of such "prison effect" on your ability to reflect on and be conscious of your own practice should not be underestimated as oftentimes routine becomes the comfort to hold onto.

In form of Job-Shadowing Visits, EPEX members working in prison had the opportunity to get to know the working environment of their colleagues in other countries. Travelling to another place made practitioners look at their tasks and responsibilities from a different viewpoint. The experience allowed for a distance from the pressures of everyday work and offered the opportunity to compare approaches and reflect on elements of practice in a way they simply do not get the chance to in daily work routine. The exchange happening during the visits led to the insight that the "prison effect" and routine can mask the professional's ability to see the obvious.

Our Job-Shadowing Visit group was composed of individuals working in prisons on a full-time basis (Norwegian Correctional Services, Violence Prevention Network Denmark), members working there on a weekly or needs basis (Violence Prevention Network), as well as members working in other forms of custodial sentencing institutions e.g. house arrest (KCSS). [3] While some of the EPEX practitioners engage with the inmates on a full-time basis, others work in setups which would distinctly separate prison staff (those who are at the prison 24/7) and practitioners (those who come to prison on a regular basis to work with clients in our field). Not all permanent prison staff are practitioners with experience in the prevention of radicalisation and deradicalisation, nor are all practitioners permanent members of staff. The prison context in Germany, Denmark and Norway as well as the level of awareness for it in society also differ significantly from the situations in Kosovo or France, for example. How-

3) For a short description of the involved organisations see the glossary of all EPEX members at the end of this publication.

ever, the stark impact of the prison institution, not only on inmates but also on workers, cut across all working contexts.

The Job-Shadowing Visits took place in prisons in Denmark and Norway. Seeing prison work in practice, rather than just talking about it in theory revealed how even small details can make an important difference. Sharing everyday procedures in institutions of the two countries showed us concrete, practical ways of addressing human rights and detention standards in line with international agreements as well as creating pro-social environments within prison. These insights could then be transferred to other work places. In particular, our discussions highlighted the need to take small obvious steps – such as providing space for staff to reflect and debrief in supervision. Another obvious yet still not universally practiced idea. [4]

4) See Chapter 01: "Who defines the radical and why does it matter? On the Impact of Definitions and the Necessity of Self-Reflection"

> *"Our first visit to Oslo in Norway made some of us quite desiring for change as we saw a prison environment that was much closer to an environment and way of working we wanted to see within our own context."*

> *"In a nutshell our first visit to Norway made some of us think, this is how prisons should be. This is in many ways obvious, but perhaps too obvious and perhaps also unrealistic for us to achieve given the different contexts. The real lightbulb moment occurred when we visited Denmark."*

Following the second Job-Shadowing Visit to Denmark, the issue of supervision became a focal point of discussion and Gazi (Norway) realised that even within the detention structures of Norway, where others felt had elements of practice to emulate, supervision did not occur. Upon his return, Gazi started the conversation about how to introduce supervision to his practice. Thereby, the most immediate practice-(ex)change that EPEX created took place in Norway. EPEX enabled recognition, confidence and momentum to continue drawing attention to what is still missing.

> *"I found it truly inspiring to see how the Danish took care of their staff in dealing with hard cases. The Correctional Services paid a team of psychologists who supervised staff regularly. In this way the employer took care of their staff and at the same time made them able to continue their work. It is a good thing to do so and it*

reminds us of the importance of investing in ourselves and in our mentors. After our visit in Denmark, I asked our Directorate and we are now planning to hire external supervisors to guide our group of mentors."

In Enner Mark prison in Denmark, we learned about different variations of supervision. There exists supervision for the practitioners in a spatially distant location, where room is provided to look at their practices and reflect. Within another setting, prison staff spend a full day of supervision together inside the prison. These sessions include trainings and teachings in relevant topics. Yet another variation consists of individual supervision for prison staff – including prison officers, social workers, teachers, lawyers and persons who work where the inmates are employed.

Supervision, in our understanding, refers to a process that creates an emotional (and where necessary spatial) distance for personal and professional reflection and provides an individual with the opportunity of clarifying and resolving issues, conflicts and frictions in her or his workplace. [5]

5) www.rico. com.au/training/ life_skills/ supervision.htm

Supervision is not a new topic in prison; quite the opposite: The need for supervision should be obvious. It should be at the very basis of our work – yet, we do not see it as common practice in the vast majority of prison systems across Europe and beyond.

Methods and benefits of supervision are also rarely put on the agenda or picked up in conversations during networking, policy and practice sharing events. Hence, we aim to highlight some of these impacts and emphasise the importance of supervision. We argue that through supervision, we can improve working relationships within prisons and help staff and practitioners become "everyday role models" which support inmates' re-socialisation or socialisation processes. At the same time, it helps in understanding that re- / socialisation has a different starting point with those prisoners who have so far never been socialised with the same pro-social values a re-socialisation process during and after incarceration tries to promote.

The chapter is divided into two parts: The first part elaborates briefly on how the prison system as working environment affects the relationship between inmates and staff. The second part of the text discusses the need of supervision as necessary tools to be included in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes as well as in daily interaction.

6) Our practice exchange showed that because the psychological and behavioural effects of the prison-institution are so high, we call for at least "minimum standards" of prison facilities, but for "maximum standards" of humanity and anti-discriminatory working practice – in opposition to "maximum security".

7) For standards of the treatment of prisoners and the management of detention facilities, see the updated version of the "Nelson Mandela Rules": UN General Assembly, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners as well as "The European Prison Rules": Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Recommendation Rec (2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules.

In other words: "You treat people equally when you treat them individually."

Part 01 — Understanding the Institutional Context

PRISON FACILITIES AND "THE ULTIMATE INSTITUTION" — Every institutional context – be it in schools, municipalities, prisons or elsewhere – influences the practitioners and their ability to deliver good practice. The crucial difference with prisons is that their institutional setting fully takes charge of every aspect of inmates' lives and partly of workers' lives as well. Hence, prisons are spaces where institutional rules and setups act out a specific power. Because of this strong influence, a set of material minimum standards for prison facilities (such as having enough and well-trained staff, not overcrowding the prison, …) is vital. [6]

Beyond the facilities themselves, it is the treatment with respect and dignity, an atmosphere and culture of working together on eye-level that we see as enabling for successful engagement between prison staff and prisoners. [7] In this sense – given a good standard of resources – it is never just the facilities themselves, but the kinds of interactions, stability, safety and structure they provide which matter in this process. It is about filling the structures with life and using them in the best possible way.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF STAFF AND PRACTITIONERS — One challenge when working in prisons and other closed institutions comes from the fact that prison staff needs to perform a variety of roles. They constantly need to balance the obligation of controlling inmates on one hand, while on the other hand being a "helper" and enabler of positive change. Prison staff or practitioners' responsibilities further include locking people in and out, spending large stretches of time with inmates in confinement, acting within authoritarian structures, bearing responsibility, writing reports, or making recommendations which determine the fate of inmates.

There is another important balance to strike between the need for clear rules and structures on the one hand and individual solutions on the other. To reduce conflict on a day-to-day basis and provide equal treatment between inmates, clear rules and procedures can be important. Yet, each imprisoned person is a unique individual. A prison population must never be seen as a homogeneous group. There must be

space for individualised solutions which meet their subjective needs. In other words: *"You treat people equally when you treat them individually."* Even though this might be especially divergent to the guiding principles and the inner institutional logic within prisons.

In our Job-Shadowing Visits we found that prisons still use many "one size fits all" practices, although individual approaches responding to the respective inmate's needs are more promising. For instance, using isolation as punishment for someone who is in need of social contact may follow procedures, but makes the person more isolated and aggravates feelings of exclusion.

> *"One prisoner was suffering very much because he felt alone and had nobody to talk to. Even the television didn't help him because it was in German which he could not understand. He said to me, he had been in prison in Morocco, Spain, France and Germany. To him, nowhere was it as difficult as in Germany because he was completely alone in the cell. Another inmate I worked with was very restless and had problems to be alone as well, so he was tempted to speak through the window with his neighbouring inmates. This is forbidden and sanctioned through exclusion from the shared group free time which increased his problems and led to more sanctions. The staff applied the rules correctly, but it was not the appropriate measure and didn't help anybody because it led to more violence, frustration, …"*

Caught between necessary discipline and care-taking, the prison space is a space full of frictions for the practitioners. Therefore, to enable prison staff to consider individual needs in choosing appropriate measures instead of just applying abstract general rules, professionals inside prisons need to not only be well-trained but also continuously well-supported in this process. Part of this support, we believe, means helping prison staff realise their own influence on inmates and the general prison atmosphere. Oftentimes, both workers themselves and the mainstream debates on detention structures underestimate the influence of these daily interactions on the long-term re-socialisation of prisoners.

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR RE-SOCIALISATION IN PRISON AND THE QUESTION OF VIOLENCE — Prison sentences had for a very long time two foremost purposes: to protect the society and to punish the wrongdoer. The prison as institution is therefore a setting that responds to violations of law, which sometimes involve physical violence, with yet another form of violence by taking away liberties of a person in confinement. Although this constitutes another obvious fact, attention has not been payed sufficiently to how violence and social inequalities – by way of racism, discrimination, stigmatisation, and exclusion – from outside prison are repeated and often reinforced inside prison. Even less attention has been payed to effective practices that people – practitioners and inmates alike – can develop to solve such conflicts non-violently inside the prison setting as well as after release.

Historically, responses to violence in prison focus on the act itself without attempting to understand the dynamics between the people involved. Understanding prisoners' interpretation of the situations they face helps to show how decisions to use violence on either side are influenced by the particular setting of the detention facility. It is important to focus on addressing causes of a person's problems, not just on punishing their consequences. If we seek to reduce violence, we should regard prisons as socialisation institutions and remember that the interactions in prison are the only models of social interaction available to inmates during their time of incarceration.

> *"If we take all responsibility away from prisoners while they are in prison, and if they haven't learned basic skills before they entered prison, how can we expect them to organise and structure their life on their own after prison?"*

Being treated with human dignity and respect is essential for everyone and may, in our working environment, be of crucial importance for imprisoned persons. According to the practitioners' experience, the lack of self-esteem is very often one of the main causes of offences. As one prisoner states: *"When I entered the prison I hated myself. And when you hate yourself, you are able to do anything!"* According to the inmate's own view, a lack of self-esteem made him join a terrorist group. Moreover, the feeling of being discriminated and excluded in prison can have similarly strong consequences, lead to psychological distress or under certain circumstances contribute to a process of radicalisation.[8] Society, institutions and other relevant stakeholders have failed to build skills for understanding the problem of violent extremism. Most of the countries and experts

8) Council of Europe (2018): Prison. A Breeding Ground for Radicalisation and Violent Extremism?

Seeing the person behind the inmate rather than the problem they pose.

9) On the national, regional and conceptual differences in the use of the terminology on "resocialisation", "reintegration" or "rehabilitation" see for example Liora Lazarus (2004): Contrasting Prisoners' Rights. A Comparative Examination of England and Germany, Oxford / New York, Oxford University Press.

focus on "looking at inmates" without considering the importance of prison staff for good practice interaction being crucial for rehabilitation, such as seeing the person behind the inmates rather than the problem they pose. Only more recent prison reforms pay attention to the fact that after the sentence, offenders will have to live in the society again, so they must be prepared for release. In this perspective, the time in prison can and should be used to work on specific difficulties and (personal) problems which eventually led or contributed to committing the offence. Related programmes are often referred to as reintegration or re-socialisation measures. [9] Reintegration includes preparing for the reinstatement of freedoms that had been taken away from individuals. It means preparing for independent decision-making again in the absence of constant oversight. If the correctional services fail to prepare inmates for this, recidivism rates are high with serious consequences for the person of concern as well as society. Within the context of violent extremism, the recent discussions around reintegration and re-socialisation focus exclusively on the phenomenon of incarcerated foreign fighters, while forgetting that this problem concerns all inmates. In sum, both the relevance of reintegration efforts for violent offenders in general before and after release, as well as the important role of individuals working in prisons contributing to the prison atmosphere, are not yet recognised sufficiently by institutional policies and often absent from public debates on the topic.

Through education and training, staff and practitioners can be made aware of their important role and enabled to promote pro-social values in exchange with the prisoners. Supervision supports staff significantly to reflect this process. It strengthens staff to interact with inmates respectfully and on eye-level where possible, thereby acting as "everyday role models". When it comes to responses towards violent action, supervision essentially helps to consciously build and improve skills, methods, and behaviour that can counter or at least interrupt routines of violence inside the institution that might have become ordinary for everyone inside prison.

SOCIALISATION AND RE-SOCIALISATION — Another crucial question concerning pro-social skills to counter violence comes into sight once prison administrations subscribe to the idea that the goal of de-

tention should be to re-socialise the inmates before their release. In this context, socialisation describes a process of taking over social norms as well as adapting skills that are characteristic to society outside prison. Hence, re-socialisation suggests you had been a functioning part of that society before. In reality, some prisoners have never really been fully integrated into that society they are promised to be released to – whether that's due to discrimination and exclusion or due to the fact that they have been socialised in communities / entities that preferred to live apart from other parts of society. Some imprisoned persons therefore might not know and never have adopted the demanded norms and skills prevalent in "outside" society.

This was revealed by a concrete example from the EPEX partners in Germany. In 2015, refugees from North-African countries represented 90% of incarcerated persons in the pretrial detention department of a prison in Germany. Miscommunication and misunderstandings caused a lot of conflicts creating stress for unprepared staff and negative consequences for the prisoners.

> *"The reason for the numerous conflicts were most of the time found in misunderstandings and a big difference in culture. The German staff intended to apply law and to be severe and strict in a very cold-hearted way which provoked a violent self-defence on the side of the prisoners.[…] I tried to develop a rescue space for them where they feel comfortable and tell their sorrows, reserved for the most difficult prisoners and additional to the prayer meetings which are open for everybody.*
>
> *My suggestion was to create a 'Tea-Circle' with Moroccan tea and to give space to some conversations in their mother-tongue. We spoke about their hometowns, families and language skills and also about the problems they face in prison. After a short time, the whole situation improved, and the co-director was fascinated. He changed his approach and gained a lot of respect from the prisoners. The mutual understanding was increased. There is a big need of cultural bridge-building, of sensitive approach and empathy which can be reached by formation and reflection in a supervision constellation."*

Clearly, not all prisoners face the same challenges after release as they are a greatly diverse group. The inmates we are working with in particular have been part of violent extremist groups or incarcerated for committing hate crimes. They often go a long way requiring more than one attempt until they find a state of independence and self-reliance for themselves which enables them to avoid a much easier option of "reintegration" by returning to the same (extremist or criminal) structures as before. To lead a life after prison in non-violent environments, competences needed include dealing with conflicts in a non-violent manner, asking for help, creating a structure for daily life, behaving respectfully towards others, projecting oneself into a self-confident future and building alternative fields of interest and affirmation. The principle elements that one should focus and work on from the very beginning seem to be the personal motivations of the person concerned and the long-term benefits – even if it is often difficult not to lose sight of them in a strict and conflictual environment inside as well as outside prison. Lastly, one should not forget that on the side of the staff, investing in personal relationships is an on-going process, too, just like it is a process for the inmates to change habits and one's state of mind.

WORKING WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN RADICALISED — Knowledge, empathy and meeting all people with respect enables positive relations and thus, the interaction between prison staff and inmates can result in mutual trust. This does also have a positive impact on security for both inmates and staff. Like one of our EPEX members said: *"It is easier to hit someone you don't know than someone you know."*

When working with inmates who are or were members of violent extremist groups, we need to understand what is not being said and look beyond the violent acts – seeing the person behind the actions, not the "criminal" or "terrorist". The need of creating a positive environment for change, that this chapter seeks to emphasise, is essential to work with any group of people. Inmates who are or were part of violent extremist groups should by no means be kept apart or treated differently from these standards.

Public debates tend to make "returnees" a special case, that only special people are equipped to work with. As practitioners and following our insights from the EPEX project, we object this assumption. All inmates are persons with clearly defined equal and inalienable rights and should be treated that way without exception. The consciousness of the prison staff as the ones being around the inmates every day is fundamental for the defence of this human perspective and thus the protection of human rights.

If we let public and political discourse influence the climate inside prison, we will see professionals scaring away from working with returnees. Staff will be made afraid to engage with prisoners which means repeating exclusion, mistrust or disdain that earlier perhaps drove individuals into a position where they accepted violent extremist views and actions. Clearly, this represents the opposite of engaging in and developing equal and healthy relationships. It reminds us of a message resonating in each chapter of this publication: Our approach values promise over risk. As practitioners willing to foster positive change, our work focusses on opportunities in life and on the positive chances and skills people have rather than the risks they pose.

> As practitioners willing to foster positive change, our work focusses on opportunities in life and on the positive chances and skills people have rather than the risks they pose.

> *"It has been interesting to hear how the other European countries work with this group. I also find it inspiring that the general idea is to include extremists / returnees back into society and to offer youths possibilities to become a part of society. An EPEX-colleague from Germany told me that gaining trust from vulnerable youth is a tug of war competition between society and extremist groups. I like this image and see it as a good description. As an example, this colleague told me that he had seen people from extremist groups waiting outside a prison when a vulnerable inmate was released. They gave him flowers and invited him for a party, all this to recruit him to this group. Therefore, my colleague commented, we have to increase our efforts to compete with this and to protect vulnerable persons from extremists."*

10) See also Chapter 01: "Who defines the radical and why does it matter? On the Impact of Definitions and the Necessity of Self-Reflection".

Equally, not everyone has to be a "specialist" when working with returnees or radicalised persons.[10] Fresh perspectives and approaches can bring positive transformation. While building on skills available in prison

already, outside actors can be helpful to add for various and specific tasks. The basic and necessary starting point for everyone is meeting at eye-level and at "heart level" so that the inmate feels being appreciated, accepted as well as trusted – by both guards and practitioners. One of the inmates we met in our visits captured this point about creating an environment for change in his own words during our visit to Denmark: *"You can only change when you don't have to be the tough guy all the time."*

INVESTING IN STAFF — To be able to work towards a change in criminal and anti-social behaviour, all people working in prison every day (prison staff including guards, social workers, teachers etc.) must be included in any reintegration efforts.

In Denmark, this is done by letting staff move around the various departments without any firm agenda but only for building trust and relationships. It creates space for talking about everyday things, playing a game of pool or table tennis, drinking a cup of coffee or just sitting down to talk with inmates. A relationship of confidence can be built when you, as staff, make yourself visible, non-threatening and accessible.

We could also witness the consequences of institutional measures that hinder the natural and human exchange between guards and prisoners. In one of the prisons we visited, the prison guards used to have lunch and dinner with the inmates every day. Due to a lack of personnel, they don't take their time to do it anymore or not to the same extent. This has perceptible consequences for the relationship between staff and prisoners. It also has a negative impact on the quality of the officers' work: When they don't know the inmates, they cannot write proper reports about them which again makes the correctional services unable to find individual and reasonable solutions with this person. The positive long-term impact of their work is being lowered by short-term decision-making; re-socialisation fails.

These two examples show that trust-building is not only done in structured (one-on-one) conversations. Daily interactions between prison staff and the imprisoned persons are crucial as they present the more natural, less administered and thus less frictional way to achieve trustful and fair

> A relationship of confidence can be built when you, as staff, make yourself visible, non-threatening and accessible.

relations. It takes time and demands a broad set of emotional and organisational resources. Throughout the EPEX visits, we have seen a variety of approaches beneficial to creating good relationships. We have also seen that the lack of resources, either due to low or reduced budgets or a lack of qualified personnel, reduces the capacities of working in this direction. One of the reasons is that in such pro-social setting, staff might experience higher expectations to them and find it difficult to meet all the requirements. In other instances, it may also be a matter of understanding the importance of their role in reintegration. Creating awareness in prison staff around their own role through supervision should be explored as a way of stressing this relevance and thereby giving relationship-building a much higher priority.

Part 02 — Why is Supervision Important?

As demonstrated during our visits, providing supervision to prison staff is essential if we want to succeed in seizing the time of detention as an opportunity for positive change for prisoners during and after their sentence. Supervision further helps changing those structures in prison which hinder positive interaction.

Supervision invites participants to exploration, curiosity, and the (ex)change of views about the problem to develop better solutions. In our context, supervision specifically relates to the prison environment and the physical and psychological mechanisms that are important to keep in mind when prison staff and practitioners are working with inmates. Supervision must pay attention to what we named earlier as the "prison effect".

> *"Seeing the peaceful place where the Danish prison staff withdraws to regroup and gather thoughts made the meaning of 'supervision' and 'reflection' come to life for me. It showed me that it is as much about having the time and resources, as it is about having a place for it."*

During supervision, difficult issues – no matter their size – are raised, problems are explored, behaviour reflected, so that new ways of handling both the situation and oneself can be discovered and trained.

It helps to be more confident in one's professional approach, while creating a healthier work climate when being aware of the psychological impact work inside prison does have on staff (i.e. preventing burnout syndrome). To improve working conditions improves the quality of the work and makes it more inspiring. Such positive work ethics brings about positive change towards a pro-social and non-violent climate of (re-)socialisation.

HOW DOES SUPERVISION IMPROVE WORK PRACTICE? — Considering the positive results supervision shows in the prison context outlined above, we identified two main direct impacts on practitioners' working practice when regularly offered the opportunity of being supervised:

01.

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION — Supervision creates a space for evaluating and acquiring professional "tools" for prison staff. It offers opportunities, physical and mental space for taking a step back and let go of the pressure and dilemmas that reign inside the institutional setting. The practitioners can then see the daily conflicts and frictions at work from a distance and reflect their own agency in practice. Supervision makes one think about which role inside the given structure one wants to play, whether one interacts with inmates accordingly and in the best way or whether other solutions to specific situations may have led to better outcomes considering the person's long-term development. To succeed in re-socialisation and supporting inmates continuously, a strong cooperation between different professions from inside and outside detention is needed. Evaluating and reflecting where and how cooperation can work best, and where professionals can get the tools needed for best practice presents another benefit achieved through supervision. Thus, supervision can also make cooperation processes more effective by facilitating communication on various levels.

02.

APPRECIATION / RECOGNITION — One of the most important things that supervision can be used for is as a tool of appreciation. Especially for often overlooked professions, such as prison guards,

we see the need to emphasise the multiple responsibilities they bear, the impact their work has on prisoners and, thus, the importance of their function.

Supervision gives a higher value to the profession of the "guardian" who is, can and should be more than (or different from) a "turnkey". If we can help building tools to approach their work in a better way, they will be more confident about the daily tasks. Their work gets more rewarding. Most of all, prison staff need to be aware that prisoners, like any other person, need opportunities and space for social interaction to perceive, understand, and change negative behavioural habits or reflex action. Positive social skills on the side of the prison staff, including guards, not only open up such spaces of interaction, but also provide positive examples of mutual respect. This is of special importance as we know that people who suffer from experiences of social marginalisation, exclusion, discrimination or (felt) failure, people traumatised or with mental disorders, often having problems in building trust, are overrepresented among the prison population. If we think of the example from Germany, we are reminded that racist thinking and structures are always present in prisons. Supervision can and should fulfil the function of keeping a keen eye on these issues and – even though it may not be able to solve them – address and control them. Any contribution to empathy with and understanding for the inmates' individual situation and their motivations is vital to analyse and change the mechanisms at stake. Only human relationships can help us get there. This is the idea we earlier referred to as "everyday role models". Understanding this role in relation to the given power imbalance within prison can help re-evaluate reactions to momentary situations faced within prison.

Conclusion

Reducing budgets and thereby reducing the number of staff deployed to carry out their tasks is common to most (European) prisons. These tasks are those relating to security, but also to the re-socialisation of each imprisoned person. Staff is increasingly forced to juggle both "soft" and "hard" values. Given the shrinking budgets, it might well be more and more challenging to find time and finances for supervision, but the real question is if we dare not to.

Supervision is an investment in the future, both an investment in the staff's wellbeing and in the future of the prisoners and their return to society. It is important to realise that there are high costs to pay for everyone when failing in re-socialising inmates. Without well-trained staff and without relationship-building, a change in behaviour is unlikely, which leads to reincarceration. It means increased and perpetual exclusion entailing more violent behaviour and the strengthening of groups and criminal networks constituted on a basis of hate for the other. To compete with extremists, society should invest in the best possible staff to work with the inmates on their rehabilitation and reintegration as well as in penal structures that equip the staff with sufficient resources to apply their skills and do the best possible job. Experience tells us that imprisoned persons were often previously marginalised by the majority society. This liminal position makes it sometimes difficult to take on common norms and rules of that same society. Inclusion and non-segregation can only be achieved when relationships with other people are explicitly pro-social, non-violent and equal. Prison staff should be trained and deployed to behave with the prisoners in such way – instead of punishing someone for lack of skills without providing options to acquire them.

An important personal improvement for practitioners is to look at one's agency and practice from different angles. Collectively and for the whole institution, it implies establishing a culture of supervision which makes it natural to use and further develop the skills learned in training. Finally, it is about breaking the circle and nourishing a new culture of interacting which has an immediate as well as a long-term impact. Yet, just talking and writing is different from seeing. Seeing the Danish example of supervision has inspired the group and shown long-lasting effects. EPEX visits themselves were a way of fostering peer-to-peer supervision (intervision). It created the much-needed space for reflection and in-depth discussions amongst international colleagues working in the same field. Rediscovering what we were no longer able to see, we gained strength and confidence in our approach to tackle the problem of extremism among prison populations beyond the mainstream perception of the problem.

Investing in pro-social structures, communication and values between staff and prisoners, staff and other professionals, as well as between prisoners themselves should be obvious. However, as practitioners we need to keep stating the obvious because without it the theory of change will focus on the far away destination without caring for the very concrete steps to reach this destination.

Chapter 03

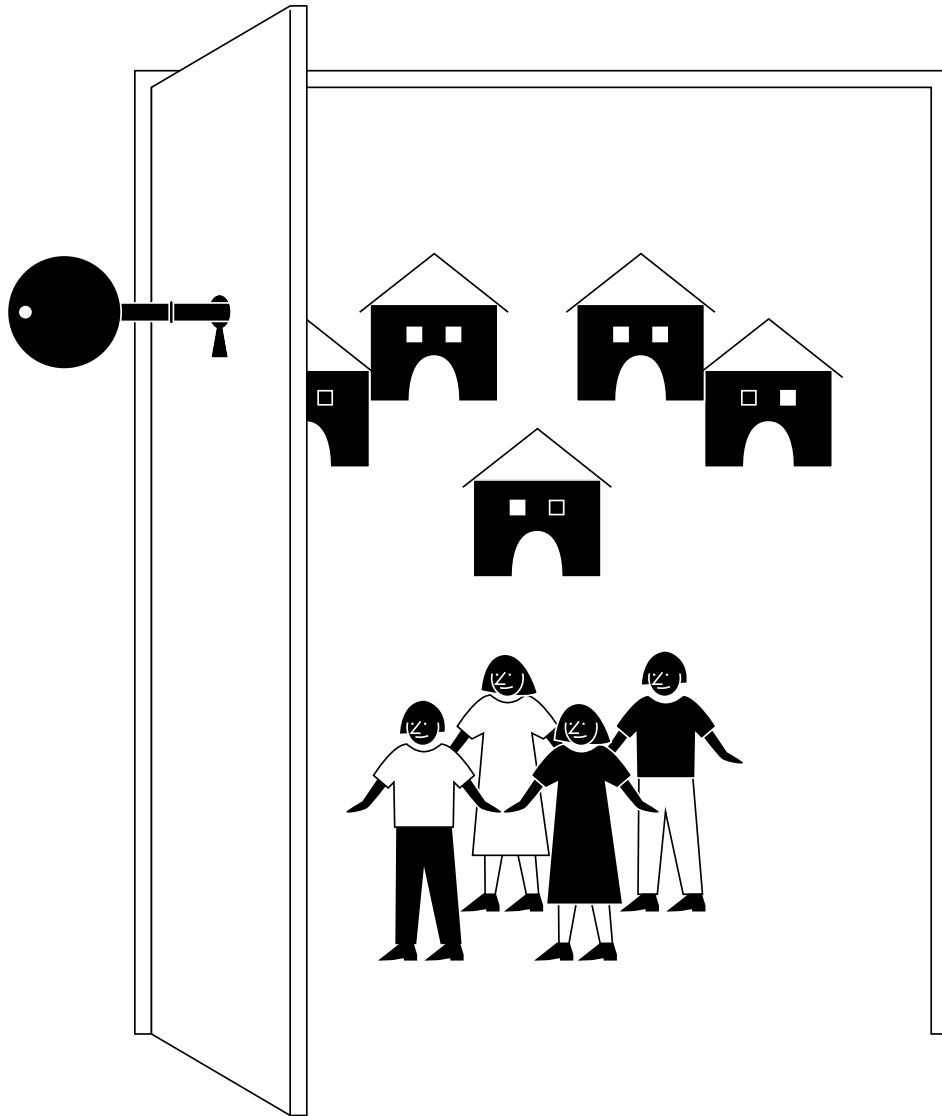# A Reflection on KEY Influencers within the EQUATION of Success
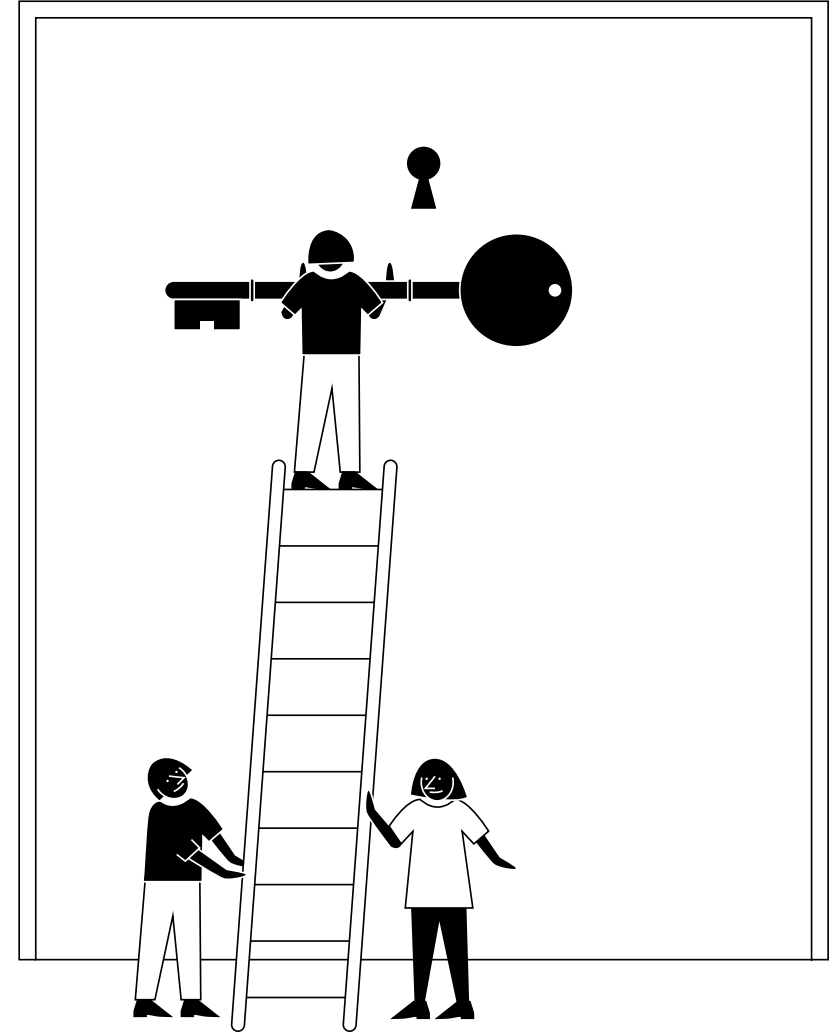
GROUP LEADS
Iris Engelsman, Shaz Zaman

WRITING GROUP
Mouna Jendoubi, Mohamed Iqbel Ben Rejeb,
Sahra Dhirie, Yousiff Florey-Meah [1]

1) The authors
are (or were at the
time of the project)
working at The
RecoRa Institute,
RATTA, Revive,
Stand Up Luton and
WIJ Groningen.

This chapter deals with the relationship
between organisations working in the field
of preventing and countering violent ex-
tremisms and individuals embedded within
communities. It aims to illustrate how such
"key influencers" can support the opening
of these respective communities and
how deploying key influencers might require
flexibility to change structures where
necessary in order to reward and integrate
key influencers.

Introduction

One (other) factor that connects us as EPEX partners is our firm belief in the importance of deploying key influencers in our work. They are essential when it comes to reaching out to, getting to know, and working for and with different communities. [2] Key influencers share certain traits and abilities that enable them to connect with groups, individuals and issues that we – as practitioners who are not necessarily embedded in these communities – want to engage with but might not always succeed in by ourselves.

Sharing our practices not only gave us insight in experiences and challenges we have in common, but it also enabled us to benefit from each other's approaches when it comes to working with key influencers. By way of concrete examples, the EPEX Job-Shadowing Visits [3] revealed a tension that often exists between a mere rhetorical understanding of the need to effectively engage with and deploy key influencers on the one hand, and our ability to identify and build a sustainable relationship with them on the other hand – let alone to harness, facilitate and reward their potential. Further, many of the key influencers we work with are active or start out as volunteers. The different EPEX members often find it a challenge to properly reward them. As one EPEX partner describes it:

> "We try our best, for example by offering them courses, incidental
> volunteer fees and elaborate and symbolical 'thank you-s'. But
> our hands are tied as well, due to government policy and funding.
> We are grateful for, yet also dependent on their [key influencers']
> help and ideas. We don't want to lose them, but we want to
> value them accordingly and not make them feel like we 'use' them."

This chapter elaborates on organisational duties that come with finding, deploying and rewarding key influencers, in the context of working within a community setting. It illustrates the challenges we encounter in our respective domains, and it highlights pathways to address them. We discuss these findings drawing on the experiences of EPEX partners RATTA, RecoRa, Luton Tigers, Stand Up Luton, Revive, and WIJ Groningen. [4] The chapter focuses on two key questions: How do we identify key influencers? And how do we harness and reward their potential?

Identifying Key Influencers [5]

As stated above, key influencers are able to connect with and have access to groups, individuals and issues that organisations want to engage with but might not always succeed in. Key influencers each have their unique characteristics and ways to go about their activities when reaching out to specific individuals and communities. They are as diverse as the communities and peer groups that they represent. However, there are some characteristics that are noticeable or desirable to develop. Sahra, representative for EPEX partner Revive defines a key influencer as follows:

> "He or she is someone that others relate to and get
> inspired by. A key influencer is dedicated to and motivated
> by making a positive impact on the lives of others, by
> building bridges between people. Thereby creating and
> nourishing bonds of trust, using their own life's experience."

EPEX member Mouna (General Secretary of RATTA and PhD student) adds that a key influencer is someone who takes the time to listen to people and does not neglect ideas or views of young people. Key influencers are motivated by the change they want to see happen, as well as the pleasure they experience in doing meaningful work.

While key influencers are positive role models, their traits and abilities may well vary from those who were the "best students in class". In fact, influential individuals are often not necessarily people with a straight CV who would be considered by mainstream society to be a good leader – but they are influential for different reasons. Credibility and influence can originate from a person's individual story, their choices in life and belonging to or identifying with a certain community. All these factors shape their role within this community. Their ability to "open doors" and thereby support a broader opening of respective communities is based precisely on their relationship with the community they live amongst. Therefore, as influential figures for a certain group, they can make a difference for how other members of this group think, feel and act about a particular issue. At the same time, they think and care beyond a subsection of a community, as Shaz illustrates:

"I am concerned with all Lutonians, not just Muslims. We are all at risk because we have sadly let a small minority of extremists dominate the narrative about who we are, and how we should view others."

This is the reason why, over the past ten years, EPEX member RecoRa has been increasingly concerned with finding key influencers (like Shaz) and mentoring them to move from being bystanders to activists who positively focus their influence to tackle problems of violence-inducing narratives in the UK.

As stated before, for many key influencers it is their life stories that enable them to make a difference and give them credibility and trustworthiness. Key influencers can have a negative perspective of public agencies, which makes them reluctant to want to engage with them. This negative perspective can be associated with their own personal experiences of such agencies, as well as with their perception of the lack of care such agencies show for the communities they are a part of.

Mohamed Iqbel, founder and president of RATTA, decided to start up an organisation himself, after comparable experiences both in his personal life as with lacking support of the government. When his younger brother, who is handicapped with muscular dystrophy, a hereditary disease also named Tunisian myopathy, was persuaded to leave home and join the fight against the Syrian regime, Mohamed Iqbel promised his mother he would get him back. When he managed to find his brother and bring him back home, he learned that his mother was not alone: many Tunisian families lost their children. Several people came to Mohamed Iqbel asking him for help with getting their radicalised family members back home. He knew that the government was not a source of support or help, so he replied to their concern and immediate need by starting the organisation RATTA. Mohamed Iqbel saw his brother's potential, rather than the risks. This has helped him get involved and make a positive difference. His experience clearly demonstrates how the personal stories and backgrounds of key influencers substantiate their standing and enable their potential to bring about effective change for and within their communities. It is upon us as organisations that work with them to acknowledge and value this.

Harnessing and Rewarding Key Influencers' Potential

The success of an approach stands and falls with the people who do the actual job. The power lies in the accumulated experience, the people concerned and the trust of the community in the current process and network. In short, the work of the key influencers is specialised work. If we let go of it, overlook or underestimate its importance, we risk losing our access and connection to the communities we aim to work with. Therefore, key influencers are by no means just added extras, but an essential piece of the equation.

This understanding makes the method of working with key influencers a strong one, but it also makes the organisational relationship with communities vulnerable, because the success of the approach should not depend on a handful of specific persons. To develop a sustainable solution to this vulnerability, we need to create organisational structures for and with key influencers, and a system of appropriate rewards and remuneration.

The power lies in the accumulated experience, the people concerned and the trust of the community in the current process and network.

Securing key influencers' potential requires negotiating our relations to public bodies and to collaborate with them in a way we do not end up changing the qualities that make key influencers who and what they are in the first place. In many contexts, civil society organisations can solve this problem by using their access and mediating power.

WIJ Groningen focuses on bridging gaps between institutions and individuals by working *with* different communities, for example the Somali community. Many Somalis living in the city of Groningen were disappointed in their economical perspectives and, as a result, felt excluded from society. They therefore withdrew into their own communities, losing touch with authorities, which eventually caused challenges and problems with participating and integrating in Dutch society. To tackle this, WIJ Groningen started by investing in *making contact, developing a relationship of mutual trust, and bridging gaps* between indi-

Collaborate with them in a way we do not end up changing the qualities that make key influencers who and what they are in the first place.

viduals and organisations. This bond enabled working together towards solutions and created a solid infrastructure of confidence and shared concern that both sides can rely on whenever necessary. Organisational networks that focus on the opportunities and potential within communities rather than seeing them solely as a problem source will be able to do the same for individuals. Focussing on *promise over risk* is one of the core principles of this work – and something we see as essential in engaging with key influencers as well. This is strongly illustrated by the following quote from Mohamed Iqbel (RATTA), regarding his brother returning from Syria:

> *"The Government still views my brother as a potential threat or risk. They do not see how he attempts to make amends, to say sorry in his own way by using his skills to build our website and manage some of our campaigns – because he does this quietly behind the scenes."*

There are critical questions to consider when engaging key influencers: What motivates them? What keeps them going? What tools (practical, educational, social, etc.) do they need to be able to do what they do, to develop and grow further? What can we do to make them feel part of the organisational team, without eroding the very characteristics that make them autonomous key influencers within their respective sphere? And what can we provide to reward them accordingly?

Key influencers very often carry an intrinsic motivation to improve conditions in their communities, neighbourhoods and / or peer groups, because they are part of them. They are driven by a perspective to achieve these improvements through permanent and direct exchange with the communities. This is partly what makes them influential and credible within their community, but their commitment (mostly on a voluntary basis) should not be taken for granted. On the contrary: It is crucial to not only acknowledge their valid contribution as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, but also to value and reward it; not only symbolically or practically, but also monetarily. While many key influencers may be very effective in a voluntary engagement, there are serious limitations to engagement in the absence of financial and organisational support and resources.

Material restrictions can make a difference for the key influencers' work by delaying or hampering valuable action and impact. Mouna (RATTA) elaborates:

> *"Our first goal was to develop a prevention campaign. However, the development was postponed for three years, because we could not start until we managed to gather a small amount of money to buy a projector and a laptop. This meant we could not start addressing the real causes for young Tunisians to join conflict areas."*

Organisations and institutions might find it difficult to provide custom made / creative solutions to practical dilemmas that come with deploying key influencers. EPEX partner WIJ Groningen is constantly looking for collaboration with those people in local (grass roots) organisations and individuals who have access to specific communities, experience in and affinity for working with them, pursuing the same goal: Helping people moving forward by working closely together with an open mind and a good dose of curiosity and intercultural sensitivity. This, however, intensifies the internal organisational dilemma of rewarding key influencers who offer their insights and help as "voluntary freelancers" (not contracted, nor registered with the Chamber of Commerce as usually required). It proved to be very difficult to deploy them and reward them accordingly (e.g. on an invoice base) as a non-registered freelancer. WIJ Groningen, like many other organisations, in the past was used to reward its valuable volunteers with symbolical gifts like a bouquet of flowers and a gift voucher. But WIJ Groningen set a precedent by successfully looking for practical ways to overcome bureaucratic barriers and find innovative ways to pay non-contracted key influencers who are not registered as freelancers. Here, actions that followed the recognition and acknowledgement of the essential role of key influencers succeeded in changing an organisational mindset and offered the organisation tools to properly reward certain volunteers. The organisation therefore advanced towards a more equal relationship with the cooperation partners, while also informing volunteers about the benefits of registering with the Chamber of Commerce, which makes it easier for them to receive payments for their work.

Furthermore, the EPEX practitioners exchange made it manifest that sustainable professional development emerges in key influencers due to

organisational support and training. For Shaz, creating Stand Up Luton (SUL) provided a way to channel his influence and passion in a constructive direction, coached, supported and facilitated by RecoRa. Working together made it possible to transmit, spread, and multiply knowledge and experience. At the time of starting Stand Up Luton, policy-makers in his town shied away from Shaz, because of their assumptions on a particular episode in his life, which resulted in him being convicted and sentenced to 13 years in prison. Since his release, Shaz was searching for opportunities to make amends. This opportunity came when he met RecoRa at a meeting:

> *"What RecoRa did, was simply ask me the question 'what is stopping you from doing something?' They listened to my ideas and simply said: 'Let's do it then.' I attended a RecoRa meeting on supporting homeless people, and before I knew it I was on the street with other Lutonians sharing coffee and cakes with homeless families. This is what activism should be like."*

Shaz was engaged in Stand Up Luton's activities on an entirely voluntary basis. For three years, he earned his wages through working late evening shifts on the railways, catching a few hours of sleep before using his daytime for being trained and mentored to organise SUL activities, doing community work before going back to work late in the night.

Through his commitment and despite the difficult circumstances, Shaz became the public face of the movement and its only public facing member. This opportunity put him into direct contact with policy-makers within the local authority. Eventually, they recognised the potential role he could play. For Shaz, the opportunity to be mentored and supported up to a point where he was able to turn his activism in addressing things that mattered to him into a paid occupation and the appreciation of his work by policy-makers was the best reward.

> *"In many ways I just think I have been lucky. The support I received has mainly been about people standing beside me and asking me to try a different way; encouraging me to be careful of the language I used and most importantly introducing me to public agency staff who were passionate about Luton and wanted to do something rather than just talk."*

Another dimension of successful exchange and collaboration between key influencers and organisations has been revealed through the experiences that RATTA shared with the other EPEX members. For RATTA, it has been rewarding to collaborate with likeminded individuals and organisations to obtain feedback, improve knowledge on best practices – for example in the domain of funding – and be inspired and supported by entities that share their vision and method on deradicalisation.

In this sense, the enabling structure to include key influencers does not necessarily have to be a civil society organisation which bridges the gap between municipal institutions and grassroot organisations or communities, like WIJ Groningen or an organisation that focuses on mentoring and empowering "street-level activists" like RecoRa. It can also be a network of colleagues – like EPEX – that gives the chance to exchange and disseminate experiences, critically reflect on approaches and provides inspiration and support, bringing together the potential of both local and international networks.

Conclusion

Key influencers can be very helpful when it comes to reaching out to, getting to know, and working for and with communities that some might label as "hard to reach". We need to step out of our comfort zone and prepare to identify and recognise the difference they make, collaboratively work with, and reward key influencers accordingly. This requires mutual change and flexibility on both sides and presents challenges for the way institutions are used to work. It is important for organisations to build sustainable relationships and collaborations with key influencers and find ways to build platforms around these individuals. In this way, key influencers can be encouraged, supported and rewarded practically, symbolically, and monetarily. We need to not only show and articulate clearly our personal and professional recognition and appreciation (accompanied by symbolic appreciation) of their work and inspirations they give us. We also need to make sure that opportunities of empowerment and training are available to key influencers working with us to support their own development and goals. This aspect is linked to the importance of recognising what outcomes matter to them. According to the personal motivations of key influencers, achieving the change they want to see happen and the feeling to make a difference can be very rewarding.

In addition, responsiveness and support by decision-makers can demonstrate a sincere appreciation of key influencers' contributions. Nevertheless, organisations should find ways to allow for appropriate financial remuneration. We need to develop alternative solutions to arrange payments and / or find opportunities of employment in the long run (like Shaz' story demonstrated).

For all these aspects and concrete steps to make, it is important for us as organisations to take into account the social differences and barriers in our respective societies that affect our relationship with key influencers and their communities. Referring to Chapter 01 of this publication, we want to underline and remind ourselves of the importance of seeing and clarifying our own positions while listening to the perspectives and experiences of the key influencers – as it is them who constantly walk the line between organisational and community life, between institutions and individuals. Their knowledge can show the way to improve organisational settings (as the example of WIJ Groningen has shown) that we might sometimes no longer be aware of in our daily practice.

Finally, this means turning the above-mentioned tension between any rhetorical or abstract understanding of the importance of just collaboration with key influencers and the effective means to create these just circumstances into a driving factor for change and learning processes of the organisation in dialogue with the working environment.

Chapter 04

An Exploration of EPEX Methodology: Amplifying Experience-based PRACTICE

Ariane Wolf, Gareth Harris, Julia Reinelt, Yousiff Florey-Meah, David Otto [1]

The chapter develops on the methodological learnings taking place over the course of the EPEX project. The lessons learned about how to build sustainable networks of trust and mutual exchange between very different groups of practitioners gave way to a new set of methods of collaboration and communication. These methods are explained, their benefits as well as challenges highlighted.

What Is the Context of the Project?

Related to the burgeoning growth of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry in recent years, we see a corresponding growth in the number of topical conferences and networking events. Given the number of different organisations in this field and the cross-country relevance of different approaches, focused efforts to exchange and gain overview become more and more essential.

Many of the networking events we see in our field today take the shape of formal, large-scale settings inspired by academic convention: Speakers give presentations in large conference rooms, discussion and question time is strictly limited, making this mostly a one-way flow of information. Too often, this format privileges theoretical and academic knowledge at the expense of the knowledge of practitioners. In many cases, the most interesting conversations take place during the breaks but without the opportunity of going deeper. Many events strive to include all kinds of relevant stakeholders while at the same time broaching every aspect of the complex topic. The discussion remains on the surface of different thematic aspects.

While such large networking events at a broad organisational level are useful to gain overview and keep up with current developments, we found that smaller and more intimate networks on a practitioner level are better-suited for leveraging practical learning and deeper long-term exchange. The success of an event also depends on the goal-setting: different forms of networks will achieve different outcomes. Experimenting with multiple forms of knowledge exchange can be vital to achieve new forms of collaboration.

What Have We Learned?

EPEX has developed specific strategies to share peer-to-peer learning. Therefore, we believe that EPEX offers methodological learning on how to enhance the capacity of peer-to-peer networks to exchange knowledge, and how to further develop these approaches. The headline that resulted from the last three years is the importance of a personal and process-oriented approach for a richer exchange of practice, which requires intimacy,

flexibility and time. Exchange is an ongoing process and is not to be seen as final: There is always more to learn. Ideally, the undertaking of organising a network or knowledge exchange should be understood as initiating a participatory process that is based on the needs of the actors in that exchange.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TAKES TIME — Networks are built on the quality of relationships. The stronger the relationships between network members, the more the benefits of networking are maximised. Time spent with each other is critical, and the more this happens face-to-face the better. By spending time together, trust builds in honest and in-depth discussion. Part of this honesty is to not only discuss what we have done well but also what we have not done so well. Foster exchange formally in workshops and discussions is important, but for sustainable networks to flourish, people need to share experiences in less formal settings, eating meals, travel, etc. It is this shared time that does as much – if not more – as formal discussion to cement trust. Informal interactions require time and resources but provide opportunities for an intimacy that is often lacking in more conventional settings.

BREAKING THE LONELINESS OF OUR WORK — An advantage of focusing only on one group of relevant actors – in our case practitioners – is that sharing experiences within the group turns into a source of emotional support. Currently, CVE work comes with immense pressure from all sides. Knowing others feel the same pressure can be very energising as it provides a source of support. We have found this to be a powerful driver of community and motivation within the network. There is a parallel here with the more formal argument made for supervision in Chapter 02 on practitioners' work in prison. [2]

2) See Chapter 02: "Stating the Obvious: A View From behind Closed Doors".

Methodological Learnings

LEVEL — In the original project set-up, we emphasised the level of people involved in the network. Having as many practitioners as possible who work directly with clients, either with people who have been radicalised in closed environments, such as prisons, or with their families, friends and wider communities. While exchanges between policy-makers and academics are needed, we found that this type of learning rarely cascades

down to practitioners. There is an important place for networks and conferences to promote the vertical flow of information – many existing structures do this task well. But there is also a strong case for networks to promote the horizontal flow of information – something that we see as largely missing at the practitioner level internationally and that EPEX sought to resolve.

ANGLE — Creating opportunities for the horizontal exchange of information is also about finding the types of language and questions that resonate with those working directly with radicalised individuals. The angle and questions raised when they are rooted in practice are different. Many conferences are dominated by a securitised perspective: Covering risk, policing, and protection. While these are important considerations, the focus of these debates often lacks the point of view that comes from talking with members of extremist groups, not just about them. Our focus lies on solving the problems that people *have* – rather than focussing uniquely on the risk and problems clients *pose*. This provides a perspective on opportunities for healthy transformation and change: That is to say *promise* is not just about positive engagement but also about the potential. [3]

That is to say promise is not just about positive engagement but also about the potential. [3]

3) See Chapter 01: "Who defines the radical and why does it matter? On the Impact of Definitions and the Necessity of Self-Reflection".

4) Ibid.

DETAILED METHODOLOGY VS. BUZZWORDS — Due to the large-scale nature of many events, there is little opportunity to go in depth on many topics. This leads to a number of "buzzwords" evolving. The differences of what these really mean tend to come out only in their implementation. For instance, many people might agree rhetorically on the importance of considering multi-agency approaches, information-sharing or treating clients with respect. But who shares information with whom and according to which rules? Who gets a seat at the table and who has the power to decide? The differences in how terms are interpreted by officials, policy-makers, academics and practitioners may lead to substantially different policy outcomes. The difficulty of defining terms that frame the agenda – such as radicalisation or extremism – illustrates the point. [4]

By taking a close look into the details of practice, a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the true differences in methodologies and working realities can be obtained. EPEX provides a method for giving

practitioners more time to talk through what happens on the ground. Sometimes this can be a long way from the original idea. Practitioner networks give us an opportunity to see how policies and abstract ideas roll out on the ground and think through the unintended consequences of interventions.

ACCESS — Many first-line practitioners, especially those who are closest to the communities, do not have access or do not have the resources to join these broad high-level events or networks. Oftentimes, networking means an additional strain on already tightly calculated working hours. Therefore, the more relevant we can make networks for applied exchange, the more likely participants can better justify their input and resources. We have also found that involvement in these sort of knowledge exchanges through *peer-to-peer supervision with colleagues* can empower practitioners and support professional development of which this publication is evidence.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING — Peer-to-peer networks offer a way to learn what other practitioners do in response to shared problems. From discussing how others react to specific situations we also learn something valuable about our own practice. This is made apparent when visiting, and even more apparent when working alongside peers.

Comparison of practices and approaches with colleagues also enables self-reflection and recognition of our potential blind spots. This has several components: It can either tell us something new that we did not know before, or it can reconfirm what we already know. It may refresh our thinking on things we have forgotten, show it from a different perspective or remind us of the obvious. [5]

5) See Chapter 02: "Stating the Obvious: A View From behind Closed Doors"

Both parts are equally important: Reassuring practitioners in what they are doing well, embedding it in a broader context and adding to that knowledge to change practices for the better. This process is not about streamlining "best practice" across the board, but rather strengthening what works and shedding light on what can be improved.

PRACTITIONER-LED PROCESS — Our EPEX network fully included practitioners in setting the agenda and relevant topics while providing a structure to address these. Instead of telling practitioners what the project management believes matters in a top-down way, we structured the network in a way for all members to make those decisions. Every member has the best knowledge of her and his own context.

Therefore, it makes sense to let them raise the relevant questions. This collaborative method proved to be a great source of strength and motivation while also surfacing common topics and goals across different countries despite the differences in context and working environment.

Format — Job-Shadowing Visits: "Seeing for Yourself"

EPEX aimed to achieve knowledge transfer that inspires work practice, therefore the exchange between partners need to go deeper than hellos and goodbyes. We found that a good network for us is one that allows its members to build and sustain intimate and trusting relationships. EPEX managed to increase the tangible benefit of the exchange by providing participants the opportunity to observe what the others do in practice: Observation narrows the gap between discussion and practice.

It is not always easy to see someone else's practice. In the exercise of people's everyday work, it can be busy. You are juggling competing demands, fending calls, answering queries, dealing with emergencies, etc. – space (for the host) needs to be worked in to allow visitors an insight into what you do without creating a false impression. Also, within this field of work, issues around security, sensitivity and privacy can mean that the amount that you can show visitors about your work might be restricted. This does not mean it is impossible – *how to* make it possible is what the last three years have been about. One format we have found helpful are Job-Shadowing Visits.

JOB-SHADOWING VISITS: WHAT DOES THIS METHOD ADD? — The Job-Shadowing Visits were designed to enable the members of EPEX to get a very concrete and practice-based insight into the work approach and setting of another participant. The approach using activity-based learning by observing the actual workflow of colleagues exceeds the usual theoretical lectures. Job-Shadowing Visits are a form of peer-education in a non-theoretical set up. We see it as a both more palpable and more suitable way for first-line practitioners to strengthen individual skills and learn through direct experience.

A similar point to this is that first-line practitioners (who tend to be doers), given the tight schedules they operate under, tend to just do what they do in the routine of their everyday work. The decisions they make can be

based on years of professional experience, yet they often do not find the time, distance and words to articulate the underlying reasoning. We see a lack of spaces where practitioners can gain professional distance from their work in order to get a clearer image of what their good practices are and why they chose certain options over others in a given situation. This lack can impede the transfer of good practice to other practitioners and make practice opaque to policy-makers or academics. The Job-Shadowing Visits help to surface the knowledge that practitioners have and make it available to others. The process of peer-to-peer supervision empowers practitioners by giving them the words and phrases to describe their own practice better.

The value of visits is not a one-sided, with the benefits accruing just to the visitors. The process also brings benefits to the host. Participants have spoken about the value of being in a position where you have to think through how you are going to present to others what you do: Being asked questions about your work makes you think about why you do things in a certain way. Participants have described this as *"shaking things up"*. This is key in promoting reflexivity, providing critical distance and avoiding group think (which is especially prevalent for those who are working within institutional settings). *"The experience of having people asking questions about my work, was like holding up a mirror, it forced me to look at why I did things that I take for granted."* It's a productive paradox that working collectively in a network – if done correctly – can help us avoid group think.

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Thoughts on Networks: Gaining Analytical Leverage through Comparison

EPEX is an international network and this brings certain advantages (as well as some difficulties, for example language differences and logistical issues). The involvement of members from different countries removes any potential intra-national competition for limited resources that might occur in regional networks. Competition may inhibit the transfer of ideas and practice. Participants may be less likely to talk about mistakes while continuing to focus only on successes. Competition between NGOs can also mean that potential advances in practice / knowledge are not shared to maintain a competitive edge.

On a methodological level, international comparison brings the different institutional, political and sometimes cultural contexts within which practitioners operate sharply into focus. These are, for example, the different approaches to penal policy between Norway and France, the differences in levels of public trust in state institutions or the relationships between the tasks of policy-makers and practioners in the UK and the Netherlands – and how these differences affect practice. Relating practice to context highlights those factors that make practice (in)effective. We see value in the plurality of approaches that work across different settings. Only by identifying practice we believe to be successful and exploring it with other practitioners whose opinions we trust, can we be sure to hold on to what works and change what does not.

Relationships in a peer-to-peer network should be horizontal and reciprocated. Where they are not reciprocal, we need to explore what is blocking mutual learning. Even within a group of practitioners only, there is already a multiplicity of perspectives to bear on a challenge: Besides the country-specific contexts, EPEX also involved participants with a wide variety of disciplinary and personal backgrounds and positions. Even within regional or national networks there will be differences in approaches between members concerning work in different localities, with different client groups or coming from different disciplines. It is through comparison that we gain analytical leverage. Our advice is to exploit these differences where they exist: To try and understand why different things work in different places or across disciplines.

Some General Advice — What We Found Truly Enabling in our Work

For a more meaningful and deeper exchange we found that a long-termed exchange that includes many opportunities to get together (face-to-face) is crucial. That doesn't mean that there is no room to additionally em-

ploy other methods and elements of networking, such as digital contacts through various communication tools (e.g. WhatsApp-groups) or forms of occasional engagement. We found that a variation between big and small groups worked well. There should be a place and time for the entire network to get together and share learnings; but there should also be space for members to pursue topics and visits they are particularly interested in. What is important is that they are intimate.

EVALUATION — Having the opportunity of having a third person who is not part of the project management and focuses on a process-oriented evaluation was a huge resource to the project. Process-oriented evaluation closely monitored the project's development and learning outcomes. It gave practitioners a "third person" to talk to in evaluation interviews and enabled us to react to and manage important changes in the structure and set-up. It can help capture project outcomes in a more systematic way.

FUNDING PART 01 — Every network needs to balance structure and self-determination of members. Giving as much structure as needed to work well, while remaining flexible and open for topics and suggestions by all members will make the network evolve. In EPEX, our funding structure given by flexible foundations enabled us to truly leverage this point. Being able to engage in a process-oriented approach to exchange and letting topics evolve driven by members requires time – but it was one of the great resources of EPEX. Many funding structures do not allow for this degree of flexibility and openness.

FUNDING PART 02 — Similarly, because the funding streams were non-governmental, this allowed for a critical space for all participants irrespective of their countries' governments to engage without risking repercussions.

Where to from now?

An additional insight from EPEX practice is that strong networks can encourage other networks: Networks establish relationships that can in turn generate other networks geared to other outcomes or fields. Networks not only connect people but connect people with the other net-

6) Special Interest Group for Counter Extremism (UK).

7) in German: Wiener Plattform Extremismus-prävention – PEP.

works that they are part of. Resulting from participants' involvement in EPEX, several other networks have been developed. Some incorporated lessons learnt from EPEX. Others are designed around the specific interests of EPEX members. These include a Local Authority Network on Counter Extremism [6] in the United Kingdom and the Vienna Platform for the Prevention of Extremism. [7] Future plans involve an African-European cross-continental practice exchange network on CVE (see text box below).

We believe that the ability of networks to spawn other networks is often neglected even though this gains more and more relevance in an increasingly connected world. We therefore found that the meaning of sustainability for a network goes far beyond the question of whether it would cease to exist in the absence of funding. If we want to make networks sustainable, we need to ensure they stay relevant and closely connected to the topics and needs of the people linked to it. Therefore, we define sustainability as the ability of a network to evolve over time, to continue setting a joint agenda and developing new formats. Our progression from year one to year three enabled us to build on the relationships we had established, allowing for a deeper and more detailed exchange. We believe that this participatory element is a crucial part of sustainable networks.

The Cross-continental Network Concept — Ideas for Transferring the EPEX Methodology [8]

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EPEX BEYOND EUROPE?

EPEX practitioners identified the necessity to overcome a Eurocentric point of view to include peer-to-peer-learning of practitioners with local expertise and knowledge about radicalisation and violent extremism in all countries concerned. This brief digression introduces the idea of a cross-continental network, which bridges African diaspora communities in Europe with the respective African countries. It aims to take into account and critically examine the interactions between the African continent and the European continent for processes of radicalisation and development of (violent) extremism.

8) by David Otto

Talking about radicalisation, extremism, and terrorism, the spotlight within the last years has been very much on Daesh and the so-called "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq. Much less attention has been paid to extremist individuals' and groups' activities in African countries linked directly to developments in European states. Prominently, with the collapse of Daesh self-declared "caliphate", about 6000 experienced African foreign fighters left the territory in Raqqa, mostly through the 822 km porous border between Turkey and Syria with the option of joining other existing Daesh terror networks in Africa (e.g. Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), Daesh in Libya,

and Al-Shabaab in Somalia). Other individuals have travelled from European countries to join terror networks in Africa with varying degrees of successful engagement.

Both the European and the African practices could learn and benefit immensely from each other. Collaboratively, they can develop interventions based on international standard key learnings and knowledge exchange but adjusted to local dynamics and implemented by practitioners embedded in the respective communities. To achieve this, the idea and need of transferring the networking and exchange methodology to this different geographical scope came out of EPEX discussions.

KEY LEARNING ELEMENTS of the EPEX methodology have been discussed as especially useful to inform trainings and practice exchange taking place with and in African countries:

01 — Capacity building should especially aim at key influencers: The usual trainings in the frame of preventing and countering violent extremism organised within African countries (financed by foreign governments) aim at high level military / administration staff instead of including persons who are embedded in the respective communities. This produces a very slow and often an undesired outcome.

02 — The engagement with stakeholders "on the ground" has to be mutual and on eye-level instead of hierarchical top-down trainings: A horizontal exchange involving long-term personal interaction with follow up during the implementation process instead of one-time inputs brings about a sustainable sharing of practice which allows for contextualised best practices.

03 — There is a need for more practical insights instead of theoretical and media presentations: An activity-based peer-to-peer exchange with reciprocal visits (similar to Job-Shadowing Visits conducted within EPEX) makes the importance of context more graspable and helps to enter into discussions about practical details instead of agreeing on vague buzzwords. Capacity building cannot be reduced to video presentations but should be conducted by practitioners / professionals who can address the issue with the necessary sensitivity. Ideally, these professionals are also available to reply to questions that arise from implementing the learning in practice.

TO SUM UP

The EPEX framework of peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge, experience and practice can be applied beyond the scope of Europe to critically reflect the existing interconnection of what has been identified as a global threat to peace and stability. This does not only demonstrate the general value of our approach in contrast to the dominating practices. Any transnational perspective needs to be re-balanced with a local perspective from practitioners in African countries. This method of contextualising knowledge exchange avoids situations where valuable training from goodwill European partners fails to deliver desired outcome. It also helps analysing inequalities between the two continents and how a lack of social justice on a global scale favours processes of radicalisation.

Collective Writing Process [9]

9) by Ariane Wolf

As with many projects, in EPEX's final year, we wanted to produce a publication highlighting our results. Instead of making the publication a top-down / external exercise which listed the project's achievements isolated from the views of our members, we tried to do something genuinely different. The idea was to *collectively* write a publication.

It was as highly ambitious as it was challenging. On the one hand, it seemed like the most logical step: To amplify practitioners' voices, they needed to be reflected in all parts of the project. Making our learning tangible as a group through a collaborative writing process was in line with the project's ethos. On the other hand, we saw many obstacles:

How could we create spaces for writing together? How could we make this inclusive and enable collective author- and ownership? And how to make it coherent but still reflect the range of views and perspectives?

Collaborative writing is always a challenge even within a homogeneous group of e.g. academics who write professionally. Co-writing among practitioners brings specific challenges: Practitioners are busy engaging with clients and have very little formal time for sitting at a desk and writing. Being a very diverse group bringing together different backgrounds and working environments, there is also less of a shared skillset to start a collaborative process. The plurality of views, skills and voices was one of the biggest strengths of the project but at times also an obstacle. In the following, we outline some of these obstacles and how we attempted – not always satisfactorily – to resolve them. By doing so we hope to offer some guidance for others wanting to attempt a similar task.

It should be emphasised that the writing process can be testing and demanding. It requires high investment on the part of project management but returns high benefits if properly supported. We therefore strongly advise for two essential elements regarding set-up and project design:

— *Plan generous time for project management, external evaluation and editing*
— *Set very generous deadlines* [10]

These capacities can help in balancing out other areas of the process that are failing; it allows for giving extra support to groups and members as needed and makes it more likely to be able to shape all content inputs into workable drafts.

WHAT HELPS? — Structure and flexibility: The range of practitioners involved meant that there were differences in the (structural) ability to commit time to the writing process. To accommodate, we sought to create more flexible group structures. We included those able to contribute more time in the writing process as group leads and within the editorial group. Others with less time were able to participate as writing group members. [11]

ORGANISATIONAL CONSENSUS — While we would argue that securing consensus on the content of the publication was not essential or even desirable – in fact attempting to do so within a diverse group can be counter-

productive – it is essential to secure organisational consensus at the starting point and for it be sustained over the course of the project. This was particularly important on two levels:

— *Topic selection and writing group composition*
— *Guidelines and structure for each chapter*

First, the topics that later became chapters initially emerged from the Job-Shadowing Visits: The post-visit interviews were used to derive common or shared themes which were further refined by the whole group in our EPEX Plenary Meetings. [12] Based on this, writing groups were self-selected in one-on-one conversations based on topical interest, group composition and capacity.

Second, during our first editorial meeting, together with the writing group leads we set out a common structure for each chapter delineating key questions we wanted to answer. This was our method for creating commonality across very different groups and approaches.

SUSTAINING CONSENSUS AND CONSISTENCY — There were several challenges to sustaining consensus. One was the time span between meetings in the course of a long writing process. Keeping momentum between meetings and getting writers to start on tasks before too much time had passed was not always possible. Another challenge was to see different views and understandings on what was agreed on emerge in the process of writing. The most challenging differences in opinion are the ones that are invisible and unnoticed. They will shape the process in unintended ways, which make it hard to retrace steps and start over. We addressed these issues in several ways:

Setting clear timelines and tasks for each group: actions need to be taken as soon as possible after meetings, ideally overseen and under the responsibility of one person. This helps to prevent the inevitable drift once time has passed which can be incredibly time-consuming when it happens.

Arranging additional (writing group) meetings where necessary or having people available to troubleshoot when problems or breakdown in consensus occurs. For example, making time for balancing different points

10) E.g., a two months buffer was not enough in our case.

11) Writing Groups consisted of two co-leads, who were able to contribute more time and effort to writing. To try incorporating the plurality of our network, co-leads were selected to represent different angles with regard to kinds of engagement or institutional / structural / academic background. In order to facilitate swift communication and enable the necessary meetings, we further formed an Editorial Group. This group consisted of project management, our evaluator and writing group co-leads. This smaller group structure was to strike a balance between communicating with the whole group, while making writing and decision-making workable. Communication and information dissemination back to the writing group was envisioned to take place independently between co-leads and the writing group.

12) Annual meeting bringing together the whole EPEX network.

of views is a laborious process, but when achieved can be a source for cross-contextual learning and deeper understanding of others' working assumptions and understandings.

THIRD PARTIES — One of our main challenges was striking the balance between maximising the involvement of all relevant actors in feeding back on chapters and limiting the feedback to a workable and productive amount. A look from outside the writing groups has been essential to both making feedback meaningful and balancing opinions. Throughout the duration of the project the evaluator and in the later stages of the project, an external evaluator and editor fulfilled this role.

LESSONS LEARNED — We learnt key lessons in the how to run a collective writing project, some of which could not have been foreseen but only emerged in the process of 'doing' and it is in this spirit that they are offered. To incorporate everybody's voices (as much as possible), there needs to be a clear structure which allows people to engage in the writing process according to their wishes and capacity. At the same time there needs to be sufficient flexibility to ensure that not too much rests on the actions of any one individual which can cause bottlenecks if someone is unable to respond.

Who belongs and what they do within a writing group should be based on a pragmatic consideration such as time and affinity to write, as much as topical interest. Being clear about what is being asked of people is essential, but the form of collaboration may differ across groups. However, setting a structure for each chapter was the working basis for any writing and shared learning process. The stronger the base, the more likely you are to succeed. This does not mean having to agree on everything – quite the opposite.

One of our clearest learning outcomes was that bringing view points and content together within a group was only possible in face-to-face meetings (as with building relationships). These should be long enough to create a plan, start working on it (writing / interviews put on paper) and bringing this back to the bigger group. This is a good tool to ensure the work involves as many people as possible and reflects expectations.

External editing helps to ensure the coherence of the writing process. A trusted third party in every meeting would be a great resource to support the process and also helps to capture and implement lessons learned across the writing groups.

Conclusion

This chapter picked up many themes found in the other chapters at a methodological level. An argument is made for the practical importance of adding the knowledge that practitioners already possess rather than rely solely on theoretical knowledge. We believe that EPEX offers a valuable contribution to developing a model of work that helps to realise this: EPEX emphasises that the sharing of learning and the potential to develop practice from that process is enabled by long-term relationship building based on trust and intimacy. In this process, we argue that informal interaction can often build more sustainable structures of cooperation than restricted formal interactions. However, this is not an argument for merely prioritising practitioner's expertise at the expense of others. It rather makes the case for their perspective to be given equal weight among many other perspectives. In fact, the potential for effective knowledge transfer was heightened by the diversity and range of the participants' backgrounds and disciplines.

Equally, we believe that an alternative way of thinking about networks is to see them as ongoing and in constant transformation. A potential way to build on this is to move to more collaborative working among practitioners focused on shared issues and tasks. We also believe that the lessons we have learnt from the project are applicable in other fields beyond CVE work. In turn, using the same methodology in other fields where there is a similar division between practice and theoretical knowledge would help us to further refine our own methodology.

The full potential of peer-to-peer learning is only realised if we can communicate these insights back into policy and academia. The next step, therefore, would be to establish more productive feedback loops between policy-makers, academics and practitioners by acting on the insights gained during EPEX.

We are sure that the relationships and ideas we developed over the course of this project continue to exist and evolve. However, if we seek to further develop this shared learning we need to continue creating the space and time needed to do so. In order to generate more shared ideas and move even closer towards task-based cooperation in many areas, a coordinating structure and the ability to attribute funds to our shared goals remain essential.

Conclusion: What Difference Do Practitioners' Voices MAKE?

1) The author is working at The RecoRa Institute.

Yousiff Florey-Meah [1]

The European Practice EXchange started with the simple idea that CVE policy and practice would benefit from listening to the voices of practitioners – individuals who were working closely with individuals or groups characterised as "radicalised" or at risk of being influenced to engage in acts of terrorism. This simple idea is contentious because it suggests that their voices were not being heard as much as others or not equally included within the industrious number of events, forums and get-togethers that governments over the past few years have sponsored. Considerable budgets have been spent to bring "experts" together with more budgets set aside to facilitate the continuation of such forums. This investment has had at its core a valuable aim: define and delimit "radicalisation". What causes it? How can we counter it? Can we prevent it and how? Over the years, the investment made tried to single out "best practice" and the essential methods of policy drivers that enable such practice.

Those events have significantly shaped thinking and undoubtedly influenced policy and practice. There is a wealth of information on what constitutes "best practice" and a library of publications as well as definitions of problems and supposed solutions. There is then perhaps an obvious answer to the simple question we asked at the outset: Does it make a difference whether practitioners' voices are heard or not?

This publication, but more profoundly the process of EPEX itself, is an attempt to answer this question. Beyond that, it poses a challenge concerning not only the *why* of practitioner exchanges but also the *how*. Some of these aspects have been edited out in this publication giving weight to a variety of practitioners' experiences and perspectives on the issues they prioritised during EPEX. Others are merely still in development.

This conclusion explores the chapters as if they were answering the question of *why* and *how* practitioners' knowledge and points of view are essential for improving CVE activities. Individually, the chapters have not necessarily been composed with that purpose. Readers might find answers for themselves. Our own perspectives as EPEX members have been written down to communicate what we learned and enable readers to see the world through our eyes. Intended or unintended, the argumentations of each chapter suggest answers we would construct for ourselves according to our shared experiences. Yet, the space to develop a personal and unique question and answer exists precisely because (as explored in Chapter 01) we all have our own personal backpacks consisting of "*our*

own experiences, opinions and positions". They become the lens through which we not only define the question but also find the answer. As one EPEX member explains:

> "*We all look at the world from different vantage points and even when we think we are looking at the same thing, we capture different images. Our realities are affected by how we see things; how we see things are shaped, not only by our experiences, but also by how we construct stories that make sense of these.*"

Such plurality of vision implies that the way we define a question directly influences the answers we will discover. The slightest shift of the vantage point can lead to different assumptions that in turn can lead not only to different solutions but also fundamentally different policy options.

How does this insight apply to such global and complex phenomena as radicalisation processes? It does when we start to think of policy-making as defining a question and, in response, of practice as giving an answer to that question. Suddenly, the import of privileging one perspective over another becomes clearer and the consequences of giving less weight to the opinion of practitioners become more and more evident.

The essential reasons for practitioners' contributions to policy, public discourse, and practice alike in regard to radicalisation are what we discovered as shared items within our own "backpacks": Shared values in which our motivations and our approaches for engaging in this type of work are grounded, shared experiences that make us see the details of routine as fundamental elements of concern, and shared social principles that lead us to talk of institutions in the service of people rather than a hierarchy of roles and rules. These are the components we build on, making the *why* as empowering reasons for practitioner exchange visible.

Perhaps the most striking shared value has been captured within the phrase *promise over risk* that resonates in each of the chapters. The attitude of seeing and anticipating only risks leads to a policy of securitisation but is at the same time already informed by such. In other words, the question of security is asked without including those visions seeing promise and potential for positive change in humans and society. Answers consequently address supposed security threats but might fail to tackle the existing problems in people's lives leading to radicalisation and

the adoption of extremist ideologies. Within our chapters, we argue that by recognising the practitioners' experience and reinstating the principle of promise over risk, this self-sustaining circle of securitisation can be broken. Integration through exchange leads to effective solutions for everyone.

Another consequence of prioritising one perspective over another is that the debate over practice turns from a discussion about how different perspectives can help reshape policy into a field of competing ideas. Multiple forms of knowledge compete for "expertise" instead of enriching each other to gain a better understanding of our complex field of work. Our exchanges have shown that there is an important role for everyone to play. Being clear about your own role is fundamental for building relationships of trust in order to learn from each other. Clarity on your position also helps to overcome the freeze state of professionals when they feel uncertain in response to the risk-focused perspective of media and political discourse.

One further unintended consequence of not listening well enough to the voices of practitioners is a neglect of the obvious and small steps for improvement. Having a vantage point removed from actual practice, like a helicopter view, fails to capture the fine detail. In Chapter 02 a surprising outcome was that the necessity was not to apply unknown innovation but to re-gain the "*ability to see the obvious*". The chapter highlights that it is through seeing one's own everyday routine from a distance created by supervision that we begin to understand the "prison effect".

The final shared item in our backpacks is the significance of relationships. In Chapter 01 the focus lies on developing a self-conscious and self-critical relationship with ourselves. The method of self-reflection revealed a strong relevance that we all agreed on as it points out the significance of the personal and biographical background of a person in relation to one's ideas, definitions, roles and actions – always caring, in the first place, for the human potential to learn and change. This has profound implications on how policy is implemented. Chapter 02 underlines the importance of "*pro-social values and interactions*" and "*everyday role models*", while Chapter 03 articulates and values the role that key influencers have in connecting policy to practice. Finally, the last chapter on methodology and / in practice suggests that policy-makers need to invest in building relationships rather than formal meetings, through connecting groups of people with similar concerns and interests.

By exploring the impact, influence and added value, the *why* of practitioner exchange can be discovered within the chapters. This conclusion has attempted to perhaps influence another re-reading from this point of view – and make you discover your own answers. The difference that listening to practitioners' voices could make was the reason and the starting point for EPEX. But the real question was: Would we discover something different, something that could potentially create the opportunity for improving not just practice but also policy? Therefore, the most intriguing insight of our exchanges was not within the *why*-question despite the discoveries and learning we have made both individually and collectively; but the discovery of the *how*. This is examined in detail in Chapter 04, emphasising the significance of time to develop not just learning but also relationships that allow for a practitioner-led course (and sometimes change of course) according to the concrete needs of the people we work with.

The Importance of Informalising the FORMAL

Networks are built on the quality of relationships. The stronger the relationships between network members, the more benefits of networking arise. For sustainable networks to flourish, intimacy, time and flexibility are key. People need to share experiences in less formal settings – common meals, travel, etc. The following pictures give a small impression of our time spent together.

Cultural Visit
to Berlin Wall.
Job-Shad-
owing Visit to
Berlin 2016.

Break by the river
in Vienna.
1st Editorial Group
Meeting 2018.

Plenary
Meeting 2017
at Bosch
Foundation,
Berlin.

Visit to Şehit-
lik Mosque.
Job-Shad-
owing Visit to
Berlin 2016.

Informal time spent was some of the most valuable time for exchange. Plenary Meeting Dinner, Berlin 2017.

Luton Tigers at Plenary Meeting 2017.

Post-Its and Warm Ups: Putting each others' exercises for prisons and schools to the test. Plenary Meeting 2017, Berlin.
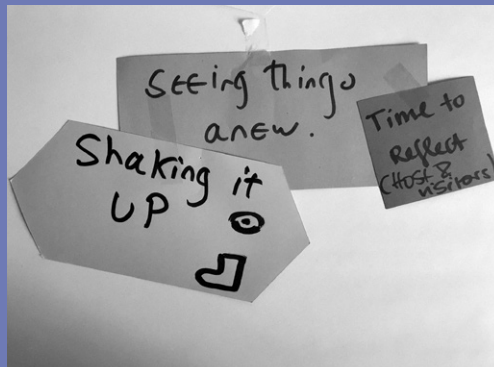
How has EPEX changed what you do? Notes from Plenary Meeting 2017, Berlin.

Experiencing the importance of places of retreat and supervision for prison staff. Job-Shadowing Visit to Enner Mark Prison, Denmark 2017.

Collective Development of our Chapters. Prison Writing Group, Berlin 2018.

1st Editorial Meeting, Vienna 2018.

Afterhours at Plenary Meeting 2017, Berlin.

EPEX in Pictures

Job-Shadowing Visit to Groningen, 2016.

Some fresh air for better ideas. Morning cycle at 2nd Editorial Meeting, Groningen 2018.

Writing Group Birmingham, 2018.

THIS IS GROUND-BREAKING.

Knowing that it can work and seeing it gives you confidence to do it.

MEMBER Organisations

MJD Netherlands

Netherlands (Niels Harbrink)

MJD is a broad welfare organisation that offers activities, information, activation, advice, help and (mental) healthcare for vulnerable citizens of Groningen. MJD also gives consultation in engaging difficult target groups. On the topics of radicalisation / polarisation, MJD offers information, advice and trainings for professionals and volunteers in the local and regional social domain on identifying and preventing polarisation and radicalisation.
www.mjd.nl

Extremism Information Center

Austria (Myassa Kraitt)

The extremism information center is conducting the nationwide help-line. Besides face-to-face counselling and the development of solution strategies and action plans, their multiprofessional and multilingual team also offers expertise as well as workshops and lectures regarding politically or religiously motivated extremism.
www.beratungsstelleextremismus.at

Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS)

Kosovo (Vesë Kelmendi)

In the frame of their research programme "Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism", the KCSS is primary working at community level. KCSS organises lectures for mothers and siblings of individuals considered to be "at risk" of radicalisation as well as young people to raise awareness within these groups and empower them. Moreover, KCSS is focused on involving relevant actors such as municipal representatives, representatives of civil society, the security sector, the Islamic Community and representatives of the media. KCSS aims to facilitate the cooperation between the local level, the national level and advocacy through policy research.
www.qkss.org

Norwegian Correctional Service

Norway (Gazi Mikail, Mentoring Scheme)

Norwegian Correctional Service Eastern Region

Norway (Sikke Folgerø, Senior Legal Advisor)

The Norwegian Correctional Services conduct a mentoring scheme for radicalised inmates. The mentors provide advice, guidance and practical support for prisoners and continue to accompany them after their release to help with their reintegration into society.
utveier.no/krus/

The RecoRa Institute

UK (Yousiff Florey-Meah)

The RecoRa Institute is a pan-European collaboration linking government organisations with research institutes and practitioners from the U.K., the Netherlands and Sweden. RecoRa is supporting local authorities to develop alternative narratives and to build effective prevention engagement with local activists and key influencers.

The Rescue Association for Tunisians Trapped Abroad (RATTA)

Tunisia (Mohamed Iqbel Ben Rejeb, founder and president / Mouna Jendoubi, General Secretary and PhD student)

RATTA is counselling families of foreign fighters and returnees and tries to support Tunisian citizens trapped in conflict areas abroad. The Association also conducts preventional workshops for youths in different regions and cities of Tunisia.
www.ratta-tn.org
www.facebook.com/RATTA.TN
twitter.com/RATTA_TN
youtu.be/oza8v5ghUIw

Revive
UK (Sahra Dhirie)

Revive is a Youth & Community Family Foundation that offers programmes to develop and empower youth through providing opportunities for meaningful involvement in preventing youth violence, radicalisation and violent extremism before it starts.

Stand Up Luton (SUL) and Luton Tigers
UK (Shaz Zaman / Simon Philbert)

SUL is a movement of anonymous activists, producing a newspaper with local alternative narratives, campaigning to expose the activities of extremists in town and physically disrupt extremist gatherings / events. Luton Tigers promotes the idea of an Lutonian identity superseding faith, ethnicity, gender, class etc. They provide sport sessions to engage young people and also deliver conflict resolution programmes in school as well as design programmes for unaccompanied minors.

TGS Intelligence Consultants Ltd / SISO
UK (David Otto)

TGS conducts radicalisation awareness programmes in Europe and Africa as well as deradicalisation and disengagement measures in and outside of correctional facilities in different African countries. TGS also promotes dialogue platforms for conflict management and resolution.
www.tgsintconsultant.com
globalrisk.international

University Paris Diderot
France (Annabelle Jaccard)

Annabelle and her fellow (postgraduate / PhD) students are conducting psychological counselling the prison context and are looking into how a psychoanalytical approach can help radicalised persons to express their anger in a non-violent way.

Violence Prevention Network
Germany (Ariane Wolf / Husamuddin Meyer /Julia Reinelt)

Violence Prevention Network is a group of experienced specialists who have successfully been engaged in anti-violence work and the prevention of extremism, as well as the deradicalisation of ideologically motivated offenders since 2001. Programmes take place both within and outside of the penitentiary system in many federal states.
www.violence-prevention-network.de
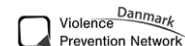
Violence Prevention Network Denmark
Denmark (Mette Schramm Pedersen)

VPN Denmark is working in Danish prisons with inmates whose crime and acts of violence are motivated by religion or ideological reasons.

VPN Denmark is working in Danish prisons with inmates whose crime and acts of violence are motivated by religion or ideological reasons. The programme works intensively through teaching, case work and models to analyse prejudices or enemy images and enable an understanding of where they originate.

WIJ GRONINGEN

WIJ Groningen, Activation Project for Somalis in Groningen (AGS)

Netherlands (Iris Engelsman)

AGS is a WIJ Groningen project that is executed in close collaboration with a number of partners, such as the municipality, the police, social work organisations, healthcare, housing corporations and most importantly: the Somali community itself. It works towards maintaining a solid relationship of trust, and deploying key figures as role models and bridge builders to improve the integration and position of the local Somali community.
wij.groningen.nl/

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