



DeRadicalisation  
in Europe and Beyond:  
Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate



# Starting D.Rad – a research project on de- radicalisation



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After the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was murdered in Turkey in January 2007, his widow Rakel Dink said in her eulogy, “unless we question the darkness that fostered a murderer from a baby, nothing can be done my brothers and sisters”. While recording the plight of refugees at the Hungarian-Serbian border in 2015, the Hungarian camerawoman Petra László kicked out at a girl and tripped up a desperate man carrying his boy to safety. In 2020 at a business meeting, an international partner raised the matter of Britain, but ignored my presence in favour of a white British colleague.

To understand what links these incidents, we must address a theoretical problem: how the “other’s” presence disturbs our sense of “self”. D.Rad starts from this question. Inspired by my PhD student Bogdan Ianosev, I ask why anyone would conceive diversity as a zero-sum game, that is, why the other’s prominence serves to diminish the self and to inspire feelings of enmity.

D.Rad will thus examine the micro-level foundations of radicalisation, to understand how individuals travel along a spectrum from unradicalized to radicalised to deradicalised. Our theoretical starting point is what we call the I-GAP spectrum. Radicalisation may begin with feelings of injustice (I), of being singled out or discriminated against because of one’s identity or status. This can become grievance (G), enmity against other social groups, which can foster alienation (A) from the social and political order and from unradicalised members of the community. The ultimate effect of many individuals travelling along this spectrum will be polarisation (P) of cultural and political attitudes.

However, we also propose that resilience can affect how individuals travel along this spectrum. The task of intervention is to foster social intimacies and feelings of joint belongingness in mundane community activities. Another of my PhD students, Doga Atalay, suggests that this intervention starts in our neighbourhood, city, leisure activities, and recognising the “other” in everyday contexts. Once people start discussing their mundane problems with each other, which could be the weather in Scotland where I live, it is easier to achieve social inclusion by recognising common problems rather than emphasising the problems that separate us.

None of this means ignoring the pertinence of larger questions of state power, system integration or wider minority/majority relationships. Macro-level factors also condition radicalised behaviour. If individuals, groups, or communities cannot trust their state and their compatriots, how can they get on with everyday life? If accent, clothing, gender or

sexuality cause immediate disadvantage or put people in peril, how can they even bear their self-identity outside their homes?

In other words, as Bensiyon Pinto, the Honorary President of the Turkish Jewish Community, says, if one continuously feels obliged to bolt their doors stronger every time they are attacked, how can we talk about intimacies? There is thus no denying the relevance of macro influences and trends. D.Rad's model of stakeholder engagement also aims to understand how they shape behaviours at the everyday level.

D.Rad is not an easy project. It involves 18 partners and 17 countries, many of them understudied. The consortium ranges through Finland, Hungary, Slovenia, Jordan, Georgia, Iraq, and Israel among others. It brings together an amazing group of junior and senior academics and third sector organisations along a spectrum from humanities to artificial intelligence.

Therefore, we start with learning how to talk to and respect each other in this consortium, and then move to engage with our communities. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, we have devised a platform of exploratory and participative research. Ultimately, we draw our inspiration from everyday acts of kindness at the micro; we recognise the value of communities at the meso; and finally, watching the Pope meeting the Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani in Iraq, we appreciate how our lives are shaped at the macro-level. There is so much to stimulate us and that is why we get on with work.

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