

# Historical Context and the Good Lives Model

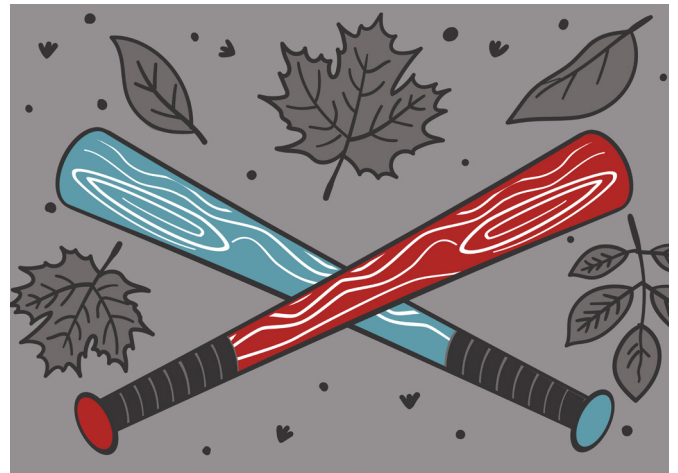
Lotta Rahlf

## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the findings of research based on a qualitative analysis of the life histories of four German, former right-wing extremists. It uses the Good Lives Model (GLM) as a framework for interpreting their journeys into and out of extremism and considers the implications for policy and practice.

The findings suggest that developing rehabilitation strategies for right-wing extremists which draw on strengths-based approaches, such as the GLM, has promise as it helps to understand which primary needs are fulfilled by right-wing extremist ideology and contexts, and therefore can provide insight into where to target rehabilitation strategies at an individual level. However, individual-level analysis only is insufficient. It is also important to consider the social and historical context an individual is embedded in, and the opportunities and barriers that context provides to fulfil goods in normative or counter-normative ways.

In certain socio-historical periods, national and local contexts, and/ or organisational settings, there can be explicit or tacit support for right-wing ideology. The life stories analysed for this report were rooted in experiences in Germany in the 1990s. During this period, the so-called 'Baseball Bat Years' because of the scale of neo-Nazi violence, right-wing extremism was often trivialised and attracted relatively modest sanctions. In this context, engaging in right-wing activities could be understood as being in line with wider norms, reinforcing extremist aspirations by providing easy access to somewhat socially acceptable, if harmful routes to achieving goods and fulfilling individual needs.



The analysis demonstrates how the GLM helps interpret how individuals can meet needs and fulfil goods in maladaptive and anti-social ways. The findings also illustrate the importance of considering the normative contexts people are embedded in when developing intervention or reintegration strategies. If individuals are situated in, or returned to, right-wing supportive contexts, the opportunities for them to pursue non-harmful routes to achieving goods are reduced.

These issues also highlight the importance of recognising the dynamic nature of norms, and the way shifting societal and political perspectives on what is 'extreme', or acceptable forms of political expression, shape the contexts within which assessments of risk; analyses of trajectories through extremism; and intervention planning are developed.

### ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This is the Executive Summary taken from the full Report. You can find all the outputs from this project at: [www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/constraining-violence/](http://www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/constraining-violence/)

The research for the report was supported by the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX). C-REX is a cross-disciplinary centre for the study of right-wing extremism, hate crime and political violence at the University of Oslo, and the Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews.

The Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) is funded by the UK's Home Office and security and intelligence agencies to identify and produce social science that enhances their understanding of security threats and capacity to counter them. Its funding is administered by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC Award ES/V002775/1).



UiO : **C-REX – Center for Research on Extremism**  
University of Oslo