NEWSLETTER

RAN

Practitioners Update

December 2021

10 YEARS OF RAN

Contents

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the propagation and proliferation of conspiracy narratives and disinformation at an ever-increasing pace. Where they were once thought to be confined to dark, hidden corners of the online space, COVID-19 has accelerated their mainstreaming into almost all areas of life. With the pathway between conspiracy narratives, disinformation and radicalisation already established, practitioners are having to work harder than ever to cut through the noise created by these narratives, which can be so appealing to communities who are increasingly finding it difficult to know what to believe.

This month's update contains the latest RAN Practitioners Spotlight Magazine which focuses on the topic of conspiracy narratives and disinformation, with articles and interviews with practitioners working in this space. The Update also links to a new film which hears from academic experts, practitioners and Working Group Leads discussing conspiracy narratives and disinformation, as well as a newly released paper on the topic.

CONSPIRACY NARRATIVES & DISINFORMATION

Spotlight

The latest edition of the RAN Practitioners Spotlight magazine features a series of articles, case studies and interviews with practitioners and Working Group leads highlighting their work tackling the proliferation of conspiracy narratives and disinformation. The magazine assesses various aspects of the challenge, outlines the scale of the problem and the options that practitioners have in combatting it, and provides examples of what RAN and its network of practitioners are doing in this space.

You can view the magazine here... ▸

Film – Conspiracy Narratives & Disinformation

This new film highlights the P/CVE challenge posed by conspiracy narratives and disinformation, as well as RAN Practitioner's response. In the film we hear from academic experts in the field, as well as RAN Working Group Leads and Practitioners as they highlight the existing and emerging conspiracy narratives that we see in P/CVE practice, (from the New World Order to QAnon to COVID-19 conspiracy plots), the difference between them and less harmful conspiracy narratives, the increasingly mainstream nature of them, as well as the nuances between different types of disinformation and RAN's attempts to tackle them.

You can view the film here… ▶

Paper – Conspiracy narratives and right-wing extremism

A new paper highlights the proliferation of conspiracy narratives and their link to violent right-wing extremism. It highlights the archetypal narratives of conspiracy ideologies, providing 'black and white' world views and how they foster societal divisions between in-groups and out-groups by exacerbating intolerance against 'the other' and delegitimising different voices as being part of the conspiracy. The paper provides recommendations for practitioners in tackling the conspiratorial labyrinth of conspiracy narratives.

You can read the paper in full here… ▶

UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, RAN Practitioners will continue to deliver the majority of meetings in the coming months online. For more information on planned meetings please go to the RAN website.

2021

RAN Study Visit in Paris
7-8 December 2021

Small-scale expert meeting on Lone actors: Making use of needs and risk assessment tools in P/CVE
10 December 2021

Cross-cutting thematic event — Management of returning FTFs and their family members with a focus on returning women and children
14-15 December 2021

RAN POL Workshop for in-depth case diagnosis
16-17 December 2021

Focus on Children: The challenge to reflect on values with imprisoned extremist parents

A new paper that provides an overview of projects in Europe concentrating on parents in prison, their children or both. Most of the projects focus on strengthening parenting competence and encouraging bonds and communication between imprisoned parents and their children. Even though the authors' work is primarily concerned with parents holding right-wing extremist attitudes, some of its elements are applicable to any form of extremism. You can view the full paper here... ▶

The role of psychotherapy in rehabilitation and exit work

This new paper highlights the growing focus on the intersection between mental health and the field of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). In the past, researchers tended toward the view that it was people with mental health illnesses or psychopathic tendencies who committed extremist acts. Scholars later eschewed these explanations in favour of the theory that radicalised individuals were rational actors in pursuit of specific objectives. Now, overwhelmingly, the current literature recognises that the pathways to radicalisation are complex, multifaceted and interconnected, and that there is no 'single pathway' to radicalisation. You can read the full paper here... ▶

Substance use and violent extremism

This new paper looks at the historical link between alcohol and drugs, and human violent behaviour. Despite the fact that many politically and religiously motivated extremist ideologies and groups promote purity of body and mind as an ideal, drug use and mind-altering substances have been widely reported in violent Islamist extremist (VIE) and violent right-wing extremist (VRWE) contexts. The objective of this paper is therefore to examine the ways in which drugs and alcohol form part of the wider social practices of different extremist groups and phenomena. The paper considers how drugs can be utilised for recruitment or radicalisation purposes, and specifically, how drugs are used to lower the threshold for committing extremist violence and/or terrorism. You can read the full paper here... ▶

National hubs supporting local actors in P/CVE – practitioners' insights

A new paper that looks at the key role that local actors play in effective efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. When it comes to addressing challenges of radicalisation and violent extremism, local municipalities and authorities together with and supported by national governments, often bear the primary responsibility. In past years, a variety of local approaches has emerged across Europe, each of them informed by different local settings, governance structures, resources and needs assessments and all of them guided by different national prevention strategies. You can read the full paper here... ▶

Contemporary Violent Leftwing and Anarchist Extremism (VLWAE) in the EU: Analysing Threats and Potential for P/CVE, November 2021

A new paper that looks at the complex, difficult issue of contemporary violent left-wing extremism. The complexity of the phenomenon starts with its definition, as happens for many other forms of extremism. The classification of violent manifestations in the left-wing extremist scene in the EU is highly controversial both in political circles and academic communities. Furthermore, the phenomenon has several ties with anarchist violent extremism, and, throughout history, the ideological spectrum of violent left-wing extremists was enlarged by the intersection of different ideologies like Marxism-Leninism, Trotskyism, Proletarian internationalism, Stalinism, Maoism, anti-militarism and eco-socialism. You can read the full paper here... ▶

Incels: A first scan of the phenomenon (in the EU) and its relevance and challenges for P/CVE

This new paper describes the task of mental health professionals working in the context of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and provides guidance on how this can be undertaken to be consistent with ethical practice. In the section on Ethical Dilemmas, the key concerns of psychiatrists, psychologists and psychiatric nurses in relation to this work are identified and addressed. These concern their dual responsibility towards their patients and the wider public, the challenges of breaching confidentiality and sharing information, the dangers of pathologising beliefs, and the importance of ensuring that their practice is evidence-based and does not take them beyond the limits of their competence as mental health practitioners. You can read the full paper here... ▶

Returning to extremism: An overview of terrorist reoffending and current challenges

A new paper that aims to provide recommendations for practitioners working with violent extremist clients by discussing recidivism data, current challenges, risk and protective factors, and risk management strategies. Due to recent tragic terrorist attacks in Europe, the question of terrorist recidivism has come to the centre of attention in public and policy discourses. Although the data show low recidivism rates in European countries, the impact of successful re-offenses are enormous and prompts the revision of existing practices. You can the read the paper in full here... ▶

Extremists' use of gaming (adjacent) platforms – Insights regarding primary and secondary prevention measures

This new paper discusses how traditional gaming (adjacent) platforms have contributed to extremist activities. Non-gaming platforms must be considered in addition to classic platforms focused on gaming. The paper also explores how extremist individuals and organisations make strategic and organic use of the platforms. The paper goes on to focus on opportunities for primary and secondary prevention on gaming (adjacent) platforms. As there is little experience of P/CVE measures on these platforms, the paper provides considerations and recommendations that should be taken into account when designing and implementing prevention efforts in these environments. You can the read the paper in full here... ▶

CONTACT

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