
Factors of Radicalization

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Introduction

When addressing radicalism a problem occurs at the very beginning – in terms of the unclear definition of the subject under examination. Usually, the problem begins with vague definitions that are too broad or inadequate in other ways. As pointed out by Đorić (2016), expert elaborations tend to contain three kinds of errors in this respect: the use of synonyms, voluntarist qualifications and disregard of the difference between the general and specific. A superficial use of synonyms often leads to the equalisation of terms, such as populism, right-wing radicalism, extremism, neo-fascism, ultra-radicalism, terrorism, and so on.

Most often the voluntarist approach uses radicalism as a stigma in political discourse, and this occurs in two ways: for disqualification, where the designation of radicalism is used as a label of inferiority to demarcate competitive ideas or groups; or the same designation can serve as an “orientation” criterion of the analysis in which the term radicalism serves to qualify the extreme poles of the relationship between the left and the right wings, in order to more easily discern the nuances between different competitive actors in the political space. This is not always wrong, because such an “orientation” use is not necessarily without an analytical value, but it can only be realised under three conditions: if the concept of radicalism is clearly defined, if it is consistently applied, and at the same time empirically supported. If this is not the case, and only one of these conditions is absent, we have slipped into voluntarism. There is a

current example: in Slovenia, as elsewhere in Europe, this “orientation” confusion typically presents us with the problem that I am going to describe in the rest of this paragraph, and that was most clearly visible after the parliamentary election, in Slovenia in 2018, when the governing coalition was composed of numerous heterogeneous and small political parties. Despite the explicit, substantive as well as declarative competitiveness of all political parties that managed to enter Parliament, their only common characteristic was in the unified qualification of the one newly-formed party (established in June 2017) called the Left (*Levica*). Only because no other party (in Slovenia) was located even farther left from it, this political party has been considered the “extreme left” by all political actors and most of the media, although neither in its programme nor its actions has there been anything that would distinguish the Left from the classical social-democratic parties that existed for most of the 20th century.¹ The third case of erroneous designation occurs through blurring the difference between the general and the specific; this shift often leads to the hasty equalisation of radicalism with terrorism, merely due to the assumption that any terrorism is at the same time also radicalism (which it is) – but the reverse is not always true. Not every form of radicalism advocates the use of terrorism, as the first is a general concept, while the second is a specific one (by analogy with fruit/apple, building/house, justice/equality, etc.). This supports the point that one of the biggest problems in examining radicalism and extremism “lies in the fact that these social phenomena are dynamic and, in order to be analysed in a scientifically objective manner, they must be examined in the specific temporal, spatial and socio-political context” (Đorić, 2016: p. 215).

Modernisation and Pluralism

In addressing the subject in the title, I will consider this general warning expressed in three more concrete points:

- 1 It is true, however, that the *Left* party is more to the left than its most proximate competitor, that is, the *Social Democrats* party [*Socialni demokrati*], after the latter’s once social-democratic profile was diluted by the party’s declared, decisive and actual move to the political centre, where now (in Slovenia) most parliamentary parties try to hold their positions. There are two reasons for the *Social Democrats’* turn to the right in the past quarter of the century. Firstly, due to their susceptibility to neoliberalism, and secondly their premeditated attempt to destigmatise themselves from the socialist system in which this party was constituted (under the then name *The League of Communists of Slovenia - Zveza komunistov Slovenije*). This is not to be considered mimicry, but the transition philosophy of the “Visegrad Group” of former socialist countries: *Social Democrats* – to survive in such nations – saved themselves from the stigma of impersonating the former one-party regime by proving that they were the trustworthy followers of the neoliberalism that replaced the collapsed system of the Eastern bloc.

1. radicalism (as a general qualification) should be distinguished from the concrete *factors* of this social phenomenon;
2. the factors of radicalisation are not typical of any single social sphere, system or organisation; on the contrary, as a rule they can occur in all dimensions of human (social and psychological) action;
3. radicalism is defined (in this article) as a combination of four factors: cognitive, political, existential and temporal.

The first point involves the understanding of the factors of radicalism in terms of its *conditions*, or, as it were, in terms of its *constituents* (in such cases when this phenomenon actually occurs in reality); which means that no individual factor can be considered as the cause of radicalism.² If, independently of the context, religion or socialisation, the media or authoritarian leaders, deprivation or inequality, culture or values... are declared the cause of radicalism, this is similar to saying that the cause of radicalism is like water which is consumed, in one way or another, by all radicalised people. A typical example of such erroneous reduction to a single factor of the causal effect is the polemics about the causes of fascism in American sociology (Bannister, 1992: pp. 174–176). A specific variation of such overrating of an individual factor is its selective valuation, in which only the obvious, expected or desired effects of a factor are considered, and its opposite effects are ignored. An example of this variation is the qualification of the theology of Martin Luther, the founder of the Protestant Reformation, in which the emancipatory effect of his radicalism on the relation between the believer and God is often one-sidedly emphasised, and this same radicalism's effect on secular authorities is ignored, although it was quite opposed to the first effect, because it strengthened the legitimacy of absolutism (Spruk, 2018).

The second point calls attention to the false assumption which in the West has (again)³ escalated in the Islamophobic responses to the terrorism

2. An analogy with precipitation: water, condensation, droplet growth, temperature, pressure, air flow etc., are the factors without which precipitation could not occur, although none of them is the cause that in itself would explain this result.
3. Also in Slovenia, the same pattern of wrong responses has been traditionally present since the late 19th century and is known as the “cultural fight”. This syntagm mistakenly qualifies the history of radical social movements in the territory of Slovenia, the essence of which is allegedly “culturally” conditioned due to the antagonism between the Catholic and Communist social movements, which empirically cannot be sustained. The result of this approach is – on one side – ignoring the historically important and very strong Christian-socialist current that opposed the clericalists of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia (and that during World War II recruited most of the partisans in the fight against fascism), and at the same time – on the other side – this same approach blurred the difference between the actors on the political left, where the dominant social-democratic current was equated with the representatives of the Stalinist version of Marxism, although even in the early 1930s the

of Islamic extremists. Namely, that radicalism is immanent to a certain religion as opposed to other religions and spheres of action, which is a mistaken belief. Radicalism is not an inherent characteristic of any social sphere, and at the same time no sphere is immune to this phenomenon or holds monopoly over it. This applies to politics as well as religion, economics, the arts, dietary practices,⁴ physical needs, gardening⁵ and other fields. Forget this and radicalism can easily be attributed only to the religious⁶ or political spheres (as seen in the example of the religious functionaries of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia, who still blame the political authorities from the former socialist system for all the current problems of their organisation; Štuhec, 2000: p. 21). Simplified qualifications of radicalism – particularly in the case of terrorism – are the principal origin of such wrong reactions (Lerner 2006: pp. 167–171). It is the problem of the origin of radicalism that is one of the questions to which there is no essential difference between the religious and political fields. This can be seen both from the empirical evidence⁷ as well as the definition of these general fields, such as in the following examples:

A religion is a complex mixture of beliefs, values, symbols and rituals. Most major religions /.../ contain beliefs and values about this world, whatever they may say about another, super-empirical one /.../ Religion can be seen as a part of the ideological sphere of a society when it operates in a way which helps to maintain the political, cultural and economic arrangements of that society over time. (Bocock, 1985: p. 207)

“Religion refers to the systems of general compensators”⁸ (Stark, & Bainbridge, 2007: p. 47), with characteristically both politics and religion

latter were still a very marginal political force (Dolenc, 1996; Dragoš, 1998, 2011, 2015; Pelikan, 1997, 2002; Prunk, 1977; Repe, 2015).

4 For example, veganism, particularly in cases, when it is practiced from birth.

5 In Great Britain as many as 17 % of the owners of gardens were victims of thefts, most often of garden gnomes – which were most frequently the target of the organisations fighting for the liberation of garden gnomes and for their return to the forest. The most well-known phenomenon of this kind was noticed in France, where the Front for the Liberation of Garden Gnomes took several thousand gnomes from the gardens” (Thieves [Tatovi], 2018).

6 See the list of examples in Lerner, 2006: pp. 41–43.

7 “Sacrifice and self-sacrifice, particularly from young people, is known in numerous national and liberation movements; we know this also from Slovenian history. Because Islam is very heterogenous, and can be understood in different ways, it can act as the grounds for encouraging people to sacrifice and self-sacrifice for religious-political goals /.../ There is nothing exceptional in this. The Crusaders also left for war, obtaining concessions for their sins in advance, in case they would die, while fighting with infidels.” (Kerševan, 2015).

8 Compensators are unattainable, unverifiable or non-existent rewards for which there is demand (e.g. an afterlife). Definition: “Compensators are expectations of a reward correspond-

maintaining their respective monopolies in terms of the “protection of compensators against their rebut. (ibid.: p. 300)

What was said about religion, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, also for other forms of superior order of meaning. Modernisation has, if not completely abolished, at least made more difficult the maintenance of the monopoly of locally constrained socially integrated systems of meaning and values. (Berger & Luckmann, 1999: p. 32)

The boundaries of politics are always and necessarily highly contested of the range of issues that can potentially be considered as political – from the economy to the environment, and from morality to sex /.../ These debates and challenges underscore the fact that an element of force is always necessarily involved in politics. From this perspective, politics can be conceived in the terms of Harold Lasswell’s book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936). (Turner, 2006: pp. 446–447)

Not accidentally, the fields of religion and politics, as described in the above quotes, are so similar that we probably would not even notice if somebody would mixed up the words and replaced “religion” with politics”, and vice versa – the definitions would still remain equally meaningful. The historical differentiation of religion and politics towards specific and autonomous⁹ systems, that we started to face half of millennium ago in the West, does not mean in itself that these two fields of social regulation have remained without a common core. Instead, both systems – politics and religion – are oriented to that which they have never surrendered: they are specialised to operate with all three kinds of transcendences, i.e., with the small and medium, as well as large-scale.¹⁰ In relation to transcendence, the differences between both fields in terms of the division of labour only refer to the amount of the attention they attract:¹¹ religion mainly puts forward large transcendences, while politics focuses on the

ing to the explanations that are not easily susceptible to unambiguous valuation /.../ People consider compensators in terms of rewards” (Stark & Bainbridge, 2007: p. 44).

- 9 Autonomy is the systems’ reaction towards the reduction of risk, as well as contingency and complexity of the outer environment in which they operate. At the same time this is how they create their own, new problems, for which only they can find appropriate solutions (Luhmann, 1995: pp. 186, 204). One of these solutions is the interpenetration of systems (ibid.: pp. 212–218) – however, it is in the case of the interpenetration of political and religious systems that this strategy is the most theoretically vague, politically risky and legally constrained.
- 10 Transcendences are the basic building-blocks of meaning (as defined by Thomas Luckmann, 1997: pp. 109–112).
- 11 The degree of attention is institutionally regulated with positive and negative sanctions, or with benefits and costs (as Stark & Bainbridge, 2007, would say).

medium ones. But, as noted above, neither is without them. With, in this sense, both politics as well as religion being typically omnipresent or hypercomplex¹² systems, it makes sense to consider the following two theses in relation to radicalisation. For lack of space I will not go into detail, but will only give a short formulation of both:

- the more the systems of institutionalised meanings (in our case, politics and religion)¹³ are hypercomplex, the greater the possibility for the radicalisation of dissatisfied minorities among the members of the system;
- although, in the long term, modernisation and pluralisation of social systems are narrowing the space for radical choices, this can only be said for top to bottom radicalisation, and not in the opposite direction.

The more optimistically we understand modernisation the more these two theses will sound pessimistic, as a “tax” on Enlightenment illusions. This “tax” is justified for two reasons; the first is linked to the expected scope of modernisation processes, and the second to their depth. The estimations of both were exaggerated, beginning with the father of sociological science, Émile Durkheim (for more on this see Berger & Luckmann, 1999: pp. 33–34). Sociologically, there is no controversy, and thus it is believed that – more than ever before in the history of human societies – such strong factors as modernisation and modern¹⁴ pluralism lead to relativisation due to demonopolisation. Values, the persuasiveness of their explanations and the power of institutional mechanisms that support them, are becoming weaker due to the competition that erodes them. This results in the “decanonisation” of truths as well as “dis-orientation

12 It is hypercomplex in terms as understood by systems theory (for a definition, see Niklas Luhmann, 1995: 471), and the fundamental problem of these systems is autoparalysis. Willke describes this problem as the paradox of the “relationship between complexity and contingency: paradoxality of the principled possibility of creating diverse realities by choosing certain options of the complex whole on one hand, and the autoparalysis of the complex system for the very abundance of options” on the other (emphasis in Willke, 1993: p. 87). Willke wrote this diagnosis, that gives a good explanation of today’s crisis of the system of parliamentary democracy, in 1989, that is, in different times that were extremely optimistic for the development of democracy.

13 Because the art system also belongs among hypercomplex systems (specific theories or aesthetics + “language” + rules + institutions + production processes + definitions of system boundaries of inside/outside), this system is also considered overburdened and consequently equally susceptible to radicalisation. However, it is not dangerous, because – as opposed to politics and religion – it is based on essentially different relationship between coercive and persuasive forms of power.

14 As a consequence of modernisation processes, modern pluralism differs from previous pluralisms in pre-modern societies (Berger & Luckmann, 1999: pp. 28–29).

of the individual and entire groups” (ibid.: pp. 33–38). Although modern pluralism is useful, because it promotes the peaceful coexistence of different lifestyles, it cannot be considered a “direct inhibitor of the process of expansion of crises of meaning”, as Berger and Luckmann have put it. The authors show that the problem lies in the narrow scope of pluralisation processes. Namely, pluralisation only suggests to the individual how they should behave towards others, but that is all. Pluralisation is neither a map nor an algorithm for action. Now individuals have to find their own way of how to “very concretely lead one’s life,” as they find themselves in a situation when “the unquestioned *validity* of the *traditional order* is shaken” (ibid.: pp. 29–30), faster and faster and more and more dramatically.

Moreover systems theory – about which Berger and Luckmann give an account with regard to the individual as a psychic system (confrontation with meaning) – points to the same problem with regard to interactive, social and societal systems.¹⁵ The processes of modernisation and pluralisation have come to present a growing challenge for the systemic regulation of their boundaries with the environment due to the growing contingency; that is, the possibility that “something can be like this or like something else” (Luhmann, 1995: pp. 25, 56–57). The growing contingency is related to the growing complexity and the need for its selection, which, as I have said, applies to all human systems. The more complex the circumstances the more difficult is the regulation of the difference between a system and its environment (both external and internal). With regard to the strategies of radicalisation, contingency is important, because it increases the degree of vagueness, insecurity, distress and risk, and in turn radicalism can (under certain circumstances) become a possible exit from the resulting dilemma.

The Cage of Radicalisation

Radicalism means – as I defined it at the beginning of this paper – a combination of four factors (as illustrated in Figure 1):¹⁶

- Cognitive factor: this involves the *attitude* to reality. Its perception is possible on the dimension between two extreme poles, between complete relativism and the opposite extreme, a fundamentalist attitude to the world or to certain truths in individual fields. With regard with this dimension Krüger’s definition of fundamentalism seems appropriate: “Fundamentalism’, thus understood, implies not only a set of substantive ideas, but also a particular cognitive style

15 For a general theory of systems and their classification see Luhmann, 1995: pp. 1–11.

16 Figure 1 present factors as dimensions in space.

and stance, as well as a style of social positioning” (Krüger, 2006: p. 888).

- Political factor: this means the choice of the *mode* of action in all those cases and circumstances that involve making the decision that something needs to be changed. Of course, the answers to the question of how this should be done can be different, although not entirely arbitrary. They are possible on the dimension between two extreme poles, where one pole presents the minimum correction in terms of reformism, and the opposing pole presents the maximum, that is, radical change (with taking into account that being radical within this dimension is not the same as radicalism in a wider sense).¹⁷
- Existential factor: this defines the *direction* of action, including two opposing directions that are usually combined, and sometimes can be one-sidedly intensified. One possibility is to direct the action inwards, involving only a change in the psychological world of the individual or social networks within a community. The opposite is the outward action, where changing the world is the condition for change at the micro level. The most evident consequences of both choices are segregation in the case of acting inwards, and proselytism in the case of acting outwards.
- Temporal factor: this involves the perception of time in the *acausal* sense, where “time is not a line, but a network of intentionalities” (Merleau-Ponty 2006: p. 423). We usually imagine time superficially as a chronological sequence of “presents”, classified in three more general categories, the past, present and future. More adequate is the intentional qualification of temporality, where this phenomenon both in terms of contents and attitude to them depends on the position of the observer. Intentionality opens up many different and

17 This radicalness in the *mode* of action needs to be separated from the wider phenomenon of radicalisation, presented in Figure 1, for the following reasons: the first case involves radicalness in the *narrow* sense of a conscious choice of action (within the dimension), while the second involves radicalisation in the *wider* sense of the effect of all four dimensions (Figure 1) that coincide in the extremes. The difference is important, because radicalism in the narrow sense is easier to change, as it still involves a conscious decision, where – in Weber’s terminology – the actor carries out either purposive-rational or value-rational action (Brunkhorst, 1998: pp. 2–3), while it is no longer possible to easily exit radicalism in its wider sense: it already acts as a “cage”, because action is no longer only dependent on the actor, but mainly on the context in which it takes place.

For the needs of this article let it be enough to define radicalism in the *narrow* sense as the action of those individuals, groups or organisation that carry out “positive or negative influence on more mainstream movement organizations by pushing for more action than on-radical actors are willing to commit” (Cross & Snow, 2011: p. 117).

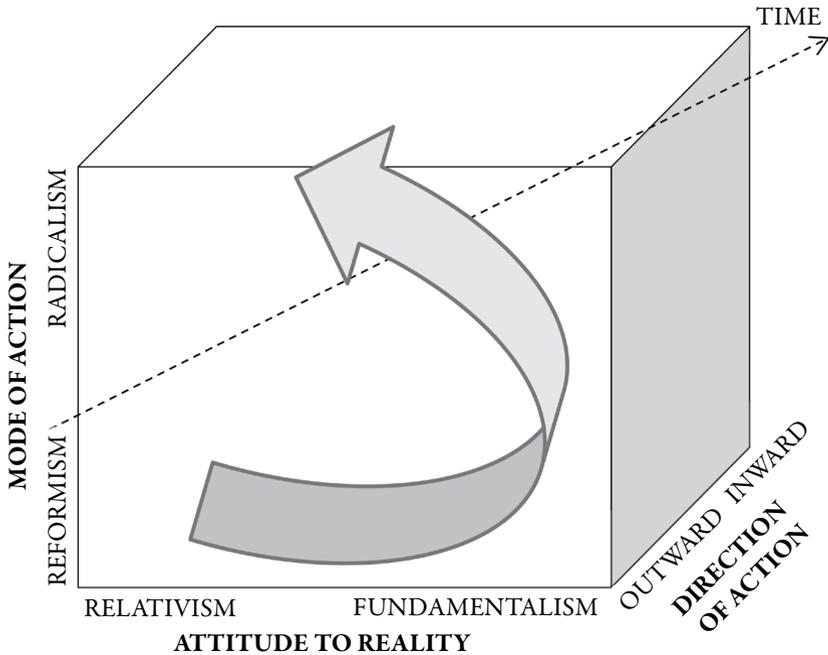


Figure 1: Four dimensions (of the cage) of radicalisation:

subjectively possible combinations, because – “I do not pass through a series of instances of now, the images of which I preserve and which, placed end to end, make a line. With the arrival of every moment, its predecessor undergoes a change /.../ beginning to outline itself against, or project itself upon, my present, whereas a moment ago it *was* my present. When a third moment arrives, the second undergoes a new modification;” and so on (ibid.).¹⁸

This approach to understanding time is three times more adequate than the conventional one. First, it deters us from reducing time, as we

¹⁸ This is why Merleau-Ponty points out that instead of reducing temporality (to a mere sequence of factual events $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$) we always have to deal with the “network of intentionalities” that is not composed only of A, B and C, but also of A', B', A'', B'', etc. For a schematic illustration of this network, taken from Husserl, see Merleau-Ponty, 2006: p. 423; for an explanation see ibid.: pp. 416-439. The aforementioned events, marked by the capital letters and one or two apostrophes, also include memory which cannot be reduced only to present or to past. Memory is the intersection of both, which means that the same object of memory can involve several different intersections, depending on the viewpoint. In this regard, Davic’s revealing classification of memory related to the reproduction of religious tradition in Europe lists eight different types of memory (Davic, 2003; p. 273).

usually do, to a series of superficial events, by introducing an additional logic of connections that are not only causal; second, it considers these connections – or better associations – of objective events as depending on the observer. And third, the intentional concept avoids the reduction of temporality on factuality that can be objectively measured, such as with a clock, since time is a relational phenomenon (“network”) to which we only have access through conscious understanding. This means that one and the same object of temporal events (A, B, C) triggers different phenomena. Because these are defined by the position of the actor that subjectivates objectivity (in A, A’...), the phenomenological approach to temporality is particularly important in confronting radicalism. It calls attention, for example, to the fact that a literal reading of holy books or historical chronologies is as equally possible as any other, and that it is impossible to ignore this (typically fundamentalist) feature by assuming a binary logic (actual / fictional, permitted / prohibited, adequate / inadequate), where only one possibility would be the right one and the other stigmatised as unreal.

The arrow in Figure 1 illustrates the radicalisation of an individual actor. Only when the fundamentalist attitude to reality is combined (from the temporal perspective) with the radical mode of outward action do we have radicalisation as a social phenomenon. If all four dimensions do not appear simultaneously, then radicalness is not dangerous, because it remains within the individual dimensions. The same can be said for institutions as the tools of power, as was pointed out over half a century ago by Robert K. Merton, the critic of classical functionalism, in the debate on simultaneous functionality and dysfunctionality of an actor (Merton, 1979).¹⁹ The same applies to radicalism – which at times can even be considered beneficial.

Examples

A typical example of one of the benefits of radicalism is the demand for the separation of church and state from the religious sphere. This modernist solution – which Slovenia has even written into its Constitution (Article 7) – started with the demand for the establishment of a “wall of separation” between the church and the state. This innovative and radical

19 “In every concrete example a certain phenomenon can have functional as well as dysfunctional consequences”, says Merton (1979; p. 113). From this he derives two conclusions in regard with social analysis: “To the extent that functional analysis focuses wholly on functional consequences, it leans toward an ultraconservative ideology; to the extent that it focuses wholly on dysfunctional consequences, it leans toward an ultra-radical utopia” (ibid., p. 103). *Social Theory and Social Structure*, The Free Press, New York, 1968, p. 94.

idea was first set out by Roger Williams (1603–1683), an English theologian and reformed Baptist, who aimed, in his words, to safeguard the religious gardens against the secular desert, and protect the church against the harmful influence of the secular authorities. Williams' solution was adopted a hundred years later by the third president of the USA, Thomas Jefferson, although this time with the opposite aim: to keep conflictual religious tendencies away from the federal authorities, and to protect the secular government against any religious influence (Weber, 1998; Dragoš, 2001). Although in Williams' case we speak about religious fundamentalism and radical political demands, we cannot consider this radicalisation (as a "cage"),²⁰ as Williams' endeavours were not directed outward, but rather inward (isolation against a secular exterior, rather than diffusion of religion outwards). Numerous other cases of radicalism can be seen as neutral; that is, neither detrimental nor beneficial to society. For example, a vegan lifestyle or the separation of dental floss in plastic waste – lying within the fields of dietary practices and environmental concerns, respectively – could both be considered radical, maybe even fundamental, actions (if they involve the belief that they help change the world). But as long as such gestures are directed only to the actor that performs them, they do not have any detrimental effects in terms of Figure 1.

A different case is the recent European trend of promulgate sanctions on wearing headgear in public that partly or entirely cover the face (as in France, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, and, to some extent, the Netherlands). In terms of the mode of action this is a radical measure, because it violates both religious and human rights. At the same time it is directed outwards, as it implies the formal imposition of new habits that are to be observed by all members of society, while in practice this can actually be seen as a measure against Muslim women that wear a niqab or burqa. In terms of the third dimension (Figure 1) involving the attitude to reality, these measures could be strongly suspected as indicating a shift towards fundamentalism, which, in this case, is even supported by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. How could we understand in any other way the explanation that this prohibition is "necessary in a democratic society", as the judges' explanation reads, because it aims to "ensure the conditions for a common life as an element for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others" (Prepoved, 2017)? How can 200 women from the social margins, who cover their mouths and noses in Denmark population of 5.7 million, shake democracy along with the conditions for a common life, and endanger the freedom of others? It is those

20 See footnote 17.

who truly believe this that have a fundamentalist attitude to reality. Only the fourth dimension in Figure 1 (temporality) shows the social function of such sanctioning of clothes. Even if we are not phenomenologists, it is not difficult to predict different temporal “networks of intentionality” in the perception of this measure. Obviously, some will believe that this is only a safety measure against the erosion of tolerance in society, while others will see the same measure as a symptom or even a trigger of intolerance.

One of perhaps the most bizarre examples of radicalism, which is unimaginable outside the social context, is the recent movement known as “QAnon”²¹ in the USA. It consists of a vast collection of pro-Trump claims and predictions that foretell, like one of Nostradamus’ prophecies, the fight against a “deep state”, including ideas such as 1) the “Russian investigation” is a distraction to hide something else, namely Donald Trump’s endeavours to uncover a network of paedophiles, naturally including Barak Obama and Bill and Hillary Clinton, and after these figures are arrested they will be imprisoned in Guantanamo, Cuba; 2) the Republicans lost the Senate elections in Alabama on purpose, because this is a long-term plan to fight against those who are tampering with voting machines, with the final goal of this strategy being to bring down George Soros; or 3) President Kennedy’s assassination only happened because he wanted to disclose the existence of the “deep state” and its secret government, while according to some versions of this story Kennedy is still alive, and the assassination was faked by this same “deep state” in order to kidnap Kennedy and then use him, in some way, to gain power in the next elections, etc. QAnon is not interesting because of the bizarre and obviously false stories that it proposes, but because it has been able to attract mass attention and help start a kind of social movement (called by some the “Trumpenproletariat”). An application for mobile phones related to these conspiracy theories has become one of the top sellers on Apple’s online store, while a video with the same kind of contents has already reached over 200,000 views on YouTube; a man “took over” the Hoover Dam bridge in Arizona, blocked the road and demanded the publication of some classified documents, the existence of which he was informed of by QAnon; and at a Donald Trump’s rally in Florida his supporters wore T-shirts with capital letter Q and posters saying “We are Q” (Kopušar, 2018). If we classify these developments in Figure 1, we can see that they are oriented towards extremes on all four dimensions (radicalism in the mode of action, outward orientation, the change of the entire

21 Q is a code for an anonymous person who is supposedly a high official with access to classified information, and Anon is an abbreviation of the word anonymous.

society, a fundamentalist attitude to reality, and an “alternative” reading of events). How much impact this radicalism will have depends on both the social circumstances and the most powerful man in the country who is creating them.

The reason why Figure 1 is marked as a “cage” is because it illustrates the *social* context that moves various combinations of dimensions towards one or the other direction. When negative extremes of the four dimensions coincide, everything goes wrong, because they encourage closed, self-referential logic. One of the important constituents of the context that strengthens the development of individual dimensions is social power: that is why it does matter who combines the extremes in the abovementioned dimensions (Figure 1) – whether the actors are people in power or from the social margins. In this context, Koopmans (1993) and others²² point out that the qualification of radicalism primarily depends on the state and its reaction to certain events. Since in Europe Muslims (beside the Roma) are now the most stigmatised part of the population, some educational experts warn that Muslim schools – despite their practicing religious indoctrination – pose less threat for the radicalisation of their students than mixed schools that are also attended by Muslim children, because in mixed schools children are exposed to more pressure coming from the environment due to their specific religious or ethnic differences (Merry, 2018). While I am certainly not trying here to advocate educational indoctrination, what I am suggesting is a choice of lesser risk. Although studies with the opposing findings also seem convincing (e.g. Hewstone et al., 2018), it is very likely that the reduction of discrimination and stigmatisation that can occur in the learning process does not depend on the (non-)existence of religious schools, but on the social context in which they operate.

Apart from social power and status, the context of radicalisation also depends on material inequality and the related expectations. According to Gallup and Castelli (1989: p. 122) – “American blacks are, by some measures, the most religious people in the world.” They see the reason for this in the context in which such people live, as individual religiosity is most influenced by ethnicity or colour of skin, social-economic status, degree of education, size of the city in which a person lives, and the religiosity of one’s parents (Batson et al., 1993: pp. 38–43). If the changes in economic or social conditions that are occurring in the richest societies of the world prevent the majority of people from expecting that their material

22 “The tolerance of different regimes for certain types of behavior can cause dramatic shifts in what constitutes radicalism over very short periods of time” (Cross & Snow, 2011: p. 117).

conditions will ever improve, and in fact they fear they will become ever worse off, then this is a favourable condition for radical thinking. While in the past half century the characteristics of the USA and UK which gave rise to Trump and Brexit have been amply and empirically documented and commented on, they still deserve to be repeated:

In the UK, the average income of the richest 10% is almost 10 times as large as for the poorest 10%. The OECD average is 9.5, in France and Germany it is around 7 and in the US 16. OECD (2015)

In this context, Slovenia stands out as one of the most developed countries among the smallest in the world (with only two million inhabitants). However, it is in relation to social inequality that public opinion is also becoming radicalised in Slovenia, although, as opposed to the US and UK, it has a much better situation in this regard. Slovenia was always (and remains) a state with one of the smallest degrees of income inequality in Europe, and therefore is among the world's most egalitarian countries according to this criterion. This is why Slovenia still (for now) also boasts a below the European average degree of poverty among its population, is high in the world in terms of the degree of general safety and has a low per capita number of criminal acts and prisoners, a rapid reduction in the traffic mortality rate, high gender equality rate, low neonatal mortality rate, and is further distinguished by a series of other key indicators that show the good quality of life (Messner, 2014; Flere & Lavrič, 2005: p. 741; UNICEF, 2009; Porter et al., 2014). In short, if a alien from the space would shipwreck on the planet Earth and chose to live in the Slovenian oasis, they would come off rather well.²³ However, even in Slovenia public opinion has become radicalised, and the most so in terms of inequality. What has been going on to cause this?

The right side of *Table 2* shows that Slovenia remains (in almost all years of the measured period) a very, and even exceptionally low, degree of inequality with respect to the whole EU. Even the Nordic states do not come close to it, and although they are among the best in the world they still lag behind Slovenia according to this criterion, because they have a higher average Gini coefficient (GC). In 2016, only Iceland and Slovakia had an even lower GC than Slovenia (Eurostat, 2018). For Slovenia, a former socialist country, this is an excellent result, because most of the former socialist countries show a much higher degree of inequality, which exceeds the European average.

23 But only under the condition that they do not tell they are alien (Dragoš, 2016; Lukšič-Hacin, 2017; Kramberger et al., 2004).

Table 2: Inequality (Gini coefficient) and the attitude towards it, as measured by the share of those who strongly agree with the statement that the government “*should adopt measures to reduce differences in peoples’ incomes*” (measured on a five-degree scale: 1 = strongly agree ... 5 = not agree at all; summarised from Toš, 2017: pp. 354-355)

STATE	ATTITUDE TO INEQUALITY				INEQUALITY			
	STRONGLY AGREE		AVERAGE (1-5)		Gini coefficient		CHANGE	
	%	CHANGE '02 - '14 (%)	%	CHANGE '02 - '14 (%)	2009	2016	'09 - '16 (%)	
Slovenia	2002	34.4	1.89	-3.7	22.7	24.4	+ 7.5	
	2014	43.2	1.82					
Ex-socialism ¹	2002	29.7	1.64	+ 18.3	32.2	31.7	- 1.6	
	2014	39.1	1.94					
Nordic countries ³	2002	18.7	2.46	-0.4	26.6	26.0	- 2.3	
	2014	20.0	2.45					
EU ⁴	2002	25.5	2.21	-4.1	30.6	30.8	+ 0.7	
	2014	31.8	2.12					

1 The higher the value of the coefficient, the larger the inequality.

2 Ex-socialist states (without Slovenia): the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland. The Gini coeff. (on the right side of the table) here refers to the average of 11 countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Macedonia and Serbia (in the last two countries the data for 2013 and 2013 is used instead of the data for 2009).

3 Nordic states: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden. The Gini coeff. (on the right side of the Table) applies to the average of all five Nordic states, including Iceland.

4 Given is the average of the EU 24 countries (including Israel and Switzerland). The Gini coeff. (on the right side of the Table) applies to the EU 27.

However, the last column of *Table 2* shows that in the years during and after the most recent economic crisis inequality has increased in Slovenia, with the GC having risen by 7.5 percent in seven years. During the same period of time it has only increased by 0.7 per cent on average in Europe, and notably reduced in the former socialist countries and Nordic

nations. If we compare this significant shift towards a greater inequality in Slovenia with the left side of the table, which shows the public attitude toward the issue of wealth redistributions, it becomes clear where the dissatisfaction comes from. The figures show that the percentage of Slovenians who strongly agree that inequality should be reduced and that it is the responsibility of the government to achieve this is above the European average, as well as that seen in the Nordic and former socialist countries. Similarly, in Slovenia the growth in this percentage between the years 2002 and 2014 – while also increasing in the rest of Europe – is above the European average.

The next factor that makes Slovenia consistently stand out from the rest of Europe is the political one (= dimension: “mode of action” in *Figure 1*). Typically, it shows the simultaneous presence of a markedly leftist orientation of public opinion and the continued rule of neoliberal governments (cohibentency). Slovenia has one of the “leanest” states, and is rather stingy towards its citizens considering the size of its GDP. Slovenian expenditure on social protection (as a percentage of GDP) is well under the European average, and has been decreasing over the past decade, while in other EU countries this figure has been increasing. The same applies to expenditure on pensions (as a percentage of GDP), while the Slovenian health sector is on the verge of collapse, due to both a lack of finances and staff. According to this criterion it is completely uncomparable with the European average. There are similar stories in the public resources available for science, as well as for the housing sector that is one of the most privatised in Slovenia and among the worst in Europe. There is also a very high level of precarious employment, a high level of dissatisfaction regarding trust in company managers and directors, and Slovenia also has one of the highest levels of state involvement in the economy²⁴ (Eurostat, 2017; OECD, 2017; Dragoš & Leskošek, 2016). As shown in Table 2, public opinion is very critical of the Slovenian state, while the political consequences of this can be seen in Table 3.

In its political preferences, it is Slovenian society that is most oriented to the left in Europe. In Slovenia in all the years examined the average value on the ten-degree (self-evaluated) scale is well under 5, while the European average is above this mean value, which also applies to the former socialist countries that are most comparable with Slovenia, and even more for the Nordic group. For reasons of comparison Table 3 also includes two more countries (participating in the ESS 2002–2016 survey)

²⁴ This indicator of central government spending by function is measured as a percentage of total expenditures: the OECD average is 12 %, and data for Slovenia show 17 %; the opposite is shown for social protection: Slovenia 25.4 %, OECD average 26.4 % (OECD, 2017).

Table 3: The leftist orientation of Slovenian public opinion (between 2002 and 2014, based on self-evaluation in the question): “Politics sometimes speaks about the left and the right. Where would you classify yourself on the scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means left and 10 means right?” (Toš, 2017: pp. 352-353)

STATE	YEAR	AVERAGE VALUE	DIFFERENCE	
			2002 – 2014	
			%	Direction of shift
Slovenia	2002	4.70	- 6.2	Very much to the left
	2014	4.41		
Spain	2002	4.41	+ 0.2	Slightly to the right
	2014	4.42		
Israel	2002	5.68	+ 2.5	To the right
	2014	5.82		
Ex-socialist ¹	2002	5.17	+ 1.4	To the right
	2014	5.24		
Nordic states ²	2002	5.34	+ 0.4	Slightly to the right
	2014	5.36		
EU (24) ³	2002	5.11	- 0.2	Slightly to the left
	2014	5.10		

1 Ex-socialist states (without Slovenia): the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland.

2 Nordic states: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden.

3 The stated average of the EU countries (including Israel and Switzerland).

that stand out with regard to this factor, i.e. Spain and the “European” complement, Israel; the first is at the extreme, because it has the same value as Slovenia, while the second is the most right wing. As is evident from the last two columns of the table, in economically the most critical years – that is, between 2002 and 2014²⁵ – public opinion in Slovenia moved more to the left than anywhere else in Europe. Moreover, Slovenia is also the country in Europe with the highest percentage of respondents who (according to various criteria) are very critical of capitalism and consider socialism to be better (Toš & Vovk, 2014). In short, a basic characteristic of Slovenia is that, right from the very foundation of this young country, in 1991, the general public has been moving notably to the left, while the

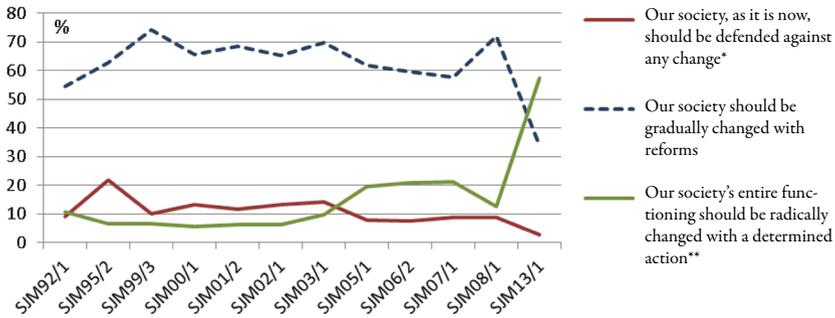
25 Economically the mentioned period is the most critical for three reasons: because it indicates the peak of the most recent recession, which marked the triumph of neoliberalism and the collapse of various stock market bubbles that had inflated due to a belief in infinite economic growth; because this collapse was followed by a very severe economic crisis, comparable with that in the 1930s; because even after leaving this crisis nothing indicates that we have had learned anything from it.

Table 4: "How satisfied are you in general with the functioning of democracy in Slovenia?" - comparison of Slovenia with the EU average and with the Czech Republic and Norway (between 2002 and 2014; summarised after Toš, 2017: p. 347)

COUNTRY (all in %)	YEAR of measurement	SCALE from 0 to 10: 0 = very unsatisfied ... 10 = very satisfied										AVERAGE VALUE	
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10
Slovenia	2002	6.7	5.0	10.0	14.5	12.3	20.9	10.4	11.0	7.1	1.4	0.9	4.39
	2014	18.1	11.8	16.2	18.6	10.4	12.8	5.4	3.6	2.1	0.3	0.7	2.90
	2002→2014	64.7 Growth for +78.7% Fall for -34.4%										28.6 Fall for -67.2%	6.7 Fall for -33.9%
Czech Rep.	2002	3.8	5.4	7.6	13.1	11.1	20.5	11.4	12.9	8.7	4.7	0.9	4.85
	2014	5.2	2.7	5.6	10.7	10.2	20.5	12.3	15.6	9.7	4.1	3.4	5.20
	2002→2014	24.2 Fall for -19.1% No change										43.0 Growth for +20.6%	32.8 Growth for +7.2%
Norway	2002	1.0	0.9	2.5	5.4	8.4	18.4	15.1	20.6	17.9	7.7	1.8	6.14
	2014	0.7	0.2	0.8	2.3	4.1	10.1	10.1	19.0	26.6	15.6	8.5	7.23
	2002→2014	4.0 Fall for -59.2% Fall for -42.0%										24.3 Growth for +45.2%	69.7 Growth for +17.8%
EU ¹	2002	3.8	2.6	5.2	8.7	9.9	18.5	12.8	16.0	14.2	5.2	3.0	5.51
	2014	5.5	3.6	6.6	9.6	10.0	16.4	11.8	14.9	13.3	5.3	3.2	5.27
	2002→2014	25.3 Growth for +24.6% Fall for -7.3%										38.2 Fall for -4.4%	36.7 Fall for -4.4%

1 Given is the average of the EU countries (including Israel and Switzerland).

THREE TYPICAL VIEWS OF THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE ARE GIVEN
Which of them you consider to be the closest to your own opinion?



* Until 2003: Our society as it is now, should be defended against any upturn

** Until 2003: Our society's entire functioning should be radically changed with a revolutionary action

FDV - CJMMK, Slovenian public opinion 1992-2013

Table 5: Attitude to social change in Slovenian public opinion (Toš, 2014: p. 106)

Slovenian elites have been moving to the right. The results of these trends are shown in *Tables 4* and *5*.

Slovenian dissatisfaction with democracy is at a critically high level. *Table 4* shows that in 2014 the share of people who declared themselves unsatisfied with democracy in Slovenia amounted to over 64 %, well above the European average of 25.3 %. For reasons of comparison this table also includes the Czech Republic as the country that is most similar to Slovenia due to its experience of socialism, although the percentage of its citizens who are unsatisfied with democracy is substantially lower (24.2 %), and Norway, where the dissatisfaction is the lowest seen in Europe. The same trends can be seen in the right column of the same table: in 12 years the average self-assessed level of satisfaction, as measured on a scale from 0 to 10, fell 33.9 % in Slovenia, while during the same time the average fall for the whole EU was only 4.4 %. One consequence of these trends is an extraordinary radicalisation of public opinion in Slovenia over the past decade. As seen from *Table 5*, the percentage of self-defined conservatives who reject any changes to the current system has been approaching zero; the percentage of reformists that wish for gradual changes, which in the previous quarter century represented the majority of the public, has fallen dramatically; while those who think that “the entire way of functioning of our society needs to be radically changed with a determined action” have become the majority.

In short, the case of Slovenia is an educative illustration of the influence that social context has on radicalisation, even when seemingly nothing is wrong. Despite one of the lowest levels of inequality, and many other very favourable factors, public opinion in Slovenia has become radicalised, because of the growing distance between ordinary citizens and the political elites that run the country following a neoliberal plan. According to the results of the survey outlined above, an aversion to democracy has deepened with the majority of the population, who favour the option of having a “strong leader that would fix things” instead of more democracy. In 2015 – that is, several years after the end of the most recent economic crisis – this attitude was expressed by as much as 62.4 % of the Slovenian public, the highest level in Europe, while only 13 years ago this opinion was held by much less than half the population (Dragoš, 2016: p. 45).²⁶ Among those who would prefer to have an authoritarian leader over greater democracy, most are voters with low education, the unemployed, the religious, those over the age of 60, and those who live in poverty or close to it (Toš & Vovk, 2014). In short, despite the relatively low degree of inequality in Slovenian society, social factors are among the main ones linked to the mainstream distrust of democracy. With regard to other contextual reasons related to radicalisation, two other factors need to be noted, namely social capital along with unfavourable psychological shifts related to what is usually uncritically idealised as the Slovenian “national character”. While the indicator of the quality of social ties in Slovenia remains below the European average²⁷, it is with regard to “national character” that Slovenians are markedly above the European average, and here they value the most negative personal characteristics, which are related to the concept of authoritarian personality. These characteristics are: submissiveness, modestolatry,²⁸ conformism and traditionalism. Despite the already high measured values for these characteristics at the start of the

26 In these terms the statement of the current president of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, seems typical: “With regard to running the governments, a certain world trend also needs to be considered. We are witnessing the growing phenomenon of strong political leaders, also in countries with long democratic traditions. For many people it is attractive to have a leader that can compensate for the deficiencies of democracy. If democracy does not work, they say to themselves, at least it is better to have a strong leader. Contrary to those that typically jump to conclude that this leads to authoritarianism, I am not so sure that the two are interconnected. People look for strong leaders for whom they believe would be able to fix things /.../ I am reserved towards predictions of apocalypse in cases when a strong political personality takes over leadership of the government” (Korljan, 2018).

27 Although slightly above the average of the former socialist countries.

28 It shows agreement with the statement: “It is important to be humble and modest, not to draw attention.”

period examined in this survey, these value orientations only grew stronger over the following 14 years (Toš, 2017: pp. 376 ss).

Conclusion

The potential for radicalisation is not the characteristic of a single social sphere, system or organisation; quite the contrary, it can emerge in all dimensions of human (social and psychological) action. With the concept of radicalisation, as illustrated with the “cage” of four dimensions, we can thus avoid the most common mistakes that can occur when addressing the problem indicated in the title of this paper, namely the unreflected use of synonyms, voluntarist qualifications and ignoring the difference between the general and specific. The dimensions included in the concept are political (involving the mode of action), cognitive (attitude to reality), existential (direction of action) and temporal in the acausal sense (which Merleau-Ponty names the “network of intentionalities”). Radicalism arises because of an unfavourable combination of these dimensions, when moves along them coincide in the direction of extremes. Social context is an important amplifier of such shifts, and within this the primary factors are the power relations among the actors, inequality in the distribution of goods and opportunities, and the related expectations people have with regard to their lives. The example of Slovenia is particularly interesting to illustrate such effects, because this country does not have a very problematic degree of inequality among its citizens. Nonetheless, public opinion in Slovenia has become radicalised to a greater extent than in other European countries (although it remains within the political dimension of the “mode of action”, as shown in Figure 1). The main characteristics of the social context that explains this state of affairs are the prolonged and openly expressed division between – on one hand – people’s expectations, which are socially rather egalitarian and politically oriented to the left (socialist), and – on the other hand – the actions of the political elites who have applied neoliberal strategies of development. The future direction of Slovenian society, in terms of the strengthening of these individual and contradictory characteristics, depends on the social context. The least favourable direction would be the one leading towards the cage of radicalisation (Figure 1), where the extremes coincide. Slovenia is currently at a crossroads where everything still remains open, including a destructive version of the future that could resemble the 1930’s. This is because the country has many of the factors needed to realise this outcome, as laid out in the following equation: an aversion to parliamentary democracy and capitalism + favourable views of socialism and a strong leader +

the predominance of the authoritarian personality type + nationalism = national socialism.

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