DeRadicalisation
in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate

Cultural Drivers of Radicalisation

Italy/D5.1 Country Report

May 2021

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Reference: D.RAD [5.1]

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This document is available for download at https://dradproject.com/

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List of Abbreviations

BAS - Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol
CPI – Casa Pound Italia
SSB – Südtiroler Schützenbund

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include a sense of being victimised; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and coming under the influence of "us vs them" identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalisation will be central to the project's aims.

Executive Summary

The report briefly summarises the key features of the Italian media landscape: its concentration; the growth of online platforms; and limits to media pluralism. It shows that Italian radicalising actors rely on social media platforms to disseminate their ideas and claims (rather than on the mainstream media).

To shed more light on the relationship between the media and radicalisation processes, we analysed three cultural objects produced by right-wing (Casa Pound Italia – CPI) and separatist (individuals linked to the Südtiroler Schützenbund - SSB) actors. We found that all cultural objects were constructed to trigger feelings of injustice linked with collective grievances of the population, alienation from the state institutions and polarisation against 'perceived others'.

Concerning the triggering of right-wing radicalisation, we find that CPI's videos clearly convey an 'us vs them' message, pitting the common Italian citizen against immigrants, criminals and corrupt elites, and advocating resistance against these actors. Comments by the audience suggest that the public interprets these messages as calls for revolution and for the re-establishment of a Fascist regime.

With regards to radical separatist views inside the SSB, these have sometimes been adopted by individual members of the organisation and included in a wider extremist framework connecting 'traditional values' with discriminatory, homo-/xenophobic and misogynist world-views. Although, as proven by the chosen case study, the organisation is ready to take measures to identify and suppress such radical voices, singular actors can take advantage of the communicative means of the SSB to effectively disseminate radical ideologies by reaching a wider audience and reinforcing a polarised environment inside and outside separatist groups.

1. Introduction

This report contributes to D.Rad WP5 through a snapshot of the Italian experience. WP5 examines the ways in which injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarisation (I-GAP) manifest themselves on digital platforms and in popular culture. Specifically, it investigates how the media depicts and triggers the perceived injustice and grievances underpinning radicalisation. It does so through in-depth analysis of selected media artefacts (cultural objects) and mapping of their impact on public audiences.

The Italian case is discussed through a broad contextualisation of the national media landscape and in-depth analysis of three video clips: the right-wing movement Casa Pound Italia (CPI) produced a video of a demonstration against amendments to Italy's citizenship laws (Video A) (CPI, 2017), and a second video as an electoral advertisement for the Rome municipal elections (video B) (CPI, 2016). The third video is a rap song written and performed by a (now former) commander of the Südtiroler Schützenbund (SSB), an association deeply connected to the history of South Tyrol and structured in a somewhat militaristic format, which is related to separatist claims in the Italian province of South Tyrol. These three videos have been selected among others because of their higher illustrative value and their impact at different institutional and geographic levels. Video A situates processes of socio-cultural and political polarisation at the national level, depicting a section of the Italian population which rejects international globalising forces and the consequent rethinking of national identities and allegiances. Video B focuses instead on the local level and in particular on the context of the Italian capital, where injustices and grievances are articulated with a more pragmatic and community-focused approach. Finally, Video C shows how a polarised and polarising local social environment may assume a transnational dimension, as well as how long-standing revanchist ideologies are re-contextualising in an evolving cultural scenario. Each one of the three videos clearly depicts perceived injustices and grievances that are processed and expressed through dynamics of alienation and polarisation from mainstream society and public institutions.

Consequently, our analysis confirms the validity of the I-GAP framework for analysing radicalisation processes in Italy in three respects. Radicalising actors primarily rely on social media platforms to disseminate their ideas and claims. The cultural objects analysed are also constructed to trigger feelings of injustice linked with collective grievances of the population, alienation from the state institutions and polarisation against 'others'. Finally, on the basis of our contextual analysis of the Italian media landscape and of two prominent radicalising actors (associated with the right-wing and the ethno-separatist milieus in Italy), we reflected on the multiple ways in which radical political and social actors use YouTube in innovative ways to sow narratives of injustice, disseminate them as widely as possible, and gather feedback from both existing sympathisers and the wider public. In this sense, our analysis confirms that the 'comment' function on YouTube enables popular engagement and community building that can entrench polarised views of identity, exacerbate alienation from existing institutions and even encourage violent extremist action.

The following sections will briefly introduce the overarching drivers of radicalisation and the key features of media ownership and regulations in Italy, before turning to the three media objects examined in this report and their cultural and political background.

1.1 Overarching cultural drivers of radicalisation

For over half a decade, Italy has experienced various episodes of terrorist and extremist activity. In recent years, the Italian radicalisation context has been driven by at least four types of extremism: left-wing and right-wing political extremism, religious extremism, and radical separatist ideologies. For this report, we focus on three media objects (videos) related to two specific phenomena: right-wing neo-fascist extremism throughout Italy and separatism in the province of South Tyrol, the Alpine region between Italy and Austria with a German and Ladin speaking population and a past of ethnic tensions. While the right-wing cultural objects may help in understanding and depicting the country-wide media landscape, the specific case of South Tyrol offers an in-depth perspective on local dynamics with a transnational impact. The extreme right-wing cultural sphere is increasingly dominated by CPI. CPI, a movement of self-defined 'third millennium fascists' (Cammelli, 2018), emphasizes national identity and a virulent hostility to immigration, multiculturalism and the European Union (Europol, 2019; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2019). It was founded as a youth cultural centre originating out the right-wing party Fiamma Tricolore.[1] Within the Italian context, CPI plays a critical role in mainstreaming radicalisation through the use of digital platforms as well as offline activities like protests and social actions. Ostensibly, CPI has focused fully on cultural, educational, and social activities since 2019, following its lack of success in winning local and European elections (Open, 2019).

Many of these cultural activities consist of public displays of fascist symbols and yearly celebrations of fascist milestones, including the March on Rome, the Saló Republic and Mussolini's death. These displays have an ambiguous status in Italy, where a 1952 Law criminalises the glorification of fascism (Heywood, 2019). However, the presence and circulation of fascist symbols needs to be recognized as part of the Italian political and cultural landscape. Beyond its cultural and leisure activities, CPI engages in initiatives for the benefit of the Italian population; these include social housing, food banks, relief to earthquake affected population (Sesana, 2019). It is notable that all these activities are presented as benefiting only the Italian population, explicitly excluding immigrants. It is also important to note that despite this emphasis on cultural and solidarity activities, it is well documented that CPI members and sympathisers have also organized 'squadrist-style' violent political demonstrations, riots and racially motivated violent attacks and demonstrations (Heywood, 2019).

Though less present throughout Italy, radical separatist ideologies are reflected in the ethnonational claims made in South Tyrol. Indeed, as highlighted in our previous report on stakeholders of radicalisation, the South Tyrolean case suggests that

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[1] Fiamma Tricolore was founded in 1995. Its creation as a splinter group from the post-war neo-fascist party Movimento sociale italiano (MSI) was a protest against the MSI's decision to distance itself from its fascist legacy, change its name to Alleanza Nazionale and join a centre-right government coalition (Cammelli, 2018).

different strands of radicalisation might combine in a context of historical ethnic tensions; the South Tyrolean separatist discourse has sometimes been included in a wider right-wing extremist framework in which certain individuals connect 'traditional values' with discriminatory, homo-/xenophobic and misogynist world-views. As one example, radical separatist ideologies infused with chauvinism have been promoted on occasion by some members of the Südtiroler Schützenbund (SSB). The SSB is a private voluntary transnational association with counterparts in Tyrol (Austria), Bavaria (Germany) and the Italian neighbouring province of Trentino that bears the legacy of a historic militia that participates in historical revival events. Replete with various local symbols and costumes, the SSB are a familiar presence at festivals and also have charitable initiatives, similar to the CPI. According to its statute and its defined objectives, the SSB builds on the tradition of the provincial and tributary orders of Tyrolean history; protects and defends the homeland and the identity of the Tyrolean people against internal and external enemies and threats. Furthermore, the self-determination and the peaceful reunification of Tyrol as a European federal state are the two most prominent objectives of the organization which fulfils socio-political, cultural, and social tasks. The SSB counts 141 member companies spread across the whole territory of South Tyrol, as well as 3 bands (band "Freiherr von Cazan", Meransen and Pichl) with a total of 4,967 active, 188 honorary and 1.009 supporting members.[2]

1.2 Context of radicalisation

Italy has witnessed a resurgence of extreme right-wing movements in the last decade, with three main 'events' triggering the increasing appeal of the xenophobic right. First, the 2008 economic crisis and the long-term impact of successive policies of austerity have led to increasing economic hardship for Italy's working and middle classes (Di Mascio & Natalini, 2014; Menegatto, 2015). In turn, socio-economic grievances have increased the appeal of extreme right-wing groups that emphasise solidarity and camaraderie among Italians, including CPI (Bulli, 2019; Castelli Gattinara, Froio & Albanese, 2013; Sesana, 2019). Grievances, as articulated in CPI's flyers, have also fuelled violent riots and actions in deprived and peripheral areas of Italy's major cities, including the 2014 'revolt of the peripheries' in Rome (Selmini, 2016).

Second, Italy has emerged as a key migratory route from the Southern Mediterranean into Western Europe, particularly following the collapse of the Gadhafi regime in Libya in 2011 (Panebianco, 2019; Crawley et al., 2016). The Italian state's struggle to cope with increasing migratory flows, and some episodes of violence carried out by illegal migrants[3] have lent additional support to groups advocating blanket deportations of unemployed foreigners and the use of state funds for the exclusive benefit of Italian citizens; this sentiment is reflected in CPI's slogan of 'First to the Italians' (Castelli

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[2]Statute, objectives and statistics available at: https://schuetzen.com/organisation/ssb/statuten/; https://schuetzen.com/organisation/ssb/zielsetzung/ and https://schuetzen.com/organisation/nuetzliches/statistik/
[3] An emblematic example was the gruesome killing of 18-years old Pamela Mastropietro by Innocent Oseghale, a Nigerian migrant in Macerata in 2018 (The Sun, 2018). A more recent example is the homicide of parish priest don Roberto Marchesini by an illegal immigrant from Tunisia in 2020 (Il Giorno, 2020).

Gattinara & O'Connor and Lindekilde; Mammone, 2009). Increasing polarisation between Italians and 'others' on the media and in public discourse has partly motivated violent right-wing actions, including a wave of racially-motivated beatings of Bengalese workers in Rome in 2008 (La Repubblica, 2017), the shooting of two Senegalese market traders in Florence in 2011 (The Guardian, 2011; BBC, 2011) and the drive-by shooting of six migrants in Macerata in 2017 (La Repubblica, 2018).

Third, the Covid-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 have provided further impetus for the extreme right. On the one hand, there is extensive evidence that social isolation has increased individual vulnerability to the extremist messages distributed online (Cossiga, 2020; Marone, 2021). On the other hand, the rhetoric and actions of right-wing groups such as CPI (particularly in regard to the closure of borders, the inadequacy of the state, the economic grievances of the population) have increasingly resonated with the wider population, especially the youth, in the context of increasing unemployment, poverty and cyclical political crises (CPI, 2020; La Stampa, 2020).

With regards to South Tyrol, the Italian wide grievances outlined above are somewhat reflected but there are additional unresolved grievances related to the province's status within Italy. These stem from numerous boundary changes, policies of forced assimilation, international disputes that culminated in a polarised environment, where "us vs them" narratives were further reinforced by systemic divisions. This polarisation escalated into a conflict between organised separatist groups and Italian institutions from the late 1950s until the end of the 1980s. The violent actions targeted Italian institutions, monuments, infrastructures, and police forces, and were perpetrated in most part by the separatist organisations Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol (BAS, translated as Liberation Committee South Tyrol) and Ein.Tirol. While these groups were infiltrated by right-wing pan-Germanist extremists from both Austria and Germany, it also seems that the Italian secret services were to some degree involved in the implementation of the so-called strategia della tensione (tension strategy) – tension strategy, that is, "the use of violent criminal actions by state agents to engender a climate of fear that blames the violence on a dangerous 'public enemy'" (Clement & Scalia, 2020; Pallaver, 2008). Nowadays, South Tyrol is widely considered a successful laboratory of local autonomy and power-sharing, and the violent period of ethno-nationalist terrorism seems to have come to an end (Bernardini & Pallaver, 2015).

Nevertheless, the reconciliation between the Italian and German language groups has been called into question by the revival of old and new ethnic divides. While there are no longer acts of clearly defined ethno-nationalist terrorism, there remains elements of German-speaking separatist discourse that have increasingly become embedded in and indeed swamped by the dynamics of right-wing extremism. Although the South Tyrolean mainstream separatist ideology, as endorsed and promoted for instance by some local parties and private organisations such as the SSB, has clearly distanced itself from the use of political violence, local ethnicised politics provide a breeding

ground for possible contaminations between legitimate socio-political institutions and extremist groups who often have a transnational character and a very partial and distorted view of history (Barfuss, 2019). As noted above, individual members of separatist forces have indeed occasionally been found to endorse or disseminate revisionist, xenophobic or misogynist ideologies (L'Espresso, 2008; Corriere dell'Alto Adige, 2018; Palermo, 2007).

1.3 Media ownership, Regulation and Radicalising Actors' Use of the Mainstream media in Italy

A recent report on Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Era (Brogi et al., 2020; Brogi, 2017) describes effectively the three key features of the Italian media landscape. First, the media market in Italy is concentrated in the hands of the public station broadcaster (RAI) and its main competitor, Mediaset. Concentration also characterises the ownership of newspapers, as well as online platforms (Brogi et al., 2020). Second, Italians rely primarily on TV and radio for their information, followed by online news and declining newspaper sales (Brogi et al., 2020). The growth of online TV streaming and news has characterised the last years, along with a booming reach of social media, with Facebook and YouTube dominating this market (CENSIS, 2018). The growth of online media platforms has amplified hate speech, disinformation and unfair electoral propaganda (Brogi et al., 2020), but is deemed positive by almost 50% of Italians on the grounds that it allows them a more direct communication channel with politicians (CENSIS, 2018). Third, the pluralism of the Italian media is at considerable risk at present. This assessment reflects the growing violent threats against journalists and ineffective mechanisms to protect them; the limited political independence of public broadcasters; the absence of effective rules on conflicts of interest; the lack of regulations on balanced electoral reporting, fact-checking and transparency on online platforms; the limited access to media for women and minorities; and the diffusion of hate speech (Brogi et al., 2020).

According to recent research, Italian mainstream media discourses appear to focus on 'immigration, corruption and privileges of the elite – also related to a certain rhetoric on the inability of the state to protect the rights of the needy' (Giglietto et al., 2019). Similarly, Pollice & Miggiano (2020) identify a 'significant over-exposition' and 'over-representation' of the migratory phenomenon as a threat to Italianess and identify migrants as the main 'other' in Italian media reports up until 2020. Whilst often resulting from valuable forms of investigative journalism, which have uncovered instances of corruption and clientelism, the media's emphasis on migration may amplify claims underpinning feelings of injustice among the population related with economic deprivation, cultural marginalisation and alienation from the major political parties and institutions (Caponion & Cappiali, 2017; Galantino, 2017; Bobba & Seddone, 2017; Lucchesi, 2020).[4]

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[4] Memoli (2019) shows that these narratives are less extreme than those conveyed via social media, while Falcone et al. (2020) suggest that recent media coverage of the Covid-19 crisis may have helped build trust in public institutions.

With regard to the general media landscape of South Tyrol, this does not significantly differ from that of Italy. However, it also shows some local peculiarities. The main differentiating factor is of linguistic nature. As part of the system of measures to protect local minorities, media are divided along linguistic lines (ECMI, 2020), though there are also local bilingual media attempts. For example, there are local newspapers in Italian or German language and possibility to watch Austrian and German TV channels. However, linguistic divisions sometimes predict the underlying ideology of a specific media. Newspapers of both language groups target mainly readership of their own group. Both the print media and as well as the mass media therefore inform mainly a part of society and tend to structure information differently. For instance, while Alto Adige is a local newspaper published in Italian which has frequently defended the 'Italianess' of the region (Alto Adige, 2011a), Dolomiten is a historic newspaper published since the 1920s in German which has sometimes been seen as adopting separatist stances (Il Dolomiti, 2020a), but which has also condemned revanchist perspectives (Ansa, 2017). Dolomiten is also member of the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS). Quite strikingly, both newspapers – together with other important local newspapers of the Alpine region such as L'Adige and Trentino, as well as Radio Dolomiti – are owned by the same editorial group. This quasi-monopoly (except for the Corriere dell'Alto Adige) has been considered problematic by some political parties, some of which required urgent action in the Italian parliament (Ansa, 2018; La Voce del Trentino, 2020).

An important event on the media market in South Tyrol was the foundation of Radio South Tyrol (RAS) in 1975, which made it possible for the first time to receive foreign German speaking channels, such as the broadcasts of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), the Second German Television (ZDF) or the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG), boosting competition with the Italian speaking channels (Klein, 2015). Finally, the Internet opened up a multitude of possibilities for reaching out to the public. These include various websites, such as the one of the Athesia publishing house company 'stol.it' or 'suedtirolnews.it'.

Notwithstanding these specificities, South Tyrol is still clearly part of a general digitalisation trend. Consequently, radicalising ideas are shared mainly online, in social media (mainly Facebook), in blogs, official pages, online newspapers, etc. However, it can also be recognised a propensity for 'physical tools', using posters, events, or symbolic actions (Alto Adige, 2020; Il Dolomiti, 2020b).

Different mainstream media adopt different political stances when dealing with separatism in South Tyrol. While it can be expected that right leaning media tend to defend the Italianess of the region and condemn separatist claims, also more centrist – if not left leaning – media have sometimes adopted a centralist attitude when reporting news coming from South Tyrol, while failing to understand the historical grievances that characterise the region and the polarising effect of a naïve, superficial or one-sided analysis (La Repubblica, 2021; Il Corriere della Sera, 2019; Rielli, 2016).

In sum, an overview of the mainstream media in Italy shows that the injustices and grievances voiced by radicalising actors often echo the contents privileged by the mainstream media, suggesting a broad relevance of these grievances. Despite this mirroring, radicalising actors prefer using non-mainstream platforms to disseminate their messages: the next section will explore the reasons underpinning this choice.

1.4 Radicalising Actors' engagement with the mainstream and alternative media.

The media landscape in Italy has had a demonstrable effect on extremist groups, namely in their need to design and sustain extensive communication strategies to engage both with the mainstream media (more superficially) and to make use of alternative media and platforms to build and nurture their community. Despite a resonance between the prevailing discourses in mainstream media and the rhetoric of the far right, actors such as CPI have remained suspicious of the mainstream media. Indeed, CPI has consistently accused the mainstream media of 'marginalizing, and repressing, the free speech of neo-Fascists on issues as varied as the environment, the economy, culture' (Castelli Gattinara & Bouron, 2020). Nevertheless, CPI has made expert use of both the mainstream media and of online media to disseminate its core messages.

On the one hand, the Italian mainstream media has often amplified CPI's high-impact theatrical actions against austerity, immigration, and insecurity (Bulli, 2019; Castelli Gattinara & Bouron, 2020). CPI has employed the mainstream media to enhance its visibility through actions of 'squadrismo mediatico' (media squadrismo). Squadrismo mediatico consists of emblematic actions of high emotional impact, with a large potential for extensive media coverage. As Castelli Gattinara et al. (2020) show, the 'traditional media… looked to satisfy a need for the spectacular and the dramatic, a need to which CPI's theatricality responded perfectly' (Bulli, 2019). For example, to denounce the economic impact of lockdowns in July 2020, CPI posted up fake funeral posters on the doors of tax and revenue offices throughout Italy (ItaliaOggi, 2020). Bulli (2019) further suggests that the very 'imaginary of violence' adopted by CPI feeds the media's 'fascination' with the group.

On the other hand, CPI and other right-wing groups have increasingly relied on their own independent online media for conveying their messages and articulating their political goals (Castelli Gattinara & Bouron, 2020). CPI controls an online TV channel (Tortugawebtv), a radio channel (Radio Bandiera Nera) and two newspapers (Occidentale and Il Primato Nazionale) (Bulli, 2019). It also relies on official social media profiles (on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) managed by sympathisers who do not wish to become full members (Castelli Gattinara, O'Connor & Lindekilde, 2018), a national website and local branch websites. Through these channels, CPI disseminates both mainstream and more radical content. As Castelli Gattinara & Bouron (2020) show, 'these online platforms are very coherent in aesthetic choices and in the diffusion of messages, facilitating the construction of shared meanings and goals among militants and sympathizers'. Notwithstanding such presence, there are

limits on online activities in Italy. In 2019, the CPI Facebook page was blocked for 'spreading hate and attacking others on the basis of who they are' (Il Sole 24 Ore, 2019).

In the context of ethno-nationalism in South Tyrol instead, separatist organisations and parties do not seem to rely on specific mainstream or local media to disseminate their ideas and claims, since official statements are commonly published on official social media accounts or webpages. Instead, as done by CPI, some of these groups organise 'physical' non-violent actions to gain visibility (La Repubblica, 2020; Alto Adige, 2011b; Il Dolomiti, 2019). Indeed, separatists often exploit the mainstream media, which, amplifies their demands and positions by reporting on their non-violent activities.

With regard specifically to the SSB, the organization cares about the preservation of the homeland, the cultivation of tradition and the paternal faith. Besides its own webpage, the SSB has various accounts and channels on a number of social media platforms to spread its messages, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Telegram, WhatsApp, Skype, Soundcloud and Scribd. Together with its Tyrolean counterpart, the SSB publishes five issues of its own newspaper called "Tiroler Schützenzeitung, a newsletter of the Schuetzen of the Alpine Republic" to be read also online on the SSB webpage.

This overview underscores that despite many of their grievances being presented on the mainstream media, radicalising actors favour alternative media to disseminate their messages. This choice, as suggested by Castelli Gattinara & Bouron (2020), may be explained by the dual function of social media and alternative media in both disseminating content and helping community-building.

1.5 The media objects and their context in Italy

Having identified right-wing extremism and ethno-nationalism/separatism in South Tyrol as potentially radicalising ideologies, this report seeks to capture the ways in which injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarisation (I-GAP) manifest themselves on digital platforms and in popular culture in Italy through an analysis of three videos, publicly available on YouTube. Indeed, social media is a prime space for sowing cultures for polarization, mythmaking, and injustice (Foxman & Wolf, 2013; Caiani & Parenti, 2013; Klein & Muis, 2019; Fielitz & Thurston, 2019; Froio & Ganesh, 2019; Wahlström, Törnberg & Ekbrand, 2020).

The first video documents a CPI demonstration against amendments to Italy's citizenship laws, held in L'Aquila in 2017 (video A) (CPI, 2017). It was viewed 10,829 times between 2017 and March 2020. The second video is CPI's electoral advertisement for the Rome municipal elections in 2016 (video B) (CPI, 2016). It was viewed 59,574 times between 2016 and March 2020. The third video is a rap song written and performed by a commander of the SSB that was circulated in 2020.

To explore how these three media artefacts express and convey injustice, grievance, alienation and polarisation to the wider population, this report first introduces the

methodology for our analysis; subsequently, it evaluates the representation, circulation, and consumption context of the three chosen videos before drawing some general conclusions.

2. Methodology

This report uses selective examples of video to consider their role as cultural drivers of radicalisation and extremism in the Italian context. We have selected three videos that are available on YouTube and shared through the public channels of the CPI and SSB because social media is becoming the main media through which radicalising ideas are shared, disseminated, and reinforced. Furthermore, YouTube videos are a very powerful communicative tool, since they offer both a complete media object (words and images) and a comment section where radicalised ideas may be sustained and radical networks may be supported (Burgess, Marwick, Poell, 2017).

We adopted a mixed-method approach to study how these videos operate as ideational compositions of claims, assessments and reflections that have the potential to contribute to patterns of radicalisation (the I-GAP Spectrum). The main research questions are: how are radical political and social actors using YouTube in innovative ways to sow narratives of injustice? How do YouTube comments reflect popular engagement and community building that can lead to polarisation?

2.1 Sampling of media sources

Our sampling of media products draws on our previous analysis of radical political actors in Italy (WP3). An extensive desk research revealed that the majority of these actors and their affiliates employ private and closed profiles on Facebook and other social media to disseminate their message. However, this messaging can be unidirectional: even when using free media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, these actors frequently block the comments function, making it impossible to gauge audience response to individual media objects, as done in the case of the SSB. A prominent exception to this trend is CPI. CPI's extensive and effective use of social media for the purposes of propaganda is well documented and will be further explored in section 4 below (Castelli Gattinara & Bouron, 2020). CPI's YouTube channel includes 132 videos and allows for extensive comments. While SBB produces many videos as part of its extensive social media profile, the video "Mamma Tirol" was chosen specifically because of the controversy and discussion that the video sparked in South Tyrol as well as across the border in Austria.

2.2 Analysis

Four main aspects of the media text and context are highlighted in this report. First, to study representation, we tracked the elements of visual culture on display in the videos as expressions of contentious dynamics of social forces and power, such as trafficking

in negative and positive stereotypes that reinforced an us-versus-them dichotomy as well as the inclusion of historically and politically charged symbols.

Second, the report studies the narratives of videos to understand how they delineated adversarial framing that turns individual grievances into collective struggles. We carried out multimodal discourse analysis, meant as an extension of discourse analysis beyond 'the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music and sound' (O'Halloran, 2011) to analyse video texts (speeches, voiceover and the superimposed captions) and identify the core themes of the two CPI videos.[5] For the text of the song in Video C, this concerns choices of words and cultural references. These texts and themes were then subsequently analysed through the I-GAP spectrum and along three dimensions of injustice narratives: economic, symbolic/cultural, and political (Fraser, 2008; Fraser, 1995).

Third, we studied how the narrative was reinforced through a variety of technical elements. For the videos, this included paying careful attention to the aesthetics, cinematography, camera angles, the use of voiceover, and editing. Finally, we applied quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the audience reactions to the videos. This enables us to capture the intricacies of the process of "audience-making", in line with media practice theory that considers what people do in relation to media (Couldry, 2004, p. 121).

In the case of the two CPI videos, we focused on the media practice of commenting to gauge audience reception. Comments are public and available to all users unless they are deleted by the video uploader, a limitation of the data that should be noted. To collect the comments, we used the free software Coberry. We subsequently carried out a deductive thematic analysis of the comments to categorise the data by frequency of key actors and terms.[6] We also analysed the comments under nodes related to injustice, grievances, alienation, polarisation, and violent action. The nodes were developed deductively, based on the I-GAP spectrum.

Instead, since the video from SSB was removed from YouTube and therefore did not have public comments available for analysis, we examined consumption by considering the swift backlash and condemnation of the video that emanated from different political bodies, mainstream media, and various civil society groups. Nevertheless, the author of the video issued a public statement on the SSB Facebook page, whose comment section offer a clear view on the various reactions sparked by the video. Furthermore, we briefly analyse the reaction in neighbouring regions by similar organisations. This analysis allowed us to evaluate and compare the extent to which our chosen media products triggered feelings described in the I-GAP spectrum as a precondition for violent radicalisation.

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[5] In line with the methods outlined by Ozduzen (2020).
[6] To execute the frequency analysis, we employed the free software Coberry combined with word clouds and automatic analyses geenrated through the free software WordItOut (https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create).

3. Representation, circulation, and consumption of the media objects

3.1 CPI: media objects

This report compares two videos, which were produced and disseminated by Casa Pound Italia (CPI). The first video was produced to document a CPI demonstration in L'Aquila in 2017 (video A) (CPI, 2017). The second video is part of CPI's electoral campaign for the Rome municipal elections in 2016 (video B) (CPI, 2016). Despite their different intended purposes, the visual and discursive contents of the two videos are similar in their triggering of feelings of injustice linked with grievances (poverty and the delayed reconstruction of territories devastated by the 2009 earthquake), alienation from the state institutions (unresponsive to people's needs for security and economic aid) and polarisation (against the political class and the police). These feelings are subsequently harnessed to encourage protest against the status quo by the audiences. As such, the two videos are good examples of how the I-GAP framework helps shed light on the dynamics of right-wing radicalisation.

Video A documents a demonstration against proposed new citizenship laws in L'Aquila. The speech by CPI leader Di Stefano clearly conveys CPI's polarised view of Italy, one pitting 'Italians' against 'immigrants'. Di Stefano articulates an alleged design by the established politicians in Rome ('puppets') to 'scientifically promote - literally - the replacement of the Italian people'. Referring to low natality rates, he advances that every year, 200,000 Italians are replaced by 'foreigners who arrive every year with their boats'.[7] He presents CPI as the forefront of resistance to this alleged 'project': 'No. Our nation and the whole of Europe belongs to the Europeans. Italy belongs to the Italians and nobody else'.

Visually, video A corroborates the presentation of CPI as the avantgarde of resistance. Numerous shots of a sea of CPI flags convey an impression of cohesion, while lengthy shots of waving Italian flags trigger feelings of patriotism. A marching soundtrack conveys an impression of orderly and military resistance, which is further corroborated by rows of equidistant and orderly demonstrators waving CPI flags. The use of red smoke bombs provides particularly suggestive and emotional images of the orderly demonstrators emerging from the red smoke. These scenes are well-rehearsed: Castelli Gattinara and Bouron document the elaborate rituals ensuring optimal visual impact for CPI demonstrations, including the prohibition to display any signs other that the CPI and Italian flags (Castelli Gattinara & Bouron, 2020).

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[7] This argument echoes the white ethnonationalist conspiracy theory of Great Replacement (Cosentino, 2020; Feola, 2020; Bowles, 2019). Stocker (2019) traces the mainstreaming of these 'demographic conspiracies... immigration and multiculturalism are not merely negative influences on society which should be slowed, stopped or reversed, but the product of an intentional plan by elites to weaken or even eradicate national (or European) identity' in the last decade.

Visual symbols in video A make CPI clearly identifiable as an extreme right-wing movement, in line with CPI's use of aesthetics referencing the Futurist movement.[8] For example, several banners use a font typical of the Fascist regime. Similarly, one of the banners displays an eagle clutching a baton, echoing fascist symbols of eagles clutching a fasces.

Video B is more subtle in its use of symbology, reflecting its aim to appeal to a wider audience of potential electors. It consists primarily of a tracking shot of the CPI leaders and candidate to the Rome elections, Di Stefano, walking through the streets of Rome addressing the camera. The audio clearly presents CPI as the remedy to the population's feelings of injustice. Much more subtly than in Video A, Di Stefano polarises its audience through a clear stereotyping of 'us' (the Italian population of voters) against 'them' (illegal immigrants, unemployed or homeless immigrants, criminals and drug addicts). For example, in the video, Di Stefano is followed by a handful of supporters in orderly and organised manner, similar to bodyguards, which convey an impression of order and security. All his followers are white, well-groomed and well dressed, embodying CPI's commitment to stand 'always on the side of Italians'.

In the first part of the video, Di Stefano voices grievances related to the lack of safety and security in Rome. He presents himself and CPI as the only ones willing to check on people's safety, echoing the campaign slogan 'to defend Rome'. Identifying the sources on insecurity with illegal immigrants and unauthorised peddlers, he calls for the immediate expulsion of all foreigners without a house or job, and for a formal authorisation for Italians to organise structured patrol services. Di Stefano also voices the socio-economic grievances of the population of Rome. Walking alongside a young woman pushing a pram, he states that 'we [Italians] have to come before others' in employment, council flats and state-funded nurseries and calls to end all immigration- and Roma-related spending and for every Euro to be spent on and for Italians.

In the second part of the video, Di Stefano expresses the alienation of people from the state institutions. He refers to 'the powers that be' as preventing change in Rome, mentions cases of corruption and concussion among the political establishment and criticises the leaders of left- and right-wing parties for having failed to change the city. Throughout the video, Di Stefano reiterates that 'politicians talk, we have already done these things. Politicians talk, and we are in the streets fighting with our people every day.' These slogans echo what Bulli identifies as CPI's 'frame of success', a discourse establishing CPI as a unique alternative to the right and the left, and the only actor punching above its weight in Italian politics (Bulli, 2019). Indeed, to corroborate this 'frame of success', the video is interspersed with clips testifying to CPI's actions, including demonstrations against refugee and immigration centres; demonstrations against Roma camps; and demonstrations against corruption in Rome. These clips underscore CPI's implementation of actions of solidarity, seen by Bulli as establishing

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[8] Futurism was an artistic and literary movement which became officially associated with Fascism following Mussolini's rise to power in 1922 (Bulli, 2019).

a firm connection with the 'Fascist regime, particularly its social and economic policies' (Bulli, 2019). It is notable that captions clarify that the beneficiaries of actions such as occupations of council flats and food banks are exclusively Italian families.

Whilst these initiatives are largely peaceful, one of the clips includes a clash with the police (during a demonstration against a refugee centre in Casale San Nicola), further corroborating CPI's identity as a dynamic and active group willing to engage in violence against the state. The final message, that 'this city can be changed kicking, and can be changed only with who wants to get down into the streets and stand next to the citizens, also physically, to defend them' echoes the aggressive dynamism of traditional Fascist ideology of 'idea-action' (idea-azione) (Bulli, 2019).

In sum, Videos A and B exemplify the two different ways in which CPI engages with its core audience on a national level (Video A) and with the broader political spectrum on the local level (Video B). We find that both cultural objects leverage grievances related with poverty and security; alienation from political and economic institutions; and polarisation against immigrants and the elites to stoke feelings of injustice among the audience. In the next section, we explore the extent to which these messages are captured by the audience and how the audience reacts to them.

3.2 CPI: circulation and consumption

The audience responses to both videos underscores that the public is highly receptive to the messages conveyed by CPI, corroborating the usefulness of the I-GAP framework for analysing radicalisation processes. Video A was viewed 10,829 times between 2017 and March 2020. A frequency analysis of the 68 comments shows that words such as Italians (Italiani, Italiano, Italians), ours/us (noi/nostro) and citizens (cittadini) appear rather frequently. This resonates with the core message of the video, which through both its discourses and visual images polarises the audience between Italians and others (immigrants).

The comments also support CPI's emphasis on defending the Italian people against immigration flows in calling for Italians to be 'masters in their own house'. Moving beyond the video's emphasis on immigration, and linking grievances with a deep alienation towards the political and economic class in Italy and Europe, several comments attack international institutions and their influences, as in the following example:

> *Die, European Union, you are evil Italy [is] ours of Italians we do not want to be globalised we have our origins and will go on until the end of the world.*

Most comments wish strength and victory to the movement. However, a small number of comments call for a 'revolution' or 'uprising'. For example, one comment auspicates 'moving towards a revolution that would collapse the current system'. Moreover, the language employed in many comments echoes fascist language (most relevant, the wish for 'onore', honour), suggesting that the subtle visual messages in the videos

(particularly as related with fascist aesthetics) resonated with the audience. Some comments are even more explicit in their identifying CPI with a fascist avant-garde and wishing for a resurgence of Italian fascism. For example, one comment invokes the Fascist regime motto of 'Dux mea lux' (Duce, my light). A second comment auspicates that 'we will be reborn. Long live Fascist Italy'.[9]

Video B was viewed 59,574 times between 2016 and March 2020, reflecting its wider intended appeal as part of a municipal electoral campaign for the Italian capital. The broader message on Video A is also reflected in the frequency analysis of its 412 comments, which includes a wider variety of keywords as compared with Video B (Italians; work; immigrants…).

Video B was exceptionally successful in resonating with the grievances of common individuals and identifying CPI as the most effective remedy to them. As one comment summarises:

> *I don't know who edited this advertisement and who added the background music, but it is fantastic, convincing, that makes you feel like taking the streets to bring back justice in this country that we love so much.*

When considering the specific messages conveyed by the video, it becomes evident that the audience endorses the polarisation into us (Italians) vs them (immigrants) and present the former as under attack:

> *[Is it possible] that the barbaric, backward, obscurantist, self-referential, criminal and antihumanist Muslim "culture", that has waged an ultra-millenial war against us, is advancing further?*

Moreover, Video B's presentation of security and socio-economic grievances clearly resonates with the audience. Numerous comments call for an 'enough with refugee centres', 'enough with Roma camps', and one comment summarises the audience's desire for 'respect, justice, cleanliness on top of work, public services and controls!' Echoing the Video's discourse, the comments advocate an end to 'coming always after everyone else in our own house'.

Similarly, the audience responds positively to discourses of alienation from the political and economic class, identifying them as 'jokers' 'pets' and arguing that 'they only think about their own economic interest' and that 'they don't give a fuck about you, sovereign people!'.

The frame of success presented by CPI is endorsed in the comments. Most clearly one comment states:

> *'gods don't exist, CASAPOUND DOES!!! I LOVE YOU HEROES!!! HONOUR AND RESPECT!!! BEST WISHES CASAPOUND till the end'.*

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[9] It is notable that since 1952 Italy criminalises glorification of Fascism, but the law has been applied unevenly (Heywood, 2019).

Interestingly, and going beyond the explicit discourse in Video B but responding to the patriotic language and symbols presented in the clip, the comments present additional grievances related with Italy's lost status as a great power: 'We were a world power. They feared us'. Another comment states that 'I am with Casapound and with whoever WANTS to give Italy the greatness it deserves'.

Responding to the subtle emphasis on the principle of 'idea-action' and to the alienation from the political and economic elites expressed in Video B, the audience identifies Fascism as the appropriate response to these grievances:

> *We are Fascists, never Nazis. We have healthy principles for the motherland, for work, for the family, for culture, for the economy and for the other things. We were really a world power…. The economic condition of Italy at that time, we will never reach it with this 'Democracy'. NEVER!*
> *'Not all that is Fascisti s evil given that in the twenty years [of Fascism] Fascists gave a house and work to Italians then that they made some mistakes we know that it is the case but being people also people make mistakes and I think that in this millennium many Fascist ideas would be useful for Italy.*

This analysis underscores that the public (a broad audience of dissatisfied citizens) is highly receptive to CPI's articulation of core injustices based around socio-economic grievances of the Italian population, around the alienation from the existing political class, around the polarisation against immigrants and the elites. CPI supporters and sympathisers, arguably guided by the visual and symbolic elements presented in the clips, also identify right-wing extremism, Fascism, and even 'revolution' as the only way of redressing these injustices. The next section will explore a similar pattern in the case of SSB.

3.3 The SSB: media object

The music video "Mamma Tirol" was announced on the official website of the SSB and on their official Facebook and Twitter pages between December 27 and 30, 2020. It was ironically labelled as an "extraordinary project [...] where genius and madness combine". The announcement also foresaw a polarisation and harsh debate on the video, stating that "'Mamma Tirol' is a project that will have our critics tearing us apart and our fans dancing on the tables". The announcement itself, at least on the Facebook page, did not receive particular attention by other users, something which may also have resulted from the relative low number of followers of the SSB Facebook page – less than 15,000 (of a South Tyrolean population of about 500,000). On December 31, the video of the rap song was uploaded on the official SSB YouTube account, where it reached a remarkable 50,000 views (Rüb, 2021; GGG.at, 2021). Between January 4 and 5, 2021, a series of public reactions start surfacing in local newspapers, mainly in German language, while also the parallel Austrian organisation condemned the politicisation of the SSB, that is, its engagement in the local separatist discourse, outside its prevalent cultural and social tasks (Stol.it, 2021; Tiroler Schützen, 2021). On January 5, 2021 the South Tyrolean Provincial Commission for

Equal Opportunities for Women started a petition – which reached more than 7000 supporters – on Change.org asking for "the immediate deletion of the video, a public apology from the Rapper, Wirth Anderlan, who was also the commander of the Schützen and information about public funding or contributions for the production, realisation and/or publication of the video and the possible amount of funding" (Change.org, 2021; il Dolomiti, 2021a). From January 6, 2021 the actions received coverage also in mainstream Italian newspapers. On the same day, the author of the video, the commander of the Schützen, issued a statement on the official SSB webpage and in the official SSB Facebook page defending his action – although now labelled as a 'private initiative'-- condemning personal attacks but also announcing that the video would be taken out of circulation "in the foreseeable future" (Schuetzen.com, 2021). On January 8, 2021 local newspaper announced that the author had resigned from his commanding position in the SSB. Finally, on January 16, the SSB announced on Twitter, Facebook and in its official webpage that while SSB was strongly condemning all hostilities - in the online media but also outside - towards both the organisation and the author, the SSB would take care of internal reappraisals at all levels and it was also discussed and made clear that individual initiatives - without consulting the federal leadership of the SSB - are not acceptable. In fact, even within the SSB, the video had triggered controversies prompting local Schützen Companies such as e.g. the one of St. Leonhard in Passeier to issue rejection statements on Facebook (Rainews, 2021a).

The video depicts overlays of rallies, marches, Catholic recollections, and pictures of the stunning South Tyrolean landscape contrasted by images of the perceived enemy, which is depicted as the Italian state represented by the flag, Italian fascists, made-up women, homosexuals, and immigrants. The video has a peculiar setting depicting the author, in a dark, cave-style room lit only by candles (ZdA, 2021). While smoking, sipping red wine and browsing through a photo album, the Rapper laments to pictures of the First World War about a South Tyrol "treated like a cheap whore for a hundred years".[10] The text clearly conveys the narrative of historical injustices and perceived grievances by using lines such as "Today we live in the south in the wrong nation; Surrounded by liars, my neighbour a spy" or "They are becoming more and more these traitors to the homeland". With reference to the dogma of the SBB as "…Tyroleans, democrats and Christians; We love our homeland, who can't understand that?; Pride and respect, where is the problem" the Rapper uses a typical 'us vs. them' rhetoric by asking "Where are the people who still represent our values"? and claims that the only people remaining are "migrants, students and many prophets" who want to save the planet, but "forget their roots" and "don't even respect their own fathers", while people engage in non-traditional forms of partnership as "In the park in front of my house, Dieter [male name] loves Peter". Against this is set the "DNA of the SSB": The "belief in freedom is our fuel" therefore, the song ends with the affirmation of "… the courage

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[10]   [Own's translation] Text of the Rap available in German language at: https://www.suedtirolnews.it/politik/landeskommandant-des-suedtiroler-schuetzenbundes-zum-video-mamma-tirol.

and the will never to surrender" and the need to "take action not just fine speeches" with which the SSB "…will make it with God's blessing".

In sum, in "Mamma Tirol", the author articulates the complex and multi-layered grievances of South Tyrol separatists. The next section will explore how the audience reacted to this clip, and the extent to which it may have facilitated ethno-separatist radicalisation.

3.4 The SSB: circulation and consumption

The video/the rap was successful in resonating with the grievances of common individuals. The official announcement of the Rapper on the SSB Facebook page triggered 482 reactions of which 464 expressed their likes. From the 111 comments to this Facebook announcement post, a clear majority supported the video and expressed their backing for the Rapper as the only one who would finally dare to speak the truth and publicly name injustices. As one comment summarizes: "I liked the video very much. Stand firm. The truth must be spoken - even in this way. There will always be envious people and traitors who get upset, especially within their own ranks. The wind from outside only proves that you are right. Gutmenschen[11] get upset about everything. Just today about the alleged racist blackfacing. Absolutely absurd. Where do we live now? The video is a blessing. The SSB is a ray of hope in this day and age. Stay firm". The audience responded positively to discourses of patriotism, of perceived historical injustices, and the narrative of living under alleged foreign rule. As one comment puts it: "… Apart from the music, I think the lyrics are good. True to the homeland and against Italian foreign rule…". However, those who condemned the video did so as they considered the content as being homophobic, misogynist, and offensive. Yet, the official statement of the SSB on the dismissal of Anderlan Wirth itself triggered 52 comments on FB with almost 90 % backing the Rapper and criticizing the SSB for having betrayed the Rapper and not standing firm with him. As one comment puts it "I am with the SSB for 26 years .... and am proud of it but the so-called resignation of Jürgen is for the SSB in South Tyrol a huge step backwards to replace him is completely impossible. And it is very shameful that none of the leadership has publicly supported him ...Where is the cohesion ....Now it should be stronger than ever. And I would also be in favour of a petition to reinstate Jürgen Wirth Anderlan as national commander of South Tyrol".

The video was not only controversial in the national online and offline context but also in the transnational sphere. In a survey published by a regional Tyrolean newspaper, 56,15 % considered the video as cool and not as a provocation (Meinbezirk.at, 2021). And the Rap made it even into the Austrian political arena and on the agenda of the South Tyrol Committee of the Austrian Parliament not least due to the reaction of the South Tyrol Spokesman in the National Council, Peter Wurm, a member of the right-wing party "Freiheitliche Partei Austria" (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ). "You can find

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[11] A Gutmensch is someone who, in a manner that is perceived as moralizing, self-righteous, naïve and out of touch with reality, represents views, goals and demands that correspond to political correctness and are judged to be excessively altruistic or similar.

Anderlan's German rap good or bad, but the fact is that he speaks the truth and addresses problems. He also exaggerates, but that falls under artistic freedom," says Wurm, who, like the Tyrolean FPÖ Party Chairman enjoyed the video very much (FPÖ, 2021). The proxy of the non-political figure of a rap artist was clearly useful for politicians to invoke. In stark contrast however, members of the Austrian Green and the Social democratic Party condemned the video (Ots.at, 2021).

As pointed out above, while the action was condemned by the Tiroler Schützen in Austria (Tiroler Schützen, 2021), it gained support by the local Schützen of the neighbouring Italian Province of Trentino, who defended the intentions and message of the song (Il Dolomiti, 2021b). Just three months after the release of the rap "Mamma Tirol", Wirth Anderlan released another video titled "Tatta Tirol" (Father Tyrol) on his private webpage, his YouTube channel and Facebook account. The ex-commander of the SSB fears the country is being driven to the wall "without any balls in its pants". And he scolds local politics: "I love my homeland but not the system, the Edelweiss is green, with a blind captain".[12] In South Tyrol one waits in vain for the revolution, "we are still in the phase of prostitution," the rap says. "Free opinion and criticism are subject to censorship, pure brainwashing." The Rapper himself strives for freedom, but between all the cultureless people with BMW, who are doing too well, the Tatta Tirol (Father Tyrol), says "quietly goodbye" (Rainews, 2021b). Within a week, the video was viewed 30,315 times on YouTube; on Facebook the video was shared 808 times, triggered some 1,619 reactions of which 1,560 expressed their likes, and was 307 times commented on. The clear majority of comments expressed their support for the Rapper and for the content likewise, with some even calling for the Rapper to establish a party and join politics.

In sum, it becomes apparent that – similarly to CPI for the right-wing – members of SSB have made expert use of YouTube to disseminate complex messages related with the ideological underpinnings of ethno-separatism in South Tyrol. On the one hand, "Mamma Tirol" and its successor, "Tatta Tirol", achieved a remarkable circulation, exposing a broad audience to the video's messages, including their articulation of core injustices related with the suppression of ethno-separatist identities. On the other hand, this analysis clearly illustrates the role of YouTube and other social media in providing an echo chamber for sympathisers and members of extremist organisations, where their beliefs are validated and amplified in the broader public sphere (Castelli Gattinara et al. 2018).

4. Conclusions

This report has investigated how the media depicts and triggers the perceived injustice and grievances underpinning radicalisation in the Italian context. It has done so by

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[12] The symbol of the Edelweiss (a little white flower typical for the Alps) is used in the logo of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP). Thus, "The Edelweiss becoming greener", is a narrative used by libertarians and by the SSB to present the SVP as moving towards the leftist spectra.

analysing three media artefacts (cultural objects) and mapping their impact on public audiences. Such analysis generates three main insights into the relationship between the media and radicalisation in Italy. First, we find that radicalising actors primarily rely on social media to disseminate their ideas and claims. When they engage with the mainstream media, CPI and radical members of the SSB tend to do so by organising theatrical non-violent actions to gain visibility and amplify their grievance-related messages.

Second, we find that the visual and discursive contents of the three videos examined aim to trigger feelings of injustice linked with collective grievances of the population, alienation from the state institutions and polarisation against 'others'. Based on the varying claims of the two movements (right wing and ethno-separatist) the divergent purposes of the three videos, and the different audiences for the videos, the three videos employ different symbols, images, and narratives. However, what these three videos have in common is that their visual and discursive messages are clearly harnessed to encourage protest against the status quo.

Third, we note that the audience was highly receptive to the messages conveyed by the three videos. This suggests that the videos resonated with the grievances of common individuals and corroborates the function of social media as a fundamental echo-chamber for radicalisation. As such, the Italian case corroborates the usefulness of the I-GAP framework for analysing radicalisation processes.

Finally, the analysis of the SSB video has pointed out how in the transnational context and of border regions radical messages may resonate well beyond the local sphere, gaining support from different actors and audiences in other areas. Such support can be perceived as an 'external legitimation' by individual radical actors. Furthermore, although local organisations such as the SSB have demonstrated the ability to tackle the issue of internal radicalism, individual members may exploit their network and communicative tools to gain a wider audience, as well as a form of 'internal legitimation'. In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates how it is fundamental to find means to regulate the dissemination of radical ideas in social media, striking a balance between freedom of expression and an effective protection against discrimination and hate speech.

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