



Countering Oppositional Political
Extremism through Attuned
Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit

Translocal articulations of extremism in three countries

Countering Oppositional Political
Extremism through Attuned
Dialogue: Track, Attune, LimitVisit oppattune.eu

Deliverable No. 4.2

Translocal articulations of extremism in three countries

**Visualisation report
on Austria, Bulgaria, and Sweden**

Tina Askanius, Miriam Haselbacher,
Jullietta Stoencheva and Ursula Reeger

Malmö University/Austrian Academy of Sciences

11 November 2024



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



**Innovate
UK**

Project name	OppAttune: Countering Oppositional Political Extremism Through Attuned Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit.
Project acronym	OPPATTUNE
Grant agreement ID	101095170
Deliverable number	D4.2
Deliverable name	Three country translocal articulation of extremism & visualisation report
Due date	30 September 2024
Submission date	11 November 2024
Type	R - Document, report
Dissemination level	PU - Public
Work package	WP4: Media, Machines, Mobilisations
Deliverable Leading Partner	Malmö University, Sweden
Contributing Partners	Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
Version	Publication date	Changes
0	10 Sept	Draft report reviewed by Tina Askanius and Ursula Reeger (WP4 leads)
I	9 Oct	Report reviewed by Umut Korkut
II	5 Nov	Final version reviewed by Tina Askanius and Ursula Reeger (WP4 leads)

Views and opinions expressed within this report are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, the Horizon-Europe programme or Innovate UK. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. Grant Agreement No. 101095170.

For more information on this report please contact Tina Askanius:
tina.askanius@mau.se

Follow OppAttune Publications on:

 [oppattune.eu](https://www.oppattune.eu)  [@oppattune](https://twitter.com/oppattune)  [oppattune](https://www.linkedin.com/company/oppattune)  [@OppAttune](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)  [@oppattune.project](https://www.instagram.com/oppattune.project)

Table of Contents

TABLE OF FIGURES	6
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	9
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION 2024 IN CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM AUSTRIA, BULGARIA AND SWEDEN	13
2.1. VIENNA, AUSTRIA: A SECOND ORDER ELECTION IN AN EXTRAORDINARY ELECTION YEAR.....	14
2.2. SOFIA, BULGARIA: IN THE SHADOW OF (YET ANOTHER) NATIONAL ELECTION AND DEEPENING POLITICAL CRISIS.....	16
2.3. MALMÖ, SWEDEN: PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY, ANTI-WAR PROTESTS AND FAR-RIGHT TROLL FACTORIES	18
3. KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS.....	20
3.1. EVERYDAY EXTREMISM: UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT IDEAS IN EVERYDAY SETTINGS	20
3.2. TRANSLOCALITY	21
3.3. HYBRID SPACES ACROSS THE ONLINE/OFFLINE CONTINUUM.....	22
4. METHODOLOGY: COMBINING URBAN AND DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY	24
4.1. CONDUCTING ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK ACROSS HYBRID SPACES	24
4.2. VISUAL ANALYSIS OF MEMES AND OTHER VISUAL MATERIALS	26
5. THE EP ELECTIONS AS A SITE OF EVERYDAY EXTREMISM: SPACE OF FLOWS, TRANSLOCAL DYNAMICS AND VIOLENT NARRATIVES	27
5.1. POLITICAL CONTESTATION ACROSS ONLINE-OFFLINE CONTINUUM	31
5.2. TRANSLOCAL ARTICULATIONS OF EXTREMISM.....	36
5.3. A CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE: FROM MUNDANE TO EXTREME ARTICULATIONS OF VIOLENCE	42
6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS: TOWARDS A RELATIONAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY EXTREMISM.....	47
REFERENCES	50

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Empirical steps in WP4.....	11
Figure 2. Voter turnout, 1996-2024 EP elections in Austria. (Source: European Parliament).....	16
Figure 3. Results, 2024 EP elections in Austria. (Source: European Parliament).....	16
Figure 4. Voter turnout, 2007-2024 EP elections in Bulgaria. (Source: European Parliament)	17
Figure 5. Results, 2024 EP elections in Bulgaria. (Source: European Parliament)	17
Figure 6. Voter turnout, 1995-2024 EP elections in Sweden. (Source: European Parliament)	19
Figure 7. Results, 2024 EP elections in Sweden. (Source: European Parliament)	19
Figure 8. Treemap of topic distribution across all countries (n=584).....	28
Figure 9. Topic distribution per country (n=584).....	29
Figure 10. Word cloud of most frequent out-groups.	30
Figure 11. Language in memes across countries (n=584).....	37
Figure 12. Type of violence per topic (n=584).	43
Figure 13. Relational model for understanding everyday extremism.	48

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1. The FPÖ election campaign (translations: “Stop EU madness”) and its modifications..	32
Illustration 2. PP-DB's campaign (translations: “What kind of PM do you want?”; “#Who wins if you don't vote”) and its modifications.	33
Illustration 3. Viral image and memetic modifications of the demolition of the Monument of the Soviet Army in Sofia, Bulgaria.	34
Illustration 4. Anti-SD campaign in Nyköping, Sweden (translation: “You can vote for SD here”) and its modifications.....	36
Illustration 5. On the left: Meme from Austrian dataset, translation: “There is no such thing as a great replacement!”; on the right: Meme from Bulgarian dataset, translation: “You are going extinct. Fight.”	38
Illustration 6. Meme from Austrian dataset referencing the Sylt Scandal.	39
Illustration 7. Meme from Austrian dataset referencing the Stolzmonat campaign.	41
Illustration 8. Meme from Austrian dataset with the Austrian Stolzmonat flag in the background, translation: “This comment section is now proud!”	41
Illustration 9. Examples of memes articulating symbolic violence.....	44
Illustration 10. Examples of memes articulating structural violence.	45
Illustration 11. Examples of memes articulating physical violence.	46

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report takes the 2024 European Parliament elections as an entry point to examine translocal articulations of everyday extremism in and across three European countries and regions: Sweden (northern Europe), Austria (central Europe), and Bulgaria (eastern Europe). Drawing on hybrid ethnographic fieldwork and visual analysis of memes and other visual artefacts, we trace everyday political discussions surrounding the EP election campaigns in each country to examine how extremist narratives occur around contentious issues and how these are negotiated across online and offline spaces. The multi-sited research design allows us to shed light on differences and similarities in how violent rhetoric and political extremism emerge across different European contexts during a significant political event shared by citizens. By offering in-depth insights from three countries, the report contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges facing European cohesion in a time of rising political extremism and polarization within the European Union.

We identified six key topics around which extremist narratives emerged in political discussions in the context of the EP election 2024. These include political discontent, gender, migration, war and conflict, conspiracies and climate change. The most prominent theme in the data reflects a broad discontent with institutional politics and its representatives. However, the analysis suggests that general political discontent is often intertwined with and is fueled by a range of other more specific grievances. Further, while all topics appeared across countries, their relative importance varied by national context. Bulgaria's proximity to the Russia-Ukraine conflict heightened the prominence of the war and conflict theme, while in Sweden, migration remains a dominant theme generating hostility and violent rhetoric in debates. In Austria, gender emerged as the dominant topic, reflecting how "wokeness" around "gender ideology" has become a prominent and highly politicized issue in public discourse amplified by debates around Vienna Pride. Common themes across all countries, however, included hostility toward perceived "global elites," opposition to "woke ideologies," and skepticism toward the EU and its institutions. As such many memes addressing the topic of gender for example tapped into a deeper ideological left-versus-right divide, positioning gender related topics as emblematic of a larger culture war and "war on wokeness".

Probing for the translocal features of extremist narratives, the analysis provides insights on how "global" blueprint narratives of political extremism and conspiratorial beliefs are translated in different national and local contexts. Memes resonated powerfully across national borders. For example, in the context of migration, references to other European countries were frequent, reinforcing the narrative of the collapse of a Europe under the weight of multiculturalism and the negative effects of immigration. Variations of the same memetic templates, drawing on similar pop-cultural references and symbols, appeared in all three countries. This suggests a certain level of awareness of the transnational visual grammar

of contemporary politics within each country and testifies to the ability of these malleable memetic templates to adopt to different national contexts. However, our data revealed that while all topics we coded for were present in all countries, they were approached differently – sometimes referring to explicitly global problems, and at other times reduced to local concerns. Memes are most often not copy-pasted wholesale but rather repurposed and appropriated to make sense in, and add meaning to, specific national contexts, conflicts, and public conversations going on there.

Exploring the nature of violence saturating political discourse around the EP election in both digital and urban spaces, the analysis demonstrates how different forms of violence—symbolic, physical, and structural—sit on a spectrum that ranges from subtle and mundane expressions of aggression and hostility to explicit calls for violence. These are interconnected and mutually reinforce broader sentiments of political discontent and disillusionment. This interplay highlights the pervasive and mutable nature of contemporary extremist narratives circulating in Europe, which shape public perception and discourse in ways that increasingly tolerate political violence. A key finding in this regard is that extremism narratives are often ambiguous and presented in satiric form in ways that blend humour and irony making it difficult to immediately recognize the underlying call for violence and dehumanisation at work. The findings indicate a troubling normalisation of violent rhetoric in a development towards “everyday extremism,” where anti-democratic ideas increasingly seep into the mainstream and everyday political discussions.

In closing and based on the results of this study, we propose a relational model for understanding contemporary forms of extremism along three analytical continuums: translocal-local, online-offline, mundane-extreme. Such an approach captures the complex, intersecting processes driving the evolution towards everyday extremism by recognising the intertwined dynamics shaping today’s political discourse and action.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfS: Alternative for Sweden (SE)
AU: Austria
BG: Bulgaria
BSP: Bulgarian Socialist Party (BG)
C: Center Party (SE)
CSD: Center for the Study of Democracy
EP: European Parliament
EPP: European People's Party
EU: European Union
FPÖ: Freedom Party of Austria (AT)
GERB: Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (BG)
ITN: There is Such a People (BG)
KD: Christian Democrats (SE)
KPÖ: Communist Party of Austria (AT)
L: Libreal Party (SE)
LGBTQ+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more
M: Moderate Party (SE)
MP: Green Party (SE)
MRF: Movement for Rights and Freedoms (BG)
NEOS: The New Austria and Liberal Forum (AT)
PM: Prime Minister
PP-DB: We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria (BG)
S: Social Democrats (SE)
SD: Sweden Democrats (SE)
SE: Sweden
SPÖ: Social Democratic Party of Austria (AT)
SS: Schutzstaffel
UDF: Union of Democratic Forces (BG)
V: Left Party (SE)
WP: Work package
ÖVP: Christian Democratic People's Party (AT)

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament (EP) elections represent a major shared political event, ideally fostering democratic participation, facilitating pan-European dialogue, and shaping the future direction of the European Union. However, this year's EP elections, which took place in May 2024, unfolded amid a surge in political violence and political polarization across the continent. Germany, for example, experienced several violent incidents and attacks against politicians, and in Slovakia an assassination attempt targeted the prime minister. More generally, a range of political, social, and geopolitical crises heavily influenced the election campaigns and everyday political discussions among European citizens.

Importantly, the elections took place against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine which has shattered illusions of continued peace on the European continent and significantly destabilized security and the economy. Another significant factor influencing the elections is Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, along with the mounting protests among European citizens against continued U.S. and European support for Israel's war and military campaign. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic also loomed large. The pandemic not only exposed vulnerabilities in European health systems but also fuelled divisive debates on civil liberties and brought an uptick in disinformation and conspiracy theories, which has proven to have long term consequences for the political landscape and civic trust in public institutions and authorities.

Against this backdrop, populist and far-right parties made substantial electoral gains across Europe, weakening pro-European and democratic forces within the European Parliament. These parties have long proved adept at using online media to amplify their rhetoric, particularly in opposition to the EU's Green Deal, civil rights for minorities, and migration policies. In all three countries under scrutiny for this report - Sweden, Austria, and Bulgaria - populist far-right parties and actors on the extra-parliamentary extreme right significantly influenced political debates around the EP elections.

While many key "global" concerns—such as climate change, immigration, and the economy—are shared across the EU, local political dynamics and distinct realities shaped each country's political discourse distinctly. In Austria, scandals and controversies involving especially the lead candidate of the Green Party shaped everyday discussions on the election, while in Bulgaria, yet another national election and growing voter fatigue over the inability to form a stable government amidst a prolonged political crisis was the dominant theme. Furthermore, the war in Gaza and associated pro-Palestinian anti-war protests occurred simultaneously with the EP election campaigns and became deeply intertwined with broader political discourse on European politics, especially in Sweden, where the anti-war mobilizations blurred the boundaries between domestic electoral issues and international conflicts.

Amid the backdrop of these deepening political conflicts in Europe and the world, this study examines the political mobilisations and discussions surrounding the EP elections, with a focus on the emergence of divisive and violent discourse within these contexts. The study is part of a larger transnational research developed within the framework of Work Package 4 *Media, Machines, and Mobilisations* in the OppAttune project. OppAttune tracks the evolution of oppositional ideologies and aims to develop tools to **track, attune, and limit the spread of extreme political narratives**. The project operates at micro, meso, and macro levels, comprehensively addressing these issues from the perspective of legal, political, and historical factors to group dynamics, media contexts and the everyday life of citizens. Within the larger OppAttune project, Work Package 4 brings together media and urban scholars to identify and understand contemporary extremist narratives on- and offline and to map their spread across the digital mainstream and into local ecologies. This deliverable, along with the efforts of WP4 at large, contributes specifically to OppAttune’s first objective of *tracking* the evolution of extreme political narratives. The results of our empirical work will, however, feed into the Attunement Model and the subsequent stages of developing tools for attuning capacity for public dialogue by modelling how the evolution of extreme political narratives impact social and political dialogue.

The report is the second in a series of deliverables from the work package that follow a three-step approach to examining what we term “everyday extremism” (*figure 1*).

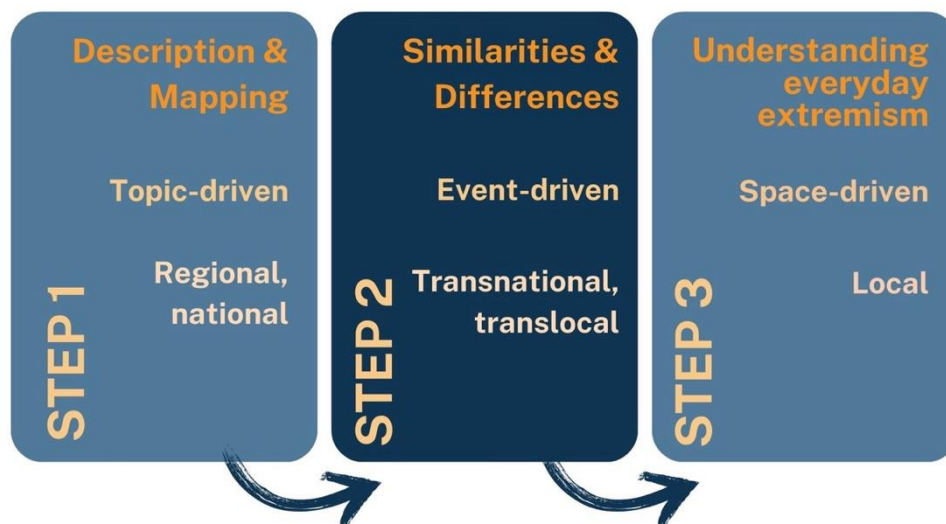


FIGURE 1. EMPIRICAL STEPS IN WP4.

The first report (D4.1) was *topic-driven*, focusing on extremist narratives emerging around contentious topics as they circulate online in specific national contexts. These topics relate to the broader set of topics identified by the OppAttune consortium including vaccination,

immigration and supply-chain protectionism. Our initial review moved beyond these and further identified climate and gender as pivotal topics around which extremist narratives revolve across Europe. In this second report, we build on insights gained from this initial mapping of key topics around which political antagonism, and in some cases, extremist discourse, tend to emerge. We are acutely aware, however, that we are studying a moving target within a rapidly shifting political landscape. The political discourse surrounding the issues that surfaced from the initial phases of our empirical work has evolved significantly in the short time since we first started the project. For example, the conversations surrounding vaccines and the surge of anti-government and anti-elite sentiments that dominated the period following the global pandemic have since evolved. These discussions have morphed into a broader, more diffuse set of amorphous post-pandemic conspiracies, focused on issues such as global domination and population control, which are no longer explicitly tied to COVID-19. Instead, these have begun to intersect with conspiracy theories and narratives related to climate change denial and fears of manipulation and orchestrated population control more generally. Additionally, the ongoing wars and armed conflicts—particularly in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, and now Lebanon—have pushed war and global conflict to the forefront of public discourse and significantly shaped this phase of our empirical research. This evolving landscape underscores the dynamic nature of political discourse and the need for continuous adaptation in our analysis as new crises and issues emerge, fueling shifts in both mainstream and extremist rhetoric.

This report takes the EP elections as an entry point to study translocal articulations of extremism in everyday spaces and conversations, as they emerge around a major pan-European event. Building on an in-depth study of political campaigning and commentary around the elections in three European countries, we seek to understand of how extremist narratives were articulated, disseminated, and contested across online and offline spaces in connection to the EP 2024 elections. The report sheds light on the similarities and differences of extremist narratives occurring among broader political discussions around contentious topics in different European countries while highlighting the translocal dimensions of such narratives in terms of the form they take and how they circulate.

During the spring of 2024 (1 May–10 June) we conducted hybrid ethnographies in three countries. We immersed ourselves in online spaces central to political communication and public deliberation in Sweden, Bulgaria, and Austria respectively, and offline localities focusing our efforts on the cities of Malmö, Sofia, and Vienna. The findings presented in this report draw on results generated as part of this field work, but for this particular deliverable we focus on the visual components in our data set with an in-depth analysis of memes and other forms of visual communication. Visual artefacts like symbols, pictures, posters, graffiti, memes or short videos have become powerful tools in political mobilization today (see Caiani, 2024; Doerr et al., 2013; Jenzen et al., 2021; Lu & Peng, 2024), effectively spreading ideas and messages and shaping politics and political communication (Bleiker, 2018; Veneti et al., 2019).

Not only has digital visual media increasingly become “central to the everyday practice of engaged citizens” (Dean, 2018, p. 255), they also provide content creators with multiple options to attract new audiences, facilitating the movement of radicalised content from echo-chambers to the mainstream of society (Ozduzen & Korkut, 2023).

In preparing this visualization report, our analytical efforts have therefore centred on interpreting the extensive dataset produced by the hybrid ethnographies through a visual lens. Specifically, we conducted an in-depth analysis of the memes circulating online during the election campaign period in all three countries. This analysis enabled us to unpack the themes, symbols, and narratives embedded in these digital artefacts, offering insights into differences and similarities in how citizens across different European regions engaged in this transnational political event, and track the ways in which extremist narratives can take on visual forms. When examining these visuals, we highlight the translocal dimensions of how global and local dynamics intersect online, shaping political discourse across borders while reflecting the specific cultural and regional contexts of each electorate. Beyond the translocal dimension of these memes, we take an interest in where (around which issues) and how (through what modes of violence and hostility) extremism occurs within the more general articulations of political contention and discontent with institutional politics in Europe.

Following these focal points and, in alignment with the Grant Agreement, the objectives of the report are to a) track the dissemination of extremist narratives emerging and their circulation from the digital mainstream into various urban contexts (and vice versa), and b) explore the transnational nature of extremist narratives through a cross-regional visual analysis. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between digital space and physical localities in circulating extremist narratives during a pivotal political event, offering insights into the broader implications of these narratives on democratic processes and societal cohesion in Europe.

2. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION 2024 IN CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM AUSTRIA, BULGARIA AND SWEDEN

On June 6-9, 2024, European Parliament elections—the world’s second largest elections—took place. With over 400 million eligible voters across Europe, these elections not only capture widespread public attention but also provide a platform for a diverse range of ideologies to gain visibility. Using the EP elections as our focal point, we examine this politically significant event, which occurred simultaneously across three countries. This democratic event offers a unique opportunity to explore how extremist narratives intersects with mainstream electoral politics, shapes public discourse, and potentially influences voter behaviour. Further, the EP elections represent a period of heightened political tension and

polarization, making them an ideal context for analysing how extremist ideologies seek to gain traction and spread throughout the continent.

European elections have long been considered “second order elections” that are driven by domestic politics rather than EU-level policymaking (Ehin and Talving, 2021). Historically, the most prominent issues in these elections have been shaped by national concerns rather than broader pan-European policy debates. However, there are multiple similarities and shared concerns across the three national contexts we studied, particularly when it comes to major future-oriented issues debated in connection with this election. These include topics such as EU enlargement or potential exits (Swexit, Öxit, Bulexit), immigration and external border management, the handling of the pandemic, and the role of EU as a player in global politics. An additional commonality across all three countries is the presence of relatively strong far-right parties that compete for votes alongside actors promoting anti-EU campaigns and pushing for exit policies. These parties and political groups shaped the election campaigns, and, by extension, the political agenda and public conversations, in significant ways.

In all three countries, the elections took place on 9 June, with Austria electing 20 MEPs, Bulgaria – 17, and Sweden – 21. In Sweden, election day holds less significance compared to the other two countries as voters have the flexibility to cast their ballots in advance at designated voting locations, through mobile voting clerks, or via messenger or letter. In Bulgaria, voting is compulsory for all Bulgarian citizens over 18 who have resided in Bulgaria or another EU country three months prior to the elections, but no penalty is incurred if the voting responsibility is not fulfilled. All three countries have a preferential voting system, allowing voters to influence candidate ranking within parties.

2.1. VIENNA, AUSTRIA: A SECOND ORDER ELECTION IN AN EXTRAORDINARY ELECTION YEAR

In Austria, the 2024 EP elections took place in a so-called “super election year” shortly after regional elections in two federal states and just three months prior to national elections. For a long time, the Austrian party system was characterized by the dominance of the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Christian Democratic People’s Party (ÖVP). Up until the 1980s these two parties accounted for around 90% of the votes in the National Council (Parliament) and dominated regional politics, whereby some federal states were traditionally under ÖVP rule and others under SPÖ rule. The sharp rise of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) under Jörg Haider came along with declining votes for SPÖ and ÖVP and the emergence of new parties, including the Greens (in the 1980s) and the liberal NEOS (in 2012). The FPÖ has been continuously represented in the National Council since the early years of the Second Republic and was junior coalition partner in five different federal governments so far. Intra-party disputes and scandals were the main reasons why their share of votes in national elections varied greatly, ranging between 10% and 27% since 1990.

Importantly, a growing portion of the voting-age population is excluded from participating in national and local level elections, due to the disenfranchisement of foreign nationals. This is particularly pronounced in Vienna, where more than one-third of the population is affected (Stadt Wien, 2023). However, an exception is made for EU citizens who have their main place of residence in Austria, who retain the right to vote in European and municipal elections. Voting age in Austria, set at 16, has been shown to encourage political engagement among younger citizens (Aichholzer & Kritzinger, 2020).

After a referendum in which 67% of Austrians voted in favour of entering the EU, Austria joined the EU in 1995, the same year as Sweden. In the European Parliament elections of 1996, more or less immediately after Austria's accession, the voter turnout was relatively high with just under 70% of eligible voters participating. Subsequently, participation fell sharply, reaching its lowest point in 2004 (42%). More recently, participation in EU elections has risen again, reaching 56% in 2024, which is still well below the turnout in national elections – 75.6% in 2019 (*figure 2*). Austria is thus a strong case for the second order framework (Boomgarden et al., 2019) and EP elections tend to stand in the shadow of national politics (Plescia et al., 2020).

In addition, EU-scepticism remains notably strong in Austria. According to the latest Eurobarometer (2024), only 38% of Austrians held a positive view of the European Union, while approximately 25% expressed a negative perception – a slight improvement over previous polls. Despite this slight increase in positive sentiment, Austria still falls below the EU average when it comes to positive associations with the EU, many associating it with “waste of money”, “bureaucracy”, and “loss of cultural identity” (Schönherr, 2023).

The 2024 EU elections were marked by party internal transformations and scandals, most notably controversies surrounding the Green Party's lead candidate Lena Schilling. The EU election also served to prelude the upcoming national elections (September 2024), which is why in addition to the lead candidates, all party leaders were highly visible throughout the campaigns. As in 2019, all parliamentary parties (SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Greens and NEOS) retained their seats in the European Parliament (*see figure 3*). For the first time, the FPÖ became the strongest party in a nationwide election securing 25.4% of the votes (+8.2%), ahead of the ÖVP (24.5%, -10.0%), SPÖ (23.2%, -0.7%), the Greens (11.1%, -3.0%) and NEOS (10.1%, +1.7%). Neither the Communist Party (KPÖ) nor the newly founded independent list DNA, which positioned itself mainly as an anti-vaccination movement, surpassed the four percent threshold.

EP elections in Austria Voter turnout, %

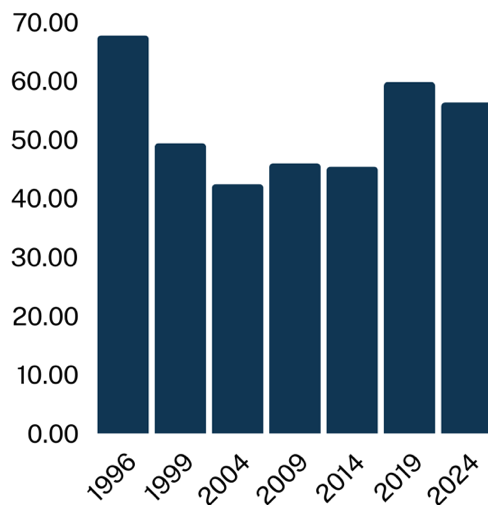


FIGURE 2. VOTER TURNOUT, 1996-2024 EP ELECTIONS IN AUSTRIA. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

EP elections in Austria 2024

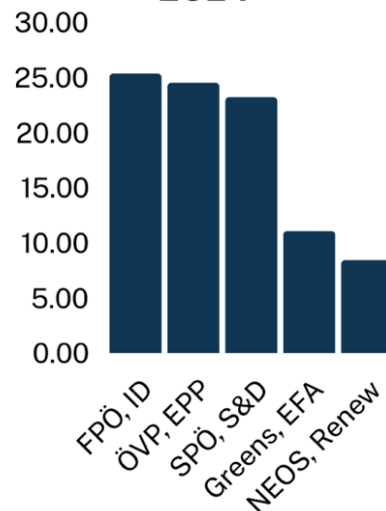


FIGURE 3. RESULTS, 2024 EP ELECTIONS IN AUSTRIA. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

2.2. SOFIA, BULGARIA: IN THE SHADOW OF (YET ANOTHER) NATIONAL ELECTION AND DEEPENING POLITICAL CRISIS

Bulgaria's participation in EP elections began in 2007 following its EU accession. Since then, voter turnout has consistently been lower than for national elections, a pattern seen across much of Europe (Berg & Oscarsson, 2015), but also lower than the average for EU member states. The recent years' political crisis in Bulgaria has negatively impacted the already low voter turnout. The 2024 EP elections were overshadowed by parliamentary snap elections on the same day – the sixth round of elections within a 3-year span, following a short-lived government that dismantled over a failed rotation agreement after mere nine months.

Persistent political issues such as corruption and economic instability have influenced both voter turnout and political stability in the country (Ganchev et al., 2023). The first democratic parliamentary elections after the fall of the communist regime in 1989 saw over 90% participation, but subsequently, voter turnout has gradually declined, reflecting the decreasing public trust in government institutions (Eurobarometer, 2007-2024). Over the past decade, Bulgaria found itself in a period of political upheavals, marked by a combination of protests, escalations, corruption scandals, pandemic-related grievences, anti-vaxx sentiments, international conflicts, and a deepening political crisis (see Askanus et al., 2024). These developments have led to a loss of confidence in the government and institutions and heightened feelings of uncertainty in Bulgarian society, in turn negatively impacting voter behavior. This is evident by the rapid rise and fall of newly emerged parties from one election to the next, and significant political fragmentation. Further, political instability has resulted in

voter fatigue and broader disenchantment with the democratic system: in a 2020 CSD survey, only 35% of Bulgarians stated that they prefer a liberal democratic multi-party system with regular elections; 45% of the surveyed citizens' preferred form of governance was "a strong and decisive leader unhindered by a parliament or elections" (Filipova & Stefanov, 2020).

The June 9 general election recorded the lowest voter turnout to date in post-communist Bulgaria at just 34.4%. The European Parliament election saw similar levels of participation as in previous years, with a turnout of 33.8% (*figure 4*). The fragmentation of the country's political landscape reflected the EP election results (*figure 5*): while GERB remained the largest party, it lost almost 8% of its voter support compared to 2019, costing them a seat. PP-DB, a merge of two parties—PP, which emerged in 2021, and DB, previously represented in the European Parliament by one seat—marked a precedent when they announced that their three elected candidates will join two different European families – one of the candidates, formerly of DB, will remain in EPP which DB had been part of since 2019, but the newly elected two would join Renew Europe. Another newly emerged political party—far-right Revival—achieved electoral success securing three seats and pushing the two previously represented nationalist parties IMRO and Bulgaria Without Censorship off the list. The Bulgarian Socialist party (BSP) lost three seats, dropping from five to two, while ITN entered the European Parliament for the first time with one seat. In the national elections held on the same day, apart from the abovementioned parties, a new player—nationalist far-right Velichie—surprisingly entered the national parliament with 4.6% of the votes, having mainly campaigned on social media, particularly Facebook, TikTok and YouTube (Dimitrov, 2024).

EP elections in Bulgaria
Voter turnout, %

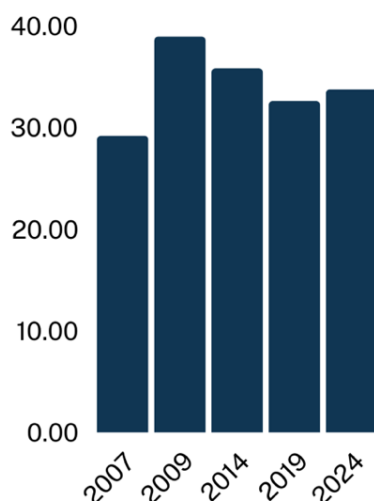


FIGURE 4. VOTER TURNOUT, 2007-2024 EP ELECTIONS IN BULGARIA. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

EP elections in Bulgaria
2024

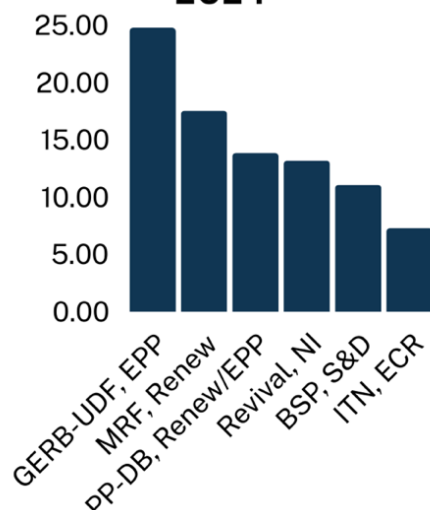


FIGURE 5. RESULTS, 2024 EP ELECTIONS IN BULGARIA. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

2.3. MALMÖ, SWEDEN: PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY, ANTI-WAR PROTESTS AND FAR-RIGHT TROLL FACTORIES

Sweden is one of the countries with highest voter turnout in Europe. General elections often reach between 80-90% voter turnout – an exceptionally high figure from an international perspective. This also correlates with high levels of trust in democracy, where Sweden consistently scores in the top five among European countries (Regeringskansliet, 2018). Some practical factors deemed relevant to this high participation are, among others, the fact that Election Day always falls on a Sunday, along with the possibility to vote in advance in any section in the country. However, slight class differences in voter participation have been reported: it tends to be lower among citizens with lower levels of education, lower income, or no employment, as well as those born outside of Sweden (Lindström, 2021).

Sweden is often cited as a model for successful democratic development, due to its longstanding commitment to social equality and economic cooperation – features strongly tied to the so-called “Swedish model” (Möller, 2023). Like Austria, Sweden joined the EU in 1995, following a referendum in 1994 where 52.3% voted in favor. Since then, the public opinion of its membership in the Union has maintained a balance between pragmatic support and critical scrutiny. While the majority of Swedes support the membership, there is a cautious approach to balancing national interests with deeper integration, exemplified i.e. by Sweden’s continuous refusal to join the Eurozone. However, Sweden’s EP election participation reflects the country’s strong democratic tradition. While the total turnout in the European Parliament elections is decreasing in the EU, the turnout in Sweden is increasing steadily (*figure 6*), and is higher than the average for the EU, although still lower than the participation in national elections (Centre for European Research, 2019).

The 2024 EP Elections in Sweden were marked by significant levels of conflict driven by divisive debates over the country’s immigration policies, climate change action, and the country’s accession to NATO and role within the European Union. Political parties were polarized on issues such as the EU’s handling of security, economic disparities, and digital sovereignty, leading to a highly charged political climate. Amidst this backdrop, far-right parties stirred controversy with provocative anti-immigration campaigns. Far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) ran the slogan “My Europe builds walls” (Mitt Europa bygger murar), a pun on the famous speech given by Fredrik Reinfeldt, the Swedish prime minister during the so-called 2015 “refugee crisis” in which he called for solidarity and compassion. Their campaign featured videos targeting immigrants containing inflammatory rhetoric and misleading information spread through their media channels. The campaign drew criticism for its aggressive and divisive rhetoric, which some argued were reminiscent of far-right propaganda techniques (Klenell, 2024). Anti-EU Alternative for Sweden (AfS), on the other hand, arranged a rally tour across the country, where party leader Gustav Kasselstrand ritually burned the European flag in several Swedish cities. Adding to the tension, SD faced backlash over

revelations of a “troll factory” of anonymous social media accounts used to spread propaganda and false information to interfere with the election (Sveriges Radio, 2024). Further, the EP elections in Sweden were shaped by the anti-war and pro-Palestine protests that erupted in the spring of 2024 in response to Israel's escalation of deadly attacks against civilians in Gaza. Protesters across the country called for ceasefire and for stronger humanitarian relief efforts from the government alongside demands for a commercial embargo and political sanctions against Israel. While domestic issues tend to dominate EP elections in Sweden as in other European countries, the war in Gaza brought foreign policy and Sweden's shifting position in international politics to the forefront of political conversations.

Unlike in Bulgaria, the results of the latest EP election in Sweden were drastically different than the national election results – SD, who hold the second position in the Swedish parliament, ended up fourth on June 9th with 13.2% of the votes, while the Green Party, which only received 5.1% of the votes in the latest national election, ended up third with 13.9% (figure 7).

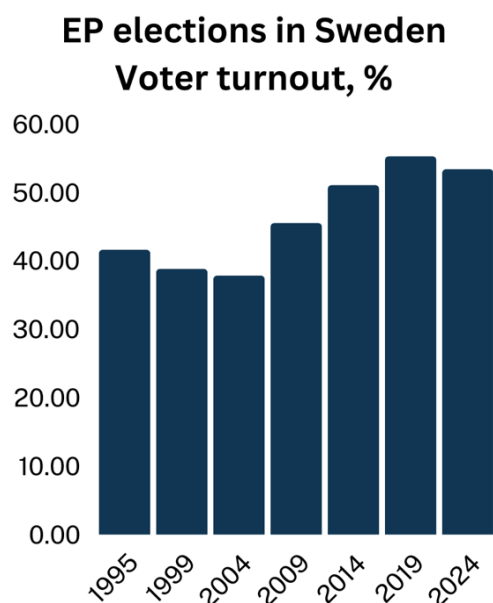


FIGURE 6. VOTER TURNOUT, 1995-2024 EP ELECTIONS IN SWEDEN. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

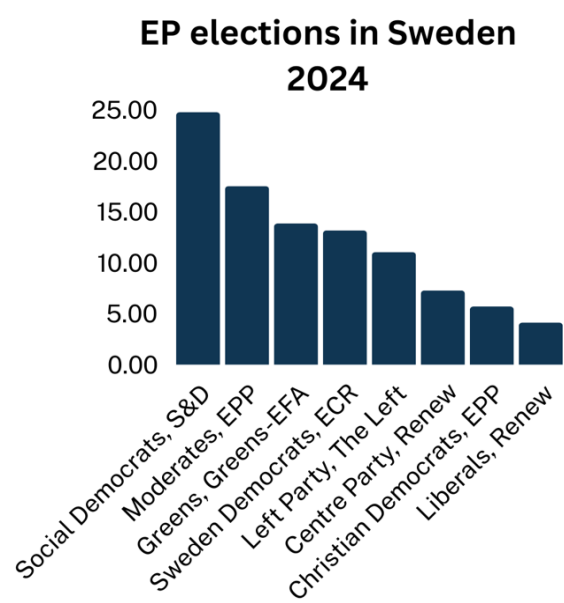


FIGURE 7. RESULTS, 2024 EP ELECTIONS IN SWEDEN. (SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)

3. KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

To inform our work, we draw on a number of key concepts. These include the notion of *everyday extremism* and *translocality* along with the notion of *hybrid space*, which serves as a key tool for examining discourse and practices across online and offline settings.

3.1. EVERYDAY EXTREMISM: UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT IDEAS IN EVERYDAY SETTINGS

The concept of *everyday extremism* seeks to capture how extremist narratives increasingly penetrate into everyday settings and are renegotiated in everyday life both online and offline. It focuses on the pervasiveness of extreme and violent ideas that ordinary citizens may encounter as part of their day-to-day routines and media consumption. Everyday extremism is usefully understood, not as a distinct or new form of extremist ideology, but rather as a way to understand how longstanding and familiar ideas, once considered taboo, fringe, or extreme have gradually entered mainstream spaces and conversations, digital as well as physical (see also Askanius & Stoencheva, 2024; Stoencheva & Boshkoska, 2024).

In alignment with the work being developed in WP5 (*Extremism & Living Democracies*), we echo the importance of understanding “the ordinary, everyday discourses and practices that reproduce hostile oppositions between ‘us’ and ‘them’”. Extreme everyday narratives have become part of the common-sense way in which people understand the world, and this is evident in daily discourse and interactions” (Andreouli et al., 2024). This “us” versus “them” binary is central to what we define as extremist narratives. At the core of extremist narratives is a “value proposition” that asserts hostile measures against an out-group (them) are required in the face of an immanent crisis, and in extension, existential threat this poses to the in-group (us) (Berger, 2018). While all political discourse essentially rely on group identities and opposition, **we consider a narrative extremist when it advocates for hostility or violence against an abject Other, thus violating democratic principles and fundamental human rights rooted in notions of equality and human dignity**. Such hostility, however, does not necessarily need to be articulated overtly or represented as explicit physical violence against specific people. Moving beyond the framework of violent extremism to everyday extremism involves shifting the focus from explicit physical violence to symbolic and cultural violence. This entails an analytical lens which foregrounds the discursive-narrative aspects of violence that create the conditions for structural and direct violence to persist.

Developing an “everyday approach” to understanding extremism responds to Miller-Idriss’ call for research to focus on “the kinds of places where people may encounter extremist messages and ideas in their ordinary lives—perhaps long before they have made an ideological commitment (...)—and the role that these new, mainstream gateways may play in shaping extremist engagement” (Miller-Idriss, 2020, p. 4). Such an everyday approach to studying extremism requires us to think outside the box about what constitutes the object of

analysis and what qualifies as data. It forces us to consider how extremism travels and resonates when it appears on a sticker, meme, t-shirt, or other everyday artefact, compared to more traditional and explicitly ideological forms of text like political manifestos or speeches. This calls for methods that capture routine, ordinary practices and discourse – such as the ethnographic approach used in this research. Based on these perspectives, we propose a working definition of everyday extremism along the following lines:

Everyday extremism refers to the recurrent and normalised presence of extremist narratives embedded in familiar settings such as discourse (including jokes, visuals, etc.), spaces, and practices. It pertains to mundane discourse and practices rather than extreme or extraordinary incidents. It is often amorphous, ambiguous, and embedded in the routine aspects of daily life.

3.2. TRANSLOCALITY

Central to this report is the notion of *translocal geographies* and the development of tools to understand how extremist narratives transcend national boundaries and become manifest and propagated across different local contexts. Within the nexus of local, national, transnational, and global dynamics, local political concerns and grievances are shaped by (trans)national contexts, and in turn, local concerns feed into broader (trans)national narratives. This highlights how transnational political issues are negotiated at the local level, while local politics are increasingly influenced by external developments and cannot be understood in isolation from global issues and events.

Within the field of geography, the concept of translocality has long focused on migration and the personal ties of migrants, who, through these ties connect spaces, places and people. In essence, translocality sees “mobility and emplacement as simultaneous processes” (Porst & Sakdapolrak, 2017, p. 113), making it possible to focus not only on connections and networks across borders but also on inner-national ties and rural-urban linkages. Thus, it departs from the perspective of transnationalism and the nation states as a static unit of analysis (see Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013) and translocality has become a research perspective of its own. Such a perspective “holds the potential to challenge a fixed idea of location and to enliven local-local connections and place-to-place relationships” (Puzon, 2018, p. 28).

Urban contexts are particularly permeated by translocal networks and linkages that result in a web of social, cultural, economic, and political ties stretching across multiple geographical locations. It is the movement of people, goods, capital, and services that shapes such processes and that is a prerequisite for the “connectedness between, and embeddedness within places” (Datta & Brickell, 2016). This points to the relational and transformative character of the local and the processual character of the production of space. It allows us to study how global and local processes intersect within urban contexts, conceptualizing cities

not as static entities but as dynamic nodes in a larger, interconnected web of places and people.

The rise of digital technologies has amplified such translocal connections further, allowing for the maintaining of relationships across borders and the exchange of ideas in real time, regardless of geographical distance. In media and communication studies and especially the field of social media, the notion of transnationality and translocality is essential to the study of the circulation of news, ideas, and narratives. Research suggests that digital connectivity shapes how people experience locality (Martin & Rizvi, 2014; Waldherr et al., 2023), and that these factors transform the local-global nexus not least in how democratic conversations and political movements operate (Dahlberg-Grundberg and Örestig, 2017; Penney & Dadas, 2014). These dynamics contribute to the transnationality of the ideas, narratives and actors that drive political mobilisations, including those of anti-democratic and extremist movements. In a recent study on the transnationalization of far-right narratives around the COVID-19 pandemic, Askanius, Molas, et al. (2024, p. 4) distinguish between three modes of transnationalism in visual extremist narratives circulating around the so-called “freedom movements” that emerged in response to lockdowns and restrictions during the pandemic: 1) the circulation of identical content/material/narratives across borders; 2) the establishment of direct communicative references across borders; 3) the circulation of similar content/visuals/symbols across borders, i.e. participating in the same discourse at the same time (see also McSwiney et al., 2021).

We build on this typology for analysing the visual language of memes, albeit adopting a perspective of translocality rather than transnationality, and argue that all three modes contribute to the formation of a coherent transnational narrative. We anticipated finding that, despite the striking similarities in narratives of discontent across Europe that tend to be tailored around certain global “templates”, there is an adaptive process involved within each national context. Our research shows that narratives are not merely adopted wholesale but rather translated to make sense in specific national contexts. We consider narratives as continuously evolving, embedding localized meanings into transnational conflicts, which are then interpreted and negotiated in specific local contexts. Thus, we view translocality as “a bidirectional process in which local and global discourses impact and shape each other” (Kytölä, 2015, p. 371). Our interest therefore lies not only in the global templates of certain narratives but also in their local adaptations.

3.3. HYBRID SPACES ACROSS THE ONLINE/OFFLINE CONTINUUM

Our research design draws on the notion of hybrid space as this emerges at the intersection of online and offline interactions and practices. We consider hybrid space a key concept for understanding the relationship between digital and urban spaces in the making of contemporary political “produced space” (Lefebvre, 2013). From the perspective of spatial

science, the hybridization of space, amplified by digital technologies, has added a new dimension to how we understand geographical, political, and social environments. Space is no longer just a physical construct influenced by human interpretations and networks, it includes spaces enabled by digital platforms.

In implementing this concept, we draw on the work of social movement scholar Manuel Castells, who introduced the idea of the “space of flows” for understanding political mobilisations that take place in digital media and in the streets simultaneously. Castells (2015) argues that spatial relations in political campaigning are no longer exclusively defined by physical proximity or activities taking place face-to-face. With the advent of digital networks, space has transcended its physical boundaries to include the digital realm, where individuals and communities interact, share information, and form social ties that may never materialize in the same geographic location. Physical spaces and virtual spaces co-exist, interconnect, and influence each other in ways that have transformed our understanding of politics in a digital age.

Hybrid spaces, thus, are not dualistic environments where one exists either in the physical (offline) or digital (online) realm. Instead, it exists on a continuum between the two, where interactions, movements, and ideas traverse seamlessly across both realms. For instance, content that circulates online or goes viral on social media has the power to trigger reactions, protests, or even violence. Conversely, events that occur in the physical world, such as political events, social crises, or acts of violence make their way into the online space, where they are interpreted, discussed, amplified, modified and potentially spark further offline reactions. This concept is crucial also when examining political extremism, where ideas and actors are not constrained to physical environments but permeate both online and offline domains, feeding off each other in a mutually reinforcing cycle.

The concept of hybrid space thus allows us to place ourselves and our analytical lens in the interconnected space between online and offline realms where ideas, symbols and narratives travel back and forth, continuously shaping and reshaping both digital and embodied political practices. Understanding this complex interaction requires moving beyond outdated dualisms and embracing a more integrated approach to studying how political communication operates in contemporary societies.

4. METHODOLOGY: COMBINING URBAN AND DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY

The research presented in this report draws on a hybrid ethnography, combining nonparticipant observations across digital and urban spaces in Europe in the period leading up to the 2024 EP election. Such an approach involves observing participants in both online and offline settings without actively engaging in events or interacting directly or purposefully with others. By integrating diverse sources of data, we provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional analysis. This allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how extremist narratives manifest in both digital and physical environments, providing rich descriptions of the interplay between online platforms and urban spaces. For this visualisation report, we focus predominantly on the visual material we gathered, e.g. memes collected online and photographs from graffiti, posters, pamphlets, stickers etc. that we encountered in offline spaces.

Drawing on Pink et al. (2016), we understand digital ethnography to take as its starting point the idea that digital media and technologies are intimately linked to the everyday world that people inhabit. It follows what media scholars have called a non-media centric approach to studying the role of media in contemporary societies (Couldry, 2016). De-centering media in a digital ethnography means acknowledging that these are always part of a wider set of environments and relations, and that media technology is inseparable from the other activities materialities, spatial and affective dimensions of how they are used, experienced and operate. Therefore, we understand digital spaces not as separate from but as an intrinsic part of the material, sensory and global/local spaces that people engage with.

Hybrid ethnography as a research practice thus invites us to think about the nexus between digital-material localities and offline environments, encouraging us to attend to the ways in which these spheres intersect instead of focusing on what sets them apart. As a method, hybrid ethnography essentially involves a form of “deep hanging out” online (Barendregt, 2021) in a systematic manner and over a sustained period of time, while simultaneously immersing oneself in the offline settings relevant to the research area. In our case, this involved ethnographic fieldwork in urban spaces, such as participating in town hall meetings or observing parties or political groups in rallies or handing out flyers in the city, while at the same time following the party’s activities around their campaign across multiple social media platforms.

4.1. CONDUCTING ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK ACROSS HYBRID SPACES

The ethnography unfolded in three main steps: 1) charting and defining the field; 2) day-to-day ethnographic practices; and 3) data analysis. To contextualize and structure our study, we kept track of the main events that shaped the election and collected information on the

political parties and their ideological foundations, including leading candidates and affiliation to fractions in the EP as well as party programmes, key topics and campaign material. This first step helped us understand the dynamics that shaped the election campaigns and laid the groundwork for the subsequent phases of the study.

The second step was at the heart of the hybrid ethnographies and consisted of a series of overlapping daily routines: catching up, exploring, observing, documenting (field diary and visuals) and finally archiving (see Postill & Pink, 2012). To conduct the online fieldwork, we purchased entirely new devices and registered them with freshly created, empty accounts, to minimise pre-defined algorithmic influence. Then, we registered new accounts on each of the three countries on the most popular social media platforms: Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok. On each of these platforms, we followed all the official accounts of the parties running for office in the respective country, their political leaders, and their top five EU candidates if they had social media presence on the platform. Additionally, we followed the ten biggest news outlets in each of the countries, and other key political actors, opinion makers and relevant hashtags that emerged through networked snowballing.

From May 1st to June 10th, 2024, we established a daily routine of spending approximately 30 minutes per country immersing ourselves in the online conversations surrounding the election campaigning. This entailed daily routines of opening each of the platforms, scrolling the feeds, and clicking the comment fields of popular posts, as we were most interested in user reactions and conversations. The screen was recorded during the entire process using the devices' built-in screen recorder feature, so we could focus on immersing ourselves in the field rather than keeping track of documentation. After the daily sessions were completed, we reviewed the recordings and took screenshots of relevant pieces of data (i.e. memes; violent use of emojis or gifs; noteworthy comments), focusing on user comments and reactions rather than the posts by the parties themselves.

Additionally, we engaged in non-participant observations in public spaces in the cities of Malmö, Vienna and Sofia. In each city, members of our team went on long strolls around the city—the equivalent of deep hangouts online—collecting visual materials and producing written documentation. Additionally, we selected a series of events to attend in each city including rallies, political campaigning in the streets, demonstrations or other public events related to the elections. The collected data range from photographs from rallies, meeting pamphlets, and flyers to documentations of politicisation of public spaces in the form of posters, banners, stickers, graffiti, but also online campaign materials and political expressions in visual and textual form, including reactions, comments, memes, gifs, and emojis. The data include audio and video recordings, field notes, screenshots, and images stored securely on Malmö University's servers.

4.2. VISUAL ANALYSIS OF MEMES AND OTHER VISUAL MATERIALS

For this report, we chose to focus on a visual analysis of the memes collected as part of our online fieldwork. These primarily appeared in the comment fields of political posts, and predominantly on the platforms Facebook and X. The dataset consisted of 208 images for Austria, 210 for Bulgaria and 161 for Sweden. We chose to focus our analysis on memes specifically because of the significant role they have come to play in political commentary and online extremism in recent years. Memes capture antagonistic narratives of political discontent as reflected in collective emotions and attitudes, created to appeal to a general public. This specific type of visual communication is particularly interesting with regard to its affective and aesthetic dimensions of how conversations shift from political antagonism to extremism. One of the most critical aspects of memes is their ability to cloak extremist narratives within seemingly innocuous or humorous content (Greene, 2019; Schmid et al., 2024). By incorporating pop-cultural references and employing humor, irony and ambiguity memes can disguise serious messages of violence or hatred, rendering them more palatable and shareable (Askanius & Keller, 2021). This allows extremist ideas to circulate without immediate scrutiny, thus facilitating the penetration of certain ideas into mainstream political conversations.

Building on the findings of Deliverable 4.1, we coded the memes with the qualitative analysis software NVivo, using a combination of inductive and deductive coding. First, to identify the *narrative* in each image in line with the definition proposed above, we coded for the following questions:

- Who are the in-groups?
- Who are the out-groups?
- What are the key topics/issues addressed (as part of the crisis narrative)?
- What (if any) type of violence is depicted/called for? (measures/solution to the crisis)

The *in-group* and *out-group* variables were coded with open (inductive) coding. We initially applied deductive coding to the variable *topic*, starting from the five topics identified in Deliverable 4.1, and later expanded the codes inductively. The variable *violence* was coded deductively, whereby we differentiated between *non-violent political discontent*; *symbolic violence*; *structural violence*; and *physical violence*. *Non-violent political discontent* either simply expresses dislike or calls for opposing an actor or action through democratic means (i.e. voting). *Symbolic violence* represents expressions of hostility, hatred, and exclusion, but steers clear of depicting or promoting violent actions. *Structural violence* entails the promotion of official, legal and/or anti-democratic actions against the out-group(s). *Physical violence* depicts and/or calls for physical forms of violence either by or against the out-group(s). In addition, we inductively coded the following variables: whether the image makes an explicit reference to a specific (trans)national *event*; what (if any) *symbols* the image contains (i.e. memetic templates, logos, flags, emojis, or ideological markers); and the

language in which the text in the meme appeared. Throughout the pages of this report, we include illustrative examples from the visual dataset that reflect the broader patterns of the findings. In selecting these visuals, we have intentionally avoided included the most overtly violent (racist, misogynist, homophobic, etc.) memes so as not to reproduce and amplify harmful content.

Regarding the visualisation of our data, we relied on three parallel strategies, presented in the following sections: a) the visualisation of our key findings in diagrams and charts; b) the presentation and thick description of visual documentation of our the fieldwork; and c) the in-depth analysis of memes as a particularly important mode of visual communication in contemporary political campaigning and commentary.

5. THE EP ELECTIONS AS A SITE OF EVERYDAY EXTREMISM: SPACE OF FLOWS, TRANSLOCAL DYNAMICS AND VIOLENT NARRATIVES

In our previous report mapping emerging extremist narratives across Europe (see Askanus et al., 2024), we identified gender, migration, climate, and vaccination as four key topics around which political contention and extremist narratives tend to emerge. The empirical data collected for this report not only reaffirmed the continued relevance of these topics but also provide valuable insights into their ongoing evolution. For example, as the COVID-19 pandemic recedes in urgency, discussions surrounding vaccination have expanded to include a range of post-COVID conspiracies around global domination and population control, which goes beyond the initial focus on vaccination policy. Moreover, while we coded climate as a distinct topic, we found it to be closely related to, and sometimes entirely intertwined with post-COVID conspiracies, as climate policies tend to fuel grievances similar to those expressed in relation to lockdowns or vaccine mandates tapping into fears of population control and manipulation. Finally, ongoing global conflicts such as the wars in Ukraine and Palestine emerged prominently as topics of contention in our dataset, which we summarised under the category *war & conflict*. As our empirical study centred on a specific election event, most of the discussions evolved around the topic of general political discontent with institutional politics and its representatives.

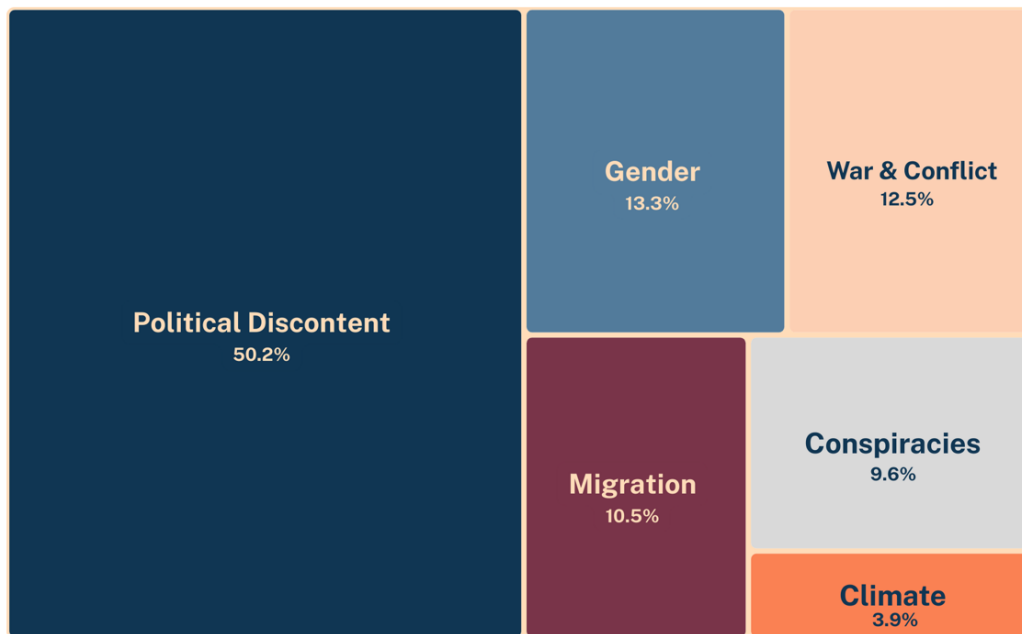


FIGURE 8. TREEMAP OF TOPIC DISTRIBUTION ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES (N=584).

Figure 8 offers an overview on the distribution of topics across all three countries based on the analysis of memes and visual artefacts circulating around the election campaigns. Unsurprisingly, about half of the visuals we encountered articulated some form of political discontent and opposition to the political establishment. Hence, the content created by ordinary users expressed support for or opposition to a candidate or party and were clearly shaped by the event of the EP elections. In most of the instances, political leaders and parties were mocked, ridiculed, implicated in political scandals or accused of ideological treachery. When supporting a candidate, users tend to resort to the use of emojis instead of memes and express their support through posting, for example, a heart in the colours of their preferred party or other positive emojis. Other memes within the topic of political discontent broadly targeted political ideologies, and a more general clash between left- and right-wing trenches. For example, parties and their lead candidates were visually implicated with extremist movements and ideologies, e.g. Stalinism and Nazism, and were portrayed as threats to democratic values. Finally, several memes also expressed a general disenchantment with politics, the (national) government or the EU and its institutions.

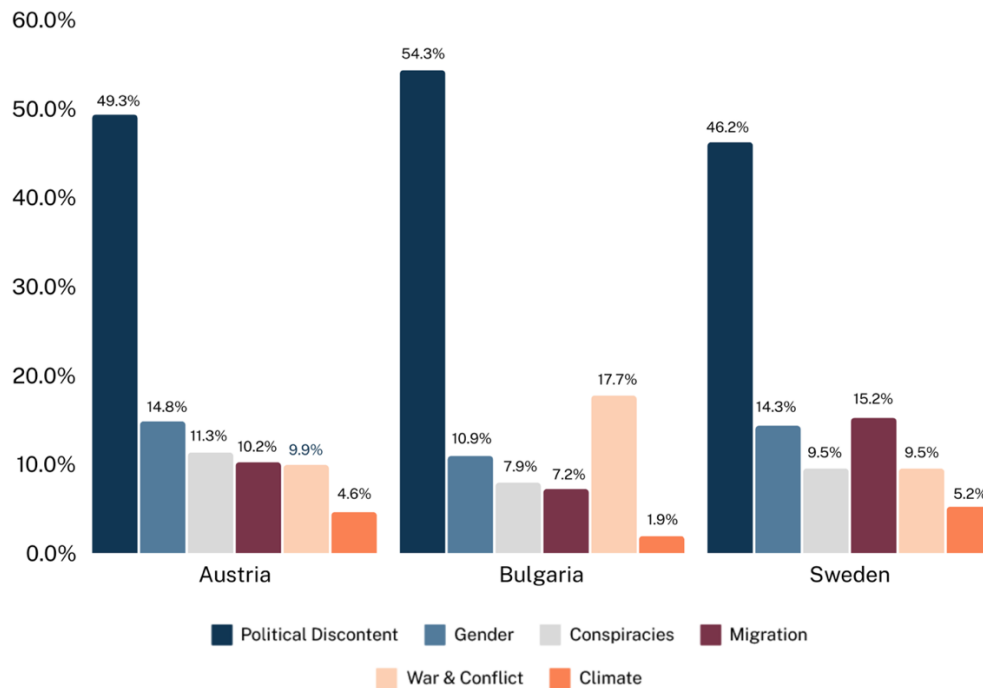


FIGURE 9. TOPIC DISTRIBUTION PER COUNTRY (N=584).

Approximately one-third of the memes coded as expressing political discontent with institutional politics also connected to other themes, highlighting how political discontent often intertwines with and is fueled by a range of grievances. For instance, many memes addressing the topic of gender also tapped into a deeper ideological left-versus-right divide, positioning gender related topics as emblematic of a larger culture war and “war on wokeness”. Although all topics appeared across countries, their relative importance varied by national context (*figure 9*). For example, Bulgaria’s proximity to the Russia-Ukraine conflict heightened the prominence of the war and conflict theme, while in Sweden, migration was most frequently discussed, reflecting the significant influx of immigrants during 2014-2015. In Austria, gender emerged as the dominant topic, reflecting how “wokeness” around “gender ideology” has become a prominent and highly politicized issue in public discourse. This was particularly evident during Vienna Pride (May 25-June 9), where debates around gender identity and expressions became increasingly toxic marked by a heightened emotional rhetoric and oppositional viewpoints.



FIGURE 10. WORD CLOUD OF MOST FREQUENT OUT-GROUPS.

Summarizing the most frequently occurring words across the data set, *figure 10* illustrates the myriad of out-groups as articulated in all three countries. The largest group—the elites—encompasses power-holders such as governments, institutions (i.e. WHO), alliances (i.e. EU and NATO), media, corporations, and NGOs, often portrayed as out of touch with ordinary people or pursuing hidden agendas. Immigrants are another prominent out-group, with memes communicating strong anti-immigration sentiments, where migration is framed as a threat to national/racial identities, safety and security, and economic stability. Opposition to left-wing, liberal values and LGBTQ+ rights or “wokeness” is also evident, with such values framed as undermining traditional social norms and accused of promoting political correctness and erasing national identities. Cumulatively, however, the most prominent out-groups in our dataset from all three countries were various political parties and their representatives. In many of the memes, either individual candidates or parties’ entire programs and/or ideologies were ridiculed or demonized. Both mainstream and opposition parties were frequently depicted as corrupt, ineffective, or malicious.

In the following sections, we explore specific examples from the data to illustrate how extremist narratives tend to evolve around specific topics and social group dichotomies thereby providing empirical evidence to support our conceptualization of everyday extremism. We structure the analysis around three key aspects that we believe are crucial for understanding how everyday extremist narratives emerge and evolve: first, the online-offline connections of everyday political conversations; second, the transnational dimensions of these narratives; and third, the levels of violence we encountered, which operate on a continuum from moderate to extreme.

5.1. POLITICAL CONTESTATION ACROSS ONLINE-OFFLINE CONTINUUM

In the digital age, political discourse seamlessly flows between online and offline realms, resulting in a complex and dynamic interplay of influence, engagement, and metamorphosis. This is particularly true during election campaigns when both urban and digital spaces become deeply political. Offline, we witness how urban spaces are appropriated for political purposes, most visibly through election posters displayed on buildings, streetlights, and public billboards. These materials transform everyday spaces into sites of political messaging, making public areas a canvas for competing ideologies and agendas. Online, users are similarly confronted with campaign material as election strategies have increasingly shifted to digital platforms. Political parties launch targeted campaigns and ads that permeate everyday online spaces making social media feeds, websites, and streaming platforms key battlegrounds for political messaging. Media act as connecting elements between both realms. Material artefacts, like election posters, flyers or photographs are frequently transformed into memes and other digital artefacts that circulate online. At the same time, memes and symbols from online conversations and campaigning make their way into physical spaces, with slogans and images first born online appearing in urban environments for example on stickers or as graffiti. In this section, we outline the interconnections of these two spheres, highlighting how narratives travel back and forth between digital platforms and urban spaces, transforming them into battlegrounds for ideologically laden struggles.

Drawing from our hybrid fieldwork, we offer insights into how the election left its mark on both physical and digital spaces, and how citizens challenge and subvert formal campaign messages, imbuing them with new meanings and enriching everyday political discourse. Our analysis of the data suggests that the EP election was negotiated in both on- and offline realms, with a particular emphasis on offline campaigns and visual materials that were modified to express widespread discontent with institutional politics and its representatives. These modifications often altered the original intent of campaign materials, sparking increasingly contentious struggles among supporters of opposing parties over the interpretation and spread of political narratives. A prominent example of this phenomenon is the election campaign of Austria's right-wing populist party, FPÖ. *Illustration 1* features the FPÖ's most widely recognized election posters alongside various subversive alterations created by the public. These modified images circulated across both on- and offline spaces, reflecting how citizens engaged with and resisted official campaign narratives. The original campaign poster was controversial in and off itself; the central slogan "Stop EU madness" (EU-Wahnsinn stoppen), positioned the party firmly within the camp of EU sceptics. The poster featured a collage of images depicting Volodymyr Zelensky and Ursula von der Leyen kissing against the backdrop of the words "asylum crisis" (Asylkrise), "warmongering" (Kriegstreiberei), "eco-communism" (Öko-Kommunismus), and "Corona chaos" (Corona-Chaos). This combination of imagery and messaging—all within a single image—address several of the topics central to our analytical focus.



ILLUSTRATION 1. THE FPÖ ELECTION CAMPAIGN (TRANSLATIONS: “STOP EU MADNESS”) AND ITS MODIFICATIONS.

When appearing in public space, FPÖ’s posters were frequently overwritten, covered with stickers, vandalized, or otherwise smeared, as evidenced by the two examples at the bottom of *illustration 1*. In online spaces, various actors, cartoonists, and comedians creatively altered the posters. For instance, the original FPÖ poster was rephrased to “Stop the FPÖ-EU-madness” (FPÖ-EU-Wahnsinn stoppen) or “Stop the FPÖ madness” (FPÖ-Wahnsinn stoppen). Similarly, the poster that originally had the slogan “Curtain up for our Austria” (Vorhang auf für Österreich) was transformed to “Curtain up for Putin’s Austria” (Vorhang auf für Putins Österreich) or “Curtain up for Russia” (Vorhang auf für Russland) – a prominent narrative among FPÖ opponents, who during the election campaign repeatedly pointed out the party’s ties to Russian politicians and its pro-Russian political stance.

An additional example of political struggle and discontent unfolding across a spectrum of hybrid spaces, can be observed in Bulgaria (*illustration 2*). The centrist anti-corruption party “We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria” (PP-DB) faced an obstacle over the launch of their election campaign when the advertising company they hired refused to put up their posters. The reason: the posters depicted a caricature of an opponent—the MRF party leader at the time, Delyan Peevski—as a pig in a football suit, stepping on a pumpkin, with the text: “#Who wins if you don’t vote” (#Кой печели, ако не гласуваш). *The pumpkin* (in Bulgarian: slang for a large empty head), is a known derogatory nickname for Boyko Borisov – the party

leader of GERB. Delyan Peevski, a media mogul and oligarch implicated in multiple corruption scandals, was target of massive anti-corruption protests already in 2013 when he was briefly appointed Head of the State Agency of National Security. These protests mobilized primarily on social media under the hashtag #Who, which was referenced in PP-DB's poster. Former PM Boyko Borisov has also had his share of corruption scandals and rumors around his involvement with Peevski's "mafia", which fuelled both the 2013 and 2020 anti-corruption protests (see Askanius, Haselbacher, et al., 2024). Given the two parties' past parliamentary collaborations, PP-DB's poster illustrated a familiar narrative: Peevski's omnipresent influence covers even Borisov.

Upon the advertising company's rejection, which PP-DB claimed was another proof of Peevski's influence, the party launched the poster as a digital campaign. It didn't take long before physical posters and stickers with the image appeared on the streets – printed and put up by the party's supporters. However, the poster was equally swiftly altered online and its image and message modified and shared by PP-DB's opponents in response to the campaign.



ILLUSTRATION 2. PP-DB's CAMPAIGN (TRANSLATIONS: "WHAT KIND OF PM DO YOU WANT?"; "#WHO WINS IF YOU DON'T VOTE") AND ITS MODIFICATIONS.

A few days later, PP-DB launched a billboard campaign all over the country, with the text “What kind of PM do you want?” (Какъв искате да бъде вашият премиер?). To the left was the face of PP-DB’s PM candidate Nikolay Denkov, and to the right – Borisov and Peevski’s faces. The online reactions didn’t wait – commentary and digital alterations immediately filled social media platforms. Borisov, in turn, filed a claim to the Central Election Commission, stating that his face was used for advertising without permission and PP-DB was fined and urged to take the posters down. The billboards stayed up, but with Borisov and Peevski’s faces blacked out to comply with advertising regulations. In a final ramp-up of PP-DB’s adversary attack on Borisov and Peevski, a billboard appeared in front of a shopping center in Sofia, featuring the same text: “What kind of PM do you want?”, but this time imposed on a stock image of a pig eating a pumpkin, again causing a wave of online reactions by both sympathizers and opponents.



ILLUSTRATION 3. VIRAL IMAGE AND MEMETIC MODIFICATIONS OF THE DEMOLITION OF THE MONUMENT OF THE SOVIET ARMY IN SOFIA, BULGARIA.

Another valuable insight into the interconnections of on- and offline conversations that mutually stimulate one another can be derived from observing the process of turning political discourse into memes, i.e. the memification of photographs that derive from offline settings. The memefication process entails captioning, editing, remixing, and recontextualising images, giving them new meanings in different online contexts. In this way, familiar local settings serve as visual shorthand to humorous or critical commentary on local or transnational issues online. One such example of how symbolic imagery can become meme material was a viral photograph from the demolition of the Monument of the Soviet Army in Sofia, Bulgaria, depicting the cut torso of a Soviet soldier next to what was previously a raised hand holding a rifle, now detached from his body (*Illustration 3*). The photo was repeatedly altered and/or complemented with different humorous captions online, often published in the context of discussions on the Russia/Ukraine conflict.

Box 1: Everyday campaigning in the streets of Vienna*Miriam Haselbacher and Ursula Reeger, Vienna, 18 May 2024*

For our first in-depth immersion into the everyday campaigning in the streets of Vienna, we choose a Saturday morning, hoping that we would encounter several parties who are handing out leaflets and other material in street campaigns. We meet at Reumannplatz in Favoriten, the 10th district of Vienna. It is an area with a high share of immigrants and a large weekly market nearby, which is very busy on Saturdays. Already in the metro, I am sitting vis-à-vis a young man wearing a T-Shirt and a bag from the liberal party NEOS. He gets off the same stop as I do and after reuniting with my colleague, we see that a group of NEOS supporters has gathered nearby, all covered in pink (the colours of the party) and waving EU flags. We approach them to chat and they tell us that the leading candidate of the party will soon arrive in person.

We walk a shopping street towards the market and encounter a small booth from the Social Democratic Party SPÖ, where a member from the National Council is handing out coffee and leaflets. The Organization of the SPÖ Women of the 10th District has put a flipchart with various questions on the floor, where people passing by are asked to vote on what is important to them. We stay and listen to the conversations, a woman is sharing her concern about the rising living costs, another person says that he is disappointed about the Social Democrats.

We leave to search for the leading candidate of the NEOS. Everywhere around the market, we encounter election posters, most of them smeared on, destroyed or at least partially demolished. The whole area is plastered with stickers and small graffiti and is a witness to political disputes that enfold along the left vs right, immigration, inflation, and security. Some slogans also touch upon the right to the city and the appropriation of the neighbourhood with slogans like “We’re taking back our Favoriten” or “no Nazi meeting point in our neighbourhood” but also posters in other languages. We encounter Helmut Brandstätter, the top candidate of NEOS, in the middle of the narrow and very crowded market road. He is covered in a large EU flag that he keeps wrapped around him, in a neighbourhood where almost half of the population is not eligible to vote in EU-elections. Although the tall man in the EU flag stands out from the crowd, many people don’t seem to pay much attention to him. After a few minutes we leave Favoriten and move on to another market near the city centre.



**HELMUT BRANDSTÄTTER (NEOS)
CAMPAIGNING IN FAVORITEN,
VIENNA. ©AUTHORS, 18 MAY 2024.**

A different example from Sweden reveals a related practice – digital alteration of official communication to express political discontent. In the Swedish town of Nyköping, posters copying the official template of the Swedish Election Authority were attached to trash bins, inviting the Sweden Democrats’ voters to cast their ballots there (*Illustration 4*). “You who intend to vote for the Sweden Democrats can do so in this ballot box” (Du som har tänkt att rösta på Sverigedemokraterna kan göra det i denna valurna), the explanatory text on the poster reads, ridiculing SD supporters by implying that their vote belongs in the bin. This activist act of political discontent and party mockery sparked a series of uses beyond provoking the passers-by who saw the posters in the streets of Nyköping. For one, pictures of the bins were shared online to express opposition to the Sweden Democrats, acting as a meaning-laden meme in of themselves. For the other, the posters inspired similar messages to be attached to trash bins around the country – in various designs, from handwritten to digital, and targeting different political parties.



ILLUSTRATION 4. ANTI-SD CAMPAIGN IN NYKÖPING, SWEDEN (TRANSLATION: “YOU CAN VOTE FOR SD HERE”) AND ITS MODIFICATIONS.

5.2. TRANSLOCAL ARTICULATIONS OF EXTREMISM

In this section we delve into the translocal character of our visual data, shedding light on local specificities and connecting elements. Memes have emerged as a distinctly transnational political phenomenon (Shifman, 2013; McSwiney et al., 2021), operating across various cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries. They transcend borders by adapting well-known and easy to understand templates that can be modified and filled with local meaning, demonstrating a unique blend of universality and specificity (Wiggins, 2019). This fluidity is facilitated by the way memes rely on pop cultural symbols, icons, and shared online references, allowing them to be both recognizable and adaptable in different contexts. Humor is a widely used strategy across the memes in our sample. Humor is a central element of memes that can bring together transnational audiences and work as a “common tongue” facilitating the spread of certain violent messages (Tuters & Hagen, 2021; Askanius, 2021).

Doerr (2017) argues that the visual form of text-image macros which characterise memes supports the distribution of viewpoints and arguments by making language barriers less relevant. *Figure 11* displays the language of the memes we analysed. Interestingly, there are striking differences between the countries. While in Austria and Bulgaria only one third of the

memes were either without any written language or in English, in Sweden more than half of the memes were understandable for a non-Swedish speaking audience. This finding can be understood in terms of Swedish society's preference for international over local entertainment sources and high use of international media platforms (Digital Culture Index, 2024). In contrast, only 6% of the memes shared in Bulgaria were in English. What's more, Bulgaria is the only country example in our dataset featuring memes in a language other than the local language or English – about 3% of the memes in the Bulgarian dataset were in Russian. This is indicative of Russia's continued strong influence in the country following Bulgaria's Communist past. Prior to 1989, Russian was mandatorily taught in Bulgarian schools, so the target audience for these memes were presumably middle-aged Bulgarians able to understand their content. In Austria, the language of the majority of the memes shared was German. However, this is not to indicate national confinement – German is a language spoken by many outside of the borders of Austria (e.g. in Germany and parts of Switzerland). Hence, some of these memes were either directly borrowed from, or adapted to fit, several German-speaking national contexts.

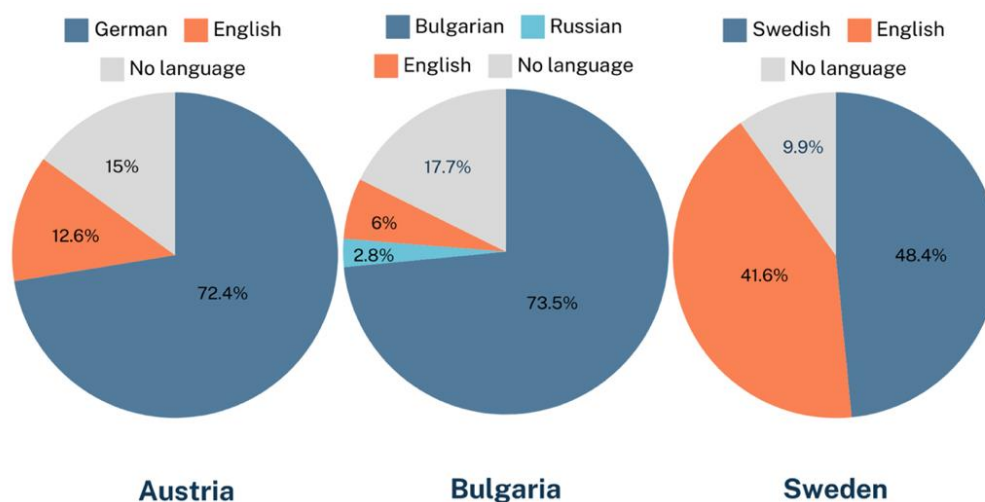


FIGURE 11. LANGUAGE IN MEMES ACROSS COUNTRIES (N=584).

Nevertheless, the transnational resonance of the memes is apparent in all countries from the content and visual narratives. For example, in the context of migration, references to other European countries were frequent, reinforcing the narrative of the collapse of a multicultural Europe and the negative effects of immigration. Variations of the same memetic templates, drawing on pop-cultural and symbolic elements of meaning-making, appeared in all three countries. This suggests a certain level of awareness of the transnational visual grammar of contemporary politics within each country and testifies to the ability of these malleable memetic templates to adopt to different national contexts. However, our data has revealed that while all topics we coded for were present in all countries, they were sometimes

approached differently – sometimes referring to explicitly global problems, and at other times being reduced to local concerns. Memes were most often not copy-pasted wholesale but rather repurposed and appropriated to make sense in, and add meaning to, specific national contexts, conflicts, and public conversations going on there (*illustration 5*). This interconnectedness of local and global elements is, on the one hand, indicative of “cultural globalization” (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2018) – the broader integration of global digital cultures into local contexts, where the predominance of English and shared internet subcultures shape local content creation. The influence of international platforms encourages a blending of linguistic and cultural practices, making national digital spaces more accessible and aligned with global trends. On the other hand, the strong presence of local elements in the memes we analysed reinforces earlier findings about political memes: that they often reproduce similar images and themes across countries, but with locally specific symbols and elements imposed onto them, thus indicating “transnationality with national colours” (Risse et al., 2001; McSwiney et al., 2021).



ILLUSTRATION 5. ON THE LEFT: MEME FROM AUSTRIAN DATASET, TRANSLATION: “THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A GREAT REPLACEMENT!”; ON THE RIGHT: MEME FROM BULGARIAN DATASET, TRANSLATION: “YOU ARE GOING EXTINCT. FIGHT.”

In the following, we will discuss two events that intersected with the period of the EP election campaign and are both strong cases of translocality, highlighting how events, symbols, codes and meaning are translated and adopted within different settings and how in this process narratives and campaigns become transnational. The first was the so-called Sylt Scandal. It started with a group of young and affluent Germans in their 20s who filmed themselves at a party on the popular German island of Sylt, singing racist and xenophobic lyrics to the tune of Gigi D’Agostino’s popular song “L’amour Toujours”. They altered the original lyrics to include derogatory and offensive phrases targeting immigrants, singing “Deutschland den Deutschen, Ausländer raus” (“Germany to the Germans, foreigners out”). The video was subsequently

uploaded to social media, sparking widespread outrage and condemnation across Germany after May 24 and drew attention to issues of racism among younger generations and populations that are not immediately associated with such open xenophobia and the spread of Nazi parables.

The origin of the reframing of the song is not clear, it first popped up in 2023 through memes and since 2023, there had been several incidents across Germany where young people had been singing the song, attempting to turn the tune of "L'amour Toujours" into a symbol of far-right ideology. However, it was the Sylt incident that truly popularized this usage. As a well-known and "catchy" song that most people are familiar with, "L'amour Toujours" works very well as a code, and soon, subtle references like "döp dödö döp" or even a simple picture of the island of Sylt became subtle "dog whistles" to convey the intended anti-immigration message (*illustration 6*). Since Sylt, there have been multiple incidents across Europe where this coded reference has been linked to extremist activities, not least in Sweden where an SD politician was compelled to resign when he sang the anti-immigration alternative lyrics to "L'amour Toujours" at SD's EP election observation event on June 9th (unknowingly) in the presence of a journalist.



**ILLUSTRATION 6. MEME FROM
AUSTRIAN DATASET REFERENCING THE
SYLT SCANDAL**

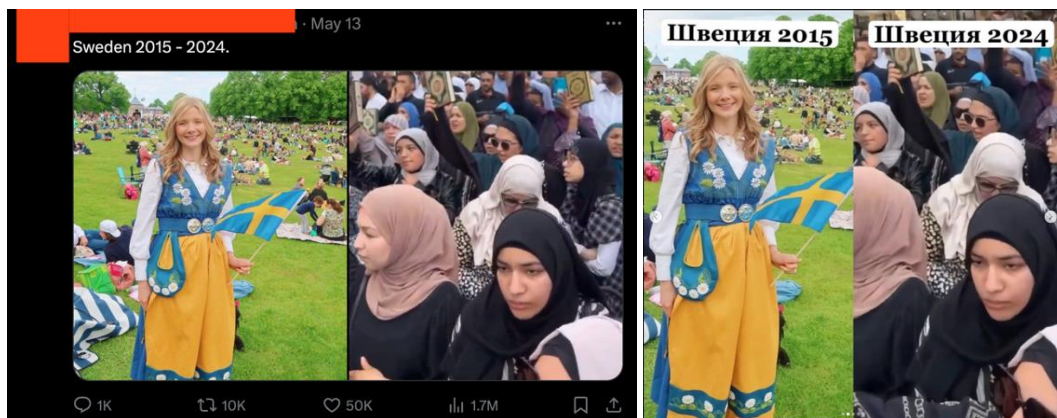
Box 2: A case of transnational connections: The AfS visit in Bulgaria

Jullietta Stoencheva, Sofia, 13 May 2024

In the period leading up to the EU elections, Alternative for Sweden (AfS) launched a series of international collaborations with other far-right and EU-sceptic parties across Europe, among which Bulgaria's Revival. As a part of this collaboration, AfS party leader Gustav Kasselstrand spent a week in Bulgaria, where Revival's party leader Kostadin Kostadinov organized an international conference titled "The new leaders of Europe". The conference culminated in the signing of what Kostadinov dubbed *the Sofia Declaration* – a formal agreement between far-right party leaders from nine European countries promising to work together towards shared goals like the preservation of national borders and the sovereignty of individual states, as well as renegotiating the European Union's political power. Beyond participation in Revival's conference, Kasselstrand's visit to Bulgaria included a road trip to the Bulgarian-Turkish border together with Revival's top EU election candidate Stanislav Stoyanov, with a stop at a notorious "Roma ghetto" neighborhood in the Bulgarian town of Sliven, from where Kasselstrand published a vlog to his YouTube followers.

After Kasselstrand's visit, the friendship between AfS and Revival manifested in their active support for each other online. The parties followed each other's social media accounts, regularly liking and commenting on each other's posts. Stoyanov recorded a short video message, looking into the camera and saying "Vote for Alternative for Sweden on June 9th!", which Kasselstrand proudly reshared. In turn, Kasselstrand uploaded Revival's election video on his own YouTube channel, with a short commentary of support to their "sister party in Bulgaria". In a video of Kasselstrand burning the EU flag at an AfS rally, Kostadinov commented "Well done, Gustav!", Kasselstrand replying with emojis of the Bulgarian and Swedish flag together. Under an official AfS election video, Kostadinov wrote "Greetings from Bulgaria! I wish victory to Alternative for Sweden!".

The AfS-Revival ties did not remain confined to the parties themselves – narratives co-created by the parties seeped into the mainstream. In his speech at the AfS rally in Malmö, Sweden, Kasselstrand spoke about his visit to Bulgaria and the collaborations he fostered under the Sofia Declaration, making sure to highlight his "ghetto visit" and the issues he witnessed there, which he stressed were "caused by the Roma population". A more subtle case of mainstreaming of these party ties was the spread of several memes about Sweden in Bulgaria, of the same kind that AfS shared on their own channels. The memes were largely anti-immigration in nature, depicting a Sweden overtaken by Muslim migrants. At least one of these can be traced directly to AfS – on May 13, an AfS member retweeted a post featuring two pictures – one of herself in a Swedish national garment, and one of a group of Muslim women in hijab, with the caption "Sweden 2015-2024". A few days later, the same photos appeared in a collage, with the same text but in Bulgarian imposed onto them, in Bulgarian social media. Although the meme was not circulated by Revival's official accounts, it is indicative of the transnational influence of AfS' narratives in Bulgaria fostered through their friendship with Revival.



ON THE LEFT: POST BY AN AFS POLITICIAN ON X WITH THE CAPTION "SWEDEN 2015 - 2024". ON THE RIGHT: THE SAME TWO PHOTOS AND CAPTION MERGED IN A SINGLE IMAGE IN BULGARIAN SOCIAL MEDIA.



ILLUSTRATION 7. MEME FROM AUSTRIAN DATASET REFERENCING THE STOLZMONAT CAMPAIGN.

The second event was the German-speaking far-right campaign *Stolzmonat*, held during Pride Month of June. After June 1, Pride Month became a highly prominent topic of debate on social media, especially in Austria where the Vienna Pride festival took place between May 25 and June 9 and political parties, news outlets, influencers and companies posted content showing their solidarity or alliance with the LGBTQ+ movement. Already in 2023, right-wing extremist groups had launched a counter-campaign called *Stolzmonat* (the German translation of “Pride Month”), reframing Pride Month with the pun pride for the nation sought to refocus on patriotism. Although the *Stolzmonat* campaign has its roots in Germany, it quickly spread to other countries, gaining traction in German-speaking regions like Austria and Switzerland before expanding further. *Illustration 7* depicts how the campaign was transnationalized. As the Amadeu Antonio Foundation (2024) notes, *Stolzmonat* draws on the

aesthetics of the Pride flag, creating a *Stolzmonat* flag which depicts the colours of the German national flag in a seven shade gradation, appropriating the visual coding of pride items. Soon an Austrian *Stolzmonat* flag popped up on social media, as is seen in the background of *illustration 8*.

In parallel to pride month, online activists, along with everyday users, flooded social media with the hashtags #Stolzmonat and #Stolz, sharing memes and videos and changing their profile pictures by adding a frame in the colours of the national flag. The *Stolzmonat* content usually depicts patriotic and nationalist imagery mixed with anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Activists also took the campaign to the streets and posted pictures of people raising national flags, tearing down Pride flags or painting over LGBTQ+ symbols. Far-right websites offered merch and explanatory texts and videos. The campaign deliberately encouraged users to post *Stolzmonat* content under pride content, turning what was meant to be a positive and inclusive message into content spreading hate and intolerance. For example, the meme in *illustration 8*, stating

“This comment section is now proud!”, was posted under a photo of a politician waving the rainbow flag. The picture also establishes a link to the election, as Herbert Kickl, the party



ILLUSTRATION 8. MEME FROM AUSTRIAN DATASET WITH THE AUSTRIAN STOLZMONAT FLAG IN THE BACKGROUND, TRANSLATION: “THIS COMMENT SECTION IS NOW PROUD!”.

chairman of the FPÖ, is displayed. By 2024, the campaign had evolved far beyond a niche phenomenon and was taken up by politicians. For example, AfD politician Björn Höcke and former Austrian Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of the FPÖ, both updated their profile pictures to support the campaign. However, this was not a onedimensional process and soon LGBTQ+ activists started posting liberal content under the same hashtag and a battle over the appropriation of meaning arose.

These examples of translocal articulations of extremist narratives and politicized discourses reflect transnational translation processes, where a cultural reference is adapted, shared, and reinterpreted across various local settings. They allow extremist groups and individuals to spread their narratives beyond their immediate surroundings while maintaining a shared overall ideological message. These campaigns furthermore illustrate how right-wing extremist actors managed to gain a significant reach across localities and national borders by creating far-reaching platforms through the appropriation of hashtags, buzzwords, or imagery. The *Stolzmonat* campaign, for example, outlines how far right activists make use of the tools of social media to spread right-wing extremist, nationalist, and homophobic narratives that reach far beyond their audiences. In addition, the Sylt incident shows how a local phenomenon can quickly transcend regional boundaries and become adopted in different contexts across Europe. The translocal spread of narratives is facilitated by a number of factors, among them visual and textual codes, shared references, hashtags, and templates. Furthermore, visual memetic templates and pop-cultural references enable the seamless adaptation and dissemination of extremist messages across diverse contexts, amplifying their reach and impact.

5.3. A CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE: FROM MUNDANE TO EXTREME ARTICULATIONS OF VIOLENCE

In this final analytical section, we examine the various forms of violence identified in our data, unpacking how these manifestations are articulated around certain topics and across the different national contexts. The element of violence is a crucial component in our understanding of extremist narratives and key to understanding the development towards everyday extremism within political discourse. Our empirical material, sheds light on the modes of violence and hostility through which extremism occurs within the broader context of political contention and discontent. Notably, we observe how discursive violence seeps into everyday conversations in the context of the EP elections. This includes examining the forms it takes—whether symbolic, physical, or structural—and understanding these on a spectrum from subtle to explicit articulations of violence. This conceptualisation of extremism as a continuum allows us to see how even seemingly minor acts of hostility or exclusion can escalate into more overt expressions of violence. Different articulations of violence are connected to each other and together constitute a highly contentious popular discourse,

where political discontent, symbolic, physical, and structural violence intersect and amplify one another.

Our dataset of visual material displays a spectrum of violence ranging from mundane to extreme and explicit manifestations. Within the corpus of memes we collected, we identified all types of violence coded for in relation to each of the key topics (*figure 12*). However, different political issues generated different forms and degrees of violence. For example, discussions around migration often involved physical and explicit violence, while symbolic violence was prevalent in gender-related discussions, particularly in Bulgaria, where anti-gender and misogynist memes served as a proxy for expressing political discontent through hypersexualization and allusions to gender-based violence, including rape. In turn, the COVID-19 pandemic brought structural violence to the forefront, highlighting systemic issues exacerbated by the global health crisis.

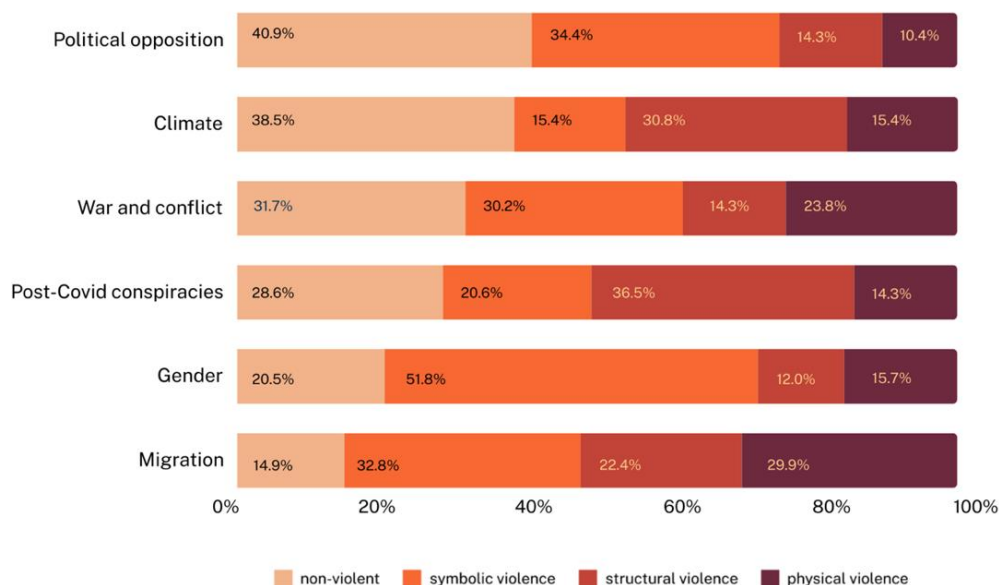


FIGURE 12. TYPE OF VIOLENCE PER TOPIC (N=584).

Symbolic violence, as defined by Bourdieu (1979), encompasses the ideologies, behaviors, words, and non-verbal communications that produce, enable, and reproduce power relations. In our visual analysis, coding for symbolic violence involved identifying and interpreting visual cues, representations, or symbols that reinforce power imbalances, social hierarchies, or forms of oppression. Examples of symbolic violence in our data included memes that perpetuate gender biases, reinforce harmful stereotypes, and ridicule or dehumanize individuals based on their race, gender, or socio-economic status (i.e. the body-shaming of women; depicting migrants as intellectually inferior or dangerous; portraying LGBTQ+ individuals in a derogatory manner). These memes share a strong visual language at

the cost of individuals or groups, often reducing them to targets of mockery and reinforcing harmful stereotypes (*illustration 9*), often directed at the political elite.

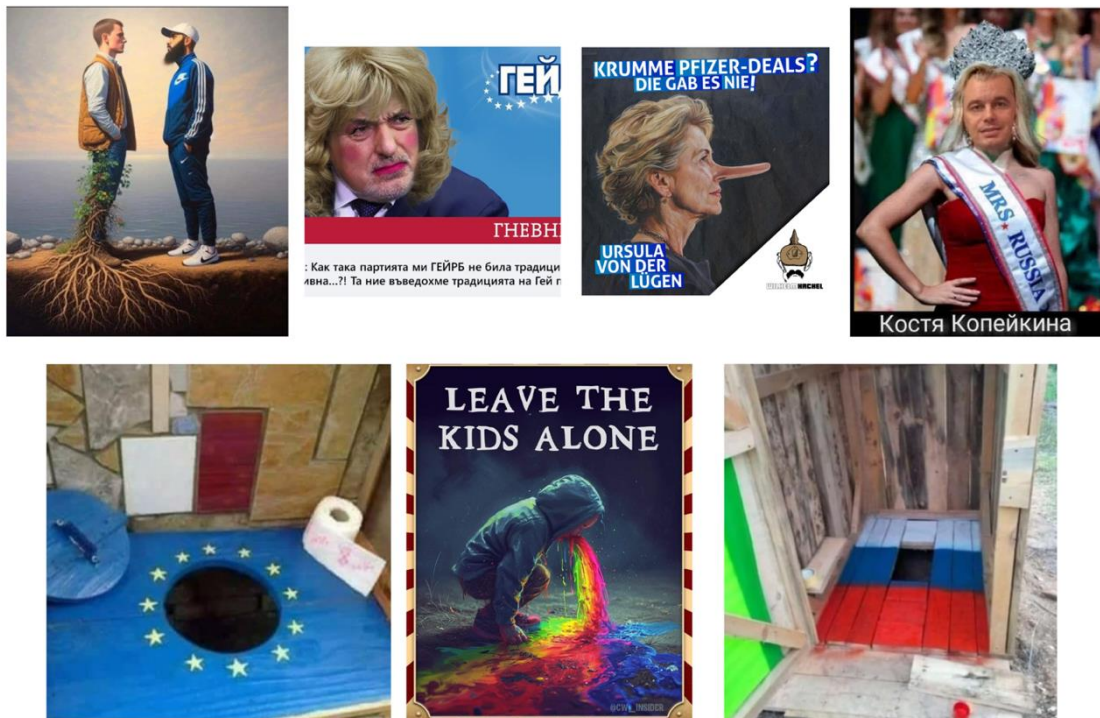


ILLUSTRATION 9. EXAMPLES OF MEMES ARTICULATING SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE.

A prominent example of memes articulating symbolic violence is the frequently depicted feminization and/or sexualization of (predominantly male) politicians' bodies in Bulgaria. *Illustration 9* features Boyko Borisov of GERB (second picture from the top-left) wearing makeup and a wig, next to a modified logo of his party altered to say "gay" (гей). Revival leader Kostadin Kostadinov (upper right corner) was depicted as Mrs. Russia, with the feminized name "Kostya Kopeykina" (Костя Копейкина) written underneath, "kopeyka" referring to the coins in Russian currency to imply that he is a paid Russian agent. This form of symbolic violence leverages societal prejudices about gender and gender norms to ridicule and delegitimize political figures by associating them with traits stereotypically deemed as weak or inferior, thus undermining their authority and credibility. Additionally, depictions of politicians as hypersexualized feminine or transgender figures touch upon opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, thereby even signifying symbolic violence against these groups. In contrast, while expressions of opposition to progressive gender norms are even present in Sweden, celebration of the country's progressive LGBTQ+ rights is sometimes used as an anti-Muslim code, highlighting the complex interplay between different forms of violence and political discourse. This narrative often portrays Muslims and Islam as inherently unswedish, associating them with intolerance and violence towards LGBTQ+ individuals and thus reinforcing xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments.



ILLUSTRATION 10. EXAMPLES OF MEMES ARTICULATING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE.

Structural violence refers to harm inflicted through legal and/or formal political mechanisms rather than physical means, often implying misuse of political power or advocating for legal and structural change (*illustration 10*). In our data, this articulation of violence was prominent in post-COVID narratives about population control or conspiracies of global domination by a powerful elite. On the local level, it referred to implicating political figures in different forms of misconduct, i.e. corruption, behind-the-scenes plotting, and abuse of authority to maintain control and/or suppress dissent. For example, in the middle bottom of *illustration 10*, we see a deepfake picture of the Austrian chancellor Karl Nehammer being arrested as new Nürnberg trials are called for – thus equating COVID-19 measures with the crimes of national socialism. In the picture at the upper left corner, we see the leaders of the right-wing governing coalition in Sweden—M, KD, and L, who rule with support from SD—tied to strings like marionettes. The puppet master pulling the strings is SD party leader Jimmie Åkesson, and the controls are shaped like swastikas. The picture is accompanied by the text “Social liberalism”.

When the memes did not target individual politicians, they directed hostility towards out-groups, such as immigrants and LGBTIQ+ minorities and activists. Similar to the topic of global domination, these themes are closely linked to various conspiracy theories. Regarding migration, far-right extremist narratives such as the “great replacement” conspiracies emerged, while discussions surrounding gender often centered on the idea of a “woke” elite that allegedly suppresses those outside its ranks.



ILLUSTRATION 11. EXAMPLES OF MEMES ARTICULATING PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.

As *physical violence* we coded images depicting symbols and/or explicit textual and visual references pertaining to physical harm, such as references to murder, portrayals of weapons, blood, or physically violent acts against people or groups. Some of these examples are by no means cloaked or hidden articulations of extremism but straightforwardly accept, or even call for, the use of violence (*illustration 11*). Others accuse individuals, organizations, or groups of committing physical violence, framing them as extremists or terrorists, like the picture of Bill Gates. Articulations of physical violence was most prevalent around the topic of migration, where the imagery often included graphic depictions of harm either inflicted by or directed at migrants. These images all implicitly or explicitly demanded the deportation or remigration of immigrants, and often tapping into conspiracy theories of an orchestrated “great replacement” of European populations.

We also observed that physical violence was often strongly connected to claims of structural violence. In many instances, political parties were depicted as inflicting physical harm on the population, symbolizing the perceived oppressive and harmful nature of their policies and governance. In contrast to memes expressing structural violence, the memes here implied that global organizations and politicians not simply want to control “the people”, but are even threatening their lives. This metaphorical and/or overt depiction of physical violence equates policy decisions with direct bodily harm to highlight the perceived severity of their impact on society.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates how different expressions of violence (symbolic, physical, and structural) sits on a spectrum ranging from the mundane and subtle to explicit and overt calls for violence—that are interwoven and mutually reinforcing broader sentiments of political discontent and disillusionement. This interplay underscores the pervasive and mutable nature of contemporary forms of extremist narratives, molding public perception and discourse to increasingly tolerate political violence. Understanding these dynamics enables us to better grasp how violent narratives gain traction and exert influence in contemporary political discourse.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS: TOWARDS A RELATIONAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY EXTREMISM

So, what are the broader implications of what we describe above for the political conversations we are all part of? What is at stake for European cohesion and continued trust in and support for democratic institutions? The fact that violent and divisive ideas can manifest in such diverse and seemingly benign forms around a democratic election as demonstrated above is critical. It points to a process in which anti-democratic ideas are increasingly normalised within mainstream political discourse and everyday interactions – a phenomenon we refer to as *everyday extremism*. This penetration of extremist ideas into political debates and public life, creates an environment where heightened hostility, dehumanization, and stigmatisation of certain groups become socially accepted. As these ideas gain traction, they push the boundaries of what is considered acceptable and viable political discourse in a democratic society. To comprehensively capture the intersecting processes involved in the evolution towards everyday extremism, we need analytical frameworks that move beyond simple and unproductive dichotomies artificially separating online and offline spaces of political interactions, local and global levels of participation or well as democratic and extremist (violent) politics. Instead, we argue, frameworks should adopt a relational approach which takes into account the intertwined nature of the processes shaping political discourse and action today. Consequently, we may usefully consider the findings presented in this report, and the project more generally, with reference to a **relational model for understanding contemporary forms of extremism along three analytical continuums**: translocal-local, online-offline, mundane-extreme (*figure 13*).

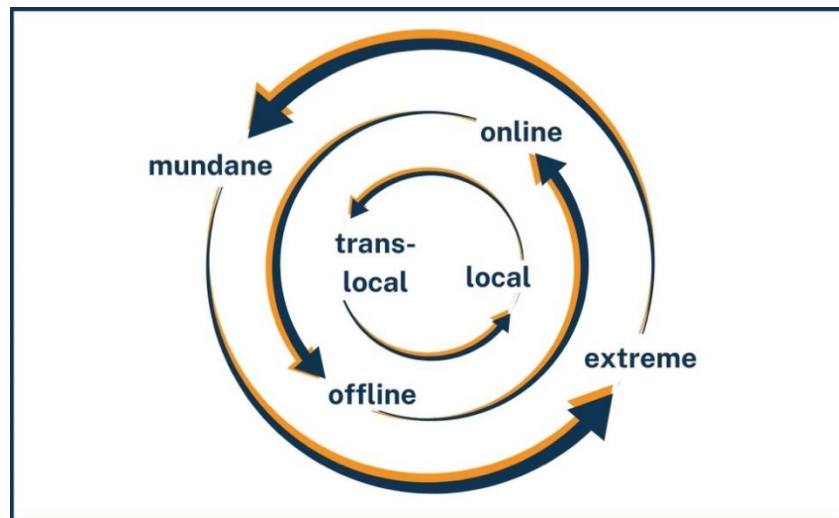


FIGURE 13. RELATIONAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY EXTREMISM.

Situating our analysis within this relation model allows us to understand extremism along a range of processes that operate across different scales or continuums – from local to global and translocal, physical and digital spaces, and across various modes of violence. In combination, these continuums help shed light on the intertwined nature of how extremist narratives circulate across digital platforms and local settings, and demonstrate how, in the process, violence can take on forms that range from overtly violent and extremist to more subtle and mundane ways of conveying violent messages.

The findings of this report suggest that extremist narratives merge with discourses of more general popular discontent and occur around polarizing topics such as gender, and war and global conflict, and provide insights on how “global” blueprint narratives of extremist and conspiratorial beliefs are translated in different national and local contexts. Across Europe, these narratives share striking similarities but also reflect notable differences, shaped by localized contexts and concerns. Common themes, such as opposition to a “woke elite,” hostility towards LGBTIQ+ communities, and anti-immigrant sentiment, is present across all countries and regions. However, the specific events tied to these narratives tend to differ, reflecting national concerns. In Austria, for instance, narratives are influenced by events within the broader German-speaking world, while in Bulgaria, national elections and corruption scandals dominate. Sweden, on the other hand, sees a more international focus, with topics like NATO membership and international politics playing central roles. Historical contexts also shape these differences. Austria’s political discourse, for instance, draws on its complex relationship with immigration and EU scepticism, whereas Bulgaria’s narratives are influenced by its post-communist transition and ongoing corruption issues. Despite these national distinctions, a significant factor in the convergence of political narratives across Europe is the use of *memetic* templates. These memes—replete with shared figures, pop-cultural references, symbols, and

emojis—draw on a transnational, visual grammar for engaging in transgressive and antagonistic political debate. This shared grammar facilitates the spread of similar extremist or populist narratives across borders, targeting specific groups and constructing very similar in- and outgroups in the respective national contexts.

Based on our study, we may come to understand everyday extremism as the recurrent and normalised presence of extremist narratives embedded in everyday political discourse, mainstream spaces, and mundane practices. Moving beyond conventional spaces for political campaigning and deliberations, we went looking for violent and anti-democratic messages on stickers, walls, street signs and poster and immersed ourselves in everyday online spaces to track extremist narratives as reflected in memes, emojis and other visual ephemera. In conducting our fieldwork, we intentionally focused on public spaces and platforms within the digital mainstream, deliberately avoiding those known to promote extremist ideologies or peddle conspiracy theories. Yet, political extremism and violent discourse surfaced persistently in our data.

The various expressions of violent ideas in circulation are not distinct or neatly compartmentalized but interconnected, feeding into one another and best understood relationally. Within this continuum, seemingly harmless elements can be manipulated to disseminate anti-democratic ideologies because they draw from and contribute to the larger political conversation. This results in the normalisation of extremist narratives and the proliferation of increasingly violent language, pushing fringe perspectives and ideas into mainstream political discourse. Consequently, political discussions across Europe are becoming more polarized and dominated by violent rhetoric. Much of this centres around traditional ideological disputes framed in terms of left vs. right, with “us vs. them” narratives targeting immigrants, sexual minorities or a perceived global elite.

These analytical insights on the 2024 EP elections pay testimony to how political parties are increasingly losing control over the narratives surrounding their campaigns and political programs. Public debate often spirals into vitriolic, dehumanizing language and imagery, aggressive expressions of discontent, and widespread misinformation. This breakdown of political discourse underscores a broader challenge: the rise of decentralized conversations, particularly online, where official campaign messages are taken over by hostile interactions and extremist narratives.

The political messaging surrounding extremism narratives in the context of the European Parliament elections was often ambiguous and satirical, blending humour and critique in ways that made it difficult to immediately recognize the underlying calls for violence. This ambiguity in much of the content in circulation contribute to the normalization of extremist ideas, enabling them to permeate mainstream political conversations and subtly shape public perceptions and discourse on key issues central to current political developments and democratic backsliding.

REFERENCES

- Aichholzer, J., & Kritzing, S. (2020). *Voting at 16 in Practice: A Review of the Austrian Case*. In: Eichhorn, J., Bergh, J. (Eds.) *Lowering the Voting Age to 16 – Learning from Real Experiences Worldwide* (pp. 81–101). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_5
- Amadeu Antonio foundation (2024, 25 June). *Rechtsextreme Kampagne gegen den Pride Month: Der „Stolzmonat“*. <https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/rechtsextreme-kampagne-gegen-den-pride-month-der-stolzmonat-114483/>
- Andreouli, E., Ghosh, S., Ricarte, J., Rottmann, S., Weilnböck, H., & Leitão, A. (2024). *Deliverable 5.1. Framework paper on emergence of opposition drivers across sites and shared dialogical interventions*. OppAttune: Countering Oppositional Political Extremism Through Attuned Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit.
- Askanius, T. (2021). On frogs, monkeys, and execution memes: Exploring the humor-hate Nexus at the intersection of Neo-Nazi and alt-right movements in Sweden. *Television & New Media*, 22(2), 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476420982234>
- Askanius, T., & Keller, N. (2021). Murder fantasies in memes: Fascist aesthetics of death threats and the banalization of white supremacist violence. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(16), 2522–2539.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2021.1974517>
- Askanius, T., & Stoencheva, J. (2024). On memes and mugs: Everyday extremism in the (digital) mainstream. *The Psychologist*, April 23 2024,
<https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/memes-and-mugs-everyday-extremism-digital-mainstream>
- Askanius, T., Haselbacher, M., Reeger, U., & Stoencheva, J. (2024). *Deliverable 4.1. Visualisation report of emerging extremist narratives across Europe*. OppAttune: Countering Oppositional Political Extremism Through Attuned Dialogue: Track, Attune, Limit.
- Askanius, T., Molas, B., & Amarasingam, A. (2024). Far-right extremist narratives in Canadian and Swedish Covid-19 protests: A comparative case study of the Freedom Movement and Freedom Convoy. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2024.2340492>
- Barendregt, B. (2021). *Digital ethnography, or ‘deep hanging out’ in the age of big data*. In: Grasseni, C., Barendregt, B., Maaker, E., De Musso, F., Littlejohn, A., Maeckelbergh,

- M., Postma, M., & Westmoreland, M.R. (Eds.) *Audiovisual and digital ethnography: A practical and theoretical guide* (pp. 168–190). Routledge.
- Berg, L., & Oscarsson, H. (2015). *Supervalåret 2014*. Demokratistatistik, rapport nr. 20. Stockholm: Statistiska Centralbyrån (SCB).
- Berger, J.M. (2018). *Extremism*. MIT Press.
- Bleiker, R. (Ed.). (2018). *Visual Global Politics* (1st edition). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315856506>
- Boomgaarden, H. G., Johann, D., & Kritzinger, S. (2016). Voting at National versus European Elections: An Individual Level Test of the Second Order Paradigm for the 2014 European Parliament Elections. *Politics and Governance*, 4(1), 130–144. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v4i1.472>
- Bourdieu, P. (1979) Symbolic power. *Critique of Anthropology*, 4(13–14), 77–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X7900401307>
- Caiani, M. (2024). Visual Analysis and the Contentious Politics of the Radical Right. *Sociology Compass*, 18(9). <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13267>.
- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Centre for European Research. (2019). *Fact sheet about the EU election 2019:1 Sweden a trend breaker regarding electoral turnout*. University of Gothenburg.
- Couldry, N. (2016). *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity Press.
- Dahlberg-Grundberg, M., & Örestig, J. (2017). Extending the local: Activist types and forms of social media use in the case of an anti-mining struggle. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(3), 309–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2016.1268955>
- Datta, A., & Brickell, K. (2016). *Translocal geographies: Spaces, places, Connections*. Routledge.
- Dean, J. (2019). Sorted for Memes and Gifs: Visual Media and Everyday Digital Politics. *Political Studies Review*, 17(3), 255–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918807483>
- Dimitrov, M. (2024, 18 June). *Where did Velichie come from and where are they headed?* Capital.

https://kinsights.capital.bg/politics_and_society/2024/06/18/4639770 where did velichie come from and where are they headed/

Digital Culture Index. (2024, July 22). Sweden.

<https://cultureindex.digital/countries/sweden/>

Doerr, N. (2017). Bridging language barriers, bonding against immigrants: A visual case study of transnational network publics created by far-right activists in Europe. *Discourse & Society*, 28(1), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926516676689>

Doerr, N., Mattoni, A., & Teune, S. (2013). *Toward a Visual Analysis of Social Movements, Conflict, and Political Mobilization*. In: N. Doerr, A. Mattoni, & S. Teune (Eds.), *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Vol. 35 (pp. xi–xxvi). [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-786X\(2013\)0000035004](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-786X(2013)0000035004)

Ehin, P., & Talving, L. (2021). Still second-order? European elections in the era of populism, extremism, and euroscepticism. *Politics*, 41(4), 467–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720986026>

Eurobarometer. (2007–2024). *Standard Eurobarometer*.

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/browse/all/series/4961>

European Parliament. (2024, September 16). *2024 European Election Results*. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/index.html>

Filipova, R., & Stefanov, R. (2020). *Демокрацията в България – все още крехка след три десетилетия преход*. CSD.

Ganchev, G., Tsenkov, V. & Paskaleva, M. (2023). Corruption in Bulgaria: Context, Factors and International Comparison. *Economic Thought Journal*, 68(6), 587–620. <https://doi.org/10.56497/etj2368601>

Greene, V. S. (2019). “Deplorable” Satire: Alt-Right Memes, White Genocide Tweets, and Redpilling Normies. *Studies in American Humor*, 5(1), 31–69. <https://doi.org/10.5325/studamerhumor.5.1.0031>

Greiner, C., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2013). Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives. *Geography Compass*, 7(5), 373–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12048>

Jenzen, O., Erhart, I., Eslen-Ziya, H., Korkut, U., & McGarry, A. (2021). The symbol of social media in contemporary protest: Twitter and the Gezi Park movement. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 27(2), 414–437. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856520933747>

- Klenell, J. (2024, May 29). *Trollfabrik, Tidölag och Putin – här är SD:s valrörelse i 16 punkter*. Arbetet. <https://arbetet.se/2024/05/29/trollfabrik-tidolag-och-putin-har-ar-sds-valrorelse-i-16-punkter/>
- Kytölä, S. (2016). *Translocality*. In: Geörgakopoulou, A. & Spilioti, T. (Eds.) *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 371–388). Routledge.
- Lefebvre, H. (2013). *The production of space* (33rd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Lindström, A. (2021, 1 September). *Who votes in Sweden?*. Linköping University. <https://liu.se/en/news-item/vem-rostar-i-sverige>
- Lu, Y., & Peng, Y. (2024). The Mobilizing Power of Visual Media Across Stages of Social-Mediated Protests. *Political Communication*, 41(4), 531–558. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2024.2317951>
- Martin, F., & Rizvi, F. (2014). Making Melbourne: Digital connectivity and international students' experience of locality. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(7), 1016–1031. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714541223>
- McSwiney, J., Vaughan, M., Heft, A., & Hoffmann, M. (2021). Sharing the hate? Memes and transnationality in the far right's digital visual culture. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(16), 2502–2521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2021.1961006>
- Miller-Idriss, C. (2020). *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right*. Princeton University Press.
- Möller, T. (2023). *Svensk Politisk Historia: Strid och samverkan under tvåhundra år*. Studentlitteratur.
- Nissenbaum, A., & Shifman, L. (2018). Meme Templates as Expressive Repertoires in a Globalizing World: A Cross-Linguistic Study. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(5), 294–310. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy016>
- Ozduzen, O., & Korkut, U. (2023). Guest Editors' introduction. *Visual Studies*, 38(5), 817–819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2023.2275928>
- Penney, J., & Dadas, C. (2014). (Re)Tweeting in the service of protest: Digital composition and circulation in the Occupy Wall Street movement. *New Media & Society*, 16(1), 74–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813479593>
- Pink, S., Horst, H. A., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T., & Tacchi, J. (2016). *Digital Ethnography: Principles and practice*. SAGE.

- Plescia, C., James W., & Kritzinger, S. (2020). *First-order breakthrough or still second-order? An assessment of the 2019 EP elections*. In: Kritzinger, S., Plescia, C., Raube, K., Wilhelm, J. & Wouters, J. (Eds.). *Assessing the 2019 European Parliament Elections* (pp.76-95). Routledge.
- Porst, L., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2017). How scale matters in translocality: Uses and potentials of scale in translocal research. *Erdkunde*, 71(2), 111–126.
- Postill, J., & Pink, S. (2012). Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web. *Media International Australia*, 145(1), 123-134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1214500114>
- Puzon, K. (2018). *Translocality: An essay based on a panel with Beverley Butler, Banu Karaca, and Paola Ivanov*. In: CARMAH Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (Ed.). *Otherwise: Rethinking Museums and Heritage* (pp. 27-39). CARMAH
- Regeringskansliet. (2018). *Strategi för en stark demokrati – främja, förankra, försvara*. Kulturdepartementet.
- Risse, T., Cowles, M. G., & Caporaso, J. (2001). *Europeanization and domestic change: Introduction*. In: Cowles, M. G., Risse, T. & Caporaso, J. (Eds.) *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and domestic change* (pp. 1–20). Cornell University Press.
- Schönherr, D. (2023). *Die öffentliche Meinung in der Europäischen Union, Länderbericht Österreich*. Standard Eurobarometer 100 – Autumn 2023.
- Schmid, U. K., Schulze, H., & Drexel, A. (2024). Memes, humor, and the far right's strategic mainstreaming. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2329610>
- Shifman, L. (2013). *Memes in Digital Culture*. MIT Press.
- Stoencheva, J., & Boshkoska, B. M. (2024). Extremist narratives in the digital mainstream: Exploring online discussions about migration in Sweden. *MedieKultur*, forthcoming autumn 2024.
- Stadt Wien. (2023). *Integrations- & Diversitätsmonitor 2023*. Vienna.
- Sveriges Radio. (2024, May 23). *SD:s trollkonton debatterades i EU: "Sprider Falska Nyheter"*. <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/sds-trollkonton-debatterades-i-eu-sprider-falska-nyheter>
- Tuters, M., & Hagen, S. (2019). (((they))) rule: Memetic antagonism and nebulous othering on 4chan. *New Media & Society*, 22(12), 2218–2237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819888746>

-
- Veneti, A., Jackson, D., & Lilleker, D. G. (Eds.). (2019). *Visual Political Communication*. Springer.
- Waldherr, A., Stoltenberg, D., Maier, D., Keinert, A., & Pfetsch, B. (2023). Translocal networked public spheres: Spatial arrangements of metropolitan Twitter. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231156579>
- Wiggins, B. E. (2019). *The Discursive Power of Memes in Digital Culture: Ideology, Semiotics, and Intertextuality* (1 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492303>

