Home > Printer-friendly PDF > Printer-friendly PDF

How Nazis turn youths into extremists

Society & Culture[1]
Society & Culture[1]Children and adolescents [2]Politics [3]Social media [4]The Internet [5]Denmark [6] Videnskab.dk [7]
Far right Nazi-like parties are using a new strategy for spreading their message to young people. New research takes a closer look.

It's been a while since we've heard about Nazis and skinheads, hasn't it? These people – along with other right-wing extremists – used to march in the streets shouting out their slogans.

But today this form of campaigning appears profoundly outdated – at least in Germany, where a new strategy has emerged.

Instead of shouting out their message to anyone and everyone, today's extreme right now tries go into dialogue with citizens, usually based on an anti-Muslim view.

"The various parties and organisations have a clear battle strategy," says Rikke Peters, a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Aesthetics and Communication, Aarhus University.

"They try to appear civilised and meet people at eye level through blogs and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. They want to engage the public – young people in particular – in dialogue.

Nazis have become 'respectable' politicians

The basis of Peters's research is extreme right circles in Germany. Here, neo-Nazis are under constant pressure from the democratic society. The German government wants to avoid a gradual undermining of the country's democracy, as was the case leading up to World War 2. This undermining led to the Nazi takeover in 1930.

This pressure from the democracy may be the reason why today's extreme right parties have changed their communication strategy. They now dress like other politicians and generally behave like 'respectable' citizens.

An example of this is the organisation 'Pro NRW', which – under the guise of wanting to defend the freedom of expression – aims to drive Islam out of North Rhine-Westphalia, which is the most populous state of Germany.

"But we could also use NPD – the National Democratic Party of Germany – as an example. It used to be a party for former neo-Nazis and village idiots. Today it's headed by university-educated men," says the researcher.

"The raw look with beer guts, skinheads and t-shirts is a thing of the past. On the party's website, its politicians are presented wearing a suit and tie – a visual appearance that gives the impression of a conservative lifestyle."

On the internet, anything goes

When the members of extreme right groups dress nicely and no longer march in the streets, you might easily end up thinking they no longer pose a challenge to democracy.

"It's easy to say that the right-wing circles no longer play a major role, since the problem with skinheads in the streets is gone. But they can now be found elsewhere, especially on the internet, where they're less visible," she says.

"The judiciary, politicians and ordinary citizens used to find it easy to distance themselves from the right-wing extremists. But on the internet and on the social media they're free to express their anti-Islam core ideas."

Extremism wrapped up in good music

For many years, the extreme right rhetoric centred on the fear of the influence Islam had on Western society. But today the extremists disguise their message with humour and music that can catch young people's attention online.

"The right-wing extremist groups are creating lots of online subcultures – for instance centred on rock or hip-hop. Common to the music from these subcultures is that it contains messages that are hateful towards Islam," says Peters.

"Many of the websites are encrypted and only accessible to members. Others are more open, with chat forums where the underlying messages are presented under the guise of a more harmless concern for the direction the culture is taking and the family's future."

An example of such a chat room is stormfront.org [8]. Here, users exchange their views on subjects as diverse as 'culture', 'fitness' and 'ecology'.

"There are also dating sites for young neo-Nazis, sites where users can share music videos, poetry slam-videos and more informative sites about concerts and demonstrations."

'Humorous' computer game: shoot an asylum family

The strangest thing Peters has come across in her research is a somewhat different computer game:

"It's pretty crazy: the point of the game is to shoot asylum families and compete with fellow gamers on how many asylum families they can send back home," says the researcher.

"The game is made with humorous intentions by the extreme right parties. But it also represents a new way to appeal to young people. The coarse humour lures some youths in, and before they know it, they're finding themselves discussing politics on right-wing extremist websites."

Read the Danish version of this article at videnskab.dk [9]

> Today?s Nazis focus mostly on Muslims, while the anti-Semitism has taken a backseat. Pictured here is a mosque in Saint Étienne, which has been vandalised with Hitler salutes, swastikas and hateful slogans. (Photo: Colourbox) [10]

[NPD is a far-right German party, which used to be a neo-Nazi party. Looking at its politicians today, you probably wouldn?t believe that. They certainly look a bit different to Nazi skinheads marching in large black leather boots. (Screen dump from NPD?s website)](#) [11]

[Neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremists appear to have dropped the raw, shaven look. Instead they dress nicely and appear as ?real? politicians on the internet. (Photo: Chad Johnson)](#) [12]

[nazi2.jpg](#) [13]

There are also dating sites for young neo-Nazis, sites where users can share music videos, poetry slam-videos and more informative sites about concerts and demonstrations.

Rikke Peters

[Rikke Peters's profile](#) [14] [The Democratic Public Sphere at Aarhus University](#) [15]

Embed

<iframe width="620" height="415" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/fpBlfaWlxIY?rel=0" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe><i>'Lunikoff' is a right-wing extremist band which spreads its political message on Youtube and other social media. The band is part of the German far right?s new media strategy, which aims to create small communities around various kinds of music online. The music contains a right-wing extremist message, which aims to influence young music fans.</i>

[Niels Ebdrup](#) [16]

Dann Vinther

October 10, 2012 - 06:48

This field is not in use. The footer is displayed in the mini panel called "Footer (mini panel)"

Source URL: http://sciencenordic.com/how-nazis-turn-youths-extremists

Links:

[1] http://sciencenordic.com/category/section/society-culture
[2] http://sciencenordic.com/category/keywords/children-and-adolescents
[3] http://sciencenordic.com/politics
[4] http://sciencenordic.com/social-media
[5] http://sciencenordic.com/internet
[6] http://sciencenordic.com/category/countries/denmark
[7] http://sciencenordic.com/videnskabdk
[8] http://stormfront.org
[9] http://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/sadan-gor-nazister-unge-til-ekstremister
[10] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/nazi.jpg
[11] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/nazi1.jpg
[12] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/nazi2_0.jpg
[13] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/nazi2.jpg
[14] http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/rikke-peters(f38cdf1e-ae0e-496e-8756-dc9e9709e550).html
[15] http://offentlighed.au.dk/en/del-projekter/democratic-inclusion-and-citizenship-from-below/
[16] http://sciencenordic.com/content/niels-ebdrup