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Community-based counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies and the ZDK’s 'Community Coaching'²

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Abstract

Across Europe, authorities on various levels are increasingly pressured to develop strategies to counter terrorism and extremism. Particularly the local level is considered crucial and local communities are frequently formulated as the central site on which to reject the ideology and manifestations of extremism and terrorism. Recently, in order to counter violent Islamic extremism, the promotion of community cohesion and resilience are in the focus of many local counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies as marginalization and isolation are often considered to foster the breeding ground for radicalization. Hence, citizens themselves become a substantial part of preventive security and constitute both, suspects as well as protagonists, in efforts against terrorism and extremism. Based on current scientific discourses, this paper will explore the role of local communities in current European counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies. At the local level in Berlin, the ZDK’s ‘Community Coaching’ approach serves as a good example of a community-based practice that includes notions of prevention, community cohesion and resilience. The aim of the paper is to describe the theoretical underpinnings as well as practical utilization of ‘Community Coaching’, a methodology that has been developed to counter radicalization and extremism, particularly at a local level. The ‘Community Coaching’ approach attempts to

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raise awareness of anti-democratic ‘threats’ within a particular community and to establish local networks, comprising various practitioners and institutions, in order to promote and strengthen democratic structures. Though having been developed in the realm of right-wing extremism, this paper will use the Berlin district of Neukölln to exemplify how ‘Community Coaching’ has been launched to also target Islamic extremism. To research preventive, community-based approaches to Islamic extremism in Germany seems to be a highly interesting, yet, under-studied research field. This is particularly striking as these newly developed concepts and developments that focus on local communities in countering Islamic extremism and terrorism cannot be considered ‘new’ in the German realm where in the last decades similar notions and theoretical lines in countering right-wing extremism have been applied.

The role of local communities in European counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies

Following 9/11, the bombings in Madrid and London, and the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, the dominant European perception of terrorism is that it is inspired and committed by violent Islamic extremists. Subsequently, Islamic terrorism and extremism have become highly polarized public concerns and the main focus of security agencies and public policies. Authorities are increasingly under pressure to develop strategies and instruments in order to counter Islamic extremism in its violent and non-violent forms. This happened on an international, national as well as local level, comprising a variety of actors and strategies. Yet, authorities on all levels not only find themselves confronted with the need to tackle actual violence, which often remains task of the police or security agencies, but they also need to address root causes of as well as counter mechanisms towards these phenomena.

Research identified radicalization as an idiosyncratic phenomenon. There are no general rules or courses that can be observed for all individual extremists and terrorists (Bjorgo, Horgan: 2009; Dalgaard- Nielsen: 2010; Demant et al.: 2008; McCauley, Moskalenko: 2008; Slootman, Tillie: 2006; Veldhuis, Bakker: 2007). In short, a general terrorist profile doesn’t exist and, thus, also no ‘one-size fits it all’ solution to terrorism and extremism. To define
which conditions, factors and mechanisms influence groups and individuals to turn to extreme ideologies or even violence is a very difficult task and a highly contested research field. Many factors on a personal, interpersonal and collective level and with a local, national and international dimension seem to play a role. How the different mechanisms and factors interplay or condition themselves is yet unclear. Assumptions on the causes and explanations of political extremism and terrorism do not entail that someone with certain characteristics will actually radicalize. Particular conditions, nevertheless, might constitute an important factor in certain cases and often also form a crucial element in the set up of counter-measurements. “For example, those which think the ghettoization of vulnerable communities is critical might prioritize segregation and integration indicators, whereas those which consider ideology as most important might focus on indicators linked to imam training, mosque reform and religious education” (Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2010: 2).

Next to focusing on law enforcement and repressive policies, further common denominators in current counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies across Europe have been the emphasis on the vital role of local communities as well as the focus on notions of prevention, community cohesion and resilience (Thomas 2010, 2012; Spalek, Lambert 2008, Briggs et al. 2006). Also Spalek et al. note: “At the heart of many counter-terrorism analyses and related policies lies a theory which explicitly identifies terrorist recruitment and support as happening within and between members of the public, or more accurately, in specific communities” (Spalek et al. 2012: 6). Moreover, due to the involvement of European Muslims in violent attacks, European countries have been confronted with the alleged failure to integrate their minority population. For many authorities, “the rationale was that communities produce detached violent homegrown individuals because the communities themselves are detached” (Vermeulen: forthcoming). Hence, the inclusion of Muslims became a top priority in order to counter the perceived ‘threat from within’ (Haverig: 2012).

The local level is further considered essential as it constitutes the level where the contact between diverse individuals and groups is being shaped on a daily basis and where integration, democracy and notions of community become apparent. Also many scholars such as Thomas (2010), Lambert (2010), Githens-Mazer & Lambert (2010), Jarvis & Lister
(2010) or Vermeulen, Bovenkerk (2012) emphasize the significance of the particular local context in order to understand local problems, developments as well as requirements. Moreover, the community level is, in most cases, the implementing level for various interventions. National authorities increasingly stress the importance of local responsibility as good knowledge of local circumstances enables them to develop targeted interventions rather than following national policy guidelines, which may be irrelevant to specific local needs. Additionally, communities are believed to actively contribute to the prevention of extremism and terrorism by e.g. tackling underlying economic, social and political drivers of radicalization, challenging narratives and messages, spotting signs of vulnerability, providing information and intelligence etc. (Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2010: 4). In short, communities in current policies and scientific research are depicted as important resource for tackling terrorism, radicalization and extremism.

Thereby, the promotion of community cohesion, improvement of internal and external community relations as well as increasing resilience and empowerment of local actors are measurements most authorities across Europe currently focus on due to the fact that marginalization and isolation are considered to foster the breeding ground for radicalization and potential violence. Hence, many counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies are based on community cohesion and resilience in which the concept of stakeholder security becomes apparent as well. The notion of stakeholder security refers to governmental efforts to involve ordinary citizens into the state’s security apparatus. Citizens thereby become ‘self-policing agents of preventive security’ (de Goede 2008: 164) and are considered both suspects and protagonists, so the subject and object in efforts against terrorism and extremism (Jarvis, Lister 2010; Spalek, Lambert 2008).

However, these counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies have been highly controversial since their introduction across European countries and also led to the development towards Critical Terrorism Studies, which focuses on the critical exploration of policies and discourses around counter-radicalization and the prevention of terrorism and extremism. For instance, what or who is identified as ‘local communities’ can also differ...
significantly. Regularly, community is being defined in terms of ethnic or religious groups and
neighbourhoods, which might lead to controversial policy outcomes. Also Spalek et al. note
that “in the case of the post 9/11 War on Terror, in which Al Qaeda related violence is
viewed as most threatening to national and international security, the ‘community’ of focus
is most often the ‘Muslim community’” (Spalek et al. 2012: 6). Along the ‘War on Terror’,
Islamic terrorism was declared an unparalleled global threat, which led to Muslim minority
population being increasingly targeted as ‘suspect’ (e.g. Thomas 2010; Vermeulen
Hillyard, a suspect community is being constructed when a policy framework, in law, policy
and police practice treats an entire community differently from the rest of the population
(Hillyard: 1993). “Viewing a whole community as inherently suspicious can often have
detrimental effects, resulting in increasingly intrusive, heavy-handed policy and policing
techniques that stigmatize the entire community” (Vermeulen: forthcoming). For instance in
the UK, official policy documents stress ‘community consultation’ or ‘communities defeat
terror’ or ‘partnership led’ (Spalek et al. 2012), which underlines the notion that
communities are considered to be the protagonist and at the front line in countering
terrorism and extremism. As a result, there has been a considerable increase in ethnic and
religious profiling as well as law enforcement that is predominantly targeting British Muslims
(Spalek et al.: 2012). The UK’s strategy ‘Prevent’ (part of the national policy framework
CONTEST, which was developed in 2003) is focusing, amongst others, on engagement and
has often been criticized as a surveillance tool. “The interest in communities is therefore
problematic on a conceptual level; the use of a term such as ‘Muslim community’ within a
policy document is unable to reflect the nuances of people’s lived realities, especially
problematic when the community in question is identified as a location of potential or actual
terrorist activity” (Spalek et al. 2012: 6). To immoderately focus on Muslim individuals,
organizations or communities might not only erode trust in the state but can also increase
the perceived stigmatization and marginalization by European Muslims.
Public and academic voices also increasingly criticize the one-directional approach that community-based counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies have adopted. Violent offences committed by far-right activists just very recently received the status as terrorist acts (Kundani: 2012). The last decade however saw that policy documents were often solely targeting violent and non-violent Islamic extremism while neglecting activities and manifestations from the right-wing scene. Also many scholars like Kundani feel that right-wing extremism and terrorism have not been appropriately incorporated in national policy guidelines as well as local community-based counter-measurements. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for instance, already existing counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization programs have just recently been extended to also focus on all violent extremist ideologies within local communities and not solely targeting Islamic extremism (Kundani: 2012). After having realized the risk of creating ‘suspect communities’ and due to the shocking attacks by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway and the NSU terror cell in Germany these policies have been expanded to also target right-wing extremism. In contrast to that, in Germany we have rather seen a different development. Next to law enforcement and security measures (for a detailed overview, see Jesse and Mannewitz 2012), existing national programmes to combat right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism were expanded in 2010 through the ‘Initiative Demokratie Stärken’ (Strengthening Democracy Initiative). The programme, which targets left-wing and Islamic extremism, should not be understood as a comprehensive, well-defined policy like the UK’s Prevent strategy. Nor is it a policy document outlining the problems, causes or mechanisms underlying these phenomena. Rather, it is an umbrella initiative that funds diverse projects undertaken by a variety of actors working against extremism. Its priority is to finance educational and intercultural approaches mainly aimed at strengthening young people against radical influences. Yet, also Jesse and Mannewitz state: ‘the current state of research in Germany concerning the impact and evaluation of counter-terrorism strategies in general and particular counter-terrorism measures is disheartening’ (Jesse and Mannewitz 2012: 49). Likewise, there is still a huge research gap when it comes to researching in how far
authorities choose similar approaches, methodologies, interventions or concept of vulnerability when addressing different forms of extremism.

**Countering right-wing extremism in and with German communities**

However, the focus on civil society as well as particular communities in countering extremism and terrorism has a substantial tradition within the German realm, due to the unique case of Germany as a militant democracy. The concept of militant democracy is mainly based on the sociological-philosophical assumptions by Karl Loewenstein and functions as a preventive protection of democracy and bulwark against extremism. Due to spatial limitations the concept of militant democracy and the particular German version known as ‘streitbare Demokratie’ can’t be explained in further detail here. However, the peculiarity of the German ‘streitbare Demokratie’ is that it not only targets penal law, but also comprises many constitutional, institutional and societal dimensions. Yet, as Loewenstein already noted in his famous article ‘Militant Democracy and Fundamental Rights’ in 1937, the protection of democracy cannot be based on legal aspects alone; a democracy needs active democrats as well (Loewenstein: 1937). In the German tradition this societal dimension is in fact considered the most essential factor in countering terrorism and extremism. The suspect and protagonist of countering extremism and terrorism is being outlined as the regular citizen. This is described in the German realm as ‘Böckenförde Theorem’: the state alone cannot protect the liberal democracy but needs constant discourses as well as societal militancy. “When it comes to the protection and defence of the highest principles of the constitution, not state institutions but rather the attentive civil society is the main addressee of the „streitbare Demokratie“” (Scherb 2008: 20, translation by the author). Hence, the concept of the „streitbare Demokratie“ is expecting an active defence of democratic structures by every citizen. In that sense, there has been a long tradition in Germany around the relation between democracy, extremism and the role of citizens and society in general in preventing terrorism and extremism.
Also entire municipalities are traditionally being engaged in efforts against extremism, which underlines the significance of the societal level. To this day, the community level plays a central role for the German right-wing extremist scene. In both German states, authorities were confident in having developed sufficient measurements in order to counter fascism and extremism that haunted the country for way too many years. However, right-wing extremism as a social movement and its solidification as a complex syndrome with racial, xenophobic and increasing anti-Semitic sentiment and violence has been largely underestimated (Wagner 2003: 4).

Particularly right after German Reunification, many municipalities struggled with a prosperous right-wing scene that severely changed the respective local climate. Right-wing extremism comes to the fore in various forms on a daily basis e.g. as violent acts, foundation of parties or organizations, in youth culture or protest movement- just to name a few examples. Often the German right-wing scene consists of lose groups that are not centrally organized but get into contact with each other through their common engagement in a particular region or community (Borstel 2001: 42). A central goal of right-wing extremists is to establish a hegemonic position within a community by mainly taking real problems and deficits as a gateway. These groups are making use of a double strategy that includes elements of social service activities (e.g. planting trees, running errands for elderly) as well as intimidation and violence. This can be considered a grassroots tactic that aims at an anchoring in local communities to ultimately establish themselves at the next higher political level (Strobl, Lobermeier 2009: 17).

Moreover, to this day, right-wing structures and manifestations dominate the reality in some communities. In small municipalities it has been quite simple to gain a hegemonic position, since there have been only small-scale social networks that could be easily dominated through personnel or via certain institutions e.g. the local sports club or bar (Borstel 2003: 30/31). Particularly in rural areas, far right activists sometimes constitute a proper socialization instance and determine everyday life in these communities (Borstel 2001: 44). Thereby, real existing problems and deficits are being exploited consciously as well as unconsciously by far-right activists. Among these deficits are for instance weak social
institutions (e.g. local authorities, local youth facilities etc.), a lack of involvement of the local population in democratic discourses and processes as well as the normality of xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic attitudes (Strobl, Lobermeier 2009: 19).

In fact, democratic principles are sometimes no longer in effect at the local level. Especially the victims of right-wing extremists developed a mental map of areas and streets that they are attempting to avoid. The number of violent attacks might considerably decrease in these areas and are no longer of public interest. However, this is not due to the fact that there are no potential violent perpetrators any longer but that the victims try to avoid these localities or move away altogether (Borstel 2001: 44). Often, local authorities are overwhelmed with these developments within their communities and are not getting active in this regard as they are worried about their town’s image as well as potential stigmatizing media coverage (Strobl, Lobermeier 2009: 16). To return to democratic principles or at least gain some of these structures back is a difficult, however not impossible task.

The violent attacks in Rostock- Lichtenhagen, Mölln and Solingen are only few examples of violent right-wing activism in Germany during the 1990ies. This development has been considered unacceptable and national as well as local authorities increasingly focused on countering right-wing extremism in small municipalities. The goal was to prevent a pathological extent and a political-cultural hegemony within a community, particularly when not only ideological components are involved but also acts of violence and other inhuman hate crimes. Strengthening and financing civil society activity against extremism as well as including a broad range of democratic actors has thereby been a top priority (ZDK) and is required on a daily basis; and not only when right-wing extremists have already become active (Strobl, Lobermeier 2009: 20). In light of the activities of right-wing extremists, local civil society institutions, networks and projects are of utmost importance. Particularly since 2000 national and local authorities have become more aware of the need to actively, politically address threats to the democratic system within their administrative district and decided to strengthen the role of civil society. Here, the foundation of the ‘AG Netzwerke gegen Rechtsextremismus’ (‘Working group networks against right-wing extremism’) as well
as political programs such as ‘CIVITAS’, ‘ENTIMON’ and ‘XENOS’ serve as examples (Wagner 2003: 4). But already in 1991 the Regionalen Arbeitsstellen für Ausländerfragen, Jugendarbeit und Schule (RAA) (regional working groups on immigration, youth work and schools) were established as private agencies in the federal states of the former GDR. This complex approach was implemented and financed to a different extent by respective regional and local administrations and political authorities. Right from the beginning the RAAs were aiming at an instrumental linking of political and societal relevant aspects in the actual practice in communities (Wagner 2000: 33). Furthermore emerging from the RAA concept, was a ‘Mobiles Beratungsteam (MBT)’ (‘mobile counselling team’) that the federal state of Brandenburg launched in 1992. This initiative has been involved in increasing the sensitivity and knowledge around right-wing extremist phenomena, improving the conceptualization and development of measurements and activities for existing initiatives that are countering right-wing extremism, strengthening competencies as well as sustainability of local practioners, establishing community-based resistance and initiating local discourses around democracy, human rights, right-wing extremism and racism (Wagner 2000: 33-35).

Moreover, communal networks started to emerge, which are broad local alliances of authorities, teachers, police, youth workers, civil society organizations, youth etc. that are attempting to counter right-wing extremism. The town Fürstenwalde in Brandenburg serves as one of numerous examples hereof as already in 1997 a local platform ‘Plattform gegen Rechts’ (‘platform against right’) comprising various regional and local actors from local political parties, organizations, churches and other initiatives was founded in order to counter violence, right-wing extremism and xenophobia. The platform coordinates civil society action and is providing information, sensitizing the public and organizing discussion rounds, demonstrations etc. ever since (Plattform Fürstenwalde).

Local right-wing activities often provide the starting point for joint counter-measurements. However, often these efforts are not very effective when there is a lack of cooperation, common ground or strategy. For this reason, the ZDK developed the methodology of ‘Community Coaching’.
The ZDK and the development of ‘Community Coaching’

The ZDK, ‘Gesellschaft Demokratische Kultur gGmbH’ (‘Centre for Democratic Culture’), is a non-profit NGO-network that is situated in Berlin while being engaged throughout Germany. It was founded in 1997 and is aiming at promoting democratic values and countering violence as well as extremism. The ZDK thereby comprises various institutions and networks in the field of right-wing extremism, Islamic extremism as well as academic research, which will be shortly outlined in the following.

In regard to right-wing extremism, an integral part of the ZDK is Exit-Germany. It is the oldest de-radicalization and disengagement program in the field of right-wing extremism in Germany and was founded in 2000 by criminologist Bernd Wagner and Ex neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach. So far, Exit-Germany has accompanied over 500 cases of drop-outs in the realm of right-wing extremism (Wagner 2013) and has been awarded multiple times due to its outstanding work with a recidivism rate of only 2%4.

The KDR (‘Kompetenzstelle Deradikalisierung’) is a centre of excellence on de-radicalization that is also targeting right-wing extremism. It provides counselling, educational seminars, discussion rounds and awareness trainings to various authorities, communities and institutions such as schools.

AstIU (‘Arbeitsstelle Islamismus/ Ultranationalismus’) constitutes another part of the ZDK and is the leading non-governmental counselling organization on Islamic extremism in Germany and, like the KDR, provides various trainings as well as educational and thematic activities around Islamic extremism and Turkish ultranationalism.

‘Hayat’ is another ZDK initiative that targets Islamic extremism. It provides family counselling in realm of Islamic extremism and Turkish ultranationalism after an inquiry by a relative of a person that entered the Islamic extremist scene. Families and friends, who tend to be of high

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emotional significance to a radicalized person, are being coached by the Hayat team on ways how to deal and debate with their loved one and are shown options for action (Dantschke, Köhler 2013).

In terms of research activities the ZDK hosts the ISRM- the ‘Institute for the Study of Radical Movements’, which was founded in 2012 as an independent, non-profit research institution. It aims at combining the practical experience and empirical data of several non-governmental organizations in the field of de-radicalization with high quality research in order to support knowledge and research on radical movements (Wagner 2013).

Just recently the ZDK also launched the academic journal ‘JEX’, a journal on de-radicalization and democratic culture, which has been the first journal in Germany to specifically address issues of terrorism, extremism and radicalization and which also aims at combining academic research with practical experience (Wagner 2013).

Local civil society institutions, networks and projects are of utmost importance in countering extremism and terrorism. Systematic and effective /action, however, also requires an analysis of the concrete problem situation, the options for intervention as well as the accompaniment and assistance of practitioners in order to avoid uncoordinated activism and the deterioration of social energy and motivation (Wagner 2003: 4). This analysis, support and monitoring is being provided by the ‘Community Coaching’ of the ZDK.

Thus, ‘Community Coaching’ understands itself as a start up for organizing and implementing action aiming at democratic and liberal standards as well as values based on human rights principles. The methodology of ‘Community Coaching’ of the ZDK is an offer to communities with all their various actors to strengthen processes of democratization. The concrete idea around ‘Community Coaching’ was derived from practical work. In 1999, the NPD (a German right-wing party) had been demonstrating in the Berlin district of Hohenschönhausen- which came as a shock to local authorities. In a subsequent public discussion with the head of the ZDK, Bernd Wagner (who already in the 1990ies developed the RAA and MBT strategy), it was intensively debated how to best set up counter-measurements at the district level. A qualitative innovation has been not to focus solely on a temporary reaction to the NPD-
provocations but rather to develop a long term strategy to counter the problems within the district. Throughout these discussions it became clear that there was one general problem: there was no common understanding of the situation within the district as a whole. Teachers were reporting on everyday life at school, social and youth workers on their institutions, police on their work and representatives of churches and local organizations of their respective experiences (Borstel, Sischka 2003: 6). However there was no consistent, uniform perspective, particularly regarding links of and among extremist networks, their peculiarities, appearance, shape, manifestations, backgrounds and organizations, which are however essential in order to structure and coordinate common action of diverse practitioners within a particular setting. What was lacking was an accommodation of this engagement in regard to real, central problems within the community. Thus, there has been a lack of an overview of local manifestations of right-wing extremism as well as of the diverse experiences of various local actors - hence, a comprehensive discussion of these phenomena as well as a general, overarching concept for the democratization of the entire community was needed.

The general goal of ‘Community Coaching’ is to provide respective communities with scientific analysis, coordination of civil society practise and political counselling. The ZDK thereby sees itself as independent, external partner of local engagement while generating a common process, which identifies the crucial local difficulties as well as sustainable perspectives and opportunities for democratic developments (Borstel, Sischka 2003: 7). Prerequisite for any involvement for the ZDK is an impulse or inquiry by a person of the local community. Together with the ZDK team an initial clarification on the desires, requirements and expectations of the local employer/sponsor is essential. Conceptual action first and foremost requires a common general understanding of the phenomena at hand. Yet as outlined above, many actors are lacking a general overview that expands their individual sphere of influence. Thus, the first goal of the ‘Community Coaching’ process is the generation of a concrete analysis of the local situation. The main focus of this should be placed on the portrayal of various manifestations of extremism combined with the question of how democratic actors perceive and react towards this phenomenon (Borstel, Sischka
‘Community Coaching’ is targeting the entire community in all its complexity and attempts to include as many local actors as possible e.g. schools, police, youth workers etc. On this basis, local topics of concern can be specified. After this empirical depiction, the ZDK advises different local actors on how these problems can be targeted and how long-term engagement and preventative approaches for safeguarding and strengthening democratic structures can be set up most effectively. Through the ‘Community Coaching’, local initiatives and institutions are being brought together and strengthened in developing long-term options for action. Networking, the organization of discussion rounds and trainings as well as thematic publications serve as main tools throughout the process. To substantiate and visualize this process, the following figure will be explained in further detail.

### The Community Coaching (CC) Process

![Diagram of the Community Coaching Process]

- **Needs Assessment Phase I**
  - Qualitative Analysis
  - Situation Assessment
  - „Thick description“
  - Interviews
  - Participatory Observation
  - Group Discussions

- **Networking Moderation Phase II**
  - Community Network Establishment
  - Round Tables
  - Initiatives
  - Alliance Building

- **Implementation Counselling Phase III**
  - Implementation
  - Quality Management
  - PR
  - Integrated Process Counselling
  - External Evaluation

Identification of key actors, options and course of action. Establishment of analytically rooted plans with specific steps and according to goals and available means.

Source: English version according to: Borstel, Sischka 2003: 12

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Within the first phase a community analysis is developed that includes experiences and perceptions of various local actors. The ZDK works with the approach developed by Clifford Geertz, which is called ‘thick description’. The aim of this approach is not to question the ideological patterns but to describe the social climate and power structures in social environments. Hence, the ZDK team goes into these communities and investigates the situation at e.g. local schools, bars, parks, authorities, sport clubs, churches, unions etc. They conduct semi-structured interviews, observe, organize spontaneous as well as scheduled group discussions, and make a ‘thick’ description of the local situation, which often results in a publication. With this publication the ZDK aims to increase the theoretical knowledge of local problems by providing definitions and insights from extremism research, explain respective ideological and political concepts and empirically assess the structures, strategies, ideologies, events and key actors at the local level. Solely on this basis a concrete action plan as well as further goals and means within the process can be identified (Borstel, Sischka 2003: 9/10; Borstel 2001: 45).

The proper coaching phase starts with the moderation phase in which the ZDK attempts to bring all actors within a community together and to establish networks as well as public discourses. This is realized through e.g. the organization of round tables and discussion rounds or through launching certain initiatives. The linking of local actors is an essential prerequisite for long-term, targeted intervention at the local level that is commonly developed in a next step (Borstel, Sischka 2003: 10/11).

The counseling phase is the final stage within the process. Counter strategies are developed and include various projects and methods for local actors that are in line with respective local capacities. To outline projects and methods that are generally applied is hardly possible as no community resembles another in terms of their social and political composition, which means that no project and method resembles another. This also means that it is difficult to identify general, superordinate criteria that would allow for a delineation of local situations in which a ‘Community Coaching’ is requested. The ZDK is accompanying the
implementation process, in which different measurements are being conducted and evaluated. The main goal is to substantially strengthen and advise local practitioners in their action and to develop sustainable ways of strengthening democratic structures and countering extremist phenomena at the local level while always keeping in mind local peculiarities and capabilities. An effective countering of extremism and terrorism is a local, perceptible and lived democracy, which is aware of its own strengths, weaknesses and limits. ‘Community Coaching’ is exactly aiming at shaping this process (Borstel, Sischka 2003: 11).

Important to keep in mind is that the figure above depicts an ideal case. The ‘Community Coaching’ process does not always go through all three phases - sometimes even the community analysis might be already very helpful for local practitioners in order to go on from there and organize common action or sometimes the financial means simply do not allow for further activities. So far, the ZDK carried out this community approach in 35 municipalities throughout Germany as well as particular districts within Berlin.

Long before the devastating events of 9/11, the ZDK became aware of the virulent, anti-democratic tendency Islamic extremism poses. Particular ideological intersections to right-wing extremism could be found along issues such as Anti-Semitism, Anti-liberalism, conspiracy theory, Anti-Imperialism, Anti-Americanism as well as Globalization critique (Wagner 2003: 5). Hence, problems and threats around right-wing extremism and Islamic extremism are being regarded as referential points and integrated into the concept of Community Coaching. According to the ZDK, despite many analytical, practical and substantial differences, there is no particular reason to address threats to freedom and democracy in a community differently. The next paragraph will describe how ‘Community Coaching’ has been applied in the Berlin district of Neukölln to specifically target Islamic extremism.
Community Coaching in Neukölln

Since July 2010 the ZDK has been working in the Berlin district of Neukölln with its ‘Community Coaching’ in order to specifically analyze and address local manifestations and structures of Islamic extremism and radicalization as well as Turkish ultranationalism. However even prior to the official launch of the ‘Community Coaching’ the ZDK has been active in the district and closely worked with various stakeholders and developed amongst other the dialogue series ‘Islam in Neukölln- dialogue and controversy’ comprising pedagogues, youth and social workers, parents, police, representatives of local Islamic organizations, district managements, commissioner for integration, youth welfare office, Muslim youths, local initiatives etc. Moreover, the aim of ‘Community Coaching’ in Neukölln has been to encourage the political as well as societal discourse around these phenomena within the district. Conflicts in the neighbourhood around schools, mosques and more pragmatic issues of socio-economic relevance resulted in some local practitioners being overstrained, since they were lacking necessary knowledge and experiences with these situations. Together with district authorities, the ZDK therefore conducted a series of measures in Neukölln to develop solutions to the experienced difficulties. These included a community analysis that identified Islamic extremist and Turkish ultranationalist structures and parameters, which also required considerable fieldwork as a fundamental basis for further counselling, thematic focus and educational seminars. Further, networking and exchange between local actors has been an integral part of the coaching process. Different actors in the district in the realm of discussions and round table meetings have been given the opportunity to get to know each other, build trust and establish local assistance and counselling structures. Raising awareness of ideological peculiarities and their allurement is a key aspect in the ZDK’s work. The team therefore particularly focused on the organization of educational seminars and a sensitization of local actors. The ZDK also provided specialist literature e.g. ‘Ich lebe nur für Allah- Argumente und Anziehungskraft des Salafismus’ (‘I solely live for Allah- argumentation and appeal of Salafism’). Another aim has been the development of local, effective concepts discussing Islamic extremism and Turkish Ultranationalism. The already existing discussion series ‘Islam in Neukölln’ has been
supplemented with a series of lectures e.g. ‘Otherwise you will go to hell – fear as an educational instrument’; ‘With Islam against Islamism? The role of religious education in the prevention of radical attitudes among youths’; ‘Belief moves mountains? Islamic healers, family counseling and psychotherapy’. Through these lectures, the local population could discuss topics that are often being exploited by extremist groups. Moreover, the ZDK provided demand-oriented counselling of practitioners and options for action by offering specific trainings and qualificatory measurements, for instance, a workshop entitled ‘Islam in the district’. The workshop comprised several working groups on e.g. gender roles, violence, the atmosphere in the district etc., in which, amongst others, representatives of youth as well as educational facilities, parents, police and religious organizations took part. Another aspect of the ZDK’s work in Neukölln has been to counsel and assist local practitioners in direct contention with extremist groups and for instance has given advice on how to deal with local extremist groups or individuals on a daily basis. Additionally, the team is accompanying, counselling, and supporting persons that are directly affected by Islamic extremism e.g. families and friends of persons that have entered Islamic extremist structures. While the ‘community coaching’ process is targeting the entire community, so the macro-level, it can also serve as a basis for meso-level measurements that target relatives of radicalized individuals. Through engagement in the entire community, people become aware of the ZDK and their work and have directly turned to the team for further advice in dealing with their loved ones. The Hayat team at the ZDK is then able to address these issues and provide professional counselling. Next to additional target group oriented, thematic publications there has been also PR around the coaching in the district in form of the flyer ‘Demokratie stärken vor Ort- Islamismus und Ultranationalismus im kommunalen Raum’ (‘Strengthening democracy locally- Islamic extremism and Turkish ultranationalism at the local level’) (ZDK: 2010).
Conclusion

The article has outlined recent developments in European counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies, which focus on the local level as well as notions of community cohesion and resilience. Also certain difficulties arising from current approaches have been addressed. In the German realm, the ZDK’s ‘Community Coaching’ serves as a good example of a broad community-based approach that is particularly focusing on ideological components—however without suggesting a causal chain between ideology and violence. It directly targets the local level and comprises aspects of community cohesion and resilience through its focus on strengthening democratic structures as well as practitioners and policy makers in their work. ‘Community Coaching’ always works case-specific as well as demand-oriented, is adjusted to the concrete, practical situation and takes the local community with all its peculiarities, complexity and needs into account. ‘Community Coaching’ also exemplifies how, in the German realm, long term strategies from experiences in countering right-wing extremism are being applied to the context of Islamic extremism and Turkish ultranationalism, though further research is needed in order to analyze in how far this a generally observable trend. ‘Community Coaching’ is moreover attempting to avoid stigmatizations as well as the creation of ‘suspect communities’ as Islamic extremism and terrorism are not perceived as a specific phenomenon of the local ‘Muslim community’ but as broad social phenomenon. Thus, the entire population in a district is being addressed and identified as both subject and object of action. Not only certain segments of the population are included in the process but the aim is to target and engage the respective community as a whole. It thereby follows the tradition of countering right-wing extremism as decade-long efforts did not always single out particular groups within society.
Julia Berczyk: Community based counter-terrorism and anti-extremism policies and the ZDK’s ‘Community Coaching’

Literature


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Plattform Fürstenwalde: http://plattform-fuerstenwalde.de


