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CONCLUSION PAPER
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Emotional Governance: deconstructing local P/CVE strategies in the face of 'salad bar' extremism and understanding needs and grievances

Key outcomes

In this RAN LOCAL meeting, local authorities and practitioners gathered to discuss the complex challenges they face in engaging with their communities effectively to foster resilience against violent extremism and uphold shared values of peace, tolerance and solidarity. The premise of the meeting was that traditional local approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) primarily focus on security measures, overlooking the crucial role of emotions within institutions and among practitioners in fostering trust, understanding and resilience within the communities they serve.

Using the definition of "emotional intelligence" as the ability to perceive, understand and regulate public emotions, participants discussed to what extent they need to practice "emotional governance" and incorporate it into their respective local P/CVE strategies. These are the key outcomes of their discussion:

- Emotional governance is a new concept for local P/CVE practitioners and authorities, requiring time and effort to develop a working definition suitable for local P/CVE contexts.

- Using the working definition of emotional governance, participants recognised that local authorities are already in a position to utilise it. Through their policies, strategies and interventions, they inherently attempt to manage the emotions of their citizens.

- The management of emotions by local authorities is often aligned with the perceived shared image, mission or culture of the respective city. While not necessarily wrong, this approach may be incomplete and fail to reach those who feel marginalised, a growing group of citizens.

- Emotions can be effectively used as a tool for local P/CVE, with the caveat that authorities must stay closely connected to the actual needs and emotions of individual citizens. This involves recognising that individuals identify with multiple "communities", not just those aligned with the perceived image, mission, culture or shared values.

- Implementing emotional governance requires authenticity, which entails accountability and transparency about self-perceived authenticity (i.e. "good governance") and an institutional acceptance of making mistakes. Acknowledging dilemmas fosters understanding among citizens. The creed "Re-attempt, reframe, and try again. TikTok, don't tick box" emerged as a guiding principle for local authorities dealing with P/CVE.

Highlights of the discussion

On the first day of the meeting, the discussion centred around the notion of emotional governance, its meaning in the context of local P/CVE strategy, and the importance of implementing it in local P/CVE efforts. The second day's focus was on understanding what local P/CVE practitioners need for effective utilisation of emotional governance and formulating recommendations for local authorities.

What is emotional governance?

Emotional governance in the context of P/CVE, as discussed by the participants, refers to the recognition and management of emotions at personal, group and societal levels within decision-making and governance. It involves acknowledging and navigating public emotions to prevent radicalisation and extremism while promoting a safe, inclusive and compassionate society.

Key elements of emotional governance in P/CVE:

- Considering all perspectives, including those of minorities, and being aware and transparent about this approach. Emotional governance involves genuinely attempting to hear all voices, understanding that each side may view the other as an "emotional traitor" to some extent.

- Understanding that emotions like fear, anger, dissatisfaction, disappointment and distrust often reflect underlying viewpoints or beliefs. Emotional governance involves recognising these emotions and their significance in the public sphere to navigate an individual away from radicalisation and prevent the adoption of extremist views.

- Acknowledging that emotions are inherently personal and often irrational. Emotional governance is about navigating these emotions constructively rather than mitigating them, creating safe spaces for emotional expression, compassion and dialogue.

- Investing in understanding public emotions helps authorities recognise the pitfalls of their own biases and established norms, enhancing their ability to govern effectively.

- Recognising the importance of inclusive language and the complex, intersectional identities of citizens. Authorities must be mindful that terms like "community" can be exclusive and that individuals may identify with multiple, sometimes conflicting, communities.

- Recognising the significance of symbols, such as flags or emoticons, in expressing emotions. Emotional governance includes being aware of how these symbols are used to convey emotions in both traditional and modern contexts.

- Understanding the historical context of emotions and how narratives are repeated and reframed over time. Emotional governance involves being aware of these historical connections to address current emotional climates effectively.

As such, participants agreed that its application must embody a nuanced and adaptive approach. There were voices expressing the lack of understanding among local authorities regarding the emotional landscape of their communities and what it means to be considered a part of a community. Intersectionality must be recognised when attempting to govern the emotions of the public.

In addition, participants agreed that local and national strategies need to be aligned to avoid conflicting messages. The messaging must be authentic, resonating with the entire population and innovative, leveraging new platforms and influencers to enhance engagement. It must also encompass patience and constant reflection. The participants concurred that local P/CVE authorities should especially adopt a patient approach, focusing on long-term relationship building and continuous reflection.

How do we implement emotional governance in local P/CVE strategies?

Taking into consideration what was learned and exchanged on day one, the participants discussed at length how emotional governance should be integrated into local P/CVE strategies.

One highlight from the discussion was the encouragement for participants to practice empathy, both within their institutions and among themselves and their colleagues. Establishing a genuine connection with citizens, especially from an authority perspective, goes a long way in rebuilding trust and fostering open dialogue.

Another crucial point was the consensus on the need for a balanced response to crises. Trusted local governments must manage their own emotions and reactions while demonstrating leadership, essentially serving as role models. Participants agreed that avoiding overreaction and maintaining emotional stability within the institution are necessary to effectively manage the emotions of the public.

Additionally, balanced and unbiased communication is essential. Ensuring that messages are impartial and considerate of all perspectives helps in building trust and preventing alienation of any group within the community. This approach contributes to a more inclusive and effective emotional governance strategy.

Utilising emotional governance in local P/CVE	
Recommendations	**Additional information**
Understanding emotions of the entire population, not just through the lens of "leaders" of communities.	Effective emotional governance begins with a deep understanding of the emotions that drive the population. Emotional grievances such as feelings of marginalisation, identity crises and perceived injustices can be critical in radicalisation processes.
Understand your role as local authority in these times of distrust and show patience and emotional intelligence.	Local authorities need to exercise patience and avoid hasty responses to conflicts. Emotional responses must be measured and considerate of the long-term impact on community relations and trust.
Create a learning community in your city or region in which everyone can make mistakes and gets an opportunity to learn.	Mistakes by governments in handling emotional aspects of conflicts have highlighted the need for better strategies. Learning from these mistakes can inform more effective emotional governance practices.
Reframe existing practices so that they embody the elements of emotional governance.	Emotional governance is not a new concept but represents an opportunity to reframe and give consistency to long-standing preventive practices. It emphasises the importance of primary and secondary prevention in the long term.

| Be authentic, have a discussion with your citizens as to what it means to be authentic and don't be afraid to take risks. | Authenticity is crucial for emotional governance to be effective. Institutional messages need to be genuine and resonate with the community. Working with influencers and using innovative platforms like TikTok can enhance authenticity and engagement. Taking risks in emotional governance means that not every initiative will succeed, but it's essential to be bold and innovative in these efforts. |

Implementing emotional governance in local P/CVE

Recommendations	Additional information
First, accept that there are challenges in the practical implementation of emotional governance.	Emotional governance strategies, such as counter-narratives, can fall short if they are too formal or institutionalised. Effective implementation requires a genuine connection with the community and a willingness to adapt and innovate.
Find ways to emphatically engage with the emotions of the population.	Practice empathy by addressing emotions openly and fostering genuine connections with citizens, key players and informal networks.
Be consistent and inclusive in your engagement.	Hold regular, structured meetings with community members, including journalists and other stakeholders, to maintain ongoing communication and feedback.
Address online and offline emotional governance in one approach. It's 2024. There is no such thing as an online and an offline world. They are the same.	Enhance the online presence of local authorities by engaging with communities on social media platforms. Collaborate with communication professionals to highlight the added value of emotional governance in online spaces. Utilise automation tools for monitoring emotional trends and sentiment analysis online to respond appropriately to emerging issues.
Use arts and narrative therapy.	Implement arts and narrative therapy to help individuals process and express their emotions. This can be particularly effective for engaging men and other groups less likely to participate in traditional forms of therapy. Utilise storytelling and involve credible voices who have lived experiences related to extremism. This approach can help illustrate the real impact of extremist actions and foster empathy and understanding.

Maintain balance and monitor emotions, but be aware of misuse.	Balance responses to incidents of extremism to avoid overreaction and maintain emotional stability within the community. Authorities should manage their own emotions and model calm, measured responses. Continuously monitor the emotional climate of the community to identify emerging issues and respond proactively. This includes balancing fear and anxiety with appropriate risk mitigation measures.
Show vulnerability and humanity.	Show vulnerability as part of the process, acknowledging that professionals are human too. This can help build trust and connect with the community on a deeper level.
Provide training and resources.	Implement training programmes for local practitioners focusing on emotional intelligence, empathy and how to handle emotionally charged situations. These programmes should also address vulnerability and dismantle hierarchical structures within organisations. Develop practical toolkits and briefings that provide guidance on managing emotions and responding to crises. Resources should be culturally sensitive and contextually relevant.

Relevant practices of emotional governance

- **Scotland's approach to knife crime:** Using a mental health and trauma-based approach, Scotland addresses underlying emotional issues by connecting to childhood stories and life experiences, thereby preventing violent behaviour from an emotional standpoint.

Relevant reading

- Richards, B. (2007). *Emotional governance: Politics, media and terror*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Conclusion Paper RAN LOCAL 8-9 June 2023, Budapest: <u>The future and position of local P/CVE strategies and approaches</u>

- Conclusion Paper RAN LOCAL 15-16 November 2022, Helsinki: <u>What Are Local Effects of Recent Developments on P/CVE?</u>