EX ANTE PAPER

Discussing the draft 'Polarisation Management Manual'

Introduction

Aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, islamophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerant ideologies are threatening Europe's fundamental values. Social cohesion and inclusion are undermined by processes of polarisation.

*That's why RAN organised several activities where practitioners shared experiences on how to prevent and manage polarisation. The insights and lessons are written down in the draft **Polarisation Management Manual** which we present in this document. At the Amsterdam meeting the RAN community of practitioners will reflect on it. This final manual will be shared with colleagues around Europe this summer.*

Introduction to polarisation, RAN and practitioners

Within the RAN community of practitioners there is a growing concern about polarisation between different groups in society. Austerity and economic reform have caused a great deal of uncertainty and anger all over Europe. This uncertainty is being exploited by actors using it to mobilise support on the basis of an 'us and them' narrative. This results in increased tension. The refugee and migrant crisis also provide fuel for polarisation, as did recent terrorist attacks and incidents. The recent attacks caused an uptake in numbers of hate crime incidents.

Polarisation has been the topic of several RAN meetings and papers. They all fit into a 2017 roadmap that will help develop and disseminate the RAN Polarisation Management Manual, as a tangible tool. The Manual took stock of:
- RAN PREVENT, 'How to prevent future violence in post-conflict areas', Zagreb (19-20 November 2012);
- RAN POL 'Successful and effective engaging with communities', Oslo (06-07 April 2016)[1];
- Thematic event on Refugees and polarisation (14 April 2016)[2];
- A series of four Member State workshops on the migrant and refugee crisis (11, 12, 13 May and 16 September 2016);
- Issue Paper on 'Tackling the challenges to prevention policies in an increasingly polarised society', (November 2016)[3];
- Study visit Northern Ireland (24-25 April 2017);
- 'Working on the polarisation manual', joint RAN EDU and POL meeting in Stockholm (10-11 May 2017);
- 'Strengthening community resilience' RAN Youth, Families and Communities (London 29-30 June 2017)

The practitioners at the RAN H&SC (Health and Social Care) meeting that will be held on 4-5 July 2017 will also provide content for the final Polarisation Management manual. This ex-ante document is the draft version of the manual. The feedback and input at the thematic meeting will be used to draft the final Polarisation Management Manual.

Polarisation

Polarisation can be seen as a thought construct based on assumptions of identities of 'us' and 'them'. They neglect what us and them might have in common and only focus on the perceived (and often exaggerated) differences in simplistic narratives about the others. Polarisation therefore shows itself

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-pol/docs/ran_pol_ex_post_paper_oslo_en.pdf
[2] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_ex_post_paper_the_refugee_and_migrant_crisis_en.pdf
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/tackling_challenges_prevention_policies_in_increasingly_polarised_society_112016_en.pdf

in negative thoughts and attitudes to other groups, possibly resulting in growing hostility and segregation. This could lead situations where intolerance slips into in hate speech and even hate crime. In such an environment some (parts) of groups or individuals can radicalise towards violent extremism and terrorism.

J.M. Berger recently issued a research paper for the ICCT under the title 'Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics'[4]. Berger defines a 'ladder of identity construction'
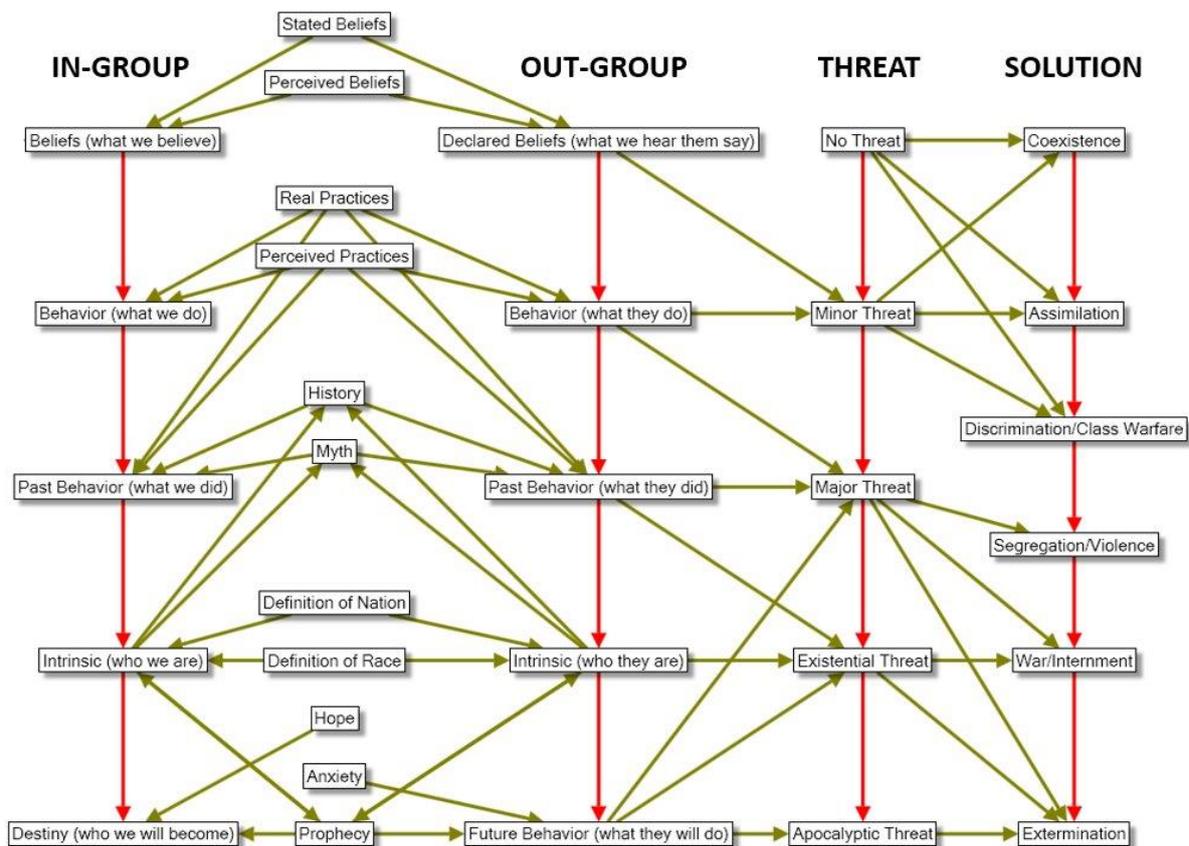

Figure 1 Identity groups evolving into extremism (Berger 2017)

Polarisation is the process that takes place at the top of this figure, at the first steps of the ladder of identity construction. Berger, looking at the processes that make identity group morph into extremists groups, comes with the following conclusions:

- Identity movements are oriented toward establishing the legitimacy of a collective group (organised on the basis of geography, religion, ethnicity or other prima facie commonalities)

- Movements become extreme when the in-group's demand for legitimacy escalates to the point it can only be satisfied at the expense of an out-group

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[4] https://icct.nl/publication/extremist-construction-of-identity-how-escalating-demands-for-legitimacy-shape-and-define-in-group-and-out-group-dynamics/

In polarisation these developments are intertwined ad even reciprocal. So the out-group will see itself as an in-group, where the same mechanisms are working. Trigger events can prompt an acceleration in polarisation, catalysed and facilitated by mass media channels and social media. Fake news, framing incidents and so-called information bubbles enforce the polarisation process.

Polarisation – radicalisation

The *Radicalisation* Awareness Network is not the *Polarisation* Awareness Network. Polarisation is not the key focus for practitioners preventing radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. However, the RAN community of practitioners is concerned. We seek to *prevent* radicalisation, and by preventing and decreasing polarisation, we are creating the conditions needed to prevent individuals from being lured towards intolerant 'us and them' ideologies.

Moreover, in a polarised situation in which hate speech is being used, as well as speech referring to violence, there is the risk of lone actors or small groups turning to violence. This has been seen in several recent cases: the individual who killed UK Member of Parliament Jo Cox; the shooting of Republican politicians in the USA; and the fire bomb attacks with 'terrorist intent' on a Dutch mosque and refugee facilities being attacked from the deepest south of Europe to the north. From the west to the east we see polarisation leading to hostility, exclusion and violence. A polarised Europe, in which strong, hateful 'us and them' feelings are rife, is the swamp in which extremist recruiters thrive, and where self-radicalisers turn to violence.

It is important to highlight the distinction and connection between polarisation and radicalisation. Within the context of RAN, radicalisation refers to the process through which an individual comes to adopt extremist political, social, or religious ideas and aspirations which then serve to reject diversity, tolerance and freedom of choice and legitimize breaking the rule of law and using violence towards property and people. This process may culminate in terrorist offences which *'are defined as acts committed with the aim of 'seriously intimidating a population', 'unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act', or 'seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation'.*[5]

Interesting and relevant is Berger's definition of radicalisation: *Radicalisation is the process of adoption of increasingly negative ideas about an out-group and increasing harsh action against the out-group that are justifiable.*

As explained in the RAN issue paper Tackling the challenges to prevention policies in an increasingly polarised society: *'Polarisation does not necessarily lead to radicalisation and radicalisation does not have to result in growing polarisation. The answer lays in the concepts of factors that make people vulnerable to extremist propaganda and recruitment. RAN wrote about a kaleidoscope of factors.*[6] *Being affected by a process of polarisation amplifies many of the psychological and social factors that make people vulnerable. A heavily divided community with hostilities between groups and a strong "us and them" thinking is the ideal breeding ground for recruiters and radicalisers for extremist ideologies, exploiting feelings of fear, distrust and rejection of "them".'*

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[5] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/571320/EPRS_ATA(2015)571320_EN.pdf
[6] RAN ISSUE PAPER The Root Causes of Violent Extremism, Magnus Ranstorp

Understanding and managing polarisation - by Bart Brandsma

At the joint EDU and POL meeting in Stockholm, participants discussed Bart Brandsma's Polarisation Management model[7]. For a short introduction watch the four-minute video on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R3gzMONDUI
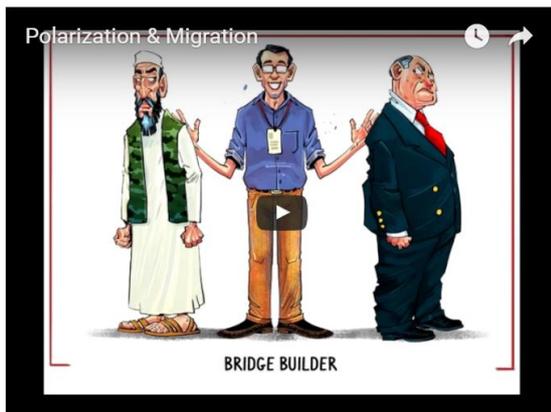
The polarisation model as described by Bart Brandsma was also presented at earlier meetings, such as the RAN POL meeting in Oslo on communities[8] and the Thematic Event on the Refugee crisis and challenges for prevention policies. The model is becoming popular in several countries and is being used by the Dutch police, and, for instance, at the Royal Athenaeum of Antwerp, Belgium, the school of which RAN EDU co-chair Karin Heremans is director.

To allow the RAN community of practitioners to read more about Brandsma's model, the RAN Centre of Excellence translated a large preview of his book to English. It can be downloaded at: https://www.polarisatie.nl/eng-home/. The short version is described at the following page.

Brandsma argues that polarisation is built upon *three rules* and *five roles*:

Three rules:
1. Polarisation is a *thought construct*, 'us-and-them' thinking, based on identities and groups;
2. Polarisation *needs fuel*; it thrives on talking about identities in combination with judgment. If there is no communication, no energy put into the polarisation, it will die out;
3. Polarisation is about *feelings and emotions*. Facts and figures won't do the job.

The five roles
1. The *Pushers* are trying to create polarisation, they are the instigators acting from the poles. They claim 100% truth and are more in the 'send mode' than the 'listen mode'. They don't want a real dialogue;
2. The *Joiners* have chosen sides and moved towards the pushers; this is polarisation taking place;
3. The *Silent in the middle ground*, the nuanced, are not choosing sides, not taking part in polarisation. They could be neutral, scared or indifferent. They are targeted by the pushers;
4. The *Bridge-builder* is trying to bring peace and moderation by reaching out to both opposing poles. But, by doing so, he or she underlines the existence of the two poles, adding fuel;
5. The *Scapegoats* are being blamed or attacked, these could be the non-polarised 'in the middle ground' or the bridge-builders.

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[7] Bart Brandsma https://www.polarisatie.nl/eng-home-1/
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-pol/docs/ran_pol_ex_post_paper_oslo_en.pdf

Four game changers:

1. Change *the target audience*. Pushers portray an enemy in the other pusher and target the middle ground. That's where polarisation is intended. So, target the middle ground for depolarisation;
2. Change *the topic*. Move away from the identity construct chosen by the pushers and start a conversation on the common concerns and interest of those in the middle ground;
3. Change *position*. Don't act above the parties, in between the poles, but move towards the middle ground;
4. Change *the tone*; this is not about right or wrong or facts. Use mediating speech and try to engage and connect with the diverse middle ground.

These roles, rules and game changers were overwhelmingly endorsed at the joint RAN POL -EDU meeting and seen as practical.

Polarisation – conflict

Brandsma stresses the importance of making a distinction between polarisation and conflict. Polarisation is an artificial construction of identities, whereas in conflict, there is a real incident. For conflict, there must have been an incident, perpetrators and victims. Something has been broken or stolen, or there are people wounded. There are people directly involved who are fighting over something. They are problem owners.
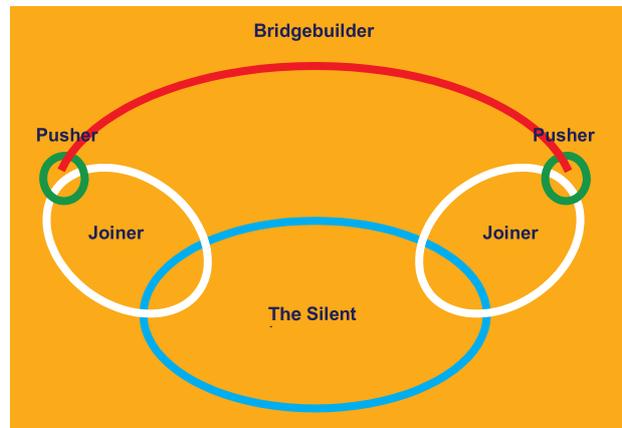
Polarisation is about people who are being targeted by narrow identity communication to choose sides. Pushers try to lure them into polarisation. The definition of the problem and problem ownership is not very clear. Are all Muslims part of a conflict if an attack takes place that was claimed by Daesh? Or are some actors trying to pull people into a 'black and white identity construct'? In case of a conflict, we can rely on a long tradition of mediation and peace building. The dynamics of polarisation are however different. Familiar elements from conflict mediation, like *mediating speech* and *mediating behaviour* are helpful, but polarisation also needs other approaches. That's where the above mentioned three rules, five roles and four game-changers come into play.

A RAN Polarisation Management Manual for first-line practitioners

Brandsma describes how some actors have a sanitising role to play. Teachers, police officers, principals, mayors, social workers, in their professional role and ethos, feel the need to prevent further polarisation. They have a leadership role to fulfil. But there is a risk that, in trying to do so, they add new fuel to polarisation. If their communication and interventions feed the dichotomy – the black and white 'us and them' construct, they may end up helping the pushers. They may be fuelling polarisation for instance by playing the role of the neutral bridge-builder and trying to override differences if they start a dialogue between the polarising pushers. By acting within the frame and the game of the pushers, they make even more visible the existence of the two constructed poles.

That's why RAN presents the manual as a tangible deliverable a focus on *doing* and *doing the right thing*.

The draft version contains 6 thematic chapters

- Communication
- Local government
- Police
- Education
- Communities, families and youth
- Prison and probation

However, there are some practical principals that might work for all.

Practical guidelines for all

Do no harm, understand the dynamics of polarisation
Whatever your profession, it is wise to invest in understanding the unique nature of polarisation to make sure that your actions and communications don't unintentionally serve polarisation and its pushers. This is why a training session on the on rules, roles and game-changers makes sense.

Don't be belatedly surprised. Be prepared!
Try to build up a sensitivity – or procedures – for how to respond to the first signs of potentially problematic polarisation. Through internal assessments, checking with partners or data, try to identify polarisation at a stage where it is still easy to manage.

Polarisation management needs multi-agency cooperation
Because polarisation is a societal process, many actors in society can influence it in a positive or negative way. Multi-agency cooperation is therefore needed for polarisation management. All relevant actors must be involved in coordinating information and actions – especially when polarisation reaches a concerning level.

Be aware of the vulnerability of practitioners whose background is relevant to the situation
Colleagues with a background which is part of the polarisation frame could be confronted with questions or even accusations about their position. This could make them vulnerable.

Communication and polarisation management

Why is communication relevant for polarisation?

Polarisation *is* all about communication. No communication, no polarisation. This means that all actors operating in the midst of polarising forces should be aware of how they are communicating or how they are portrayed in the mainstream media and social media.

In this chapter we focus on three aspects:

- Strategic communication in seven steps
- Campaigns to empower the middle ground and increase resilience
- Mass media, the press and media organisations

How to understand polarisation and how to use strategic communication

The seven practical steps below are an adapted version of the seven steps described in the RAN Manual on responses to returnees and their families. [9]

How to communicate strategically to manage polarisation
1. Clearly **define the local polarising issue** through research and understanding communities, media and wider stakeholder sentiment. Who are pushers and joiners on both sides? Who is in the middle ground? Who are the bridge builders? How is polarisation framed by the pushers? In addition, ensure the communication strategy is coordinated with other communication strategies. Polarisation will likely impact on other communications, and can also be influenced by them. What are the objectives of your strategy?
2. **Understand who you want to speak to** and how to speak to them clearly and in a way that makes sense to them. Who are the credible voices that resonate with the target audiences? What messages need to be conveyed, and how are these going to be received by the target audience? Use a mediative attitude and speech when possible.
3. Work creatively on campaigns and **work in partnership** with others, particularly between government (in the local multi-agency cooperation team), community and other NGO partners, and with the support of agencies (communications, design, media etc.), and where possible social media companies. Can potential creative partners be identified?
4. **Who are the community voices** and partners with whom to work? Can they share stories that will help change the topic, change the audience and "tone of voice"? Clear, concise campaigns are needed to put forward the facts, but wider campaigns will be needed that address the emotions that this issue is likely to raise. Try to use mediatorial language – language supporting mediation by showing empathy and building trust in the process. Language that does not feed the polarisation.
5. **How to engage with different audiences** will depend on who they are, but the mainstream media is not always the most effective or trusted. Community partners might be able to use social media to reach those most 'engaged' with the issue. Will this be organic reach or will it need to be supported by paid-for advertising through social media platforms? Will local community events help explain the issue? Initial research and analysis should have already answered these questions.

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[9] The Returnee Manual will be published this summer on the RAN website.

6. **Monitor the response** to any communication carefully. This is the primary feedback and can be used iteratively to inform work and adjust accordingly. This will also feed into an evaluation of the activity's overall success and provide insights into shortcomings.

7. **Report and discuss communications efforts** and success with other stakeholders. This work will help inform future preventative communications and policy development. Ensure results are made available and prompt further communications planning to build on the success.

How can campaigns boost the middle ground and build resilience?

Polarisation starts with pushers shouting at each other, but they are actually targeting the middle ground. Pushers try to convince people to join them. Keeping people in the middle ground is key.

How to build a campaign

- Identify your target audiences, who can be considered the middle ground.
- Apply the four game changers: change of position, change of topic, audience, and tone of voice. By doing so, try to reach out and engage.
- Be realistic and tailor the campaign by creating sub-campaigns to reach out to specific target audiences.
- During the campaign, be aware that the pushers and joiners are listening in. By using mediatorial speech you minimise the risk of pushers using your messages for polarisation.
- Engaging and connective narratives can be built upon empathy, inclusion.
- Berger's theory on group identity suggests that campaigns aiming to challenge the legitimisation of a polarising group identity might in turn lead to more that the polarising group investing more effort in justifying their existence and necessity– and a more polarised position.

Top-down or bottom-up?

- Someone should take the initiative. The local or national government has got the networks and often other resources to start a campaign.
- At the same time, can a campaign run by civil society organisations or non-governmental organisations be seen as more authentic, credible and acceptable? Governments can invite or even facilitate or support campaigns by non-governmental organisations.

Mass media and media organisations

Despite the echo chambers and information bubbles from which people get their information and conformation, mainstream media organisations still have an effect on public debate and opinion-building. Journalists and the news media are portrayed as presenting the news, based on facts, and being neutral. But "it's important for editors, reporters, sub-editors and photographers to realise that, when we get it wrong, people suffer directly"[10]. That's why in Ireland the Union of Journalists co-authored a guide for reporting on refugees, a topic surrounded by tension, concern and fears.

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[10] https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/reporting-on-refugees-nuj-ireland-and-unhcr/

How to cooperate with press and journalists

- Raise awareness and increase knowledge among journalists, editors and their organisations on the dynamics of polarisation.
- Invite organisations representing chief editors or journalist to think about their role in polarisation, in specific developments.
- Provide the media and the public, with factual information. Facts can help dispel myths and false information presented by pushers

Practices to learn from

Reporting on refugees, guidance by and for journalists

In Ireland, the National Union of Journalists NUJ, the UNHCR and the Irish Refugee Council wrote a guide, 'Reporting on refugees', in collaboration with the UNHCR and the Irish Refugee Council.

Local governments and polarisation management

Why is polarisation relevant for local governments?

It is in the streets, neighbourhoods, towns and cities where people with different identities and loyalties live side by side every day. The local or regional government influences the conditions for peaceful coexistence and resilience of the local community against polarising factors. Polarisation undermines the social fabric and eats away the resilience to bounce back from adversaries that test the social cohesion.

The local/regional government plays a key role in decreasing polarising factors by addressing these and by increasing social cohesion building. The mayor is, for example, very often seen as the ideal bridge builder. And he or she *can* be. The mayor (and his staff) can, however, also contribute to polarisation or become part of polarisation. Also, local/regional governments can operate as the linking pin between its citizens and the national government in polarising dossiers and pressing societal challenges

We focus on three challenges for local governments
1. Be prepared; see it coming and prepare actions for the day after an attack in your region or country
2. Community, identity and leadership
3. Difficult decisions, difficult groups, files triggering polarisation

Be prepared

The local government is excellent positioned and equipped to manage polarisation. It has many eyes and ears for signals of mood swings in communities, heated temperature and growing tensions and hostilities. People employed by the local or regional government, local politicians, and the many (civil society) partners and contacts they have, can recognize growing polarisation.

> ### How to raise awareness and build polarisation management capacity?
>
> - Raise awareness on the processes of polarisation and the fact polarisation can be influenced and addressed.
> - Train key persons within the local community who engage with pushers, joiners and the middle in understanding the dynamics of polarisation and conflict.
> - Build a polarisation network from organisations in the region. Meet up and for example run a table top exercise to assess the dynamics and each organisations role in managing polarisation together.
>
> ### How to set up a monitoring and polarisation management system? What to look for? What can be signs of polarisation?
>
> - The local police can be an excellent partner in setting up a monitoring system. The monitor can be built from data from police and the municipality, research on attitudes. In Rinkeby Sweden they use a traffic light indicating the tensions with green, yellow and red.
> - Build your own monitor for social cohesion and tension
>   - Local/regional governments, or their partners like community workers, social workers and housing associations can – if needed because of (expected) feelings of tension within the local community - carry out a survey that into feelings of safety, belonging, what they think are the biggest problems, what they are
>   - concerned about, the contacts with other groups and perceptions and feelings on other groups.

- - Housing associations and community police can supply data on registered complaints and incidents
  - Reports on discrimination and hate crimes. These could be the official complaints filed with the police, but sometimes an NGO or neutral partner has a lower threshold for marginalised groups to report discrimination or hate speech
  - Monitor social media and look for online manifestations where growing polarisation can be expected in social media. This is often done by police, but can be done by municipalities too. Online matters and municipalities should know what goes on, just like the 'off-line';
- Organise that the monitor is linked to national or international events that might impact local communities;
- The local/regional government can invite groups of citizens, parents and other self-organisations to design their own 'societal barometer', measuring developments in social cohesion and tensions. What do they think are signs of increasing or decreasing polarisation? This can create engagement and even ownership with individuals and groups in the middle ground

How to build a network of allies and key persons?

- The core is made from key persons in the organisation of the local/regional government. They maintain their own local networks
- Their trusted contacts form the circle around them in the network. Those can be the informal and formal leaders of the sub communities within the local community. These informal leaders can be for example a local shop owner, a mother who knows a lot of other mothers or a youth worker or more formal leaders like a spokesperson for a community.
- These informal leaders within the sub communities can be a source of information, but just as much a partner in doing the right things in managing polarisation

How to be prepared for polarisation the day after an attack? How to build resilience?

- Organise. Have your procedures, lines of command, crisis management communication ready for when this is needed;
- Engage. 'Repair the roof in summertime', be prepared. The people and organisations that you engage with, based on their sense of responsibility for peaceful coexistence, throughout the year and in the monitoring, can also the biggest support after an incident;
- Serve. Make sure you have a network within the local/regional community that can reach all those who might need support, information and guidance. So email lists for schools, youth workers, social workers, housing associations, faith groups and other groups and organisations. These channels can be used to serve them with practical information that is updated overnight and provides teachers and others practical tips on what to do and how to communicate.

Community, identity and leadership
Polarisation is a battle fought with false, malice stories about the identities of us and them. It is not about what people have in common, but about things that make 'them' different, and a problem or even threat. Division.

How to build a 'commons', the middle ground for the communities?

For local governments there are three options to create the conditions for a healthy middle ground, where individuals and formal and informal groups can live

- Policy. Inclusive policy making processes, diverse and inclusive policies and services, foster active citizenship and citizen participation
- Structure. Work with the whole of the community and sub communities. Do not only work with the existing, official organisations and their chair persons and spokes persons, who might operate from an identity perspective and interest
- Culture and identity. Build on civic pride and shared identity and citizenship. Do the people share a history, culture and identity? Shared identity or feelings of it are organic and not to be controlled or managed. But a local community and its government can start a programme or campaign to facilitate debate about shared identity. The nature of this kind of campaigns/programme should be inviting, inspiring and including.

The mayor and leadership

- Apply bridgebuilder management for the mayor. He is often pictured as neutral and above all parties, supposed to build bridges. Doing this on facts and being normative in communication will not help bolstering the middle ground. In his neutral position above the parties, addressing both the poles and trying , mayors run the risk of being critised by all parties. Focussing their actions on polarising pushers they run the risk of stepping into their polarisation frame and fuelling the polarisation. The neutral bridge builder often ends up becoming the scape goat in polarised situations.
- The mayor should be acceptable for all involved communities and groups. He could be seen as neutral, but could be more effective to be a mayor for all citizens. This is about applying a mediator style in behaviour and communication, from a position in the middle ground, among the citizens

Difficult decisions, difficult accepted groups, triggering polarisation

Polarisation is a vicious process in which people play the identity card to divide groups in society. Often there is some trigger, like decisions about building a shelter for migrants, policy about social housing being discussed or an incident like an attack. Pushers of polarisation will try to capitalise on these triggers. Whether it is a political decision to host asylum seekers or refugees, allowing a mosque to be built, or any decision on a sensitive topic, these decision can be used as the ignition or fuel to for polarisation. The way the policy making process is designed and executed, and communicated about, is key.

How to mitigate the polarisation risk with difficult dossiers and decisions?

- Be transparent on the decision making process and the strains and limitations. Is the municipality obliged to establish the disputed facility and is the how the only thing to be discussed?
- Make an assessment of the dynamics. Are the concerns, anger and fears locally based or are there forces from outside the local/regional community feeding the tensions?
- Be as inclusive as possible. Deal with angry and concerned citizens, even if they express it in an aggressive or very bolt way. If you ignore it, it will grow.

How to avoid feeding polarisation with dialogue?

Lessons for holding public meetings and dialogues on local/regional events and topics:

- Beware of big public events in big halls with open invitation and the important people behind a table. Pushers might show up using this big stage to address the middle ground. It's better to have lots of small tables, and receive people on a personal basis on entrance. And then engage with them in smaller settings.
- Be aware of the people attending the meetings/debates mostly being the ones who were already involved and will not change their opinion easily. Try to get people who where until now not involved in the debate/not heard in the debate but are equally affected by the issue/event that caused or can cause polarisation.
- Don't ignore the online pushers, haters and other big mouths. For example have the mayor, aa community police officer or social worker could address these persons by visiting them bring an unannounced home visit. Just ring the bell and ask if you can have a conversation. People will be surprised, understand they cannot shout anonymously and they might feel listened to.

Practices to learn from

The social unrest monitoring in Rinkeby – example from Sweden

The Rinkeby area was confronted with social unrest. To able to get grip on what was going on, the municipality and the police built a monitoring system that informs on a daily business about the state of social unrest. They use a traffic light metaphor: today is green, yellow or red.

Finland Community Seminars

In Finland, Community Seminars are organised at the local level. The seminars bring together different local actors from different public sectors (law enforcement, social services etc.), NGOs that specialise in working with vulnerable groups and have expertise in local prevention efforts, religious communities and community-based organisations, with grassroots access to citizens and their trust. The seminars function as a trust-building and co-creation platform for local preventive practices and initiatives. After a seminar, the local authorities receive support a local multi-agency team and action plan. The objective of this co-creation is to facilitate a transparent, inclusive and participatory process for all parties that also prevents stigmatisation and 'targeting', for example of Muslim communities. This is important also from the point of view of strategic communications ⬚ as polarisation around the topic of radicalisation, violent extremism and FTF returnees reflect a narrow and misleading image of the nature of violent extremism as phenomenon. For more information contact Finn Church Aid and the Peacemakers Network..

Police and polarisation management

Why is polarisation relevant for police?

The answer is: not only because polarisation could lead to public disorder or hate crimes, but also because pushers of polarising messages often point to a 'Them' group in combination with threats, injustice, perceived double standards and safety risks. This brings the state and the police into the picture. Policing for all, police that serve and protect all, upholding the rule of law – and being seen to do so – are key. One could say that 'delivering' on tackling crime, protecting communities in a neutral, professional way, is the 'hard contribution' to polarisation management. The 'soft contribution' comes from community policing, working on a local and often personal level to communicate inclusion, showing empathy, and building relations and networks. These are the first lines of defence against polarisation. At the same time, police should understand that their actions and communication can be a crucial catalyst for polarisation. Unintentionally, the police can, through their actions, feed polarisation between groups in society, or between groups and the police or other authorities.

Whereas the police are normally reactive, responding to incidents, polarisation management is about the pre-criminal phase and prevention. Polarisation can be described as a societal process that manifests itself in hate crimes and other incidents. So the police need to understand the symptoms, and join the dots to understand potential polarisation taking place. Like Plato's cave: it's not about the shadows on the wall, but the things that create the shadows.

For the police, there are three clusters of relevant actions in relation to polarisation:

- Preventing polarisation developing between groups in society;
- Knowing how to act when polarisation and conflict occur after a serious trigger incident ;
- Acting on polarisation within the police force.

What can police do to prevent the escalation of polarisation between groups in society?

How to be prepared, and not be belatedly surprised about polarisation
- See it coming. For instance, through local or national community tension monitoring. This can also be done through a network of local actors feeding a centralised point that makes assessments. What's on the people's minds? Pay attention to changes in attitudes and perceptions. Combine this with data, social media monitoring and assessments of developments locally, nationally and globally, that might impact the manifestation of polarisation locally.   - Take a holistic approach, encompassing the proactive gathering of community intelligence.   - Assess a situation in terms of conflict and polarisation. The two are intertwined, but the approach required for conflict is different to that needed for polarisation. Try to identify the pushers, joiners, individuals and groups in the middle ground.   - Work on early detection of tensions and tension fields. Monitor tensions within or between groups; monitor friction between different identity groups.

Community police should, in cooperation with municipalities and NGOs, detect and address bad vibes that are potential indicators of polarisation, such as hate crimes, or arguments between neighbours.

- Employ a multi-agency approach, with a clear command structure and process, to include partner agencies such as the local authority – be clear in terms of primacy (police for investigation, local authority for community cohesion) and convene regular meetings, informed by the latest community tension assessment, to agree and monitor actions.
- Organise a table top exercise on escalating polarisation with the key stakeholders in the area to raise awareness and make them aware of how well prepared they are.
- Engage in dialogues at different levels, such as neighbourhood, city, region, country (national Security Council). Invest in listening: What's on the people's minds?
- Have a media strategy – transparency of procedures and a 'neutral' police position are key. A fast response time is required – social media strategy is important – dispel myths and shut down the space in which fake news can gain any traction.

How to deal with the different actors and the dynamics of polarisation

- Police should work hard on being perceived as trustworthy and neutral so that they can guard the playing field, with a mandate awarded by agencies and the people. Besides being neutral, being engaging, helpful and protecting are key. Being seen to have an active policy on being open and responsive to hate crimes can help here.
- Police should build sustainable and long-term networks around specific tension fields and related issues. At the same time, build relations in specific groups and in specific boroughs/areas. Network from a multitude of perspectives.
- Search, detect and connect with specific stakeholders. Engage with the different roles in different ways:
  - Carefully manage potential bridge builders in the police network by re-focusing efforts so that they do not become scapegoats and counter-productive;
  - Keep in mind that public dialogues held with pushers can be excellent support for pushers when badly timed and in the wrong setting.
  - Establish a 'pusher management' strategy for pushers and active and visible joiners with bad intentions (increasing tensions, fuelling polarisation, promoting violence etc.). Search both groups, and isolate individuals if possible. Side-line/marginalise/neutralise them and don't add credence to their voices.
  - Engage with stakeholders from the middle ground. That means targeting the influential stakeholders in relation to specific issue(s) and/or concerns – citizens with plural loyalties who could contribute in a positive way. These are credible voices and you should try to establish alliances with them. Engage with informal leaders and individuals in communities. This can add crucial information in addition to official reactions by official spokespersons.
    Consideration re-focusing messaging towards the middle ground – what are the issues and concerns of the silent majority and how can we exploit this to change the subject or tone?
- An active and pro-active media strategy is required – social media is key here – it is important in dispelling myths and shutting down the space in which fake news can gain traction
- Focus media releases on the positive actions taken by the police in terms of an investigation, as well as community impact, rather than challenging the poles.

How to respond to public disorder or crime provoked by polarisation

Responses are similar to those used for restoring order, criminal investigation and crisis management. While conflict and crime may be involved, the approach taken will influence polarisation. It is essential to keep people safe, re-establish trust and uphold the rule of law.

What to do when polarisation boils over into a serious incident
• Manage the crisis and protect – the immediate response should restore order, offer reassurance and prevent further offences.   • Establish a clear command structure and process to include partner agencies such as the local authority – be clear in terms of primacy (police for investigation, municipality for community cohesion) and convene regular meetings, informed by the latest community tension summary and updated risk assessment, to agree and monitor actions. This should be dealt with before a crisis occurs.   • Evidence capture – crime scene investigation, identification of key witnesses, obtaining statements, identification of suspects, suspect management – the standard policing/investigative response must continue in order to maintain confidence in police and provide care to victim(s).   • Community tension monitoring – for risk assessment. Social media monitoring is key here to ensure an accurate picture of tensions so that the police do not simply engage with long-term community contacts who may have a vested interest in one side or the other. Take a holistic approach, including the proactive gathering of community intelligence.   • In times of crisis, the close monitoring of groups and individuals on the brink of radicalisation can be very informative.   • Identify the background to the event, including any specific trigger, to anticipate further triggers.   • Have a pro-active communication strategy. Include framework, tone and message, and be sharp on your own language and words in relation to incidents and problems (stereotyping, biases). Have your own story before the media creates it for you…   • In your approach and moreover your communication, beware of feeding polarisation, think about the four game changers.   • Communicate mediating messages praising good deeds by actors on both sides; show empathy. By doing this, you invest in the groups in the middle ground.   • Consider how best to use resources: is it best to exploit officers with heritage from the affected communities, or should this be avoided on the basis that it will fuel feelings that the police are partisan? Caution is needed here, and the response will need to be selected based on the circumstances of a particular case.

Polarisation within the police, among colleagues

Police officers wear a uniform. But beneath the uniform is a human being, with sometimes strong emotions, fuelled by what officers experience during their daily work. Unfortunately, police officers who express their personal intolerant or polarising views are not unknown. A uniformed police culture comes with lots of jokes, also about race and sexuality.

The first line of defence against polarisation, and in favour of police being an effective actor in managing polarisation in the local area, is a professional police organisation. Police must act – and be perceived as acting – neutral. They must serve and protect all.

What can a team leader do when confronted with polarisation within his or her team?

Bart Brandsma's polarisation management method[11] suggests team leaders follow a three-step approach when polarisation arises within a team:

1. Colleagues are invited to share their views. This is about exploring and not about discussion. There is no moral judgement. Participants should neither moralise nor judge, and should instead ask colleagues questions. Asking questions draws people strongly towards the middle, while expressing judgments pushes people out towards the poles.
2. A fundamental and generic discussion on the professional role for the police should make clear: "this is not about personal opinions, not about left or right. We are neutral and have to treat all citizens equally and offer security and protection to everyone". Ask colleagues which behaviour will be needed to achieve the professional norm.
3. After accepting the outcomes of step 2, colleagues are invited – in a final step – to transpose these shared and agreed norms and behaviours onto their own specific situation: what does it mean in their town or city? What is going on? How should different actors be approached?

How to build a professional and healthy police culture, resilient against polarisation

Although presented here in the Polarisation Management Manual, this is actually a 'must' for any police organisation wanting to act as a professional organisation protecting and serving all. Polarisation is one more reason to pay attention to:

- Leadership, which is crucial in setting professional standards, core values and integrity within the police organisation. Train the managers in polarisation.
- Dealing with stereotypes and prejudices in a training environment.
- Addressing the first signs of polarising behaviour. Have a private talk – avoiding giving public air time to pushers' positions and messages. Go on patrol with the officer and set the boundaries.
- Craftsmanship. Training on the job and dialogue within teams. How should moral dilemmas be addressed? What are the best ways to cope with frictions between an individual's identity and the tasks of a neutral police officer? This is far from easy; sometimes it is very complicated. These issues require dialogue.

Practices to learn from

National Community Tension Team NCCT – example from the UK

In the UK, the NCTT is a national police function which uses data provided by individual police forces on a weekly basis to monitor, assess and inform an appropriate response to changes in community tensions. Community tensions are assessed locally by looking at information from four sources: 1) force intelligence 2) community engagement 3) open source (news media, blogs, academic papers etc.) 4) social media (instant response)

The assessment leads to a national document which is sent to all police forces and relevant government departments. The reports offer a threefold EEP assessment:

- ***E**xperienced: how do communities feel?*
- ***E**videnced: what has happened or is happening*
- ***P**otential: what might happen or has the potential to happen?*

In each area, a Single Point of Contact is appointed to develop the local community tension summaries, to ensure this activity is prioritised and to encourage police and partners to feed relevant information into the process.

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[11] Implemented in pilots in the Dutch National Police

Education and polarisation management

Why is polarisation relevant for education?

Schools are being confronted with polarisation. While teachers are facing polarised situations in their classrooms, or seeing their students separated into groups in the playground, school principals are having to deal with polarisation in the staff room and the broader school community. But when is a situation at school too polarised? Is it a problem if students stand in separate groups in the playground? Isn't playing and even provoking with regard to identity and subculture even part of development towards adulthood? And don't we want to empower youngsters to use their voices – even if they share extreme ideas – to have open conversations about topics that interest them? Where should we draw the line? When does the school principal become too much a mayor or police officer, instead of 'just' a school leader?

This chapter describes polarisation at classroom, school and environmental levels, and offers guidelines on how to deal with polarisation at each level.

How to prevent polarisation at classroom level

Teachers need to be prepared to deal with polarisation at classroom level. They are the ones meeting their students every day and are the first to be challenged by polarising statements from students. Moreover, they are the first people with an opportunity to prevent a small incident from becoming a larger problem.

Teachers are however also challenged by polarisation that might go unnoticed by some, since it happens in silence. As described in the 'RAN EDU Guide on training programmes', teachers need certain fundamental skills to ensure they are both empowered and resilient. These include: being aware of your own vision, values, strengths and limits, having interactive skills and being able to discuss real-world problems in the classroom.

As described in Teaching controversial issues[12], teachers can take on different roles in the classroom such as a neutral chairperson, the devil's advocate or an ally. In light of growing polarisation, it is especially important for a teacher to pick the right role and create a good environment for dialogue so that all students feel safe and comfortable. Teachers should listen to all students and let them share their emotions.

> *How can teachers create the right environment to prevent or deal with polarisation?*
>
> - Create and build upon shared values within the classroom. Students do not need to all have the same values, but it helps if there are some shared values in common e.g. equality. These values also reflect the mini-society that the classroom is.
> - Set clear rules. If someone talks, the others should listen and vice versa. This requires facilitating skills from the teacher.
> - Show empathy as a teacher, instead of continuously trying to 'win' students for your arguments. Try to figure out why students say what they say, what is behind their statement.

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[12] Link to Teaching controversial issues:
https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806948b6

- Be sensitive to conflicts and be prepared to address them. Provide a safe space for this. A talks on sensitive issues takes time, so do not try to squeeze it into a short five-minute talk. It might be wise to organise regular debates in your classroom.
- Make someone in each class responsible for polarisation issues. This student should represent the class and talk with the teacher if problems arise so that they can come up with solutions together.
- Actively apply school rules and common values in your lessons, especially in difficult situations.
- Use the Bart Brandsma model to discuss polarisation in your classroom. A moderated version might be needed, especially for younger students. This model will give you and the students the language needed to discuss polarisation and also spot it when it takes place.
- As a teacher you should teach a subject, and this is the main focus of your lessons. But you should never forget the relationship you have with your students, and that sometimes a 'time-out' is needed.
- The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change has provided some interesting tips on dialogue: http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Essentials-of-Dialogue_0.pdf

How to recognise polarisation as a teacher

- If students do not listen to each other or do not want to sit next to each other physically, it might be good to have an open talk as polarisation may be at play.

How to prevent polarisation at school level

In addition to polarisation taking place in the classroom, it can also occur at school level, or even amongst school staff members or in the staff room. In order to prevent polarisation, it is important that investments are made in the middle ground, and that inclusion and not exclusion is promoted. School staff should also work closely together as a team, following the same rules and school ethos.

How to prevent polarisation at school level

- As a school principal, you should invest in the middle ground. Invest in the school culture and school ethos, for example by training the staff on these. School values should be clear to all school staff and students.
- As a school principal, you should be clear to all about the school rules.
- Be alert! Take a look at the staff room: do teachers always sit separately in certain groups? It might be a good idea to discuss this observation with them. You could also bring in a neutral observer.
- Use case studies to discuss different levels of polarisation with your team.
- Teach all students conflict resolution skills as well as democratic values.
- Make sure you work regularly on team-building, for example by introducing team-building activities. This will ensure strong connections within the team and help the setting of common goals.

How best to work with parents to prevent polarisation

- Make sure that parents understand the values and ethos of the school of which their child is part. As school principal, you can discuss them with parents when their child registers. You can also seek opportunities, like parents' evenings, to reinforce (awareness of) those values.

- Parents are an essential group in the middle ground. Schools can engage with them on the interest they share in ensuring the school provides a safe and inspiring community in which their children can learn: "How can we, school and parents, contribute to this together?"
- Parents who play a *pushers role*, should be managed by applying game changers. The first is: don't give them a platform to play their polarisation game. Engage with them in a closed, private and less public setting, not offering them a public polarisation platform.

How to prevent polarisation as schools while being part of a local community

Even though a school is a community in itself, it is not an island. Schools have a connection with their partners, environment and broader society. There is even a pedagogical benefit to extending school activities beyond the school gates – it ensures they are relevant to the real world, where the students' homes and neighbours are.

When dealing with problematic polarisation, schools might also need to cope and deal with their environment, especially if it is polarised and therefore affecting the school (climate). To be prepared, for polarisation both inside and outside the school gates, schools need to proactively build a relationship of trust with their partners. This should preferably take place during peace time, before polarisation has even taken place.

Be prepared for unexpected rough times. Schools might have to identify the 'right' partners and to motivate them to invest in the relationship. It may also be challenging to find the right tone in communication with parents, partners and, in a broader sense, with the community. Even though schools face these challenges and cannot change society on the one hand, they can on the other hand change how they deal with society and raise awareness of how to deal with polarisation.

How best to work in a multi-agency setting

- 'Repair the roof in summertime': be prepared!
- Build on existing contacts and multi-agency networks and reach out for instance to housing agencies, sports clubs, youth workers, the municipality and police. Present the school as a partner who is best positioned to engage with young people and their parents.
- Run a short scenario workshop with a fictitious but not unlikely scenario. Find out if people are able to reach out to other relevant actors in the area.
- Set up a multi-agency working group with a range of disciplines like local authorities, family groups and police. This will help people to see things from different perspectives. In addition to a common purpose, this group needs to develop common terminology. Using the right words and changing tone are especially important when cooling down is needed.
- Motivate different partners to join the working group.
- Search for and select the right persons and representatives, for example those practitioners who are already part of RAN.
- Focus on finding 'convincers' and 'connectors'.
- Create connections by having an informal discussion on shared topics of interest.
- Show that the working group is connected to reality and create a sense of urgency.
- Please note: not everyone needs to be involved, keep the group as small as possible.

How to use social media

- Use social media as a way of communicating with the outside world, and be sure to see the non-polarised middle ground as a target audience. A Twitter account could provide alternative narratives on events that affect the school. A Facebook account could be used as a platform to communicate the school's values, and to build an online community.

How to cooperate with other schools

- Set up twinning projects between schools in the same area; this could involve joint school projects and exchanges between pupils. These projects provide schools with an opportunity to contribute to social cohesion and mitigate the segregation that is manifest in many parts of the school. Such initiatives may also enhance students' appreciation of cultural and social diversity.

Practices to learn from

Dealing with polarisation at school and class level – example from Belgium

The Royal Atheneum of Antwerp has faced various peaks of polarisation, which had an impact on the atmosphere within the school. In order to deal with this, the focus was changed to the middle (ground). The school has, among other initiatives, created a basic set of common values, uses intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and focuses on active citizenship.
Following the failed coup attempt in Turkey, polarisation increased in a new form: those supporting Gülen versus those supporting Erdogan. The school therefore decided to invest in depolarisation training for all teachers, and introduced a new focus on history, including a special school day on the history of the Turkish empire. A group of 10 teachers / key figures attended a more in-depth training programme of two days, based on the Bart Brandsma model. At classroom level, the importance of understanding the model was emphasised to all teachers, as was the need to address polarisation without fear. There is no need for a lot of specific knowledge to address issues like this; simply applying the model and the right communication skills will help teachers.

Dealing with polarisation by teaching controversial issues – example of a practical guide

To prevent polarisation, teachers need to be able to handle controversial issues in the classroom. The guide on 'Teaching controversial issues' provides practical tools and knowledge for teachers. For example, it offers guidance for teachers on how to introduce controversial issues in the classroom, on teaching methods for controversial issues, and how to reflect on and evaluate discussions. The guide also shows how investing in basic, fundamental can create professional effectiveness and empowered teachers.

Dealing with polarisation by cooperating with the police – example from Sweden

The Rinkeby school is located in one of the poorest parts of Stockholm city, in a neighbourhood that is home to people of diverse cultural backgrounds. The area has suffered many challenges, and is known for social unrest . The school, the police and the municipality closely cooperate to address these challenges. They communicate daily on the level of tensions in the neighbourhood by using a traffic light system: is the situation green – yellow – red?

Communities, youth and polarisation management

Why is polarisation relevant for communities, youths and those working with them?

The 'Us and Them' of polarisation is actually increasing segregation, intolerance, hostility and ultimately even hate crime and extremism *between groups in society*, between sub-communities. The middle ground of people not inflicted by polarisation – perhaps to be fostered – is a collection of communities, which partly overlap. These are people with multi-faceted identities and loyalties.

Communities are potential target groups or even victims of polarisation, but are just as much potential agents of change who have the power of resistance and resilience. Communities, groups of young people and practitioners may have an opportunity to empower and support communities and youth.

We focus on four different groups, each with challenges or opportunities:
1. Mothers, fathers and other potential middle-ground 'pillars';
2. Communities, faith groups and self-organisations;
3. Youths and polarisation;
4. Professionals working with communities and youths.

The role of mothers, fathers and other potential middle-ground 'pillars'

Parents, be they mothers or fathers, care about the environment in which they live with their children. They might disagree on lots of topics, but they share the wish for a safe and peaceful environment for their children. The same applies to show owners, sports clubs and others who want a safe and peaceful environment. By changing the audience, positioning yourself in the middle-ground and addressing them on those interests the polarisation game is surpassed.

How to engage with mothers and fathers
• Address them as inhabitants and parents who live in the area and who want the best for their children.
• When polarisation on identity is pushed, these common interests, such as running their families, can be addressed (this is the 'change topic' game-changer).
• Support them in their own actions and try not to steer and direct their initiatives. Be sensitive and show a mediating attitude and behaviour.
• Keep it small and don't be afraid of working with ethnic or otherwise homogenic groups, as long as doing so contributes attempts to activate and engage with groups in the middle ground. Living peacefully next to each other is enough.

The role of communities, faith groups and self-organisations

Community voices and talents should be harnessed to build resilience to polarisation within and between communities by means of action groups, community organisations and community dialogue projects. It is therefore important to educate communities continuously and thereby strengthen their defences against the extremists' narratives. It is also essential to empower community leaders to speak out against violent extremists and their ideas.

How to build resilient organisations, fostering the middle ground
• Listening is very important in building engagement and trust within and between communities.
• Engage with the formal and more informal organisations and sub-communities
• Engage with organisations with empathy and a mediating attitude. Work from the positive things they care for.

Youth engagement

Youths are a challenge when it comes to polarisation on identity. Growing up means experimenting with identities, and developing sub-cultures and counter-cultures. Being provocative, testing boundaries and being obstinate is normal and even necessary for adolescents. Young people are often not provided with suitable programmes, for example in mosques, and get pulled by various forces. The emotional well-being of young people is also often neglected.

How to engage with youth
• One of the oldest tricks in the book for youth workers is creating opportunities where sub-cultures meet members of other sub-cultures.
• Recognise the importance of effective youth empowerment engagement: Youths should be challenged to develop their own voice, find out what they want and express their views, opinions and interests.
• People working with youths should understand their daily reality; it is key to knowing what is going on in young people's circles.
How to deal with polarisation and pushers in a group of youngsters
• The effectiveness of youth involvement approaches is built upon the quality of the human resources available. Whether these are professional youth workers, volunteers, peer coaches or other figures, they should be able to connect with young people, understand their grievances and needs, and be able to encourage change (however small) if it seems a young person is going down a destructive path. Authenticity and intrinsic motivation, training and coaching on the job are ways to ensure this.
• Start working with young people early.
• When dealing with youngsters in a polarising setting, apply the four game changers:
1. Position
2. Topic
3. Audience
4. Tone of voice

Professionals working with communities and youth

Social workers who are tasked with supporting and empowering groups of citizen in their community-building capacities can be very valuable.

In Europe, youth work can be done on a professional or voluntary basis. Professional standards are not well developed and on-the-job training can vary in quality.

For social workers interacting with citizens, the concepts of *democratic professionalism* as laid out by Albert Dzur[13] can be of help. He defines how social workers can be expected to: stand up for the weak and powerless, foster inclusion and promote pluralism (interests and opinions).. [14]

How to support communities and youths
• To be effective, practitioners need to be aware of the polarisation and dynamics that drive polarisation.   • They should be able to apply mediating speech and attitudes to engage with the groups in the middle ground.   • Practitioners should be trained to use the four game changers to manage any polarisation with which they are confronted.   • Practitioners should understand that their position, personal background and life experiences might create a bias that can affect their actions and attitude in polarising settings.   • Make sure youth and community workers are aware of the local policy and communication regarding citizenship, culture and especially polarising issues.   • Youth and social workers are not to be used as megaphone for disseminating the local policy. Their role is to empower their groups to express their interests and opinions in ways that create the conditions necessary to deal with any issues while remaining in the middle ground.

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[13] Democratic Professionalism: Citizen Participation and the Reconstruction of Professional Ethics, Identity, and Practice. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008.

Prison and probation and polarisation management

Why is polarisation relevant for prison and probation?

Imprisonment implies loosening or even cutting of regular contact with the social network people had before. In prison people will look for new contacts be it just temporary (to ease the time of the sentence) or more sustainable. This need for belonging does causes group dynamics, either for positive (friendships, mutual support, jointly participation in activities or negative bonding (illegal activities, status, scapegoating). The state of the prison society is rather determent in how group relate to each other. If prisoners feel safe and respected the competition between groups will be smaller and the need to bond as a survival mechanism is smaller.

The traditional group dynamics can coincide with the societal out-of-prison developments that can either spur or slow processes. The idea of being part of an outgroup in society can legitimize/confirm the existence of current structures or raise the need for new groups. Confrontations might follow. E.g. in some prisons there were pretty heavy debate among prisoners after the recent attacks in Europe and abroad. Groups also can use societal tension or sense of being excluded as an explanation for their criminal acts.

Staff is key when it comes to let the prison society work and guarantee a safe environment. This aspect is larger than just monitoring behaviour and patterns among prisoners (group). As prison staff is also deciding what should happen in their facility they will be regarded as group to oppose to as well. This feeling will increase if it is the perception of a group that their members are being treated worse than others. If is also good not to consider staff as a homogeneous group. Strong conflictive political opinions could play a role when it comes to mutual trust, a prerequisite for fulfilling the tasks of prison staff.

When polarisation has significance in society, this can be harmful for people re-socialising after their release. The (perceptive) level of tolerance and permissive behaviour towards former prisoners will be lower especially if someone has a clear radicalised/extremist profile or is feeling that he is part of an group that is not accepted by others. Key question here is: Do I really get a chance to start a new life. This is a concern both for prison and probation work.

Discussing polarisation and prison and probation, there are three clusters of relevant actions:

- Prevent developing polarisation between groups in prison society
- Staff awareness on polarization.
- Work on the level of non-acceptance by society to include vulnerable groups released from prison.

How to prevent polarisation between groups in prison environment

The prison environment includes the physical environment and values, relationships, procedures and policies that constitute the day-to-day functioning of a prison. These factors shape the prison experience and can provide opportunities to reduce both the risk of radicalization and polarized thoughts during imprisonment and the risk of reoffending after release into society. Overcrowding, a lack of staff or poor relationships between staff and prisoners, and poor

facilitates — including poor access to meaningful activities such as education and work — can have a negative impact on prisoners[15].

What can prison governors do to prevent polarisation?

- Remain working on a healthy prison environment.
- Be aware of consequences of the societal developments as polarization within the prison society.

What can prison staff do?

- Be aware of biased views by groups on the extent to which they are treated equally than other groups in prison. In an atmosphere like this even small incidents can be perceived as a proof for the inequality.
- Nevertheless keep on working strictly to the rules to everyone to show that no difference in treatment is made.
- Report when pressure is felt due to rising tension between prisoner groups or between prisoner groups and staff.
- Be aware or provocative behaviour towards other prisoners and/or staff can be used to mark the position of the own group. E.g. the case in which prisoners stopped accepting just to pray in designated areas and chose a public place to pray.
- Look for triggers for no longer following the rules, who initiated this?
- Talk with the groups, listen to their part of the story and be clear on what will be accepted and what won't.
- Keep an eye on prisoners not involved in rising tensions or open conflict. Does this silent majority still feel save? Do they feel neglected? Is it still possible to function in the prison society without choosing a side.

How to raise awareness with staff on polarization

The less homogenous the society is, the more complicated it will be for prison staff to understand the different cultural patterns in behaviour. And this makes it more difficult if someone is going of beaten track, is getting firmer in his stands either based on his original identity or new convictions. Trainings on signalling and dealing with religiously inspired radicalisation show that most participants have a very superficial knowledge of Islam although Muslims are present in society and prisons for decades. So before being enabling staff to see processes of radicalisation some education on the basics are necessary. The same will apply for all other religions or ideology that are 'hijacked' by extremist groups.

In quite some member states the cultural and the religious background of the prison staff and the prisoners do not mirror. This can cause an 'us' and 'them' atmosphere especially in times that there is societal tensions. This raises also an inequality: prisoners to a certain extent can speak up freely (e.g. talking supportive about an attack) where prison staff is supposed to act professionally.

What can prison governors do

- Provide sufficient training facilities for prison staff both on general needed skills like conflict behaviour as on polarization
- Have clear rules on how to report polarised behaviour among staff

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[15] RAN P&P Practitioners' working paper Approaches to violent extremist offenders and countering radicalisation in prisons and probation 2016. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-p-and-p/docs/ran_pp_approaches_to_violent_extremist_en.pdf

- Create an atmosphere in which prison staff can discuss non-appropriate behaviour towards each other or the prisoners

What can prison staff do?
- Be aware of your own opinions and how they can be influenced by strong opinions. Note that sometimes your thoughts might not be in line with your role of professional
- Keep remarks within the boundaries of what the rest of the prisoners society expects from you due to your function.
- Note that in times of low bonding/acceptance remarks that are meant funny can be considered as offensive.
- Learn to distinguish between normal, polarised and extremist behaviour.
- Talk with each other if signs of polarisation are visible within the prison staff.
- Report inappropriate behaviour of colleagues that might pose a safety hazard immediately.

How to work on the level of non-acceptance by society to include vulnerable groups released from prison?

In society there are negative feelings about resocialization of people with an extremist past. Partly there is a legitimate fear as relapse/reoffending is an option or people may suffer from posttraumatic disorders. However there are also polarized prejudice not believing that people can change. Finally people may feel not at ease to have a former terrorist as neighbour or employee.

What can the prison system do
- Start working on re-socialisation perspective in an early change. If possible involve probation.
- Involve families and positive friends in re-socialisation process

What can probation do?
- Follow vulnerable clients under probation well.
- Have good contacts with relevant partners to guarantee safety for society and the person involved.
- Safeguard client under probation and his environment in cooperation with municipality, social service, NGO's and so on.

What can others/society do?

Examples to learn from

To work at the legitimate fear and to mitigate the feeling of not at ease in some countries the prison and probation system (are about to) work with methods developed for sexual offenders. Despite the difference in the criminal act and the perpetrators the tools of monitoring and multi-agency work are helpful to safeguard the individual and society. In the UK, MAPPA was implemented this way. In the Netherlands and in Lower Saxony people are working on adapting there methods.