

YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH ANTI-ISLAM(IST) AND EXTREME RIGHT MILIEUS: COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT GERMANY

**Marksman's clubs in Germany
in the context of
mainstreaming the extreme**



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DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

Young people's trajectories through anti-Islam(ist) and extreme right milieus: Country level report

Germany

Marksmen's clubs in Germany in the context of mainstreaming the extreme


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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive Summary: | 4 |
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Setting the scene | 5 |
| 2.1 Historical context | 5 |
| 2.2 Contemporary context – mainstreaming the extreme | 6 |
| 2.2.1 PEGIDA | 6 |
| 2.2.2 AfD (Alternative for Germany) | 7 |
| 2.2.3 Right-wing crimes and right-wing terrorism | 7 |
| 2.2.4 Negative attitudes towards asylum seekers, Muslims and refugees | 8 |
| 2.2.5 Climate of hate | 8 |
| 2.3 Locating the marksmen’s milieu | 9 |
| 2.3.1 Marksmen’s clubs in Germany | 9 |
| 2.3.2 Rationale for milieu selection | 10 |
| 2.3.3 The attraction of marksmen’s clubs to agents on the far-right spectrum | 12 |
| 3. Field Research | 13 |
| 3.1 Data collection | 14 |
| 3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations | 15 |
| 3.2.1 Negotiation of field access and conducting interviews | 15 |
| 3.2.2 Field relations and positionality | 16 |
| 3.3 Ethical practice | 17 |
| 3.3.1 Informed consent | 17 |
| 3.3.2 Ethical issues | 17 |
| 3.4 Data analysis | 17 |
| 3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set | 18 |
| 3.5.1 Important socio-demographic parameters of the sample | 18 |
| 3.5.2 Class | 20 |
| 3.5.3 Place | 20 |
| 4. Key Findings | 21 |
| 4.1 What it is like to be a marksman or markswoman | 21 |
| 4.1.1 To be born into the marksmen’s club | 21 |
| 4.1.2 Time spent at the marksmen’s club | 22 |
| 4.1.3 The importance of the marksmen’s club and the marksmen’s community | 22 |
| 4.1.4 Identification with the marksmen’s way of life and the marksmen’s community | 23 |
| 4.2 Home (Heimat) | 24 |
| 4.2.1 The importance of home (Heimat) in marksmanship | 24 |
| 4.2.2 What does home mean to you? | 24 |
| 4.2.3 Home: the dual nature of closeness and the nature of belonging | 25 |
| 4.3 Belonging and not belonging, multiculturalism, and Muslims in marksmanship | 26 |
| 4.3.1 From homeliness to disconcertment | 26 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4.3.2 Socio-Spatial Segregation..... | 27 |
| 4.3.3 Multiculturalism and Muslims in the marksmen's club..... | 28 |
| 4.3.4 Culture of openness..... | 29 |
| 4.4. Muslims as significant 'others' | 30 |
| 4.4.1 Anti-Muslim racism..... | 30 |
| 4.4.2 'Islamisation'..... | 31 |
| 4.4.3 Islam as backward and Muslim as the 'others'..... | 31 |
| 4.4.4 'Because they have no real rights' | 32 |
| 4.4.5 Is Islam a cause of terrorism and are Muslim refugees a special problem? | 32 |
| 4.4.6 Lifeworld tensions and conflicts with Muslims and anti-Muslim racism in the social environment | 33 |
| 4.4.7 Muslims as significant Others..... | 34 |
| 4.4.8 Attitudes towards refugees, immigrants, integration, and a multicultural society..... | 34 |
| 4.5 From Group-focused enmity to radicalisation | 35 |
| 4.5.1 Group-focused enmity and far-right attitudes..... | 35 |
| 4.5.2 Closed right-wing extremist worldview..... | 36 |
| 4.5.3 Radicalism and extremism..... | 37 |
| 4.5.4 Extremism of the centre and radicalisation | 37 |
| 4.6. Inequality | 38 |
| 4.6.1 Outlook on world and society | 38 |
| 4.6.2 Inequality and economic insecurity..... | 39 |
| 4.6.3 Socio-political-inequality..... | 40 |
| 4.6.4 Perceived inequality | 40 |
| 4.6.5. Perceived horizontal inequality | 42 |
| 4.6.6 Inequality, perceived (horizontal) inequality and radicalisation | 43 |
| 4.6.7 Perceived (horizontal) inequality and prevention of radicalisation | 43 |
| 4.7 Understandings of 'radicalism' and 'extremism' | 45 |
| 4.7.1 Understanding of 'radicalism' and 'extremism' | 45 |
| 4.7.2 Freedom of opinion and expression..... | 46 |
| 4.7.3 Being labelled as right-wing or a Nazi..... | 46 |
| 4.7.4 The difference between 'radical' and 'extreme' and between 'right-wing' and 'right-wing radical'... | 49 |
| 4.8 Encounters and Responses to radical messages and problematic agents | 49 |
| 4.8.1 What are radical messages and problematic agents? | 49 |
| 4.8.2 Encounters with radical messages and problematic agents in everyday life and in the social environment..... | 49 |
| 4.8.3 Trajectories towards and away from radical attitudes and milieus | 51 |
| 4.8.4 The Local Extreme Right-Wing Group | 53 |
| 4.8.5 Voting and supporting right-wing populism..... | 56 |
| 4.8.6 'You can't lump them all together' | 59 |
| 4.8.7 Encounters with radical messages and agents in the marksmen's club milieu | 59 |
| 4.8.8 Right-wing niches..... | 61 |
| 4.8.9 Possible features of de- and non-radicalisation | 63 |
| 5. Conclusions..... | 65 |
| 6. Acknowledgements..... | 70 |
| 7. References..... | 70 |

Executive Summary:

This report is based on ethnographic research conducted during 2018 and 2019 in the marksmen's club milieu. Marksmen's clubs are rather conservative clubs that exist throughout Germany. Over one million people are members of such clubs. They look back on century-old tradition and are, for various reasons, attractive to far-right agents; they attempt to (increase) influence in this milieu and to appropriate certain aspects of it. The main question of this case study is how young people from marksmen's clubs react to the phenomenon of 'mainstreaming the extreme' that has taken place in recent years in Germany and other European countries. The study is based on data from qualitative interviews with 12 marksmen and 11 markswomen aged 15 to 33 years, informal communications, observations and observational participation at numerous marksmen's festivals and other marksmen's events.

Key findings:

- (1) Many respondents identify strongly with their home (*Heimat*) and their marksmen's clubs. They were often born into their club, grew up in it, had their main peer group in it and were partly socialised in it.
- (2) Even if none of the individuals in the respondent set are radical or extreme according to classical definitions of radicalism and extremism, many express anti-Muslim attitudes as well as racist attitudes and other associated attitudes that range from right-wing to extreme right-wing. This is in line with findings of representative surveys, which show that such attitudes are not confined to far-right milieus, or even a minority of the general population, but also encountered in mainstream society.
- (3) Those respondents who are affected by socio-economic inequality and/or political powerlessness, but also some other respondents who are not, relate their grievances mainly to feelings of being disadvantaged compared to refugees, immigrants and unemployed people. In addition, interview data show a significant overlap between respondents with a clear accumulation of racist and far-right attitudes and respondents who articulated perceptions of inequality in relation to refugees, immigrants and unemployed people and who are partly affected by objective inequality.
- (4) Respondents differentiate between and reflect on ideas of (right-wing) 'radicalism'/'extremism' and related terms. For many of them, the defining characteristic of (right-wing) 'radicalism'/'extremism' is verbal or physical violence; this is what they oppose and reject. Respondents were also critical towards labelling people, including themselves, too easily as right-wing extremists or Nazi; they argued for a more nuanced assessment of what it means to be really right-wing or 'just a bit to the right'.
- (5) Radicalisation and deradicalisation processes are non-linear and complex; extra-ideological factors such as emotions, a sense of belonging, or community are essential to explain such developments and their dynamics.
- (6) Most respondents have encountered radical messages and potential agents of radicalisation in everyday life. In the case of several respondents, such encounters took place in their immediate social environment, sometimes even in the context of their marksmen's clubs.
- (7) On the one hand respondents reacted negatively to such encounters. Often, these encounters led to individual counter-reactions as well as counter-reactions by the marksmen's club. Furthermore, there are also possible features of de- and non-radicalisation in the milieu. On the other hand, such messages and persons were, in some cases, tolerated or even accepted and thereby normalised. This behaviour allows and facilitates right-wing niches to form and racist attitudes and practices to become normalised.
- (8) Both the overall marksmen's club milieu as well as the respondents' personal contexts as well as their expressions and attitudes exhibit internal contradictions, which offer opportunities to counter and prevent radicalisation.

1. Introduction

Many observers, such as journalists, politicians, social commentators and researchers, speak of a new 'shift to the right' in Germany, which shows parallels to the developments in Germany of the early 1990s during the so-called 'asylum debate' (Section 2.1). This shift began in 2015 with the so-called 'refugee-debate', a public discourse around the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe in general, and to Germany in particular (Häusler, 2018a, p. 11). It has manifested through developments such as the emergence of a new racist nationalist mass movement and sharp increase in racist violence (see Section 2.2.)

A number of studies conducted in Germany since 2002 have surveyed extreme right-wing attitudes, negative and prejudicial attitudes towards minority groups and other attitudes rooted in an ideology of inequality. The basic finding of these studies, also known as 'centre studies', is that such attitudes do not only occur in radical/extreme right-wing milieus and are not only held by a small proportion of the population somewhere at the fringes of society, so to speak. They are also present in the so-called 'social centre of society' (*Mitte der Gesellschaft*) (Schröter, 2019; Zick, Küpper and Berghan, 2019b); a phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'extremism of the centre' (Decker, Kiess and Brähler, 2016). This means that nationalistic, racist and anti-Semitic attitudes, for example, have also been identified among the average population, the socio-economic middle-class, voters of parties across the democratic spectrum and people who would classify themselves as part of the 'centre' (ibid.). From a long term perspective, some of these attitudes have continued to normalise and increase in the social centre since 2015 (Brähler *et al.*, 2016; Decker and Brähler, 2018; Zick, Küpper and Berghan, 2019a; Zick, Küpper and Krause, 2016). These developments and the above mentioned new 'shift to the right' can be understood as aspects of a process of 'mainstreaming the extreme' (Section 2.2).

This case study raises the question of how young people from German marksmen's clubs react to these developments. Marksmen's clubs are rather conservative clubs which exist throughout the country and have millions of members. On the one hand, neither the overall marksmen's club milieu nor individual marksmen's clubs can be described as radical/extreme right-wing in the classically defined sense. On the other hand, marksmen's clubs are, for various reasons, attractive to far-right protagonists and they attempt to influence the milieu and to appropriate certain aspects of it. At the same time, marksmen's clubs can be understood as part of the social centre of society, which like German society as a whole are affected by the mainstreaming of the extreme. Against this background this study shows what opinions and attitudes young people from marksmen's club have about Islam and Muslims, for example, or what they perceive as unequal or unjust. It asks what these young people perceive as radical or extreme right-wing, what they think of right-wing parties or of political violence. It gives examples of how these young people react to radical messages and potential agents¹ of radicalisation in their social environment, while also asking what possible factors in the lives of these young people and in their marksmen's clubs could protect against radicalisation or contribute to non-radicalisation.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

For decades, issues around refugees, asylum and immigration have been controversial in Germany. The early 1990s witnessed the so-called 'asylum debate'. In 1992, the number of people seeking protection under Article 16 of the German constitution reached a record level of approximately 430,000. This led to a serious political crisis and an escalation of racist violence. After the pogroms against asylum seekers'

¹ In this study the term 'agent' refers to individuals, groups, or organisations such as political parties.

and migrant labourers' accommodation in Hoyerswerda in autumn 1991 and in Rostock-Lichtenhagen in late August 1992, this crisis enveloped the entire Federal Republic of Germany. Devastating arson attacks in the West German cities of Mölln and Solingen followed in 1992 and 1993, in which three and five people, respectively, from migrant families were killed. Overall, more than 40 deaths resulted from racist violence during the 1990s, according to official figures, while anti-racist watchdog groups speak at least of some 100 people killed by right-wing violence during this period. Accompanied by problematic media coverage of these attacks, the extreme right-wing political parties 'Republikaner' ('Republicans') and the 'Deutsch Volksunion - DVU' ('German People's Union') experienced various electoral successes. Public debate around asylum and immigration spiked, and politicians from the main democratic parties also played into prejudices against, and fears of, asylum seekers. Finally, in 1993, a two-thirds majority in the German Bundestag decided to substantially restrict the German asylum law after severe pressure from the conservative government on the Social Democrats (Blickle *et al.*, 2018; Botsch, 2017, p. 62; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2018; Koopmans and Olzak, 2004; Ohlemacher, 1994, 1998; Prenzel, 2012; Virchow, 2016, p. 543). According to official figures, the number of asylum applications fell continuously until 2008, to just over 28,000 cases. However, the number of asylum seekers has been increasing since 2009. Several developments on the global stage have led to a considerable increase in asylum applications, especially in 2015, such as the violent escalation of political conflicts mainly in the MENA (Middle East, North African) region, like the Syrian civil war, and the continuing prosperity gap between the global North and the global South. This led to a historic high of 476,649 asylum applications in 2015, which was exceeded again in 2016, with 745,545 applications. This resulted in a crisis of the migration regime in Germany (and Europe), before there was a sharp decline in asylum applications in the following years (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2020, p. 5).

There are crucial parallels between the situation and 'asylum debate' of the early 1990s and the situation from 2015 onwards and the accompanying, so-called, 'refugee-debate' about asylum and migration, which has dominated the public discourse like no other topic in recent years (Häusler and Virchow, 2016a, pp. 8–9). In contrast to the early 1990s, however, parts of civil society, supported by various social and political milieus, were overall very welcoming to the refugees. This 'culture of welcome' was accompanied by political efforts to distribute refugees across Europe fairly. However, most EU member states quickly switched to a policy of isolation and closed borders. In 2016, the ruling government of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany further restricted its asylum law. At the same time, far-right agents have succeeded in agitating and mobilising the public on the issue of 'immigration', referring to anti-Islam and anti-Muslim attitudes and thus exploiting the 'political opportunity structure' (Häusler, 2016b, p. 171ff.). In the course of this, a 'racial-nationalist mass movement' emerged consisting of actors from across the entire far-right spectrum and from both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary spheres (Virchow, 2017a, p. 37). As a result, the public discourse intensified, coarsened, and polarised, accompanied by the rise in hate speech on the internet. Again, similar to the early 1990s, a sharp increase in violence followed (Reinfrank and Brausam, 2016, pp. 235–236). These developments, which are elements of the aforementioned 'shift to the right' are examined in more detail in the following section.

2.2 Contemporary context – mainstreaming the extreme

2.2.1 PEGIDA

In 2014, several groups arose in Germany and started protesting, among other things, against fundamentalist and extreme Islamist currents as well as an alleged Islamisation of Europe. These protests also started against the backdrop of a growing international violent Islamism. One of the groups organising such protests is the PEGIDA movement ('Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident'). It started with an initial demonstration in the city of Dresden in the German federal state of Saxony, which was able to mobilise several thousand people. The initial demonstration spearheaded weekly protests

that, at their height, drew well over 10,000 participants although the number of participants since has decreased significantly (Durchgezählt, n.d.).

More importantly, the PEGIDA movement has succeeded in mobilising broader social strata and parts of the social centre of society and the middle-class. These are mostly people who have not previously been politically active and visible in public. The high degree of mobilisation that the PEGIDA movement achieved at times can be understood as ‘an expression of the displacement of a right-wing oriented political milieu in the middle class that no longer sees itself sufficiently represented’ (Häusler, 2016a, p. 242)². In retrospect, PEGIDA can be seen as an initial spark for new anti-Muslim and anti-refugee protest movements (Häusler and Virchow, 2016b, p. 7; Virchow, 2016). These movements, like PEGIDA itself, but also the ‘Identitarian Movement’, embody the non-parliamentary part of the aforementioned, newly emerged racial-nationalist mass movement (Virchow, 2017a, p. 37).

2.2.2 AfD (Alternative for Germany)

The non-parliamentary part of this movement, as represented by PEGIDA and similar organisations, also has a parliamentary counterpart - the ‘Alternative for Germany’ (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) party. This right-wing populist to extreme right-wing party was founded in 2013 and is the most important protagonist in this movement (Häusler, 2018b; Virchow, 2017a, p. 37). The AfD is now represented in all parliaments of the German federal states and is currently largest opposition party in the German Bundestag. The increasing electoral success of this party and its radicalisation (Häusler, 2018a) can be seen as an additional element of the aforementioned phenomenon of a ‘shift to the right’. This success is also remarkable because until now, no party from the far-right spectrum in Germany has succeeded in establishing itself nationwide and exerting such a strong influence on public and political discourse, in contrast to other European countries. Initially the AfD was founded as a party opposing the EU and the Euro, but has widened its scope, like PEGIDA, to anti-Islam and anti-Muslim messages as well as anti-refugee statements in order to mobilise its base, especially in the context of the increasing number of asylum seekers since 2015. At the end of 2015, the former deputy federal spokesman of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, called the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ a ‘gift’ for his party, as it contributed to massively rising poll ratings (Spiegel Online, 2015). Besides an interconnectedness of many political and ideological positions between PEGIDA and AfD, the party’s radical right-wing faction supported the PEGIDA movement pretty much from the beginning (Häusler, 2016b, p. 170). Evidence also suggests that the far-right AfD was the most preferred party for many PEGIDA demonstrators, who often perceived themselves as ‘political centrist’ (Kocyba, 2018, pp. 75–76).

2.2.3 Right-wing crimes and right-wing terrorism

Official data also reveals the massive increase in racist violence since 2015 (Reinfrank and Brausam, 2016). Between 2014 and 2015, 918 incidents of ‘xenophobic violence’ were recorded, an increase of 79.6%. ‘Right-wing extremist crimes against asylum accommodations’ also rose dramatically in 2015, including a fivefold increase in ‘violence against asylum accommodations’, a total of 153 incidents, and a fifteen fold increase in ‘arson attacks’, a total of 75 incidents (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2015, pp. 25–30). In 2016, the number of such incidents remained high (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, pp. 23–28). Overall, the total number of right-wing extremist crimes reached its highest level since 2001, with 23,520 crimes (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2016, pp. 23–28; Staud, 2018). In the following years, it remained at over 19,400 crimes per year (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2018b, pp. 24–31, 2019b, pp. 24–31). In addition, between 2017 and 2019, about three-quarters of ‘hate postings’ on the Internet, a category that has been officially monitored only since 2017, had a right-wing background (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2017, p. 6, 2018a, p. 6, 2019a, p. 7). The spectrum of right-wing crimes also included various crimes with a right-wing terrorist dimension, which had become increasingly common from 2011 onwards, after the racist murders and attacks by the ‘National Socialist Underground’ (NSU) between

² English translation: Author

1999 and 2007 became publicly known. This demonstrates a long continuity of right-wing terrorism in Germany (Quent, Salzborn and Salheiser, 2019; Virchow, 2020a). This continuity was most recently extended in 2019 with the attempt at an anti-Semitic mass murder and the murders in Halle in 2019,³ in addition to, the racist killings in Hanau in 2020 where the perpetrator deliberately killed nine people of immigration background and his own mother.

Interestingly, several perpetrators of recent right-wing violence did not have any connections to right-wing extremist milieus, which can be seen as evidence of the mainstreaming of the extreme over recent years. These perpetrators were, as far as is known, not members of, nor engaged in, any organised groups or scenes classified by German security authorities as right-wing extremist. However, before their offences, some had taken part in PEGIDA demonstrations, where, in some cases, they got to know each other and, potentially, became radicalised. Among these perpetrators, who were average citizens or came from the social centre of society were those who went on to commit right-wing terrorist acts (Köhler, 2019, pp. 145–146; Virchow, 2020b).

2.2.4 Negative attitudes towards asylum seekers, Muslims and refugees.

The emergence of a racist-nationalist mass movement, as described above, the related intensification, coarsening, and polarisation of public discourse and the rise of hate speech on the internet as well as the sharp increase in racist violence since 2015, can be interpreted in accordance with two significant trends identified in survey research. First, authors of so-called ‘centre studies’ state that negative attitudes towards asylum seekers have stabilised at high levels; in some cases, they have increased even further. In 2014, 2016 and 2018/2019, 44.3%, 49.5% and 54.1% (Zick *et al.*, 2019, p. 83) respectively of the survey participants in these studies expressed reservations and prejudices towards asylum seekers. They approved the statements that the state should not be generous in accepting asylum applications and/or that most asylum-seekers did not, in fact, fear persecution in their home countries (*ibid.*: 68, 72). Second, the ‘centre studies’ revealed (only) slight increases of ‘anti-Muslim’ attitudes during those same years, from 17.5% to 18.3% and finally to 18.7%, respectively (Zick *et al.*, 2019, p. 83). Moreover, in 2016, 37% of respondents expressed that Islam has too much influence in Germany and that Islam is ‘infiltrating’ German society - statements clearly in tune with anti-Muslim attitudes (Küpper, Häusler and Zick, 2016, pp. 155–156). However, agreement with the latter statement, which was measured again in 2018/2019, fell significantly from 40% to 25% (Häusler and Küpper, 2019, p. 167). In terms of ‘refugees’, in 2016, nearly 56% and 24% of respondents evaluated Germany’s accommodation of so many refugees as good or partly good, respectively. Even in 2018/2019, these figures still reached 44% and 30%, respectively. However, anti-refugee attitudes were much higher among respondents who intended to vote for the AfD; in 2018/2019 70.5% of this group of survey respondents were opposed to receiving refugees. This is interpreted as proof of the AfD’s ability to mobilise voters around the ‘refugee issue’ (Küpper, Berghan and Rees, 2019, pp. 195–197).

2.2.5 Climate of hate

In a study on PEGIDA, Vorländer, Herold and Schaller (2016, p. 146) propose that PEGIDA demonstrations, especially in Saxony, have, most likely, indirectly contributed to the sharp increase in violent attacks on refugee accommodation during the first half of 2015. As an indication of this, the aforementioned right-wing terrorist perpetrators emanating from the social centre of society might be seen as individuals who might have (further) radicalised themselves in the context of the PEGIDA demonstrations. The authors also propose that PEGIDA has contributed to a change in the ‘political climate of discourse’, meaning that racist statements, especially in social media, have been ‘normalised’ (*ibid.*). This analysis, together with the wider developments examined in this section, suggest that agents such as the PEGIDA movement and,

³ In Halle the perpetrator originally intended to kill members of a Jewish congregation on the date of the Jewish Yom Kippur festival. This plan failed because he did not succeed in gaining access to the synagogue, but he killed two other people - a passer-by and a customer of a kebab restaurant.

in the parliamentary sphere, the AfD party in particular have co-created a social climate that has contributed to mobilising and radicalising existing racist and prejudiced attitudes, especially towards Muslims and refugees. This social climate has also encouraged people from the far-right spectrum, who felt legitimised in their action by this climate, to commit racist acts of violence. In addition to its effect on existing far-right milieus, this social climate partially affected the social centre. Consequently, racist, prejudiced, and far-right attitudes have been normalised further (Schröter, 2019, p. 11) and have even increased. In addition, it made racist acts of violence by people who seemingly had not moved in radical or extreme right-wing milieus more likely (Häusler and Virchow, 2016b, pp. 122–123). Together, these developments described above might be best summarised as a process of ‘mainstreaming the extreme’.

2.3 Locating the marksmen’s milieu

2.3.1 Marksmen’s clubs in Germany

‘Marksmanship’ (*Schützenwesen*) exists in various European countries with a history going back to the Middle Ages. ‘German Marksmanship’ shares in this history and was declared an ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ by the German UNESCO Commission in December 2015. According to the Commission ‘[i]n many regions, marksmanship is an important and vibrant part of the regional or local identity. It incorporates many customs and traditions, which manifest themselves in different ways’ (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, n.d.).

Probably the most famous of these customs is the marksmen’s festival (*Schützenfest*), which is an annual event organised by every marksmen’s club. In many cases, a marksmen’s festival is not merely a club event but functions as a whole village, town or city fête or a folk festival. In many cases, these festivals also include a funfair in addition to marksmen (*Schützen*) activities.⁴ During each festival, shooting competitions take place. One of them is the so-called king bird shooting. The marksman who wins this competition becomes the king or queen of marksmen; a one-year office. Processions and parades are held in honour of the king or queen, which is one of the highlights of marksmen’s festivals. Public interest in the marksmen’s festivals depends on the geographical location and the marksmen’s club (*Schützenverein*) itself. Some marksmen’s festivals tend to go unnoticed by the larger public, while others can be formative elements in public life and sometimes attract several thousand or even some tens of thousands of visitors from near and far. Marksmen’s clubs are also active in the social lives of their villages, towns, cities and districts. For example, some clubs organise other events such as St. Martin’s processions or Easter bonfires, do voluntary work in their localities, collect money for charitable purposes, or cooperate with other clubs and institutions. In addition to the so-called ‘cultivation of tradition and customs’ (*Traditionen und Brauchtumpflege*), which is practised in many marksmen’s clubs, shooting sports and sometimes other sports are also practised. Active youth work and youth promotion, which takes place in many clubs, is an additional dimension of these clubs. Similar to other club activities, youth work takes place on a voluntary basis (*Ehrenamt*).

Marksmen’s clubs are organised via various umbrella organisations like the ‘German Shooting and Archery Federation’ (‘Deutscher Schützenbund’, DSB). This organisation was founded in 1861 and re-established in 1951, after the Second World War. Currently, the federation has 1.35 million members, distributed across more than 14,200 member clubs (DSB, n.d.). This makes it the largest umbrella organisation of marksmen’s clubs as well as the fourth largest sports umbrella organisation in Germany. The ‘The Historic German Marksmen’s Brotherhood Federation’ (‘Bund der Historischen Deutschen Schützenbruderschaften’, BHDS), a Catholic organisation, is another umbrella organisation for

⁴ In the marksmen’s club milieu, the terms ‘marksman’ or ‘marksmen’ are the terms used to refer to members even by female club members, i.e. markswomen. Unless referring explicitly to markswomen, this report will use these terms whilst recognising that they refer to people of two or more genders.

marksmen's clubs. It was founded in 1928 and is the largest umbrella organisation for the so-called 'marksmen's brotherhoods' (*Schützenbruderschaften*). It claims to have 400,000 members distributed across almost 1,300 members' clubs (Europäische Gemeinschaft Historischer Schützen, n.d.). In some regions, there is hardly a village or city that does not have at least one marksmen's club. In many cases, there are several. This is true for smaller villages, towns, and cities of all sizes. In some big cities, marksmen's clubs are active in every city district. Sometimes, there are several dozen in a single city. Overall, German marksmanship is not a marginal phenomenon. Despite declining membership, the sheer number of members means it continues to constitute an important aspect of contemporary life. Moreover, it plays a significant cultural and social role in many regions of Germany and has deep roots in German history and society.

2.3.2 Rationale for milieu selection

Today, the marksmen's club milieu can be characterised as a rather conservative milieu with a strong sense of community and a Christian and middle-class or civic self-understanding. A great deal of importance is placed on values, history, customs and traditions. Even though the marksmen's club milieu has a rather homogeneous membership structure in terms of some socio-demographic parameters (Section 3.5.), it can be understood as a milieu of the social centre of society, which is also reflected in the aforementioned milieu's self-understanding. Against this background, it was assumed when selecting this milieu that it would also be affected by the process of 'mainstreaming the extreme' in Germany, or rather by the current and concrete socio-climatic effects that have radicalised the social centre. It was supposed, in particular, that attitudes based on an 'ideologies of inequality' (Küpper, 2016; Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011) such as racism, sexism, and nativism can also be found in the marksmen's club milieu and that these 'ideologies' or attitudes as well as the holders of these ideologies and attitudes are undergoing partial radicalisation. It was thus anticipated that the marksmen's club milieu would be a site of more liberal and democratic positions as well as more radical or extreme ones and potentially allow the investigation of both radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes.

Even though neither the overall milieu nor individual marksmen's clubs can be described as radical/extreme right-wing in the classically defined sense, the milieu has several characteristics that render it an interesting site for the study of young people's encounters with radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation).

The first is that marksmen's clubs are considered to be rather conservative and traditional, for example in terms of their values and customs. They also place a lot of emphasis on their history, exhibit above-average patriotism/nationalism, and are very much attached to their 'home' (*Heimat*) (Section 4.2). An illustration of this is the motto of the Catholic umbrella organisation 'Historic German Marksmen's Brotherhood' (BHDS) and its member clubs, which some more secular marksmen's clubs also use, which is 'For Faith, Morals, Home' (*Für Glaube, Sitte, Heimat*).

Secondly, large parts of performing marksmanship consist of procedures, structures, and rituals borrowed from the military, such as: wearing uniforms, badges, and decorations; pseudo-military ranks and command structures; and marching in processions and parades to (military) marching music. In general, hierarchical structures of command and obedience in marksmen's clubs coexist with democratic ones. There are also military and nationalist rituals.

Third, in terms of cultural and socio-structural aspects, marksmen's clubs are dominantly 'male', 'white', 'Christian', and 'heterosexual'. In general, their members tend to be older, male, and ethnically homogenous, i.e., their members tend not to have immigrant backgrounds (Section 3.5).

Fourth, until recently, many marksmen's clubs have excluded women and non-Christians from (active) membership; some continue to do so. Some also discriminate against gay and lesbian people. For example, some clubs do not allow women to become members. Such rules are sometimes justified by

tradition). Another example is that of Mithat Gedik, a marksman of Muslim faith, who became king of marksmen in his club. The Catholic umbrella organisation of this club, the above mentioned 'Historic German Marksmen's Brotherhood Federation', initially rejected his enthronement because it violated the statutes of the federation. In the course of a longer controversy about the 'Muslim king of marksmen', which had led to great media interest and became a hot topic of public debate, the association decided that Mr. Gedik could keep his office. In 2017, the decision was finally made that the respective member clubs of the federation could decide for themselves whether to admit Muslims and other non-Christians as members. In the course of this decision, it was also decided that gay and lesbian marksmen could appear together with their partners as a king or queen of marksmen's couple, which had also not been allowed previously (Neue Westfälische, 2017).

Fifth, shooting sports are practised in many marksmen's clubs, and members are trained in the use of firearms. It is important to note that the practising of shooting sports is one of the few possibilities in Germany to legally acquire and possess, albeit under strict conditions, small firearms and ammunition by means of a so-called 'gun ownership card'.

The sixth and last characteristic is that the public image of marksmen's clubs is somewhat negative. This is due to people's attitudes towards shooting sports, shooting and guns in general, but also to people's perceptions of this milieu. One of these perceptions is that marksmen tend to be right-wing. In the initial phase of field research, in some interviews, the existence of this perception was confirmed by field contacts and respondents themselves. In addition, in a recent study on marksmanship in the German region of Westphalia (a region where marksmanship is popular) *non*-marksmen were asked in an online survey (n=1,599), amongst other questions, whether the term 'politically extreme' 'fits' the marksmen's club. Of the total number of respondents, 49.7% said that it 'does not fit at all' and another 36.3% of the respondents said that it 'rather does not fit'. A minority thought that the term 'fits' (11.6%) or 'strongly fits' (2.5%) the marksmen's club. The same question was also put to marksmen (n=3,871). Of this group, 58.2% said that the term 'doesn't fit at all', 34.9% said it 'rather doesn't fit', 5.9% said that it 'fits' and 1.1% said that the term 'strongly fits' the marksmen's club (Leineweber *et al.*, 2020, pp. 72–73). Now it does not emerge from this quantitative survey what the respondents understood exactly by 'politically extreme'. But even independent of the answers and limits of interpretation it is interesting that this question was asked, also because there were no other political questions in this study. This can be interpreted as an indication that the question was due to the partly public perception of a right-wing tendency among marksmen.

The selection of this milieu for study should not be read as suggesting that the marksmen's clubs or marksmen per se are right-wing or anti-Islamic, let alone extreme right-wing. However, some of the above-mentioned specific characteristics of the marksmen's club milieu – such as the importance of tradition, home and homeland, a kind of nationalism and forms of militarism and fondness of hierarchical structures – intersect with elements of milieus across the far-right spectrum.⁵ Thus, the marksmen's club milieu can be attractive to individuals affiliated with, and agents of, the far-right spectrum. For these individuals, for example, the possibility of access to weapons and training in using them could be an important factor in becoming part of a marksmen's club (Sections 2.3.2; 2.3.3). The emphasis on home and homeland (Section 2.3.3) are also vulnerable to being appropriated and influenced by agents of the far-right spectrum and could make the milieu vulnerable to calls to radicalisation. Furthermore, these aspects are in danger of being exploited by far-right interpretations and traditional ideas of society, such as an exclusive, homogeneous, and exclusionary understanding of home (*Heimat*) (Section 2.3.3). Thus, in light of this, and the wider process of mainstreaming the extreme, it was anticipated that this milieu would be potentially vulnerable to radicalisation calls and that marksmen's club members would have to some

⁵ In this study the term 'far-right' refers to the whole spectrum of the right from right-wing to extreme right-wing agents, behaviours, and attitudes.

extent qualitatively significant encounters with radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation). At the same time, it was hypothesised that other aspects of the marksmen's club milieu – such as (Christian) values, a strong sense of community and a set of democratic and participatory structures – might contribute to preventing young people from engaging in actions of political violence or becoming radicalised (at least to the point of violent extremism). Thus, this milieu was also a promising site for the exploring non-radicalisation pathways and what prevents young people's radicalisation.

Finally, marksmen's clubs were selected as the research milieu because of their societal significance. This relates to the high number of marksmen's clubs as well as the cultural importance of marksmanship in many parts of Germany and the partial public perception of them as 'right-wing'. Despite this association, there is relatively little empirical research on this milieu and no research on radicalisation, deradicalisation and non-radicalisation within it. In this respect this study is both new and exploratory.

2.3.3 The attraction of marksmen's clubs to agents on the far-right spectrum

To conclude this section, a few examples are given to illustrate how aspects of the marksmen's club milieu can be attractive to agents from the far-right spectrum and their attempts to influence the milieu and appropriate certain aspects of it.

Several right-wing extremists and (alleged) right-wing terrorist perpetrators have been members of marksmen's clubs. As part of their membership, they were allowed to handle small firearms and had access to ammunition. For example, the now convicted murderer of the district president of the city of Kassel, Walter Lübcke, and his alleged accomplice⁶ were members of the same marksmen's club and possessed gun ownership cards (Kampf, 2019). The assassin of Hanau was also a member of a marksmen's club (Jansen and Lemkemeyer, 2020).

According to the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, in 2018, 910 members of the '*Reichsbürgerbewegung*' ('Reich Citizens Movement'), a term used to describe a variety of groups who reject the modern boundaries of the Federal Republic of Germany and maintain that Germany's borders are those of pre-World War II,⁷ possessed a gun-license (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2018b, p. 96); in 2019, that number decreased to about 530. In general, 950 of the individuals in this movement, to which, according to the authorities, about 19,000 persons could be attributed this year, have been identified as belonging to the right-wing extremist scene (Bundesministerium des Innern, 2019b, pp. 103–104). Unfortunately, there is no information about how many of the 950 right-wing extremist members of the movements also hold a gun license. Some of the gun license holding members of the movement might have this license simply because they are active in shooting sports in marksmen's club.

In 2017, the recent President of the Thuringian Office for the Protection of the Constitution had warned that neo-Nazis were infiltrating Thuringian marksmen's clubs based on concrete cases (Klaus, 2017). At the national level, the German Federal Government stated in 2020 that it knew of up to ten shooting sports and marksmen's clubs where, since 2017, there were indications that the clubs were influenced or even shaped by members of right-wing extremist groups (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2020, p. 2). Thus, some individual clubs might be exposed to such infiltration and harbour right-wing perpetrators in the marksmen's milieu. These cases clearly merit dedicated attention, even if they constitute only a very small proportion of the several thousand clubs in Germany. They demonstrate the attractiveness of marksmen's clubs for agents from the far-right spectrum and it is hard to estimate the potential number of unreported cases.

There is evidence of the attempt to influence the milieu and appropriate certain aspects of it from an internal strategy paper of the AfD party, named 'Strategy 2019 – 2025'. The paper describes the AfD as being on the road to becoming a people's party' but in need of further public support and appeal to

⁶ This individual has since been acquitted of the charge of helping to commit murder.

⁷ Schönberger and Schönberger (2020); Speit (2017); Rathje (2018).

particular groups in society. To this end, the paper states that the AfD should be better anchored in the electorate. Accordingly, in a ‘march through the organisations’ (Reisinger, 2019), the paper suggests to focus on organisations with a nationwide outreach and a high number of members that are not far to the left politically as well as on smaller organisations that overlap with AfD-related issues (Fiedler, 2019). The paper even specifically mentioned marksmen’s clubs as a target: ‘Clubs and federations that cultivate traditions, that do not meet with much sympathy among the left-liberal milieu are suitable for the AfD to address. These include, for example, hunters, marksmen’s clubs, sports shooters, or members of religious, primarily Christian minorities, as well as cultivators of customs’ (quoted from Rosbach, 2020)⁸.

In fact, the AfD Bundestag faction sent a flyer to member clubs of ‘The Historic German Marksmen’s Brotherhood Federation’ (BHDS) at the end of 2019. In this flyer, the AfD addressed the reservations of sport shooters and hunters towards a tightening of gun laws (Staudenmaier, 2020). The flyer ends with the following sentence, which shows how the party is identifying with certain elements of marksmanship and how it is also trying to situate itself as a political lobby for these rights: ‘Sport shooters, hunters, gun collectors and other owners of legal weapons stand for the German marksmen’s tradition, for the regional customs and preserve the local and historical heritage. This must be defended and cultivated. This is what we fight for in the German Bundestag’ (AfD Bundestagsfraktion, 2019)⁹.

However, the AfD was also faced with resistance from some protagonists in the milieu. In an interview on this topic, the 1st president of the ‘Historic German Marksmen’s Brotherhood Federation’ responds to the AfD’s attempts to get closer to the clubs as follows: ‘For us, home is not only the place where I was born and grew up. Home is not defined by origin, nationality, skin colour or religion. For us, home is the place where I feel at home and secure. Our Christian view of humanity is clearly different from the ideas and statements of AfD’ (Zerback, 2020)¹⁰. Moreover, when the AfD attempted to move close to and appropriate marksmanship, the Federation’s youth organisation declared itself and the AfD incompatible (Staudenmaier, 2020). This example also demonstrates existing liberal open tendencies that can be found in parts of the marksmen’s milieu. This allows this milieu to be described as a milieu in which liberal-democratic tendencies and illiberal-antidemocratic, authoritarian, and nativist tendencies clash with each other. Of course, these conflicts take place in society as a whole, but are more dramatic in more conservative milieus such as the marksmen’s one. Such milieus are more intensely exposed to attempts of appropriation and influence by the far-right spectrum. Plus, such milieus also and need to negotiate more frequently their definitions of what is conservative and what is right-wing and need to constantly define their boundaries with the more radical and extreme spectrum. These conflicts are further intensified because of the current ‘mainstreaming the extreme’, which increases the potential for radicalisation of individuals and groups, even from beyond the radical fringes.

3. Field Research

This report is based on ethnographic field research in the marksmen's club milieu. I participated in numerous events in this milieu, especially at marksmen's festivals and events of individual corps,¹¹ such as summer parties or king bird shooting competitions (Section 2.3.1). Most of these events took place in the five clubs where I primarily conducted my research (Section 3.5.3). During my field research, I became active as a ‘participant observer’ on the one hand; thus, the primary goal of my involvement in the field

⁸ English translation: Author

⁹ English translation: Author

¹⁰ English translation: Author

¹¹ Many marksmen’s clubs are subdivided into units, often called ‘corps’. These are a type of sub-club with which the members of the marksmen’s club are associated and which are often similar in structure to the overarching marksmen’s club.

was to make observations. On the other hand, I also became increasingly active as an ‘observing participant’; in the sense of ‘lifeworld ethnography’, I tried to get existentially involved in what was happening at these events and did what the others did and what was usual in these situations (Hitzler and Gothe, 2015, pp. 10–12). Thus, at some marksmen's festivals, I celebrated together with the marksmen and other guests, instead of merely observing their celebration. Also, to give another example, I became a guest marksman at one corps of a marksmen's club. In the course of this, for instance, I was also engaged in parades and processions wearing a marksmen's uniform, which took place as part of the marksmen's festival of this club. My first field entry was in December 2018 when I attended a Winter Concert of a club, also to meet with the club's president to explain my proposed research to him in more detail. The last diary entry was at the summer of 2019 and describes my aforementioned participation at a marksmen's festival as a guest marksman. Between December 2018 and August 2019, I also conducted 29 qualitative interviews with marksmen, both male and female (based on the interview schedule agreed across the project), one interview with a former markswoman, one interview with a marksman's family and four expert interviews. This study is based on 23 interviews conducted with marksmen and some of my field observations and experiences. These interviews were transcribed and then coded and analysed along with the field diary entries and other data (such as documents) using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

3.1 Data collection

Table 1: Data set

| | Number | Total length or brief description (as appropriate) | Average length |
|------------------------------------|------------|---|----------------------|
| Respondent memos | 23 | n/a | n/a |
| Audio interviews | 23 | Total length of audio transcripts = 3,278 mins (54.7 hours) | 143 mins (2.4 hours) |
| Field diary entries (total) | 15 | 41,692 words (108 pages) | n/a |
| Still images* | 230 | From several events attended | n/a |
| Moving images* | 77 | From several events attended | n/a |
| Documents* | Approx. 50 | Flyers, magazines, leaflets, advertisement, press statements, newspaper articles (offline/online); most of these things came from marksmen's clubs and related umbrella organisations and were partly collected at various marksmen's club events. | n/a |
| Supplementary interviews | 12 | Six additional interviews with marksmen, one interview with a former markswoman, an interview with a family of marksmen and four expert interviews were conducted but not included in the primary database for analysis. They have informed the analysis, however, and are referred to in the report where appropriate. | n/a |

*These data were only partially systematically analysed, but have served to inform the analysis presented here.

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

3.2.1 Negotiation of field access and conducting interviews

The processes of getting access to the field and recruiting interview partners took several months and thus constituted a significant part of the field research period. First, I sent letters and emails to members on the management boards (mostly the presiding presidents) of about 30 secular and Catholic marksmen's clubs and marksmen's corps in one particular region and disclosed the research request. I also tried to reach them by phone as a follow-up to my letters and/or emails. I was also able to solicit assistance from an individual on the management board of a local marksmen's umbrella organisation. This individual agreed to share my research request among the organisation's member clubs, which partly overlapped with the 30 clubs I had contacted myself.

Most of the clubs addressed did not reply and six clubs rejected the request or communication broke down. In total, four clubs and two corps of another club were willing to cooperate and supported the project in a range of different ways. In this subsection, I outline the main ways that these clubs worked with me and some of the issues that arose while securing access to the field.

The management board of one club put me in touch with its board of the club's marksmen's youth, which became an important gatekeeper. These youth board members introduced me to possible interview partners, and I conducted also interviews with several of the board members. In another club, the gatekeeper was initially a member of the board. This person invited me to a club event, introduced me to board members of different corps, and gave me the opportunity to meet possible interview partners on site. This resulted in a few interviews. This person disseminated information about my research topic among friendly clubs although no interviews resulted from this. In a further club, I was allowed to present my research project at the annual general meeting of a corps of this club and to ask for interview partners. This did not result in any interviews but gave me the opportunity to conduct some field research. A newly founded marksmen's group of this corps showed interest in my research project and accepted me as a guest member for a marksmen's festival season. Most of these clubs and corps also shared my research request with their members by e-mail. Although this probably reached several hundred marksmen, it resulted in only three interviews. I was also able to attend and participate in the marksmen's festivals and other events of all these clubs. Besides the possibility of field research, this allowed me to get to know other possible interview partners. Finally, I conducted interviews with two experts in an umbrella sports organisation, which led me to an expert interview with an individual of another marksmen's umbrella organisation. This expert then shared my request among a few marksmen, which resulted in another interview with a marksman who became an important gatekeeper and led to the identification of additional interviewees from his city.

In sum, the following measures enabled me to recruit interview partners and to engage in field research in the marksmanship: Writing to clubs at management board level, contacting actors and experts at umbrella organisation level, presenting my project at general meetings of corps, connecting with gatekeepers and interview partners who introduced me to additional interview partners or facilitated field access and participation in various marksmen events.

However, a number of issues arose in terms of field access and conducting of interviews. First, there was a low response rate and long response times of marksmen's clubs and marksmen that were contacted directly. It was not clear why many clubs did not respond but in the case of the four explicit rejections, the reasons given were: the time commitment for the club; the unwillingness of requested marksmen to do lengthy interviews; and a lack of interest in talking about the issues of concern to the project. Another problem was no-shows – promised interviews and already arranged interview dates were not kept, the contact was broken off without giving reasons or longer follow-ups were necessary. I also experienced some negative reactions to the term 'radicalisation', which as part of the DARE project title also featured in the Information Sheet given to potential participants when seeking informed consent. One respondent

categorically refused to participate in the project when he was informed of its title. A few other possible respondents, however, justified their interest in participating because of their willingness to support a project against radicalisation. However, some of the respondents that were referred to me by gatekeepers or other respondents did not know exactly what the research was about until the first personal contact or even the day of the interview, or they just thought that it is about 'integration' or just about marksmen and marksmen's clubs. This is a problem, which can arise when working with gatekeepers, who may outline the project briefly or loosely. Any lack of clarity was addressed by me upon meeting the potential respondents who were then fully informed about the project before they signed a consent form ahead of the interview (Section 3.3.1).

It also turned out that some members of one of the umbrella organisations that I approached considered responding critically to the research request. These members felt that the title and topic of the project gave the impression that the project per se assumes right-wing radicalism in marksmen's clubs and among marksmen. Even though I was able to dispel this impression during a meeting, it might have led to the research request not being shared more widely among its member clubs.

During my field research, I was also confronted with questions or remarks that generally stated that marksmen are not as bad as their image, referred to in the introduction (Section 2.3.2). In particular, such comments were about two prejudicial perceptions of marksmen: one, that they drink a lot, and two, that they are mostly right-wingers. For example, board members in two clubs mentioned to me during an event that marksmen are not as right-wing as some of the common stereotypes or perceptions suggest. I assume that these comments were made because of the project title.

3.2.2 Field relations and positionality

From participation in various marksmen's events during my field research, I was able to understand the milieu more deeply and intimately. This understanding was helpful during my interviews. Participation in these events also helped me to identify particularly interesting interview partners and to work on building relationships with them, which in turn increased their willingness to be interviewed. For example, during a club's marksmen's festival, a board member told me that he had watched me and liked the fact that I did not just stand around and take notes, but that I was present every day, talking to people, getting in contact and celebrating with them. Several participants expressed their appreciation for my research interest in marksmanship. My presence during fieldwork was described by some as a chance to show that marksmen are not as bad as their reputation and the research seen as a potential advertisement for marksmanship.

As far as my positionality is concerned, I need to point out that I have no marksmen's background and haven't had any contact with marksmanship prior to my research. At many of the marksmen's events I attended, I was a stranger. Often, I was the only person who was neither a marksman nor part of the marksmen's environment. I was also unfamiliar with any of the proceedings, while all the others knew each other and the proceedings more or less well.

As a white, cisgender and heterosexual man from a working class family and with a Christian background, even if I am not a believer, I was in a milieu that could be called a 'white room' or a 'white world' (Ahmed, 2007), which to a certain extent is influenced by both Christianity and masculinity. Thus, it can also be said that I was a white researcher who also researched on aspects of whiteness (Foste, 2020). I was also reasonably familiar with certain activities and cultural techniques within the milieu and was willing and habitually inclined to engage in these and other activities (as a participating observer) or was supported by the milieu to participate in these activities. By this I mean, for example, singing German *Schlager* music and dancing together or drinking alcohol together. Thus, although I was not able to move in this milieu entirely like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127), participants' perception of me as 'like them', due my appearance as a white, male, Christian, German, presumed heterosexual, eased my presence there. This acceptance of my presence in the milieu was facilitated by participants' perception

of me as not prejudiced against the marksmen in advance and as not conforming to their image of the arrogant academic.

All these aspects of my identity and behaviour during fieldwork probably influenced the respondent-researcher relation in the interview situation and beyond to some extent as well. I found the interview situations to be generally informal and comfortable; this was helped by interviews being conducted mainly in locations chosen by the respondents such as in club restaurants, pubs and cafes. In their feedback, some respondents confirmed that they also felt very comfortable during the interview process. I also had the impression that most respondents were relatively open during the interviews – even when expressing attitudes that I would describe as socially undesirable, like racist ones. However, based on my observations in the field and other information, it would seem that two interviewees were not wholly truthful during interviews in relation to a particular issue. Concerned that my interview partners would not have spoken so openly if I had contradicted or responded critically to racist or other, from my point of view, problematic statements, and because the interviews were designed to understand respondents' meaning-making processes and narratives, I usually kept silent about such statements or asked further questions about the underlying issues. At the same time, I think it is very likely that my respondents were so open in expressing socially undesirable attitudes partially because of my own whiteness. Regarding this issue Foste (2020) critically reflects on the implications it can have when white scholars study whiteness, such as creating contexts for racial comfort in interviews, the unintentional validation of racist beliefs due to the researcher's silence on problematic statements or the missing of opportunities for educational interventions. Since it is planned to share the outcome of this research with the respondents and, if desired, to discuss with them again in person or to present the findings to the researched clubs, there is the potential opportunity to discuss and reflect on problematic findings with individual respondents or within the club environment.

3.3 Ethical practice

3.3.1 Informed consent

Before I started the interview, I explained to respondents what the research was about, how the interview would be conducted, how their data would be used and their anonymity maintained. After participants read the information sheet which included a detailed description of the research process, I answered any questions and explained the informed consent form to the respondents, which we then signed. In the case of minors, I sent the information sheet and consent form to their parents beforehand, and the signed document was brought to the interview. In one case, I was given verbal consent first, and the signed form was given a few weeks later to me.

3.3.2 Ethical issues

Possible ethical issues were discussed in advance with the leader of the project's ethics committee and our team leader Prof. Virchow. During the research, no ethical issues arose although there were some interview situations that were emotionally challenging because some adult respondents talked about their experiences of bullying in the past or mental illness.

3.4 Data analysis

My data analysis followed the agreed data analysis procedure for the project (see the general Introduction to this series of reports). In addition to the pre-agreed Level 2 nodes, a further seven were created during the coding of data for this study. These nodes were:

1. 'The place where I live'. This node was created because the topic 'living place' is important for many respondents. This is partly because many respondents identify strongly with where they

- live, and some complained about certain structural changes in their city districts. Additionally, marksmen's clubs are generally strongly linked to the villages, towns, cities and city districts in which they are based (Sections 4.2 and 4.3).
2. 'Marksmen's Identity and community, marksmen's feelings, marksmen's values and home (*Heimat*)'. This node contains information about marksmanship in general, what role marksmanship and certain marksmen's values play in the lives of the respondents, and what self-conception they have as a marksman or markswoman (Section 4.1).
 3. 'Gender in the marksmen's club (and gender and sexual identity). Since I spoke with my respondents about gender issues mainly in the context of marksmanship, I created this node and merged it with the 'Gender and sexual identity' node.
 4. 'Views on Islam and Muslims, conflictual relationships with Muslims, Muslims and multiculturalism in the marksmen's club'. This reflects the centrality of topics 'Islam and Muslims' and 'multiculturalism' inside and outside the marksmen's club during the interviews (Section 4.4)
 5. '(Social-) Media (use) and knowledge about what's going on'. This node was created to capture reflections from respondents during detailed discussion of their (social-) media consumption and their opinions on (social-) media. Social media was often also the source of my respondents' subjective knowledge about certain issues (e.g., about refugees and crime).
 6. 'Counter-radicalisation (social & institutional factors)'. Based on interview statements and other sources, this node contains factors that could, on an individual level and on the level of the marksmen's clubs, counteract processes of radicalisation and/or serve as factors to prevent racism and right-wing extremism.
 7. 'Feedback and benefits of the DARE project'. At the end of the interview, some respondents gave me feedback on the interview and suggested what, for example, policy makers or the EU could do with their statements and the statements of other young people regarding these topics. This was coded under this additional node.

In addition, the Level 2 nodes 'Future' and 'Dreams, Ideals and utopias' were merged into one Level 2 Node called 'Future (Dreams, Ideals and utopias)'. The Level 2 nodes 'Ideologised enemies, their attributes' and 'Kicks, thrills and sensory stimuli' did not play a major role in the coding. The Level 2 nodes 'Ideologised enemies, their attributes' and 'Kicks, thrills and sensory stimuli' were not populated during the coding of data and thus node memos were not completed for these Level 2 nodes.

In total, the interviews were coded using 29 Level 2 nodes and 205 Level 1 nodes. In total, 4,411 data segments ('references') were analysed.

3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

3.5.1 Important socio-demographic parameters of the sample

In order to ensure the anonymity of respondents in this study, socio-demographic data for each individual is not provided. However, in this section, an overview of the most important socio-demographic parameters of the sample will be presented and (where data are available) compared to the marksmen's milieu in general.

- *Gender*: 12 respondents are male; 11 respondents are female.
There is no comprehensive data about gender ratio for all marksmen's clubs. However, based on membership statistics of the 'German Shooting and Archery Federation' (DSB), the proportion of women among the 1.35 million marksmen in the federation is about 25% (Deutscher Schützenbund, 2019). It can be assumed that this ratio will be similar across all marksmanship organisations. Traditionally, marksmen's clubs were largely men only clubs. Even in the more

recent past, women were often not allowed to become active members. While this has started to change, some marksmen's clubs still do not allow women as active members; this applies both to clubs that are directly connected to the Catholic church and to secular clubs. In my study, women were allowed as active members in all clubs except for one of the big city clubs (referred to here as 'Big City 2') although in some clubs' women were not accepted into certain corps of the club. There are also a few corps that do not accept men. These clubs are thus mixed-gender or they have mixed-gender corps as well as same-sex corps.

- *Age*: On average, the respondents are 23.5 years old, and the median age is 25 years. The youngest respondent was at the time of the interview 16 years old, and the oldest respondent was at the time of the interview 32 years old.

As far as the general age structure of marksmen's clubs is concerned, there are various evidences that marksmen's clubs in general have a more senior age structure (Deutscher Schützenbund, 2019; Leineweber *et al.*, 2020; Statista Research Department, 2010; Westfälischer Heimatbund e. V., 2017, p. 14). In this respect, the age profile of my sample was considerably younger than the general age profile of marksmen's clubs. The reason for this was the project's focus on young people between the ages of 12 and 30.

- *Number of siblings*: Two respondents are single children, 13 respondents have one sibling, four respondents have two siblings and three respondents have three siblings. Some respondents have also half- or step-siblings; One respondent only has a little half-brother.
- *Family Status*: Seventeen respondents are in a relationship, and seven are single. Nobody is married.
- *Living Situation*: Fourteen respondents still live with their parents or one parent. In six of those cases, siblings or a sibling are also living in the household.
- *Number of own children*: Three respondents have a young child between 0 and 4 years. One respondent has an older child aged between 9 and 13 years.
- *Ethnicity and country of birth*: Twenty respondents are of German origin, meaning that both parents are German, and 22 respondents were born in Germany. One respondent was born in an Eastern European country but came to Germany with his family when he was very young. The parents/one parent of two other respondents had emigrated from an Eastern European country to Germany also. Thus, the vast majority of my 23 respondents were of German origin. This low proportion of people with an immigration background was found also in a study by the Federal Institute for Sports Science. It shows that in 2009, 5% of members of marksmen's clubs had an immigration background, and 25% of this group held voluntary positions within their clubs (Breuer and Wicker, 2011, 151 ff.). Further figures from this institute show that 9% of the members of all German sports clubs had an immigration background and 29% of the members of all German sports clubs held voluntary positions in their clubs. (Breuer, 2011, pp. 25–26).
- *Religion and degree of religiosity*: Fifteen respondents are Catholic, and eight are Protestant. Three respondents described themselves as believers and practising. Twelve respondents could be described as irregularly or moderately practising Christians, i.e. believing but not practising, or as somewhat believing. Eight respondents describe themselves as non-believers. Two respondents are members in marksmen's clubs affiliated with Catholic 'marksmen's brotherhoods' mentioned above (Section 2.3.1). All other respondents are members of secular clubs, which are independent of the church. However, this does not mean that religion does not play a role in these secular clubs. Religious practices are still an integral part of club life, e.g., when church services are attended as part of the marksmen's festival.
- *Education (school and university)*: Three respondents are still at school. One of them attends a Secondary School (*Realschule*) (grades 5 to 10), and the other two are in Grammar School (*Gymnasium*) (grades 5 to 12/13). Three respondents were at a Lower Secondary School (*Hauptschule*) (grades 5 to 9) and have a Lower Secondary Education (*Hauptschulabschluss*) and

eight respondents have a Secondary Education (*Realschulabschluss*). Four respondents completed secondary education with an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (*Fachabitur*) and five with A-levels (*Abitur*); these qualifications entitle them to study at university. One respondent has a university degree, and three respondents are still studying at university.

- *Education (apprenticeship)*: Five respondents are currently doing an apprenticeship in the retail sector, the social service sector, the geriatric nursing sector and the health sector. Eight of the respondents have completed an apprenticeship in the healthcare sector, the (geriatric) nursing sector, the administrative sector, the passenger transportation sector, and the craft sector.
- *Employment*: Six of the respondents who had completed their apprenticeships are working in the sectors of their apprenticeships. One respondent has no apprenticeship and works for a temporary work agency as a production assistant. One respondent has been self-employed for several years. One respondent went to university and works in the business sector. One respondent is currently unemployed.

3.5.2 Class

Most of the respondents might be classified as middle-class based on their completion of secondary education and their aspired or active professions as well as based on the professions of their parents and siblings. However, the official (German Economic Institute) classification of middle-class uses economic criteria alone. This classification is based on the population's median income and is determined by the monthly net income of a household. According to this classification, a household belongs to the middle-class if its income is between 60% and 250% of the median income. There are further subdivisions between 'upper middle', 'middle in the narrower sense', and 'lower middle' class. In the case of the 'middle in the narrower sense', this means that a household belongs to the middle if its income is between 80% and 150% of the median income. For example, in the case of a single household that classifies as 'middle-class', the monthly net income is between 1,410 euros and 2,640 euros; in the case of a couple (with a child under 14), it is between 2,530 euro's and 4,750 euros (Niehuess, 2017, 5–6; 20). Based on this and information given by the respondents, most of the respondents in this study would belong to the 'middle-class in the narrower sense', a few respondents might be assigned to the 'lower middle-class', while a few respondents may (or in the future perhaps could) be assigned to the 'high-income middle-class'.

3.5.3 Place

The respondents' marksmen's clubs of are located in urban areas, in medium-sized and large cities¹² (including several districts of these cities). The cities are located in western Germany, in a region where marksmanship is relatively strong. All of these cities consist of different districts, and most of these districts have their own marksmen's club. Most respondents live in the cities or often in the city districts where their clubs are located. Here is a detailed breakdown of their clubs and locations:

German Medium-Sized City 1 (two respondents, who know each other, are in two different marksmen's club from two different city districts); German Big City 2 (two respondents who belong to the largest marksmen's club in the city, which includes the whole city); German Big City 3 (six respondents, who know each other, belong to the Marksmen's Club of District 3.E, and 13 respondents, who know each other, belong to the Marksmen's Club of District 3.A).

¹² By medium-sized cities I mean cities with between 20, 000 and 100, 000 inhabitants and by large cities I mean cities with more than 100, 000 inhabitants.

4. Key Findings

Before presenting the key findings of the study according to the substantive themes that emerged from the analysis, it is important to reflect briefly on what we can and cannot conclude from those findings.

Both during the interviews and in the subsequent analysis, I tried to address and understand my respondents as marksmen - people who are involved in a specific, marksmen's milieu – on the one hand but as ordinary young people on the other. Similarly, some of what is said in the interviews is explained by respondents' milieu affiliation and can be extrapolated to understand the overall club milieu, but this is not always the case. Moreover, since not all issues were talked about with all respondents, it is not always possible to consider attitudes across the whole respondent set.

Second, this report's key findings cannot make all respondents visible to the same extent. Only statements that are relevant for the research questions and exemplify certain phenomena particularly well are cited and thus the range of interviewees and the diversity of their opinions will not be represented in full. Some respondents will appear more frequently in connection with phenomena, such as racism, that are widely disapproved. This often does not do justice to the complexity of these individuals, or their opinions, and of opinion-forming processes. It also means there is little opportunity to explore contradictions in these, although there is an attempt to provide some insight into these. To somewhat reduce this effect, but also to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, not every statement or information in this report is accompanied with the respondent's pseudonym.

Third, the marksmen's club milieu is not completely homogeneous. Although clubs share basic elements and are similarly structured, there are also regional and local differences. For example, in the same region or even city, some clubs accept women as members while others do not, or a Catholic club continues to deny membership to non-Christians while the Catholic marksmen's brotherhoods in the surrounding area have followed their umbrella organisation's more open policies. I was also told by markswomen that the position of women in their club was reasonably good, whereas in a neighbouring club, female members were discriminated against. In another city, I was told that a particular club was extremely conservative and that more open-minded people had left it for that reason. At the same time, different characteristics exist even within one club. For example, the prevailing climate can be more backward-looking in one corps and more progressive in another or new management in a club might lead to the adaptation of club procedures to reflect changes and developments in society. So, the marksmen's club milieu on all its levels is not a completely heterogeneous structure, but it is also not completely homogeneous. In part, it is more heterogeneous than I originally assumed and is actually undergoing some changes on all these levels.

This heterogeneity within the milieu, as well as the complexity, or even contradictory nature, of individuals and their opinions, means that some aspects of the milieu, or the attitudes of its members, might be understood as relatively moderate, liberal or progressive. Indeed, as demonstrated below, there are also anti-racist and anti-right-wing elements in this milieu. At the same time, especially in the latter sections of the key findings, attitudes and practices (at the individual and club level) are described and examined that might be understood as racist or (radical/extreme) right-wing phenomena.

4.1 What it is like to be a marksman or markswoman

4.1.1 To be born into the marksmen's club

For a better understanding of the milieu, and the role that marksmanship plays in the lives of many respondents, the following subsections provide an overview about what it is like to be a marksman or markswoman for the respondents.

First, the vast majority (19 of 23) of respondents were 'born into' their marksmen's club or come from so-called 'marksmen's families' or 'marksmen's dynasties'. Most of the respondents 'grew up' in the club, as

many marksmen expressed it. This meant that their parents (or at least one of them) were already members of the same marksmen's club or even in the same corps. Grandparents (or even the great-grandparents and even earlier ancestors) as well as other relatives, such as siblings, were members too in some cases. According to my respondents, this is common among many marksmen. It also confirms the fact that many clubs struggle to recruit new members because it is rare for people who were not born into the club to join. Julian, for example, says that he 'grew up in the marksmen's marquee' and Marlene, whose entire family almost belongs to the club, describes this situation as follows:

Well, my club is just my family. [...]. [...] But I used to walk holding my mum's hand [in the parades and processions of the marksmen's club]. But I have been officially registered since I was [between five and seven]¹³ years old. [...] And that's how it comes into my life, that's how you grow up [...]. (Marlene)

Growing up in a marksmen's club does not only mean being in the same club or corps as family members, but also that friendships are made and developed, often from childhood, in the context of one's own marksmen's club or marksmanship in general. Many of the respondents had such a group of peers in their marksmen's club and were partly socialised in it and, as several respondents describe, brought up in it to a certain extent. Uschi explained that she was now doing this with her own child who, like the children of other respondents, was also in the marksmen's club. Uschi sees the club as teaching a certain discipline and prefers her child being involved in the club rather than causing problems.

Many marksmen's clubs, as this study's sample reflects, engage in intensive youth work. One example is the so-called 'marksmen's youth' (*Schützenjugend*) in which 'young marksmen' (*Jungschützen*) of a certain age range (e.g. from 12 to 24 years) are automatically members. In this organisation, club members volunteer to look after the young people, e.g. in the form of a youth board, and organise various activities, for example shooting training and, depending on the club, other sports or youth trips. Some of the respondents were such 'young marksmen' and/or active in the youth work of their club.

4.1.2 Time spent at the marksmen's club

All respondents spend regular time in activities connected to their marksmen's clubs. Many spend a significant amount of their spare time doing so. They participate in various and numerous activities that take place within the club as a whole or in the individual corps. In addition to the aforementioned youth work and youth activities, clubs organise regular shooting training or rehearsals for musical or other performances. Furthermore, clubs and corps arrange regular meetings and common celebrations or public events during the year like St. Martin's Parades. Many respondents also visit other marksmen's festivals or help other clubs, often as musicians, marchers, or, for example, volunteer at marksmen's festivals of befriended clubs. The highlight of the marksmen's year is the marksmen's festival season and each club holds its own marksmen's festival. This, respondents said, is a must for them and every marksman. It takes place annually, usually lasts 4-5 days, and involves a lot of preparation.

4.1.3 The importance of the marksmen's club and the marksmen's community

The interviews make clear that marksmen's clubs and marksmanship play a very important role in the lives of many respondents on different levels, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and that many respondents are strongly integrated into their clubs and are attached to them. For example, three of the seven respondents were bullied in school (see also Section 4.8.3.1) and as a result they experienced psychological problems. In their interviews, they explicitly stated that being in the club helped them to cope with the bullying experiences. The importance of the marksmen's club and marksmanship is also evident in an answer from Alexander, one of the few respondents who does not come from a marksmen's family, but who joined his club early because he was attracted by the music during the marksmen's

¹³ Information in square brackets within quotations and the text means that the exact details are anonymised. Names of respondents, cities and clubs have been anonymised without using brackets.

processions and parades:

Because I associate many positive things with marksmanship. Here I have strengthened my social competence. Here I have made most of my friendships, of which almost all have lasted to this day. And yes. I joined the club at the age of [8-10]. I grew up in the marksmen's club, practically. My youth, which is still continuing. I am [20-23] of course. I have experienced everything with the club. Positive and negative things. Sad experiences. Everything is processed in the marksmen's club or I have experienced with the club and therefore it is already an important part of my life, yes. (Alexander)

Accordingly, several respondents also describe the club as 'home' (*'Heimat'*) or as 'family' or 'second family', which can, in the cases of the mentioned marksmen's families, be taken literally.

Thus, clubs play an important role in building community for their members. Community-building, according to Peter, is something that marksmen are particularly good at and was found to be a central aspect of the milieu in this study. The analysis of the narratives of respondents in this study suggest four key dimensions of community that they associate with the marksmen's community: belonging; sociability, linked with fun and joy of living; comradeship, which speaks to the unity within the marksmen community; and socialisation and the normative dimension of community.

4.1.4 Identification with the marksmen's way of life and the marksmen's community

In addition to identifying with marksmanship in general, data from the respondents' interviews also show a strong identification with the marksmen's way of life and their local marksmen's club. Repeatedly, respondents expressed how strongly they identify with the marksmen's identity and way of life and their community, which can therefore be interpreted as an essential element of their identity. This level of identification connects with feelings of pride (Sullivan, 2014), like when Marvin replies that he's proud to be a marksman: 'I live for it and no one can take it away from me.' Anton's answer to what it means to be a marksman shows the same identification with and closeness to the marksmen community:

Yes. That's a good question. Well, I think it is.... It's a certain sense of life. So, this joy of life, uhm, that you can share with different people. Uhm, the cohesion, it's terrific. So, one should not underestimate [that]. And it is also a bit of pride, I think. To go there and say, yes, of course you have a nice uniform and everything shines. That's one thing but I think it's a pride to represent the group, to represent the city. And maybe also to represent certain values that simply predominate. That's comradeship, that's cohesion, that's, uhm, the joy of life, yeah? [...] Also to help. To be there for someone who needs help. Uhm, and yes, the celebration, that is of course also a big aspect. You forget. Whether it's professional or personal problems, whether it's social or political things that perhaps occupy you in your everyday life. Uhm. You simply forget that. Because then you're just human. And yes. Everyone celebrates together and has a good time. And I think that's fabulous. (Anton)

In summary, it can be said that a large majority of respondents were born into their marksmen's clubs. They regularly spend time involved in activities connected to their marksmen's clubs, which in the case of many is a considerable amount of their spare time. Overall, it can be said, that their marksmen's club and marksmanship play a significant role in the lives of many respondents and are an important factor of identification and identity.

4.2 Home (*Heimat*)

4.2.1 The importance of home (*Heimat*) in marksmanship

Anton's answer above also highlights an important element of the milieu: the 'home' (*Heimat*¹⁴), which in Anton's answer includes the city that his marksmen's club proudly represent. The motto of the Catholic umbrella organisation 'The Historic German Marksmen's Brotherhood Federation' (BHDS), which is also popular among secular clubs, is 'For Faith, Morals and Home' (*Für Glaube, Sitte, Heimat*). The BHDS' website actually explains these terms also because these terms have a complicated history related to National Socialism and can come across as 'very *völkisch* and thus burdened'. This is how the website explains 'home':

The love for home and fatherland is shown, among other things, through active neighbourly help that the brotherhoods provide. As responsible citizens they serve the common good. They promote a sense of community, for example by organising citizens' festivals. Apart from the home clubs, regional customs are especially upheld and cultivated in the brotherhoods. They also try to establish contact with similar organisations in other (European) countries and thus prevent an excessive regional and national consciousness. (Remmers, n.d.)¹⁵

In general, many marksmen's clubs see themselves – regardless of what exactly can be understood by 'home' – as clubs with a 'home relatedness' (*Heimatbezug*). Among other things, these clubs, according to their self-image, pursue 'home and customs care' (*Heimatspflege und Brauchtumspflege*). Many marksmen's clubs organise events and activities directly related to their regional locations. Some put on an evening at their marksmen's festivals called 'Home Evening' (*Heimatabend*); some even call their entire festival 'Home festival' (*Heimatfest*). In the study mentioned above on marksmanship in the German region of Westphalia (Section 2.3.2), a total of 98.86% of the questioned marksmen answered that 'home' was 'very important' (54.43%), 'important' (36.81%) or 'somewhat important' (7.62%) to them. Only 1.14% of the surveyed marksmen answered that 'home' was 'not important' to them (Leineweber *et al.*, 2020, p. 65).¹⁶ The following example from my field research exemplifies this commitment to *Heimat*. In one marksmen's club, German songs about the local region (*Heimatlieder*) were sung. Most of these songs are about the club's city or marksmen's festival alongside other references to 'home'. To take an example from an interview: I ask Michael which values he thinks play the most important role in marksmanship. Besides 'brotherhood', which he combines with 'comradeship' and 'cohesion', he mentions 'loyalty to the club' and 'loyalty to the home' (*Heimattreue*) as very important values in marksmanship. He also mentions 'awareness of tradition', 'because you always refer to WHAT and where the roots of the of the marksmanship or even the home, of course, are'.

4.2.2 What does home mean to you?

What does 'home' mean to respondents? I asked this question of several respondents, or the issue of 'home' came up in other interview contexts. Some respondents answered this question in the context of the more global dimension of 'home', i.e. the home country or the nation. Six respondents said that Germany is (also) home to them. Several factors contributed to those statements, such as positive experiences associated with visits of a respondent's friend who lives somewhere else in Germany, or the fact that respondents were born, grew up and live in Germany, or the fact that they speak the language

¹⁴ The German word '*Heimat*' does not have an English equivalent. Here it is important to note that home (*Heimat*) does not necessarily have to be a person's country of origin or this person's homeland (*Heimatland*). It can refer to a country, to a specific region, a city, the place of growing up but, for example, also to a specific group of people. '*Heimat*' is a literal or abstract place where somebody feels at home (German Language Blog 2020).

¹⁵ English translation: Author

¹⁶ In addition to 'home', this study also examined the importance of 'faith' and 'morals' in the personal life of the study participants and thus captures all elements of the marksmen's motto 'For Faith, Morals and Home' (Leineweber *et al.*, 2020, pp. 62–68).

and know the people, unlike being abroad. Based on these statements, these respondents' concept of home can be understood less as a rather abstract and global category, like the concept of 'nation' as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006, pp. 5–7), but rather as an individual, or local concept linked to their own experiences. This seems to connect to the above-mentioned Catholic brotherhoods' or BHDS' understanding of home, where love of home and fatherland is rather concrete and localised in terms of neighbourly help, community feeling at citizens' festivals and regional customs.

This individual or local concept of home is also reflected in other statements by respondents. More than half of them described their living place as their home. In addition, most respondents still live in the same cities, often even in the same city districts, where they grew up and where they would like to stay in the future. Spatial mobility does not seem to play a major role in their lives. Some explain this lack of spatial mobility by wanting to stay close to their families, often calling themselves 'family people', the friends they grew up with, and their marksmen's club. Seven respondents also described their families as home, five named their friends, ten mentioned their marksmen's club and seven also described home as a place where one feels good. Many respondents' friends and families live in the immediate vicinity, often in the same city district, and some of these respondents still live with their families. The marksmen's clubs in which respondents are members are also mostly located within their living places or within their immediate vicinity.

When Mona is asked by me, what home means to her, she answers:

Mona: Uhm comfort (*Geborgenheit*), trust in others from your home. Uhm, that you know each other. For example – that you have meetings together, like at the marksmen's festival, where everybody just comes together, where you have fun. Yes. Where I know I will come home and I feel good.

Researcher: So, it's a feeling too somehow?

Mona: Right. Yeah.

4.2.3 Home: the dual nature of closeness and the nature of belonging

'Home' can be understood as a place that for many respondents is tied to their living place. One respondent, for example, described himself as 'very attached to his home' and showed me a tattoo with a reference to his hometown, a phenomenon that I encountered two more times in the field. However, this attachment to living place does not only exist in a spatial-material sense. Rather, home consists of a multidimensional network of social relationships in which the respondents are embedded and which is one of the foundations of their attachment to their living place. In this respect, home is also a place in the 'social space'. This network is thus constituted, among other things, by the respondents' family and friendships as well as by the marksmen's community.

Researcher: And does the word 'home' mean anything to you? Because that's what many people said in the interview. That for them, home is also important.

Anne: Definitely. So, when I think of home, I don't necessarily mean the city where I live. Of course, this city is my home. But it is not necessarily because I live here, but because I grew up here, because my family is here. The marksmen's club is here (laughing). So, this is my home. If, for whatever reason, I was to move at some point, it would not automatically be my home.

Therefore, the concept of 'home' is based on the relationship between the physical space on the one hand and a more abstract space based on social connections on the other and is built on two different levels of closeness. One level of closeness has to do with the concentration of significant social relationships at the respondents' living place. It is a kind of local, almost physical closeness. The other level of closeness is more abstract and is an identificatory and affective closeness. Two factors play a role here: first, social relationships that are responsible for the respondents' attachment to their living places and the affective

dimension of ‘home’, and second, their identification with their marksmen’s club, the overall marksmen’s community, and their identities as marksmen. The marksmen’s club or the marksmen’s community is in turn understood as a place in which the network of relationships that is home is condensed, overlapped, spatially and socially localised, institutionalised, and articulated in various cultural, sub-cultural and social practices. It also takes on a group-identity form and affective loading.

Finally, the concept of ‘belonging’ (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011) offers some more insight into these two levels of closeness relating to the concept of ‘home’ as well as aspects of the marksmen’s community. This concept allows, among other things, to grasp the affective, subjective, and normative dimension of ‘home’, but also its dynamic, interactive, performative, embodied, material, and thus praxeological dimension (Antonsich, 2010). This also means that what home is and who belongs to it and who does not is a social construct that must be constantly produced and negotiated in discursive and non-discursive practices. Two definitions of ‘belonging’ help illuminate this and capture the relationships respondents express to ‘home’ and the marksmen’s community. First, according to Yuval-Davis, ‘Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling “at home” [...]’ (197). Anthias (2008, p. 8) puts it like this:

Belonging [...] is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion. [...] Here to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership. To belong is to share values, networks and practices and not just a question of identification.

This definition helps to understand the marksmen’s club or community and the home offered as a ‘community of belonging’ and, following Pfaff-Czarnecka (2011, p. 6), as a ‘regime of belonging’: ‘All bounded collective units – states, ethnic and religious organizations, associations and families dispose of devices buttressing commonality, mutuality and attachments, while simultaneously excluding outsiders’.

4.3 Belonging and not belonging, multiculturalism, and Muslims in marksmanship

The importance of belonging within marksmanship raises the question of who belongs to the home and the marksmen’s community and who does not? This in turn leads to reflections on what practices are employed to produce this sense of belonging among some while excluding others? Examples of practices that produce belonging were found to include wearing of the marksmen’s uniform and jointly celebrating of the marksmen’s festival while a concrete example of an exclusionary practice is discussed later (Section 4.3.2). The rest of this section draws on respondents’ narratives to determine who they understood as ‘belonging’ to the marksmen’s clubs, at the local level, and who is more likely to be perceived and defined as the not belonging ‘other’¹⁷.

4.3.1 From homeliness to disconcertment

Several respondents from two cities talked about changes in their living places. When I asked them about what bothers them about their cities and districts or what they would like to change, they sometimes complained about what was happening in their area. These respondents talked about the effects of urban development, modernisation and gentrification, about housing shortages and rent increases and about ‘luxury houses’. The latter do not serve anyone who needs a ‘normal apartment’ like a ‘normal worker’, according to Max, who is such a worker. In connection with this, some of the respondents also expressed displeasure about newcomers who had recently moved to their city or district, motivated by cheaper rent prices than in the nearby big city where they actually worked.

¹⁷ In most cases this is derived from interview and other data; who belonged, and who did not belong to their home was discussed explicitly only with a few respondents.

Yet, the new built areas ‘are extremely isolated’, as Hanna puts it. ‘You don’t notice anything about them [the newcomers] and have no contact with them, you see them very seldom and if you see them then just always in suit and tie’. Frederik, from another city than Hanna, described how, when he was a child, he felt that everyone knew everyone, but that changed as he grew up, and it felt more and more disconcerting for him. Peter made a similar observation:

Well, when I was a kid, I thought it was homely and intimate (*heimelig*). I couldn’t do anything without my parents talking to me afterwards because people knew me. When I was young, that got a bit lost and now in the last few years it’s become extreme that you have less and less sense of community. [...] For me you are an inhabitant of the city if you try to participate in village life and not only if you have a flat here. (Peter)

Based on the concept of ‘home’ described above, it seems as if respondents do not see newcomers necessarily as really belonging to what they perceive as home. Although there is a partial local closeness, there is no affective and social one. This is also because newcomers do not participate in ‘village life’ or, for example, in the marksmen’s community, as two respondents point out. Rather, newcomers bring in the way just described about socio-structural change and thus partly irritate the respondents’ sense of home and community, whereby the intimate and familiar environment becomes more ‘disconcerting’ and the ‘sense of community’ decreases.

4.3.2 Socio-Spatial Segregation

Respondents from two city districts and one further city described one area in their respective city district or city as areas where a comparatively higher number of unemployed, welfare recipient, social deviant people (Colwell, 2010), and people with an immigration background reside and where the average income and level of education is lower than the average of the city. At the same time, most of these respondents do not live in these areas.

For example, four respondents from the same district described that there are many ‘immigrants’ living in the respective area or a ‘relatively large number of foreigners’, but ‘of course also Germans’ or people ‘who had alcoholics as family members’. They also said that this area includes a lot of social housing and labelled a ‘Hartz IV¹⁸ area’ or a ‘ghetto’. For instance, one of the respondents was not allowed to play in this area as a child. Two other respondents from another district described their respective areas as follows:

Area 2 is more the better side and in Area 1. [...] So there are actually almost only Russians, Poles, Gypsies, Moroccans, Turks, everything. That’s such a side. You hear, you notice that when you go to this side, you notice that. They are dressed very differently. They speak differently. (Ronja)

Marlene: Yes. And the Area 1, I find it really hard sometimes.

Researcher: What do you find hard about it?

Marlene: There are just so many things happening and how the buildings sometimes look. And uhm yes. Things happen like a garbage is set alight there. Uhm there are really just a lot of foreigners living there. Well, I have nothing against foreigners, but that’s what happens. There are also all the teenagers now drinking alcohol and so on. [...].

Other respondents, however, had different views. For example, one respondent had moved to Area 1 and described it as nice. Another respondent lived in Area 1 for a short time and also mentioned that the level of poverty there is greater and that the housing is not as nice, but they also think it is a cliché that the neighbourhood is bad and that there are more foreigners and more violence.

¹⁸ Hartz IV refers to a set of reforms to the German welfare system whose introduction in 2005 created much protest throughout Germany.

Despite these positive views, comments by the majority of respondents who spoke about this issue seem to be driven by class and origin. This leads to an ‘Othering’ in which the respondents explicitly or implicitly see themselves as members of a different social class while they also differentiated themselves from groups they perceive as ‘foreigners’ or as non-Germans.

Finally, the following comment by a respondent demonstrates the negative views of certain areas. The respondent belongs to a group of young marksmen who the respondent describes as ‘a little bit right-wing’. They talked about a situation when their group engaged in racist or right-wing actions:

For example, there is also a uhm an Area [...]. That is also somehow labelled as a Hartz IV area. Yes, and there are also quite a lot of foreigners and almost always [laughs] when you walk through there, something like that happens. Or also if we were distributing these [information brochures about the marksmen’s club and festival], we have to distribute them in this area also and then at some point the direction came [tinged with laughter]: ‘Yes, but only in the mailboxes where there are German names.’ So, okay. Then you also had to think about: ‘Ok, is that right now?’. Because there are restaurant vouchers in the back of the brochure. And they [the respondent means the foreign residents of this area] would have just taken the vouchers out and they couldn’t have done anything with. And I understand that, but whether there is someone, who is German or would have been interested in it, you just don’t know. (Respondent)

Based on this quote, the respondent seems to believe that the information brochure about marksmanship is mainly of interest to Germans. Additionally, what they describe here can be characterised as a performative racist act of exclusion. In this act, individuals who are not German, as perceived by the young marksmen mentioned in this incident, are defined as not belonging to the marksmen’s community. In addition, even the possibility of a factual belonging is also made more difficult for them.

4.3.3 Multiculturalism and Muslims in the marksmen’s club

The above quote by one of my respondents raises the question of how many people with an immigration background actually belong to the respondents’ marksmen’s clubs? In general, the proportion of foreigners and people with an immigration background is often higher in cities and districts similar to those in which the respondents’ clubs and living places are located. The context of the general socio-demography of the marksmen’s club milieu is important to consider here. According to the study cited above (Section 3.5.1) in 2009, 5% of all marksmen’s club members had an immigration background (Breuer and Wicker, 2011, 151 ff.). Based on my estimate and that of my respondents, the corresponding number in their clubs is similar or slightly lower. Just a few people in the respondents’ clubs have an immigration background, and most of them are from European countries, apart from a few prominent exceptions, such as specific dignitaries within these clubs who originally have a non-European and/or Muslim background. Based on my conversations with the respondents, their clubs do not seem to have members of Muslim faith either. During my fieldwork, I acquired a similar impression, namely that marksmen’s club members move and act in a primarily ‘white room’ or ‘white world’ (Ahmed, 2007) with an identifiable Christian character. This impression is confirmed by the following statement from a respondent with an immigration background:

Well, I think I’m the only person in our clique [this refers to the respondent’s marksmen corps] that has gone into the marksmen’s club myself. For fun and not because mum and dad said, ‘you have to go in there now’. Actually, almost all the people in our club are German. It’s just a German tradition, innit? As a foreigner, you are quite lonely. [...]. I just come from a Catholic country [...]. Innit? A marksmen’s club is a somewhat [tinged with laughter] nationalistic Catholic club. They are also [people from my parents’ country of origin]. So, I fit in there quite well. If I was somehow, I don’t know, Moroccan, Turkish, Muslim or something, I think it would be very different. But we don’t have any of those in the club. (Respondent)

Similarly, the respondents' immediate social environment (which, as mentioned above, in some cases overlaps strongly with the marksmen's environment) does not seem to include too much diversity. Although five respondents mentioned having Muslim friends, and several respondents mentioned friends with immigration backgrounds, especially the presence of Muslim friends seems to be an exception in most of the respondents' circles of friends.

When asked why most marksmen in their clubs are 'Germans' or non-Muslims, respondents provided three main reasons. The first was that culture explained the absence of 'non-German' and/or Muslim members. Those referring to this argued that marksmen's clubs are understood as German and Christian traditional clubs into which people are more likely to be born and with which people with an immigration background tend to have no connection. A second explanation of this lack of representation, used by two respondents, was that this lies rather with the 'others' who are not willing to open themselves to the marksmen's community. In Anna's opinion, for example, Muslims 'keep to themselves', which was also the case in her school days, when she had more contact with individuals from Polish and Russian backgrounds. Similarly, Maurice wishes for a society in which people 'that one can still call external groups like dark-skinned people, Jews and Muslims are more open and will say, "Come on, what is actually this marksmen's club or what can we do here in the district to form a community"'. That uhm they will also say: "Come on, we don't want to have our so-called 'Turkish quarter' for us, we also want uhm that we are all a big community"". Finally, respondents also named things that, in their opinion, make marksmen's clubs unattractive or that deter people with an immigration background and/or Muslims. Examples include the common perception that marksmen drink a lot of alcohol (Steven), things such as the debate about the 'Muslim king of marksmen' (Anton) (see below), the far-right attitudes of many older marksmen (Vanessa), the 'nationalistic reputation' of marksmen or the 'prejudice' that 'marksmen are Nazis' (Lena). Lena, as well other respondents I have talked to about this, considers this perception or public image that marksmen are right-wingers or 'Nazis' to be wrong although she thinks that it would deter Muslims in particular.

Lena: [...] I don't know any Muslim or anyone like that. Nope. We just don't have that.

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Lena [...] [breathing heavily] Because the marksmen's club still has a nationalistic reputation, I think.

Researcher: [...] What do you mean by nationalistic reputation?

Lena: Well. So many people say, 'That's just, that's just such a prejudice.' Right? You know, that marksmen are Nazis. So, in any case it's a prejudice.

Researcher: [...] What do you say to that?

Lena: [...] So partly I can understand it. Because if you say that you are in a club, you only want Catholics in it and there are only Germans inside of course that seems a bit nationalistic. But I always think that this is a tradition.

4.3.4 Culture of openness

Although, in practice, the respondents' marksmen's clubs are relatively homogeneous, in principle everyone is welcome regardless of origin or faith. This was mentioned by a number of respondents. Lara, who has been a member of her club since she was between 6 and 8 years old, said that she had not encountered any racist or right-wing statements since she had been a member. She also believes that the club can actually protect young people from radicalisation:

Because the club already conveys such an open image. We accept everyone and if then maybe people from other cultures come to the club and you live near each other and then you get to know something about their culture, but you can also show them the marksmen's club and your own culture that this helps. [...] So, it was not explicitly said that it was open to everybody. That was just somehow clear, because nobody was ever looked at in a strange

way or it was out of the question... it was always out of question that people from other cultures or nationalities couldn't come into the club. That was somehow irrelevant. It was other things that mattered - whether people were nice or so on, not their origin or accent or anything. (Lara)

During my fieldwork, I also heard people on marksmen's clubs' management boards emphasise issues such as world openness, open-mindedness, diversity, tolerance and multicultural coexistence on several occasions, in addition to openly speaking out against racism, right-wing populism, right-wing extremism and related social developments. One such example is the recent laudatory speech by a member of a marksmen's club's board for the highest dignitary of the club, who is originally from abroad:

He continues to speak and asks why it is still worth a newspaper headline today that the highest dignitary of the club has foreign roots. He said something like, 'we are more tolerant' and that such a thing is not worth a newspaper headline any more. He says something like: 'We are the middle of society'. And something like: 'If we are not tolerant, who is?'. Or: 'If not us, who else?' [...]. Also, after this statement there is a loud standing ovation, again long clapping, cheering and cheering whistles. The moment is gripping and carries a stirring atmosphere. (Fieldwork diary, 2019)

Several of the respondents also said that they would not have any problem with people with an immigration background and Muslims joining their marksmen's clubs and that they would actually like to see more people from these groups as members. Incidentally, many respondents also expressed their openness towards accepting gay or lesbian marksmen or potentially gay or lesbian kings or queens. I also spoke with many respondents about Mithat Gedik, the so-called 'Muslim king' of a marksmen's club (Section 2.3.2). Almost all respondents with whom I spoke about this expressed their support for the inclusion of Muslims in Catholic marksmen's brotherhoods. Many also criticised the fact that, in the past, non-Christians or Muslims were generally denied membership in these brotherhoods. Only one respondent argued against this inclusion based on the marksmen's clubs Catholic and Christian traditions. This argument, which seems to be an 'appeal to tradition' (Harpine, 1993), invokes values considered essential for marksmanship, values that other groups (supposedly) do not share and that structurally excluded such groups from the marksmen community's 'regime of belonging' (Section 4.2.3). I encountered this kind of argument in some interviews and in the field also in connection with other topics, for example when it was used to justify why women cannot be active members of marksmen's clubs.

Even though several respondents were open towards people with an immigration background or Muslims joining their marksmen's clubs, some of them put conditions on such memberships. Some of them listed preserving traditions or corresponding values as such conditions. For example, Steven says that it doesn't matter what religion you have and that you are welcome in the club 'as long as you can fit in', and Mona and Peter would have no problems with Muslims in the marksmen's club, as long as they would not try to change the marksmen's customs.

4.4. Muslims as significant 'others'

4.4.1 Anti-Muslim racism

The conditions for membership that some respondents mentioned (as described above) are based on prejudices about, and negative characteristics ascribed to 'others'. They can be understood as an expression of (an implicit) cultural racism or, more precisely, of 'anti-Muslim racism'. The term 'anti-Muslim racism' covers more than 'Islamophobia' in the narrow sense, i.e. the fear of a religion that ultimately leads to discrimination against the (alleged) followers of that religion. 'Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism' (Runnymede Trust, 2017, p. 7). 'Anti-Muslim racism' occurs when Muslims or persons who are perceived as Muslims on the basis of certain characteristics, such as national origin, language, and

lifestyle, are homogenised or ‘racialised’ as ‘the others’ under the blanket ascription of negative characteristics. A certain Islamic culture/faith is then understood as (co-)cause for the presumed existence of these characteristics (Cakir, 2014, pp. 211–212; Häusler, 2019, pp. 15–17). Through these homogenising and racialising attributions, Muslims (or persons perceived as Muslims) are not only ‘Othered’ but are downgraded in relation to the ‘we-group’, which is simultaneously elevated. The following sections aim to identify fundamental anti-Muslim and racist themes that came up in some of the respondents’ statements. Furthermore, they show the extent to which anti-Muslim racism or concrete hostility towards Muslims plays a role in lives of some respondents.

4.4.2 ‘Islamisation’

‘Islamisation’ can be considered the first such theme and captures the understanding of certain forms of Islamic life (such as the building of mosques) as (intentional or unintentional) causes of a cultural (and demographic) expansion in the course of which, for example, the culture and identity of the dominant society is suppressed or displaced (Kerst, 2019).

This theme emerged, for example, with Mona when I asked about her thoughts about Muslims joining her marksmen’s club. She answered that she would find it ‘fully okay’ if Muslims were in her club. But she also said that Muslim women should not wear a headscarf then, because for her, that practice does not fit with the club’s ‘customs’. She also said that Muslims should not ‘rip anything apart’ in the club.

We’re still in Germany and that’s still our custom and I think, for example, this renaming of the St. Martin’s Festival to the Festival of Light – out of respect for them – and stuff like that is totally daft. [...]. This is still our custom and therefore they should adapt to us. (Mona)

Mona also thinks more generally that Muslim refugees are a special problem, which is in line with the Islamisation narrative that views Muslims as sticking together, continuing to do their things, not respecting German traditions and being prepared to fight those traditions at times when their group is strong enough. Marlene shares Mona’s view and has the ‘feeling’ that they ‘want to change a lot here’. Even if only very few respondents seem to fully embrace the Islamisation narrative, a few more respondents exhibit related beliefs. One such example is the belief, as Mona expressed it, that events with Christian connotations, such as the St. Martin’s Festival or Christmas markets, should be renamed out of respect for Muslims or because Muslims have exerted some pressure to rename these. In reality, discussions about renaming such events have happened for a multitude of reasons. Another example is Steven’s opinion, who believes that ‘more and more of them’ are coming, more and more mosques are being built and that ‘our faith’ is now being ‘suppressed’. Uschi, on the other hand, does not see that much ‘Islamisation’ taking place. She feels that the topic is being pushed by the media and the public. But she also believes, which is also part of the Islamisation narrative, that ‘for any believing children’ ‘some crosses are taken down in the schools’ and is against this.

4.4.3 Islam as backward and Muslim as the ‘others’

Another anti-Muslim and racist theme expressed by some respondents is an implicit or explicit devaluation of what is perceived as Islamic culture, which is presented as backward and contrasted with respondents’ own culture. For example, Peter’s condition for Muslims to join his marksmen’s club would be to ensure that ‘the woman isn’t walking around with a headscarf, the woman is wearing a uniform, uhm, you just have to cultivate a certain cosmopolitan culture’. Based on Peter’s comment, he understands the headscarf as an expression of backward Islamic culture, which is in opposition to what he considers the ‘cosmopolitan culture’ of his club. Another respondent expresses similar beliefs, namely that ‘European culture’ and ‘Muslim culture’ are like ‘two pairs of shoes that just don’t fit together’, which expresses the ideas of the irrevocability of (supposed) cultural differences and the concept of a ‘clash of civilisations’ (Huntington, 1997) made popular by extensive media coverage despite its theoretical and empirical shortcomings (Virchow, 2010). It is interesting to note that this respondent also has Muslim female friends with Eastern European immigration backgrounds. But, as this respondent puts it, they don’t

necessarily wear headscarves, they're 'a bit European' and 'unlike some Syrian girls who wear a burka and sit in school when it's 35 degrees'.

The respondents with whom I spoke about freedom of religion believed that freedom of religion is a basic right in Germany and that Muslims are also allowed to live according to their faith including the building of mosques, albeit within certain limits as one respondent said. Ronja agrees with freedom of religion for Muslims but is against the building of mosques: 'Uhm, but I just don't think it belongs here. It is not part of our culture. It doesn't belong to Germany'. Ronja sees headscarves in a similar light. When I asked her about synagogues, she answered that you can't say anything against synagogues because there are German Jews. This seems to suggest that for Ronja, German Muslims do not exist or that she does not perceive them as German.

Ronja's statement shows another anti-Muslim and racist theme, which a few other respondents' comments also exhibited, to varying degrees, namely a tendency to equate Muslims and people perceived as Muslims with foreigners/non-Germans/the stranger or to use the term 'Muslim' to describe ethnicity. Similarly, many people who perceive individuals as members of 'Islam'/'Islamic culture' tend to 'de-individualize' and 'de-personalize' such individuals (Cakir, 2014). As Cakir points out, this 'de-individualization' and 'depersonalization' can also happen on the basis of 'ethnically charged differentiation markers' such as origin, language, proper names, lifestyle and clothing style. It can also happen to individuals regardless of their actual religious affiliation or convictions. In other words, individuals or groups of people who are perceived as Muslims are affected as well (2014, p. 21).

Additional comments by a few respondents also indicate that they equate Muslims with non-Germans and that they have a homogeneous perception of Muslims. For example, a few respondents said that Muslims in Germany are allowed to do things that they are not allowed in 'their countries' or 'Muslim countries' – such as building churches or demonstrating.

4.4.4 'Because they have no real rights'

Another anti-Muslim and racist theme is the general assumption that Muslim women are oppressed or have no or few rights in Islamic cultures. One female respondent, for example, expresses her general openness about her daughter's choice of religion as well as her sexual orientation. Yet, she would have a problem if her daughter were to convert to the Muslim faith: 'Because they [women] have no real rights [...] The women here in Germany, they fought for their rights. For years. And that's how I raise my child. And not so she'll end up covered and subservient to her husband's will.' Wearing the Islamic headscarf is seen as a symbol and act of this oppression. Similarly, a few other female respondents expressed the same thought. Interestingly, only female respondents' comments included the theme of the 'oppressed Muslim woman'.

At the same time, however, almost all of these, and other respondents, felt that wearing a headscarf should not be prohibited for reasons of religious freedom. Participants had more reservations about Islamic veils like the burqa.

When it comes to issues around gender, it is worth mentioning that many female respondents were critical about some marksmen's clubs that still do not allow women as active members. In addition, several of them also criticised certain gender roles as being sexist or other marksmen practices as sexist. Their critique referred to other clubs and sometimes even to their own marksmen's clubs. However, none of these respondents or any other respondents directly connected the issues of 'gender in Islam' with 'gender in marksmanship'.

4.4.5 Is Islam a cause of terrorism and are Muslim refugees a special problem?

Despite some anti-Muslim and racist themes mentioned above, the one theme that did not emerge is that of equating Muslims or Islam in general with terrorism. I spoke with several respondents about whether they think that there is a causal link between Islam and radical Islamism or Islamist terrorism. Eleven of

these 13 respondents did not believe that there is such a link. The remaining two respondents found that Islam at least does not play the main role in radicalisation or terrorism.

I don't think that Islam is aggressive in general. I mean I haven't read what is in the Qur'an¹⁹ [...]. I don't believe that the person who wrote it back then had the idea that we have to eliminate everything else that has a different faith or no faith at all. (Julian)

Instead of religion, these respondents suspected and named other reasons for radical Islamism or Islamist terrorism, such as a lack of opportunities, perspectives, education, social acceptance and affiliation, problems in the parental home, wrong upbringing, no guiding hand, feeling deprived, boredom and stupidity. Andreas, who knows several refugees who are now working in Germany and sees them as well integrated, believes that one reason for forced migration and terrorism is US foreign policy:

When you drop bombs on innocent people, you shouldn't be surprised that they are filled with hatred. When you're hateful, you quickly join groups that you might have avoided before and then you have more terrorists. (Andreas)

Based on the German discourse around refugees in 2015 and subsequent years, I asked more than half of the respondents whether they see a large number of Muslims among the refugees from 2015 onwards as a particular problem. Three respondents answered 'yes' and three respondents were not certain. However, seven respondents rated this as rather unproblematic. For example, Michael believes that there are 'assholes and non-assholes', which doesn't depend on people's religious affiliation. Additionally, if there are problems such as terrorism and other problems, Jana believes that this has nothing to do with religion, but rather with the fact that too little is being done in terms of integration.

A few reasons make this lack of Islam being equated with a cause of terrorism and of Muslim refugees being labelled as a particular problem interesting. In recent years, public and media mainstream discourse have perpetuated this anti-Muslim and racist theme, which far-right agents and groups have picked up and radicalised (Häusler, 2019). Additionally, some respondents made other anti-Muslim and racist statements, so it would not be too far-fetched to expect them also to buy into this narrative. Despite the overall lack of this theme when asked about it directly, some respondents nevertheless linked Muslims and Islam with terrorism at other times during the interview process, implicitly as well as explicitly. For example, Alexander said that when he hears 'extremism' or 'radicalism', he thinks on the one hand about right-wingers and on the other about terrorists 'and therefore unfortunately about Islam'. Similarly, Uschi thinks the burqa should be banned because you can't see if the person underneath is wearing a bomb. Some respondents also voiced some criticism of the stereotype of Islam being equated with terrorism. Another respondent, Vanessa, tells a story about one of her brothers. When he was a toddler, he saw a man in a turban two weeks after the September 11th attacks and said: "'Mom, look, a terrorist". Because he picked that up on television.' Vanessa thinks this is 'the fault of the media'.

4.4.6 Lifeworld tensions and conflicts with Muslims and anti-Muslim racism in the social environment

Anti-Muslim racist attitudes, but also derogatory and discriminatory verbal and non-verbal actions against Muslims or persons perceived as Muslims, which can be described as 'anti-Muslim actions' (Halliday, 1999), have manifested themselves in the closer and more distant social environments of several respondents. For example, Anton once had a colleague who generalised a lot and, for example, described all Muslims as terrorists. Anton found this attitude quite radical, but he could not oppose his colleague's attitude as he was unable to come up with any counterarguments. Another respondent mentioned having many friends who do not like Muslims, Turks and Islam and who 'sometimes make stupid statements about Muslims'. Furthermore, respondents also reported concrete tensions and conflicts with which they

¹⁹ This would be the case for most of the respondents in my judgement.

themselves have been involved. Most of these occurred at school and the cause was often someone wearing an Islamic headscarf or other Islamic veils. For example, one female respondent said that when she was at school, she had to hear from ‘some Muslim girls in burka’ that her sports pants are too short because her knees were visible. When she saw them after that in the gym wearing burkinis, she said to them: ‘Are you nuts?’ As a response, she was called a ‘Nazi’.

4.4.7 Muslims as significant Others

Based on the collected data, it can be summarised that Muslims (or persons perceived as such) seem to belong to the group which was most significantly designated and defined as a not belonging ‘out-group’, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by attributing negative characteristics. In doing so they were opposed to a ‘we-group’ and othered accordingly. Respondents made anti-Muslim racist statements, talked about tensions and conflicts of their own with Muslims, and some reported anti-Muslim racist attitudes in their immediate social environment. Among them were also two female respondents who said that they would not enter a romantic relationship with a Muslim man. These respondents also said that their parents would have a problem with such a relationship. ‘So, my daddy has impressed this on me from the beginning, I am not allowed to come home with someone like that’, as one of these respondents puts it.

Despite the out-group status accorded to Muslims, several respondents were in favour of freedom of religion for Muslims and did not see any connection between Islam and radical Islamism or Islamist terrorism. However, Muslims or persons perceived as Muslims were also the group most frequently mentioned when it came to observed or self-involved conflicts and tensions in everyday life and anti-Muslim racist attitudes and anti-Muslim actions in the respondents’ own (immediate) social environment. At the same time, Muslims in the respondents’ immediate social environment, such as the circle of friends or the marksmen’s club, seem to be the exception or non-existent, even though several respondents have shown themselves to be open to possible Muslim marksmen, although this was sometimes subject to conditions in which partly anti-Muslim racism had been expressed.

4.4.8 Attitudes towards refugees, immigrants, integration, and a multicultural society

When we spoke about refugees in general and of issues such as the reception of refugees and immigration, some respondents equated refugees with ‘Muslim refugees’. This corresponds with the anti-Muslim and racist theme of equating faith and national origin of refugees. Even though most refugees actually came from Muslim majority countries from 2015 onwards (Tonassi, 2015), previous research has identified a general tendency that perceives migration movements disproportionately as immigration of Muslims (Pickel, 2018, pp. 295–301). However, it is not always possible to assess whether this perception of the ‘Muslim refugee/immigrant’ has influenced the content of respondents’ statements in a particular way when talking about these issues, even when it was about people from Muslim-majority countries.

Now, respondents seemed to differentiate between refugees and other groups of immigrants, especially in terms of being open to them entering and staying in Germany. More than half of the respondents felt that so-called ‘war refugees’ had a more legitimate reasons to stay than those leaving their countries for economic reasons. They also differentiated between ‘integrated’ and ‘non-integrated’ refugees or immigrants. Similar to the conditions many respondents had for the possible admission of Muslims and immigrants to their marksmen’s clubs, more than half of the respondents felt that refugees and immigrants must integrate. ‘In principle, that’s how I see it. Whoever wants to come to our country must also adapt to us and not the other way around’, as Steven put it. Similarly, Uschi said:

He could come from Denmark or Sweden for all I care. Then he simply has to learn German. I don’t have to adapt to that. They came to us, so they have to learn OUR language. When I hear that too: ‘The Christian crosses are taken down in schools’. So, we are a Christian country. So, tell them, please: ‘Please take your carpet up.’ They would stone you to death.

But that's just another German mentality. Yes, after the Second World War. That has a lot to do with it. (Uschi)

Yet, based on the statements of five respondents, two of whom have an immigrant background, integration seems needed on both sides. Anton believes that we need openness on both sides: 'If, if the people here are not open enough to the so-called "strangers", then exclusion takes place the other way around' (Anton). Many mentioned work and language as the most important factors for 'successful integration' as well as living a law-abiding life. The issue of following laws came up on other occasions as well. More than half of the respondents spoke about the issue of criminality in connection to refugees and immigrants. A few respondents mentioned that immigrants are not fully or at all integrated and should integrate more. When our conversation turned to the intake of refugees, more than half of the respondents were in favour of doing so, although five respondents found that too many refugees were accepted to enter the country. As far as refugee policy is concerned, half of the respondents said that they would have liked more control over who entered the country. Finally, I also spoke with some respondents about multiculturalism and multicultural coexistence. Seven of these respondents considered multiculturalism a positive opportunity for Germany. For example, Max thinks that multiculturalism is positive for the job market and the economy. Similarly, Leon, who has friends with different immigrant backgrounds, says: 'You don't always have to have the same friends or the same nationality. As they say, variety is always better than the same old thing always.' As far as the question of how multicultural coexistence works, five respondents said that it would work or works in part, while four respondents were rather sceptical.

4.5 From Group-focused enmity to radicalisation

4.5.1 Group-focused enmity and far-right attitudes

One of the essential concepts of the above mentioned 'centre studies' (Section 1) that have been examining right-wing, racist and related attitudes in Germany is the multidimensional concept of 'group-focused enmity', developed by Heitmeyer (2003). These studies asked participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements (items) about different groups. These scaled (dis)agreement were measured quantitatively in the form of representative opinion polls. This was intended to measure the levels of prejudice against 'major target groups of prejudice' (Zick and Küpper, 2014, p. 254). Since 2002, these surveys have measured levels of prejudice and other values at regular intervals in Germany (Zick *et al.*, 2019), but also in a European context (Zick and Küpper, 2014; Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011). Prejudice against individual groups can be understood as dimensions of prejudice. Together, these dimensions result in a 'syndrome of group-focused enmity', the core of which is understood as an 'ideology of inequality' or an 'ideology of unequal status' (Küpper, 2016; Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011).

The following dimensions of prejudice were measured as part of the syndrome of group-focused enmity in the last German 'centre study': racism; xenophobia; anti-Semitism; anti-Muslim attitudes; devaluation of Sinti and Roma; devaluation of asylum seekers; sexism; devaluation of homosexuals; devaluation of trans*people; devaluation of homeless people; devaluation of long-term unemployed people; devaluation of people with disabilities; precedence rights of the established population (Zick *et al.*, 2019, p. 58). This concept of a syndrome also reflects the empirical finding that different types of prejudice toward various groups are interrelated. In other words, someone who is prejudiced towards one group is more likely to be prejudiced towards another group. For example, someone who is prejudiced towards asylum seekers is more likely to be prejudiced towards Muslims. On average, prejudicial attitudes are usually directed not towards just one group, but towards several (Zick *et al.*, 2019, pp. 69–78). Besides these attitudes of 'group-focused-enmity' (Zick *et al.*, 2019, pp. 65–78) according to 'centre studies', further attitudes are measured in a similar way. These are 'right-wing populist' attitudes (Küpper, Berghaus

and Rees, 2019, pp. 180–188) and ‘new right-wing’ attitudes (Häusler and Küpper, 2019, pp. 162–169) but also ‘extreme right-wing’ attitudes²⁰ (Küpper, Krause and Zick, 2019, pp. 120–127; 140–142). Some of the statements made by respondents in this study can be compared with the attitudes measured according to ‘centre studies’. This comparison allows placing group-focused and far-right attitudes from the respondents within a well-established and empirically sound social science framework.

4.5.2 Closed right-wing extremist worldview

Overall, the statements of several, if not all, respondents correspond, to varying degrees, to the ‘centre studies’ dimensions of ‘group-focused enmity’ or to certain ‘right-wing populist’ or ‘new right-wing’ attitudes. Very few statements correspond to ‘extreme right-wing’ attitudes. In terms of ‘group-focused-enmity’, there were statements among the respondents against ‘Muslims’, ‘foreigners’, ‘unemployed people’ and ‘people who have recently moved to Germany or the respondents’ cities. As far as ‘right-wing populist’, ‘new right-wing’, or ‘extreme right-wing’ attitudes are concerned, the Islamisation narrative discussed above (Section 4.2.2) could be assigned to these, but also, for example, respondents’ statements that express a feeling of suppressed national pride or the feeling that in Germany one is too quickly labelled as racist, right-wing or ‘Nazi’ (Section 4.7.3). In the case of one respondent, some aspects of National Socialism were seen as positive.

Among the total set of respondents, eight made statements that could be categorised as ‘group-focused enmity’, ‘right-wing populist’, ‘new right-wing’ and/or ‘extreme right-wing’ attitudes more often than the other respondents. However, none of these respondents can be considered to have a ‘closed right-wing extremist worldview’. Based on the last ‘centre study’, only 2.4% of the population exhibit such an worldview (Küpper, Schröter and Zick, 2019, p. 252).²¹

So, for example, many respondents spoke in favour of democracy as a form of government, or at least not against it, which would be one of the necessary conditions for a ‘closed extreme right-wing worldview’²². Uschi said that we live in a democracy, and that if the population wants another eight years of Merkel, ‘that’s just the way it is’. Regarding the issue of ‘democracy,’ four of the respondents made several statements that could be interpreted as approval or partial approval of right-wing dictatorial tendencies.

²⁰ This study follows an understanding of ‘right-wing populism’ in which the main element of right-wing populism is an opposition made between the ‘people’ (‘Volk’) and a political class, for example characterised as corrupt and obsessed with power, as well as the articulation of external threats, such as ‘the EU’, ‘migrants’, ‘Muslims’ and ‘Islam’ (Virchow, 2017b, p. 19; Häusler and Küpper, 2019, p. 153). Thus, the (often emotionalised) logic underlying right-wing populism could be summarised on the vertical level as ‘we down here’ against ‘them up there’ and on the horizontal level as an ‘we’ against ‘the others’. This ‘we’ mostly refers to the (German) ‘people’ (‘Volk’), based on a nativist concept of the people. Accordingly, right-wing populism and ‘right-wing populist attitudes’ often involve the devaluation of certain minorities (currently especially asylum seekers and Muslims), distrust of democracy and also authoritarian ideas of society (Küpper, Berghan and Rees, 2019, pp. 182–183; Virchow, 2017b, p. 19). ‘New right-wing’ attitudes are, among others, represented in right-wing intellectual circles or by groups such as the ‘Identitarian Movement’ (Zick, Küpper and Berghan, 2019b, p. 36). According to Häusler and Küpper (2019, pp. 162–164) this includes attitudes in which ethnopluralism, antifeminism and aspects of the Islamisation narrative are reflected. But also, anti-EU attitudes, attitudes that imply that freedom of expression is suppressed in Germany or in which the need of resistance to the current German policy is expressed. According to Küpper, Krause and Zick (2019, pp. 121–124), in this study ‘extreme right-wing’ attitudes are understood to include such attitudes as espousal of a right-wing dictatorship, chauvinism, downplaying of National Socialism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Social Darwinism.

²¹ For Küpper, Schröter and Zick (2019, pp. 252–254) in a general sense a ‘closed right-wing extremist worldview’ would exist if person displayed all the ‘extreme right-wing attitudes’ listed in footnote 20 to a very strong degree.

²² Such an endorsement or rejection of democracy would not only be a defining moment for a ‘closed extreme right-wing’, but also for other multidimensional definitions of right-wing extremism. A more recent example is the ‘minimal’ definition of ‘right-wing extremism’ as an ideology that encompasses authoritarianism, anti-democracy, and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism developed by Carter (2018).

One of these respondents, for example, believes that democracy is the best form of government as long as the majority of the population is ‘realistic and knows how to work and not just demand’. If this is not the case, the respondent would theoretically like it if someone was in charge in order to ‘bring everything into line in a short period of time’. At the same time, this respondent would not trust anyone to do so. This statement, as well as those of other respondents, cannot be interpreted as advocating a right-wing dictatorship; they display, rather, a partly problematic understanding of democracy, a leaning towards a certain authoritarianism, and a corresponding vulnerability to related motifs, ideologies, and possible situational contexts. A further necessary condition for the attribution of a ‘closed extreme right-wing world view’ would be, for example, agreement with various anti-Semitic statements, which is found in only 3.4% of the population (Küpper, Krause and Zick, 2019, p. 127). Even though I did not ask explicit questions about this topic in the interviews and therefore cannot judge how the corresponding answers would have turned out, none of the participants made any anti-Semitic statements spontaneously.

4.5.3 Radicalism and extremism

In terms of ‘radicalism’, none of the respondents can be understood as radical, if ‘radicality’ is understood as Beck (2015, p. 39) suggests as a ‘contention that is outside the common routines of politics present within a society, oriented towards substantial change in social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures, and undertaken by any actor using extra-institutional means’. In other words, none of the respondents currently seems to actively seek to question the system in terms of fundamental political or social change, to support such change actively, or to actively participate in it by extra-institutional (non-violent or violent) means. As far as I can judge based on the data, none of the respondents currently belongs to any right-wing or right-wing extremist movements, organisations, or parties. Similarly, none of them could be considered ‘extremist’. The concept of ‘extremism’ is distinguished from the concept of ‘radicalism’ in the DARE project. Schmid (2013) defines ‘extremists’ as persons who have ‘closed minds’ (10) and who ‘strive to create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets; they seek to make society conformist by suppressing all opposition and subjugating minorities’. Due to their closed-mindedness extremists ‘[...] adhering to a simplified mono-causal interpretation of the world where you are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution’ (ibid:10). ‘That distinguishes them from mere radicals who accept diversity and believe in the power of reason rather than dogma’ (ibid: 9). Schmid conceives extremists as closed-minded while radicals as open-minded (ibid: 10) – perhaps it would be better to conceive radicals as relatively open-minded. Related to the issue of extremism is the question of the legitimacy of (political) violence as a means of achieving (political) goals that extremists accept positively according to Schmid’s understanding (ibid: 9-10). I have only spoken about this explicitly with a few respondents, all of whom rejected violence. The only exceptions, as mentioned by two of them, would be a potential self-defence situation or the defence of their family and friends. Statements by other respondents can be interpreted as a rejection of violence and a rejection of extremist political violence. Indeed, they described extremist violence as something negative or said that they would intervene to stop right-wing actions in their social environment at the latest if these actions threatened to descend into violence.

4.5.4 Extremism of the centre and radicalisation

In sum, none of the respondents’ statements and attitudes can be interpreted as an expression of *closed* right-wing populist, new right-wing, or right-wing extremist worldviews or Schmid’s ‘closed mind’ which can be seen in relation to such closed worldviews. Equally, none of them can be characterised as radical or even extreme, in the sense of Schmid (2013)²³. At the same time, some statements reflect the dimensions of ‘group-focused enmity’ and far-right attitudes. The ‘centre studies’ present a similar key finding, namely that far-right attitudes and attitudes of ‘group-focused enmity’ based on an ‘ideology of inequality’ do not only occur in radical/extreme right-wing milieus, but also in broader sections of the

²³ See Section 4.7 for the respondents’ own understandings of terms like ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’.

population or in the so-called ‘centre of society’, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as ‘extremism of the centre’ (Decker, Kiess and Brähler, 2016). Overall, this shows that such attitudes sometimes reach deep into society. Consequently, they can serve as a resource and hinge for far-right agents, a phenomenon that connects with the issue of radicalisation. For example, as described above (Section 2.2), the PEGIDA movement and the AfD party were able to successfully mobilise supporters and voters, especially with their anti-Muslim and anti-refugee programmes. Such attitudes can provide an entry point and fertile soil for (closed) right-wing populist, new right-wing or right-wing extremist worldviews or can trigger an entry into the corresponding far-right milieus. Each of these trajectories can be understood as an element of the radicalisation process. Furthermore, such attitudes and attitude patterns can also be used to legitimise discriminatory and violent acts (Zick and Küpper, 2014, p. 243). But they also correlate significantly with the acceptance of and willingness to use violence (against immigrants and other groups) (Küpper, Berghan and Rees, 2019, p. 194; Zick *et al.*, 2019, pp. 99–102; Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011, pp. 118–121) or with the intention to vote in favour of anti-immigrant parties or to discriminate against immigrants (Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011, 115–118; 121). In fact, they can also be co-responsible for concrete discriminatory and violent (political) actions. This is presumably the case with the above-mentioned right-wing terrorist perpetrators, from the social centre of society, who, as far as is known, were not members of, or engaged in, organised extreme right-wing groups or scenes and who maybe also radicalised their attitudes at PEGIDA demonstrations (Section 2.2.3).

All these aspects, in turn, can be understood as possible constitutive moments for radicalisation processes following the DARE project’s understanding of radicalisation as a process ‘by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes’ (DARE: Concepts and Definitions, no date; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 8). The DARE project’s understanding of radicalisation is also based on a wider understanding of radicalisation in the sense ‘that radicalisation must be seen as distinct from terrorism and that ideological radicalisation (the process of coming to hold radical or extremist views) must be analytically distinguished from behavioural radicalisation (engagement in violent extremist actions or terrorism)’ (Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 8). This distinction is based on the assumption that attitudes do not necessarily lead to behaviour (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017; Zick and Küpper, 2017, pp. 100–103). Thus, the distinctions between terrorism and radicalisation as well as between ideological and behavioural radicalisation express the following understanding: radicalisation implies neither current engagement in, nor an inevitable trajectory towards, physical violence. In addition, even forms of symbolic and verbal violence and discriminatory actions as well as certain attitudes can also have negative social consequences.

In conclusion, far-right attitudes, as well as attitudes of group-focused enmity and the ideology of inequality that underlies them, can both be part of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural radicalisation processes and can provide an entry point to them. Consequently, these processes of radicalisation can lead into far-right milieus. Such processes take place within them, but also beyond them, in milieus of the centre of society. As a result, these attitudes are called ‘radical attitudes’ hereafter, and can be considered problematic.

4.6. Inequality

4.6.1 Outlook on world and society

During the fieldwork, I spoke with several respondents about what they found disturbing about the current condition of the world or society, like the current economic and politic conditions. Alexander and Lara refer negatively to the US President Trump, e.g. his plans to build the wall along the border with Mexico (Alexander) or his America First policy (Lara). Michael also refers negatively to Trump and to the fact that the US is becoming more and more nationalistic. He also mentions Brexit and the rise of the AfD party in Germany. He generally believes that the world is ‘politically quite far-right, quite nationalistic [...]

uhm or at least the tendency is very strong'. Steven believes that Europe is going more and more 'down the pan ... because of Brexit, because the Euro makes it more and more expensive and because of the disagreement between the European countries'. Peter and Maurice believe that society is more and more about work, about 'work mania', 'overtime' and 'I have to make a career'. Anton, to give another example, thinks that especially in Germany, politics in particular, but also many parts of society are still very strongly influenced by the 'old generation' who 'won't listen to us'. For him, a rethink is needed in order to be able to really bring about change as the younger generation. He thinks that Greta Thunberg, the young environmental activist from Sweden, is great and says:

I think that's very important. That we also get young people to have opinions and stand up for certain things. What she or her heart beats for. I think this is very important and that's why ... At the moment I don't see that yet. That my generation or even the younger ones can actively change something. Simply because we are not allowed. And uhm, the way it all turns out I don't think that will happen in the foreseeable future. (Anton)

4.6.2 Inequality and economic insecurity

I also spoke with several respondents about what they perceive as unequal or unjust, disturbing, annoying, and unacceptable, be it for them personally, in their social environment, in society, or in the world. The respondents also told me what they would like to change about these things.

Anne, Uschi and Michael, for example, find the gap between rich and poor unjust, as well as income and educational inequality. Marvin, if he could, would make sure that there is peace in society and that people are doing well, that no one is homeless, and that no one must live in poverty. He finds it important that everyone has work and a space in a day-care or nursery. Maurice thinks it is 'fundamentally unjust that some people are treated differently from others', which for him is 'actually the definition of inequality'.

Eight respondents also mentioned, explicitly or implicitly, their financial situation today and/or in the future with two of them also referring to financial challenges facing their families and families in general (including the three respondents who have children). In sum, this 'financial shortage' can be partly understood as an expression of the feeling of 'economic insecurity' (Bossert and D'Ambrosio, 2013, p. 1018). These respondents, as far as I can tell based on their professions and other interview data, can be described, like the majority of all respondents (Section 3.5.2), as 'middle-class'. Additionally, and regarding their secondary education, most of these respondents graduated after 9 or 10 years of schooling from either a Lower Secondary School (*Hauptschule*) (grades 5 to 9) or a Secondary School (*Realschule*) (grades 5 to 10) and have therefore not achieved the qualifications necessary to go on to study at university, which, in Germany, are mainly gained from going to Grammar School (*Gymnasium*) (grades 5-12/13). One of them is self-employed, one is a temporary worker, two are doing an apprenticeship in the nursing and health service, and the others are working in working class jobs, as craftsmen or in the nursing sector. For example, Vanessa spoke with me repeatedly about her financial situation and that of her own family and the worries and fears associated with economic difficulties. She spoke a lot about 'financial shortage' and the feeling of 'economic insecurity'. When I asked her how she envisages her future, she replied:

Vanessa: Short. Financially short. But usually, you make the best of it.

Researcher: And what do you wish for your future?

Vanessa: For my future. I hope that my child and the children who might come, that they will have a childhood like mine. That they don't have to be as scared as I am. That they're prepared for it.

I would suggest understanding the socio-economic situation of these respondents, i.e. their educational and professional background, as well as the partly articulated financial shortage and economic insecurity, as indicators and specific manifestations of individual and vertical socio-economic inequality. Vertical

socio-economic inequality is measured by the objective comparison of different individuals within a society based on values such as income or education, whereas a ‘horizontal inequality’, to which this report refers later, describes inequality between sub-groups within a society (Jasso and Kotz, 2008; Stewart, 2000; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 7).

4.6.3 Socio-political-inequality

‘Socio-political-inequality’ is a multidimensional phenomenon with various manifestations (Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 94). One of these dimensions is the feeling of ‘political powerlessness’. This was also measured in a European study (Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011), but also in the German ‘centre studies’. The following two statements were used to measure this dimension: ‘People like me have no influence on what the government does anyway’ and, ‘I think it’s pointless to get politically involved’. According to the last ‘centre study’, 36% and 21% of respondents, respectively, partially or fully agreed with these statements. The study also showed a stronger correlation between ‘political powerlessness’ and the equally evaluated value of ‘mistrust of democracy’ (Zick, Küpper and Berghan, 2019a, pp. 230–236). Additionally, the higher the approval of the items ‘political powerlessness’, ‘distrust of democracy’ and an ‘illiberal understanding of democracy’, the higher the probability of group-focused enmity (ibid: 237-240). The results of the European study are very similar (Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011, 99-100).

The statements of six respondents in my study can also be interpreted expressions of ‘political powerlessness’; other statements from this group of respondents can be understood as an expression of ‘mistrust of democracy’ and an ‘illiberal understanding of democracy’. The majority of these respondents, as they told me, do not go to vote, and if they do, it is only because their parents and friends urge them to. Otherwise, these respondents think that voting does not change much, if anything, and some are convinced that there is generally little or nothing that can be changed. For example, Frederik thinks it is important to go to the polls, but ‘unfortunately I always think that one vote doesn’t help either’. It is also interesting to note that five of these six respondents experience socio-economic inequality; the data therefore suggests an overlap between these phenomena.

However, there are also five respondents, some of them politically active, who are or were members of political parties belonging to the democratic spectrum. Additionally, some respondents considered voting to be important and believed that it could change something, at least to a certain extent.

4.6.4 Perceived inequality

Six of the respondents affected by socio-economic inequality and/or political powerlessness and another four respondents described their own situation (and/or the situations of other persons and groups) as ‘unjust’, ‘annoying’ or ‘disturbing’ or expressed their ‘grievance’. They did so by comparing their own situation to the perceived situation of refugees and immigrants or ‘foreigners’, but also to the perceived situation of the unemployed, whether of German origin or migrant background. Other respondents referred mainly to ‘refugees’ and ‘foreigners’ but said that ‘there are Germans too’. In the expression of this grievance, however, no one explicitly referred to Muslims as a group. Marvin, for example, refers to both the group of ‘Hartz IV recipients’ and ‘asylum seekers’:

Researcher: What do you find unjust

Marvin: I think it’s unjust that all those Hartz IV recipients are just too lazy to look for work. I like to go to work, even if it’s stressful, when the building site, when there’s pressure and everything, your boss, but I like to go to work. And then I see people who sit at home and we practically finance them, because they live off the state and everything, I think that’s just antisocial. [...]

Researcher: Yes. You think the majority of Hartz IV recipients are like that?

Marvin: So, I would say yes. [...]

Researcher: And what about uh justice in relation to asylum seekers?

Marvin: [...] Yes [laughing]. Where do you start? [coughs].

Researcher: You can say anything. Anything you can think of.

Marvin: Let me put it this way. Start with the apartments. Start with the money. When you see, that sometimes they get everything shoved up their arse²⁴. They're people, sure. I have nothing against foreigners. [...] [Clicks tongue] But I don't know. As a German you're treated unjustly, unjustifiably. They get practically everything shoved up their arse - they get an apartment and everything, and some of the people here are living on the street. When you sometimes walk through the city centre, especially in winter, you would like to take, I don't know, one of these homeless people to your home, because he's not well or you see that he's freezing. [...]. But the asylum seekers, they come here, they get an apartment, they get money and live here like gods and don't even have to do anything. They're offered jobs and I don't know. And here another person is looking for a job but gets nothing, looks for apartments, gets nothing, I think that's so unjust at that point.

Marvin complained that the unemployed and asylum seekers get things, in his perception, without having to do anything for it, especially since he is working hard and paying taxes. He feels this is unjust. The theme of hard work can also be interpreted as an expression of a certain identifying moment with one's own work. Other respondents express similar feelings, for example Uschi who is annoyed by 'economic refugees' who are, in her opinion, illegitimate, unlike 'war refugees':

I am going to work for me and for my child. So, we can afford it. So that I can say, 'I got this from MY money and not from Father State or not from any man who keeps me'. No. I have worked my ass off for this. Simple as that. For my self-esteem. And that's just parasitic what they're doing. Well, sure, if you can do it, why not? (Uschi)

Marvin's and Uschi's statements, as well as similar statements by a few other respondents, could be interpreted through the concept of 'producerism' (Berlet and Lyons, 2000), which, as Virchow (2017b) points out, is still not sufficiently considered in research on right-wing extremism. This is based on the contrasting of the 'working population' and social groups that are characterised as non-productive, lazy or unwilling to work (ibid. 10-11).

Similar to other respondents, Uschi refers to her own financial situation in terms of 'financial shortage' or the associated feeling of 'economic insecurity'. Ronja, for example, wonders where refugees get money for certain purchases that she and her partner cannot afford because of their low salaries, especially since their new housing situation has made it necessary to pay more attention to money:

I mean, most of them are still running around with the latest smartphones. You know, brand-name shoes, brand-name clothes. And then you ask yourself, 'where did they get the money?' These are things we sometimes can't even afford ourselves. Because sometimes we already have such a low salary. [...] And since the move you realise that you have to pay more attention to your money. And that you just can't buy everything anymore. But most people live alone. And then you ask yourself how they can afford everything. (Ronja)

These perceptions of inequality or feelings of grievance are articulated by ten respondents and can be understood as a manifestation of 'perceived inequality'. Such perceptions of inequality do not necessarily have to be based on the actual experience of inequality. Objective inequality can exist, but is only perceived as a problem when it is evaluated as unjust (Jetten *et al.*, 2017; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 7). Generally speaking, not only the actual circumstances and life situations play a role, but above all how these are interpreted and evaluated subjectively. This can also happen with prejudice. Often, prejudice is based on limited or wrong information; some of this limited or wrong information might even be based partly on people's experiences. For example, some empirical research has actually shown that

²⁴ This is a German vulgar expression for getting something for nothing.

what matters most in predicting attitudes is the perception of immigrant populations' size rather than the actual size (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2020; Sides and Citrin, 2007), and the perception of threat rather than actual resource competition (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 91).

The data collected for this project confirms this phenomenon of 'perceived inequality'. Sometimes, respondents' perceptions regarding what members of the out-groups get – and, in particular, what they get without having to do anything for it – were wrong and very much exaggerated. The same goes for the estimated number of refugees or immigrants. For example, one respondent believes that 60% of the German population is 'no longer German at all, 20 million refugees have come to Germany, some of them with 50 children, and in addition to the 'child benefit' ('*Kindergeld*')²⁵ for each child they immediately got an entry visa, further money and a key to a flat, while 'we Germans' have to apply for everything and have it approved.' This can be understood as a kind of numerological racism, which according to Hage (2014, p. 233) consists of concern that there are too many people of a certain group.

When I asked some respondents where they got their knowledge from about these groups, the responses varied but included that they had 'seen' it for themselves, 'heard' it, 'been told about it' or that 'one reads and hears it in the media' or in city district groups on Facebook or that it had been reported on television or in a docusoap.

4.6.5. Perceived horizontal inequality

Overall, respondents evaluated their own situation (individual level) as deprived in so far as they assessed it as unjust in relation to the perceived situation of certain groups (group level). For some respondents, this evaluation did not apply to the individual-group level alone, but to the inter-group level (Jasso and Kotz, 2008), which is based on the concept of 'group relative deprivation' (Smith *et al.*, 2012; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, pp. 7–8; van den Bos, 2020). This means that not only one's own situation, but also the perceived situation of one's own 'in-group' was evaluated as unjust compared to the perceived situation of 'foreign groups'. This is also described as 'fraternal' relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966; Zick, Hövermann and Küpper, 2011). For example, Marvin, who was quoted above, not only speaks for himself, but also for Germans as a whole ('as a German'). On another occasion, he speaks of 'our fellow citizens'. Other respondents speak of 'we', of 'the Germans' or 'us Germans' or use the term 'own population'. Some talk about the working population. For example Max, who calls himself a 'workhorse' and refers to the working population as 'those who really do something physically, or mentally, it doesn't matter, in any case, those who pull themselves together and do something for their money'. In addition, some respondents referred to certain groups that they addressed as victims of injustices or inequality and probably considered them to be part of their own in-group. Other respondents referred to others from their social environment. For example, Marvin also refers to the 'homeless people', and Steven talks about how much he himself has to 'plough'. Yet, he also refers to the pensioners who helped to rebuild Germany after the war and who are 'coming up shorter and shorter'. This reference was often accompanied by the expression of a certain emotional attachment expressed, for example, by Marvin when he says that he would have liked to take one of the freezing homeless people to his home. This feeling of 'coming up short', which could also be translated as the feeling of being a second-class citizen also described in other qualitative studies (Pilkington, 2016; Poli and Arun, 2019, pp. 44–47), is something that the in-group experiences. Steven brings this up as well. One of the things that disturb him in politics is that 'we have been neglected in the refugee crisis'. He thinks that 'we Germans' should be more important than refugees and other problems that are mentioned in the media all the time. In sum, all these phenomena in which one's own perceived situation and/or the situation of persons from one's own social environment

²⁵ Child benefit is a monthly payment given from the German Government to German parents, regardless of their income, to ensure that their children's basic needs are covered. Under certain conditions, EU citizens and foreign nationals living in Germany can also receive child benefit for their children.

and/or the situation of members of certain groups, who are perceived as belonging to one's in-group, is evaluated as unjust in relation to the perceived situation of other groups and their members can be considered as cases of 'perceived horizontal inequality'.

4.6.6 Inequality, perceived (horizontal) inequality and radicalisation

Those who experience socio-economic inequality in general and, more specifically, 'perceived horizontal inequality' tend to express negative attitudes towards immigrants and minorities (Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 93). For example, people who have problems meeting their economic needs through their income are more likely to be opposed to immigration in general (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; McLaren and Paterson, 2020; O'Connell, 2005, p. 64) and to Muslim immigration in particular (Schlueter, Masso and Davidov, 2020; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 93). In the context of dimensions of group-focused enmity a study has shown that the levels of prejudice in several European countries, including Germany, are associated with low relative income; the lower the relative income, the stronger the prejudice (Zick, Küpper and Hövermann, 2011, pp. 89–91). This connection is also evident with regard to education level (ibid: 83–85). According to the authors of this study, 'fraternal relative deprivation' is of considerable relevance for predicting group-focused enmity. In other words: The more the interviewees in the study see their in-group as being disadvantaged compared to an out-group the more frequent they express prejudices according to the dimensions of group-focused enmity (ibid: 154-157) (see also Pettigrew *et al.*, 2008). Finally the study by Zick, Küpper and Hövermann (2011) also shows a positive correlation between political powerlessness and group-focused enmity (ibid: 99-98).

One issue that the DARE project addresses is the relationship between inequality and radicalisation (Franc and Pavlovica, 2018; Poli and Arun, 2019; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020). Inequality is often assumed to be an important factor in radicalisation (Poli and Arun, 2019, p. 7). Some of the data collected for this study can be interpreted as being in accordance with this relationship in some respects. For example, seven of the eight respondents who articulated above average 'radical attitudes' (Section 4.5.4) also belong to the group of ten respondents who articulated perceptions of 'horizontal inequality' and are partially also affected by 'socio-economic inequality' and/or 'political powerlessness'. Thus, the interview data show at least the simultaneous presence of 'socio-economic inequality', 'political powerlessness', and 'perceived horizontal inequality' on the one hand and 'group-focused enmity' and other patterns of 'radical attitudes' on the other. What the data also show, however, is how perceptions of horizontal inequality go hand in hand with ignoring the deprived situation of the other groups, their Othering, and, in accordance with the 'centre studies', certain levels of prejudice. This was the case, for example, when several respondents, in articulating their perceptions of inequality, distinguished between illegitimate and legitimate causes of migration. For example, some said that immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria would come primarily for social welfare and child benefits. Others said that the majority of Hartz IV recipients do not want to work. These comments illustrate the dimensions of prejudice against asylum seekers and against long-term unemployed people.

4.6.7 Perceived (horizontal) inequality and prevention of radicalisation

In Moghaddam's (2005), 'staircase to terrorism' approach the process of radicalisation is metaphorically compared to climbing a narrowing staircase, passing six different floors with fewer and fewer choices, until the terrorist act is reached at the top of the staircase (161-162). However, for Moghaddam most people are and remain on the ground floor where material conditions (like poverty and a lack of education) are psychologically interpreted and 'perceptions and feelings of relative deprivation' dominate (ibid: 162): 'Those who reach the first floor seek ways in which to improve their situation and achieve greater justice. But if they do not see possibilities for individual mobility and do not feel that they can adequately influence the procedures through which decisions are made, they are more likely to keep climbing' (ibid.). This also means that the prevention of radicalisation processes, which Moghaddam (2005, p. 167) emphasises under the heading 'Prevention must come first', involves improving the material conditions of people on the ground floor and counteracting socio-economic, socio-political, and

other inequalities. As van den Bos (2020, pp. 574–575) points out, strengthening democracy and opportunities for democratic participation is also highly relevant.

Several respondents actually mentioned examples of strengthening opportunities for democratic participation, for example local initiatives for public participation. Among these respondents, two were affected by both socio-economic inequality and political powerlessness. Another example is Peter who denies that violence is a legitimate means for him to achieve political goals, at least as long as democracy exists:

Nope. Because whenever I have an opportunity to vote, to participate, to change something, I think it's unrealistic. So here I do not need violence in Germany. Honestly yes, I can't change anything with a referendum, but then I go and build a political party. If my opinion is so great and it has to be implemented, 50% of the people will vote for me. And I decide what's going to happen. I think that is possible. Of course, I would like a bit more participation here, there's no question. (Peter)

Peter also said that he is practising democracy with the marksmen by getting involved and participating, even if he would like to see more democracy in his club and marksmanship in general. I asked him if he believes that one can change things as a young person. He talked about his voluntary engagement in marksmanship and says:

Otherwise I wouldn't have done voluntary work for over 10 years. And I think I have already brought a lot forward in some places. Of course, I can't change everything on my own, but I can change something. (Peter)

With regards to the respondents' perceptions of inequality, the interview data showed that these perceptions are also based on incorrect and insufficient information, which could be counteracted preventively, for example by providing better information or civic education in general. As Moghaddam (2005), points out, perceived inequality is a significant driver for radicalisation (Poli and Arun, 2019, p. 69). It is primarily determined by how certain factual circumstances and life situations are interpreted subjectively, intersubjectively and collectively. This also applies to perceptions of 'symbolic threats' to identity, culture, or tradition, which can be associated with anti-Muslim hostility (Obaidi *et al.*, 2018; Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 92). In combination with the experience of unfairness and uncertainty, perceived inequality can further intensify the radicalisation process (van den Bos, 2020, p. 575).

In addition, perceived (horizontal) inequality or objective inequalities are also targeted by far-right agents, who stir these up and exploit them (Poli and Arun, 2019, pp. 42–44), in a similar manner to racist and other negative attitudes towards various groups, like refugees. For example, such agents or organisations suggest there is unjust treatment of the 'German population' compared to 'the refugees' or warn against the threat of 'Islamisation'. The following statement about the AfD party by one of the respondents illustrates that such narratives are successful:

I read through something and partly I find that they [she is talking about the AfD party] are also a bit right, because they just show a hard edge and say: 'That's unfair'. Let's put it this way, when I think of the AfD, I also think of all the people who get Hartz IV and come here from abroad just because of it. (Hanna)

However, Hanna also said that one cannot generalise, because she knows many 'foreign colleagues' who 'want to work and who go to work and who can do it' and that she would not vote for the AfD because the AfD is generalising too much. This implies that Hanna at least contextualises her perception of inequality with experience-based information, thereby partially evading the AfD's narratives.

4.7 Understandings of ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’

4.7.1 Understanding of ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’

In my interviews with all respondents, I tried to learn more about their understanding of terms like (‘right-wing’) ‘radical’, ‘extreme’ or ‘radicalisation’. The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the respondents’ understanding of these issues. Some aspects are discussed in the next section, where the focus is on how respondents react to concrete ‘radical messages’ in their social environments.

Seven respondents defined a person or group as ‘radical’ or ‘extreme’ when violence is used or there is willingness to use violence. Some of these respondents explicitly stated that they themselves reject violence (on respondents’ views on violence, see also Section 4.5.3). In this respect, their views are similar to views that can be found in public and academic discourses on the issue of radicalisation. Based on such discourses, the acceptance or use of violence is seen at least as a part of political ‘extremism’; in the DARE project and other radicalisation models (see for example McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017; Moghaddam, 2005), it is seen as (one of) the last stages of radicalisation (Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 8). For Alexander, for instance, these terms most often evoke negative associations and sometimes fear. He tries to keep away and distance himself from all radical and extreme currents and does not deal with this topic: ‘This means that when I hear radicalism I often think of violence. Exercising violence. And yes, I also try to distance myself from that’. For him, the use of violence is ‘the shift to the radical’.

Seven other respondents also tended to define the terms ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ by highlighting violence. These respondents, however, also classified verbal expressions as violent, especially when they are expressed publicly to individuals or groups. Thus, Andreas thinks that one can also exercise violence verbally. In this respect, he would also call some of the statements made by AfD party members ‘radical’, for example those regarding migrants, ‘if you lump them all together and treat them badly’ with such statements. And for Vanessa, someone is radical when they verbally attack a person; if someone uses violence, then they are ‘disturbed’.

Other respondents did not define the terms ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ only in the context of violent actions. Rather, these terms also play a role on the level of opinions and attitudes from which radical/extreme behaviour and actions may follow. In their view, being radical or extreme means to have some kind of closed mind that does not allow other opinions. Such a closed mind is also connected with the impetus to enforce one’s opinion on others by any means. This understanding of ‘radical’/‘extreme’ corresponds more or less to Schmid’s (2013) already cited understanding of what ‘extremists’ are (Section 4.5.3), who, unlike the ‘radicals’ are dogmatic, no longer allow diversity, and are characterised by ‘closed minds’ and accept violence as a legitimate means of achieving their aims (Schmid, 2013: 9-10).

Michael: [...] Someone is an extremist for me, as I just said, if they simply stick to their opinion and are not open and open-minded towards other opinions. This is quite extremist for me.

And if one also tries to assert oneself by any means. yes. [...]

Researcher: You mean including violence?

Michael: Yes. Right.

Additionally, respondents associated different persons and groups with being radical or extreme. In a few cases, ‘Muslims’, ‘Islamist ‘terrorists’, and the ‘Islamic State’ were mentioned as examples of radical or extreme groups and individuals. However, Michael, for example, thinks that the public discourse and the media focus too much on radical Islam compared to right-wing terrorism. For Michael, this explains why people with whom he talks also perceive right-wing terrorism as less problematic.

A few respondents also mentioned left-wing individuals and groups. Interestingly, 11 respondents addressed the issue of ‘left-wing extremism’ without being asked about it; they sometimes even emphasised that there is also ‘left-wing extremism’ and that ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ extremism are both problematic. Some claimed that public discourse focused too much on ‘right-wing extremism’.

In most cases, however, most respondents referred to actors from the ‘right-wing camp’ (Alexander), such as ‘aggressive neo-Nazis’ (Hanna) or corresponding actions and attitudes, such as ‘violence’ (Camilla), ‘xenophobia’ and ‘racial hostility’ (Maurice) as examples of radical or extreme individuals, groups, or attitudes.

Altogether, many respondents described the terms ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ or related phenomena as negative and associated them with negative feelings (which in some cases was probably because of negative attitudes and feelings towards violence in general). This was the case with Marvin, for example, who associated the notion of ‘bad’ with these terms, but also with ‘Nazis’. Similarly, Anton reacted with ‘incomprehension’ to these terms and said that, depending on the circumstances, for him these terms are associated with ‘grief’ and ‘suffering’.

4.7.2 Freedom of opinion and expression

Several respondents also differentiated between expressing or having an opinion and being radical and extreme. For example, some of the respondents considered it unproblematic to just have a political opinion as long as this opinion is held and justified, does not lead to a closed mind, and/or is not translated into verbal or physical action against others. For example, for Anne, a legitimate opinion is ‘that not everything is going well in Germany’, but saying ‘all foreigners out’ is a ‘right-wing’ opinion for her, because it is a generalising statement that becomes extreme when violence against these groups results from it. Two respondents also felt that voting for far-right parties, such as the AfD and NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany), was also a legitimate expression of freedom of opinion, while Maurice regrets that people think this way, and that such parties exist, but he does not consider it as radical to vote for such parties. Finally, Frederik had said at an earlier point in the interview, that he had a problem with unemployed foreigners and with the fact that some German young people, too, were behaving inappropriately, which in his opinion had become worse. In part, he had the feeling that German youth had copied this behaviour from foreigners. He also said the following:

Yes, let me put it this way, as I often said before, in some ways I also have something against these foreigners. But I don’t see myself as extremist now, because I, I don’t do anything. But if I really, I don’t know, sprayed some graffiti on their shops or smoke bombs or all sorts of things or got physical, then I would find that extremist. [...] When I say: ‘I object, because...’. So, if I really have an argument about why [I object], then it is freedom of opinion. But if I only say, ‘That’s a foreigner. I don’t like you’, nope. (Frederik)

This distinction between being against foreigners and being extreme seems to be so important to Frederik that at the end of the interview, when I asked him what effect he would like the DARE project to have, he said the following:

Uhm. Maybe, I don’t know. Maybe it’ll shake people up a bit. So that people don’t see us as Nazis or whatever, if you are a little bit right-wing, like I am now, uhm. (Frederik)

4.7.3 Being labelled as right-wing or a Nazi

When asked, some respondents found terms such as ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ helpful. Camilla said that these terms could be important in education: ‘For example, adults can be educated about what they watch, what they like, and which groups they follow.’ But apart from that, Camilla criticises how politics are taught in general and the debate about radicalisation in particular. She feels that it could somehow be made more modern, e.g. by better visualisations, better communication, but also with regard to social media. Other respondents found these terms important in order to be able to clearly name and describe radical and extreme phenomena and persons.

However, around half of the respondents criticised these terms and how they are used. As Peter puts it, they are ‘over-used’ and ‘not differentiated enough’. The respondents find that the terms right-wing, extreme right-wing, or Nazi are often used too quickly when labelling political opinions and people. When

asked for examples, most respondents believed that expressing critical opinions about issues such as the reception of refugees and immigration or about living in a multicultural society, where many people from different background interact with each other, was the main reason for such labelling. Respondents who had been labelled this way expressed this opinion as well as those who had not. 'I cannot assume that everyone who has a certain political opinion is extremist', as Anne puts it. She finds the term 'extremism' helpful in dealing with extremist persons, but then finds it no longer helpful when it leads to what she considers to be undifferentiated insinuations. Another respondent describes people from their own marksmen's club as 'a little bit' 'racist' and 'right-wing' and says that it is difficult to classify people whom one has known for years as 'radical' or 'extremist':

[...] If you then claim that someone is uhm extremist or uhm radical. Then they are labelled as such, so you already know, it's going in that direction, but it's just like someone who's addicted to alcohol, I think. I think that's a good comparison, when you say he's an alcoholic, then he's almost directly labelled. Even if it's just for you. And uhm, that's like with the prejudices against foreigners [...]. [...] '[H]e's radical now' or 'he attacks children', 'he has beaten him and him'. That goes around much faster than anything nice and that's why I think you have to be so damn careful with that. And especially on such topics you have to pay attention who you talk to about it, or whether you give names at all [...]. (Respondent)

In addition, some of these respondents also expressed a kind of fear of being labelled this way, but also that one should be careful about expressing one's opinion publicly on some issues.

These views can also be compared with various surveys. In a survey conducted by the Allensbach Polling Institute in 2019, for example, the majority of participants agreed that talking about refugees (71%) or about Islam and Muslims (66%) was tricky. A high percentage of those surveyed thought that one should be careful about 'some' (58%) or 'many' (20%) topics when expressing one's opinion in public space (Köcher, 2019). For example, 55% of the respondents in the last centre study agreed more or less or completely with the statement, 'In Germany, one cannot say anything bad about foreigners without being immediately berated as a racist', and 27% agreed with the following statement: 'In Germany, one can no longer freely express one's opinion without getting into trouble' (Häusler and Küpper, 2019, p. 166). The authors of these studies describe these attitudes as 'new right-wing attitudes', as mentioned above (Section 4.5.1), and also point out that these attitudes highly correlate with the prejudice dimensions of group-focused enmity (ibid: 167-168). Narratives like the labelling narrative and that of oppressed opinion play a central role in right-wing populism. They are exploited by far-right agents and are instrumentalised in a variety of ways. Alexander addresses such a case in relation to the AfD:

Certain groups like the AfD like to propagate this. That you are not allowed to say anything at all, because everything can be used against you and you could be labelled as a Nazi for every little... Uhm for every little statement. But there... I find that a little difficult to judge. It depends in which context... Yes, it depends in which context you make which statement. (Alexander)

This perception of being silenced (Grimm and Pilkington, 2015; Pilkington, 2016, pp. 203–221) also relates to another perception mentioned by some respondents and that I encountered twice during my field research, namely the problematic nature of being proud of one's country, or to show this pride, as a German. Respondents listed German history as the reason and the fact that Germans do not want to be labelled as Nazis. In other words, respondents said that many Germans who expressing feeling proud of their country will be labelled as a Nazi (see for further empirical examples of this phenomenon Grimm and Pilkington, 2015, p. 218). Similarly, in the Allensbach survey, 41% of respondents agreed that 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' are sensitive issues (Köcher, 2019). This agreement could be perceived as a part of certain far-right attitudes, but more importantly the survey shows that although such views may be

popular in far-right milieus, they are not minority opinions. Actually, they are relatively widespread among the population and are often discussed in public discourses.

Six respondents said that they themselves had been called 'Nazi' or 'right-wing extremist' or 'racist'. In most cases, this occurred in the context of conflicts in school with classmates with an immigration background or conflicts with Muslim classmates.

For example, Peter, who had been involved in extreme right-wing groups in the past (Section 4.8.3), but who has long since distanced himself from it and now sees himself as 'socially conservative', said that he has often been called a 'Nazi'. He also talked about the danger he sees when it happens:

This has happened to me several times in my life. I was a Nazi because I listened to [the band] 'Freiwild'²⁶. I was a Nazi because I do this, I am a Nazi because I do that, I am a Nazi because I am a marksman. The thing is, I haven't even expressed an opinion or done anything in any other area. I just have a hobby, I am a marksman: 'Nazi'. I hear 'Freiwild': 'Nazi', I listen to [the band] 'Onkelz': Nazi. [...] Then you have people who keep quiet because they don't want to be called a Nazi [...]. [...] And as often as I have been put in a right-wing corner just because I am conservative: 'Then you are a Nazi, then you are shit'. That is a reaction you find all the time. [...]. Because if you are called a Nazi, you will be shunned by many. The thing is that it has become a weapon that people like to use very, very much. For me, this is also a huge mistake in the discussion with the AfD, to leave them completely out of the discussion. That doesn't help. You have to try to get them into a social consensus, because you can only prove that they are shit if you prove it and not just because you say they are shit. And this shunning strategy is just one of the things that makes you have a lot of people who now think, 'then I can vote for the AfD if I'm a Nazi anyway'. And so many people accuse me of this and I really know many who would actually rather vote for CDU or CSU or FDP, who say, 'then I will think about it [voting for the AfD], I'm a Nazi anyway'. (Peter)

Finally, a further distinction is important when discussing who is considered a 'Nazi' and who isn't. For Lara, for example, someone is a Nazi if they use the Hitler salute and refer to National Socialism: 'But if somebody has something against foreigners, then he is not a Nazi for me, then he is simply either racist, intolerant, yes, or just a little bit right-wing or right-wing oriented'. Similarly, Jana associates the terms 'radical' and 'extreme' primarily with verbal and physical violence and identifies intermediate levels between the terms 'right-wing' and 'right-wing radical'. For her, 'right-wing radicalism' is the 'worst level'; as she put it.

Jana: Yes, there are gradations. So, there are people who in my opinion are right-wing oriented and maybe would vote for parties like the AfD or the NPD and uhm who and who believe what they are saying, but who would never do so with malice aforethought. And then you have those people who just freak out completely, without knowing this person, just because he runs across the street they will start thinking, 'Oh I'd like to beat him up because he has black hair'. There are definitely gradations and I think there are also many, many lower grades that go up to right-wing radicalism.

Researcher: But right-wing radicalism is for you then so to speak the...

Jana: The worst level.

In other words, these respondents are concerned with differentiating between having an opinion and being right-wing in general, in addition to differentiating different levels within the right-wing sphere.

Such differentiations are interesting for two reasons. First, they partly coincide with ideas and concepts in public and scientific discourses. Second, they also show that respondents themselves have reflected on

²⁶ On this band, see: Rammerstorfer (2015); Seeliger (2019).

and developed differentiated ideas about the meanings of terms such as ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ and corresponding phenomena. The respondents’ criticism of how these terms are used reveals a complexity that the simple use of these terms overlooks. Peter, for example, perceives these terms as morally charged labels. For Peter, the labels can lead to people being shunned. This in turn can cause them to turn towards far-right milieus, where these labels are exploited and instrumentalised. Such labelling can be very effective, as evidenced by some respondents’ fears of being labelled ‘right-wing’ or ‘a Nazi’. Frederik’s thoughts on this support such a view. He expressed concern, despite his own description of himself as being ‘a little bit right-wing’ himself, of being labelled a ‘Nazi’. This concern, as he mentioned, has caused him to no longer express his opinions, even though he himself has never been called a ‘Nazi’.

4.7.4 The difference between ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ and between ‘right-wing’ and ‘right-wing radical’

With over half of the respondents, I explicitly talked about the distinction between the terms (‘right-wing’) ‘radical’ and (‘right-wing’) ‘extreme’. A few respondents argued that there was no difference between these terms. Three respondents felt that ‘radicalism’, as Peter says, is the ‘final level’. Again, in line with the above definition, for seven respondents, extremism is the strongest term. It was rated as ‘even worse’ (Ronja) and associated with violence, or greater violence. When asked, Steven drew a similar distinction between what is ‘right-wing’ and what is ‘right-wing radical’. For him, the difference between the former and the latter is the willingness to use violence and a firm stance in achieving the goal of ‘foreigners-out’.

4.8 Encounters and Responses to radical messages and problematic agents

4.8.1 What are radical messages and problematic agents?

As part of this project, I wanted to speak with respondents about their encounters with and reactions to ‘radical messages’ and ‘problematic agents’. In this report, ‘radical messages’ refer to statements whose content can be attributed to far-right attitudes and attitudes of group-focused enmity (Section 4.5.1) or which were evaluated accordingly by the respondents themselves. So far, I have described such attitudes as ‘radical attitudes’ because they can be elements in, and facilitate, cognitive, emotional and behavioural radicalisation processes (Section 4.5.4). In this respect, ‘radical messages’ can also be understood as ‘messages of radicalisation’ in a narrower sense.

The term ‘problematic agents’ describes individuals who do not necessarily have to be understood as radical or extreme, but those who broadcast such ‘radical messages’ and/or individuals whom respondents described as ‘right-wing’, ‘right-wing radical’ etc. ‘Problematic agents’ can become ‘agents of radicalisation’ in a narrow sense, when they trigger radicalisation processes through the messages they broadcast or by interacting with them.

‘Responses’ are respondents’ reactions to ‘radical messages’ and ‘problematic agents’ on a verbal or non-verbal ‘action level’ and on the ‘cognitive and emotional level’, i.e. thoughts and feelings that respondents had during the corresponding encounters, but also evaluations of these encounters in the interview.

4.8.2 Encounters with radical messages and problematic agents in everyday life and in the social environment

I also asked most of the respondents whether they had ever experienced situations where people in their everyday life or in their immediate or more distant social environment, such as school or their circle of friends, did or said things that they themselves would describe as radical, extreme, right-wing etc. Most respondents spoke about such encounters. In some cases, that information was given to me by respondents in the interviews, at other times, I was physically present in the field and observed such encounters.

Five respondents explicitly stated that they had not experienced such encounters or at least not in their immediate social environment. In total, the responses and narratives of the respondents revealed over 40 of such encounters, which took place among the family, friends and acquaintances, at school and at work, in the neighbourhood, the local pub, the city district, the public, or the football stadium. Most of these encounters happened in the immediate social environment or at school and at work. Such encounters included: a grandparent making an anti-Muslim statement; a sibling with an extreme right-wing past; 'right-wing oriented' friends; friends who do not like Muslims, Islam and Turkish people and who insulted a person perceived as Muslim; a friend of a friend with a swastika tattoo; a more distant acquaintance who once said to someone with dark skin that he would make a lampshade out of him; extreme right-wing and left-wing people in the circle of acquaintances, including an acquaintance who said that refugees at the border could be shot at; AfD voters and voters of other far-right parties in their social environments; a picture with Nazi connotations in a WhatsApp friends group; right-wing and extreme right-wing people in a Facebook friends list; a teacher who made ambiguous remarks about women, people with disabilities, and people of Jewish faith; comments against foreigners from a classmate; discrimination against Muslim classmates; negative comments and jokes about refugees at work; a Nazi and hooligans in the neighbourhood; people 'with a right-wing attitude' in a local pub; right-wingers and Nazis at the football stadium. Respondents also encountered radical materials such as stickers of extreme right-wing groups but also radical Islamist groups; seven respondents mentioned such stickers. Even if these are only snippets of their everyday realities, it is clear that such encounters with radical messages and problematic agents and even agents of radicalisation play a role in their own lives. In the case of some respondents, such situations seem to have happened only occasionally. In the case of other respondents, however, these situations happened regularly, for example in the case of respondents who had right-wing persons among their friends and acquaintances. Some respondents also reported being exposed to radical messages and problematic agents in their marksmen's club (Sections 4.8.7 and 4.8.8).

The following section and subsections will examine the situations where respondents were exposed to radical, extreme, or right-wing opinions, problematic agents and the respondents' responses to these situations in more detail using selected case examples, which, in some cases, are supplemented by additional data. This allows a thick, empirically based description of possible factors that might influence the beginning or facilitation of cognitive, emotional, or behavioural radicalisation processes. These examples also help to identify factors that could counteract a possible process of radicalisation or could act as possible factors in the prevention of radicalisation or as elements of deradicalisation processes.

In subsection 4.8.3, the focus will be on respondents who have been in contact with extreme right-wing groups and/or have been right-wing in the past. Subsection 4.8.4 will discuss examples of respondents' responses to extreme right-wing agents in their own city district. Over half of the respondents talked about situations in their closer social environment, e.g. their families, their circle of friends or their marksmen's clubs, which they identified as encounters with radical messages or problematic agents or which can be interpreted in this way. Four subsections explore this. Specifically, Subsection 4.8.5 focuses on reactions by one respondent to potential supporters and voters of the AfD party and various radical messages in that individual's offline and online social environment. Subsection 4.8.6 focuses on an example that outlines the strategy of a respondent in dealing with radical messages coming from his own circle of friends. This case also illustrates how positively connoted relationships to people with immigration backgrounds, or positive perceptions of them, can play a certain counter-radical role. Subsections 4.8.7 and 4.8.8 focus on responses to radical messages and problematic agents within a certain group of a marksmen's club. This example is designed to show empirically how right-wing sub-milieus or 'right-wing niches' can persist where racist and right-wing messages have become normalised. It will be supplemented by further interview data; Subsection 4.8.7 will outline some general information on the encounters with radical messages and problematic agents in the researched marksmen's clubs and the type of reactions they provoked.

4.8.3 Trajectories towards and away from radical attitudes and milieus

Some of the respondents had been involved in an extreme right-wing group (Peter), in a hooligan group (Uschi), had 'right-wing thoughts' and 'hate' for 'foreigners' (Julian), or voted in the past for a radical/extreme right-wing party (Andreas).

Based on selected examples, the aim of this subsection is to show the trajectories along which respondents have undergone a certain cognitive, emotional and behavioural development and have made their way in and out of right-wing scenes and thoughts. Relevant factors in these trajectories have been general living conditions of these respondents at the time, as well as crisis-like moments and trigger events, social actors, social emotions, and inter-group processes. These factors will be examined in more detail; some of them can be understood as push factors and pull factors (Borum, 2011, p. 57). Peter's story is particularly relevant here. He is the only respondent, to my knowledge, who was part of an extreme right-wing milieu over a longer period of time and we discussed this part of his past in detail.

4.8.3.1 Trajectories towards radical attitudes and milieus

Push factors: A total of seven respondents said that they had been bullied during their school years, sometimes for years. Two of the respondents whose stories are featured in this section had such experiences in school. One of them, Julian, relates this directly to his far-right attitudes at that time. Julian explains that he was strongly influenced by the bullying he suffered in school, also from individuals with immigration backgrounds. As a result, he started to 'screw things up' because he 'didn't know where to go'. Julian recounts that, among other things, he started beating people up, but he does not specify what kind of people he hit. He says that this was one very bad reaction to the bullying. He got also 'right-wing thoughts' at that time and 'hate' when he saw 'foreigners'. As a possible explanation for his budding hate towards foreigners, he mentions that he was 'much' annoyed and bullied by 'foreigners' and excluded from their 'group'. Julian suspects that these things increased or triggered his hatred at the time. He generalised this to all foreigners, 'which I definitely don't do any more today, because, yes, I now think further than just around a corner, as I said. And not each human is the same'.

Peter was also bullied at school for years, but in the interview, unlike Julian, he did not mention the bullies' cultural background. As reasons for the bullying, Peter named his appearance and 'besides, I don't fit into the system'. At the same time, there were other problems in Peter's family. For him, all this and 'the unsteady development of life that arose in the process' was a trigger for not feeling good. Peter named things that helped him deal with all these circumstances back then, including friends and an older brother whose help was very important to him. At the time, this brother was an active and organised neo-Nazi. Peter describes his brother as someone who had 'also been through a lot of shit in his life' and that they therefore understood each other. Their common motto was 'the world is the hell of another planet'. When I asked Peter whether and to what extent his brother influenced him in his attitudes, Peter replied that his brother was his 'role model', 'my ideal, well, and I emulated him for many, many, many years'. Peter said that his brother did not consciously steer him towards a right-wing path, but that his shift towards right-wing beliefs also happened because his brother was such a role model for him, 'and when you hear these topics and you get introduced to them, you develop an opinion in that direction and then you strive for it a little bit'. Peter also mentioned a few problems with foreigners who wanted to take away his valuables. As far as bullying is concerned, Peter generally believes that such experiences can cause young people to isolate or even radicalise because they are looking for a circle of friends for support. Peter also says of himself: 'I have been around Nazis, I have been around hooligans'. Julian's and Peter's cases are pretty consistent with various studies that show that the experience of being bullied is widespread among young people who are going on to enter extreme right-wing movements (Kimmel, 2007; Pilkington, 2016, p. 69; Treadwell and Garland, 2011, pp. 627–628).

Pull factors: Uschi's case allows a focus on the pull factors rather than the factors that push individuals towards far-right attitudes and milieus. She joined the hooligan scene through one of her ex-boyfriends

who was in a hooligan group that was more 'right-wing' and 'national' and whom she had met at the football stadium. Through him, she also got to know other hooligans and joined a hooligan group at that time. Looking back, Uschi said:

And then you attacked the opposing fans. And all that stuff. Sure, even as a woman. And I don't think much of that anymore. Sure, I was young, I was stupid. It was adrenaline. It was exciting. But in hindsight. That's nothing. That's just stupid. Sure, you have... You're frustrated, you have problems at home. That's where this all starts. And that's how you get into this scene: 'Come, we'll help you.' (Uschi)

Coming back to Peter and his pull factors, his time in a hooligan group is interesting because according to him, that connection got him into this 'extreme line'. He was already in 'this flow' when he finally came into contact with the neo-Nazi group, because both groups had a 'similar direction'. Through a former colleague, Peter finally met someone who was 'definitely a Nazi' and a member of a right-wing family. He befriended him and stayed in the neo-Nazi group for about two years. Peter said that during this time, there were football tournaments, comradeship meetings, and drinking and talking together. He also visited a regulars' table of the extreme right-wing NPD party. When I asked him whether he could identify politically with this group, Peter said:

Uhm not really, I could see the extreme positions, I didn't even look far enough to identify with them. I just saw in that moment: Yes, if we Germans were doing better, it would be nice. And they like me. And I have problems there, and I have problems there, they're cool. (Peter)

According to Peter, it was important to feel that 'you are part of this', 'you're worth something'. There was also a 'cosy feeling' and a feeling of 'comfort' (*Geborgenheit*). The latter points are significant because what appears to have been decisive in Peter's case was not so much an identification with this group for political or ideological reasons, but rather the esteem shown for him, evoking feelings of comfort and making him feel that he was part of and belonged to something. This corresponds with the DARE perspective, namely that extra-ideological factors such as a sense of belonging and other feelings and emotions, community, family, or identity play an essential role in radicalisation processes. This is also reflected in other qualitative research results that identify a sense of belonging as an important pull factor towards extreme-right wing and similar groups and movements. Research describes these factors as providing 'affectivity rich environments' (Kimmel, 2007, p. 210; Pilkington, Omelchenko and Perasović, 2018). However, such factors, as discussed previously in this report, are also offered by the marksmen's club milieu (Section 4.2.3).

4.8.3.2 Trajectories away from radical attitudes and milieus

In addition to ideological, social, and emotional pull factors, Peter also mentioned a number of reasons why he had never fully joined this neo-Nazi group and why he gradually moved further and further away from it. Peter said that one year out of his two-year time in that group is 'where it ended'. During this time, he still went to group meetings, mainly because of his friend who brought him to this group originally. One of the reasons he never fully joined had to do with the fact that over time, he did not find answers to his political questions in this group that satisfied him. This reason, in addition to the others can be understood as factors of Peter's trajectory away from this milieu. He also did not find the group's reasoning and concepts very well thought through:

So accordingly, I went there again a year later because of him [Peter's friend], but I just kept asking questions like, 'what you are talking about now is bullshit'. There was too much that was meaningless. Innit? But what they just told you is, 'you're safe', also, 'look, they're taking away your job and you earn so little because of that', or 'this has happened'. And they did that relatively skilfully, to relate that to their limited subjects and present it accordingly. [...] (T)his horizon was so big [Peter indicates something small]. And exactly in this world you

could feel comfortable. But as soon as you were able to look behind it, you noticed small-mindedness. Every time you encountered nonsense, you started to question it more and more. (Peter)

Peter also mentioned another reason for not fully joining the group and leaving it later; when he asked critical questions or scrutinised things too much, he was avoided within the group or forced out. For example, Peter opposed denying that the Holocaust happened, even though Holocaust denial was widespread in this group. Peter also refers to another former group member who also questioned things a lot and did not always have time for the group. When this person experienced an emergency, the other members of the group did not support this person, which for Peter was contrary to the idea of comradeship that the group conveyed: 'And these things were part of the reason why I said, "sorry, this is going in the wrong direction".'

Other reasons that Peter gave are the following:

Peter felt that he had never completely integrated into the group because he had always had quite good contacts with people with an immigration background. Peter also mentioned a friend with an immigration background whom he met towards the end of his participation in the neo-Nazi-group. Through him and through 'foreigners' at his workplace, who were 'integrated' from his point of view, he was able to focus on 'foreigners' who go to work. At some point, he concluded that the majority of 'foreigners' do something positive. He also thought at this time, that it was wrong to lump all people with an immigration background together and questioned this attitude. This seems to be a perspective shared by many other respondents when it comes to issues such as immigration and people with immigration background.

During his time with the group, Peter also met a tattoo artist who did not like his neo-Nazi friend because of his extreme right-wing attitude. With Peter, however, she thought it was just temporary. She thought Peter was conservative and she told him that his different views meant he had nothing in common with these people, and that he would continue to develop further away from such extreme right-wing attitudes and people.

According to Peter, his marksmen's club and the club life had been another factor that helped him to distance himself from this group, mostly due to what Peter refers to as 'Christian values'. Because of these values, 'Nazism' is 'rather rarely represented' in marksmen's clubs, even if marksmen's clubs are usually more conservative, as he said, and even if there are 'black sheep in all directions'. Peter said that by reflecting on Christian values, he felt conflicted about the 'extremist ideas' within the neo-Nazi group and concluded that he cannot 'be so extreme to people'. Then as now, Peter sees himself as conservative, and today as socially conservative. The CSU (Christian Social Union in Bavaria) is the party with which he can identify most; he does not see himself as right-wing.

Unlike Peter, Julian does not think that a marksmen's club can help change attitudes. In terms of Julian's trajectory away from his right-wing thoughts and attitudes, he says that his father whom he describes as 'very leftist' regularly reprimanded him for making right-wing statements. At that time, he was always in conflict with him and so his father was not responsible for changing his mind. His change of mind, as Julian says, just came at some point when he had the insight that he was only destroying himself by getting annoyed about unnecessary things. He also believes that the insight must come on its own and that there is no other way. 'Because, what can you do? Exchange people's brains?' 'It's an idea that people have'.

4.8.4 The Local Extreme Right-Wing Group

In one of the cities where I carried out my research, several extreme-right groups are active. I am referring to one of these groups as the 'Local Extreme Right-Wing Group' which is active in different districts of the city. One of their meeting points seems to be the city district where several of my respondents come from. As far as I know, nobody in this right-wing group is a member of this district's marksmen's club, and none of the respondents is a member of this group. Nevertheless, almost all respondents from this district know

about this group. There are some respondents who know members of this group more or less well. This is because they went to the same school or they know children of the group's older members, or they know people who know members of the group, or they know former partners of group members, or they have relatives who in turn know members of the group. For example, one respondent says that they know 'some' of this group, but do not know if they are 'radicals' and think they are 'wannabes'. When asked how they encounter them, the answer was:

Yes, it's also again through contacts. Then you're, I don't know, you're out with a colleague, he talks to them about normal things, then, so to speak, you see each other, then you say 'hello' and whatever. (Respondent)

Other respondents also spoke of everyday encounters with this group in the district. For example, two respondents probably do not know any group members personally, but on their way home regularly pass a location where this group meets occasionally. Like two other respondents, these respondents stressed that they had not yet seen this group attacking anyone and that they themselves have never been abused or hassled by this group when they walked by. 'In no way, you can't really blame them for that. You can't lump them together again', as one of these respondents said. I asked this respondent if she thinks that the group might attack her in some way if she were to walk by with a headscarf. She said that she cannot judge that and added that she does not think that this group would attack children or even adults. She continued: 'They might say, when the person is gone, they would get upset about the person or say, "shame on Germany" or whatever. But I don't think they're really that extreme then. Or even that radical to attack someone who walks past them. I don't believe that'. However, the other of these two respondents said that if she had a different faith and wore a headscarf, she would not like to walk past this group. Another respondent says that he often sees group members in the district and finds them 'actually very harmless' because, as he said, he 'has never had a fight with them'. He believes that the group is quiet 'if you don't start a fight with them'. In his opinion, there is only stress when 'other foreigners or something like that start stress'.

Another respondent talked about right-wingers in the district, but without naming this group. This respondent said that as long as they do not hurt people, they did not care, 'then they can be Nazis'. What they find bad, however, is when the Nazis attack foreigners. Later, this respondent added that they knew many people who 'hate foreigners'. Among them is a Nazi who lives in the same neighbourhood but with whom they had nothing else to do.

Respondent: [...] He is nice to me. To me he is so kind. Uhm what he does when he is outside doesn't interest me either.

Researcher: As long as he is nice to you and leaves you alone.

Respondent: Yes right. As long as he doesn't hurt me. And the foreigners and the Nazis, they both have faults. The foreigners want to beat up the Nazis, the Nazis want to beat up the foreigners. Well, in a way, they both have a problem.

I also asked this respondent about the other people who 'hate foreigners':

Researcher: And you also know people who just don't like foreigners.

Respondent: Yes...

Researcher: But they are not necessarily Nazis.

Respondent: Nope. Ah ah. There are many who say: 'Fucking foreigners'. However, they don't mean it literally. Like, 'I have to beat them up or something'. I often say, 'Whoa, fucking foreigners'. However, many people say that, foreigners say it themselves.

Researcher: Yes?

Respondent: Often. Yes.

Researcher: To others then?

Respondent: Yes. [...] So. A friend... So my uhm uhm friend [with origin from a Muslim-majority country], also says sometimes, 'Fucking foreigner'. But it all has different meanings somehow. They take it differently. When a Nazi says 'Fucking foreigner', it has a completely different meaning than when I say it.

Researcher: Yes.

Respondent: Therefore. There are different meanings.

To come back to the Local Extreme Right-Wing Group, there were also three respondents who explicitly distanced themselves from this group. One of this three, for example, finds this group 'just embarrassing'. Also, she does not know anybody in her social environment who openly says that they are in this group. On the contrary, the people with whom she has talked about this group do not like it at all. Two other respondents, who know members of this group personally, also expressed their dissatisfaction with this group. One called them, for example, 'Sharia Police' for the 'white race' with the goal of 'non-Islamisation'. She also considers some members to be uneducated and sees them as people who have not made any progress in life and want to feel great in the group. Another respondent said that they avoid the group, even though they know some members better. When they talk to these members, they are 'super loving people'; they are only different when they are with the group. They also said that they are 'dear to us', but unpredictable. This respondent would also say that they are not violent.

For several respondents, this group seems to be part of their normal life. None of them seem to be irritated by the existence of this group; only some respondents considered this group problematic, even though most of the respondents are aware that this group is a right-wing or extreme right-wing group. A few respondents claimed that they did not know exactly how the group was politically oriented. A few respondents were also explicitly critical of this group and its political orientation, but other respondents were only partially critical of the group. In some cases, they even had a rather positive or benevolent view of the group. In addition, with very few exceptions, respondents tended to misjudge or underestimate the group's dangerousness and potential for violence, which has actually been documented pretty well. In some cases, they downplayed the extent of the group's threatening nature, ignored it, or called right-wing violence, in two cases, a kind of self-defence against violence by foreigners. The respondents did not reflect on the fact that they would not be a target of the group's right-wing hostilities and violence, or that the right-wing group or the Nazi from the neighbourhood is 'polite' and 'kind' to them only because they are perceived as a 'white person' by the group and/or that they are someone who is somehow familiar with this group.

This view of this group was also evident when some members of this group, who were recognisable as such at least by their look, showed up at the district's marksmen's festival – an observation I made during my field research and which I also discussed in interviews with a few respondents. There were some interactions between the members of the Local Extreme Right-Wing Group and marksmen, for example in the form of conversations, some of which seemed relatively friendly. All in all, I did not have the impression that the group members themselves or their presence was perceived as a significant problem; at least, nobody acted that way. It seemed that the group members, as far as they were known, were accepted at the festival, or at least tolerated. This also corresponds to the statements of one respondent. This respondent perceived their presence as if they were acting as self-proclaimed watchdogs and evaluated this rather as positive.

Researcher: And what do you know about them [the Local Extreme Right-Wing Group]?

Respondent: (breathing noticeably) (4) They are also ordinary people [tinted with laughter] like you and me. Innit? Well, really calm, they don't come here and play up or whatever. I have not seen that yet. They don't want that either. They really do keep law and order here [at the marksmen's festival] because their presence is a little bit deterrent, I think. (Respondent)

Finally, it might also be argued that the relationship between some respondents, marksmen and inhabitants of this district and the group was rooted in the perception of each other as belonging to the same 'home' (Section 4.2.3).

4.8.5 Voting and supporting right-wing populism

At the heart of the following case are the reactions of Camilla to the right-wing populist to extreme right-wing AfD party and towards potential supporters and voters of this party in her social environment.

In general, 15 respondents distanced themselves from the AfD and/or did not understand their voters and/or perceived the AfD as a far-right party. The latter was the case with eight respondents; they described the AfD as being taboo, partly for this reason. The remaining seven respondents said that they liked some of the major points made by the AfD and/or that they had (some) understanding for AfD voters. Like all respondents, however, these respondents also said that they did not vote for the AfD and would not do so in the future. For two respondents, the party would have been an electoral option at the time it was founded. However, they now perceive the party as being too right-wing for them.

Reactions to the AfD and its potential supporters and voters are of particular interest because the rise of this party can be seen as a key momentum in the mainstreaming of the extreme in Germany in recent years (Section 2.2.2). If one also looks at the attitudes of potential AfD voters, the last 'centre studies' showed that potential AfD voters agreed above average with items standing for 'right-wing extremist orientation' as well as prejudice dimensions of 'group-focused enmity' (Küpper, Krause and Zick, 2019, pp. 137–140; Zick *et al.*, 2019, pp. 94–96). For these reasons, voting for the AfD can be, although not always, the beginning of a process of radicalisation, or be part of that process.

I asked Camilla how she would position herself politically. She answered that she would assess herself as politically neutral with a tendency to 'left-wing'. She has never voted 'right-wing', and she does not believe she would ever vote that way. She said that it is 'dangerous' because there are many people who vote for far-right parties. She spoke about people from her social environment who have thought about it and, as she later mentioned, have in part done so:

And I have discussed this with my colleagues at work, I have discussed it with my friends and family. There are many people who say that we might vote for the AfD party or The Right [a small German, neo-Nazi, extreme right-wing party], because then you are more likely to be heard and it is more likely that something has to happen in politics. And at some point, I started to hesitate and thought, 'yes, hm, hm, they are not wrong'. But after the elections, that was really a moment, very briefly, where I thought, 'wow, did you vote correctly or should you have also...'. But then I keep thinking about what's in the headlines. And just because they [the AfD] are... now, because of the dissatisfaction of the population with... I don't know if you can call it a wave of success or not. But you can see a lot on the internet, and I think they are right about some things. But I didn't have the heart for it. Because there are people involved, they are not quite right in the head and there are people who are definitely a bit bonkers and I don't know if the right or the wrong person will come along later to power... I don't know if that's so good. So. (Camilla)

In this quote, Camilla mentions that some agents and discussions in her social environment made her doubt her choice of not voting for the AfD. Camilla also referred to these and other agents at other points in the interview. For example, a colleague at work had argued vehemently against the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which Camilla is also against. Another example is Camilla's boyfriend. Along with him, she is sometimes angry about Eastern European so-called 'refugees'. Regarding this group she says:

[...] Again, that sounds harsh, but the moment you ask yourself, 'why should I bother going to work?' 'Sure. I will just go to the neighbouring country, there's welfare money there'.

There's welfare or money from the job centre for these people, innit? And you ask yourself: 'Why am I paying taxes?' But then you tell yourself: 'No, you like doing it. You like working. You like to be around people. You're around people. You're making money. You can afford to go to the movies. You can buy clothes.' (Camilla)

In addition to people she knows, Camilla also talked about the role of the Internet in casting doubt on her decision not to vote for the AfD. She said that even if she did not want to at first, she had started reading Facebook posts by someone from her marksmen's club. This individual is 'very pro' about a far-right party. This is because she wanted to know what it was all about: 'You always try to see and read the other side. But social media is so dangerous in my opinion'. Later, Camilla talked about the online messages spread by the AfD and the strong presence of the party on the internet:

If you watch videos [breathing noticeably], uhm, they reach people, innit? [...] Well, it's already uhm... Well, I'm aware of them at the moment. I don't know why. No matter where you look or listen, whether it's the internet or something, they're constantly and always somewhere. (Camilla)

Other respondents, for example Jana, also talked about how they were affected and influenced on social media by content shared by far-right influencers like far-right parties, or, for example, by people in their own Facebook friends list:

Jana: I think it becomes more difficult not to be influenced and not to be taken in by propaganda [at this point she is talking about press coverage]. Because it is simply, yes, more and more in the public eye and you hear more and more like, 'Yes, it was just again one of these folks [she means refugees or migrants]. This wording, 'It was one of them again' or something like that. That makes it incredibly difficult for me to remain neutral.

Researcher: And that's propaganda for you?

Jana: Partly, yes. So, when I see comments on it [...]. Nowadays, you see certain messages on Facebook in the communities [...] People who are more right-wing oriented share articles that are not completely right-wing, but if you read between the lines, you will see that this isn't just factual information, but that there's something behind it that stirs up people a bit. Whether it's because someone is interested in steering you in a certain direction or because this person just doesn't notice it himself anymore, because he's already so caught up in his own cobwebs. And uhm I find that kind of difficult. Well, I have always had many foreign friends and so on, and I still find it difficult to remain neutral and say, 'Yes, I will give everyone a chance'. [...] Shared articles are also provided with certain comments from these people so that you must be very careful that you are not steered in a specific direction by other friends. I have also sometimes... Well, I have often thought about whether I even want to stay friends with this person on Facebook and be influenced by it. (Jana)

Shortly after this interview episode, Jana, like Camilla and four other respondents, expressed a somewhat increased feeling of insecurity or a heightened perception of danger in connection with refugees and immigration. In addition to the topic of extreme Islamist terrorism, Jana mentioned, in the context of possible sexual assaults, a certain fear of larger groups of 'southern-looking men', which she also attributed to the many articles and reports in the media, whereby she also referred to the traditional press. Camilla thinks that, unless all people are more 'open-minded', it is rather difficult when too many people from different cultures come together. In the context of this statement and according to parts of the public discourse, she said that the number of attacks with knives and rapes has increased. She also mentioned videos on WhatsApp and Facebook as well as Facebook comments: 'When you see it like that, you get the feeling that things are just worse right now.'

Finally, I asked Camilla why she is not attracted to right-wing messages and agents after all. She answered:

[...] Well, I do read some articles in between where I think to myself: 'Wow. Are you really clicking that now? If anyone saw you looking at this.' So, this is really my thought then: 'What would others think at that moment?' But you read it anyway and you always think: 'Wow, they are quite right. Doesn't that happen or why didn't we do it this way and that way, we let everybody in and why didn't we register it somehow differently'. But then... Well, I don't know why, but then there is a moment when I am actually ashamed of the fact that I sometimes think like that. Because I think that not all people are the same. There are really families who came here, they had it bad, they couldn't have a life. And I don't want to be persecuted, I don't want to grow up with weapons like that, I don't want to know that a house next to me is being bombed and that... Well, that's the point that always brings me back somehow and I think, 'wow, what you're thinking right now is not right. Things will get better here and, at some point, the majority of the population will be taken care of'. [...] Whether it's my boyfriend or my work colleague. There are many who... When you rush to say, 'wow, the same ones again and they get something again'. That is often the case when you are overrun by emotions. And then, when you think about it again, I think, 'wow, what did I just say or was that so right. And when you are in that situation, you don't want to be treated like that either'. That's the moment where something like that just doesn't reach me. Not at all. Because that's just not human for me in that moment either. (Camilla)

What is interesting about this case is that it can be interpreted as a detailed empirical example of how social and socio-psychological factors interact and influence opinion-forming and evaluation processes around voting for the AfD party. Also, these processes touch upon the issues of force migration and immigration that this party focuses on and exploits.

Camilla's case reveals some of the agents as well various discussions and radical messages on the offline and online levels in her environment, which act as problematic agents and, therefore, as factors that affect the decisions she makes and the opinions she forms. Social, emotional and cognitive factors also play a role, such as anger about certain situations and the feeling of being treated unjustly. Some of these factors can be interpreted as factors that could counteract or prevent possible processes of radicalisation. Camilla still seems to have a certain trust or at least residual trust in established parties and politics. She said this: 'Perhaps our country would have to be in a worse state for me to think that way. But it is still the case that I think there is definitely a solution and that politics is there for that'. Camilla also believes that not all people are the same, and that only a minority of refugees or immigrants are problematic. Camilla seems to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate reasons for immigration. She also believes that one cannot generalise; a view that is shared by several respondents. Several respondents, including Camilla, also articulated a certain principle of equality when it came to the issues of immigration and multicultural coexistence, namely that that 'human is human'. She also displays some empathy when she puts herself in the role of refugees, as right-wing beliefs can't influence her then. In addition, Camilla reflected on the fact that she herself is not as deprived as others. It is also interesting to note Camilla's anticipation of being observed in something that she feels would be perceived negatively and the shame she feels about having certain thoughts, which she associates with a guilty conscience. In other words, what seems to play a role in Camilla's opinion-forming process is social desirability combined with morality. This is also accompanied by the negative stigma of the 'right-wing' label. Camilla said elsewhere that when she thinks about negative thoughts towards refugees and immigrants, she asks herself whether she is already thinking 'too right-wing'. For her, 'being right-wing' is actually associated with 'bad'. Camilla also believes that the AfD includes problematic people who could come to power. In another part of the interview, she said that it is bad that neo-Nazis support the AfD. In sum, 'being labelled as right-wing' (Section 4.8.3) is negative, and many respondents see being extremist as negative as well (Section 4.8.1).

4.8.6 ‘You can’t lump them all together’

Vanessa talked about friends who make radical statements when immigration issues are discussed and her reactions to them. She stated that she was the only one who sought to ‘fight her way through’ her friends’ views and often succeeded in starting a discussion. For example, when her friends said, ‘bloody foreigners’ and ‘they have no business here’, she had asked, ‘Do you know him? No, why? So, why say that then?’. Vanessa’s friends responded by pointing out that ‘they’ were taking ‘our jobs and our women’ and she had replied, ‘Then sit your ass down at the computer and write an application, you might get a job’. Vanessa’s friends justify their attitudes because of ‘all the terrorist attacks and stuff’ leading Vanessa to reflect that, ‘They must have a terrorist attack in their head or something’. When confronted with such generalisations, she argues that ‘you can’t lump them all together’ and points out to her friends that another friend of the group who has an immigration background from a Muslim majority country would have to leave the country based on their logic:

‘Why does he have to leave?’. I answer, ‘He is [nationality]. Then he doesn’t belong to our friends anymore’. ‘That’s different.’ ‘Why is it different? He belongs to those countrymen you detest all the time.’ (Vanessa)

Interestingly, some other respondents made negative comments about refugees, immigrants and Muslims, although rarely so openly racist as Vanessa’s friends. At the same time, however, they spoke positively about people with an immigration background in their immediate social environment with whom they are friendly. Marvin, for example, feels that he is being treated unfairly compared to asylum seekers; he also mentioned that radical groups, such as neo-Nazis encountered at the football stadium, do not really appeal to him because he himself has ‘foreign friends’. He said that ‘A human is a human [...]. I have plenty of foreign friends and I wouldn’t even think of doing such shit.’ Marvin also said that he had not yet had any personal contact with asylum seekers.

These examples demonstrate that positive relationships with groups can lead to processes of differentiation and reflection or to distancing oneself from certain radical messages and problematic or radical agents, which was also apparent in Peter’s case (Section 4.8.3.2). This does not mean that these processes necessarily reduce or make problematic or radical attitudes disappear, although they might act as a counterweight in processes of radicalisation.

These examples also demonstrate that such reflection or differentiation can also solidify certain attitudes. For Vanessa’s friends, for example, the friend with an immigration background seems to be the exception to the rule; he is not seen as part of the groups they perceive as problematic. Also, if a temporary guest in one of the researched marksmen’s club, who is Muslim, is seen in a positive light because club members emphasise how well he is integrated and that he does not demand any changes in the club despite his Muslim status, an implicit reproduction of the Islamisation narrative takes place (Section 4.2.2). Finally, the differentiation between the so-called ‘war and economic refugees’ can reinforce the idea that certain groups of immigrants are migrating to Germany only for welfare benefits.

At the same time, these reflections and differentiations also include certain contradictions, ruptures, and other moments that offer opportunities to prevent radicalisation or foster deradicalisation, contrary to completely closed ‘mind-sets’. One could argue that Vanessa contributes to cognitive deradicalisation when she argues with her friends, pointing out the contradiction of having a friend with a certain cultural or religious background while despising in general others with that same background.

4.8.7 Encounters with radical messages and agents in the marksmen’s club milieu

As the marksmen’s club is an important part of the respondents’ social sphere, their experiences of encounters with radical messages and problematic agents in that environment were also discussed.

Respondents reported having been exposed to ‘racist’ or ‘right-wing’ jokes and remarks in their marksmen’s clubs. Sometimes, this was on a single occasion but some respondents mentioned that this

happened frequently. One respondent talked about a marksman who told him that he would not oppose a ‘little Hitler’ for Germany. Several respondents referred to marksmen who make right-wing and sometimes even radical or extreme right-wing posts on Facebook. Two respondents each named fellow marksmen (one each) who they felt were right-wing. One respondent said that he had come across radical right-wing views in the marksmen’s club, but that there were also individual cases of radical left-wing marksmen. Some markswomen told me about sexist remarks and structural sexism in their own or other marksmen’s clubs. One respondent mentioned racist or right-wing attitudes of many older marksmen in the club he belongs to; and another marksman said that the older members of his club ‘tend to be little bit more towards’ right-wing attitudes. Another respondent, however, said in his club, he noticed that some of the younger folks were right-wing. Also, several respondents talked about (potential) AfD voters in their marksmen’s clubs and spoke about discussions they had with them about the AfD. However, there were also five respondents who said that they had not encountered any racist or right-wing remarks during their (sometimes decade-long) time in their marksmen’s clubs. In one club, I came across a very racist term that was used in this club in the past and is no longer officially used but is still used unofficially. In one case, I was told about the appearance of racist and extreme right-wing stickers at a big marksmen’s event. In the field, I also heard that the young marksmen of one club had discussed refugees in a racist and dehumanising way during a youth trip.

In the interviews, most respondents rated their exposure to radical messages or their contact with far-right individuals as problematic or negative. In some cases, they told me about their own interventions or counter-reactions, be they direct verbal responses or reports to the club’s management board. Several respondents also believe that other people from their club would react in a similar way, when I asked them about how they think their fellow club members and management board would react to any far-right incidents. Besides their individual responses, some respondents also talked about counter-reactions at the club level. Indeed, some club management boards responded to reports filed by other members. These responses consisted of a warning conversation with the reported individual. In three of these cases, the individuals in question were expelled from the club.

In one of these cases, Anton told me, not only was the marksman in question excluded from the club but the entire corps this marksman was part of. The reason for the exclusion of the whole corps was that the others stood in solidarity with this marksman and downplayed what had happened. Anton considered this reaction as harsh, but ‘the only right one’ and explained as follows:

Because uhm you have to, I think, as a society or as a marksmen’s club uhm, which is a role model in society. Uhm you also have to say: ‘Okay, these are the consequences that result from it when you radicalise yourself.’ (...) Because it’s just not tolerable. I think the marksmen’s club is very clear on that point. I think it is right and symbolic to say. Because we can’t claim that, ‘Everyone is welcome here, no matter what skin colour, no matter what cultural background’ while, on the other hand, tolerating that. Or to say, ‘Hey, you – don’t do that again’ It’s not appropriate. (Anton)

From the statements of five respondents, it might be concluded that they reject far-right attitudes and situations revealing such attitudes within their clubs mostly because they are bad for the club’s public image. For example, one respondent told me about someone in his club who is on the radical right-wing ‘track’. This person was talked to, and they have not made any comments of that kind since. This respondent also said that it is not appropriate for someone in marksmen’s uniform to promote right-wing ideas or to get into a fight. If the person is in civilian clothes, that is different; they can have their personal opinion. Another respondent talked about a marksman who said xenophobic and right-wing things at the marksmen’s festival, like ‘Heil Hitler’. The respondent had spoken up at the time and also told the club’s management board about this incident. The board then spoke with this marksman, and he stopped saying such things. This respondent reacted because he could not accept this behaviour and is in general opposed

to Nazis, but also because he believes that such a thing confirms the cliché of right-wing marksmen and could destroy a club if people from the outside were to find out.

In sum, the marksmen's club milieu at least as far as the clubs I researched are concerned seems to be a place for singular as well as frequent encounters with radical messages and problematic agents, even if this does not seem to be the view of all respondents. If there were reactions to these occurrences, the responses took place mostly on an individual level; in certain cases, there were also responses at the club level that led partly to the exclusion of racist or right-wing members from the club.

4.8.8 Right-wing niches

One female respondent (Female Respondent 1) pointed out that a few corps in her marksmen's club [of District 3.E] only have male members; some of them do not even accept women as members. She thinks that the members of these corps are 'a little racist', and 'so a little bit right-wing. At the same time, she mentioned the 'marksmen's youth'²⁷ of her club, of which she herself is a member. In her opinion, the young marksmen of the marksmen's youth are 'a little bit right-wing'. She talked about frequent racist comments and jokes among the young marksmen in general, but for her, this is a problem especially among young male marksmen:

So, we girls are somehow much more open-minded than the boys. So, if there were some racist comments from the boys or if something was going down and I and all the other girls were standing nearby, it would be like 'Oh, that's a bit too much now'. (Female respondent 1)

According to this respondent, such comments and jokes usually are made 'in this marksmen's environment', by which she probably means various events of her club, often in the later evening hours with increased alcohol consumption. She also mentioned occasions when the young marksmen of her club meet people 'from that nationality' in public, such as on the train. As an example, she mentioned the episode quoted earlier, when some young marksmen said that they should only distribute marksmen's information brochure to mailboxes with German names (Section 4.3.2).

Such incidents are not isolated cases but seem to quite normal among the young marksmen of her club. This is captured in the quote below as she describes these jokes and comments as 'a little radical':

Because it's kind of standard there. Maybe it is along the lines of, uhm, extremism and radicalism, but it is just not as conscious as when you read about it in a report. You don't see what's going on with us, in this environment, as being so extreme or in the same environment. That is why I find it hard to judge, because I am involved in it myself, I would say. And I talk to them too. [...] Somehow, that's just the way they are. So. Yeah. (Female respondent 1)

Her answer reveals her difficulty in evaluating and reflecting on her own social environment, but also her reflexivity on these issues. Furthermore, her answer reveals that the normality of regular far-right attitudes makes the radical nature of these attitudes somewhat invisible. This and further interview data make it clear that there are factors that enable the reproduction of such racist normality instead of disrupting it. In other words, it seems that a kind of far-right sub-milieu, which I call 'right-wing niche', can persist in this marksman's club.

Female Respondent 1 would only label comments and jokes of the young marksmen of her club as extreme if people were beaten up or flyers were distributed and right-wing 'propaganda' conducted. As she put it: 'So far, you could think that is down to them just being a little drunk'. Other respondents had

²⁷ As already mentioned in Section 4.1.1, in many clubs there is a 'marksmen's youth' whose members are called 'young marksmen' (*Schützenjugend* and *Jungschützen*). All marksmen within a certain age range (e.g. from 12-24 years) automatically become members of these youth organisations, which organise a range of activities.

similar reactions to radical messages and problematic agents in their immediate social environment. Jana, for example, would only see her relationship with her 'rather right-wing oriented' friends as problematic if they went into a 'right-wing radical scene'. Otherwise, she responded to her friends, in a similar way to Vanessa quoted above (Section 4.8.6) either by using counter-arguments or by simply suppressing political discussions with them: "'Guys, that may be your opinion, but I don't want to have anything to do with it [...]. I like being friends with you, but I don't want to talk about politics with you'." Female Respondent 1 chose a similar strategy. She responded to her friends' racist/right-wing comments by calmly admonishing them or mostly by getting away from the young marksmen or leaving an event.

Female Respondent 2 is, like Female Respondent 1, a member of the Marksmen's Club of District 3.E. In the interview, she told me about racist or right-wing jokes and comments, presumably made by the young marksmen of her clubs' marksmen's youth section. She said that such jokes and comments, which she sometimes counters with 'Come on, boys', are 'all right' for her. She justified her reactions as follows: 'Well that's, they only talk among themselves. They don't have a go at anyone or whatever. [...] But uhm, as long as they just talk, I don't care'. She would only intervene in the case of (verbal) violence. But she also mentioned that she would be bothered by the jokes and comments when they were spoken too loudly, in which case she had intervened before: 'Well, as long as it doesn't, uhm, entertain the whole street, then they should do it.'

Finally, I asked Female Respondent 2, like many other respondents, if her marksmen's club, in her opinion, could do something to counter radicalisation. She thinks that such action could work on a small scale, for example by talking critically to AfD voters. However, she does not believe that anything could be done to stop radicalisation in the group of young marksmen she mentioned:

Because we are also among ourselves, because we are also predominantly German. If someone has something against something or somebody, then he says, 'yes, for this and that reason'. And uhm then you talk more about it and then it is often the case that you say, 'oh yes, that's right and so on'. And then you just have this one-track thinking again. [...] Well, there are also discussions, but that is just rather difficult or rather rare that one is divided, for example when it comes to foreigners. (Female Respondent 2)

The findings thus appear to suggest that radical messages and problematic agents are met with limited, if any, critical response either within the marksmen's youth of the Club of District 3.E or, in the case of some respondents, in their social environments. This means the racist 'normality' formed within the right-wing niche by the young marksmen, as well as, for example, within Jana's circle of friends, does not cause a general friction, is not challenged or incur any significant counter-reaction. Such counter-reactions and a subsequent evaluation of statements and persons as radical would only occur if the line of (verbal) violence were crossed, or organised right-wing behaviour were to take place.

In the case of the marksmen's youth of the Club of District 3.E this lack of push-back against far-right attitudes and behaviours seems to occur also because radical messages are evaluated as relatively unproblematic as long as they are not noticeable for others or as long situations in which such messages occur can be largely avoided. In the case of Jana's circle of friends, discussions about these far-right attitudes and behaviours are partially suppressed, which may relieve Jana of the need to evaluate her relationship to her friends. The situation is similar with the mentioned above marksmen, who were admonished by their clubs' management boards on the basis of their right-wing comments (Section 4.8.7). In at least one of these cases, it seemed rather important that such occurrences no longer appear in the context of the marksmen's club. Whether the statements and persons as such were critically judged, however, is questionable.

The relative ethnic homogeneity of the group of young marksmen of the Marksmen's Club of District 3.E results in certain group dynamic processes. These processes reproduce and maintain a normality

of right-wing discourse, as Female Respondent 2 explained. In her opinion this homogeneity also leads to certain groups, such as ‘foreigners’, being discussed, talked, and thought about in a rather uniform manner, leading to opinions never being challenged and to individuals confirming each other’s opinions.²⁸

The data also suggest that racist and far-right attitudes do not meet opposition because members of the marksmen’s youth of the Marksmen’s Club of District 3.E share these thoughts to some extent. Another member of this club with whom I had an interview also confirmed this. They believe that it would be ‘less bad’ to make a ‘very right-wing’ statement within the club than a ‘very left-wing’ one.

At the same time, there have also been responses that challenge radical messages and problematic agents within the Marksmen’s Club of District 3.E upon which respondents have commented. In addition, racist and right-wing occurrences are not only challenged from within the club when there is danger of the club’s image being affected negatively, even if that is a legitimate concern. In addition, there are also progressive and liberal movements in this club, which was demonstrated in a festival speech about tolerance, openness, and diversity by the management board, which was met with great applause from all marksmen and guests present at this festival.

4.8.9 Possible features of de- and non-radicalisation

This dynamic also happens in other clubs I have researched in different forms and manifestations. There have been various counter-reactions against radical messages and problematic agents at the individual and club levels. I have also heard speeches, mostly from the management boards of the club, in which topics such as world openness, tolerance, and multicultural coexistence were positively addressed and that took a clear position against racism, right-wing populism, right-wing extremism, and related social developments (Section 4.3.4). I also came across various initiatives adopted at umbrella organisation level and being implemented in a range of clubs. These included initiatives in support of refugees or against right-wing extremism, or extremism in general, or initiatives promoting diversity and tolerance.²⁹ Another example is a brochure published in 2020 by the earlier mentioned ‘German Shooting and Archery Federation’ (DSB) (Section 2.3.1). Among other things, this brochure contains recommendations for the prevention and countering of extremism in marksmen’s clubs. The publication was an output of the project ‘Marksmen against Extremism - for Diversity and Democracy’ (Schützen gegen Extremismus – für Vielfalt und Demokratie) (dsb.de, 2020). According to this umbrella organisation, the project was motivated by the above mentioned right-wing terrorist murders of Walter Lübcke, the racist killings in Hanau (Section 2.3.3) and another racist attack carried out by a person who was member of marksmen’s clubs (ibid., 7). Lastly, the ‘The Historic German Marksmen’s Brotherhood Federation’ (BHDS), as mentioned earlier, distanced themselves from the AfD party, while their youth organisation even declared its incompatibility with this party and the party’s sub organisations (Section 2.3.3).

²⁸ Due to the relative ethnic homogeneity of marksmen’s club in general (Sections 3.5.1; 4.3.3), Maurice, a member of another marksmen’s club, thought that sports clubs in general can help against the radicalisation of young people. He mentioned the aspect of community as a very important reason, but also the opportunities to socialise and make friends with club members with an immigration background. However, he finds it difficult to answer whether marksmen’s clubs can protect against radicalisation: ‘The basic features are the same as in other sport clubs, of course. That does help against radicalisation, of course. But we don’t have many, actually hardly any foreigners and I don’t think there’s a single black person in the club’ (Maurice).

²⁹ How such actions at the umbrella organisation level are received by the subordinate clubs or by the individual marksmen is of course another question, which is difficult to answer. However, in an expert interview at the umbrella organisation level, for example, I was told about an initiative that was, among other things, directed against homophobia and had gone down well at the club level. The same applies to the board speeches just mentioned and the question of how they are received at by rank-and-file marksmen. Regarding such speeches, apart from general applause, I perceived positive feedback of individual marksmen several times.

All examples mentioned above affect different levels of club life and marksmanship in general. They also show features that, either alone or in combination, may counteract racist and right-wing to extreme right-wing tendencies in marksmen's clubs or prevent and counter possible radicalisation processes and could have de- and non-radicalising effects.

Similarly, other features of the club life or the marksmen's milieu, mentioned by several respondents, might prevent radicalisation within the marksmen's club milieu, for example (Christian) values, the opportunity of (democratic) participation and the social control within in the club. Regarding Christian values, it is worth remembering that Peter highlighted the Christian values practised in his marksmen's club as a factor in distancing himself from the neo-Nazi group he was involved with (Section 4.8.3.2). Also, in terms of (democratic) participation opportunities, Peter emphasised that democracy is enacted in his club through involvement and participation, even though he would like to see even more democracy in his club and marksmanship in general. Michael is of the opinion that the opportunity to changes things by oneself in the marksmen's club or express one's opinion democratically to board members can lead to the belief that it is also possible to change something in other areas of life 'in a reasonable' and non-radical way. Michael is also of the opinion that people who are active in marksmanship are strongly connected to their clubs and move most often in the context of their clubs:

That means that they also have a lot of people around them who are not radical. As I said, that's not one hundred per cent of the people. Of course not. But there are a lot of people who are not radical and you move around in many, uhm yes also at many events that are open, that are Christian, that have nothing to do with radicalisation. I think that if people see this and are anchored in it, I believe that they are less at risk of becoming radicalised or of going down radical trajectories. (Michael)

A few respondents were also of the opinion that the marksmen's club can protect against radicalisation because marksmen who are heavily involved in the club have little opportunity to be influenced by right-wing agitation or to think too much about politics. For example, Leon believes that people who are very involved in their marksmen's club are not in danger of being 'distracted' by right-wing influences (he sees a similar effect in sporting activities like playing football). He also emphasises that the time spent in the marksmen's club and with his fellow marksmen helps him to cope better with stress, e.g. at school.

Also, many respondents mentioned their strong identification with their marksmen's club or corps, which makes these groups 'family' or 'home'. Having a community with such strong cohesion, in which one is accepted and to which one belongs, seemed really important (Sections 4.1 and 4.2). For example, Anne, who at the same time also addresses the moment of involvement and social control, but also the youth work which is carried out in marksmen's clubs as a possible feature of de- or non-radicalisation:

Researcher: And do you think that being in the marksmen's club can protect young people from radicalisation?

Anne: Absolutely. I definitely think so. Uhm, I can see that just from ME. Now that's just another stupid example. But also, like in the case of alcohol or something – so to screw things up. Because our group was always a community and we were only involved with each other, we didn't get any impressions from outside that would have pulled us down or influenced us negatively. I believe that when you are in such a strong community, it is much harder to radicalise someone. Or inspire someone to become radicalised. But also because... For example, if I had told the group that someone had approached me [she means a far-right person], the others would have said, 'no, don't do that, better stop it'. Or they would have talked to me about it and in that sense, they would have protected me from it. Absolutely. And so, especially here in [my marksmen's club] it is also the case that the youth management board is very close to the young people, because some of the members of the youth management board are still young people. I mean, according to the club constitution I also

belong to the youth [at the same time Anne is member of youth management board of her club's marksmen' youth]. That's why we get to see a lot. And even if that is only how children somehow annoy or insult each other. We'll find out about that. And then somehow, they are directly told: 'Hey, no. That's not right. It's not okay.' So, yes, it is. It's protection.

In general, this strong connection with, and belonging to, a group can be an important pull factor into and within far-right groups and movements or for corresponding radicalisation processes (Kimmel, 2007, p. 210; Pilkington, Omelchenko and Perasović, 2018). However, this strong connection with the marksmen's club milieu (and other milieus that offer such a connection to their members) can also prevent radicalisation, at least in terms of radicalisation towards violent extremism or extreme right-wing groups. Overall, despite various levels of the above discussed connections and interactions with the Local Extreme Right-Wing Group (Section 4.8.4), none of the respondents from the district in question appeared to be a member of it.

In summary, it can be said that there are features at various levels of club life and marksmanship in general that, either alone or in combination, may offer the possibility of counteracting racist and right-wing to extreme right-wing tendencies or may have a non- or counter-radicalising effect. Ultimately, these features can also be understood as an expression of the heterogeneity of the marksmen's club milieu and individual clubs mentioned at the beginning of these key findings.

In addition to attitudes of group-focused enmity (such as anti-Muslim racism) and far-right attitudes, which were shown by several respondents and which were referred to in this study as 'radical attitudes' (Section 4.5.4), 'right-wing niches' nevertheless exist in the marksmen's club milieu. They offer opportunities for club members to encounter radical messages or problematic agents (of radicalisation) who, for various reasons, are underestimated, tolerated, not criticised, accepted, perceived as part of the home, or even evaluated rather benevolently and positively and were, in general terms, 'normalised'. Sometimes, these niches even reproduce and share radical messages and corresponding attitudes and behaviours. When such niches develop and persist, radical messages and agents could exert their influence and thus serve as possible factors of radicalisation. The example of the young marksmen of the Marksmen's Club of District 3.E and the supplementary data presented in the previous section support this and can help explain why these niches can develop and persist. The examples in the previous sections show that respondents encounter such niches not only within their marksmen's club. They also encounter such niches among their friends and acquaintances as well as when interacting with members of extreme right-wing groups in their own city district or at the marksmen's festival, where these right-wing agents could potentially function as agents of radicalisation. This might be even more the case if these right-wing agents are not questioned but are in some way accepted as part of the common home or even just tolerated as such.

5. Conclusions

This report began with an overview of far-right tendencies in German society as they have developed from the 1990s to the present. The 'shift to the right' in Germany was seen as taking place against the background of the 'refugee debate', which started in 2015 due to increasing numbers of refugees coming to Germany and Europe. Non-parliamentary and parliamentary far-right agents succeeded in agitating and mobilising individuals with anti-Islam, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigration messages, resulting in a 'racist-nationalist mass movement' (Virchow, 2017a). These agents thereby contributed to a social climate that normalised racist, prejudiced and far-right attitudes, based on an ideology of inequality, especially against Muslims and asylum seekers among the so-called 'social centre of society'. Such attitudes were normalised, even radicalised, and made racist violence, which had experienced a massive increase since

2015, more likely. These phenomena and developments, taken together, were considered to constitute a process of ‘mainstreaming the extreme’.

The marksmen's club milieu, which was the focus of interest in this study, was described as a rather conservative, value-bound, history-conscious, traditionalist, and above averagely patriotic/nationalist and very home-attached (*heimatverbunden*) milieu, with Christian and middle-class or civic self-understanding. It was said that this milieu also includes structures and values borrowed from the military and the practice of shooting sports (Section 2.3.2). In general, the marksmen's club milieu was classified as a milieu of the social centre of society, which, it was assumed, like the whole German society, is affected by the mainstreaming of the extreme. When reasoning why the marksmen's club milieu was selected as research milieu, it was emphasised that, although this milieu cannot be described as a radical or extreme milieu in the classically defined sense, it is, for various reasons, attractive to far-right protagonists and subject to their attempts to influence and appropriate certain aspects of it (see Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). But in the reasoning of the milieu selection, it was also hypothesised that other aspects of the marksmen's club milieu – such as (Christian) values, a strong sense of community and a set of democratic and participatory structures – might contribute to preventing young people from engaging in actions of political violence or becoming radicalised (at least to the point of violent extremism). It was therefore anticipated that this milieu would be partly vulnerable to calls of radicalisation and that marksmen's club members experience significant encounters with radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation) making it an interesting milieu to study possible processes of radicalisation and deradicalisation as well as non-radicalisation.

The data presented in this report suggest a number of key conclusions. First, based on existing definitions and conceptualisations in the published literature, such as the definitions given by Schmid (Schmid, 2013), the respondents participating in this study cannot be considered ‘radical’ or ‘extreme’. For example, none of the respondents currently actively supports fundamental political change or fundamentally questions the political system. Also, none of them have a closed mind or would approve violence as a means of achieving political goals, at least not in a democratic society (Section 4.5.3). Similarly, none of the respondents presented a closed right-wing to right-wing extremist worldview or consistently prejudiced thinking in the sense of ‘group-focused enmity’, which is understood as an aspect of a closed mind (Section 4.5.2).

However, several, but not all, respondents have made statements that can be considered, to varying degrees, as expressions of attitudes of group-focused enmity and new right-wing, right-wing populist and in a few cases right-wing extremist attitudes (Section 4.5.2). This would appear to confirm the results of the ‘centre studies’, which suggest that prejudiced thinking toward various groups, but also new right-wing, right-wing populist and right-wing extremist attitudes, are present in relevant parts of the population and not only in what might be perceived as radical/extreme right-wing milieus. It should be mentioned here again that such attitudes can be part of cognitive, emotional and behavioural radicalisation processes. They can provide individuals with an entry point into radicalisation processes or can make them vulnerable to radical discourse, thereby guiding them into radical/extreme right-wing milieus. Because of this, this report classified these attitudes as ‘radical’ and ‘problematic’ (Section 4.5.2). Additionally, because these ‘radical attitudes’ and causes for their normalisation also exist in milieus that are not classifiable as radical/extreme right-wing milieus according to classical definitions of radicalism and extremism, like the marksmen's clubs, something can be learned about radicalisation, deradicalisation, and non-radicalisation in such milieus. This has a certain similarity to the case of the ‘radicalised and non-radicalised individual’. Apart from the general problem of such attributions and how they are perceived by those affected by them (Section 4.7.3), there are intermediate positions and stages or, metaphorically spoken ‘grey areas’, between the non-radicalised and radicalised individual, but also between non-radical and radical/extreme milieus. This is suggested by this study and other studies (Poli and Arun, 2019, p. 71). Ultimately, a more nuanced perspective on individuals and milieus would help to

understand both radicalisation and non-radicalisation better, instead of distinguishing in rather binary terms, between the possibilities non-radical/extreme and radical/extreme and focusing, in terms of research just on radicalised individuals and radical/extreme milieus.

The various levels of the action or opinion ‘two-pyramids model of radicalisation’ developed by McCauley and Moskaleiko (2017) or the ‘staircase to terrorism’ developed by Moghaddam (2005) could also be applicable to this grey area between being not radicalised and radicalised. According to Moghaddam, people remain on the ground floor of his staircase in which material conditions are psychologically interpreted and ‘perceptions and feelings of relative deprivation’ dominate (ibid: 162).

Although this report does not intend to classify respondents based on these models, it is worth noting that several respondents can be described as affected by socio-economic inequality and/or political powerlessness and in this respect, fit on the ground floor of Moghaddam’s model (Section 4.6.3). These respondents, along with four others, assessed their own deprived situation and and/or that of their in-group and/or that of groups within the in-group and/or that of persons from their social environment as unjust compared to what they perceived as the privileged situation of refugees, immigrants, and the unemployed (Sections 4.6.4; 4.6.5). The perception of being unfairly treated was referred to in this report as the experience of ‘perceived horizontal inequality’ (Section 4.6.5). An important finding from this study on the question of the relationship between inequality and radicalisation, was a significant overlap between the eight respondents who made frequent statements displaying ‘radical attitudes’ and those respondents who experienced ‘horizontal inequality’ (i.e. those affected by ‘socio-economic inequality’ and/or ‘political powerlessness’) (Section 4.6.6). In addition, this report’s data show that perceptions of horizontal inequality with reference to one’s own (group) identity go hand in hand with the attribution of negative prejudice, or the Othering of out-groups (Section 4.6.6). This shows how perceptions of horizontal inequality can be directly accompanied by radical attitudes, but also how inequality is produced and reproduced, in as much as such dynamics of attribution and Othering are understood as an expression and cause of inequality. This appears to confirm the findings of Poli and Arun (2019), based on a synthesis of published qualitative studies on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation, that inequality produces radicalisation, but radicalisation also produces inequality leading to a ‘bi-directional relationship’ between these two phenomena (ibid: 67).

It should also be emphasised that in the case of perceptions of inequality in general or related feelings of grievance, not only are the factual circumstances and life situations crucial, but above all how these are interpreted and assessed subjectively, as well as intersubjectively and collectively. This is all the more important as such perceptions are located primarily on the ‘ground floor’ or the starting point of radicalisation processes (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 163) or they can fuel them (van den Bos, 2020, p. 575). They even appear to be more relevant for radicalisation than objective inequality (Poli and Arun, 2019, p. 69), and, together with structural inequality, they are main drivers for radicalisation (ibid: 66). This suggests, on the one hand, that in order to prevent radicalisation, a further radicalisation or to develop mechanisms for deradicalisation such perceptions of inequality, which are often fuelled by far-right agents like far-right parties, or their causes must be tackled. This applies in particular to perceptions of ‘horizontal inequality’ and related perceptions, such as that of ‘symbolic threats’ (Storm, Pavlovica and Franc, 2020, p. 92) to one’s own identity, culture, and tradition. This study has provided multiple examples of such perceptions of threat, for example, in the articulation of the Islamisation narrative (Section 4.2.2). Often, the data show that respondents seem to have incorrect or insufficient information, for example about refugees and what state benefits they receive (Section 4.7.6). This lack of information, which could be an important cause for the grievance or the perception about being treated unjustly, could be also countered by improving information, political education and ground-level dialogue. On the other hand, it seems clear that objective causes of socio-economic and political inequality must be tackled, which can be an important (contributory) cause for perceptions of (horizontal) inequality.

As far as respondents' encounters with 'radical messages' and their messengers (referred to as 'problematic agents (of radicalisation)' in this report) (Section 4.8.1) are considered, it is important to note that most respondents explicitly, although sometimes implicitly, talked about such encounters, most of which took place in the respondents' immediate social environment, for example in their circle of friends or acquaintances or at school and at work (Section 4.8.2), but also in their marksmen's club (Section 4.8.7). Some of these encounters happened just once, but others seem to have occurred and are occurring with a higher frequency, for example encounters within the family or circles of friends (Sections 4.8.5; 4.8.6), in a 'right-wing niche' in the marksmen's club (Section 4.8.8), or while in contact with extreme right-wing agents in respondents' own city district (Section 4.8.4). Thus, while it seems that such encounters have occurred in the everyday life of most respondents, they seem to play a greater role in the lives of several of them and were more frequent in at least one club among those included in this study.

The data in this report reveal interesting information about radicalisation but also about opportunities to prevent and counter processes of radicalisation and bolster opportunities for deradicalisation or non-radicalisation. First, it is important to state that the somewhat regular encounters with 'radical messages' and their messengers' matter and have impact, offline as well as online. This was particularly evident in Camilla's example about various problematic 'radical messages' and 'problematic agents' in her immediate social environment but also at work and online (Section 4.8.5). These messages and agents had a strong influence on how Camilla formed her opinions and thoughts, possibly influencing voting for the right-wing populist to extreme right-wing AfD party as well as the issues such as the reception of refugees and immigration and immigration that this party campaigns on. Other influential factors were her perception of 'horizontal inequality' and an increased 'feeling of insecurity'. Some counteractive factors, however, also had an impact, among them a feeling of shame for having right-wing thoughts, the negative stigma of right-wing belief systems, a rejection of violence and extremist political violence, or the conviction that it is wrong to generalise when judging others. These and other factors that could prevent possible radicalisation or contribute to deradicalisation processes can also be derived from the cases of other respondents, such as, for example, the belief that all people are equal.

Camilla's opinion-forming and evaluation processes can be understood as a moment of a particular way of cognitive and emotional radicalisation and deradicalisation. Camilla's case provides a dense empirical description of how radicalisation and deradicalisation processes are non-linear, complex, dynamic, situational, and embedded in certain socio-cultural structures (Costanza, 2015). This means that such processes have an intersubjective, interactive, and extra-ideological (as well as an ideological) dimension (for example an affective one). It also means individuals involved in these processes act as active agents and are not just passively subjected to them. The same applies to the trajectories towards and away from radical attitudes and milieus also described in this report (Section 4.8.3).

Aspects of Camilla's opinion-forming processes, as well as aspects of the trajectories away from radical attitudes and milieus, and other examples of the cases presented in this study, can also be taken as evidence that open rather than closed mindedness and reflectiveness can be found within this study's respondent set. However, this evidence also shows the general possibility of numerous different starting points for preventing and countering radicalisation. Furthermore, this report's data also reveals those responses to radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation), in addition to many counter-reactions (see e.g. Section 4.8.6), were for various reasons, often 'normalised'. This might explain the emergence and persistence of 'right-wing niches' (Section 4.8.8).

This normalisation of radical messages and problematic agents seemed to have been enabled because respondents did not see a reason to intervene or considered such agents and messages only to a certain extent as problematic. Respondents said that they would only react more strongly if radical messages and problematic agents were to cross the line of verbal and especially physical violence or lead to participation in organised right-wing extremism. This mirrors the understanding of radicalism and extremism of these

and other respondents, who saw such thresholds as the relevant threshold to radicalism, extremism, and related phenomena (Section 4.8.8). In some cases, distinctions were made within the far-right spectrum (e.g. between 'right-wing', 'right-wing radicalism' and 'right-wing extremism'), or radical and extreme expressions were distinguished from (differentiated/justified/private) legitimate (political) expressions (Section 4.7).

This normalisation carries the danger that only radical and extreme verbal and non-verbal actions, or only visible right-wing radicalism and right-wing extremism, are perceived as a real problem while 'radical attitudes' and 'radical messages', such as racist ones, can be easily overlooked. This is a cause for concern since the latter can be a cause, or part, of such radical/extreme actions and radicalisation processes. The same could apply to the distinctions made by the respondents within the far-right spectrum. This does not necessarily mean that it would be helpful to classify persons as radical or extreme at an earlier stage, even though radicalism and extremism were evaluated negatively by many respondents (Section 4.7.1). The data revealed, several times, also a general stigmatisation of the right-wing that has led several respondents to distance themselves from it, for example in the form of (possible) voting decisions (Section 4.8.5).

A further problem with such normalisations of radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation) or right-wing niches is that it can potentially lead to further radicalising already existing 'radical attitudes', which can be accompanied both by an increased acceptance and readiness to use violence, but presumably also by concrete acts of violence (Section 4.5.4). Even if such violent phenomena do not seem to play a role in this study's respondent set, the interview data contained examples of discriminatory acts against immigrants or persons perceived as Muslims, which happened, for example, within a circle of friends and also within the group of young marksmen (for one example, see Section 4.8.8). Thus, the normalisation of radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation) and the rise and persistence of related right-wing niches should be counteracted.

This is true for the marksmen's club milieu. In this milieu, strong counter-reactions to radical messages and problematic agents (of radicalisation) have been found in some cases, both at the level of the ordinary marksmen and at the level of the club's management boards (Section 4.8.7). Various features identified in the marksmen's club milieu can also be understood as possibly working to prevent or counter-radicalisation or as having de- and non-radicalising effects. These include the strong connection with and belonging to the club communities or the possibilities for engagement and (democratic) participation within the clubs and the marksmanship (4.8.9).

Nevertheless, more could be done as right-wing niches and encounters with radical messages and agents of radicalisation still exist in this milieu and its broader environment as well as far-right attitudes and those of group-focused enmity, as was shown in this study. This is also problematic because, as mentioned above, membership in many marksmen's clubs can provide the opportunity to legally acquire and possess, albeit under strict conditions, small firearms and ammunition as well as training in their use (Section 2.3.2). Furthermore, right-wing terrorist perpetrators and murderers have indeed been members of marksmen's clubs (Section 2.3.2). In this respect, marksmen's clubs have a particularly great responsibility. Ultimately, such phenomena should be resolutely counteracted, especially in more conservative milieus and milieus that are exposed to a greater extent to attempts at appropriation and influence from the far-right spectrum. In such milieus, it is negotiated in a unique way what is conservative and what is right-wing, and where the limits to the more radical and extreme spectrum should be. This negotiation is particularly important in times of a 'mainstreaming the extreme' and the resulting, increased potential for radicalisation.

The various contradictory tendencies identified within the marksmen's club milieu were seen also in other social environments and in the statements, attitudes, and behaviour of some respondents. These contradictions are, for example, between attitudes that can be classified as 'radical attitudes', like being

racist and anti-Muslim or denigrating refugees, and attitudes that, from an analytical perspective, exclude such discrimination by acknowledging 'human is human'. Some respondents expressed far-right attitudes, but also distanced themselves from far-right groups and ideas because of their own immigration background or that of many friends. For other respondents, however, acquaintances and friendships with people with an immigrant background seem to have actually been de- or non-radicalising factors. And some respondents also generalised behaviours and perceptions of one group but expressed much more differentiated views about another group or respondents normalised extreme-right wing groups and symbols while the worldview of these respondents was neither right-wing nor extreme right-wing. At the same time all these contradictions, which are often only *prima facie* contradictions, also offer possibilities and starting points for countering and preventing radicalisation, just like a non-closed mind, which can be also the source of such contradictions. Explaining and clarifying these contradictions can help to better understand the overall phenomenon of radicalisation. It can also help to further illuminate the grey area between milieus that are radical/extreme in the classically defined sense and milieus that are not radical/extreme, as well as between the radicalised and the non-radicalised individual.

6. Acknowledgements

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