>>>

Youth extremism in Northern Ireland – Why now?

by Clare Cosgrove

© Brendan Howard

As a youth and community worker originally from, and practising in, west Belfast, I am often intrigued at how Northern Ireland is viewed by outsiders. For many, the images that prevail are those that I remember from my own childhood: burning buses blocking roads, masked youths throwing petrol bombs, armed tanks rolling through streets left in utter devastation and chaos after yet another explosion. However, following on from the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, when both sides of the political divide agreed to end the 40 years of protracted violence and engage in a process of political power sharing, Northern Ireland is now held up as a beacon of hope. Along with South Africa, Northern Ireland is hailed as a model of good practice in peace building, a success story. We are widely considered a "post-conflict" society.

As a youth worker, a parent and a resident of Northern Ireland, it is my belief that neither of these images quite fit with the reality facing our young people. While we have moved to a situation where our political leaders are working towards a shared future, this has not been embraced at all levels of society, with many young people still as affected by, and engaged in, conflict here as ever.

It will come as no surprise to anyone who has experienced conflict on a societal level that the impact of the conflict on our young people has been complex, multi-faceted and wide reaching. In answer to this, there has now been over 2 billion euros of peace money pumped into projects that aim to heal divisions, increase tolerance and understanding and pave out a brighter, shared future for Northern Ireland. This is a staggering amount when one takes into account that we are a nation of only 1.7 million inhabitants. To put this into perspective, this amount exceeds that which was spent under the Marshall Plan, the economic aid plan to rebuild Europe after the Second World War. Yet, while there is no doubt that the youth and community sector has benefitted immensely from this funding and in turn contributed greatly to the progress that has been made in peace building in Northern Ireland to date, there still remain many challenges in working with our young people in addressing the legacy of the conflict.

"Youth extremism" is not a term that is often used here. However, there is very clear evidence that there remains a youth sub-culture for whom sectarian violence is still very much a normalised part of everyday life. Many readers will be familiar with images of groups of children and young people in Northern Ireland, as young as 6, engaging in anti-social behaviour, rioting and violence. This is particularly an issue around times of tension between communities, such as during the annual controversial marching season, with whole areas of Belfast being shut down due to riots and violence involving mainly young people. This is despite the fact that the current generation of young people, (or at least those aged 16 and under) were born after the IRA ceasefire of 1994, which is still regarded as the main breakthrough towards "peace".

So, why exactly is it that these young people are still being drawn into violence and extremism despite never having witnessed the conflict first hand?

One possible explanation is that the passage of time has allowed for a collective romanticisation of paramilitaries and the violence they perpetrated, and many young people now commonly view the conflict through rose-tinted glasses. This is particularly the case among young people who did not have to experience the horror and utter devastation of the conflict directly, such as through the loss of a family member or witnessing a bombing. For many young people, the stories that are passed through the generations of those who perpetrated violence in the name of "the cause" involve a level of hero worship. Paramilitaries are often hailed as protectors of the community against the "other", and therefore the pain they inflicted on others deemed as "necessary" or "unavoidable" as a result.

Additionally, with the police not always recognised or accepted as law enforcers, particularly in Catholic areas, residents have historically relied heavily on paramilitaries to police their own areas against criminality from within their own communities.

It is easy then to see how these factors are linked to, and impact on, the mentality of many young people who engage in violence along the "interface" areas (flashpoints where Catholics and Protestants live in close proximity but are divided by physical or imagined barriers, such as the peace walls).

These mainly working-class areas are the most prone to brutal, violent instances of sectarian division. For the young people who live in the shadow of the interface, there is often the perception that engaging in violence with "the other" is their way of having a role within their community. Many see themselves as policing and protecting their area against the "other", just as the generations before them did during the height of the conflict and were held up as martyrs for doing so. Of course, there are many who engage in such violence as a form of recreation, while also cognisant of the fact that they can attempt to justify or excuse their violence as merely defending their community should their actions be called into question. There are even many reported cases of young people who have travelled across the region specifically in order to engage in such violence, which calls into question the rationale that they are doing so in the name of "their" community.

On the other hand, many young people who are still engaged in sectarian violence come from communities and families which have been directly impacted, and for whom the memory of the conflict is incredibly personal and raw. This transgenerational, shared trauma remains evident given that such major atrocities as the Shankill and Omagh bombs are still very much within living memory, with the effects of these still impacting on the current generations of young people and their families. Often, when we see young people engaging in sectarian violence, it is a manifestation of this unhealed trauma. Sadly, in acting out this trauma, these young people create a new cycle of victimhood; by moving from victim to perpetrator they create new victims and trauma in the process.

There is also a strong economic element to the current culture of youth violence. As our young people become more and more demoralised by the absence of employment and opportunities on offer, there is an overwhelming lack of incentive to ensure that they engage with their communities and society in a positive way. This has allowed for the further compounding of the polarisation that young people commonly experience anyway. In turn, this marginalisation makes it acceptable for young people who otherwise feel at a loss when seeking their place or role in their community to form an identity built around violence. Often this is through rioting against a common cause, such as during the marching season, or a common enemy, such as the police or those who live on the other side of the interface.

As in other areas of the world, such as Palestine and Israel, physical structures still ensure that our young people remain very much segregated from each other. The now infamous "peace walls", separate Catholic and Protestant areas to the extent that many of the young people I have worked with have never knowingly experienced or had meaningful conversation with someone from the "opposite" side. While youth and community groups have striven for years to increase each group's understanding and tolerance of the other, it is undeniable that this work still holds many challenges in the context of a society where we live, socialise and are educated almost entirely separately. In the 2001 census, it was reported that more than two thirds of us still live in areas which are more than 90% Catholic or Protestant, with 93% of us still being taught in either exclusively Catholic or Protestant schools. This being the case, one can see the challenges we as youth educators continue to face in our efforts to decrease youth extremism; how can we increase empathy for the "other" when they may have never had an opportunity to engage positively with someone from the opposite side, knowing them only as the rival?

Many youth workers dealing with young people engaged in violence and extremism point to the current funding climate as a massive issue in tackling the problem. Despite the early intervention of funders on the scale previously discussed, many in the sector fear that there is a huge underestimation of the ongoing impacts of the conflict which is still not being addressed. Funding is now being focused on other areas, with the obvious implications this has on areas of work undertaken.

In my view, I fear that for too long we have avoided talking to our young people about difficult questions. Rightly or wrongly, we have wanted to protect the next generation from the horror of the troubles, and have too often mistaken their silence for resilience. While local government need to play their role in ensuring that these issues continue to be addressed at a policy level, it is incumbent on us as youth workers to tackle the hard issues through open dialogue, and to help these young people find a more productive means of engaging with their community and each other.

»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»
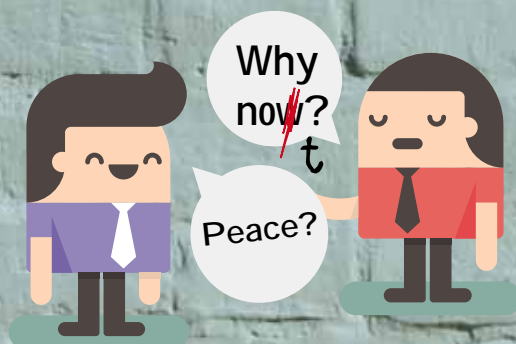
My kid is an extremist

By Gisèle Evrard

One morning of summer 2012 Myrddhin, a 10 year-old kid, stops what he is doing and asks: "What does it mean to be unconventional?" After receiving the relatively standard definition that it generally relates to a behaviour that isn't "in accordance with the given norms and conventions" and some examples, his next question is: "Does that mean that it is necessarily bad to be unconventional?"

The point here is not to try to define what is normal and what is not; other articles in this issue will tackle the question of "normality". Nonetheless, it raises two predominant issues: how teenagers perceive the question of norms and social behaviour and how adults deal with that perception. When linked to social behaviour, extremism is always measured against "something" that is supposed to match a series of norms and standards. The relativity of the latter can and possibly ought to be questioned. If it in any way diminishes the importance of social conventions, it certainly highlights the fact that norms are not only different for each of us or our social groups (something we knew already) but also the fact that adolescents behave differently than adults, for reasons that can be social as well as neurological.

The social brain of an adolescent

Let's first take the time to look at how the so-called social brain of an adolescent functions. Recent studies in neuroscience have demonstrated that certain parts of our brain – and especially the prefrontal cortex – develop differently depending on our age and neuroscientists have paid particular attention to how the brains of adolescents evolve. In her recent talks and work on this topic, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, neuroscientist at University College in London, defines adolescence as a period going from "the one of physical changes during puberty to the capacity of an individual to play an independent role in society". One may smile reading this, wondering when the second part of the definition really comes into reality, if ever. Nonetheless, in numbers this supposedly relates to young people aged 10 to 15, on average.

© Gisèle Evrard

My kid is an extremist

Now that we managed to place adolescence on someone's personal timeline, what do we mean by the social brain? The social brain and in particular the prefrontal cortex of a human brain is what allows one to understand people's ways to relate and to interact, to understand emotions and to make decisions, among other aspects. It is therefore also a condensed set of cognitive functions that allow a person to take risks or not (to measure the consequences), to elaborate strategies, to plan, to adjust behaviours, to make social decisions, and to almost simultaneously assess the degree of a possibly rewarding process.

So far, so good

Adolescents tend to have an extraordinary capacity to not only understand irony or to measure the part of truth and exaggeration in someone's discourse, but also to feel emotions to a higher degree than adults and, therefore, to experience intensely the rewarding feeling that follows decision making. This also explains why adolescents are high risk-takers, because the emotions and related rewards are as important and relevant as the level of risk to be taken. However, the part of the brain focusing on social relations – our now well-known prefrontal cortex – is less developed during adolescence than in adulthood. This means that factual analysis or reasoning is less predominant in an adolescent mind. This is the reason why impulses, emotions and the need to find greater recognition and support from one's peers and social group is higher than for an adult (in principle, at least). In her book, *The Art of Choosing*, Sheena Iyengar (2010) goes along the same line of analysis when examining how people make choices (in general) in order to highlight the differences between adolescents, young people and adults as well as what motivates them to opt for certain choices rather than others, even for those which could be considered extreme ones.

Knowing how the social brains of adolescents function does not explain it all. When proper guidance and support is not made available to

young people, extremist types of behaviour can more easily occur. The social abilities of an adolescent may turn into cognitive and emotional disorders, but knowing this does not justify everything. Being unconventional is not "bad" per se. The fact that conventions and norms exist means that they can also be challenged and questioned.

What is the link between the social brain of an adolescent and extreme behaviours? To answer this one must look at social issues and how social behaviours and societies as such have developed in recent years. Blakemore concludes her work by stating how important education is, especially during adolescence. Adolescence is a vulnerable period. Pedagogical influence needs to be exercised to support the adolescent in becoming an independent person. Adolescence is a turbulent period of *Sturm und Drang*. This brings perhaps bigger risks to positive development, but at the same time "offers a fantastic opportunity for learning and creativity" (Blakemore 2012). This is the huge pedagogical paradox that makes our work so exciting, and difficult: we need to influence and direct young people to become more autonomous and independent, provide them with structures and boundaries for them to either evolve within, or break.

© Gisèle Evrard

© Gisèle Evrard

Think outside the box

Spaces

A democratic society needs spaces for expression, for reflection, for demonstration, for rebellion, for cohesion and for development. Where are those social spaces today? About 30 years ago, adolescents and young people were able to find spaces to – in accordance with their "social brain development" level – take risks, act, plan, redo the world, change it, destroy it and rebuild it again, in concrete or figurative terms. A democracy needs social spaces to discuss, foment new ideas and new ideologies. Even though some of those new, wild ideas were possibly considered as "unconventional" because they challenged the norms and what dominant streams in society considered as "common sense", these spaces generated creativity, allowing a renewal of thoughts, turning into new sources of inspiration (for politics, social behaviours, fashion, culture and art, etc.) and therefore, were an important source for social transformation. These spaces for "social movement" seem to have decreased dramatically, at least in the view of those who do not want to limit themselves to spaces that are "allocated" to them and considered as "acceptable".

Still, and paradoxically, there have probably never been so many opportunities for young people to get actively involved in their society, to participate, to develop projects, to travel, to study abroad, than during the last decade. Access to education and to non-formal learning spaces has increased, thus allowing higher prospects and chances for professional and personal development.

My kid is an extremist

© Gisèle Evrard

What is the problem then?

Today, those social spaces still exist, but they are more directed at individual development than at social movement. To a great extent they are institutionalised or even privatised, giving much more weight to ideas that fit into the mainstream of society. Instead of creating spaces for young people to practice democratic citizenship they increasingly focus on educating young people to become democratic citizens.

Pressure may be another reason for the mismatch between the way young people (and their identity/ies) express themselves in their "category" (social and cognitive) on the one hand and what society expects from them on the other. Education, learning, behaviour and integration into a constantly changing society are all elements which take on more and more importance in the ways of accompanying and/or educating younger generations.

Education as such requires not only more and more efforts and a huge diversity of knowledge and competences, but is also constantly increasing the level of efficiency and "meritocracy" which are expected from pupils and students. As Ken Robinson (2001, p.58) ironically highlights in his book, *Out of our mind*, in some urban centres the competition is so high and so intense that children are being interviewed for kindergarten.

A certain denial of the existence of "youth" as such has also emerged over the past 10 years.

"Adolescents" immediately access the status of "young adults". Society (parents, policy, schools, youth workers, etc.) has transformed the youth period from a moratorium into a preparatory phase. Young people are demanded to fulfil the above-mentioned expectations as soon, as quick and as perfectly as possible. The whole idea of youth as a period of *Sturm und Drang* may still be underpinning our youth policies, but society seems to have decided to pre-structure that period so that experiments cannot go wrong and are channelled into safe environments instead of social spaces. We still talk about "young people" and refer to that age group between 14 and 20 year-olds as such, but there is no space anymore to "just be young", or even to "just be"; young people are "adults-to-be". Yet, it has become difficult for young people to be themselves. Their "social brain" is focused on exploring boundaries, taking risks, discovering the unknown, while our youth policies (or let's say policies aimed at young people) focus on guiding young people into predefined territories of what we call "the democratic society", based on economic development and individual meritocracy. The development of young people is pushed forward and further, stretched and confined into a concept of "rights and responsibilities" to be understood and practised from the youngest age possible. The younger children learn to behave as democratic citizens the safer our maintaining societal project will be.

Making connections

The above does not mean that we detest the concept of "educational guidance" and that we should not foment a sense of initiatives, responsibilities and participation, but perhaps that we ought to allow more flexibility in the way, and when, this is effectively acknowledged, understood and a certain ownership of such process and concept is developed.

Without a bubble spacious enough for young people to express themselves, resist, contrast, confront, explode and come back, the risk of extremely divergent social behaviours gets undoubtedly higher. Indeed, together with a clear cognitive improvement during adolescence comes an increasing rate of antisocial and/or risky behaviours. As explained earlier, social properties and their related emotional significance are of utmost relevance during adolescence. Without proper spaces to develop and express themselves and without a proper "distant guidance" and support which allows for the former, frustration, impulse, inhibition or the incapacity to channel emotions can contribute to isolation, extreme risk taking and cognitive recession. In other terms and because adolescence is a period where recognition from peers is not only looked for but necessary for identity and personal development, the lack of spaces to "safely experiment" in one's youth can lead to a certain rigidity of the identity, and therefore to extreme behaviours and to youth extremism.

That doesn't mean that such a process is only one sided and negative (as we try to demonstrate in this issue, "extremism" is not necessarily bad and the connotation we give to the word is socially and politically biased), but the danger of "losing young people on the way" may be higher. This has an impact not only on the young person as such, but also on the whole society. We need "extremist" spaces for young people to develop and express themselves because it helps the society to grow, to renew itself, to get inspired. Without those sources of social development, the rigidity reaches us all. But let's not isolate those spaces from society. Youth spaces are not reservations where young people can grow up in splendid isolation. This attitude creates the conditions for young people to develop either "borderless" or "template identities".

If you wonder if adolescents are different, think differently and behave differently than adults, you are totally right. Not only because they are "young" but because their bodies and minds function differently. Space and support, flexibility and guidance are the paradoxical, yet necessary elements to help them grow and develop into autonomous, critical and independent people. If we really are in favour of democratic societies then young people must have the freedom to experiment and express themselves, even in extreme ways. In our youth work jargon, we usually say that "to be challenged is a good thing", don't we? A bon entendeur…

"As long as any adult thinks that he, like the parents and teachers of old, can become introspective, invoking his own youth to understand the youth before him, he is lost." Margaret Mead

Inspired by Muse, *Uprising,* Mushroom records

References

Blakemore S.-J. (2012), "The mysterious workings of the adolescent brain", TED Talk.
Blakemore S.-J (2008), "The social brain in adolescence", *Nature Review*, Vol. 9, Nature Publishing Group.
Iyengar S. (2010), *The Art of Choosing*, Twelve, New York
Robinson K. (2001), *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative,* Capstone Publishing, Oxford.

Edgeryders: towards de-ideologising the "radical"

by Noemi Salantiu   Illustrations by Malica Worms

This contribution aims to show how individuals experimenting with radical, innovative work are paving the way to solving collective problems for a better future. Edgeryders is a community of social innovators, artists, activists, global thinkers whose projects have very high social and cultural value, despite having little or no financial support. Once we came together in a European-funded project and model of citizen–institution collaboration, our next goal is to wire seemingly disparate initiatives towards scalability and greater benefits for the mainstream. I am writing from two standpoints: a community builder who is part of the project staff and a member of the Edgeryders community, pretty well immersed in it. My deepest thanks go to every one of my new friends who inspired this account: Elf, Alessia, Petros, Lucas, Gaia, James and the rest of the community.

Briefly, it started with the Council of Europe and the European Commission wanting to understand one of Europe's most ardent problems: the situation of young people who navigate unstable environments, who question the return on investment of formal education, who don't have a place in labour markets or simply step away from traditional channels of participation; basically those who do things that don't show up in statistics or official reports because there are no instruments to measure the type of work they do. And so the Edgeryders distributed think tank was born: an open, online, highly interactive platform where young people from all corners of Europe come together to meet one another, share their struggles and equally the creative solutions they find, and collect everything into a fresh vision of what the future may hold for young Europeans if the right instruments are in place to support their work.

## The community: radical problems need radical solutions

Meet Elf, he has been living stateless and moneyless for over three years, by choice. Like most people, he used to have a job, as a web developer, but decided to let go of humanly produced artefacts that do nothing but condition our exchanges. How does this work? Well, he does things he enjoys for free, building software, sometimes helping grow food and supporting others without expecting anything in return and using sharing as a currency. Yet this comes around, as he receives food, shelter when travelling (across Europe only because he doesn't have identification documents) or whatever he needs for basic survival, and when he doesn't he dumpster dives – not so outrageous when one stops to think about all the perfectly good food that's being wasted daily. Not surprisingly, Elf's way of tweaking his lifestyle is allowing him to experiment with new skills and surface needs in communities he didn't know existed, and all this helps build great relationships with those around him, generating high mutual trust and environments that feel safe.

Meet Alessia, she is a social innovator, designer and activist. Among other things, she is travelling across Italy to save endangered cultural heritage sites. What Alessia and a diverse crowd do is occupy theatres or spaces for culture as a protest against their degradation, private buyoffs, decreasing wages of artists or teachers, and economic decay of knowledge workers in general. Inside theatres the protesters organise workshops and debates on cultural commons or welfare policies, or set up art performances, even transform them into after-school care centres. While occupying state or private property runs against the law and is criminalised, the logic is that they in fact operate to protect these spaces, and their actions are legitimate from the standpoint of the values occupiers fight to preserve: public goods funded by public money belong to the people; access to culture by all; preservation of historical heritage; arts, culture and knowledge that needn't be measured by monetary value. Essentially these guys are putting forward a new model of governance, one that takes into account the knowledge-based economy and is much more inclusive than the current one.

Meet Petros, he used to run an Internet company before the crisis hit. And it hit hard, as Petros and his wife Natalia went bankrupt and decided to move to rural Poland to found the Laboratory of Freedom on a rent-free estate. The FreeLab is a community of international residents researching solutions, offering technical support and building new skills, working together in waste control and electricity (they build rocket stoves or solar water heaters). Very importantly, they're teaching others to become self-organised and live independently from economic systems. Petros believes intentional communities are the best way to cope with the crisis and really be free as they live "off-the-matrix": "We don't want to reintegrate within the system. We are free and want to use our restored freedom for creating."

Edgeryders: towards de-ideologising the "radical"
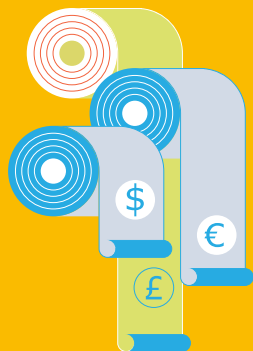
The folks at FreeLab are not the only ones working towards increasing communities' resilience. Lucas, Gaia, James and others in their crowd are looking into breakdowns of health resources (staff, supplies, equipment) and are devising alternate plans. Lucas is a public health physician, Gaia is a researcher and social network analyst, James is a community volunteer and avid cycler. What they question is how we go about leveraging community to improve the resilience of a place. Theirs is an interdisciplinary model for collaboration through networks of individuals, health and non-health professionals alike, who instead of fighting against each other when resources are scarce, work together to better respond to economic meltdowns. This has enormous value in terms of promoting solidarity, mutual aid and strengthening community connections.

What do Edgeryders Elf, Alessia, Petros, Lucas and the others have in common? First, none of these ways to experiment for the greater good are funded or are commercial activities; therefore they don't exist in the market economy. But rather than being isolated, their initiatives are connected to a larger, virtual network of change makers, people who do groundbreaking work often at the cost of living day by day. Radicalism is a cheap way to try new things that only have a small probability of working, but it costs a lot in terms of personal commitment and security. Whether it's re-appropriating commons in mercantilist societies or designing tools to increase transparency and accountability in democracies, Edgeryders are driving the change. Doing work outside the system doesn't equal being outsiders from the real world; on the contrary, their actions are based on deep awareness of the global problems affecting individual lives and communities.

HIGH INTELLECTUAL AND ITC STANDARD

Building bridges

How do we connect the dots and offer support and recognition to people at the edge of change, especially starting with our institutions? First of all, Edgeryders are pretty much against social categorisations of any kind, whether or not we are the "category" in question.[1] I don't think many would think of themselves as radicals. During an open debate at the "Living on the Edge" offline community event in June, someone's attempt to make a general statement about Europe's youth as extremist and violent was abruptly disqualified by the community in the room on the basis that if institutions antagonise citizens they cut off chances of finding constructive solutions, especially together. Also, thinking of Edgeryders as leading radical lifestyles falls short of fully grasping the meaning of their work. Edgeryding is not freeriding, our paths and risks are individual but highly connected because our success stands to benefit all. We are all part of a common future that some have started to build already.

So far the platform is home to over 1200 participants, Europeans and non-Europeans, young or not so young. There are hundreds of shared stories, many of them similar to the ones above, and thousands of comments in conversations. In June 2012 we set up an offline event bringing in over 150 Edgeryders at the Council of Europe. People from all over the Internet met Big Government, up close and personal, to make a case for the immediacy of solutions such as theirs, and they did so successfully. The "Transition handbook for policy makers" in preparation draws a list of policy recommendations that would make it easier for radical innovators out there to continue to do their "jobs". It starts with making a case that policy makers should come closer and understand the lives of young people, and goes on calling for policies to accommodate the isolated, turns-out-not-so-isolated cases of risky transition into cultural norms, so as to relieve some of the societal pressure and stigma associated with doing something outside the mainstream.

Each recommendation can be fleshed out in concrete lines of action to give people in institutions, particularly local ones, the tools to help the young. Edgeryders started with the European institutions willing to lend an ear, and now we want to be lent a hand. With the right incentives aligned – among others, commitment from public servants in key positions[2] – we are moving from a think tank advising on youth policies, to a "do tank" that multiplies positive experiences and puts transformative action at the heart of its collective existence. If you're reading this and you'd like to be part of the change, Edgeryders style, don't hesitate to get in touch. Edgeryders started out as a project by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in 2011. Upon termination end of 2012, the community spun off and built itself a new interactive web platform. A social enterprise, Edgeryders LBG, has been created to maintain and support the community's infrastructure. See more at: http://edgeryders.eu/

[1] This was one of the project's research findings. A small research team was commissioned to do ethnographic analysis of all the platform content, structured into several broad transition themes. After validation of the findings by the community, all papers are now being aggregated into a "Transition handbook for policy makers" http://edgeryders.ppa.coe.int/finale/making-sense-edgeryders-experiences-where-do-we-go-here.

[2] Many in the community don't trust institutions – deemed as machines that are highly resistant to change, limited in their ability to reform – but acknowledge that institutions are made by and of people; and that public servants can build precedents for good practices and cannot be discarded as untrustworthy. The team at the Council of Europe driving the Edgeryders project is a good example, it can be thought of doing radical work from an institutional standpoint, and the fact that people like Elf or Petros are engaging in conversation through an institutional channel is a good sign that collaboration and mutual support is possible, and that we should move forward and not away from the radical, in any of its forms, depending from where one looks.

No Hate Speech Movement
A campaign of young people for human rights online

by Rui Gomes

This article gives an overview of the campaign
and ideas about how to get involved,
as the campaign will run at least until the end of 2014.
The name of the campaign has been adopted
as the No Hate Speech Movement.

The campaign took its present format through several consultation events, preparatory meetings with experts, youth workers and young people. The main aim is to create an online community of young people motivated to discuss and act against hate speech online. The campaign is not run to limit freedom of expression online. Neither is it against hatred online nor about being nice to each other online. The campaign is against the expressions of hate speech online in all its forms, including those that most affect young people, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-hate. It is based on human rights education, youth participation and media literacy. It aims at reducing hate speech and combating racism and discrimination in their online expression; raising awareness about these phenomena is the first objective of the campaign.

The objectives of the campaign

- to raise awareness about hate speech online and its risks for democracy and for individual young people, and to promote media and Internet literacy;
- to support young people in standing up for human rights, online and offline;
- to decrease the levels of acceptance of online hate speech;
- to mobilise, train and network online youth activists for human rights;
- to map hate speech online and develop tools for constructive responses;
- to show solidarity and support to people and groups targeted by hate speech online;
- to advocate for the development of and consensus on European policy instruments combating hate speech;
- to develop forms of youth participation and citizenship online.

National campaigns

National campaign committees and support groups

The campaign is decentralised through national campaigns in the member states. Governments were invited to set up national campaign committees. The Council of Europe considers the committee as ideal if it involves the government, youth organisations and other civil society actors, as well as the relevant segments of the business sector. At the time of writing there are 36 member states of the Council of Europe that have started national campaigns. Campaign support groups may be formed in cases where a national campaign committee is not (yet) feasible. Interest for the campaign is spreading beyond Europe: NGOs and institutions from Mexico have recently expressed interest in implementing the campaign.

National online platforms

National committees can operate their own national online campaign platform and online tools in the languages that are relevant in the country. National campaigns may translate the tools into local languages so as to take into account the linguistic and cultural context of each country; this is already happening in a number of countries.

Online campaign tools

No Hate Speech Movement website
www.nohatespeechmovement.org

No Hate Speech Movement: Online platform for user-generated content uploaded by young people with their emotional and rational contributions about hate speech, identity and ideas. This site is the main landing page of the campaign available for the widest public with testimonials through self-made videos, photos or other visual manifestations. Young moderators are working to ensure safety and respect.

Hate Speech Watch

This is an online platform to monitor, collect and discuss hate speech content on the Internet. It is a user-generated online engine where registered users can link in any hate speech content from the Internet. Users can tag them, comment them and discuss them. Moderators are monitoring and facilitating the site, creating focus topics every month based on the main interest of the online community. Special "take action" features will also be available if the identified and discussed hate speech content requires further action. It's the perfect place for online activists!

The No Hate Speech Movement platform and the Hate Speech Watch are developed and maintained by the Council of Europe in English and French.

Campaign co-ordination website

This is the portal for campaign organisers and activists with updated information about the work behind the campaign. Organisations that are interested in taking part in the campaign can join by filling out a form on this website.

The campaign co-ordination website:
www.coe.int/youthcampaign

Online educational tools

This is a campaign about education. Tools for education and action are thus very important. The following will be made available shortly.

Online campaign toolkit: The Council of Europe has developed an online toolkit for young people and their organisations about ways of involvement in the campaign. The online toolkit provides knowledge and information about the campaign and its media, and gives concrete practical and methodological support for online campaigning.

Learning module on hate speech: This online learning tool helps people to understand different aspects of hate speech. The module provides "basic and essential" knowledge about hate speech and hate speech online.

School campaign pack: This online tool supports campaign promotion and action in the school environment. The Council of Europe has developed this pack for secondary schools to help teachers when discussing online hate speech with students, to organise a European competition among secondary school students on hate speech online and cyber-bullying, to introduce the online campaign tools in schools and to involve secondary school students in the online campaign.

All three tools will be available in English on the campaign websites, and the Council of Europe provides them free of charge to national campaign organisers to be translated and implemented in the national campaign context.

European Action Days
Throughout the campaign several Action Days will focus on different aspects and targets of hate speech. Each Action Day will have a special programme and online activities co-ordinated by international youth organisations.

17 May: Action Day against Homophobia and Transphobia online
20 June: Action Day in support of refugees and asylum seekers
22 July: Action Day against hate crimes
12 August: Youth Day
21 September: Action Day for religious diversity and tolerance
14-20 October: Local Democracy Week: local actions against hate
9 November: Action Day against Fascism and Anti-semitism
10 December: Action Day for human rights online.

Want to get involved?

There are many ways to take an active part in the campaign.

Individuals can join the campaign by uploading their self-expression statement about their identity or about hate speech and they can also register as a user at Hate Speech Watch and take part in the debates and monitoring of hate speech content on the Internet.

Organisations and institutions that are interested in taking part in the campaign can join on the co-ordination website by registering as a campaign partner and advertise their activities on the campaign co-ordination site. Local and national youth organisations can take part in the national campaign in their own country by organising or contributing to online and offline activities of the national campaign. For this they can contact the national campaign co-ordinator. The list of national campaign co-ordinators is available on the campaign co-ordination website. An organisation can also join one of the European Action Days that has the theme closest to the objectives of the organisation, by organising a local or national activity on that day.

European and international youth organisations can take the lead in proposing and implementing a European Action Day that has a focus or target group within the interest of the organisation. If such an organisation has an idea they can contact the campaign secretariat with their proposal for a European Action Day within the campaign.

Schools can join by downloading the campaign pack for schools and implement activities for their students, and they may also register as campaign partners on the co-ordination website.

For further details or questions you can contact the campaign secretariat by email at
youth.nohatespeech@coe.int

Morrissey made me do it!
Popular music and extremism
Views from Italian kitchens

by Giacomo Bottà   Images by Marlies Pöschl

We are in an Italian kitchen on a Sunday in 1985 and a typical Italian mother is serving a roast for lunch to Stefano, her son. Stefano says: "Mamma, I'd rather not eat this. I decided to become a vegetarian. Can I have some boiled cabbage instead?" Stefano's mother is shaken and hurt. She doesn't know what a vegetarian eats. She only knows her son listens to too much music and she is scared of the satanic backward messages you can find on records.

A few days before, Stefano had bought The Smiths' LP *Meat is Murder* and was impressed, deciding never to eat meat again. Going vegetarian in the land of prosciutto crudo and mortadella was an extremist decision. It was well beyond the borders of the ordinary, in regard to the cultural trait that is food, which was/is at the heart of Italian-ness.

However, what is interesting for us is that Stefano became a food extremist because of a record. The extreme act of depriving himself from animal proteins makes him feel a bond to a band, to a group of fans and to a certain lifestyle; he adopts it as the signifier of who he really is. This is the secret of much extremism connected to popular music, it is adopted as an individualisation process; it makes young people feel real.

Let's now time travel to an Italian kitchen in 2012, Stefano is still vegetarian and he is sitting next to his teenage son, Luca. Luca is 16, has long hair, a pentagram hangs on his neck and he is wearing a t-shirt from his favourite band, Burzum, from Norway. The singer of Burzum served time in prison for murder and for church burning. Luca has some basic notions about Satanism, mostly from Wikipedia and from some interviews with Burzum he found on the net and he doesn't consider himself a real Satanist. He just finds black metal to be really good music and he likes the goat skulls imagery and the ancient Nordic connections. He wants to study old Norse when he gets to college. Despite listening to extreme music and sharing the look, Luca has some ironic distance towards its extremist ideology.

When we talk about "extreme music", the sound in our head is always close to a distorted and confused noise. This has been there since the beginning: in the 1950s Elvis sounded like a screaming monkey to the older generations and his supposed influence on juvenile crime and rebelliousness were openly condemned. New genres are born every day, keeping popular music extreme, and it is still clearly a sign of ageing when someone suddenly realises their inability to understand the new. To me, this happened with "Speedcore", a sub-genre of techno, which rarely drops below 300 beats per minute (an average song has 120).

We talk of extreme metal, for instance, when we are referring to the fastest and most distorted variety of metal. Satanism and/or paganism are thought to be simply embedded in this sound; they are the fries that we always expect with the steak. Interestingly this doesn't happen with classical music: the German composer Richard Wagner made wide use of thundering basses and complex gloomy orchestrations, however no one thinks of his music as extreme or as linked in any ways to extremism, even if – coincidentally or not – it was widely popular in Nazi Germany.

The association between extreme music and extremism is of course not a given. Young people definitely tend to identify certain extreme sounds with extreme feelings like hate, anger and frustration but this doesn't necessary lead to extreme behaviours in society. Sometimes extreme sounds have a cathartic effect and young people immerse themselves in them to handle certain feelings, for instance when they use earphones, which build a "bubble" to defend oneself or create the right soundtrack for a hostile environment.

Popular music has also developed, throughout its history, deep relations with political extremism, whether of left- or right-wing connotation. This is mostly based on the weakness or better the malleability of music. Any kind of music can become a vehicle of political thoughts and ideologies. For instance, if not referring to some minor semiotic elements and sometimes to lyrics, it is very difficult to distinguish a neo-Nazi punk band from an apolitical one or a Christian emo from a proper emo. This uncertainty has been exploited widely by political groups: for instance in 2009 Nicolas Sarkozy used the song "Kids" by MGMT in his presidential campaign. "Kids" is a catchy, successful song that uplifted the spirits of UMP supporters and enhanced their political experience. MGMT later sued Sarkozy for the use of the song and there was a settlement of about €30 000.

Extreme political thoughts and ideologies in popular music also raise some major difficulties in terms of freedom of expression and censorship. The Polish band Behemoth for instance has been sued for blasphemy in their country, but the European Commission issued a statement concerning freedom of expression as one of the values at the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights, advising Poland to follow this treaty to which it is a party. In Germany, a considerable amount of records are banned or indexed every year, mostly in connection to racial hatred, homophobia and sexism, while in the US the "Parental advisory explicit lyrics" sticker has been put on new releases since 1985.

It is surprising to see that extremist content can be available also in music genres that are considered to be somewhat harmless. For instance reggae is normally associated with a relaxed lifestyle in the sun or with positive political activism, but homophobic lyrics are also widely represented. Racist lyrics in country music are also widespread, along with more known texts about homesickness and love.

The main point however is that popular music nowadays is ubiquitous, you find it everywhere; it streams out of your mobile phone into your ears while you are commuting, from your PC when you are working; it's in the shop where you buy food and in the bar where you're having a beer while reading *Coyote*. You can easily access (legally or illegally) all the digitalised music ever created with a simple move of your finger. This of course also means that music's power in conveying extremist or non-extremist meanings and in defining life, or life-threatening, choices weakens considerably, and not only in Italian kitchens.

Did you know that?
Youth and extrem(es/ism) in statistics

by **Thomas Spragg** | Images by **Marlies Pöschl**

1 EXTREMELY YOUTHFUL COUNTRIES

In Turkey, 26% of the population is under the age of 15. This is closely followed by 23% in Albania, 22% in Azerbaijan and 21% in Iceland!

2 EXTREMELY YOUTHFUL CITIES

Since 2006, Podgorica, Montenegro has been the youngest European city.

3 EXTREMELY RICH YOUNG PEOPLE

Europe's youngest billionaire is Prince Albert von Thurn und Taxis, 29, from Germany – who is worth a whopping €1.5 billion! Prince Albert is the only European under the age of 30 who appears on the 2012 Forbes list, but he is closely followed by 35 year-old Maxim Nogotkov (Russia) and Yvonne Bauer (Germany).

4 COUNTRIES WITH EXTREME GENERATIONAL GAPS
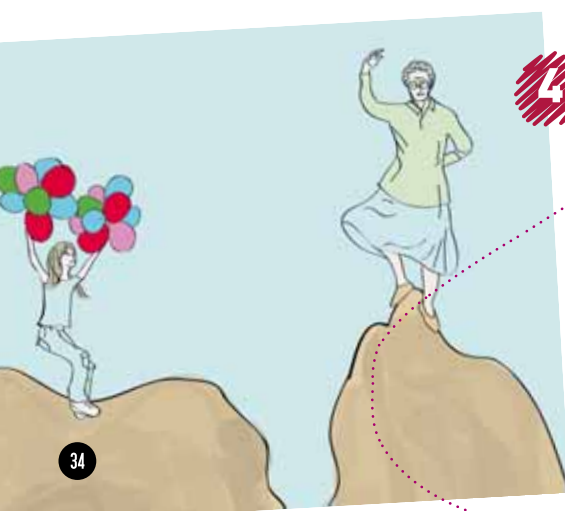
1. Monaco
Old to young ratio – 2.18:1
65 years and over – 26.9%
0-14 years – 2.18%

2. Latvia
Old to young ratio – 1.25:1
65 years and over – 16.9%
0-14 years – 13.5%

3. Slovenia
Old to young ratio – 1.25:1
65 years and over – 16.8%
0-14 years – 13.4%

TOP FIVE EUROPEAN EXTREME SPORTS

1. Cheese rolling, Gloucestershire, England
2. Kite skiing, Chamonix, France
3. Caving, Iceland
4. Snowmobiling, Greenland
5. Mountain biking, Morzine, France

6 COUNCIL OF EUROPE: AN EXTREME COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

Since 1972, 5 000 young people have been trained every year in one of its two residential youth centres. Between January and June 2013, it has awarded 58 grants for a total of €676 000 to youth projects.

7 EXTREME MUSIC

Shock Rock: an umbrella term for artists who combine rock music with elements of theatrical shock value in live performances.

Notable European shock rock performers are King Diamond (DK), Screaming Lord Sutch (UK), Rammstein (DE) and Lordi (FI).

8 EXTREME LACK OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Less than half (40%) of children believe that voting in elections is an effective tool for improving the situation in their countries (as high as 50% in western Europe and EU candidate countries), but 16% believe that elections are ineffective (particularly in transition countries within the western CIS and the Caucasus).

9 EXTREME HAPPINESS

Two thirds of all children feel happy most of the time, more so in western Europe (80%) than transition countries (60%). In general, girls feel happy more often than boys, as do urban dwellers compared to rural children.

YOUNG EUROPEAN EXTREME ADVENTURERS

The youngest person to have stood on the top of Europe's highest peak (Mount Elbrus, 5 642 meters above sea level), is the Ukranian Yunona Bukasova, at the tender age of 9 years and 1 month old. Aged 16, Dutch teenager Laura Dekker became the youngest person to complete a solo around the world sailing adventure in 2012. Dutch authorities tried to prevent the expedition, as the girl should have been in school. *The Guinness Book of World Records* also refused to recognise the feat, stating that they did not want to encourage other young people to skip school. The youngest relay team to ever have swum the English Channel consisted of six 12 year-old boys from the Royal Tunbridge Wells Monson Swimming Club. The mammoth swim was completed on 4 September 1968.