Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers

MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

Working Paper No. 210

Michael Fürstenberg

Communities of Hateful Practice: The collective learning of accelerationist right-wing extremists, with a case study of the Halle synagogue attack

Halle/Saale 2022
ISSN 1615-4568

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, PO Box 110351,
06017 Halle/Saale, Phone: +49 (0)345 2927-0, Fax: +49 (0)345 2927-402,
http://www.eth.mpg.de, e-mail: workingpaper@eth.mpg.de

Communities of Hateful Practice:
The collective learning of accelerationist right-wing extremists, with a case study of the Halle synagogue attack[1]

Michael Fürstenberg[2]

Abstract

In the past, far-right aggression predominantly focused on national settings and street terror against minorities; today, however, it is increasingly embedded in global networks and acts within a strategic framework aimed at revolution, targeting the liberal order as such. Ideologically combining antisemitism, racism, and anti-feminism/anti-LGBTQI, adherents of this movement see modern societies as degenerate and weak, with the only solution being a violent collapse that they attempt to accelerate with their actions. The terrorist who attacked the synagogue and a kebab shop in Halle, Germany, in October 2019 clearly identified with this transnational community and situated his act as a continuation of a series of attacks inspired by white supremacy in the past decade. The common term 'lone wolf' for these kinds of terrorists is in that sense a misnomer, as they are embedded in digital 'wolf packs'.

Although this movement is highly decentralized and heterogeneous, there are interactive processes that connect and shape the online milieu of extremists into more than the sum of its parts, forming a structure which facilitates a certain degree of cohesion, strategic agency, and learning. This paper uses the model of collective learning outside formal organizations to analyze how the revolutionary accelerationist right as a community of practice engages in generating collective identities and knowledge that are used in the service of their acts of death and destruction.

[1] I thank Annika Lems and Florian Köhler as well as Imad Alsoos, Carolin Görzig and not least the editors for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

[2] Michael Fürstenberg is Senior Research Fellow in the Research Group "How 'Terrorists' Learn", Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Advokatenweg 36, 06114 Halle (Saale), Germany. E-mail: fuerstenberg@eth.mpg.de

Introduction

On 9 October 2019, I was working in my office at the Max Planck Institute in Halle, when, approximately two kilometres away, right-wing extremist Stephan Balliet[3] attempted to break into the local synagogue to murder the members of the Jewish congregation assembled there to celebrate Yom Kippur. When that failed, he shot a passer-by and a customer in a local kebab shop before fleeing the scene. With the city in lockdown until Balliet was caught later that day, it quickly became clear that Halle had become the scene of a new form of right-wing terrorism. Balliet had streamed his attack live on the internet, explicitly addressing an intended international audience, for whom he commented on his actions in an English laden with the slang of online sub-cultures. While he did not have connections to the sizable neo-Nazi scene of his native East Germany, Balliet clearly identified as part of a global far-right community. He explicitly situated his act in relation to a series of attacks in the past decade inspired by revolutionary white supremacy, a movement that strives for the total collapse of democratic societies and the establishment of white domination. While right-wing terrorism is certainly not a new phenomenon, these attacks largely follow a new pattern: they were committed by extremists with no previous criminal record and without connections to organized groups who acted alone but were participants in far-right online communities. The common term 'lone wolf' to describe these kinds of terrorists is in that sense a misnomer, because it overlooks the fact that they are usually embedded in what could be called 'digital wolf packs'.

The relationship between the individual actor and the virtual structure is, however, not well defined. One mechanism that has been suggested to explain the relationship between the perpetrators and the wider movement is the concept of "stochastic terrorism". According to this explanatory model, specific attacks are essentially random but their occurrence in general is virtually assured by the fomenting and incitement of hate in mass (social) media (Schwarz 2021). In this model, the connection between individual perpetrators and the larger movement is, however, essentially treated as one-way: the (digital) media environment provides the continuing stimulus for processes of radicalization in which individuals learn extreme beliefs and behaviours. It does not consider influences in the other direction, such as feedback effects and the way attacks are perceived and utilized by the community of extremists. Although the online milieu of extremists is highly decentralized, based on the principle of "leaderless resistance" (Sweeney 2019), I argue that it is shaped by interactive processes that make it more than the sum of its parts. These processes form a structure that facilitates a certain degree of cohesion, strategic agency, and learning.

Much like with the term 'terrorism', there is no single clear definition of 'learning', but very broadly it can be understood as the accumulation of knowledge that informs future thoughts and behaviour. This involves complex processes of interpretation in interaction with the environment – knowledge is thus a product of construction rather than something that is simply implanted from an outside source. This is especially true, of course, for processes of collective learning, where

[3] There is a debate on whether it is appropriate to use the real names of terrorists, as one of their aims is precisely to become famous and spread their message. While I agree that spreading the names of attackers widely is not desirable, I think that this mainly applies to media coverage with a broad audience rather than scholarly papers with a limited and academic one. I am also not convinced that using substitutes like "the Halle attacker" has a great preventative effect regarding possible radicalization of susceptible individuals, as the names of perpetrators of specific terrorist acts can be very easily found out on the internet. I have therefore decided to use the names in this paper, for pragmatic reasons of readability as well as transparency, given that the analysis requires quoting extensively from their primary material.
As should not be surprising in a paper on this topic, the themes dealt with and the data cited contain deeply offensive material and may be perceived as upsetting.

knowledge is generated and maintained on the level of a social aggregate independent from the knowledge of individuals within this collective. This is important for two reasons: First, such knowledge is essential for preserving the collective as a whole, providing an identity, experience, and sets of skills that keep members aligned; it persists even after the departure of individual members. Second, it allows the organization to aggregate and process feedback from the actions of its members, adapt to changes in the environment, and develop strategies to advance its objectives. In institutionalized organizations, there are usually formal and hierarchical structures that further this kind of learning and maintain organizational memory, even while many informal avenues and routines exist in addition. Non-formal, fragmented, and open arrangements, however, lack such conventional structures, hampering their ability to maintain cohesion, adapt, and act collectively. How the terroristic extreme right solves this problem, at least in part, is the central puzzle of this paper – in other words, how does the 'digital pack' coordinate and build knowledge, which the 'lone wolves' both use and contribute to? I argue that in order to understand and mitigate the threat of this new form of right-wing terrorism, it is essential to study how its collective structures emerge, evolve, and advance extremist beliefs and violence.

Unfortunately, the literature on terrorist learning is ill-equipped to deal with this challenge, as for the most part it conceptualizes learning either as part of individual radicalization or as organizational learning of formalized terrorist groups. There is a lack of approaches that address learning that is collective, yet takes place outside the structure of an organization, within informal networks and movements. In this paper, I attempt to address this gap by looking at how collective learning concepts from the literature on social learning can be used to illuminate how the decentralized revolutionary right-wing terrorist movement is able to develop collective knowledge, identity, and strategy – which, in turn, is an important element in their overall attack on the principles of the democratic liberal order.

To set the stage, I begin with a brief overview of the contemporary transnational and heterogenous far-right movement and situate the primarily online-based, decentralized revolutionary extreme right in this context. Given the central strategic goal of hastening a total collapse of social order, this movement is generally subsumed both by analysts and its proponents themselves under the term "militant accelerationism" (Kriner 2022). Subsequently, I provide a review of the existing literature on terrorist learning before turning to theories of learning that focus on collectives below the level of formal organizations. This is a diverse body of scholarship that is primarily situated in business studies, adult education, and research on social movements. I pursue an eclectic approach to distil the disparate lines of research into a conceptual framework suitable for structuring the following analysis of this community. A prominent concept is the "community of practice" (Wenger 1998), which has been applied in a wide variety of settings and will serve as an anchoring point to empirically conceptualize the decentralized revolutionary extreme right as a community engaged in a common practice of hate and violence. To analyze the collective learning process of this community, I will employ the model of a "knowledge creation cycle" pioneered by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995).

The outline of the theoretical background is followed by an empirical analysis. This is divided into two sections: I first look at the revolutionary subset of the far right as a whole and an examine it as a community of practice with respect to the elements of mutual engagement, construction of a joint enterprise, and the development of a shared repertoire. I then look at examples of collective learning processes within this community in terms of a learning cycle in which information is converted from

implicit individual knowledge to explicit and combined collective knowledge, which is in turn again internalized by individuals. For my source material, I mainly draw on publicly available and accessible written communications produced by the extreme right. This includes both material published in secondary literature or media reports as well as primary sources explicitly intended for publication, such as (electronic) books by extremist writers, statements, manifestos, and documents (including videos) created by right-wing terrorists of the last decade, and texts distributed on right-wing blogs and websites.[4] In addition, to capture the day-to-day communication and discourse of this scene, I gathered contributions to relevant online discussions on publicly accessible forums and messenger channels. Those cover a wide range, from groups on mainstream websites like the gaming platform Steam to popular unregulated discussion boards like 4chan and its more niche off-shoots, to channels only accessible via the 'Darknet' or the messenger service Telegram (where a certain amount of searching is needed to find relevant information). Crucially, all these sources are both anonymous by design and generally considered open sources, as they are not password protected and can be viewed by anyone with the relevant (usually not very sophisticated) knowledge about where to find them (Conway 2021: 371–372). In addition to Google searches, I used specialized sites like the Internet Archive and 4plebs, which archive fleeting content and make it searchable; I also followed leads from both mainstream sources like Twitter and outlets dedicated to 'politically incorrect' material and discussions, for example relevant Telegram channels. The material is used in an illustrative and exemplary way and does not claim to be a systematic or complete survey of all possible sources of right-wing online communications.[5]

Finally, in order to demonstrate the connections between the established collective structures of knowledge creation and the particularities of single terrorist attacks, I close the paper with a case study of the 2019 attack on the Halle synagogue. In addition to existing studies and media reports, I base this analysis on the primary documents produced by the attacker himself (including his manifesto and video of the livestream), a detailed, partly verbatim transcript of his court proceedings (Pook, Stanjek, and Wigard 2021), and the reception and discussions of Balliet and his act in the right-wing online circles described above. Applying the categories developed from the theoretical literature and analyzed in the first empirical section of the paper, I contextualize the attack within the wider community of hate and look at its intended and perceived contributions to the collective learning process of the transnational extremist movement.

The Extreme Right-Wing Terrorist Movement

Like other perpetrators of political violence, right-wing terrorists are a fringe part of a larger political sphere. There is a considerable amount of conceptual confusion about the terminology regarding

[4] In other words, material that could be collected without directly engaging with the extremists themselves. Despite the attempts by authorities and providers of internet services to limit or even ban the distribution of this material, most of it is locatable online with comparatively little effort. I nevertheless refrain from providing links or detailed descriptions of how to access certain documents like the attacker's manifestos or extremist publications. Relevant extracts from my data and information about my sources can be made available to other researchers upon request. I do include, however, references to public posts on online forums in the interest of scientific transparency.

[5] Visual materials such as memes form a big part of this communication. In order to not spread this propaganda, it was decided to not reproduce examples in this paper (where concrete cases are discussed, references are, however, given). In contrast, selected written sources are quoted directly, without offensive content (like slurs etc.) edited out, in order to preserve the original meaning and give an accurate impression of the data the analysis is based on. While this is also a dilemma, for the purpose of studying learning processes, *how* and with what 'language' actors communicate is as important as *what* they talk about. Relevant terms and phrases of such extremist communication will be explained and properly contextualized.

right-wing ideologies, organizational forms, and violence, which I will not retrace here (Perliger 2020: 12–17). To delineate the larger context of the actors and collectives of right-wing terrorism I am interested in, I distinguish *radical* right-wing actors, who oppose basic principles of liberal societies but act mostly within the rules of the democratic system, from *extreme* right-wing actors, who openly reject democracy and favor violent to generate political change. Both are part of what can be subsumed under the term *far right* (Ravndal und Bjørgo 2018: 6). While political science in particular has focused on right-wing views and activities mostly within the context of party politics, the far right can be more accurately conceptualized as a loose social movement in the sense of Tarrow's definition of it being a "collective challenge, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (2011: 9). As Castelli Gattinara and Pirro (2019: 449) argue, this movement comprises "a variegated milieu within which we can distinguish between political parties geared towards elections and public office, social movements or 'networks of networks' that aim to mobilize public opinion, and a conglomeration of groups within the subcultural environment". Consequently, neither the far right nor its extreme subsets are fixed and clearly delimitable entities, but rather are "contingent, evolving and with fuzzy borders" (Mondon and Winter 2021: 371). The far right is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity, both in terms of ideological specificities and political action (Castelli Gattinara and Pirro 2019: 450–454). Common ideological elements are racism, antisemitism, white supremacy, exclusionist nativism, nationalism, Christian fundamentalism as well as (rather paradoxically) both authoritarianism and radical libertarianism; regarding the form of political action, the spectrum of actors extends from radical and populist right-wing political parties to activist groups like the alt-right or Identitarian movement, loose networks of 'angry citizens' and conspiracy theorists, sovereign citizens, militias and vigilante groups, up to traditional and new neo-Nazi and fascist milieus.

At its core, two elements are central to this movement: "Ideologies of inequality on the one hand (…) are associated with varying levels of acceptance of violence on the other" (Heitmeyer 2003: 401). The radical and extreme right broadly differ in that the first favours a legal framework for violence to enforce what they see as 'natural' inequality (hence, their attempts to gain power within the system of the state), while the latter sees violence as a legitimate and necessary means in the political struggle itself. The boundaries between these approaches are, however, fluid. Heitmeyer at al. have conceptualized this as a "concentric continuum of escalation [konzentrisches Eskalationskontinuum]", which ranges from members of the general population with a diffuse enmity towards certain people perceived as belonging to particular groups at one end to a hard core of clandestine terrorist actors at the other, with right-wing political parties, anti-democratic activists, and sympathizers and supporters of violence and terrorism in the middle; the various layers are connected via personal and ideal "legitimizing bridges" [Legitimationsbrücken] (Heitmeyer at al. 2020: 58–68). It would therefore be misleading to see extreme right-wing violence as isolated and disconnected from the wider far-right movement, even if only a small part of it is actively engaged in political violence. It is important, however, to distinguish terrorism from other, more common forms of violence. As Koehler (2017: 51) argues, "every act of right-wing terrorism is a form of right-wing violence, but not every act of right-wing violence can be labelled terrorism". This is of course true for political violence and terrorism regardless of ideological background; however, it is especially relevant in the case of right-wing actors because of the inherently violent nature of their ideology. Most extreme right-wing violence manifests as more-or-less situational street and mob

violence (Schedler 2020) or "hate crimes" (Koehler 2017: 57–64). While these acts are *politically motivated*, they are normally not intended to directly serve a *political end*, which is a defining characteristic of terrorism. In terrorist violence, the targets are deliberately chosen to address audiences that are different from the immediate victims (Young and Findley 2011).[6] Accordingly, the use of violence to achieve the desired end is based on a clear definition of an enemy and at least a rudimentary (even if often objectively quite faulty) cause-effect logic.

While this paper is concerned with terrorist violence, this does not mean that the focus is solely on the actual perpetrators of concrete attacks. As Heitmeyer (2020: 62–63) describes, the core of right-wing terrorist actors (be they individuals, networks, cells, or full-fledged organizations) is surrounded by layers of an anti-democratic, partly-clandestine milieu of supporters and sympathizers that can be considered its own movement of violent challengers of the liberal order. As with the wider far right, these spheres are heterogenous and fractionalized, with partly overlapping membership but identifiably different traditions and characteristics.[7] Although right-wing terrorism has long been overshadowed in public attention by left-wing violence, it nonetheless has a long tradition in the West (Weinberg 2021). Rooted in ideas of nationalism, fascism, and neo-Nazism, organized scenes of extremists exist in virtually all countries of Europe and the West. Most groups cultivate distinctive national traditions, although they are increasingly transnationally interconnected – for example, in large semi-clandestine networks like the Hammerskin Nation, Blood and Honour, and Combat 18 (Fielitz and Laloire 2016; Koehler 2017; Perliger 2020). Despite their martial demeanour, in recent times these groups have predominantly engaged in open street violence and rarely in terrorism. The most prominent example in Germany is the National Socialist Underground (NSU) which murdered nine immigrants over the course of several years (Koehler 2017: 128–156). Recent terroristic violence has more often been the result of more diffuse conglomerates of actors, often a mixture of long-standing members of extremist scenes and 'ordinary' people without prior connections to militant organizations who come together in small groups created ad hoc and coordinated mainly over social media. Koehler has coined the term "hive terrorism" to describe this phenomenon, denoting "fluid networks centred around shared opposition to democratic government and immigration, (…) with dynamic and constantly shifting compositions" (2018: 74). The reservoir of potential recruits to such formations is extremely diverse, ranging from extremists rooted in anti-government and vigilante militias, hooligans, and so-called sovereign citizens [*Reichsbürger* in German], to anti-immigration activists and radicalized 'angry citizens'. Mobilization of this type of violence is often local, targeting refugees and immigrants, political opponents, and politicians perceived as 'traitors'; sometimes, however, some individuals also harbour more ambitious goals (Phillipsberg 2021).

In addition to these two contexts, which are more or less rooted in traditional right-wing structures and conform to relatively conventional forms of organization, the last decade has seen the "emergence of a new leaderless, transnational and apocalyptic violent extreme right-wing movement" (Musharbash 2021: 39). This movement is, despite many ideological similarities to the 'old' extremists, a distinctly novel expression of far-right terrorism and decidedly a product of the digital age. Although characterizations are always in danger of being reductive, and not all violent acts and actors can easily be pigeonholed into a neat category, this strand can be referred to as militant

[6] In reality, of course, the boundaries are often not that clear cut. For further discussions see the authors cited above; for a general account of the academic discussions of the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' see Fürstenberg (2017).
[7] The following is a simplified account of the complexities of the extreme right.

or "insurrectionary" (Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022: 87) accelerationism. Rapoport (2004) laid out several criteria that are useful to determine whether terroristic events and actors are part of a consistent current: They are (1) revolutionary in nature and driven by a common predominant ideological energy; they are (2) inherently transnational, expanding across time and space; (3) events and actors do not just share a common ideological background but are interconnected; and they (4) manifest a distinctive approach to terrorism, producing "major technical works that reflect the special properties of that wave and contribute to a common modern effort to formulate a 'science' of terror" (Rapoport 2004: 49). Unlike traditional neo-Nazi culture and hive terrorism, this new accelerationist movement largely fulfils those criteria as a whole.[8]

The movement is fuelled by a growing "ideological convergence" between fundamental right-wing ideas as described above, former fringe movements, and online subcultures (Ong 2020). Their worldview is rooted in classical reactionary and fascist ideology, but adapted to contemporary circumstances, resulting in a combination of racism, antisemitism, and anti-feminism that is centred around the notion of a "white extinction" or "genocide" (Bhatt 2021): In a kind of reversal of white male supremacy, they see themselves as having become the persecuted group, threatened by the forces of liberal modernity and globalism, which are deliberately promoting the "Great Replacement", a term made popular by the French novelist Renaud Camus (Davey and Ebner 2019). According to this view, Jews control the governments of Western states with the support of liberal, 'cultural-Marxist', and feminist 'traitors' in order to organize mass immigration from the Global South. Because those immigrants have higher birth rates than whites – a result of the feminist distortion of the 'natural order' –, over time whites will be replaced as the dominant race and relegated to a state of serfdom. Thus, the extremists see themselves in a defensive, existential struggle against what they call 'the System', essentially defined by anti-modernism (Hermann 2020). The state is considered hopelessly compromised and unsalvageable, resulting in the need for a true revolution rather than just some form of reactionary restoration (Beauchamp 2019). This revolution is imagined as an apocalyptic "race war" that will bring salvation for whites; promoting it therefore "becomes an imperative" (Bhatt 2021: 47). Visions about what the actual post-revolutionary world will look like are usually vague, however, other than that the supposed 'natural order' will be restored in "white ethnostates" (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 5) or even a "new Golden Age" (Slavros 2015d: 79).

Having abandoned purely nationalist objectives in favour of 'pan-White' ideology, the movement is inherently transnational (Musharbash 2021). This is manifest on a physical level in the global scope of terrorist attacks with an (even if sometimes vague) accelerationist background: Starting with Anders Breivik's murder spree in Norway in 2011, attacks or attempted attacks have been committed in the United States, Canada, Germany, Norway, Italy, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand.[9] In contrast to old neo-Nazi structures and hive terrorism, which use digital technology as tools but organizationally prefer direct offline contact, this movement is also based predominantly in cyberspace (Bacigalupo, Borgeson, and Valeri 2022). This does not mean that personal contacts do not exist; rather, the internet serves not only an instrument but as a constitutive element for the movement itself. Thus, it is steeped in digital subcultures, using distinctly online forms of expression

[8] This is not to say that other forms of right-wing terrorism do not partly exhibit similar features, especially regarding their ideological foundations.
[9] Based on data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/.

like memes[10] and relying an English loaded with inside jargon as a lingua franca. Given the dominant political and cultural role of the United States in the West, the scene is heavily influenced by American discourse. Across different but overlapping online spheres, actors and events are interconnected through mutual references and processes of interpretation (Ben Am and Weimann 2020; Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022).

Finally, while the approach of "leaderless resistance" and "lone wolves" is not new (Sweeney 2019: 618–620; Hartleb 2020: 41–47), in combination with the connective quality of an anonymous online environment and the accelerationist impetus to hasten societal collapse, this movement has a relatively distinctive strategic outlook (Musharbash 2021: 40–41). The function of attacks largely conforms to the basic principles of revolutionary terrorism, namely sowing chaos and confusion in the population and inspiring further, more severe attacks that are supposed to eventually trigger the race war. However, in a major deviation from more traditional right-wing terror, which in the interest of deniability and operational security was mostly 'mute' and relied on letting the acts speak for themselves (Koehler 2017: 65–66), attacks are accompanied by a wealth of material produced by both perpetrators and supporters that serves as a "powerful act of propaganda designed to deliver an explanatory narrative, an ideological justification, a tactical lesson, and a call to arms for others to follow" (Macklin 2019b: 2). Operationally, therefore, attacks are maximized for publicity, usually taking the form of mass shootings that are announced in advance or even include live coverage disseminated via the internet.

Apart from these shared basic tenets, the movement should not be seen as a cohesive unit (this would, in addition, go against the principle of leaderless resistance). Organizationally, we can distinguish two ideal-typical strands with different cultural roots: Firstly, there is a hard core of accelerationists who subscribe to explicit neo-Nazi and fascist beliefs and culture; it takes the form of networks as well as clandestine cells and organizations (Musharbash 2021). This strand emerged out of the (now defunct) web forum Iron March and spread across North America and Europe. Its best-known manifestation is the terrorist network Atomwaffen Division (AWD, now likewise defunct but reorganized under a different name) and its various branches and affiliates (Newhouse 2021: 17–22). Members of these groups have been responsible for several murders and terrorist plots but have not committed large-scale terrorist attacks. The second strand is much looser and resides in the diverse yet interconnected online spaces of largely unregulated and anonymous web forums, imageboards,[11] and messenger channels populated predominantly by young males (Davey and Ebner 2019: 24). While such forums are thematically open and used for all kinds of purposes, the anonymity and absence of any censorship has made some of them the favoured medium of communication among far-right extremists; these include the infamous imageboard /pol/ (for "politically incorrect") on 4chan and its offshoots and the encrypted messenger service Telegram (Thorleifsson 2022). Although these platforms are much less stringently ideological than the explicitly neo-Nazi forums, with users heavily employing irony and references to topics popular on the internet in general, such

[10] Memes originally referred to units of culture that spread from person to person in general. However, in the sense of 'internet memes' the term is more specifically used to describe the propagation of – usually visual – content items such as jokes, parodies, or representations of abstract concepts, which may spread in its original form but often also spawn user-created derivatives (see Shifman 2013).

[11] An imageboard is a type of internet forum that originally revolved primarily around the posting of images, albeit often accompanied by text and discussion. They are structured into thematically specific "(discussion) boards". Imageboards originated in Japan, with the Futaba Channel or 2chan being a famous example; this later became the model for the first (and still largest) American imageboard, 4chan. This more textually focused board hosts discussions in accordance with a radical interpretation of free speech and anonymity, which opened the door for extremists (Colley and Moore 2022: 8–9).

as video games, movies, and Japanese subculture, the community is no less radical and committed. Virtually all right-wing terrorist attacks by 'lone actors' in the last decade have connections to this milieu, which serves as inspiration as well as being the main arena in which the attacks are received and processed. The most prominent example is Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 (Macklin 2019a). Based on the digital space where this radical culture emerged, namely 'chan'-type imageboards, I call those attackers 'chan terrorists'.

Attacker	Year	City	Target	Deaths
Dylann Roof	2015	Charleston, SC, United Sates	Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church	9
David Sonboly	2016	Munich, Germany	OEZ Shopping Mall	9 + attacker
Robert Bowers	2018	Pittsburgh, PA, United Sates	Tree-of-Life Synagogue	11
Brenton Tarrant	2019	Christchurch, New Zealand	Al Noor Mosque; Linwood Islamic Centre	51
John Earnest	2019	Poway, CA, United Sates	Chabad of Poway Synagogue	1
Patrick Crusius	2019	El Paso, TX, United Sates	Walmart Store	23
Philipp Manshaus	2019	Bærum, Norway	Al-Noor Islamic Centre	1 (attacker's stepsister)
Stephan Balliet	2019	Halle, Germany	Halle Synagogue; Kiez-Döner Kebab Shop	2
Payton Gendron	2022	Buffalo, NY, United Sates.	Tops Friendly Markets Supermarket	10
Juraj Krajcik	2022	Bratislava, Slovakia[12]	LGBT bar	2 + attacker

Table 1: Right-wing accelerationist lone actor terrorist attacks in the last decade

The militant accelerationist movement is, by design, extremely diffuse and decentralized; nevertheless, it has evolved into the most deadly and dangerous terrorist challenge in Western democracies in recent years. Moreover, it has developed a relatively coherent set of ideologies, strategies, tactics, and propaganda adapted to its transnational online environment, and it utilizes seemingly disparate and random attacks by lone actors to advance their cause and the movement itself. While there has been an immense increase in research on right-wing terrorism in general and on accelerationism and its digital infrastructure in particular, there is still a lack of macro-explanations for how the digital pack of 'lone' wolves works as a terrorist collective. Approaches like the concept of stochastic terrorism miss the meso-level of the movement, where hate is collectively organized into ideological frameworks and violent strategies. I argue that despite being expressed mainly in lone-actor attacks, the accelerationist and chan-terrorist movement can be interpreted as a collective and employing the lens of terrorist learning can offer insights into this phenomenon.

[12] This attack was committed after the finalization and review of the paper but has been added here for completeness.

Research on Terrorist Learning

While the prevailing position in the literature has long been that terrorists are generally conservative and averse to experimentation and change (Bell 1990; Hoffman 1993), after the rise of jihadist terrorism and the September 11 attacks, there has been growing recognition and study of various aspects of terrorist innovation and learning. Much like with the term 'terrorism', however, there is a great deal of conceptual confusion, with a lack of a clear and consistent understanding of 'learning' and use of terminology (Ranstorp and Normark 2015: 3). Kettle and Mumford provide a useful basic characterization of learning as the "acquisition of knowledge to inform activities in the future" (2017: 8); they recognize learning as both a process and an outcome, with the latter sometimes tangible and sometimes only tacit and cognitive. Crucially, learning is not necessarily only problem-oriented and defined by quantifiable improvement – groups can also learn 'the wrong things' or stagnate, arriving at no new outcomes despite having gone through extensive learning processes.

The literature on terrorist learning generally falls into two types: studies that focus on individuals and those that focus on the organizational learning of terrorist groups. The former, however, often deals with the topic of learning only implicitly in the context of "radicalization" (Malthaner 2017; McCauley and Moskalenko 2017). Radicalization very broadly can be understood "as a process leading towards the increased use of political violence" (Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 5). On an individual level, radicalization has been conceptualized as a gradual, complex "process of accommodation and assimilation across incrementally experienced stages" (Horgan 2008, 92). The literature distinguishes two dimensions, namely the radicalization of beliefs and opinions and the radicalization of behaviour and action (Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 7; Malthaner 2017: 386–387). While earlier accounts often assumed a linear progression from the former towards the latter, more recent studies emphasize that, while cognitive and behavioural radicalization are interrelated, they are functionally independent (McCauley and Moskalenko 2017: 211–213). Consequently, from a learning perspective, individual terrorists need to acquire two distinct kinds of information – namely motivational and operational knowledge, with the former providing the ideological reasons for engaging in violence and the latter the capability to actually do so (Forest 2006: 4). Forest (2006) and Kenney (2006) describe a range of mechanisms and settings of such activities, including learning from handbooks and other instructional material, by visiting training camps, observing the behaviour of others, and undergoing psychological and ideological conditioning.

Only rarely has the radicalization of individuals been analyzed using an explicit theoretical learning framework. Wilner and Dubouloz have applied transformative learning theory to analyze psycho-cognitive processes of radicalization; this approach sees learning as transformations of routine interpretations of experiences resulting from personal crisis, leading to the construction of "new meaning perspectives" that in turn alter behaviour (2011: 422). Based on a case study of a British Islamist's radicalization, the authors conclude that "core elements of learning theory help trace the manner in which changes in beliefs and behaviour occur" (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011: 432). Another perspective builds on social learning theory (Akers 1998) to explain individual radicalization resulting from a "cluster of social forces colliding with individuals" (Akins and Winfree 2016: 135). This theory lays out several individual and structural elements that influence how individuals learn militant thought and action from their social environment. Pauwels and Schils (2016: 4) concentrate on the element of "differential association", which links learning with direct as well as indirect associations, interactions, and identifications with a social reference group. They consider exposure

to extremist content on social media as a form of association and find a positive relationship to attitudes of violence. Stenersen (2013) studies a decidedly more practical phenomenon, by looking at "e-learning courses" offered by al-Qaeda to spread the knowledge of bomb-making. In a recent study, Lee and Knott (2022) analyze ideological learning in online extremist settings by looking at a single neo-Nazi forum, employing the concept of the 'community of practice' that will be explored in greater detail below. However, while these accounts explicitly deal with collective contexts of learning of individuals and thereby also generate insights about those contexts, they still do not consider learning on the level of the collective itself.

A second, growing body of literature analyses transformations of terrorist groups using the framework of "organizational learning" (Brown and Kenney 2006). These studies draw an analogy between business organizations and terrorist groups (Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002: 97–108), applying vocabulary and concepts from the business administration literature to the study of the evolution of terrorism (Jackson et al. 2005). Although there are a plethora of approaches and sometimes conflicting understandings of key terms in the economic and sociological literature on organizational learning, the basic premise is that organizations produce collective knowledge that goes beyond the sum of the learning of individual members of the organization. This pertains both to the processes of learning, in which existing knowledge is re-assessed and new knowledge acquired in collective endeavours of interpretation, and its outcomes, which are embedded in institutional memory. Knowledge in this way becomes organizational and does not depend on particular individuals to be utilized and implemented. As Forest describes, "attributes of a 'learning organization' include the ability to identify knowledge useful to its long-term success and incorporate that knowledge into the operations and future plans of the organization" (2006: 18). Jackson et al. (2005: 10–14) distinguish the component processes of organizational learning as acquisition, interpretation, storage, and distribution of knowledge and trace these processes in several case studies of terrorist groups.

Despite these pioneering efforts, the majority of the literature focuses not on the process, or *how* groups learn, but on sources of information and knowledge transfer on the one hand and the outcomes of learning on the other (Kenney 2020, 58). In regard to the former, terrorist groups learn first and foremost from their own experiences, reflecting on their successes and failures (Forest 2006, 20–22). A major avenue of knowledge transfer is also through direct or indirect links with other militant groups. Horowitz and Potter (2014) as well as Phillips (2014) find that terrorist groups become more powerful in general when they have non-state alliances. Singh (2017) in turn develops a typology that maps such pathways of learning and innovation in modern jihadist groups. In a case study focusing on al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Görzig (2019) demonstrates that the group learned not only from the larger al-Qaeda organization, but also from the state's counterterrorism operations. Research focusing on the outcomes of learning often essentially assumes that learning has taken place rather than explicitly studying it. Moreover, a large part of this literature is heavily focused on tactical and technological innovations of means of violence (Dolnik 2007; Ranstorp and Normark 2015). Such "bomb and bullet" innovations (Singh 2017: 627) have been found to be mostly incremental and reactive in nature (Gill et al. 2013: 129), while the potential for more sweeping and strategic changes has been little studied (Crenshaw 2010: 35–36).

One of the reasons for this limited perspective might be that, historically, the literature tends to have a practical outlook, with results primarily intended to inform efforts to disrupt learning in the interest of counterterrorism. Due to this implicit counterterrorism-bias, their central concept tends to be undertheorized in favour of descriptions of prominent cases (focusing heavily on al-Qaeda) and

typological contributions. The theoretical foundation of this research is often weak and falls short of rigorously and consistently linking back to the conceptual toolkit of organizational learning literature (Kettle and Mumford 2017: 2). An exemption is the attempt by Kettle and Mumford to develop a comprehensive new analytical framework for terrorist learning, centred on the notion of the "identification" of lessons – crucially, in this model, information does not just passively 'flow in' but is actively sought out and subject to interpretation by organizations (Kettle and Mumfort 2017: 9–10). Using a different approach, Görzig (2022) and Fürstenberg and Görzig (2020) apply the theory of "double-loop learning" from Argyris and Schön (1978) to the Egyptian Gamaa Islamyia and the al-Qaeda network, respectively, demonstrating that existing concepts from the literature on organizational learning can be fruitfully utilized to understand strategic transformations of terrorist organizations.

While the social learning approach to radicalization takes into account collective dimensions for individual learning processes and some studies of organizational learning have looked at groups with rather loose structures, there is a dearth of research dealing with a meso level of collective learning beyond that of individuals yet below whole organizations. Accounts that focus on Islamist terrorism in general and al-Qaeda in particular as loose networks (Sageman 2008) have generally not drawn on learning theories. One exception is the study by Jones, which looks at the potential for innovation of the decentralized al-Qaeda network after it lost its central authority after 2001 from the perspective of an "exploration–exploitation learning framework" (Jones 2006: 556). He argues that the greater flexibility of the network structure led to a wider space for exploration – i.e., adopting and trying out new ideas – which was, however, accompanied by a weakened ability to actually exploit those ideas due to a lack of resources and expertise. Another explicit application of a mid-level concept of learning is Kenney's research on learning processes within the radical, albeit not terrorist, British activist group al-Muhajiroun; this study is one of the few accounts to use the notion of 'communities of practice' to describe how established community members socialize newcomers to the ideas and customs of the Islamist collective (Kenney 2020: 57–58). Although most of this process resembles the social learning of individuals, the members of the network also jointly "identify problems and prospects, share ideas, and brainstorm solutions", resulting in learning on the collective level (Kenney 2020: 70). That such approaches are few and far between is likely a result of the fact that, until recently, the terrorist threat mainly emerged from formal organizations or from individuals who were thought of as acting alone. However, given that recent attacks have been carried out by individuals embedded in more informally structured communities, I argue it is necessary to develop a more theoretically grounded understanding of learning that is collective but not organizational. In the next section, I review the literature on collective learning to identify concepts that can be utilized for non-organizational collective terrorist learning.

Theories of Collective Learning

"Collective learning" can be defined as a "dynamic and cumulative process that results in the production of knowledge [which] is institutionalized in the form of structures, rules, routines, norms, discourse, and strategies that guide further action [and] emerge because of interactive mechanisms" (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 646). It can be understood as an umbrella concept that "emerged at a theoretical level out of recognition that the sum of individual learning does not equate with the collective level of analyses" (Garavan and McCarthy 2008: 452). As such, it includes a plethora of

approaches with different disciplinary and theoretical backgrounds and different understandings of key terms like 'collective' and 'learning' (Fenwick 2008; Garavan and McCarthy 2008: 453–462). The study of learning is multidisciplinary in nature, with the field growing out from cognitive and education sciences and drawing on psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, and other disciplines. While the literature is mainly based in the areas of (adult) education and business management, theoretical accounts and empirical applications are nevertheless scattered. The various research approaches focus on different aspects and are located on a multi-dimensional spectrum regarding their emphasis on cognitive versus behavioural learning, whether they have primarily normative or descriptive agendas, and how strongly they weight the role of the collective (Garavan and McCarthy 2008: 461). For example, although the field of organizational learning is multifaceted (Easterby-Smith, Crossan and Nicolini 2000), the main area of application in business and public contexts means that studies are generally interested mostly in behavioural changes and identifying normative lessons on the organizational – i.e., collective – level. By contrast, socio-cultural approaches focus on cognitive and individual learning in collective contexts (Vygotsky 1978). De Laat and Simons draw a clear conceptual distinction between social learning in interactions (with and from others) and collective learning proper "where the members consciously strive for common (learning and/or working) outcomes" (2002, 15). In other words, for learning to be collective, both the learning *processes* and learning *outcomes* have to be on the collective level (Heikkila and Gerlak 2013: 486). The knowledge produced has an inherently shared quality and, while it is reflected in individual members of the collective (and social learning is therefore part of collective learning), it cannot be broken down into single parts. True collective learning enhances the collective by enabling it to restructure and meet changing conditions, add new skills and sets of behaviour, and reflect on its actions and identity (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 647).

The nature of the "collective" is not well defined. Often, it is at least implicitly equated with organizations or their subunits, like departments or teams. As Döös and Wilhelmsen (2011: 487) argue, however, collective learning "does not only occur within the boundaries of well-defined groups". Unstructured and informal groups can also in this sense "take on characteristics of complex, living entities" (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 647). De Laat and Simons (2002: 16–20) develop a typology of collective learning that distinguishes between networks, teams, and communities. Networks are loose structures formed around common interests that facilitate individual collaboration and leave participants in full control over their contributions and inferences. They are fluid and have no fixed boundaries (Döös and Wilhelmsen 2011: 490). Teams are temporary assemblies established to work on specific tasks. By contrast, communities emerge in the process of activity itself. They can be characterized as informal groups that form when individuals develop interdependences, influence each other's behaviour, and contribute to progress in a given area of common interest (De Laat and Simons 2002: 18). Apart from that the looser structure of networks compared to communities, the two types of groups differ in the learning that takes place: in networks, collective learning outcomes remain implicit and do not crystallize into explicit outcomes. This paper focuses on the learning processes of communities, understood in a broad sense. Due to the scattered nature of research and theory-building, I pursue an eclectic and cumulative approach rather than following any single line of thinking. I will start with the concept of the community of practice and extensions to its original formulation and focus, before looking at approaches concentrating on the actual process of learning.

The Concept of Communities of Practice

One of the most prominent perspectives on collective learning in this sense is the concept of "community of practice" that was developed by Wenger (1998; Lave and Wenger 1991; Paivia Duarte 2013). Wenger understands learning as "social participation", in which individuals are engaged in a "process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (Wenger 1998: 4). Communities of practice are defined by three connected elements: a shared domain of interest; a community of people interacting based on their common domain of interest; and a common practice as members of the community seek to advance this interest (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015: 2). The core element of this approach is the notion of learning as practice. Cook and Brown have defined practice as "the coordinated activities of individuals and groups in doing their 'real work' [in contrast to practice in the sense of exercise] as it is informed by a particular (…) group context" (Cook and Brown 1999: 386–387). Practice is therefore different than mere behaviour or action. According to Wenger (1998: 47–49), by being situated in a social context, practice can be understood as the "social production of meaning". This production entails the constant negotiation of meaning in social interactions. Communities are thus held together by the practice that gives them coherence and they continually negotiate collective meanings; they are constituted by three elements: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger 1998: 72–85). Mutual engagement denotes relations and repeated interactions within the community, which generate a mutual sense of trust and accountability; joint enterprise directs these interactions and the activities of the group; finally, shared repertoires are the communal meaning resources that come from these interactions, including common discourses, ways of thinking and acting, narratives, symbols and concepts, artefacts, tools, etc. In summary, a shared repertoire is "the instrumental dimension of the community's practice" (Murillo 2008: 2), which builds up and represents the shared body of knowledge and sense of identity a group develops.

Like the majority of the literature, Wenger and most of the scholars who adopt (and sometimes adapt) his approach are concerned with collective learning primarily in terms of vocational education and learning at and for the workplace, envisaging groups of people working together in a shared locality, usually a business organization. The framework is nevertheless useful for thinking about forms of non-organizational, informal collectives of learning in general, as the few applications to extremist settings show (Hundeide 2003; Kenney 2020; Lee and Knott 2022). In fact, the concept of communities of practice has been used in a wide variety of settings and adapted for a range of purposes, often without strictly conforming to its original foundations (Storberg-Walker 2008: 556). I likewise employ the term community of practice and its main elements as described above in a looser way, without subscribing to all the specifics and settings of the original approach by Wenger.[13]

One extension of the approach concerns the *medium* of learning. The internet has been seen from the very beginning as an ideal vehicle for the advancement and spreading of knowledge. As technology has evolved, the understanding of the internet also changed: it has transformed from being mainly a new delivery system for content into an infrastructure for asynchronous cooperation and an environment of social learning (Sunal and Wright 2012). While the internet itself and connective structures based on its infrastructure are generally conceptualized as networks, parts of those can acquire characteristics more akin to the communities described above. In this sense, "network

[13] It should be noted that also Wenger himself developed and changed the concept significantly over time (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015).

communities" can be seen as "special cases of online social interactive environments" (De Cindio, Peraboni, and Cerri 2012: 2438). The notion of community of practice has also been found to be fruitful for studying the digital environment (Kimble, Hildreth, and Wright 2001). Such online or "virtual communities of practice" in principle exhibit the same features as the original concept, "but also provide an 'enunciative space' in which participants can make meaning" (Hibbert and Rich 2006: 566–567). Large multinational business organizations in particular have embraced this concept as a way of enhancing corporate identity, the realization of synergy effects, and the distribution of knowledge throughout their geographically disparate branches. The concept has also been applied to make education more flexible. While there has been debate about whether such communities can function without some grounding in the 'analog world', Murillo has demonstrated that "extra-organizational communities of practice can emerge spontaneously in the social areas of the Internet, just as they emerge in organizational settings and that true communities of practice are not inherently limited to face-to-face interaction" (Murillo 2008: 1). The communities he identified were among users of the Usenet platform, which can be seen as a predecessor of modern web forums and imageboards. In a recent meta-study, Abedini, Abedin, and Zowghi (2021) find that interest in online communities of practice has vastly increased in recent years and participation in them may even become a new norm for adults. Lee and Knott (2022) have utilized the framework for an analysis of an online neo-Nazi forum named Fascist Forge, finding it to be a weak but valid expression of a community of practice. However, most of the research they review emphasizes individual determinants and outcomes of learning, rarely considering products realized on the collective level.

Another relevant extension is offered by the literature on social movements, pertaining to the *character of the learning collective,* or *who* is learning. While research on learning in and by social movements has developed largely separately from the business-oriented literature, likely due to the fact that it has its roots to a large extent in Marxist and critical theory (Crowther 2016; Hye-Su and Tarlau 2020), a closer look reveals many parallels and conceptual approaches similar the notion of the community of practice. Social movements have been conceptualized as communities consisting of "networks of individuals, cultural activities, institutional supporters, and alternative institutions as well as [social movement organizations] and other actors that support movement goals" (Hassan and Staggenborg 2015: 341–342). Crowther draws explicitly on the notion of communities of practice as conduits through which people acquire identities and competence, and he sees social learning as an "integral part of effective collective agency" (Crowther 2016: 138). As Caren, Jowers, and Gaby (2012) demonstrate regarding the far-right internet forum Stormfront, such communities grounded in social movements can also extend to or even be based completely online. The parallels with the idea of virtual communities of practice are striking. Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 55) argue that the "collective articulation of movement identity can be likened to a process of social learning" in which knowledge, alternative worldviews, and technologies are generated.

In her attempt to lay the groundwork for a theory of collective learning in social movements, Kilgore (1999) emphasizes that it is necessary to examine the community as a learner and constructor of shared meaning, identity, and knowledge because it is this level that is most closely related to collective social action, the raison d'être of social movements.[14] According to her, collective development happens in an interplay between the individual and group level, and in the interaction of both with the environment. She identifies the components of the collective, understood as a

[14] Kilgore maintains that collective learning requires a vision of social justice – however, as Crowther rightly remarks, "there is no real justification for assuming that this is necessarily a progressive vision or struggle" (2016: 138).

"learning system", as "collective identity", "group conscience", "solidarity", and "organization" (Kilgore 1999: 197). The first two express the shared meanings and goals of a group as well as its awareness of itself as a social actor; solidarity is the sense of unity and belonging of community members and provides a major motivation for learning; lastly, organization describes the tangible and intangible properties and features of a group, like its size, modes of communication, member roles, and resources. Kilgore considers the construction of a collective identity to be the primary mode of collective learning. While the first two of these categories can be seen as roughly analogous to joint enterprise and the last to a shared repertoire, Kilgore draws on an extended version of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of a zone of proximal development to capture social movements as "sites of cognitive praxis" in which members engage in learning together (Kilgore 1999: 198–199). She argues that this process is inherently, but productively, conflictual and can be understood as mutual engagement in practice.

Kluttz and Walter conceptualize social movements as "identity movements through which both individuals and the collective engage in social praxis to learn new identities, create new knowledge and take action for social change" (2018: 96). They develop a comprehensive conceptual framework, distinguishing between learning on the micro, meso, and macro level as well as between informal and organized learning (Kluttz and Walter 2018: 98–101). While the micro level refers to individual learning and the macro level to interactions with the world outside the movement, on the meso level social movement communities construct collective identity through the negotiation of means, ends, and fields of social action and develop a sense of "collective agency [as] the active part of collective identity" (Kluttz and Walter 2018: 100). Such collective learning can occur in an unorganized fashion and remain implicit, for example in the form of cultural artefacts like protest signs, or result in more formal statements, rules, and campaign strategies, forming what Wenger would call a shared repertoire. Empirical studies of local social movements have found that participants indeed "perceived the organization itself as a learning unit" (Kim 2016: 43).

The concepts of collective learning reviewed here exhibit many similarities, even while they do not all understand their subjects in the same way or use a coherent language. To a degree, this might be rooted in the complex and largely intangible nature of the phenomenon itself. In fact, Garavan and Carbery argue that "the operationalization of collective learning is (…) problematic and researchers are faced with significant problems concerning how best to measure it or identify and label it as a social construct" (2012: 648). So, while we have so far distilled the basic parameters of collective learning – community, identity, common undertaking and practice, developed resources – *how* this process actually takes place is much harder to discern.

The Process of Collective Learning

When there is no central authority or fixed organizational structure, collective learning is essentially a self-organized process (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 647). Learning communities coalesce around a given topic when individuals respond to similar situations, hold shared presuppositions, and share some emotional commitment (Crowther 2016: 139). According to Döös and Wilhelmsen, communities engaged in a shared practice do not necessarily have to directly cooperate, as long as they are part of a "shared action arena", in which they are connected indirectly through "imprints of other people's actions and ways of understanding" in a joint undertaking (Döös and Wilhelmsen 2011: 495–496). In such an arena, participants negotiate meaning, define goals, and pursue the fulfilment of a shared vision. The generation of knowledge and this emergence of the community

through practice is a constant self-reinforcing process. In fact, according to Wenger (1998: 96) the two are inextricably linked: "Learning is the engine of practice and practice is the history of that learning". Information does not passively flow in but "always refers to an existing background of prior communication, (…) expectations, and norms, which are the basis for all further activities" (Kimmerle et al. 2015: 127). Therefore, a crucial aspect of collective learning is the construction of a shared worldview, rooted in the community's joint enterprise, that becomes the basis for its practice and its evolution. This "cognitive consensus", encompassing agreed-upon meanings, a common language and culture, and shared mental models, changes over time depending on the levels and content of interactions (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 648). Identity guides what members pay attention to, what they ignore, and how they are connected to the community through a sense of belonging. Wenger describes identity and practice as "mirror images of each other" (1998: 149). Consequently, then, practice, learning, and identity together form the trinity of collective learning: practice builds a collective identity, which in turn forms the basis for the community that is engaging in practice; identity guides the direction of learning and is at the same time a reflection of earlier learning processes; finally, learning drives practice, which embodies, with its shared repertoires, the history of learning.

Shared repertoires are the totality of resources of meaning with which a collective communicates. Its elements "gain coherence not in and of themselves as specific activities, symbols, or artefacts, but from the fact that they belong to the practice of a community pursuing an enterprise" (Wenger 1998: 82). As such, they are in a constant process of re-negotiation. Repertoires can be seen as "acting as a living curriculum" (Paiva Duerte 2013: 401), serving as the basis for generating knowledge in the form of tacit or tangible learning products or outcomes. The creation of shared meanings also "legitimize[s] new ways of behaving" (De Laat and Simons 2002: 16). Collective knowledge is therefore expressed in discourse and information as well as know-how. This collective knowledge becomes productive in an instrumental sense through the shared practice of the community, which drives a "process by which available information becomes useable knowledge" (Garavan and Carbery 2012: 648).

By becoming explicit and embodied in cultural products and artefacts of communication, learning generates collective memory in communities of practice even without the formal structures and archives of organizations (Paive-Duarte 2013: 400). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) present the interplay between the individual and collective levels of collective learning as a knowledge-creation cycle. Their so-called "SECI model" describes a process by which tacit knowledge is mobilized and converted to explicit knowledge, which in turn feeds back into individual behaviour and the emergence of new tacit knowledge based on it. It consists of four components (forming the SECI acronym): socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995: 62–70).

Socialisation refers to the sharing of implicit knowledge between individuals within a group through common activity, observation, imitation, and assimilation. Followers 'pick up' what others are saying and doing, thereby spreading new information and behaviours in much the same way that fashions and trends are spread. *Externalization* is the stage in which such implicit social knowledge is articulated into explicit concepts; it can be defined as "the process of collective reflection on experiences and interaction between individuals" (Mittendorff et al. 2006: 301). While new information external to the social system can be introduced in an implicit way through socialization, it is at this stage that it has to be 'translated' into a language the community can understand (Garavan

and Carbery 2012: 648). To be recognized, input must be transformed to correspond to the shared sense of meaning and identity of the community. Thereby, the community itself "shapes her externalizations" (Kimmerle et al. 2015: 127). Externalization distils knowledge in the form of communal objects and media – these can be concise sources or scattered expressions of practices, in written or audio-visual form. Once made explicit, tangible learning outcomes can be compiled in the form of systemic knowledge through *combination*, a systematic process of reflection and interpretation. Possible results are manuals, guidelines, best practices, and strategies as well as stories and narratives, metaphors, and systems of symbols. Because it is the mutual interpretation of communication that enables the convergence of shared knowledge, this stage is heavily influenced by the context of the learning community, i.e., its shared commitment and identity (De Cindio, Peraboni, and Cerri 2012: 2439). However, that is not to suggest that this is necessarily a straightforward or harmonious exercise – rather, conflicting views and power relations play an important role. Finally, over time the collective knowledge is transformed back into tacit habits through *internalization*. Here, the combination of knowledge results in taken-for-granted resources and repositories which can be exploited in generic situations. In the following section, I will apply these elements of collective learning in communities of practice to the insurrectionary accelerationist movement, seeking to understand it in terms of a collective that is able to evolve and learn.

The Collective Learning of Insurrectionary Accelerationism

To reiterate, learning collectives can be understood as communities that are given coherence by a common interest and practice – be it making businesses more efficient or striving for social justice. They can vary in size and are based on mutual engagement, which can be situated in the analogue and/or digital world. In these communities, common practice, construction of identity, and processes of learning are interrelated and result in the emergence of a sense of collective consciousness and agency, belonging and solidarity, and knowledge resources in the form of a repertoire of shared discourses, worldviews, symbols, behaviours, guidelines, tools etc., that inform further activity. These are developed in a cycle of knowledge creation, in which implicit individual information and behaviour is first transferred to the collective level through socialization and then made explicit in a collaborative process of externalization. It is here that the negotiations of meanings take place and visible products are created from the repertoire through combination. These serve as a collective memory for the community and are internalized by its members into unconscious and tacit knowledge. Consequently, the application of this model to the topic of this paper must focus on two principal dimensions: (1) establish that right-wing accelerationist extremists – taken to mean actual terrorists as well as the larger ecosystem promoting them – can meaningfully be understood as a community of practice; (2) analyze processes of evolution within this community as a cycle of collaboratively constructing collective knowledge that is then internalized by individuals.

The fundamental condition for any collective learning is the members having a certain self-awareness as being a group rather than merely a loose network of individuals who frequent the same spaces to get information on a topic. Research has demonstrated that such a sense of community can indeed be identified in the case of right-wing extremist digital spheres, with virtual communities not merely being an extension of 'real-world' connections or static repositories but "real social spaces" (Bowman-Grieve 2009: 990). Most such research has focused on user communities of specific sites and forums. The online scene of the revolutionary extremist right does not, however, form one

cohesive unit; rather, it can be conceptualized as a "series of distinct yet overlapping 'sub-subcultures'" (Baele, Brace, and Coan 2021: 66). These sub-cultures are nested, with the violent revolutionary extremist right being a subculture of the wider far right; it is itself fragmented into several communities defined by ideological particularities and/or online bases. Due to the largely anonymous structure of larger online interactions, both the overall accelerationist movement and its virtual subcultures are fuzzy sets rather than clearly delineated entities. However, following Wenger, a learning community gets its cohesion not necessarily from a clear delineation or organizational embeddedness but from its members engaging in a shared practice. In the case of the insurrectionary accelerationist right, this practice can be seen as the promotion of violence in the interest of bringing about a race war. Actual terrorist attacks are designed to further this objective; they are not the objective itself. Hence, they only acquire meaning in the sense of "doing [i.e., acting] in a historical and social context" (Wenger 1998: 47). The foundation for the dynamic negotiations of this meaning is mutual engagement – which, according to our model, is the first dimension linking practice and the community.

The Digital Infrastructures of Mutual Engagement

The digital infrastructure for this engagement comprises a range of tools and platforms of virtual communication. These vary in their dedication to accelerationism: In addition to web forums explicitly focused on fascist topics, extreme right-wing discourse is also institutionalized in un- or weakly regulated larger platforms, as well as repurposing niche or even decidedly mainstream channels (Conway, Scrivens, and Macnair 2019). Consistent with De Laat and Simons' (2002) description of learning communities as emergent, the insurrectionist accelerationist movement is a genuine product of the internet rather than a continuation of earlier neo-Nazi and right-wing extremism.[15] The focal point of its origin lies in the web forum Iron March, which existed from 2011 to 2017 and "served as the incubator in which the strong group identity (…) developed" (Upchurch 2021: 28). After its demise, a short-lived successor emerged under the name Fascist Forge (Lee and Knott 2022), before most of the member base migrated to Telegram, which they dubbed Terrorgram (Bedingfield 2020; DFRLab 2020).[16] A second major site of online revolutionary radicalism is the ecosystem of the already mentioned chan-type imageboards, the largest of which by far is 4chan (Thorleifsson 2022; Crawford 2022). Not long after its establishment, 4chan developed a reputation for being very laissez-faire, especially on its /pol/ board dedicated to 'politically incorrect' discussions. This quickly became a hub for uncensored right-wing extremism and inspired the creation of technologically similar imageboards with even less moderation, often (but not exclusively) with purposefully derivative names like 8chan (now 8kun), 16chan, Neinchan or Krautchan. In a comparative study, Baele, Brace, and Coan (2021) have identified a spectrum, with 4chan hosting a variety of types of discussion, including mainstream political debates (although usually with a far-right bent), and the smaller derivatives, some of which are only accessible on the dark web, being more extreme and sectarian, serving as a bridge between the 'chan-verse' and explicit accelerationist channels. There are also connections to forums of radical movements with related themes, like the so-called "manosphere" of radical misogynists and anti-feminists (Rothermel 2020). Much of the user base of Iron March had frequented chan boards prior to the creation of the forum, and many continued to do so (Upchurch 2021: 29–30). While there is no way to definitively

[15] Which is, of course, also active on the internet.
[16] At the end of 2021, Telegram banned most of the accelerationist channels.

link specific chan users with their Iron March identities and vice versa, references by users make it clear that there are clear overlaps in membership. For example, even years after Iron March was taken offline, one 4chan user lamented its loss and the general crackdown on extremist online spaces:

> "I miss Iron March. I miss the sense of camaraderie and purpose the writings gave us. (…) With the fall of infinite chan [sic – actually infinity chan, another name for 8chan], are there other fascist stronghold [sic] still left in the clear net? What about onion [a reference to the darknet]?" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/227765101, No. 227765101) [17]

References to accelerationist beliefs in general are also widespread on chan boards, with adherents trying to convince others to read core material and users discussing current events in light of the accelerationist creed.

In addition to dedicated discussion boards, the movement also uses the whole spectrum of services available on the Web 2.0.[18] The accelerationist base is largely made up of (male) digital natives, who organically frequent several corners of the internet and in this sense do not categorically distinguish between their extremist and regular use of it; there is thus a focus, for example, on services associated with video games, like Discord, Twitch, and Steam (Schlegel 2021). Steam is a distribution service for video games that also provides a hub to discuss and play games together. For a time, far-right topics and even groups explicitly dedicated to extremist and accelerationist culture were common, with for example AWD (https://archive.ph/2bHhA) and 8chan's /pol/ board (https://archive.ph/d7IVn) having their own groups.[19] While one purpose of these groups was to spread the extremist message, a study of a large number of far-right Steam groups suggests that gaming seems to be "largely used as a means of community building rather than as a deliberate strategy for radicalisation or recruitment" (Vaux, Gallagher, and Davey 2021: 8). Members of the accelerationist movement engage in a shared hobby of playing video games (most of which are not per se radical, but fit the outlook of the community, like first-person shooters and strategy games enabling the player to control Nazi Germany), thereby deepening their connections and strengthening the foundations for the mutual engagement in their revolutionary practice. Steam has been implicated also in a concrete act of terrorism: David Sonboly, who killed nine immigrants in Munich in 2016, was an avid user of the platform, where he was a member of far-right discussion groups; through these groups, he also communicated with another attacker, an American who carried out a shooting at a school in 2017 (Hartleb 2020: 99–101). Given the nebulous and decentralized nature of the collective, such seemingly innocuous spaces can therefore be important nodes in the wider online shared action arena of the revolutionary right, in which its adherents form a web of indirect relations despite often not participating in the same concrete spaces.

Other examples of the indirect mutual engagement of the extremist milieu can be found in the manifestos that almost all of the recent accelerationist terrorists produced (Ware 2020: 3–4). These often contain clear references to their common online subculture as well as to terrorist predecessors. Brenton Tarrant mentioned the attack by Dylann Roof on a Black church in Charleston 2015

[17] I cite posts on online forums with the URL of the relevant thread and the number of the specific post.
[18] After recent crackdowns by providers, however, the space is shrinking.
[19] While most of the overt extremist groups have since been deleted by Steam, others like the Germanische Zockergemeinschaft, a 400+ strong gaming community for "Patrioten, Nationalisten, Nationalsozialisten, nationale Sozialisten, Deutschsozialisten" (https://steamcommunity.com/groups/germanischezg), or Good Luck Ebola-Chan, a group celebrating Ebola as a cause of death in Africa as well as the terrorist attack by Dylann Roof (https://steamcommunity.com/groups/GoodLuckEbolaChan/), still exist.

(Ghansah 2017) and specifically cited Breivik as an inspiration, while at the same time peppering his document with in-jokes addressed to the chan community (Tarrant 2019); likewise, John Earnest, who just a few months after Tarrant's Christchurch murders attacked a synagogue in Poway, California, killing one, referenced as inspirations "Robert Bowers, Brenton Tarrant, (…) Moon Man, and Pink Guy", mixing (likely somewhat tongue-in-cheek) his terrorist role models (Bowers killed 11 in an attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018 [Silber 2019: 37–38]) with figures of popular memes on imageboards (Earnest 2019: 5). Patrick Crusius, the shooter who later the same year killed 22 people in El Paso, targeting Hispanics (Macklin 2019b), was equally straightforward: "In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto"; and while his writing was much more sober and without overt chan jokes, he revealed his cultural roots by justifying his choice of soft targets with the advice that attacks do not need to "fulfil your super soldier COD fantasy", referencing the popular shooter game 'Call of Duty' (Crusius 2019: 1, 5). Philip Manshaus, who killed his stepsister before his (thwarted) attack on a mosque in Bærum, Norway, announced his intentions on the Endchan imageboard (Ayyadi 2019). References to both gaming and chan culture were prevalent in the writings of Stephan Balliet, the attacker of the synagogue in Halle, which will be looked at in detail in the final section of this paper. Finally, Payton Gendron, who murdered 10 African-Americans in a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, in May 2022 (Abbas et al. 2022), not only peppered his manifesto with copies of memes and stated that he had "learned the truth" [about "white genocide"] from "browsing 4chan", but also unequivocally declared that he "would follow Tarrant's lead" and the attacks of so many others like him, mentioning most of the terrorists listed above by name (Gendron 2022a: 13).

The Joint Enterprise of Terror

While the extreme right-wing online sphere thus provides the infrastructure for direct and indirect engagement in a community, what gives this community meaning is the pursuit of a joint enterprise. This enterprise is not just a stated goal or purpose – it is an ongoing negotiation process that creates relations of mutual accountability that define the circumstances under which the community pursues its practice (Wenger 1998: 79–82). In the case of the accelerationists, this can be thought of as norms and templates of interpretation that delineate what it means to 'prevent white genocide' and 'accelerate the race war'. It is based on a combination of racist, antisemitic, misogynist, and anti-liberal principles coupled with the belief that the 'white race' is under imminent threat. An analysis of the most common words and bigrams on several chan forums shows that the users are obsessed with racial categories, with "white" and variations of "white people" the most frequent, and references to Blacks and Jews (often using slurs) almost always in the top 10 (Baele, Brace, and Coan 2021: 69–72).[20] Antisemitism, as Thorleifsson determines, "is the 'master frame' at /pol/ and by far the most prevalent form of online racism", consistent with the persistent narrative of a Jewish conspiracy according to which Western countries are controlled by so-called Zionist Occupied Governments (ZOG) (Thorleifsson 2022: 291). Discussions around this topic can be described as 'variations on a theme' and the community largely defines itself as "redpilled" – i.e., having

[20] Immigrants are also a category heavily talked about in a negative way; however, a large variety of terms are used, with the result that specific ones do not make the list of most common words.

discovered the truth – about the threat to the 'white race'.[21] The marking of enemy groups in the digital world is directly reflected in the targets of actual terrorist attacks: Breivik murdered what he saw as 'liberal traitors'; Roof and Gendron attacked African-Americans; Bowers, Earnest and Balliet targeted synagogues; Tarrant and Manshaus mosques; and Sonboly and Crusius those they perceived to be immigrants.

What sets the revolutionary militant community apart from the larger far-right ideology is less what they diagnose as the supposed problem than their approach to a solution. The creed of the accelerationist movement is that "there is no political solution" (Kriner, Conroy, and Ashwal 2021; SPLC 2020). The approach that defines the joint extremist practice emerged in conjunction with the community itself, which deliberately distanced itself not only from the more 'moderate' radical far-right movement, such as far-right political parties or the alt-right, but also from established extremist organizations and discourses. The Iron March forum in particular was created to "fill a niche in the online neo-fascist environment, which lacked a community for '21st century Fascists'", the self-proclaimed audience of the forum (Upchurch 2021: 30–31). The common undertaking was specifically constructed from the point of view of younger, internet-socialized men, who became interested in neo-Nazism and fascism but found traditional extremist groups and their methods unappealing. This does not mean that the community is limited to a certain age group, however – Bowers was 46 at the time of his terrorist act. He was active on the right-wing messenger Gab, where he expressed antisemitic sentiments and disdain for far-right currents that dismiss violence for tactical reasons, declaring in his last post: "Screw your optics, I'm going in" (cit. ADL 2019). Like Bowers, most members of the community have no prior institutional connections to established far-right extremist groups, even if they surely share many conventional right-wing themes and concerns. This does not imply, however, a break with historical traditions or the development of a new ideology – on the contrary, historical roots of fascism are explicitly embraced and community members make recommendations to study classic fascist works. In a compilation of philosophical-themed posts from the first few years of the forum's existence, Iron March's founder refers to a process of ideological learning:

> "It took our community 4 years (…) to formulate a more clear and comprehensive understanding of the Fascist worldview (…), addressing misconceptions and errors we have overcome. Some of these errors were simply born from limited knowledge and understanding of fascism, which new insights have swept away. Others are the result of weakness – a lack of moral courage which characterizes 'moderate' movements and thinkers. In our effort to touch the essence of fascism, we must whittle away everything which is false or which obscures the truth." (Iron March 2015a: 5–8)

That is, the movement strove to develop a 'pure' and uncompromising form of fascist struggle, explicitly stating with a reference to Breivik's attack that "we don't think murder is wrong on principle and we do not believe that every human life is sacred" (Slavros 2015a: 86). While the call for extreme violence was thus an inherent part of the community from the beginning, the specific accelerationist approach was something that developed over time. In the same foundational document

[21] The metaphor is a reference to the movie *The Matrix*, in which the protagonist is offered a blue pill for blissful ignorance or a red pill to discover the inconvenient true nature of the world – consequently, from the perspective of right-wing extremists, taking the red pill indicates that one has left the mainstream narrative and has become radicalized. The allegory has been generalized beyond the specific reference, so that a person can be 'pilled' regarding various topics (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_pill_and_blue_pill).

cited above, the author considered the "path of purposely accelerating the degeneration of the Modern World in order to help it die faster and thus make way for a new, Traditional world", but ultimately advised that "Fascism as a political ideology falls into [another] path, the path of revolting against the modern world with force" (Slavros 2015c: 24), still believing in the viability of a 'constructive' uprising.

The accelerationist strategy proper crystalized with the re-discovery of *Siege*, a hitherto mostly obscure book collecting neo-Nazi newsletters written in the first decade of the 1980s by James Mason. First made available in digital form in 2003, it was re-published by Iron March in 2015 (with new expanded editions released 2017 and 2018) and quickly gained a reputation as a kind of "neo-Nazi bible" (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 4) and required reading among militants (Newhouse 2021: 19). In the foreword to the first digital edition, the publisher succinctly summarizes the apocalyptic worldview:

> "As Mason explains, society has deteriorated to the point where it is crass idiocy to imagine that anything can be salvaged or gradually reformed by following traditional avenues of electioneering or encoded law. Likewise, SIEGE also expounds on how it is nowadays absurd to contemplate full engagement against ZOG by means of noble violence, as there is no longer the existing time, numbers, or expertise. (…). At this juncture social malaise cannot be halted, only accelerated onward to the abyss, capitulating the whole vile episode of this end cycle." (Schuster 2015: 12–13)

Advocating for small-cell and lone-actor tactics, he closes the introduction with an explicit call for violence, referencing the terrorist bombing on a government building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people in 1995: "SIEGE is to be used as a cookbook and guide. It is sincerely hoped this edition will prevail [sic] the vigilant(e) intelligence to heed a clarion call, wage battles of attrition, and act in a manner commensurate to Timothy McVeigh" (Schuster 2015: 28). Despite the fact that most of the content of the newsletters refers to 1980s America, the book's uncompromising stance and call for "revolution" struck a chord with the young community equally unsatisfied with the conventional old violent movement and the modern but legalistic alt-right. From hard-core extremist forums the idea of accelerationism was then exported to the chan-verse, where "read SIEGE!" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/214571057, No. 214571057) became a rallying cry for accepting the necessity of extreme violence and terror, and the process of adopting it is referred to as "siegepilling" (Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022: 94). 'Siegeism' provided the community with a coherent ideological and strategic framework, serving as a cornerstone for the definition of the collective struggle and baseline for consciously learning how to practice it. In 2017, the founders of Iron March even convinced the author of *Siege*, James Mason, to revise new editions of the book and provide additional writings on their websites. In these texts, Mason elaborated and updated his views, communicating to the movement "what to watch, what to believe, and who to hate" (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 11). Far from being passive consumers, his audience actively engaged with the concepts both on dedicated websites and in the wider chan network, discussing the application and implications of the approach in threads with titles like "massacres and their relationship to accelerationism" (Neinchan, cit. Crawford 2022). They also interpreted the ideology both on a philosophical basis and in relation to current politics. For example, as Johnson and Feldman (2021: 11–13) report, users focused more on feminism as an enemy, borrowing from the radical manosphere to construct an extremely degrading and sexualized image of women. Another common

theme is a certain 'told you so!' schadenfreude[22] regarding the hopes that more mainstream far-right activists had built on the Trump presidency, combined with calls for learning the lessons of his failure and embracing the accelerationist worldview. What the progression along this path of radicalization entails at the end is expressed in the most gruesome ways possible. In a collection of Telegram posts titled "Militant Accelerationism", published as a kind of primer on the movement, one author pushes the 'pilling' metaphor for the process of finding and accepting truth to the extreme by declaring "the genocide pill" to be "the final pill" (Alpha 2021a: 16).

While the need for violence is the basic tenet of this movement, fortunately the vast majority of its adherents do not engage in actual terrorism. The rationalization of this contradiction is at least an implicit part of how members negotiate the meaning of their common undertaking. In this way, the understanding of what qualifies as part of the revolutionary practice is widened, allowing the persistence of a regime of mutual accountability without generating too much cognitive dissonance. One major aspect revolves around the perceived need to ensure the survival of whites and the movement by "forming a family to form the next generation of Warriors for our Race" (Alpha 2021b, 126). Another is a common narrative of 'getting prepared', postponing violence to some future point when one can either commit to an attack or the anticipated race war has started: "[only] once you've got your base of operations set up, it'll be time to hit back. Until then, don't do anything stupid" (AA 2021: 263). Also important is partaking in the community and strengthening it by radicalizing other chan users. The discussions in fact seem to imply a certain division of labour that recognizes different roles as legitimate ways to contribute to the struggle, with one meme symbolizing the equally valuable figures of "Scholar, Warrior, Adventurer" (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/227765101, No. 227765760). Somewhat conveniently, "have fun" was even part of the official slogan of the Iron March forum (SPLC 2017).

The Shared Repertoire of Hate

The third dimension of this communitarian practice is the shared repertoire, which is made up of the combined resources available for negotiating meaning and defining the discourse and practices of the community, including norms, techniques, jargon, tools, symbols, aesthetics, mental categories, concepts, ways of expression etc. This repertoire is built up over time by the activities and mutual engagement of the community itself and interacts with the negotiations of the joint enterprise. While the negotiation of the joint enterprise sets the parameters on how to think and act, the repertoire represents the way in which these thoughts and acts can be expressed. Much of it is implicit or fleeting knowledge, but as the collective learning process progresses, portions of it are encapsulated in fixed documents, like the editions of *Siege* or the collected posts of Terrorgram. Given that interactions on the internet happen in written or (audio)visual form and are therefore preserved in observable content, however, even minor aspects of the implicit knowledge and discourse are comparatively easily accessible. In the case of the militant accelerationist movement, the shared repertoire can be described as a fusion of more mainstream aspects of internet culture (e.g., the use

[22] A Telegram entry published in a collection reads, for example: "The system is illegitimate. There is no political solution. We accepted these truths long ago, but basic bitch normalfags [slur for 'ordinary people'] are confronting them for the first time. We saw what was coming and prepared for it, while the lemmings chose the path of denial and wilful ignorance" (RWBC 2021a, 63).

of memes, video game aesthetics, a fondness for Japanese anime art, shitposting and trolling[23] etc.), the methods and language of the alt-right, and classic fascist and neo-Nazi imagery. Very broadly, it contains written text, graphics and symbols, as well as the forms of the actual violence, along with the spoken and unspoken rules of how to understand and use them. Cultural expressions are imbued with meaning through a constantly evolving interactive process. While some are relatively unambiguous, like the established symbols of Nazism (fascist aesthetics, the swastika, Nordic runes etc.), much of the repertoire only makes sense with existing knowledge and/or in light of specific contexts.

As we have already seen, accelerationists do not shy away from consuming and producing large amounts of texts (Lee and Knott 2022: 231). Consistent with the self-proclaimed image as 'truth-seekers', reading books is considered essential and several websites and messenger channels act as 'fascist libraries' with a large variety of ideological and instructional electronic texts, ranging from fascist classics like *Mein Kampf* or the works of Julius Evola to writings of post-1945 American Nazis like George Lincoln Rockwell and James Mason to esoteric and occult texts and compilations produced by the accelerationist community itself.[24] Ideological messages are also transported via fiction – the best known example is probably the 1978 book *The Turner Diaries* by William Pierce (Berger 2016), but contemporary community members also indulge in crafting supposedly 'educational' stories (Slavros and Chapel 2015; Charlie 2021: 28–29; Delta 2021: 105–115). Members then reflect upon and apply this material to current circumstances in forum and blog posts or self-published ebooks. A considerable part of the activity of learning and building the extremist repertoire thus takes the very conventional form of studying and writing, even if they emphatically frame this as being "contemplative, not intellectual" (Slavros 2015b: 19). As a philosophy of violent action, however, such cerebral engagement is not considered necessary for everybody. As one author writes in the *Next Leap* compilation,

> "it's fine if a foot soldier's understanding of fascism is limited to '1488 boots on the ground, gas the kikes race war now' [the 'motto' of Iron March – see below]. But if leaders don't personally transition to the traditional world view, then their ability to make correct decisions on basically all important issues will be compromised." (Zeiger 2015a: 136)

In addition to demonstrating a leader-follower mindset (another parallel to jihadist terrorism, where many perpetrators possess comparatively little religious knowledge, despite an extensive ideological and strategic jihadist discourse), this passage points to the second, arguably more important, type of extremist written discourse, which takes the form of forum posts and conversations in the right-wing online spheres of the chan-verse and related spaces (Conway, Scrivens, and Macnair 2019). It relies heavily on jargon and insider knowledge, as the quote above shows. Terms like "kikes" (derogatory for Jews) or "1488" (expressing adherence to white supremacy and Nazism)[25] only make sense to people who are familiar with a certain language that not only has to be learned but also constantly

[23] Shitposting refers to posting things with a lack of substance, often to derail discussions, while trolling is saying something intentionally ignorant or offensive just to get a response. While both techniques are commonly used by radicals to make a mockery of serious discussions and embarrass liberals, they are commonplace in all types of social media and often just an expression of an immature sense of humour.

[24] "NSB Library", Telegram, https://t.me/nsb_library

[25] The number refers to the '14 words' of American right-wing extremist David Lane – "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" and the Nazi greeting "Heil Hitler" with 8 representing the H as the eighth letter of the alphabet (for this and additional symbolism used by the accelerationist adherents of Iron March, see SPLC 2017).

updated as new terms and metaphors are developed and establish themselves or fade away.[26] This is an unguided process, a "struggle [for] symbolic status" (Thorleifsson 2022: 289) in which the content that is most frequently interacted with and approved of becomes – at least temporarily – the norm. The main vehicles of this process are memes, here understood in the wider original sense as "cultural units of transmission, analogous to genes" (Shifman 2013: 363). While memes are more commonly associated only with "graphics of visual and textual remixes" (Bogerts and Fieleitz 2019: 138), the mechanisms of replicating, mutating, and spreading of meanings tied to cultural artefacts also pertain to other media, language, objects, and actions. This heavy reliance on vernacular and symbols is seen by accelerationist writers themselves as perfectly fitting with their fascist tradition:

> "The tendency of fascists is to go back to the older ways, to express meaning through symbols. We adopt ancient symbols from the glorious past of our respective civilizations, and develop our own according to our modern needs and our current perspective. We express our world-view through fables, pictures and stories, rather than exclusively with technical jargon like the Marxists. (…) The same thing is progressively happening in fascist culture across the world, where one can mention '#ropeculture' and we will all chuckle knowingly, and where a party can call itself 'golden dawn' and we all know it refers to the end of the iron age. This coded language will become more complex and impenetrable as time goes on, to the point where non-fascists will become utterly unable to understand our communications." (Zeiger 2015b: 204–206)[27]

Concerning the use of slang, in addition to opaque references to right-wing imagery and openly antisemitic, racist, misogynistic, homophobic and anti-liberal slurs, which are routinely used for groups marked as enemies and serve to dehumanize them in order to reduce empathy and make violence acceptable (Munn 2019), the community also operates with the larger vocabulary of the online subculture, making it often difficult to ascertain what is precisely meant by a certain usage of a term or whether a certain post is explicitly racist. This is mostly deliberate – as many studies have demonstrated, the discourse on far-right chan boards is shrouded in layers of meaning and irony and is heavily context-dependent (Greene 2019). Expressions that begin as dark sarcastic mockery or even silly jokes can end up as insider technical terms. For instance, in chan discussions of the racist murder of Ahmaud Arbery, who was jogging when he was shot, the term "jogger" became a replacement for the n-word (Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil 2021: 989). Another example of memetic mutation is the term "boogaloo", which is derived from *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*, an obscure 1980s dance film. Among the far right, it has established itself as a synonym for a coming second civil war in the United States, even sparking a bizarre real-world militia movement (Wiggins 2021).[28]

The use of images is an arguably even bigger and more innovative part of the shared repertoire and has been studied extensively in the context of the far right's use of this technique (Bogerts and

[26] In this regard, the lingo of the far-right is, of course, not different from any other (youth) slang.

[27] #Ropeculture is in reference to the 'Day of the Rope', the day of revolution and mass murder in the *Turner Diaries* novel, while 'Golden Dawn' (a Greek right-wing party) and 'Iron Age' refer to a cyclical view of history in which the current iron age will lead to collapse and be replaced with a new 'Golden Age'.

[28] The title of the movie refers to a dance style popular in the 1970s based on an originally African-American street dance "boogaloo". The film was seen by critics as a derivative rehash at the time; in the online circles steeped in retro popular culture, the title developed into a joking generic reference to unoriginal sequels detached from its initial context. As such, it was taken up by anti-government militias and the far right as a code for a repetition of the American Civil War. It is a prime example for the unpredictable and sometimes confusing cultural evolution of signifiers on the internet in general and the heavy use of irony and jokes by the new far right socialized in internet subculture.

Fieleitz 2019; Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil 2021). Like their written slang, the visual language used by the extremist community draws heavily on mainstream or 'moderate' alt-right imagery, which they adapt to their purposes. A well-known example of alt-right appropriation is the character of Pepe the Frog, a decidedly apolitical cartoon figure which was adopted by the far right as an ironic symbol for white nationalism and evolved into a symbol that can be very explicit or serve as a kind of open signifier (Miller-Idriss 2019: 126–128). For example, Pepe is sometimes depicted in Nazi uniforms or committing violent acts, but at other times the images themselves convey nothing sinister and acquire their meaning only in juxtaposition with a certain violent context (Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil 2021: 986–987). The shared repertoire of the community consists therefore of knowledge not only about the memetic resources but also about how to creatively and appropriately employ them. These norms, in turn, embody the trajectories of learning that lead to the current interpretation of memes. This conforms to the two dimensions Wenger (1998: 83) ascribes to repertoires of practice, namely that they "reflect the history of mutual engagement" and "remain inherently ambiguous".

This does not mean, however, that memes and symbols do not sometimes develop into quite unambiguous displays of fascist and accelerationist ideology. One example of the construction of explicit knowledge for further use is the adaptation of a meme that depicts a stereotypical Nordic male replying "yes" in an unflappable way to some statement, usually some sort of accusation or something intended to elicit shock. Due to its versatility (the specific meaning of the meme depends on its combination with something else), it was for a time the most shared meme on the sample of chan boards examined in a study by Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil (2021: 985). While the meme had racist undertones even from the start due to its idealized depiction of a white male, it was heavily adapted by the community to celebrate the Christchurch terrorist attack. The Nordic male is here replaced with a figure clad in black, with glowing red eyes and holding a weapon reminiscent of the gun used by Tarrant, coldly replying "yes" to a figure decrying the eventual collapse of society (Ben Am and Weimann 2020: 141). The style is indicative of how members of the accelerationist community like to view themselves – steadfast and emotionless, powerful and merciless. The imagery includes details such as the emblem on the figure's balaclava, which depicts a 'black sun' (sometimes also called 'Sonnenrad'). Most obviously, this further identifies the figure with Brenton Tarrant, who used the symbol in his manifesto, but it is also an example of how the meme culture of the chan-verse is connected with more explicit right-wing imagery in the accelerationist practice repertoire. The black sun is an established neo-Nazi symbol, often serving as a stand-in for the swastika in countries where that symbol is banned. It features heavily in more openly fascist accelerationist images along with other Nazi elements, important historical and more contemporary figures like Adolf Hitler, George Lincoln Rockwell (founder of the American Nazi party), and James Mason himself, and right-wing terrorists like Timothy McVeigh and Anders Breivik. Beyond that, however, specifically accelerationist online spaces (like the successors to Iron March) and publications are also marked by a distinctly aggressive and violent aesthetic not usually found in the chan-verse. Images are usually gritty and dark, with black being the dominant colour along with red and white (the colours of Nazi Germany), and feature propaganda slogans and threats along with depictions of actual or threatened violence and antisemitic and racist tropes (for examples, see Johnson and Feldman 2021: 11–14; Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022). The different stylistic presentation does not, however, necessarily indicate a fundamentally different attitude to violence compared to many chan memes – some depictions of extreme violence are basically

identical, even if in one case the act is being committed by a cartoonish Pepe the frog and in the other by a gruesome masked extremist (see Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil 2021: 6 vs. Johnson and Feldman 2021: 13).

A characteristic feature is the representation of accelerationist figures with face masks showing the lower half of a human skull. This type of mask has become probably the most distinctive symbol of allegiance to the insurrectionary accelerationist community, both online and offline; accordingly, some have called this community the "skull mask network" (Upchurch 2021: 27). [29] Its precise origins are uncertain (Hay 2021), but by the time the Iron March network consolidated itself and AWD was founded in 2015, the widely available mask had been adopted as one of the central elements of the accelerationist 'brand', with members wearing it in propaganda videos and integration of the image into the official 'coats of arms' of the forum to exemplify the "21st century face of fascism" (reproduced in SPLC 2017). As such, it migrated back to the wider digital spheres, where the mask – now also called "siege mask" – evolved into a visual shorthand for being 'siegepilled' and later for a more general allegiance to the extremist far right, as can be seen in its use by some of the rioters who stormed the US Capitol in January 2021 (Hay 2021). This malleability is characteristic of the visual repertoire of the community, making it easy to be picked up, modified, and adapted for different contexts.

Finally, the importance of the shared repertoire of the movement is also expressed in the violence and terrorism committed in its name. Many recent perpetrators have drawn heavily on internet subculture in general and the repertoire developed by the community in particular. Several of the attackers explicitly expressed their allegiances and cultural background in the posts and documents they distributed on internet platforms of the community prior to their attacks (Hartleb 2020; Ware 2020). Brenton Tarrant is perhaps the most prominent case – his manifesto, which referenced the "Great Replacement" narrative in its title, is full of both tongue-in-cheek and overt allusions to accelerationist imagery and chan insider jokes (Tarrant 2019). His announcement of the attack on 8chan also framed his actions in the language of chan culture by referring to it as an attempt to "stop shitposting and (…) make a real life effort post" (https://archive.is/1oDKC; Macklin 2019a: 18).[30] Likewise, the Tarrant-inspired wannabe terrorist Philip Manshaus, who attempted to attack a mosque in Baerum in Norway, described his intentions as to "bump the race war thread irl [in real life]" (cit. Ayyadi 2019).[31] Later, a poster on 4chan proclaimed him to be "one of us" despite his ultimate failure (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/227876737, No. 227877114).

The repertoire can also be seen in the form of the attacks themselves. Rather than bombings (the method historically most often associated with terrorism), they are almost exclusively carried out as direct shooting assaults against soft targets. This is despite the fact that more elaborate tactics are widely discussed within the community, with many calls to "focus on real blows to [the System's] infrastructure" (3S 2021: 48), for example by targeting train tracks (Alpha 2021d: 41) or power stations (Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022: 105). Interestingly, its most important inspirational figure, Anders Breivik, also argued in his manifesto for quite elaborate tactics, which he subsequently demonstrated by combining the use of explosives with a mass shooting disguised as a police officer (Macklin and Bjørgo 2021). The reliance on shooting rampages may be partly due to

[29] According to experts cited by Hay (2021), it is no longer common to actually don a skull mask in practice; however, as a symbol it is still prevalent in accelerationist propaganda (Terrorgram 2021a).
[30] In internet lingo, in contrast to shitposting, an 'effort post' refers to a longer posting that is well thought-out and written.
[31] 'Bumping a thread' refers to the practice of commenting on a dormant topic in order to bring it back to the attention of other users and revive discussions.

sheer narcissist tendencies (Bushman 2018) and operational incompetence by the terrorists, but it also points to links between their tactical approaches and the internalized repertoire of their online community. The assaults are heavily influenced by the "cultural script of school shootings" (Sandberg et al. 2014: 277). School shootings are, tragically, not only a common occurrence that thus provide a readily available model for how to conduct armed attacks; they also feature prominently in discussions of the online community, where they are ironically celebrated in the typical language of the chan-verse (Encyclopedia Dramatica 2022a).[32] Many school shooters have become twisted role models for young men feeling alienated from modern society, who mingle with more overt ideological extremists in the same online spaces. Payton Gendron considered the possibility of "attack[ing] a black elementary school"; in addition, he referenced a non-school-related mass shooting in Binghampton, New York, from which he learned that it would be possible to block doors with his car (Gendron 2022b: 7). Secondly, many authors have diagnosed a so-called "gamification of terror" (Evans 2019; Schlegel 2020). This concept has been applied both to the application of gaming elements in non-gaming contexts (e.g., using reward systems and gamified language) and the use of video game elements (or actual video games) in propaganda and radicalization material. The most apparent manifestation of the former is the ranking of perpetrators according to their 'high score' – i.e., the number of people they murdered and injured in their attacks. While the 'high score' is a popular meme in accelerationist propaganda and incitement (see e.g. Loadenthal, Hausserman, and Thierry 2022: 100), it is a far older concept (Evans 2019) that is applied in the chan-verse and related sites for all kinds of violent acts, with terrorist attacks and school shootings being treated in the same framework (Encyclopedia Dramatica 2022b). Regarding the tactics of violence, gamification can be seen in the way that much of the presentation of attacks follows the aesthetics and mechanisms of video games. Tarrrant executed his attack with a go-pro camera connected to his helmet, replicating the look of first-person shooter games and creating an immersive experience for viewers who were already very familiar with these kinds of visuals. The community consequently seized on this format in their creative exploitation of the attack, demonstrating how terrorists both employ the shared repertoire of the community they participated in and contribute to its further development (Lakhani and Wiedlitzka 2022).

Militant Accelerationism as a Community of Practice

In summary, through ever-changing mutual interactions in overlapping spheres of 'edgy' internet and gaming subculture, right-wing extremism, and accelerationist revolutionary propaganda, in which the joint enterprise is defined and reflected upon and a continually evolving shared repertoire is built from fused subcultural elements, the participants of this discourse construct a community of practice. Collective learning is inherent to this process – as Wenger writes, "what they learn *is* their practice. Learning is not (…) a special category of activity" (1998: 96; emphasis in original). Unlike classic understandings of 'community', the nature of this community is fuzzy and decentralized, with no clear boundaries and a lot of grey areas in which neither particular individuals nor entire exchanges and memes can be identified as being specific to this community and its practice. This is due not least to the largely pseudo- or completely anonymous participation and the thick layers of irony that permeate most of the discourse. However, as we have seen, the concepts of collective learning also allow for large and looser structures like the integration of different types of actors and

[32] Encyclopedia Dramatica is a satirical Wikipedia-style website acting as a politically incorrect and offensive compendium of internet and trolling subculture.

organizations in social movements (Hassan and Staggenborg 2015). Such assemblages often comprise "a core group and many peripheral members" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015: 3). In the case of the insurrectionist accelerationist movement, at the community's core lies the "skull mask network" (Upchurch 2021: 27), which Newhouse characterizes as a "multi-node structure" (Newhouse 2021: 17), that emerged in the early years of Iron March and is responsible for setting the agenda and basic parameters of the movement, as well as maintaining collective memory, often in tangible form as compendiums and guidebook-like publications. Other focal points are terrorist acts and their supposedly lone-wolf perpetrators who largely emerge from the chan-verse, which can be interpreted as being a layered periphery, from small extremist places like Neinchan to 8chan/kun and larger and more general arenas like 4chan. In this diffuse milieu of online spaces, members of the core mingle with devoted adherents and more loosely aligned individuals, as well as the broader chan 'public'. Peripheral members may drift in and out of the community, not fully subscribe to the doctrine, or even participate in the discourse 'ironically'. Nevertheless, by engaging – even if only temporarily – in the production and dissemination of memes and the negotiation of meaning of accelerationist ideology and violence, they are still part of the community's practice.

In this way, the accelerationist community truly exists on a collective level. What holds it together is the existence of the core and the arena of shared action, which allow for a certain degree of coherence even though the connections between community members are often indirect. Despite this largely anonymous and open arrangement, through its practices the community has developed a distinct collective identity and a sense of solidarity and belonging – thus fulfilling all criteria that Kilgore saw as necessary for a "learning system" (1999: 197). This is expressed, for example, in the interest in expanding networks to other platforms, like the establishment of 8chan groups on Steam, or in the efforts to keep certain subcommunities going when they lose their original platforms, like the exodus of 8chan's /pol/ community to places like Neinchan (Crawford 2022). Chans often regard each other as allies and may even host backups of boards on other chans as a precautionary measure in case of deplatforming. Another example is the establishment of Fascist Forge as a substitute for Iron March, and the subsequent migration to Telegram when Fascist Forge went offline. The accelerationists use extensive in-group/out-group language in their communications; they not only clearly mark their enemies, but also strongly distance themselves from "movementarians" and "normalfags" (to quote some of the more harmless labels). Brenton Tarrant's last post on 8chan exemplifies the intense loyalty and sense of community that this decentralized collective has achieved: "It's been a long ride and despite all your rampant faggotry, fecklessness and degeneracy, you are all top blokes and the best bunch of cobbers a man could ask for" (https://archive.is/1oDKC).[33]

One important reason for this keen sense of identity is the strong branding that has evolved around the community, including common symbols, slang, and insider knowledge. Rather paradoxically, the chan-verse garners strength and a sense of belonging in spite of its simple, anonymous and impersonal nature – in a way, with each new post presenting a clean slate, it's a perfect meritocracy. Like Tarrant, John Earnest professed loyalty to 8chan in his manifesto, addressing "the true anons out there (you know who you are)" and declaring the /pol/ board "the product of unadulterated truth" (2019: 6). The publications of Iron March and the later Terrorgram, on the other hand, present slick accounts of both the ideological foundations and the activities encouraged within the movement and

[33] While the slurs are clearly meant tongue-in-cheek, "cobbers" is Australian/New Zealand slang for 'buddies' or 'mates'.

are truly collective works (Iron March 2015; Terrorgram 2021a, 2021b). Like with many subcultures, a large part of the appeal of this particularly extreme identity is the opportunity to feel like part of an elite, a select group even within the larger far right – as one adherent writes in a blog post addressed at "readers of SIEGE that are in the beginner phase", the accelerationist community was "not intended for the average 'Movementarian', and this is certainly not intended for Right Wingers, Classical Fascists, 'Fashy goys' (…) frauds" (Snyder n.d.). This elite status is not only derived from the hyper-masculine and martial self-presentation, as exemplified in the self-portrayals as masked and red-eyed purveyors of violence, but to a large extent also from the complementary self-perception as truth-seekers. As one of the authors of the Iron March compilation "Next Leap" writes: "If you're on Iron March, presumably you're some sort of elite, in the sense that even if you're a loser with no friends, you should be a loser with an IQ over 120 who knows about a lot of stuff and who wants to improve himself and his nation" (Zeiger 2015a: 135–136).

Like with other violent movements, a sense of sharing some higher insight (making violence justified in the eyes of those who wage it) and a desire to evolve and learn is heavily inscribed in the identity of the community and, therefore, in its practice (Lee and Knott 2022: 225–226). In the following section, I will look more closely at the concrete mechanisms of this interplay between individual and collective processes in the self-organized construction of useable knowledge and the generation of the cognitive consensus of the accelerationist identity, utilizing the concept of the knowledge creation cycle.

The Creation of Knowledge in the Accelerationist Community

The knowledge creation cycle, or SECI model, is based on the work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). While, like most of the collective learning literature, it was developed with more formal organizations in mind, the previous discussion has shown that such concepts can fruitfully be applied to the fuzzier structure of the extremist right. Moreover, the general framework of the cycle as consisting of stages – with implicit knowledge being socialized at the collective level, where it is transformed to explicit knowledge, which is in turn combined into explicit systems of knowledge that are then internalized by individuals – lends itself well to the interaction of individual and collective learning processes in the far-right online environment. To illustrate how the model can be used to analyze the development of knowledge that becomes integral to the functioning of the accelerationist community of practice, I will concentrate here one two examples: The emergence of critical elements of the accelerationist branding and the establishment of a de facto standard for the execution and exploitation of terrorist attacks.

As described above, the community's 'brand' is characterized by a kind of fusion of classic fascism and neo-Nazism with internet subculture that is intended to create a "fascism for the 21st century" (Upchurch 2021: 30). In terms of the SECI cycle, the construction of this brand starts with the socialization phase, in which tacit knowledge is exchanged among individuals through shared experiences in daily interactions and thereby transferred to the collective level. This is a two-way process: First, existing tacit knowledge is passed on through the example set by established members of the community, with newcomers picking up appropriate behaviour through observation, imitation, and practice. In online communities, 'lurking' (that is, silently reading discussions without actively posting) is often frowned upon; however, in the online spaces of the extreme right it is often expected that users first hold back and familiarize themselves with the way things are done before actively engaging. The "rules" section of a /pol/ board on the site Meguca makes this perfectly clear: "The

rules are intentionally vague; the board culture will define the details. Not knowing what counts is not an excuse, it means you didn't lurk before posting which is cancer in itself" (https://archive.ph/ZwjU5#selection-1215.0-1215.186). Again, extensive knowledge of contextual appropriateness is often needed to fully understand and correctly use the tools and resources of communication. One novice wrote in his introductory post to the Fascist Forge forum, that he had "been a floater and lurker, just learning and watching for years" (cit. Lee and Knott 2022: 225). In a second step, users start to actively contribute based on what they have learned so far and find their way through a kind of trial-and-error process. An important socializing mechanism is the production of memes, which by design are remixes and mashups of existing knowledge with new ideas. Users bring in their experiences with this form of humour from other, more mainstream online spheres and adapt them to fit the themes and tastes of the community (Bogerts and Fielitz 2019: 142–149). An example is the "Chad Stride" meme, a depiction of a figure with grotesquely exaggerated 'manly' features (Know Your Meme 2022). "Chad" in this sense is derived from a derogatory slang term that originated in the 1990s for sexually attractive and successful men and has been adopted by the so-called Incel community (Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro 2020).[34] The visual representation was created in 2017 in an ironic meme showing the differences between "Chads" and "virgins"; it subsequently was taken up in the extreme right-wing sphere. There, the original sarcastic meaning was adapted to the hyper-masculine ideals of the community and used not in a mocking, but (even if still somewhat tongue-in-cheek) admiring way (for an example, see https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/152761259, No. 152770603). This process is akin to informal apprenticeships as envisioned in the concept of the community of practice. As Lee and Knott succinctly summarize,

> "by lurking, [members are] able to witness and then imitate the self-presentation of high-status members and their engagement with others online. By experimentation, they [are] able to explore the kind of appeals and positions that gained favour within the forum, and to learn from the failures of others." (2022: 232)

Instead of a single authority – a master –, collective feedback is provided through the aggregated action of other members, who interact with contributions (or do not do so). The technical mechanisms of social media mean that content that is interacted with more is brought to the attention of ever more users, often supported by formal up-/down-vote instruments, and thereby becomes part of the accepted repertoire. Another example of socialization is the introduction of the skull mask into the accelerationist community. Masks and bandanas of this style were widespread and popular, for instance, in the biker and hooligan milieus well before they were adopted as a sign for violent extremism. As Hay (2021) reports, it is likely that members just thought that they would fit into the style and image of the community and its use gradually spread, until it was consciously adopted as part of propaganda. Moreover, the skull look harks back to the *Totenkopf* insignia of German SS troops in World War II. Knowledge about this historical time and its iconography is naturally great among people interested in far-right spaces.

When implicitly shared knowledge matches and finds the approval of the community, it enters the externalization phase, in which implicit knowledge is converted to explicit, articulated knowledge.

[34] "Incel" refers to "involuntary celibate", a self-styled descriptor of a community of men who define themselves as unable to get a romantic or sexual partner not due to their own failings but because of the shallowness of women attracted to physically fit "chads".

This crystallization of knowledge is the result of a collective process of reflection. In the original concept this is a conscious effort, but through the mechanisms of social media it can potentially also happen in a largely unconscious, self-organized way. The difference from the socialization phase can be illustrated by comparing the unwritten norms of web communities that newcomers have to learn through observing to explicit rules that they have to acknowledge and obey. In order to transition from socialization to externalization, knowledge brought in from outside the community has to be translated into its language and cognitive consensus. The differences can sometimes be subtle, especially in online spaces that rely on fixed and written communication. For example, it is difficult to clearly delineate implicit from externalized meme knowledge. Still, when a meme has been established in a way that it can be used as a shorthand that everyone understands, it can be considered quasi-codified. This is the case, for instance, for the aforementioned Chad Stride meme, which has been adapted by the community to depict mass-shooter terrorists in an idealized fashion (Ben Am and Weimann 2010: 140). It has also been employed to portray a generic idealized, "siege-pilled" accelerationist as contrasted with a 'weak' follower of the movementarian alt-right.

In an innovative move, this decentralized and self-organized process of generating and screening material was used by the more organized portions of the movement, especially AWD, to produce propaganda and branding essentially in a crowdsourced fashion (Newhouse 2021: 19). An essential element of the developed stylization is, of course, the skull mask, which was externalized and codified as an explicit symbol at the very latest with its inclusion on the 'coat of arms' of Iron March (SPLC 2017). Black-clad figures wearing the mask have since become ubiquitous in the community's branding efforts. Another example of the translation of implicit knowledge into crystallized form is the use of the logo of Atomwaffen Division; here implicit knowledge about the black-and-white coat of arms insignia of German Waffen-SS divisions in WWII enabled the logo to evolve into a pseudo-heraldic, with the crest being filled with different symbols and references for different groups and purposes. For instance, the published collection of accelerationist Telegram posts displays a version with the Telegram logo (Terrorgram 2021b); another compendium billed as a "Handbook" features the swastika, a balaclava referencing the skull mask, and the infinity sign as a reference to 8chan (Terrorgram 2021a).[35]

The examples show how the components of a distinct brand can emerge in an unorganized, collective way. In the subsequent combination phase, those elements can then be merged with different types of explicit knowledge of the community, edited, and processed to form more complex and systematic explicit higher-order knowledge. This is the stage at which tangible intended products of learning are created, in the form of compendia, models, best practices, declarations, guidelines, and handbooks that distil the collective learning and practice of the community and can be disseminated as material for studying. The goal of the combination phase is to produce a baseline for the further practice of the community and establish the collective memory so that it no longer relies on specific persons and platforms. Due to the network redundancy structure of the internet, it is basically impossible to remove even clearly illegal content.[36] One example of the progression from socialized implicit knowledge to explicit and then combined knowledge in the extreme right is James Mason's pivotal book *Siege* (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 3–4). While the 1993 version that collected his 1980s newsletters was digitized as a second edition in 2003, it remained largely obscure until

[35] For examples of adaptations by different affiliate groups in the wider accelerationist network see Shadnia et al. 2022: 6.
[36] The primary documents used in this study are a case in point – all of them are comparatively easily available despite being officially suppressed or even illegal to share.

2015, when members of Iron March introduced it to the community and made it a subject of collective attention. The book was then externalized in the form of a new edition – reformatted but textually identical — under the Iron March brand (Mason 2015). As described above, the title of the book quickly became virtually synonymous with the brand itself, prompting further explication and combination: not only new and expanded editions of *Siege* (Mason 2017, 2018) but even the return of the author himself to the neo-Nazi scene. In characteristic fashion, this was a 'grassroots' initiative – a teenage member of Atomwaffen had privately developed a friendship with James Mason and convinced him to not only endorse the community but also produce new material for the new *Siege* editions and the "Siege Culture" website (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 7).

In addition to *Siege*, the community has produced a range of publications ranging from "bomb-making manuals to Nazi tracts and occult books" (Newhouse 2021: 18). Of special importance for the preservation of the identity of the community are, however, collected editions of their otherwise ephemeral online communications. These also exemplify the stylistic development of the community: while the 2015 compendium of Iron March posts was an accessible but mostly dry and text-heavy tome, the 2021 "Militant Accelerationism: A Collective Handbook" published by accelerationist Telegram channels (Terrorgram 2021a) combined short agitation texts, stories, and incitements to violence with bold and stylish background designs and harsh imagery drawn from externalized brand elements like the skull mask, black-clad siege figures, and fascist symbols. For the construction of identity and collective knowledge, both content and presentation are crucial. Not everything is, however, codified in this form –, for example, there is (at least to my knowledge) no specifically extremist handbook or explicit style guide for the creation of memes. On the one hand, this conforms to the inherently malleable nature of the medium, which champions creativity and evolution. On the other hand, the diffused collective memory is in this case much larger than the dedicated platforms of the accelerationist community, with memes spreading easily from fringe to more mainstream platforms and establishing themselves as quasi-standards in the discourse (Bogerts and Fielitz 2019; Crawford, Keen, and Suarez-Tangil 2021). Visual markers like the skull mask tie the memes to the more direct and codified ideological material in the community's shared repertoire.

Finally, the cycle concludes with the internalization phase, where explicit and organized knowledge is absorbed by individuals, becoming implicit by being integrated into their cognitive apparatus and connected to personal experiences where it can be transferred and used in practical situations. Elements of accelerationist ideology, strategy, and aesthetics are thereby transformed into everyday thinking and acting, often without consciously making this connection. For many young extremists growing into the movement in the 2010s, for example, *Siege* was a "foundational text – one arguably rivalling even *Mein Kampf*" (Johnson and Feldman 2021: 3). Its lessons and worldview are deeply ingrained into their psyches. The same is true on a more subtle level for the martial aesthetics and the dark sarcastic mocking nature of memes, which both serve to dehumanize groups marked as enemies and desensitize consumers to violence (Munn 2019). This is, of course, the ultimate aim of all propaganda. As the editors of the Iron March "Next Leap" anthology wrote in the preface, "having read this book, you will already be informed enough to tell the Truth apart from lies, and thus you will be sure-footed on this path. What will truly matter then, is how you will participate in this struggle, how you will convert your certainty into Action" (Iron March 2015: 5).

It is this action that I will look at in the final portion of this section, tracing the establishment of a sort of blueprint for accelerationist terrorist attacks and their community exploitation through the stages of the knowledge cycle. From a collective perspective, the socialization phase involves

primarily online discussions about far-right ideologies in general and accelerationist ideas in particular, about historical terrorist attacks (the one by Anders Breivik being the most important), and about other acts of violence (like school shootings), as well as relevant knowledge about survivalism, weapons, IT, and other technical aspects. Therefore, the relevant spaces for the socialization phase are not only explicitly right-wing ones, but also mainstream platforms that provide, for example, information on weapons (such as video tutorials on YouTube) or access to online video games (though specifically far-right niches may emerge in these spaces, as happened with Steam). In this respect, it is important to recognize that neither the hardcore fascist forums nor the chan-verse limit discussions to political topics, and they are also used by community members simply "as a platform to discuss specific interests, [and] seemingly common day-to-day experiences" (Holt, Freilich, and Chermak 2022: 377). In this way, implicit knowledge can also be shared about tangential but ultimately essential aspects of later attacks, like technical information on how to produce videos. More generally, connecting simply via tastes in music, movies, or video games also strengthens the bonds and sense of belonging of the community, giving participants the feeling of being heard and recognized.

There is no evidence that any of the terrorist mass shooters belonged to the core of the community active on Iron March and its successors; violence by known members (for example of AWD) has taken the form of only comparatively small-scale or personal acts (Upchurch 2021: 34). Due to the anonymity of most internet interactions, there is little data on the specific posting behaviour of most right-wing terrorists in general. An exception is the Pittsburgh shooter Robert Bowers, whose posting history on Gab was public and has revealed his entrenched belief in a "genocide against Whites" as well as genocidal antisemitism, with sentiments such as "extermination [of Jews] cannot come soon enough" (cit. ADL 2019: fn 1). Most recently, the Buffalo shooter Payton Gendron published not only a conventional manifesto, but also a detailed diary-like log of Discord entries in which he mentions his usage of chan sites, stating for example that he "browses (…) /pol/ on 4chan everyday" and providing actual screenshots of some of his supposed comments (Gendron 2022c: 7, 15). In other cases, the immersion of the terrorists in this community, especially the chan subculture, can be inferred from the ways they announced their attacks, directly addressing their intended audience on their preferred channels. In this way, they included other community members as a kind of knowing co-conspirators – indicating that they saw themselves not as isolated lone wolves but part of a larger community. Brenton Tarrant's announcement quoted above was received with approval, with the first two answers "paying respects" in the form of a video game meme and wishing "godspeed Anon" (https://archive.is/1oDKC, No. 12916719; No. 12916726). Philip Manshaus, who planned an attack modelled after Tarrant's, even directly referenced the online repertoire of the community by posting a variant of the Chad Stride meme showing Tarrant, Earnest, and Crusius along with his announcement on Endchan (Ayyadi 2019). It can be assumed, therefore, that the collective practice of the accelerationist community had a substantial influence on mass shooters, particularly those following Tarrant's Christchurch attack.

The terrorist attacks themselves can be interpreted as part of the externalization phase of the cycle, in which the implicit knowledge socialized in the community is combined with other sources and translated into acts of violence and murder as well as the justification of these acts. What attackers have learned through their interactions with the community and their online practices is thus, first and foremost, that violence is not only necessary but imperative to ensure the very survival of the 'white race'. All the attackers subscribed to essentially the same fundamental narrative in which

immigration is seen as an 'invasion' that is masterminded by a nefarious minority (usually Jews) and supported by liberal elites in order to replace whites, who will be relegated to minority and slave status due to their lower birth rates than that of 'non-white' people. They also all expressed a sense of urgency that compelled them to 'do something' – as Patrick Crusius wrote, "I can no longer bear the shame of inaction" (2019: 4). However, each of them adapted this implicit knowledge to conform to his specific circumstances. The different targets of attacks can therefore be understood as different forms of externalizations of the same basic ideology of the extreme right-wing community: Dylann Roof targeted an African-American congregation, saying that Blacks are "the biggest problem for Americans", while also mentioning the "Jewish problem" and "Jewish agitation of the black race" (Roof 2015: 1). Likewise, Payton Gendron, while targeting African-Americans, emphatically declared himself an antisemite (2022a: 7). Robert Bowers's intense antisemitism led him to directly attack a Jewish institution. He had selected it because of their help for refugees, which he sarcastically referenced in a post on Gab approximately two weeks before the assault: "You like to bring in hostile invaders to dwell among us?" (cit. Silber 2019: 37). Brenton Tarrant focused explicitly on the 'invasion' narrative in his targeting of Muslims, even naming his manifesto after the theory of the "Great Replacement" (Tarrant 2019). Likewise, both David Sonboly, who saw Germany as threatened by an "Asylflut [wave of asylum seekers]" (Hartleb 2020: 98–100), and Patrick Crusius, who framed his murders as "a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas" (2019: 1), aimed at immigrants – interestingly, none of them explicitly names Jews as responsible. Tarrant writes that Jews are not enemies "so long as they do not seek to subvert or harm my people" (2019: 34), while Crusius speaks vaguely about "elites that run corporations" (2019: 3). Philip Manshaus directly followed Tarrant in his choice of targets and expressed his allegiance to him in his trial, arguing that he was acting "in self-defence" to prevent a "genocide of the white race", denying the Holocaust and presenting himself as a staunch neo-Nazi in the process (The Local 2002). Finally, in his manifesto John Earnest holds Jews responsible for basically every ill on the planet, specifically referencing the "use [of] mass immigration to displace the European race" (Earnest 2019: 1). Thus, despite the different choices of targets, the worldview of the shooters pretty closely follows the ideological narrative of the online community; however, not all of them explicitly draw on the accelerationist strategy. Tarrant devotes two pages of his manifesto to "Destabilization and Accelerationism [as] tactics for victory" (2019: 96–97), also referencing a popular accelerationist slogan that "revolutionary solution is the only possible solution" (Tarrant 2019: 21). Payton Gendron copied Tarrant's passages on accelerationism almost verbatim in his manifesto (2022a: 176–177). Crusius and Manshaus explicitly refer to Tarrant, though they do not elaborate further. Earnest speaks of "revolution" and hints at an accelerationist trope, namely that there are roles for "[t]hose who spread the truth, those who defend the race, and those who continue the race (having children)" (2019: 1). Interestingly, however, none of them used a skull mask, which had become synonymous with the movement by then, nor do the manifestos explicitly quote *Siege*.

It is also noteworthy that all terrorists who managed to start an attack chose to confront representatives of their supposed enemies head-on, instead of targeting more fundamental aspects of society like critical infrastructure – even though this features heavily in accelerationist discourse. In fact, despite this focus in the discussions, this strategic knowledge is rarely externalized in the real world in the practice of the attacks. While this may be partly due to the fact that, despite the propaganda, such attacks are more dangerous and difficult as a lone actor, it also demonstrates that there is no single automatic trajectory from socialized implicit knowledge to explicit acts. A major

factor is surely the varying personalities and preferences of individual attackers, who have internalized not only accelerationist but many other kinds of knowledge. For example, it has already been shown that the script of school shootings, which have a huge cultural presence in the chan-sphere, is an influential part of the socialized implicit knowledge that forms the basis for violent externalizations. In contrast to traditional right-wing violence, the publishing of manifesto-like statements is an element that the accelerationists have in common with non-ideological and school shooters (Macklin 2019b: 2), and Sandberg et al. demonstrate several parallels between school shootings and the Breivik case (2014: 289–290). The aesthetics and operational methods of school shootings might also have been an influence in one of the most stunning innovations of right-wing terrorist knowledge, namely the livestreaming of video recordings of attacks, which Tarrant introduced and Earnest, Manshaus, and Gendron copied (all unsuccessfully), as did Balliet (Lauer 2019). Stylistically, the first-person streams exemplify the implicit imprint of video-game culture. Overall, the externalized knowledge in the form of terrorist attacks represents a coalescence of different aspects of the socialized implicit knowledge that freely circulates in accelerationist and more general online spaces. One the one hand, this collective knowledge can be seen in the emergence of a relatively coherent and spontaneous quasi-standard for chan-terroristic attacks – upload a manifesto, choose targets based on a variant of the "white genocide" theory, and execute a mass shooting, preferably streamed per video –, despite the absence of a central authority and the fact that, in some cases, considerable time that had passed since the last big attack in this style. On the other hand, none of the executed attacks was explicitly based on the established repertoire of hardcore, 'siege-pilled' accelerationism.

The combination phase is defined by merging and integrating different types of explicit knowledge to create a systematic collection of knowledge to be disseminated. One of the striking aspects of the accelerationist attacks is the degree to which the most recent terrorists had already anticipated and deliberately contributed to this stage. While Roof and Bowers were vague about their hopes for the effect their attacks would have, and instead emphasized feelings of personal obligation to act, it seems the 2019 attackers had already learned from earlier attacks; they adapt their strategy based on both their own reactions and those of their community. The intention to purposefully create knowledge elements designed to feed into a larger collective plan is stated plainly by Brenton Tarrant, who anticipated a 'multi-media' strategy in not only aiming for survival and a trial as a "better alternative to death in order to further spread my ideals by media coverage" (2019: 31) but also explicitly called on the online community to "do your part by spreading my message, making memes and shitposting as you usually do" (https://archive.is/1oDKC). Likewise, in the post accompanying the upload of his manifesto, Crusius prompted his readers to "do your part and spread this, brothers" (while proactively adding the qualification: "only (…) if the attack is successful") (Macklin 2019b: 2). Attacks are consciously thought of as parts of a larger battle (Tarrant 2019: 104–105) and sometimes even include direct calls for copycat attacks: "The Day of the Rope is here right now—that is if you have the gnads to keep the ball rolling. (…) Every anon must play his part in this revolution" (Earnest 2019: 6).

The collective readily took up the call from Tarrant, spreading the images and documents and saving them in multiple places for the collective memory. Attacks are discussed – sometimes heatedly –, interpreted, and contextualized in the online spheres of the community and over time are memorialized and achieve a folkloric status. On the third anniversary of the Christchurch attack, for example, an appreciation thread on 4chan asking for "kind words to Brenton" elicited hundreds of

reverent responses (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/367125261). Tarrant was also correct in anticipating the memefication of violence, as several examples that have become part of the accelerationist shared repertoire have already shown. Elements of the attacks are in this sense fused with accelerationist branding and expressions of chan culture to create a new canon of explicit knowledge that is to be utilized in the ongoing practice of the community. An example of the rapid decentralized emergence of a new quasi-norm of 'best practice' is the livestreaming of a video record of the attack. After Tarrant pioneered this technique, subsequent attacks that failed to provide such a stream were commented upon with disappointment in the chan milieu, revealing the powerful impact that images have on the collective memory (Lauer 2019). Producing images has become part of the operational 'how to' of right-wing terrorist practice, as the "Militant Accelerationism Handbook" states in no uncertain terms: "What's important is that you film and photograph your efforts. An image shows what we're capable of. A video shows what it will look like. (…) [T]hrough your livestream you can sleep soundly knowing you have created 5 more [terrorists] for next season" (Alpha 2021c: 35).

Another major place where the combination of knowledge into a new integrated and systematized form can be observed is the pseudo-religious canonization of attackers as "saints" that creatively appropriates elements of Crusader Christian and jihadist martyrdom culture (Ben Am and Weimann 2020). Titling a hero of the extremist right a saint goes back to the /pol/ environment in the years following the Oslo attacks. As one 4chan user declared, Breivik was "our patron saint, and the 2011 Norway shootings [were] the best 6 months this board has ever seen" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/34698836, No. 34702766). It only really took off, however, after the Christchurch attack. Tarrant was not only more recent but also more suited to becoming a role model than Breivik, who had a comparatively low online profile and was not part of the then-nascent chan community. Tarrant also had kept his writings in a familiar style and digestible length compared to Brevik's tome of over 1,500 pages. In another example of the pastiche culture of the internet, the community combined Christian with Nazi imagery to construct Tarrant as an almost god-like figure whose status as "the ultimate martyr" was at the same time presented as "attainable and desirable for members of the far-right" (Ben Am and Weimann 2020: 142–143). The idea was also merged with the long-standing cynical practice of rating mass killers according to their "high score" (itself an extension of gaming culture), creating the concept of a pantheon in which accelerationist terrorists are arranged in a hierarchy according to the number of people they murdered. Less 'successful' terrorists like Earnest and Crusius are here sometimes considered only "disciples", with debates over whether unsuccessful ones deserve any title at all; the concept was also retroactively extended to earlier extremists: "Saint Tarrant is fresh in our minds," a 4chan user posted in April 2019, "(…) but let us not forget the martyrs of yore. Remember Saint McVeigh the Martyr" (cit. Pitcavage 2020). The sainthood narrative has become an integral part of the shared repertoire of the extremist right wing, with the potential to integrate several strands of knowledge and serve as both a powerful unifying myth and a call for action, as a triptych-like depiction posted on 4chan incorporating the black sun symbol, along with another modified AWD logo, demonstrates (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/367125261, No. 367145965).

Despite the fact that none of the attackers demonstrated explicit allegiance to the core of the accelerationist skull-mask community,[37] the notion that terrorists who act in accordance with its

[37] This may have changed with the most recent attack in Bratislava, which could not be incorporated in the analysis in this paper. In his manifesto, the attacker explicitly references publications by the accelerationist Terrorgram collective.

approach are saints was readily taken up by the community and used to integrate the chan terrorists into a wider strategic framework in spite of their failure to follow the recommended strategy of disrupting infrastructure. In this view, every (even vaguely) right-wing extremist attack accelerates the coming of the race war in a logic of 'little strokes fell big oaks' – consequently, in accelerationist material the title of saint is assigned comparatively generously (Alpha and Delta 2021: 21). The logic of this new organized and combined strategic knowledge is clearly laid out in the accelerationist literature:

> "First it was every decade, then it was every few years, next it was annually, after it was monthly, now it's weekly. The goal? Daily. (…) We [will] no longer post about a Saint Tarrant, or a Saint Roof. We will merely awe at the fact that any number between 100–100,000 were killed on a specific day by any means available." (Alpha 2021e: 20)

In the end, the basic strategy is not in essence different from the old idea of the "propaganda of the deed" devised in the nineteenth century by the anarchist inventors of modern terrorism themselves, only dialed up to the extreme (Rapoport 2004). The ultimate function of the externalized and combined collective knowledge is to inspire further terrorism – i.e., converting it back into internalized implicit knowledge of individuals. As Payton Gendron described the purpose of his attack: "Most of all it was to spread awareness to my fellow Whites (…) and to encourage further attacks that will eventually start the war that will (…) save the White race" (Gendron 2022a: 4). In the last step of the knowledge cycle, attacks should instill in subsequent members of the community the belief that extreme violence is necessary, victims do not deserve mercy, sainthood is desirable, successful attacks are feasible, and seemingly isolated violent acts are part of a larger practical plan that will eventually deliver victory. Thus, the "Militant Accelerationism Handbook" directly addresses the reader: "We pass the torch of terror to you" (Terrorgram 2021a, frontispiece).

The Collective Dimensions of the Halle Synagogue Attack

The previous section has established that the insurrectionary accelerationist movement can indeed be understood as a community of practice which is engaged in a collective process of learning, conforming to the model of a knowledge construction cycle. In the following final section of the paper, I will look at a terrorist attack in detail through the lens of the insights gained above. Specifically, I will assess to what extent the 2019 attack on a synagogue and a kebab shop in Halle, Germany, can be seen as part of the wider practice of the accelerationist community and how it contributed to the knowledge generation process of this practice. I thus analyze whether the shooter, Stephan Balliet, was part of the community, shared its joint enterprise, and drew on and employed the shared repertoire. Building on that, I look at the reception and interpretation of the attack within the accelerationist community and its role in the process of collective knowledge creation.

The Halle Attack as Externalization of Accelerationist Practice

Balliet's attack constituted the first fully realized case of this new form of right-wing violence in Germany. While the shooting in Munich was a similarly motivated and executed act, Sonboly did not post a manifesto (he allegedly wrote one) or explicitly address an international community. Earlier acts of right-wing terrorism were either conducted by small cells, like the string of murders

of the NSU (Koehler 2017: 128–156), or by lone actors who still had deep roots in the larger German far-right milieu, like Frank S. who attacked Cologne mayor Henriette Reker (Pfahl-Traughber 2015) or Stephan Ernst, the murderer of the politician Walter Lübcke (Sandersen and Knight 2021). In contrast, as his trial established, Stephan Balliet had no such connections to the conventional right-wing extremist scene, despite living in an area of East Germany where such sentiments are widespread enough that it would not have been difficult to establish ties to local groups (Pook 2021a: 150; Wigard 2021b: 491–493).[38] Rather, he committed his attack alone, motivated by a combination of personal grievances and recourse to extremist knowledge on the internet. Balliet is essentially a textbook example of a chan terrorist: At the beginning of the video that he recorded and livestreamed during the attack, he even directly identifies himself as "Anon".[39] He also addresses his audience in English, interspersed with German when he talks and curses to himself, commenting on his actions in the style of a 'let's play' video. The documents he uploaded before the attack are also in English and clearly indicate his allegiance by beginning with a "[t]hank you for all the good time anon" and including a reference to the imageboards vch.moe and 8chan (Balliet 2019a: 1). Like his predecessors, he posted the announcement along with a link to the documents and several files containing 3D-printer templates on an imageboard, in this case Meguca, a rather obscure chan-like site with a focus on a peculiar mix of anime and extreme right-wing content on its /pol/ equivalent.[40]

Just as on all chan imageboards, the interactions on Meguca are anonymous and the investigating authorities were unfortunately unable to seize potentially useful data before the board was deleted (Laufer 2020). However, it is more than plausible that Balliet frequented the board regularly, based also on the fact that he had stored many similar 'nazified' anime images on his devices (Pook 2021b: 235) and even used an anime figure in his documents (Balliet 2019c: 4). The discussions on Meguca are similar to other extremist chan boards, with widespread racial, homophobic and antisemitic slurs along with open embraces of Nazism. Notably, the infamous call to "read Siege" was common (e.g. https://archive.ph/WadeV) and the Christchurch attack was enthusiastically received, with one user reposting the original announcement from 8chan commenting "Holy fuck (…), RAHOWA [Racial Holy War] is live" (https://archive.ph/QX47k, No. 5864664). Apart from Meguca, Balliet also frequented other chan boards, both on the regular and darkweb, and had copied large amounts of material from them onto his hard drive, including the video and manifesto of the Christchurch attack (Pook 2021b: 233–237, 242–243). There are no indications that he was involved in more hardcore accelerationist channels; however, he was clearly familiar with this part of the community, as he had files of the Atomwaffen Division on his devices (Pook 2021a: 152–153). All in all, Balliet was clearly involved in the accelerationist community and intensely identified with it. This is also evidenced by his consistent refusal to talk about specifics of his online communications, remarking at the beginning of his trial "Ich will hier niemanden anscheißen" [I don't want to snitch on anybody]"and that he wanted to protect "seine eigenen Leute [his own people]" (cit. Wigard 2021a: 104–105; see also Pook 2021a: 150).

[38] For a number of historical and socio-economic reasons, East Germany has, relative to the overall population, both a higher prevalence of far-right political positions and a more active neo-Nazi scene. For details, see Koehler (2017: 84–86); Schedler (2021: 87–93).

[39] The video is in the possession of the author. Despite a very small original audience, it spread massively in the days after the attack and is still easy to find online (Broderick 2019). Disseminating it is illegal in Germany.

[40] The site, administered by an individual residing in Latvia, was taken offline after the attack and the relevant thread deleted. Many copies (without metadata) of boards are, however, archived – for the original post see https://archive.ph/iD5X5#selection-25679.0-25679.9.

He also clearly indicated his allegiance to the joint enterprise of the accelerationist community in his address at the beginning of his livestream, in which he succinctly listed essentially all the main elements of the Great Replacement theory: "The Holocaust never happened. [unintelligible] Feminism is the cause of declining birth rates in the West, which acts as a scapegoat for mass immigration, and the root of all these problems is the Jew." His choice of targets directly reflects these concerns: After he failed to break into the synagogue, he decided to murder Muslims as the "symptom" of the problem, spontaneously choosing the Kiez Döner kebab shop ("Döner! Nehmen wir [We'll take that]"); and while the murder of Jana L., a woman who happened to be passing by during his attack, was likely an impulsive decision, his misogyny clearly shines through in his comments (Wigard 2021a: 93–94). At his trial, he repeated his worldview several times, stating in his explanation of why he attacked the synagogue that the Jews were the "Hauptursache am weißen Genozid [main cause of white genocide]" (cit. Stanjek 2021a: 74). The main impetus for his radicalization seems to have been the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, when a large number of refugees entered Germany, mainly fleeing the wars in Syria and Afghanistan. The increased presence of what he called "Eroberer aus dem muslimischen Kulturkreis [conquerors from Muslim cultures]" (cit. Stanjek 2021a: 70) was interpreted by him as evidence for the replacement of whites. Another sign of the strong influence these events had on him is the headline of his manifesto, which he calls a "spiritual guide for discontent White Men in the current year +4", referencing 2015 as a sort of baseline for a chronology (Balliet 2019c: 1). Beyond such allusions, however, Balliet – in contrast to other right-wing lone-actor terrorists – refrained from long-winded political and ideological statements in his documents, restricting himself to catchphrases like "ZOG" and using slurs for groups marked as enemies by the movement (Balliet 2019b: 1–2, 2019c). According to his testimony, he did not explicitly associate his personal observations with the Great Replacement theory until he read the manifesto of Brenton Tarrant (Wigard 2021a: 104). He felt inspired by the Christchurch shooter, whose attack he cited as evidence that whites could "strike back" and as the main reason for his decision to commit a similar act of terrorism (Stanjek 2021a: 73). Thus, he expressly felt part of the larger joint enterprise of the insurrectionary right-wing community, agreeing with its basic tenet that no political, non-violent solution is possible (Stanjek 2021a: 81). Strategically, while Balliet does not express overt beliefs that only a complete societal collapse can bring salvation and does not explicitly mention an all-out 'race war', he clearly has a revolutionary agenda, arguing that the fight could be won by "cut[ting] of [sic] the head of ZOG" and killing as many Jews as possible, as "[a]fter all, if every White Man kills just one, we win" (Balliet 2019b: 10). He seems to have found that accelerationist lone-actor terrorist attacks, exemplified by Tarrant, presented a viable possibility for revolutionary action after he was disappointed that the 'refugee crisis' did not result in widespread unrest and rebellion (Pook 2021b: 254). At the very end of his trial, he stated that history will prove him right after the "civil war", revealing his belief in the inevitability of a future race-based conflict (Stanjek 2021c: 857).

Balliet also drew heavily on parts of the shared repertoire – the last element of communal practice – of the accelerationist revolutionary right, with substantial admixtures from influences from other online spheres with overlapping concerns. In addition to addressing his fellow chan users explicitly, the language in his writings and commentary in the video is clearly reminiscent of the tone of far-right conversations on imageboards, from the use of crass insults and slurs to sardonic irony and gross humour in describing ways of killing people. As a police officer testifying about the initial interrogations stated, Balliet was obviously proud of certain in-jokes, like the file name of an

unpublished document on his computer (which he intended to be found during the investigation) that used wordplay to produce a chan-typical insult if read in a certain way (Pook 2021a: 141). Both his texts and his utterances during the attack are full of such allusions the far-right imageboard subculture, like calling himself self-deprecatingly a "NEET" (an abbreviation for 'Not in Employment, Education, Training', used online as slang for unsuccessful men living with their parents), labelling an encrypted container on a USB stick in allusion to the Pepe the Frog character (Wigard 2021a: 107), or describing a decorative sword he was carrying with him "as much a weapon as a shitpost" (Balliet 2019: 7). Like John Earnest he references the "Moon Man" figure, a common symbol of the alt-right, by wearing a hat with a button depicting this character in a picture of himself uploaded along with the documents (Pook 2021b: 237). The photo was taken on August 8, 2019, likely not by coincidence, as the date written in numbers – 8.8. or 8/8 – resembles the common code for "Heil Hitler"; in another Nazi reference, in his video he declares that "nobody expects the internet SS" while on his way to the synagogue. However, obvious Nazi symbols like the swastika or the black sun are missing, and the instances above should likely more accurately be understood as examples of typical chan humour. Notably, while Balliet emphatically reasserted his murderous antisemitic and racist views during his trial and on at least one occasion provoked a Jewish witness by referencing the term "Sonderbehandlung" (Stanjek 2021b: 281),[41] he disagreed with being called a Nazi (Wigard 2021a: 109–110; Pook 2021a: 133, 135). Here there are parallels with other right-wing mass shooters – both Dylann Roof (2015: 5) and Brenton Tarrant likewise distanced themselves from Nazism, apparently distinguishing it from white supremacism and, in Tarrant's case, fascism (2019: 34–35).[42] In this sense, Balliet can be seen as a typical example of the new type of chan terrorists, who draw on the broader antisemitic, white supremacist, and accelerationist repertoire without explicitly subscribing to a more detailed and rigid ideology such as that elaborated, for instance, in the philosophical texts of Iron March. Like the mass shooters before him, he did not use the skull symbolism of the organized accelerationist groups like Atomwaffen Division.

Other subcultural influences are also present. His presentation of the attack incorporates video game aesthetics, from the first-person view of the video to the game-like listing of cynical "achievements" that Balliet drew up in his "Pre-action report" (2019b: 11). Like most members of the community, he was also very active on Steam; however, authorities do not have any data on his communications or group memberships (Pook 2021b: 241–243). There is data, however, on the games he played – mostly they are unremarkable, except for a simulator game allowing players to build and test guns, which he might have used for preparations (Pook 2021b: 241). Another feature that stands out is the strong presence of anime subculture in the symbolism of his writings, fitting the use of the anime-centred Meguca imageboard; by contrast, conventional memes of the accelerationist community are absent. In his summary of his murderous plans, he underscores his willingness to die with the remark that he might "prove the existence of Waifus[43] in Valhalla", combining the anime interest with a reference to Tarrant's manifesto, which closed with the words "see you in Valhalla" (2019: 105), by (Balliet 2019: 109). The "spiritual guide for discontent White Men" that he uploaded ends with a degrading image of a so-called "cat-girl"[44] and the ironic promise that she awaits anyone

[41] A cynic euphemism for the mass murder of Jews used by Nazi Germany.
[42] An exception is Philip Manshaus, who enthusiastically professed his admiration for Adolf Hitler.
[43] Waifu refers to a fictional character from an anime, manga or video game to whom one is attracted or whom one considers their ideal significant other. The term is derived from the Japanification of the word 'wife' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_anime_and_manga#waifu).
[44] A catgirl in Japanese anime is a female anthropomorphized character with feline traits, such as cat ears, tail, or other feline characteristics on an otherwise human body (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catgirl).

who kills a Jew (Balliet 2019c: 4). The file name of the document is written in Japanese translating to "manifesto" – in addition to being another in-joke, this might have been intended to confuse algorithms that have been trained after earlier attacks to remove manifestos of terrorists, demonstrating an adaption of the repertoire to circumstances of increased digital counterterrorism.

The modus operandi of the attack, while in general similar to earlier acts of extremist violence, demonstrates several such instances of adaption and learning from perceived mistakes of others: First, Balliet justified the additional shots on his already-dead first victim explicitly with reference to the failed attack by Philip Manshaus, who had been overpowered by a target he deemed already neutralized (Pook 2021a: 144). Secondly, after the failed attempts of both Earnest and Manshaus to livestream their attacks, he had learned that Facebook Live was unreliable and deliberately chose the more obscure platform Twitch, primarily a gaming streaming channel, to throw off possible attempts to block his stream (Pook 2021a: 154). Finally, a striking characteristic of the attack is the use of self-made guns and bombs, which seem to be partially inspired by the example of the Munich shooter, David Sonboly, who got his weapon from the darknet. As Balliet explained during his interrogation, Sonboly had had difficulties in finding legitimate offers of guns on the darknet; even though Sonboly had ultimately succeeded, this, along with his own experiences, led Balliet to decide that the risk of being swindled was too high (Pook 2021a: 153). He had therefore decided to take his chance with homemade weapons, some of which he had already begun to construct in 2015 when he felt threatened by the 'refugee crisis' and did not have enough money to buy weapons on the black market. In addition to his own trial-and-error efforts, he drew on freely available online instructions as well as on interactions with a like-minded community on the darknet, where he not only shared his experiences but also talked openly about wanting to shoot at Muslims (Wigard 2021a: 111–112). Thus, in addition to adapting the operational shared repertoire to his needs, he also explicitly aimed to contribute new material to it.

Intended Contributions to Collective Learning Knowledge Construction

In his "Pre-action Report", he states his number one objective as being to "[p]rove the viability of improvised weapons" (Balliet 2019b: 9) – that is, he hoped to add to the collective knowledge. Consequently, the detailed description of his designs makes up the better part of his documents (Balliet 2019b: 1–9). The importance he placed on the use of the improvised guns is also expressed in the fact that he actually owned a professionally made gun, an old carbine design; however, even though he acknowledged it to be the "most reliable and accurate firearm in my arsenal", he explicitly intended to use it "only if the other guns malfunction or I run out of ammo for them, since the whole deal is to show the viability of improvised guns" (Balliet 2019b: 6). In the end, he did not even employ it after many of his other guns eventually *did* malfunction, although this may be due to high level of stress he was under rather than a deliberate decision. The choice of homemade weapons was probably motivated by the disappointing experiences he had while searching for a legitimate illegal arms dealer on the darknet, reinforcing the fact that the repertoire of right-wing mass shooters dominated by perpetrators from the US, where access to guns is easy, is ill-suited to the context of European countries with stricter gun laws. Interestingly, Patrick Crusius, the only other previous chan terrorist to devote part of his manifesto to his equipment, lamented that "[o]ur European comrades don't have the gun rights needed to repel the millions of invaders" (2019: 4). It is unknown whether Balliet knew this passage, but from his writings it is clear that providing a solution to this problem – and thereby adding significantly to the repertoire of violence at the disposal of future mass

shooters in Europe – was a major concern for him (Balliet 2019b: 6). The post on Meguca in which he announced his attack was addressed to "all of you, who live in no fun countries" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086491), meaning countries with strict gun laws; he followed this with a summary of the lessons he had learned while designing his improvised weapons and providing links to building instructions and 3D-printer files. Interestingly, the post contains almost no ideological content – apart from a reference to be careful about sharing the material due to the risk of being prosecuted by the "local ZOG" – and no direct clue about his intentions. He seems to have calculated (largely correctly) that the community would know what to make of his cryptic announcement that he preferred "live testing".

However, at his trial he gave a different account of the intended impact of his deed. Although he reiterated the importance that the improvised weapons had for him (Pook 2021a: 134), the failure of his designs evidently led him to focus on a different legacy. When asked again what his main goals were, he now stated that the most important thing was to demonstrate that "resistance" was possible, with "raising moral of like-minded people" the second priority, and the actual act of killing as many "enemies" as possible coming third (Wigard 2021a: 92). With a reasoning typical of terrorist actors, he, like Roof, Bowers, and Tarrant, felt compelled to 'do something' even with limited means rather than doing nothing in the face of perceived doom – "wenn man nichts macht, ist man kein Krieger [if you do nothing, you're not a warrior]" (Pook 2021a: 134). Consequently, disseminating the video of his attack was of the highest importance for him: "Die Übertragung ist viel wichtiger, als die Handlung an sich [the broadcast is much more important than the act itself]" (cit. Stanjek 2021a: 83). Having himself been motivated by the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, Balliet hoped in turn to inspire others to join the fight. Thus, the primary function of the attack in the context of the collective practice of transnational right-wing terrorism clearly conforms to the quintessential strategic idea of terrorism, the propaganda of the deed, as he explained in his own words: "Man selbst kann nur wenig erreichen, selbst wenn man effizient arbeitet. Aber man kann andere erreichen, die kämpfen wollen [By yourself alone you cannot achieve a lot, even if you work efficiently. But you can reach others who want to fight]" (cit. Heine 2020). When he started the attack, he aspired to be a link in the chain of right-wing lone-actor terrorists – self-proclaimed "warriors" (Pook 2021a: 134) – proving the viability of the basic accelerationist strategic idea of producing an ever-increasing number of terrorists attacking at ever-shorter intervals of time until society cannot withstand it anymore (Alpha 2021e: 20). Another of his statements likewise indicates that he saw himself in this context rather than being primarily concerned with his specific personal target: When talking about the insufficient preparations for the attack, given that he did not know much about the synagogue in Halle, he says he considered postponing the act for a year (i.e., until the next Yom Kippur), but decided against it "um das Ganze in Bewegung zu halten" [to keep the momentum going]" (cit. Stanjek 2021a: 75). While this may partly refer to his personal motivation, it is very likely that he also had the earlier string of right-wing attacks in 2019 in mind – not least, given the fact that Tarrant also expressed a similar sentiment in his manifesto (2019: 19–20; see also Macklin 2019b).

The Reception of the Attack in the Online Community

Arguably, what is more important than the intention of the perpetrator is the actual reception of his attack within the accelerationist community. As an externalization of collective knowledge and part of the community's practice, the attack entered the collective process of negotiating meaning in which elements are transferred and collectively constructed into combined knowledge. Balliet was

clearly very aware of this collective process, stating that he would leave it to others (i.e., the community) to judge whether he can be considered a "warrior" (Wigard 2021a: 114). The attack was indeed extensively discussed in the chan-verse (e.g. http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229272755) and on accelerationist channels (Owen 2019). Although the livestream had a live audience of just five during the attack, as word of it spread on Meguca and in the wider chan-sphere, the video was soon widely shared. There were more than 2,000 views of the recording before it was taken down (Broderick 2019). A look at the original Meguca thread reveals frantic efforts to save the video and to "make immediate backups" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086546), with others requesting "No spoilers I haven't watched it all yet" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086555). Within less than a day, a subtitled version was even available, providing translations of the German parts of Balliet's conversations with himself (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/ thread/229330588). The initial reaction to the shooting itself was mostly enthusiastic, with one user encouraging Balliet "Godspeed anon, I'll stay with you if this is it" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086533) and another commenting on it as though watching a movie or streaming of a game: "GET HIM, UM, SWITCH TO YOUR SIDEARM!" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086567). No one expressed shock or disapproval, although some worried about possible repercussions for the board (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086596; No.7086641). Some right-wing Telegram channels were gleefully "betting on a saint" (cit. Owen 2019).

As the failure of the attack became clear, however, the reactions switched mainly to disappointment at the lack of a new 'high score' ("Only 2? America killed like 11. Germans can't even mass shoot correctly", http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229250474, No. 229250993) and ridicule for the clumsiness of the attacker, with users making fun especially of his inability to overcome a simple wooden door (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229336674, No. 229338892). In a thread on 4chan asking users to rank the shooting, Balliet got mostly low 'scores', with users calling it the "worst sequel ever" (referencing the Christchurch attack) or "absolutely pathetic and cringeworthy" (https://archive.4plebs.org/ pol/thread/229336674, No.229338801; No.229358103). The major white supremacy website Daily Stormer wrote that the "entire thing was a total disaster" (Anglin 2019). In a subsequent post that has since been taken offline, the website published parts of Balliet's manifesto, lauding the design of the weapons while hinting that the "Weebnat Failstreamer" might have been used by provocateurs, given the apparent disconnect between his preparations and actual execution. This notion of a 'false flag' operation was also common on chan boards, with one user insisting that it was "clearly a verfassungsschutz [sic] thing" (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229272755, No. 229284122). While such accusations are common, and have also been levelled at the Tarrant attack, in this case it may also express a kind of reflexive distancing due to not wanting to be associated with a failure. For many, the attack obviously did not qualify for any sort of canonization, which is expressed in typical fashion with a meme depicting Balliet as the 'virgin' compared to the triumphant 'Chad stride' (Know Your Meme 2022; https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1601391-2019-halle-synagogue-shooting). Knowing the culture and rough tone of his digital environment, Balliet himself did not harbour any illusions in this regard – already in his livestream he apologized with "sorry guys (…) I'm a fucking NEET[45] (…) I can't [do] shit [sic]", and in the trial he admitted that he had "[sich] global lächerlich gemacht [made himself a global laughingstock]" (Stanjek 2021a: 79).

[45] An abbreviation for "Not in Education, Employment or Training", a derogatory term on the internet for 'failures'.

However, the attack was not unanimously met with derision. As Kilgore (1999: 199) has remarked, debates and disagreements are typical and necessary for learning processes and the negotiation of meaning on a collective level. A small but sizable portion of the community defended Balliet, arguing that he "at least tried". Some also explicitly acknowledged Balliet as being part of their community – "he was one of us" stated a post also sporting a swastika flag (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229269734, No. 229277468). Framing it in the typical language of the chan-verse, one user gave him "8 for effort", while another remarked "you'll get a 3 extra points for starting something" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229336674, No. 229338310; No. 229344723). In general, such positive reception was, unsurprisingly, more common in more fringe arenas – the outspokenly accelerationist Neinchan for example hosts several dedicated threads on Balliet, with one poster declaring him

> "a man of the utmost bravery who took to the struggle against ZOG with an unparalleled devotion in his work producing his weapons of war. (…) It was only to his lack of experience with high pressure situations that he didn't get the score he wanted, but for this act, he is a shining light."[46]

Balliet's use of homemade guns attracted considerable attention – albeit not in the way he had hoped: given the frequent malfunctions of his weapons, the feedback was largely negative. In addition to a great deal of sarcasm and mockery, there were also factual discussions of his approach, mainly concluding that "what today showed is that DIY shit tier funs [sic] are not a real solution at all, even in the hands of a Tarrant tier hero" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086711). Others expressed understanding and appreciation for the effort, with one 4chan post declaring that creating "any kind of home-made weapon is admirable (…). He did the best with what he got arsenal wise" and another defending him against ridicule: "Make your own weapons and then do it better" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229336674, No. 229339062; No. 229339183). One Meguca user was pretty explicit in pointing out the lessons of Balliet's attack for future acts of terrorism:

> "A real carbine or battle rifle (…) appears to be the only way if you're going to go out like this, instead of messing around with half a dozen barely functional DIY guns. Just an FYI right here and now to plant the seeds in minds if you're on this path. You can get one, it just takes hard work. I mean, I'm hyped as fuck for 3d printing and all that, and have been a longtime proponent, but you need real deal gear for going to work, not hobby stuff" (https://archive.ph/iD5X5, No.7086710).

Finally, a minority recognize him as being a legitimate part in the larger collective effort, which would ultimately do better and remedy his failure in the future:

> "In the end he tried. He tried to do his part and sadly it ended in our worst attempt yet. But let us not forget that more of these attacks will happen. And there will be worse attempts. Just remember Pol the best is to come!" (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229306057, No. 229306057).

[46] As Neinchan is a darknet site, no URL is given – the material has been archived by the author of this paper.

In addition to attempting to bolster the confidence of the community after the second failed accelerationist attack in a row, some members also expressed the sentiment that even such failures could contribute to their cumulatively growing knowledge – for example, one meme not only places Balliet among the recognized "Chad disciples" but also explicitly mentions the usefulness of mistakes "so [that] others can learn from them" (https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/271917989, No. 271917989).

Chan users had reacted with a similar sentiment to previous mocking of Philip Manshaus: "People should study the reasons for his failure and learn from it instead of mocking someone willing to sacrifice everything" (cit. Thorleifsson 2021: 298). One post succinctly summarizes the accelerationist logic, in which even unsuccessful attempts at terror attacks contribute to the collective knowledge and momentum of the movement, bringing the race war nearer: "Each addition to the collective unconscious brings those men one step closer to success and one step further from failure" (http://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/229272755, No. 229279618). Therefore, despite the failure of the terrorist attack in Halle and the widespread ridicule of Balliet online, as an externalization of transnational right-wing extremism his act nevertheless feeds into the body of collective accelerationist knowledge. Despite not being discussed explicitly in the "Militant Accelerationism Handbook", Balliet is featured two times in its pages: First, he is included in a collage titled "Sainthood" that presents a chronology of murderers with a right-wing background (Alpha and Delta 2021: 21). While in the larger chan network Balliet is largely denied the status of a saint, he does indeed qualify according to the criteria pronounced by the hardcore accelerationist community (RWBC 2021b: 46). Secondly, a picture of him during the attack is employed in another straightforward expression of how the insurrectionary accelerationist community understands their collective identity and strategy: "A lone wolf acts alone, but he is never truly alone. (…) You will march into battle alone, but your brothers in arms are with you in spirit, every step of the way (…)" (Whiskey 2021: 93). While there were no immediate successors to Balliet,[47] the terror attack in Buffalo in 2022 demonstrated that the knowledge underlying the attacks has not gone away.

Conclusion

This paper looked at how recognizing the collective dimension of right-wing extremist terrorism can shed new light on supposedly 'lone wolf' attacks. The threat of right-wing violence has evolved in recent years and now to a large extent no longer emanates just from traditional localized structures and groups, but from a globally connected and ideologically integrated movement. This movement, which can be subsumed under the label insurrectionary accelerationism, produces attacks that are mostly carried out by individuals acting on their own, but that are nevertheless part of a larger revolutionary strategy. More specifically, I focused on the aspects of learning and shared construction of knowledge of this decentralized and fuzzy community that nevertheless displays a significant amount of coherence. Research on terrorist learning has predominantly employed theories that have as their unit of analysis either individual processes of radicalization (sometimes with collective dimensions as influencing environmental conditions) or the learning of organizations, but has – with few exceptions like Kenney (2020) or Lee and Knott (2022) – largely neglected approaches that

[47] While the shooting in Hanau, Germany, in February 2020 also clearly had a right-wing, specifically anti-immigration and racist as well as conspiracy-theory background, the perpetrator had apparently no direct connection to the accelerationist or far-right chan-scene. However, in a demonstration of the flexibility of the community, his portrait was also included in the Terrorgram "sainthood" compilation (Alpha and Delta 2021: 21).

address a meso-level of learning, concerning collectives that are decentralized and self-organized yet more cohesive than mere networks. To understand such loosely structured radicalized communities, this paper outlined a model of collective learning based on the concept of communities of practice in which collective knowledge is created in a process of socialization, externalization, and combination.

Employing this framework in an empirical analysis of the accelerationist movement demonstrated that the latter can meaningfully be understood as a kind of community of practice that is consciously engaged in a collective enterprise and the creation of a shared repertoire based on a digital infrastructure underlying a continuous mutual interaction on various platforms. It consists of a hard core of activists expressively committed to fascist and Nazi ideals and a looser, but ideologically largely congruent network of members in the chan-verse of unregulated internet forums. The largely anonymous and fluctuating membership forms a stable collective that is united in the basic purpose of promoting a violent collapse of liberal societies in an imagined race war that will result in the killing of perceived enemies and the establishment of a purely white ethnostate. The two spheres reinforce one another, constructing through their practices a body of knowledge that includes a distinct identity (one that is different from other manifestations of the far right) as well as sets of online and offline norms, aesthetics, and behaviours. This knowledge is expressed and kept in collective memory both in tangible artefacts of communication such as published materials, and in fluid forms like a shared verbal and visual language. It is developed by socializing implicit cultural influences, like a fascination with school shootings or video games, translating them to fit the purposes of the community, and processing them through a collective negotiation of meanings into explicit elements of the shared repertoire. Those expressions can be instruments of propaganda, but also actual acts of terrorism – both are, crucially, components of a single process of knowledge generation, which can be further processed and combined to advance the accelerationist cause. In this way, the community created, for example, a unified framework and symbolic iconography to interpret and present violent attacks using categories of ‘sainthood’ and ‘discipleship’ that serve as a collective reference as well as strategic guideline for inspiring and contextualizing future terrorism.

Individual attacks can thus be understood as an externalization of the collective knowledge of the transnational right-wing extremist online community, or, from an individual perspective, as the result of the internalization of previously externalized and combined knowledge. In a detailed case study of the terrorist attack and subsequent trial of Stephan Balliet, I traced how the collective knowledge influenced the performance of his deed as well as how the attack contributed to the advancement of collective knowledge; here his intended contribution and the reception by the community were not identical. The analysis clearly demonstrated that Balliet was not simply ‘inspired’ by previous attacks and online hate, but consciously saw himself as part of the collective accelerationist struggle: He acted on a script directly derived from the collective repertoire; he aspired to add to the collective knowledge by demonstrating the potential of homemade guns as substitutes when commercial weapons are not available and the viability of carrying out attacks even with little means; finally, he received recognition for his actions from at least a segment of the community. His inclusion in the propaganda materials of the hardcore accelerationist militants of Terrorgram moreover shows that the community is flexible and adept in integrating even events that are less than successful from their point of view into their larger narrative and collective knowledge.

This study contributes to the literature that recognizes the explicitly collective character of right-wing so-called ‘lone wolf’ terrorism and underlines the necessity of examining this form of political violence in a comprehensive way. It brings an innovative perspective to this topic by focusing on

knowledge construction, demonstrating that theories of collective learning developed for totally different contexts can be fruitfully applied to advance our understanding of how a globally active but largely leaderless movement lacking formal organizational structures is nevertheless able to pursue a collective revolutionary goal. While the wave of attacks following the mass shooting in Christchurch 2019 did not accelerate, but essentially ground to a halt until the Buffalo attack – contrary to the hopes of the right-wing extremists –, the collective knowledge underlying it has not disappeared and can crystalize again without warning, making it vital to continue to study the phenomenon. This paper develops one approach to analyzing the collective development of the decentralized extremist right using concepts from learning theory. More detailed and systematic empirical research would be required to better understand the concrete mechanisms of knowledge construction in different arenas. Netnographic methods make it possible to observe learning processes in the chan-sphere and other extremist channels in real-time outside of settings that are exclusively terroristic or right-wing. Finally, insights into these online communities and their processes of collective learning are relevant for the treatment of right-wing terrorism by security agencies and the state in general. As the trial of Balliet revealed, the German police was ill-equipped to effectively investigate the transnational context of the attack; moreover, because German law only recognizes terrorism as a group phenomenon, the shooter was ‘only’ convicted for murder, not as a terrorist, albeit with the political motive aggravating the case. While this does not diminish his sentence, it fails to recognize the role the deed played in the larger extremist ecosystem.

References

3S. 2021. The importance of organization. In: Terrorgram (ed*.): Do it for the 'gram: the collected writings of Terrorgram*. Electronically published, pp. 48–50.

AA. 2021. Evacuation. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Do it for the 'gram: the collected writings of Terrorgram*. Electronically published, p. 263.

Abbas, Tahir, Inés Bolaños Somoano, Joana Cook, Isabelle Frens, Graig R. Klein, and Richard McNeil-Willson. 2022. The Buffalo attack – an analysis of the manifesto. *ICCT Publication*, 18 May 2022. Available online at: https://icct.nl/publication/the-buffalo-attack-an-analysis-of-the-manifesto/ (last accessed 6 June 2022).

Abedini, Adam, Babak Abedin, and Didar Zowghi. 2021. Adult learning in online communities of practice: a systematic review. *British Journal of Educational Technology* 52(4): 1663–1694.

Akers, Ronald L. 1998. *Social learning and social structure: a general theory of crime and deviance.* Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Akins, J. Keith, and L. Thomas Winfree, Jr. 2016. Social learning theory and becoming a terrorist: new challenges for a general theory. In: Gary LaFree and Joshua D. Freilich (eds.): *The handbook of criminology of terrorism*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 133–149.

Alpha and Delta. 2021. Sainthood. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 21.

Alpha. 2021a. Genocide pill. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p 16.

Alpha. 2021b. A timeless call. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 126.

Alpha. 2021c. Contribute to crisis. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 35.

Alpha. 2021d. Train tracks posting. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 41.

Alpha. 2021e. Saints today. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 20.

Anglin, Andrew. 2019. Germany: epic Aryan gamer failstreams, Kills two randos – STREAM AVAILABLE [UPDATES]. *Daily Stormer*, 9 October 2019. Available online at: https://dailystormer.name/germany-gunmen-kil-two-people-outside-synagogue-throw-a-grenade-at-jewish-cemetery/ (last accessed 23 March 2022)

Anti-Defamation League (ADL). 2019. Gab and 8chan: home to terrorist plots hiding in plain sight, ADL Report, 5 April 2019. Available online at: https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/gab-and-8chan-home-to-terrorist-plots-hiding-in-plain-sight

Argyris, Chris, and Donald Schön. 1978. *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.

Ayyadi, Kira. 2019. Der globale Rechtsterrorismus von /pol/ auf den chan-Foren. *Belltower News*, 13 August 2019. Available online at: https://www.belltower.news/brenton-tarrant-memetic-warfare-der-globale-rechtsterrorismus-von-pol-auf-den-chan-foren-89421/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Bacigalupo, James, Kevin Borgeson, and Robin Maria Valeri (eds.). 2022. *Cyberhate: the far right in the digital age*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Baele, Stephane J., Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan. 2021. Variations on a theme? Comparing 4chan, 8kun, and other chans' far right "/pol" boards. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15(1): 65–80.

Balliet, Stephan. 2019a. *Read this first*. Electronically published on the image board Meguca (defunct).

Balliet, Stephan. 2019b. *Pre-action report*. Electronically published on the image board Meguca (defunct).

Balliet, Stephan. 2019c. *Manifest*. Electronically published on the image board Meguca (defunct).

Beauchamp, Zack. 2019. Accelerationism: the obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world. *Vox*, 18 November 2019. Available online at: https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/11/11/20882005/accelerationism-white-supremacy-christchurch (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Bedingfield, Will. 2020. How Telegram became a safe haven for pro-terror Nazis. *Wired*, 1 March 2020. Available online at: https://www.wired.co.uk/article/hope-not-hate-telegram-nazis (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Bell, J. Bowyer 1990. Revolutionary dynamics: the inherent inefficiency of the underground. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2(2): 193–211.

Ben Am, Ari, and Gabriel Weimann. 2020. Fabricated martyrs: the warrior-saint icons of far-right terrorism. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14(5): 130–147.

Berger, J.M. 2016. The Turner legacy. *ICCT Research Paper*, 16 September 2016. Available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.11 (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Bhatt, Chetan. 2021. White extinction: metaphysical elements of contemporary Western Fascism. *Theory, Culture & Society* 38(1): 27–52.

Bogerts, Lisa, and Maik Fielitz. 2019. "Do You Want Meme War?" Understanding the visual memes of the German far right. In: Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston (eds.). *Post-digital cultures of the far right*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 137–153.

Bowman-Grieve, Lorraine. 2009. Exploring "Stormfront": a virtual community of the radical right. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32(11): 989–1007.

Broderick, Ryan. 2019. Far-right Halle shooter allegedly posted a manifesto with Xbox-like "achievements" to anime message board before livestreaming attack. *Buzzfeed News*, 11 October 2019. Available online at: https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/halle-germany-shooter-meguca-anime-manifesto (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Brown, M. Leann, and Michael Kenney. 2006. Organizational learning: theoretical and methodological considerations. In: M. Leann Brown, Michael Kenney, and Michael Zarkin (eds). *Organizational learning in the global context*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 1–17.

Bushman, Brad J. 2018. Narcissism, fame seeking, and mass shootings. *American Behavioural Scientist* 62(2): 229–241.

Caren, Neal, Kay Jowers, and Sarah Gaby. 2012. A social movement online community: Stormfront and the white nationalist movement. *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 33: 163–193.

Castelli Gattinara, Pietro, and Andrea L. P. Pirro. 2019. The far right as social movement. *European Societies* 21(4): 447–462.

Charlie. 2021. First contact. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, pp. 28–29.

Colley, Thomas, and Martin Moore. 2022. The challenge of studying 4chan and the alt-right: 'Come on in the water is fine'. *New Media & Society* 24(1): 5–30.

Conway, Maura. 2021. Online extremism and terrorism research ethics: researcher safety, informed consent, and the need for tailored guidelines. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33(2): 367–380.

Conway, Maura, Ryan Scrivens, and Logan Macnair. 2019. Right-wing extremist's persistent online presence: history and contemporary trends. *ICCT Policy Brief*, 25 November 2019. Available online at: https://icct.nl/publication/right-wing-extremists-persistent-online-presence-history-and-contemporary-trends/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Cook, Scott D. N., and John Seely Brown. 1999. Bridging epistemologies: the generative dance between organizational knowledge and organizational knowing. *Organization Science* 10(4): 381–400.

Crawford, Blyth, Florence Keen, and Guillermo Suarez-Tangil. 2021. Memes, radicalization, and the promotion of violence on chan sites. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media,* 15(1), 982-991. Available online at: https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/18121 (last accessed 17 October 2022).

Crawford, Blyth. 2022. Tracing extremist platform migration on the Darkweb: lessons for deplatforming. *Global Network of Extremism & Technology Insights*, January, 18, 2022. Available online at: https://gnet-research.org/2022/01/18/tracing-extremist-platform-migration-on-the-darkweb-lessons-for-deplatforming/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Crenshaw, Martha. 2010. Innovation: decision points in the trajectory of terrorism. In: Magnus J. Rasmussen and Mohammed M. Hafez (eds). *Terrorist innovations in weapons of mass effect: preconditions, causes, and predictive indicators*. Washington, DC: Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, pp. 35–50.

Crowther, Jim. 2016. Knowledge and learning in social movements. In: Richard Edwards, Jim Gallacher, Susan Whittaker (eds.). *Learning outside the academy: international research perspectives on lifelong learning*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 133–148.

Crusius, Patrick. 2019. *The inconvenient truth*. Electronically published on 8chan.

Davey, Jacob, and Julia Ebner. 2019. *The great replacement: the violent consequences of mainstreamed extremism*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Available online at: https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf (last accessed 23 March 2022).

De Cindio, Fiorella, Cristian Peraboni, and Stefano A. Cerri. 2012. Network communities. In: Norbert M. Seel (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning*. Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 2438–2440.

De Laat, Maarten, and Robert-Jan Simons. 2002. Collective learning: theoretical perspectives and ways to support networked learning. *European Journal of Vocational Training* 27: 13–24.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Gary LaFree. 2012. Processes of radicalization and de-radicalization. Editor's introduction. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 6(1): 4–10.

Delta. 2021. Highscores and headlines. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, pp. 105–115.

DFRLab. 2020. Terrorgram: a community built on hate. *Medium*, 20 April 2020. Available online at: https://medium.com/dfrlab/terrorgram-a-community-built-on-hate-e02fd59ee329 (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Dolnik, Adam. 2007. *Understanding terrorist innovation: technology, tactics and global trends*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.

Döös, Marianne, and Lena Wilhelmson. 2011. Collective learning: interaction and a shared action arena. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 23(8): 487–500.

Earnest, John. 2019. *An open letter*. Electronically published on 8chan.

Easterby-Smith, Mark, Mary Crossan, and Davide Nicolini. 2000. Organizational learning: debates past, present and future. *Journal of Management Studies* 37(6): 783–796.

Encyclopedia Dramatica. 2022. High score. Available online at: https://encyclopediadramatica.online/High_Score (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Encyclopedia Dramatica. 2022. School shooting. Available online at: https://encyclopediadramatica.online/School_Shooting (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Evans, Robert. 2019. The El Paso shooting and the gamification of terror. *Bellincat*, 4 August 2019. Available online at: https://www.bellingcat.com/news/americas/2019/08/04/the-el-paso-shooting-and-the-gamification-of-terror/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Eyerman, Ron, and Andrew Jamison. 1991. *Social movements: a cognitive approach*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Fenwick, Tara. 2008. Understanding relations of individual—collective learning in work: A review of research. *Management Learning* 39(3): 227–243.

Fielitz, Maik, and Laura Lotte Laloire (eds.). 2016. *Trouble on the far right: contemporary right-wing strategies and practices in Europe.* Bielefeld: Transcript.

Forest, James J. F. 2006. Introduction. In: James J.F. Forest (ed.): *Teaching terror: strategic and tactical learning in the terrorist world*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 1–30.

Fürstenberg, Michael, and Carolin Görzig. 2020. Learning in a double loop: the strategic transformation of Al-Qaeda. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14(1): 26–38.

Fürstenberg, Michael. 2017. Look who is learning: a contested research subject. In: Carolin Görzig (ed.). *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Report: Max Planck Research Group 'How 'Terrorists' Learn' 2014/2016*. Available online at: http://hdl.handle.net/21.11116/0000-0000-FFAD-F (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Garavan, Thomas, and Alma McCarthy. 2008. Collective learning processes and human resource development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 10(4): 451–571.

Garavan, Thomas, and Ronan Carbery. 2012. Collective learning. In: Norbert M. Seel (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning*, Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 646–649.

Gendron, Payton. 2022a. *Yeah.* Electronically published.

Gendron, Payton. 2022b. *Post April 29th discord transcript.* Electronically published.

Gendron, Payton. 2022c. *April 29 and before.* Electronically published.

Ghansah, Rachel Kaadzi. 2017. A most American terrorist: the making of Dylann Roof. *GQ*, 21 August 2017. Available online at: https://www.gq.com/story/dylann-roof-making-of-an-american-terrorist (last accessed 22 June 2022).

Gill, Paul, John Horgan, Samuel T. Hunter, and Lily D. Cushenbery. 2013. Malevolent creativity in terrorist organizations. *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 47(2): 125–151.

Görzig, Carolin. 2019. Terrorist learning in context: the case of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12(4): 629–648.

Görzig, Carolin. 2022. Deradicalization through double-loop learning? How the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiya renounced violence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45(8): 704–726.

Greene, Viveca S. 2019. "Deplorable" satire: alt-right memes, white genocide tweets, and redpilling normies. *Studies in American Humor* 5(1): 31–69.

Hartleb, Florian. 2020. *Lone wolves. The new terrorism of right-wing single actors.* Berlin: Springer.

Hassan, Hatem M., and Suzanne Staggenborg. 2015. Movements as communities. In: Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (eds.): *The Oxford handbook of social movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 340–354.

Hay, Mark. 2021. Is the capitol rioters' skull-mask fetish fashion or fascist? *Daily Beast*, 3 February 2021. Available online at: https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-the-capitol-rioters-skull-mask-fetish-fashion-or-fascist (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Heikkila, Tanya, and Andrea K. Gerlak. 2013. Building a conceptual approach to collective learning: lessons for public policy scholars. *Policy Studies Journal* 41(3): 484–512.

Heine, Hannes. 2020. Attentäter von Halle beschimpft Schwarze und Muslime. *Tagesspiegel*, 21 July 2020. Available online at: https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/prozess-mit-verspaetung-gestartet-attentaeter-von-halle-beschimpft-schwarze-und-muslime/26021440.html (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Heitmeyer, Wilhelm, Manuela Freiheit, and Peter Sitzer. 2020. *Rechte Bedrohungsallianzen*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Heitmeyer, Wilhelm. 2003. Right-wing extremist violence. In: Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hargan (eds.). *International handbook of violence research*. Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic, pp. 399–436.

Hermann, Melanie. 2020. Antimoderner Abwehrkampf – zum Zusammenhang von Antisemitismus und Antifeminismus. In: Institut für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft (ed.). *Wissen schafft Demokratie 07: Schwerpunkt Kontinuitäten.* Jena: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, pp. 27–35.

Hibbert, Kathryn, and Sharon Rich. 2006. Virtual communities of practice. In: Joel Weiss, Jason Nolan, Jeremy Hunsinger and Peter Trifonas (eds.). *The international handbook of virtual learning environments*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 563–579.

Hoffman, Bruce. 1993. Terrorist targeting: tactics, trends, and potentialities. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5(2): 12–29.

Hoffman, Bruce, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro. 2020. Assessing the threat of incel violence. *Studies in Conflict & Violence* 43(7): 565–587.

Holt, Thomas J., Joshua D. Freilich, and Steven M. Chermak. 2022. Examining the online expression of ideology among far-right extremist forum users. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 34(2): 364–384.

Horgan, John. 2008. From profiles to pathways and roots to routes: perspectives from psychology on radicalization into terrorism. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618(1): 80–94.

Horowitz, Michael, and Philip B. K. Potter. 2014. Allying to kill: terrorist intergroup cooperation and the consequences for lethality. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(2): 199–225.

Hundeide, Karsten. 2003. Becoming a committed insider. *Culture and Psychology* 9(2): 107–127.

Hye-Su Kuk, and Rebecca Tarlau. 2020. The confluence of popular education and social movement studies into social movement learning: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning* 39(5–6): 591–604.

Iron March. 2015. *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published.

Jackson, Brian A., John C. Baker, Kim Cragin, John Parachini, Horacio R. Trujillo, and Peter Chalk. 2005. *Aptitude for destruction, volume 1. Organizational learning in terrorist groups and its implications for combating terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Johnson, Bethan, and Matthew Feldman. 2021. Siege culture after *Siege*: anatomy of a neo-Nazi terrorist doctrine. *ICCT Research Paper*, 21 July 2021. Available online at: https://icct.nl/publication/siege-culture-anatomy-of-a-neo-nazi-terrorist-doctrine/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Jones, Calvert. 2006. Al-Qaeda's innovative improvisers: learning in a diffuse transnational network. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19(4): 555–569.

Kenney, Michael. 2006. How terrorists learn. In: J.J.F. Forest (ed). *Teaching terror: strategic and tactical learning in the terrorist world*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 33–68.

Kenney, Michael. 2020. A community of true believers: learning as process among 'The Emigrants'. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32(1): 57–76.

Kettle, Louise, and Andrew Mumford. 2017. Terrorist Learning: A New Analytical Framework. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40(7): 523–538.

Kilgore, Deborah. 1999. Understanding learning in social movements: a theory of collective learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 18(3): 191–202.

Kim, Jihyun. 2016. The nature of adult learning in social movements. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning* 25: 29–50.

Kimble, Chris, Paul Hildreth, and Peter Wright. 2001. Communities of practice: going virtual. In: Yogesh Malhotra (ed.). *Knowledge management and business model innovation*. Hershey/London: Idea Group Publishing, pp. 220–234.

Kimmerle, Joachim, Johannes Moskaliuk, Ailee Oeberst, and Ulrike Cress. 2015. Learning and collective knowledge construction with social media: a process-oriented perspective. *Educational Psychologist* 50(2): 120–137.

Kluttz, Jenalee, and Pierre Walter. 2018. Conceptualizing learning in the climate justice movement. *Adult Education Quarterly* 68(2): 91–107.

Know Your Meme. 2022. Virgin vs. chad. Available online at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/virgin-vs-chad (last accessed March 23, 2022).

Koehler, Daniel. 2017. *Right-wing terrorism in the 21st century*. Oxon und New York: Routledge.

Koehler, Daniel. 2018. Recent trends in German right-wing violence and terrorism: what are the contextual factors behind 'hive terrorism'? *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12(6): 72–88.

Kriner, Matthew. 2022. An introduction to militant accelerationism. *The Accelerationism Research Consortium*, 9 May 2022. Available online at: https://www.accresearch.org/shortanalysis/an-introduction-to-militant-accelerationism (last accessed 17 October 2022).

Kriner, Matthew, Meghan Conroy, and Yasmine Ashwal. 2021. Understanding accelerationist narratives: 'There is no political solution'. *Global Network of Extremism & Technology Insights*, September, 2, 2021. Available online at: https://gnet-research.org/2021/09/02/understanding-accelerationist-narratives-there-is-no-political-solution/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Lakhani, Suraj, and Susann Wiedlitzka. 2022. "Press F to pay respects": An empirical exploration of the mechanics of gameification in relation to the Christchurch attack. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2022.2064746.

Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lauer, Stefan. 2019. 8chan-terror in Poway. *Belltower News*, 30 April 2019. Available online at: https://www.belltower.news/rechtsterrorismus-und-antisemitismus-8chan-terror-in-poway-84523/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Laufer, Daniel. 2020. Keine Daten fürs Bundeskriminalamt. *Netzpolitik.org*, 27 January 2020. Available online at: https://netzpolitik.org/2020/keine-daten-fuers-bundeskriminalamt/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Lee, Benjamin, and Kim Knott. 2022. Fascist aspirants: *Fascist Forge* and ideological learning in the extreme-right online milieu. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 14(3): 216–240.

Loadenthal, Michael, Samantha Hausserman, and Matthew Thierry. 2022. Accelerating hate: Atomwaffen Division, contemporary digital Fascism, and insurrectionary accelerationism. In: Bacigalupo, James, Kevin Borgeson, and Robin Maria Valeri (eds.). *Cyberhate: the far right in the digital age*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 87–118.

Macklin, Graham. 2019a. The Christchurch attacks: livestream terror in the viral video age. *CTC Sentinel* 12(7): 18–28.

Macklin, Graham. 2019b. The El Paso terrorist attack. *CTC Sentinel* 12(11): 1–9.

Macklin, Graham, and Tore Bjørgo. 2021. Breivik's long shadow? The impact of the July 22, 2011, attacks on the modus operandi of extreme-right lone actor terrorists. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15(3): 14–36.

Malthaner, Stefan. 2017. Radicalization: the evolution of an analytical paradigm. *European Journal of Sociology* 58(3), pp. 369–401.

Mason, James. 2015. *Siege*. Second edition. Iron March. Electronically published.

Mason, James. 2017. *Siege*. Third edition. Iron March. Electronically published.

Mason, James. 2018. *Siege*. Fourth edition. Iron March. Electronically published.

McCauley, Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko. 2017. Understanding political radicalization: the two-pyramids model. *American Psychologist* 72(3): 205–216.

Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2019. What makes a symbol far right? Co-opted and missed meanings in far-right iconography. In: Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston (eds.). *Post-digital cultures of the far right*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 123–135.

Mittendorff, Kariene, Femke Geijsel, Aimee Hoeve, Maarten De Laat, and Loek Nieuwenhuis. 2006. Communities of practice as stimulating forces for collective learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 18(5): 298–312.

Mondon, Aurelien, and Aaron Winter. 2021. From demonization to normalization: reflecting on far-right research. In: Stephen Ashe, Joel Busher, Graham Macklin, and Aaron Winter (eds.). *Researching the far right: theory, method and practice.* Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 370–382.

Munn, Luke. 2019. Alt-right pipeline: individual journeys to extremism online. *First Monday* 24(6). Available online at: https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i6.10108 (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Murillo, Enrique. 2008. Searching Usenet for virtual communities of practice: using mixed methods to identify the constructs of Wenger's theory. *Information Research* 13(4). Available online at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ837276.pdf (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Musharbash, Yassin. 2021. The globalization of far-right extremism: an investigative report. *CTC Sentinel* 14(6): pp. 39–47.

Newhouse, Alex. 2021. The threat is the network: the multi-node structure of neo-fascist accelerationism. *CTC Sentinel* 14(5): 17–25.

Nonaka, Ikujiro, and Hirotaka Takeuchi. 1995. The knowledge creating company: how Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ong, Kyler. 2020. Ideological convergence in the extreme right. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 12(5): 1–7.

Owen, Tess. 2019. White nationalists on Telegram are hailing the Germany synagogue shooter as a 'saint'. *Vice*, October 9, 2019. Available online at: https://www.vice.com/en/article/j5ybz4/white-nationalists-on-telegram-are-hailing-the-germany-synagogue-shooter-as-a-saint (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Paiva Duarte, Fernanda. 2013. Communities of practice. In: Samuel O. Idowu, Nicholas Capaldi, Liangrong Zu, and Ananda Das Gupta (eds.). *Encyclopedia of corporate social responsibility*. Berlin: Springer, pp. 399–403.

Pitcavage, Mark. 2020. Twenty-five years later, Oklahoma City bombing inspires a new generation of extremists. Anti-Defamation League blog, 19 April 2020. Available online at: https://www.adl.org/blog/twenty-five-years-later-oklahoma-city-bombing-inspires-a-new-generation-of-extremists (last accessed 23 March 2022)

Pauwels, Lieven, and Nele Schils. 2016. Differential online exposure to extremist content and political violence: testing the relative strength of social learning and competing perspectives. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28(1): 1–29.

Perliger, Arie.2020. *American zealots: inside right-wing domestic terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Pfahl-Traughber, Armin. 2015. Der Anschlag auf Henriette Reker – ein Fall von 'Lone Wolf'-Terrorismus. *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 3 November 2015. Available online at: https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/214657/der-anschlag-auf-henriette-reker-ein-fall-von-lone-wolf-terrorismus/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Phillips, Brian J. 2015. What is a terrorist group? Conceptual issues and empirical implications. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27(2): 225–242.

Phillipsberg, Robert. 2021. Rechtsterroristische Gruppen in Deutschland nach dem NSU. *ZRex – Zeitschrift für Rechtsextremismusforschung* 1(2): 147–166.

Pook, Linus. 2021a. 3. Verhandlungstag 28. Juli 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 119–157.

Pook, Linus. 2021b. 7. Verhandlungstag 26. August 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 223–258.

Pook, Linus, Grischa Stanjek, and Tuija Wigard (eds.). 2021. *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books.

Ranstorp, Magnus, and Magnus Normark. 2015. *Understanding terrorism innovation and learning: Al-Qaeda and beyond*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Rapoport, David. 2004. The four waves of modern terrorism. In: Audrey Cronin and James Ludes (eds.). *Attacking terrorism: elements of a grand strategy*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 46–73.

Ravndal, Jacob Aasland, and Tore Bjørgo. 2018. Investigating terrorism from the extreme right: a review of past and present research. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12(6): 5–22.

Roof, Dylann. 2015. *Untitled*. Electronically published on his website The Last Rhodesian (defunct).

Rothermel, Ann-Kathrin. 2020. Die Manosphere. Die Rolle von digitalen Gemeinschaften und regressiven Bewegungsdynamiken für on- und offline Antifeminismus. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 33(2): 491–505.

RWBC. 2021a. Accelerationists declare 2020 victory. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Do it for the 'gram: the collected writings of Terrorgram*. Electronically published, p. 63.

RWBC. 2021b. Sainthood criteria. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Do it for the 'gram: the collected writings of Terrorgram*. Electronically published, p. 46.

Sageman, Marc. 2008. *Leaderless Jihad: terror networks in the twenty-first century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Sandberg, Sveinung, Atte Oksanen, Lars Erik Berntzen, and Tomi Kiilakoski. 2014. Stories in action: the cultural influences of school shootings on the terrorist attacks in Norway. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7(2): 277–296.

Sanderson, Sertan, and Ben Knight. 2021. Neo-Nazi convicted of murder of pro-refugee German politician. *InfoMigrants*, 29 January 2021. Available online at: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/29964/neonazi-convicted-of-murder-of-prorefugee-german-politician (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Schedler, Jan. 2020. Rechtsterrorismus und rechte Gewalt: Versuch einer Abgrenzung. In: Institut für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft (ed.). *Wissen schafft Demokratie 06: Schwerpunkt Rechtsterrorismus.* Jena: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, pp. 105–116.

Schlegel, Linda. 2020. Jumanji extremism? How games and gamification could facilitate radicalization processes. *Journal for Deradicalization* 23: 1–44.

Schlegel, Linda. 2021. *Extremists' use of gaming (adjacent) platforms: insights regarding primary and secondary prevention measures*. European Commission, Radicalization Awareness Network. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-08/ran_extremists_use_gaming_platforms_082021_en.pdf (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Schuster, Ryan. 2015. Introduction. In: James Mason. *Siege*. Second edition. Iron March. Electronically published, pp. 11–18.

Schwarz, Karoline. 2021. Stochastic terrorism: mass media escalation against victim groups as a radicalization platform for terrorist individual perpetrators? In: European Institute for Counter Terrorism and Conflict Prevention (EICTP) (ed.): *EICTP Research papers on transnational terrorism and counter-terrorism. Volume II*. Vienna: EICTP, pp. 131–139.

Shadnia, Deeba, Alex Newhouse, Matt Kriner, and Arthur Bradley. 2022. Militant accelerationism: a case study in neo-fascist accelerationist coalition building online. *Tech against Terrorism Report*, 7 June 2022. Available online at: https://www.techagainstterrorism.org/2022/06/07/report-a-case-study-in-neo-fascist-accelerationist-coalition-building-online/ (last accessed 29 October 2022).

Shifman, Limor. 2013. Memes in a digital world: reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18(3): 362–377.

Silber, Mitchell D. 2019. Terrorist attacks against Jewish targets in the West (2012–2019). *CTC Sentinel* 12(5): 30–40.

Singh, Rashmi. 2017. A preliminary typology mapping pathways of learning and innovation by modern Jihadist groups. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40(7): 624–44.

Slavros, Alexander, and Charles Chapel. 2015. *A squire's trial*. Iron March. Electronically published.

Slavros, Alexander. 2015a. Methods, goals, moralizing. In: Iron March (eds.). *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 82–88.

Slavros, Alexander. 2015b. Purge the weakness. In: Iron March (eds*.). Next Leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 8–19.

Slavros, Alexander. 2015c. Come home, fascists, come home. In: Iron March (eds.). *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 20–25.

Slavros, Alexander. 2015d. Inevitability of the race war. In: Iron March (eds.). *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 77–79.

Snyder, Vincent. n.d. The movementarian menace. *SiegeCulture*. Reposted at https://americanfuturist.net/the-movementarian-menace (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). 2017. Donning the mask: presenting 'The Face of 21st Century Fascism', *Hatewatch*, 20 June 2017. Available online at: https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/06/20/donning-mask-presenting-face-21st-century-fascism (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). 2020. 'There is no political solution': accelerationism in the white power movement, *Hatewatch*, 23 June 2020. Available online at: https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/06/23/there-no-political-solution-accelerationism-white-power-movement (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Stanjek, Grischa. 2021a. 1. Verhandlungstag 21. Juli 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek, and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 60–86.

Stanjek, Grischa. 2021b. 8. Verhandlungstag 1. September 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek, and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 264–291.

Stanjek, Grischa. 2021c. 25. Verhandlungstag 9. Dezember 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek, and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 848–858.

Stenersen, Anne. 2013. 'Bomb-making for beginners': inside an al-Qaida e-learning course. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7(1): 25–37.

Storberg-Walker, Julia. 2008. Wenger's communities of practice revisited: a (failed?) exercise in applied communities of practice theory-building research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 10(4): 555–577.

Sunal, Cynthia and Vivian Wright. 2012. Online learning. In: Norbert M. Seel (ed*.). Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning*, Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 2499–2502.

Sweeney, Matthew M. (2019) Who can be a leaderless resistor: a case study test of literature-based assumptions of leaderless resistance. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 42(7): 617–635.

Takeyh, Ray and Nikolas Gvosdev. 2002. Do terrorist networks need a home? *The Washington Quarterly* 25(3): 97–108.

Tarrant, Brenton. 2019. *The Great Replacement*. Electronically published on 8chan.

Tarrow, S. (2011). *Power in movement: social movements and contentious politics* (3rd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Terrorgram (ed.). 2021a. *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published.

Terrorgram (ed.). 2021b. Do it for the 'gram: the collected writings of Terrorgram. Electronically published.

The Local. 2020. Norway mosque shooter: 'I would like to apologise for not doing more harm'. *The Local*, 20 May 2020. Available online at: https://www.thelocal.no/20200507/i-would-like-to-apologise-for-not-doing-more-harm/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Thorleifsson, Cathrine. 2022. From cyberfascism to terrorism: on 4chan/pol/ culture and the transnational production of memetic violence. *Nations and Nationalism* 28(1): 286–301.

Upchurch, H.E. 2021. The Iron March forum and the evolution of the "skull mask" neo-fascist network. *CTC Sentinel* 14(10): 27–37.

Vaux, Pierre, Aoife Gallagher, and Jacob Davey. 2021. The extreme right on Steam. *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, August 12, 2021. Available online at: https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/gaming-and-extremism-the-extreme-right-on-steam/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Vygotsky, Lev S. 1978. *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Ware, Jacob. 2020. Testament to murder: the violent far-right's increasing use of terrorist manifestos. *ICCT Policy Brief*, 17 March 2020. Available online at: https://icct.nl/publication/testament-to-murder-the-violent-far-rights-increasing-use-of-terrorist-manifestos/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Weinberg, Leonard. 2021. *Right-wing violence in the Western world since World War II.* London: World Scientific Pub.

Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger-Trayner, Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner. 2015. *Introduction to communities of practice: a brief overview of the concept and its uses*. Available online at: https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/ (last accessed 23 March 2022).

Whiskey. 2021. Your big day. In: Terrorgram (ed.): *Militant accelerationism: a collective handbook*. Electronically published, p. 93.

Wigard, Tuija. 2021a. 2. Verhandlungstag 22. Juli 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 89–114.

Wigard, Tuija. 2021b. 16. Verhandlungstag 13. Oktober 2020. In: Linus Pook, Grischa Stanjek and Tuija Wigard (eds.). *Der Halle-Prozess: Mitschriften*. Leipzig: Spector Books, pp. 481–497.

Wiggins, Bradley E. 2021. Boogaloo and Civil War 2: memetic antagonism in expressions of covert activism. *New Media & Society* 23(11): 3179–3205.

Wilner, Alex and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz. 2011. Transformative radicalization: applying learning theory to Islamist radicalization. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34(5): 418–438.

Young, Joseph K. and Michael G. Findley. 2011. Promise and pitfalls of terrorism research. *International Studies Review* 13(3): 411–431.

Zeiger. 2015a. Idealism vs. materialism. In: Iron March (eds.). *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 132–136.

Zeiger. 2015b. Symbolism and fascism. In: Iron March (eds.). *Next leap: an Iron March anthology*. Electronically published, pp. 204–209.