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Master's Thesis

Understanding the rise and the internationalisation of online alt-right's subculture: how memes are changing political culture worldwide

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Abstract and keywords

This paper examines the creation and the development of alt-right subculture, their language and behaviour. Alt-right was mainstreamed in 2016, and it is growing fast in the post-truth environment. Alt-right fights with stigmatisation that usually far-right movement face with the ironic and subtler language, rejection of the political correctness and use of jokes, sarcastic and nihilist approach and dark humour memes to spread their ideology. Alt-right members seem young, smart and exciting. They are gathering in board-based websites and/or forums that have little or no freedom of speech control. Lack of regulation and anonymity give them the opportunity to say what they mean, to spread the message and radicalise more. Alt-right online subculture was somewhat connected with rising of white supremacy's violence globally in the past couple of years. Alt-right online subculture was especially compared with the four mass shootings or attempted mass shootings in the past six months – In Australia, Norway and the US. There is a danger that this trend of rising alt-right violence will continue. The public is not very-well informed about the alt-right community and its language, and it is essential to educate, especially youth, because of the danger of radicalisation. Social media and internet platforms, some less, some more, work on changing their policy of free speech to make people safer and stopping the spread of violence, harassment, racism and hate speech.

Keywords: alt-right, violence, white nationalism, far-right, online subcultures, memes, youth, online platforms, social media

Word count: 20 020

Biography

After completing her Graduate studies of International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science, the University of Belgrade in September 2016, she started her Master studies (Regional Master's Programme in Peace Studies) at the same faculty in October 2016. In February 2017, she started working at the European Policy Centre as a Communication and Event Organiser Assistant. She is still working in the same organisation, now at the Communication and Event Coordinator position

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Academic Integrity Statement

I hereby declare that I obeyed all the rules of academic integrity in the present Paper.

This Paper is solely the result of my efforts. It is based on my research and everything that is someone's else intellectual property is listed in references below.

Student's signature

In Belgrade, September 2019.

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List of abbreviations

/pol – discussion board on 4chan and 8chan website. It stands for “Political Incorrectness”. Boards are popular places of alt-right gathering.

Alt-right – alternative-right, a loose group of people on the far right how to have some common traits

Alt-right online subculture – alternative right members online,

Daily Stormer –neo-Nazi hate-website. On 2017 it the page has been removed from Clearnet.

Far-right / extreme right / extreme right-wingers – people or groups that are share radical racist, xenophobic anti- anti-democratic views

Gab –social media platform, heavily used by the far-right

Identitarianism – a pan-European ethno-nationalist movement that believes in preservation of European culture and identity

meme – any content that is rapidly and massively shared on through the internet

Reddit – Board-based website, among the most popular websites online, divided into interest-based boards

SJWs – slang of alt-right, social justice warriors, meaning activists on the liberal and left spectrum

/DonaldTrump board on 4chan, one of the bases for Trump’s supporter

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Introduction

The internet has achieved an amazing breakthrough in an incredibly short period. Research shows that currently, more than half (58.8%) of the world's population has access to the Internet.¹ Having in mind that it exists for less than 30 years (in its www. form, accessible to the broader public), the use of the internet has spread fastest than any innovation before. The internet undoubtedly made a revolution in the world and contributed significantly to globalisation. Our age is, therefore, very often called "Internet Age"². Majority of population use it every day, everyone can interact directly with the most powerful men, and women in the world via Twitter, revolutions and coups are organised via Facebook, and the elections are won thanks to the internet, sometimes, fake news phenomena that are spreading with a help of the Internet and social networks. Through the Internet, people from the whole world gather together and "premise of digital worlds is their limitlessness and the overcoming of boundaries that exist in the physical world"³. Virtual space overcomes the obstacles that exist in the physical world. In virtual space, also, there are no blockages from expressing opinions. As in the physical world, people with the same interests, topics and sentiments gather together to discuss them. They form groups, became friends, allies or enemies – nothing different from the physical world, only that the internet makes communication faster and easier – nothing can be deleted from it. Plus, one can choose to keep its anonymity, and that could free one to be more honest because then there is no fear from social judgement.

Like everyone else, extreme right-wingers also gather on the Internet and form these kinds of communities.⁴ One of the latest internet-born identity movement is the "alternative right" movement, or popularly called, alt-right, that and function almost completely on the

¹ *Internet World Stats – Usage and population statistics* <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> (10.9.2019)

² U*X*L Encyclopedia of U.S. History, *Internet Revolution*, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/internet-revolution> (10.9.2019)

³ Gavrilović Ljiljana, *MMORPGs and Nationalism*, in *Prospects for anthropological research in South-East Europe*, N. N. Miklouho-Maklay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia, and Institute of Ethnography Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia, Moscow – Belgrade, 2019, p. 179.

⁴ Popular white nationalists' websites are stormfront.org, VDARE, gab.com, Daily Stormer and **Patriotic Europeans** Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA).

internet.⁵ As every other sub-culture, they also have their way of communication. This language is somewhat harder to understand than the language of other famous internet sub-cultures. There are many strange words such as “normies”, “cuckservatives”, “redpill”, “Kek”, “SJW”, and much more. They also have a different narrative, so different that is very easy to distinguish their members from others online. They use memes a lot, again in their own, ironic and deeply sarcastic way. They are loosely connected, without an official leader or group.⁶ All of these cannot be easily explained to people that do not belong to these cultures, no matter whether they are on the internet or not, and no matter whether they belong to the older generation or younger. Youth can maybe better understand some part of alt-right, like memes or why is something funny, but deeper understanding of these subculture, for example, why it is directly connected with four acts of terrorism in which more than 70 people have lost their lives and in what connections are something that seems like benign jokes and these attack – that demands serious research. As for various things, the general public is usually not educated enough about these issues. They cannot get information from the alt-right subculture members too - the only way “in” is to be like their members, because asking for explanation can only cause taunt. When someone visits their forums – 4chan /pol/ board and, recently shut 8chan, to name the most popular ones, he or she will find racist, homophobic, anti-democratic and white nationalist slurs - but it will shock them that everything looks like a tasteless humourless joke. They joke almost all the time – especially when discussing severe issues. Language, photos, memes, anonymous members and the way they support each other, the very look of these imageboard websites certainly looks vague, hard to follow and incomprehensible to the “outsider”. Are people on these websites just kids who do not have an especially good sense of humour, but have a lot of free time? Do they do this only to provoke mainstream politics and “political correctness”, but the real hatred and dangerous ideologies do not lie behind, only ironical jokes, as it is written in their “guide”?⁷ But, that “joke” is becoming less and less funny when they influence elections, humiliates minorities and seriously threatens people’s life and security.⁸ For the latest, to name

⁵ Bevensee Emmi, Ross Alexander Reid, *The Alt-Right and Global Information Warfare*, University of Arizona and Portland State University, USA, 2019 p.1

⁶ Forscher Patrick S, Kteily Nour S. *A Psychological Profile of the Alt-Right – Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Department of Psychological Science, University of Arkansas, Department of Management and Organizations, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, 2019 (p. 3)

⁷ Bokhari Allum, Yiannopoulos Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁸ Online far-right support for, for example, Trump and Alternative for Germany (AfD) helped them to gather some votes, according to some researches. Cf. Serrano, Juan Carlos Medina, Shahrazaye, Morteza, Papakyriakopoulos, Orestis Hegelich, Simon *The rise of the AfD: A social media analysis*, Bavarian School of Public Policy, Technical University of Munich, 2018 and Heikkilä, Niko *Online Antagonism of the Alt-Right in the 2016 Election*, Popularizing Politics: The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12140>

the most famous case, when one of their “members” has shaken the public a few months ago with horrid brutality and absurdity. Brenton Tarrant, a young man from New Zealand, killed 51 men in two mosques, live streaming his attack on Facebook, and announced it on 8chan by posting obscure manifesto, titled “The Great Replacement”. While ordinary people around the world thought that this attack, his speech before and during and a manifesto he released are abundant with a bunch of unrelated things, jokes, songs, and memes that do not make any sense, that was not the case. The extremist world on which Tarrant's like-minded individuals are gathering every day is full of such discourse and narrative - Tarrant himself was one of the most prominent users of the website 8chan, one of the famous gathering places for alt-right online subculture, website so "dangerous" that Google removes it from its search results, but this does not stop it to be among the top 5000 most visited websites in the world⁹, so dangerous that the platform in which exist finally decided to withdraw its support, after the third attack that has direct connection to it.¹⁰ It seems hard to understand the alt-right appeal for so many young people. Why are they so attracted by this fringe subculture that came into the serious focus after Donald Trump won the US election in 2016? Trump certainly had support by this community – why? He continued to have a close connection with them, either by retweeting them or by hiring founder of the “platform of the alt-right” as its chief strategist.¹¹ “Just as the modern internet had ‘disrupted’ the worlds of entertainment, business and dating, it was now disrupting war and politics.”¹²

In the past couple of years, far-right-wing movements around the world have begun to become more and more popular - not just necessarily through the Internet. The victory of populist rhetoric on elections, the spread of the fake news phenomena, reduced liability for the spoken words, and putting the focus on feelings rather than on facts are among the features of the so-called "post-truth"¹³ society some researchers say we live in. Post-truth was the Oxford dictionary’s word of the year.¹⁴ Identity policies are also getting stronger.¹⁵ The factors behind

⁹ Alexa Site Observer, <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/8ch.net> Last accessed 14.9.2019.

¹⁰ Cloudflare, *Terminating service for 8chan*, <https://blog.cloudflare.com/terminating-service-for-8chan/>, Last accessed 15.9.2019.

¹¹ Anti-Defamation League, *Steve Bannon: Five Things to Know*, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/steve-bannon-five-things-to-know> Last accessed 15.9.2019.

¹² Singer P.W, Brooking, Emerson T, *Lakeward: The Weaponization of Social Media*, An Eamon Dolan Book, Boston, New York, 2018;

¹³ Cf. Jackson, Liz, *The power of relativism*, Educational Philosophy and Theory (2017); Jandrić, Petar, *Lies, damned lies, and the Web* (2017)

¹⁴ Framke Caroline, *2016 is the year of “post-truth,” according to the Oxford Dictionaries*, Vox <https://www.vox.com/culture/2016/11/16/13651094/2016-post-truth-word-of-the-year> Last accessed 16.9.2019

¹⁵ Cf. Croucher, Shelia L. *Globalization and belonging: the politics of identity in a changing world*, Miami University, 2018.

that are numerous and can be sought in the uncertainty of the current world order, the changes that have occurred with migrations, crises, and the fact that the world is changing. Far right-wing movements are, of course, as old as politics, but some of the features that the old far right-wing movements had, a new, alternative right, do not, and vice versa. For example, the old far-right-wing movement was limited to one country. The alternative right, thanks to the Internet and the universal dominance of English and European-American culture, has overcome that burden and became international. There are, though, far-right initiatives that have “switched” to the physical world - more recently, PEGIDA in Europe or campaign Defend Europe. But the majority of alt-right continue to only exist as a fringe online subculture.

The internalisation of far right-wing does not involve whole world, not even all people with the access to the internet, as Goggin and McLelland illustrate in their book¹⁶ - the teenage girl from Japan is not the same as teenage Palestinian girl – they will not have the same behaviour nor they are the part of the same online culture, although both have access to the internet. What those authors excellently point at is that the Western people on the internet are not merely its consumers and how important internet is for forming a culture – and how that culture became part of their identity. Alt-right is probably one of the hundreds of perfect examples for that. It is, however, tough to find the connections between these people, because they are not organised as other subcultures often are. Again, something connects its members. Men from Texas, California, Norway and New Zealand have something in common. The discourse is very similar. They believe in related ideas, although they targeted different communities - Mexicans, Muslims, Jews and Muslims again, respectively. We currently cannot understand them, but we need to because of the influence they have on the world's events. We do not know if they're joking and if they are, what kind of humour is that. But we know that their views are very carefully related to the fact that several dozen people were killed.

This research paper recognises the growth of the presence of the alt-right movement, its internationalisation and the increasing mobilisation of young people for this movement online. Recent developments favour the recognition of this problem as a real danger that needs to be addressed very seriously because the alt-right subculture continues to grow very fast, and the expert community must understand this movement. Therefore, the topic of the thesis is the **understanding the online subculture of members of the alt-right online subculture**, their humour and the influence they had. One of the horrid thing that this movement is related to could

¹⁶ Goggin Gerard, McLelland, Mark *Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms*, Routledge, 2009, p. 3.

be seen in attacks carried out in the last period¹⁷ inspired by this “ideology of hate”, as well as in the growth of influence of personalities perceived as members of the alt-right online subculture. A central problem that this paper will try to understand is the rapid growth of the alt-right movement and its appeal, especially to young people and try to comprehend this specific language that members of alt-right share. This paper will discuss the growth and how members of this movement talk about their movement, what their goals, intentions and explanations are. It will analyse how the alt-right movement as a subculture is specific and how it differs from other types of right-wingers and what makes this subculture is so different. This problem was already discussed in several books and research papers. Book by Angela Nagle “Kill All Normies”, for example, is explaining how online sub-cultures helped in the rise of an organised alt-right movement. This paper will be of added value in the sense that it will try to promote this topic in Serbia, where there have been no papers on this topic so far (and the community is still not notably active), but also by analysing the most recent events, some of which are only a month old. This paper aims to understand the alt-right community and their language and bring it closer to the general public. Alt-right online subculture belongs to the far-right-wing groups, and it is specific for its style, internalisation, gathering primarily on the internet, its mix of different ideologies and the fact that it is mainly made *by* and *for* youth. The goals of this research are the following: to describe, explain and understand the online alt-right subculture; to draw the attention of academia and decision-makers to this problem and utilisation of the results of this research in the future research on this and similar topics. It has a mission to help in spreading the information about the dangers of alt-right online subculture to help in reducing future recruitments of youth.

The research paper is divided into four parts: the first part explains the history of the alt-right online subculture, its ideology, members, places of gathering, most significant persons, and their language and humour. The second part describes the influence this online subculture had on four recent events. Although the online alt-right subculture can maybe be related to even more attacks¹⁸, the author decided to focus on the last period (March 2019 – September 2019). The third part is dedicated to researching the methods that countries, private stakeholders and network use to fight against this problem. In the fourth part, the author analyses how much the public does know about the alt-right and present the results of a short survey that she conducted

¹⁷ Guardian, *More than 175 killed worldwide in last eight years in white nationalist-linked attacks* <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/04/mass-shootings-white-nationalism-linked-attacks-worldwide> Last accessed 20.8.2019

¹⁸ Morgan Jonathon, *These charts show exactly how racist and radical the alt-right has gotten this year*, Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/09/26/these-charts-show-exactly-how-racist-and-radical-the-alt-right-has-gotten-this-year/> Last accessed 29.8.2019

between September 6 and September 20. Finally, the conclusion of the whole paper will be given.

The primary method that will be used in this research is qualitative research method - an online ethnographical method for data collection and online observation, as well as analysing online data. During the research, the basic scientific methods - analysis and synthesis - will also be used. The examination will be applied through deduction in the case studies of four events that are somehow related to the online subculture. These events are chosen because they are all related to the research topic, they are very current, and they can be used as perfect examples of the influence that online alt-right subculture has on the events in the world. A deduction will also be applied when making conclusions. The synthesis will be used to connect the previously separated parts into a meaningful whole and to create a basis for grouping them according to the criteria of significance. For the research, a comparative analysis will also be used in the analysis of the survey's results. The author will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods, focusing on qualitative ones for all parts except when analysing the results of an online survey.

1. What is the alt-right?

1.1. History of the alt-right movement

The term “alt-right” is new – it exists for less than a decade but is on the spotlight for less than five years. It was firstly introduced by Richard Spencer, the famous American theorist. He started an online magazine called *Alternative Right*¹⁹ (it was shut down in the meantime). The purpose of it was to present an alternative–far-right movement as an answer to the critics that conservatism became too close to liberalism. Spencer is still very famous in white supremacist circles and a frequent speaker at their conferences. He defines alt-right as the ideology that blends the ideas of neo-reactionaries, who advocate a return to an antiquated, pseudo-libertarian government that supports traditional western civilization, those who advocate for a return to traditional values without jettisoning the advances of society and technology; human biodiversity adherents and race realists - people who generally adhere to “scientific racism” and other extreme-right ideologies. Alt-right adherents stridently reject egalitarianism and universalism.²⁰ Alt-right gathers and exists mostly on the internet, and, though not quite the same, alt-right and alt-right online subculture almost wholly overlap.

Some experts will define it as “a loose group of individuals united by their opposition to progressivism, which they perceive to be a thinly veiled fundamentalist religion dedicated to egalitarian principles and intent of totalitarian world domination via global hegemony.”²¹ According to the University of Auckland, “‘Alt-Right’ is rather a designation used to describe a milieu of groups and individuals that occupy a spectrum of ideas.”²² In the book, “The New Right: A Journey to the Fringe of American Politics,” the author says how these people have nothing in common, just that their hatred is pointed at the same people.²³ Famous political commentator Ben Shapiro describes them as “movement of online trolls, generally populists and

¹⁹ Johnson Greg, *What is the Alternative Right*, Counter-Currents Publishing, part 1 of 4
<https://www.counter-currents.com/2018/10/what-is-the-alternative-right-part-1/> Last accessed 2.9.2019

²⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Alt-Right*,
<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alt-right> Last accessed 2.9.2019

²¹ Malice Michael *The New Right: A Journey to the Fringe of American Politics*, All points books, New York, USA, 2019, p.3

²² Berry Damon, *What is the alt-right*, The University of Auckland
<https://www.thebigq.org/2019/04/04/what-is-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

²³ The Federalist, *The New Right and their hatred for progressive leftists* – podcast
<https://thefederalist.com/2019/07/01/podcast-the-new-right-and-their-hatred-for-progressive-leftists/> Last accessed 16.9.2019

nationalists, who revel in using taboo language.”²⁴ What members of this movement share are **white nationalism, hyper-violent rhetoric, leader cult and rejection of democracy and mainstream politics**²⁵. Religion is not that significant within them – it is culture and nation (for alt-right, this implies Christianity – catholic or protestant). Their perfect society does not necessarily “produce a soaring GDP, but it does produce symphonies, basilicas and Old Masters.”²⁶

Angela Nagle, in her book, “Kill All Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right”, says that the characteristics of the alt-right online subculture are continually changing, but that their counterculture, transgression and nonconformity tell a lot about them. People fail, she says when they do not see connections between the alt-right and the left and consider alt-right as a typical right movement. Alt-right, she says “has more in common with the 1968 left’s slogan ‘It is forbidden to forbid!’ than it does with anything most recognise as part of any traditionalist right.”²⁷ “They are not crazy or weird, she argues. “They are American (and we can say European) as Apple Pie,²⁸” Malice agrees.

Viveca Greene in her book *Deplorable Satire: Alt-right Memes, White Genocide Tweets and Redpilling Normies* say that alt-right is not geographically proximate movement and that the main point of their language is to radicalise potential supports, to challenge ideologies and institutions, “redpill” “normies”, and create a toxic counter-public.²⁹ The core members of the alt-right online subculture are often (but not always) white supremacist, anarcho-capitalists, Tea-Party movement members, Asian identitarians, Dark Enlightenment members, Neo-Nazis and related groups.

This movement does grow and change very fast, so fast that the academic researcher could not follow and give their policy responses and recommendations. This not surprising, having in mind how quickly al-right online subculture communicate.

²⁴ Shapiro Ben, *Responding to the alt-right: Are they bigots, or just stupid children*, Daily Wire, <https://www.dailywire.com/news/4396/responding-alt-right-are-they-bigots-or-just-ben-shapiro> Last accessed 18.9.2019

²⁵ Matthews Dylan, *The alt-right is more than warmed-over white supremacy. It’s that, but way way weirder*, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/2016/4/18/11434098/alt-right-explained> Last accessed 18.9.2019

²⁶ Bokhari Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2018

²⁷ Nagle Angela, *Kill all Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester, UK, Washington, USA, 2017, p.37

²⁸ Malice, Michael *The New Right: A Journey to the Fringe of American Politics*, All points books, New York, USA, 2019, p.12

²⁹ Greene, Viveca S. *“Deplorable” Satire: Alt Right Memes, White Genocide Tweets, and Redpilling Normies*, The Pennsylvania State University, USA, 2019, p. 34-39



Picture 1. Trump tweeted the meme that was allegedly created on 4chan. It was marked as racist and lately deleted.

The alternative right took the internet slowly and come to a public place about three years ago. Spencer, the big Trump supporter, said how “nobody has paid attention before Trump”. The media started to pay closer attention during the 2016 USA elections when Trump tweeted meme that was created on 4chan (Picture 1). As time went by, it started to become clear that their love is two-sided. Alt-right generally, and especially alt-right online subculture primarily on 4chan /pol and /DonaldTrump boards strongly supported Trump for president. He was popular because of his language - because he was not a mainstream candidate, and apparently, he shared the views of people on far right. It seems like the group that was hiding in darkness finally saw the opportunity to become

mainstream and decided to seize that opportunity to grab public space. 2016 was the year when “unleashed excitement and enthusiasm among extreme right-wing activists who carried out online information and disinformation campaigns and psychological operations to promote his (Trump’s) campaigns and to shift the public’s attitude in his favour.”³⁰ The alt-right gained in popularity even more after Charlottesville, mass gathering in protest of the removal of a confederate statue in one city in Virginia, USA, but maintained above all its presence and dominance on the Internet, through obscure and fringe websites. Thanks to the English language and the dominance of Western culture, alt-right online subculture did not have a problem to become internalised. They created their news networks, social media platforms, funding structures and chat applications.³¹ Internet is currently flooded with highly ideological propaganda websites, and it is more difficult to sort out what information is accurate and what is not.³²

Although “alt-right” is very vague term, as explained above, since there is no official leadership or organisation (except for a large number of *think tanks* dealing with this topic and people that are considered as group’s role models or important), what can be seen to be common to all members of the movement **is a strong focus on preserving European culture**. The term they use very much is **culture**, which is maybe just a fancy substitute for words “race” or “nation”. The alt-right online subculture’s views are anti-Jews, against immigrants, non-whites,

³⁰ Ebner Julia, Davey Jacob, *The Fringe Insufficiency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, 2017, p. 19

³¹ Ebner Julia, Davey Jacob, *The Fringe Insufficiency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, 2017, p. 19

³² Neiwert David, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, Verso, London, UK, 2017, ch. 2

and, like other right-wing groups, they try to justify their views scientifically. Alt-right members also mock mainstream media, mainstream politicians, and hate political correctness may be more than all the above combined. As mentioned above, it is maybe of key importance in understanding the alt-right online subculture – their genuine irritation of the modern discourse in which **people can be labelled racist for any opinion that is not mainstream**, e.g. Israel, mass migration – alt-right online subculture feel like they cannot say almost anything. And then they become massively irritated. “If it’s okay to say hateful things about white men, the claim that it’s not okay to say them about other groups becomes tenuous.”³³ Hilary Clinton called everyone who supports Donald Trump “deplorables,” – which is the mistake that liberals do – it is entirely normal that people will be offended and irritated and that they will share everything they really believe in on their anonymous websites, under anonymous terms, because that is the only place that is completely free from judgments. They feel so-called “white victimisation” that they are unable to present their points of view without fear of being fired or losing credibility. They weaponised sarcasm and provocative language to attract people who feel that they are not allowed to be themselves or say what to feel, afraid that they would turn out to be “politically incorrect”. In a discourse when someone could be named as Nazi only because he or she wears dreadlock or be accused of appropriation if dressed like a Yasmin for Halloween, it should not shock people that someone will start a joke out of it. That doesn’t imply that someone is on the right. And even if it is, right-wing is certainly very big and labelling them all with the term “Neo-Nazi”, even the farthest ones, is wrong and shows that person who uses this term shows little or no understanding for this community and diminishes the horror of Nazism. There are, on the other hand, researchers who say that these new terms are used only to “wash” and old mainstream ideologies and that there is nothing “alternative” or “new”. Greenblatt, for example, said in his statement for Harvard Political Review that “the alt-right is a new name for an old hatred... make no mistake—the alt-right is racist and anti-Semitic to the core.”³⁴ He clarifies that the American alt-right online subculture does not have anything cool, new, or exciting - people like the protesters at Charlottesville are modern supporters of the racist ideologies that have been present in American society since the country’s inception.³⁵

What this online subculture also honestly feels and often discuss about is that every group has its right to be proud of itself – except white people. Far-right wing very often speaks about how the white population is jeopardised (and how there are only 9% of white people in the

³³ Young Cathy, *You can’t whitewash the alt-right’s bigotry*, The Federalist, <https://thefederalist.com/2016/04/14/you-cant-whitewash-the-alt-rights-bigotry/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

³⁴ Gao Michelle, *A Nazi by any other name: Linguistic and White Supremacy*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/white-supremacy/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

³⁵ Ibid.

world). Alt-right online subculture does the same. What they point out very often is that they feel that every group can defend itself and have the right to be proud of itself, except for white culture.

When became associated with political figures, the alt-right gained unprecedented popularity and was quickly mainstreamed in the USA. Europe was not lagging. Politicians like Thierry Baudette, who became so famous among the alt-right online subculture³⁶ and perfected the alt-right application of the principle "we are not serious, we are only kidding," phenomenon that is called *Poe's law* in science - that one cannot know whether it is a joke or a reality. The Netherlands and Germany demonstrated increased trans-Atlantic cooperation and information exchange between extreme right-wing activists on the web. Members and supporters of Dutch Freedom Party's leader Geert Wilders, as well as the French Front National's candidate Marine Le Pen, borrowed tactics made by the alt-right in the US elections.³⁷ On 4Chan's /pol board, precise instructions from the US elections on how to obfuscate and manipulate the media were adjusted for German voters: meme campaigns such as 'normie memes', psychological operations and guidelines how to manipulate narratives' that links to detailed playbooks.³⁸ YouTube channel "Millennial Woes"³⁹ is the biggest alt-right channel on YouTube in Europe, with more than 50 000 subscribers.

What the alt-right online subculture also considers as part of its identity, in addition to a thorough critique of mainstream discourse and praise of the white culture, is **anti-feminism**. Almost all the alt-right online subculture members are white men. Some of those who now identify as members of the Alt-Right say they arrived at their current affiliation via men's rights activism and critiques of feminism.⁴⁰ They believe in the natural order, in place that belongs to **every gender** (and that there are only two genders) in society. Feminism is incompatible with the nature of women. This has a long history within this culture, from shaming celebrities to threatening women in a Gamergate campaign by releasing details against women who fought for equal and fair representation of women in online games.

Another common thing that is very often among them is believing in **conspiracy theories**. This is not strange - psychologist Robert Altmeyer cites common traits to the

³⁶ Digg Magazine, *Memes, 4chan and strategic ambivalence Thierry Baudet* <https://www.diggmagazine.com/column/memes-4chan-and-strategic-ambivalence-thierry-baudet> Last accessed 17.9.2019

³⁷ Ebner Julia, Davey, Jacob: *The Fringe Insufficiency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, 2017, pg.19

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Millennial Woes*, YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/MillennialWoes> Last accessed 12.9.2019

⁴⁰ Berry Damon, *What is the alt-right*, University of Auckland, <https://www.thebigq.org/2019/04/04/what-is-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 12.9.2019

conspiracy theorists are ethnocentrism, self-rightness and belief of dangerous world⁴¹ - all standard features of alt-right online subculture. A large number of members are inspired by Curtis Yarvin's ideas (real name: Mencius Moldbug) and his Dark Enlightenment theory, mostly in the part that rejects democracy and centrism and advocates feudalism. Members of the alt-right subculture are mostly not for monarchism. It seems weird having in mind the very scope of this community, but they are also predominantly against libertarianism and individualism. Community is essential.

Harvard Politics called 2017 “a year of far-right”⁴², and that is mainly thanks to the alt-right online subculture. Internet, free world without borders, plus people who were feeling unhappy and muted, now are allowed to say what they want. They choose to that by using humour. “Once relegated to the political fringes, the alt-right has become a sudden, shocking force in mainstream politics, closely identified with the Donald Trump regularly retweets the memes and messages of the alt-right, which has propelled the movement into the limelight,” Washington Post says.⁴³ For the first time, this online subculture is now *designed* to attack youth, who are feeling lonely. Not youth from one city or state, but youth across the world. Youth who is tech-savvy, who is *cool* and *edgy*, smart and intellectual and who reject mainstream politics. Speaking at a conference in Washington, D.C., Richard Spencer, the author of “alt-right” term said how this group is edgy, dangerous, cool and hip and how that is something parents do not want their children to do. So, this is, by design, an affiliation that appeals to young people, so they try to speak the language they understand – the language of humour, the language of jokes and weird memes.

Since there is no official movement, alt-right is widespread throughout the world and, since they feel that they are forbidden to express their opinions, with far-right parties gathering an insignificant number of people, members of the alt-right gather in these image-board type of websites.

But, unfortunately, it must not be forgotten how much all these activities have an impact on the real world, on real-life outside the internet, how much this is not just a funny world and place to share opinions, and how dangerous this loophole can be - it has been shown through multiple horrid events in the world. What is noticeable is that social media is being exploited - wars are now being fought, and revolutions started through the media. The attacks are live-

⁴¹ Neiwert, David, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, Verso, London, UK, 2017, ch. 2

⁴² Gao, Michelle, *A Nazi by any other name: Linguistic and White Supremacy*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/white-supremacy/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

⁴³ Morgan, Jonathon, *These charts show exactly how racist and radical the alt-right has gotten this year*, Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/09/26/these-charts-show-exactly-how-racist-and-radical-the-alt-right-has-gotten-this-year/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

streamed. Every subculture in the future will probably emerge on the Internet. Everything still functions in the same way - a collective identity that creates collective action.

Youth today believes more to social media than distrust traditional outlets. Youth also need emotional connections to sources. When we add online algorithms and “bubble effect” – that one will see more references from the pages and content he or she mostly like, it is easy to live in the world where their views are rarely challenged.

“It (*alt-right*) has swallowed up most of the guys in the senior class at my school. ... Every discussion devolves into things like which girls are ‘feminazis,’ celebrities dating outside their ethnicity being ‘white genocide,’ and so on. ... I’m genuinely scared that it’s going to spread to the point where I won’t have anyone I can talk to like a normal human being,” one teenager wrote in a letter for *American Conservative* magazine.⁴⁴

Milo Yiannopoulos, prominent figure within alt-right, says that they differ from skinheads – alt-right members are smarter, educational and that are the reasons why people are afraid of them.⁴⁵ Milo regularly compares alt-right with punk. “Although initially small in number, the alt-right has a youthful energy and jarring, taboo-defying rhetoric that have boosted its membership and made it impossible to ignore,”⁴⁶ says Yiannopoulos. “They are dangerously bright”.⁴⁷

Hiding under the veil of irony gives them a powerful weapon to avoid accusations of extremism, meaning that they only want to joke and challenge mainstream politics, but still actively spreading hateful language and memes. Alt-right online subculture, thus, highly value free speech and ‘the right to offend’ as well as using highly provocative language. Bokhari and Yiannopoulos write that we can “thank” the social justice cults that dominate in media for the rise of this movement. This is a healthy and expected reaction to the wild cis-white privilege of male hatred. Traditional discourse has made dangerous labels such as racist and white supremacist completely ridiculous. When wearing a sombrero for Halloween can get you

⁴⁴ Collins, Corry, *What is the “Alt-Right”?* Teaching Tolerance, <https://www.tolerance.org/print/96070/print> Last accessed 15.9.2019

⁴⁵ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁴⁶ <https://www.thedailybeast.com/meet-milo-yiannopoulos-the-appealing-young-face-of-the-racist-alt-right>

⁴⁷ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

labelled a racist, the name becomes meaningless.⁴⁸ “A spectre is haunting the dinner parties, fundraisers and think-tanks of the Establishment: the spectre of the “alternative right.”⁴⁹

The ground rule for the alt-right is that nothing is sacred – nothing is safe for being mocked at, not even their principles. Absolute freedom of speech is guaranteed on their forums. They hate the veil of moralization that liberals and leftist use, and instead, they use a veil of irony.⁵⁰ The number one thing that amuses them the most is “hurt feelings” of social justice warriors (SJW) or snowflakes, how they often called them. Chan culture does not believe in appeasing moral order, does not believe in the celebration of equality and life, but only in the will of power. The favourite and often quoted philosopher is Nietzsche. Nietzsche is widely used by the entire political spectre – from Nazis to feminist. His antimoralism is something that seems very “edgy and cool” to these people also – they hate so-called “slave morality” and “victimisation”.⁵¹ This online subculture hates moralism and compassion, “snowflakes” and weak people.

The recipe seems perfect: by addressing youth who have nowhere else to express their views by living in a liberal dictatorship and then sharing messages simply and engagingly, **simplifying things as much as possible**, making them edgy – of course, the community is growing. It is, by design, an affiliation that appeals to young people.

Harvard Politics Review marks that “liberals may have won the culture wars, but it appears that as long as this faceless, decentralised culture of reaction continues to fester, we will have to get more familiar with the language of the Christchurch shooter’s manifesto.⁵² After Tarrant, we could see the examples of “inspirational terrorism”, a copycat attack in which attackers refer to the previous one - Tarrant (“saint tarrant” as he is called on these obscure websites) is one of those examples. It is therefore urgent to understand what motivates people to copy him and why is he such hero on those websites.

Frederic Brennan, the founder of one of internet most dangerous message board, 8chan, gives the perfect explanation in his interview for *Vice*. He is born with a severe bone fracture

⁴⁸ Young Cathy, *You can’t whitewash the alt-right’s bigotry*, The Federalist, <https://thefederalist.com/2016/04/14/you-cant-whitewash-the-alt-rights-bigotry/> Last accessed 14.9.2019

⁴⁹ Bokhari Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁵⁰ Khan Rumi, *The Alt-Right as Counterculture: Memes, Video Games and Violence*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/alt-right-counterculture/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

⁵¹ Nagle Angela, *Kill all Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester, UK, Washington, USA, 2017, p. 94

⁵² Khan Rumi, *The Alt-Right as Counterculture: Memes, Video Games and Violence*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/alt-right-counterculture/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

disease that prevents him from moving normally or in any way functioning normally without breaking his bones. That is why he did not move almost at all. He says that his parents and surroundings are always nice to him. However, on 4chan, a website he moderated before founding 8chan, was the first place that someone said “cripple” to him. That was painful catharses – he knew that everyone means that, but nobody says anything because they do not want to hurt him.

This nicely shows the hatred of the alt-right towards traditional, mainstream opinions, and especially the hatred of free speech. Now, under the veil of anonymity (the vast majority of users never log in), they are allowed to express their real, Freudian Id.⁵³ Anglin notes that one of the critical elements of the alt-right’s success in online communities like 4chan was that they could be anonymous — they could share their socially unacceptable views under cover of darkness, without having to be accountable for their racism, while they found their views echoed and emboldened by the other anons around them. 4chan was the online equivalent of KKK members’ white hoods.⁵⁴

1.2. Places of gathering

The presence and impact of the Alt-Right have been primarily noted online, not only in coordinated actions such as #BoycottStarWarsVII which started as a response to a black actor being cast in one of the lead roles in this 2015 film but also in the spread of material associated with them. Websites such as 4chan and 8chan are “hubs of alt-right activity”.⁵⁵ Both sites look like websites from 2001, and that’s intentional. They are imageboard websites, where topics are divided into boards and sub-boards. There is no identity related to posts and old posts are deleted, as well as non-active boards (*principles of anonymity and ephemerality*). An “original poster” creates a new thread by making a post, with one single image attached, to a board with a focus of interest. People reply with a text and/or image. They are low-tech and lightweight, prioritising its function above all else: discussion. And on some of these boards on those websites, that discussion started to become incredibly offensive.⁵⁶

⁵³ Wendling, Mike, *Christchurch shootings: The rising new threat of far-right violence*, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-47596446> Last accessed 16.9.2019

⁵⁴ Romano, Aja, *The year social media changed everything*, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/2016/12/31/13869676/social-media-influence-alt-right> Last accessed 12.9.2019

⁵⁵ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁵⁶ Blackburn, Jeremy, Cristofaro, Emiliano De, Stringhini, Gianluca, *A Longitudinal Measurement Study of 4chan’s Politically Incorrect Forum and its Effect on the Web*, Bentham’s Gaze,

The most offensive board on both 4chan and 8chan is so-called /pol board, or “Political Incorrectness” board. These websites are different from Neo-Nazi websites such as stormfront.org and similar nationalist websites that are very serious and somewhat scary. The people on 4chan and 8chan are very young, and more importantly, it is never quite clear whether they are joking or not - often everything seems like a joke. But, one analysis of over 100 million posts on Gab, another website very popular among the youth far right-wing, and 4chan’s Politically Incorrect board found that, between July 2016 and January 2018, the use of the terms “Jew” and “kike,” a derogatory term for Jewish people, more than doubled on /pol board.⁵⁷ “You can’t understate 4chan’s role. I constantly see 4chan being mentioned by the more Internet- and tech-savvy guys in the white nationalist movement. They’re getting their content from 4chan,”⁵⁸ says Jacob Siegel, a journalist from *Daily Beast*.

Internet fastened communication so much that people can comment on the world’s happenings daily in real-time. Protests can be organised in less than 5 minutes; someone can get cyber-abused by an organised mob very easily. Lives are getting destroyed by false accusations. Comments and discussion boards are the places in which rage, anger, aggression and conspiracy theories can thrive because likeminded people communicate only with each other, they are no longer contradicted, and this fuels a group polarisation.⁵⁹

Despite the global spread of the internet, it is still very much strongly influenced by the USA,⁶⁰ although there are striking differences in how it has taken shape in different countries. What is sure is that people on the internet, especially in the western countries, are not simply consumers of the new technologies, but rather part of “youth culture stretching back to the 1980s that has driven these new technologies forward and given them the current shape”.⁶¹ Through the weaponisation of social media, the internet has changed the world, and it continues to change it. Terrorists live-stream their attacks. Tweets can start revolutions. “War, tech, and politics have blurred into a new kind of battlespace that plays out on our smartphones.”⁶² What separates the alt-right from the other far-right is its use of effective internet organisation. Until now, far-right-

<https://www.benthamsgaze.org/2016/11/16/a-longitudinal-measurement-study-of-4chans-politically-incorrect-forum-and-its-effect-on-the-web/> Last accessed 12.9.2019

⁵⁷ Woolley, Samuel, *Computational Propaganda, Jewish-Americans and the 2018 Midterms: The Amplification of Anti-Semitic Harassment Online*, Anti-Defamation League Report, 2018, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Matthews, Dylan, *The alt-right is more than warmed-over white supremacy. It’s that, but way way weirder*, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/2016/4/18/11434098/alt-right-explained> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁵⁹ Vorländer, Hans, Herold Maik, Schäller Steven, *PEGIDA and new right-wing Populism in Germany*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland, 2016, p. 183

⁶⁰ Cf. Goggin Gerrard, McClelland Mark, *Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms*, Routledge, New York, USA, 2009;

⁶¹ Ibid, p.3.

⁶² Singer, P.W, Brooking, Emerson T, *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media*, An Eamon Dolan Book, Boston, New York, 2018. Citation from: <https://www.likewarbook.com/>

wing movements were limited by geographic. The Internet has removed the barriers, enabling them to organise across the world and spread propaganda.⁶³ The alt-right utilities this reality by speaking the language of the internet made strong alt-right online subculture that was both created but also influenced by the youth. Even the innocent game such as *Pokémon Go* served for recruiting purposes by far-right members. Popular alt-right persona, Andrew Anglin, said: “I have long thought that we needed to get pre-teens involved in the movement...Anyone who accepts Nazism at the age of 10 or 11 is going to be a Nazi for life,”⁶⁴ It is easy to justify their behaviour by saying that they only exercise their free speech rights.⁶⁵ The website altright.com even promotes the book for recruiting children.⁶⁶

Primarily designed as a website for anime and Japanese culture fans in which they could discuss these topics in English, 4chan was a huge success. Over the next ten years, 4chan has expanded significantly, and today it has “some of the best and some of the worst content available online.”⁶⁷ Famous LOLcats, as well as similar memes, have almost "ruined the Internet" with their popularity was created here. No wonder this site is so popular. "4chan has been a changing agent in the internet era for well over a decade. Its influenza is vastly understated in the media because 4chan is known as the place for misogyny, racism and paedophilia. Because of this dark side of the site, its influenza often gets shrugged off by the mainstream media. ⁶⁸ " said Fernando Alonso, 4chan expert and *Daily Dot* writer a few years ago. Alonso though admits that 4chan has strong connections with the alt-right community. “It would be too much for 4chan to say that the birthplace of the alt-right community is certainly very close to it - this website is a distinct meeting point and their meeting place. This study shows the extent to which hateful comments on 4chan /pol board, as well as their memes and influence, are genuine.”⁶⁹ 4chan, with its dark humour and love of transgression for its own sake, made it hard to know what political views were genuinely held and what was mere, as they used

⁶³ Mealey, Lexi, *Cyber Sedition: How the Alt-Right Is Challenging Free Speech on the Internet*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/cyber-sedition-how-the-alt-right-is-challenging-free-speech-on-the-internet/> Last accessed 14.9.2019

⁶⁴ King, James, Cohen, Aden, *Alt-Right Recruiting Kids With 'Pokémon Go Nazi Challenge*, Vocativ <https://www.vocativ.com/357002/alt-right-pokemon-go-nazi-challenge/index.html> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁶⁵ Mealey, Lexi, *Cyber Sedition: How the Alt-Right Is Challenging Free Speech on the Internet*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/cyber-sedition-how-the-alt-right-is-challenging-free-speech-on-the-internet/> Last accessed 14.9.2019

⁶⁶ Evola, Julius, *Alt-Right Essentials: A Handbook For Right-Wing Youth*, <https://altright.com/2017/03/28/altright-essentials-a-handbook-for-right-wing-youth-julius-evola/> Last accessed 12.9.2019..

⁶⁷ Suber-Jenkins, Alic *How 4chan, a small anime forum, became Donald Trump's most rabid fan base*, Mic, <https://www.mic.com/articles/157545/how-4chan-a-small-anime-forum-became-donald-trump-s-most-rabid-fanbase>

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Cf. Hine, Gabriel Emile, Onaolapo Jeremiah, Cristofaro, Emiliano De, Kourtellis Nicolas, Leontiadis, Ilias, Samaras, Riginos, Stringhini, Gianluca, Blackburn, Jeremy, *Kek, Cucks, and God Emperor Trump: A Measurement Study of 4chan's Politically Incorrect Forum and Its Effects on the Web*, 2017, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1610.03452.pdf>

to say, “for the lulz”⁷⁰. “What seemed to hold them all together in their obscurity was a **love of mocking the earnestness and moral self-flattery** of what felt like a tired liberal intellectual conformity.”⁷¹ Maybe mocking is one of the main features of this website. *Schadenfreude*, being happy for someone’s else misery is especially present on these websites. Author of *Kill All the Normies* gives an example of *Kony 2012* as one of the first examples of the very beginning of this narrative. *Kony 2012* was a short Hollywood-like film about the plight of children in Africa has been watched more than 100 000 000 times on YouTube. The countless number of celebrities talked about it, and it raised a significant amount of donation. But soon it suffered a significant backlash from organisations and publications questioning of the producer of the film, *Invisible Children*, including keeping money from donations and only promoting “slacktivism” — the idea that sharing, liking or retweeting will solve a problem. They were called hypocrites, and those who supported them were labelled as false moralists who think that they are helping by only sharing the link to the video, but they only do that to feel good about themselves, without really caring. Of course, they were turned into memes and jokes by the nihilistic and ironic chan culture. Although those traits are more of the less present among everyone on these websites, alt-right online subculture parts are also famous by their opposition to political correctness, feminism, multiculturalism, etc., and its encroachment into their freewheeling world of anonymity and tech.⁷² People often called that these websites should also be more heavily scrutinized, “that companies and platforms hosting hateful or harassing content “should be a liability [for web hosts], just like it is to have a neo-Nazi publication.”⁷³

“The year 2016 may be remembered as the year the media mainstream’s hold over formal politics died,” says Nagle in her *Kill All Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester book. Although she says that for the USA, this can be applied to the countries where western influence is powerful. That year, 4chan was one of the most visited sites in 2016 (1000 most visited according to Alexa forum research). As stated in the above section, the alt-right is a movement that was entirely created and developed on the Internet. However, after some things were so horrid, that could not even be allowed here, most of which were the *Gamergate* campaign⁷⁴, which aimed at humiliating women in video games by

⁷⁰ A term used to justify ridiculous, pointless and occasionally gratuitous behaviour, *Urban Dictionary*-
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=For%20the%20lulz> Last accessed 14.9.2019.

⁷¹ Nagle, Angela, *Kill All Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester, UK, Washington, USA, 2017, p. 8

⁷² Ibid, p. 20

⁷³ Woolley, Samuel, *Computational Propaganda, Jewish-Americans and the 2018 Midterms: The Amplification of Anti-Semitic Harassment Online*, Anti-Defamation League Report, 2018
<https://www.adl.org/media/12028/download>, p. 13 Last accessed 12.9.2019

⁷⁴ VanDerWerff, Emily Todd, *#Gamergate: Here's why everybody in the video game world is fighting*, Vox,
<https://www.vox.com/2014/9/6/6111065/gamergate-explained-everybody-fighting> Last accessed: 5.9.2019

publishing their personal information. 4chan banned gamergates; they were wandering around, trying to find a new place for themselves. One of the 4chan moderators, already mentioned Frederic Brennan, decided to start a new board-based website, 8chan. 8chan was founded in January 2015, and Brennan himself stated that he did not care about the women attacked by gamergates nor about gamergates – he only wanted to lure them to 8chan, because he wanted to popularise it. When even this site banned gamergates, the wandering group found a new haven - 8chan, imageboard based website too, but with incredibly more radical bunch of people who started jogging created the now-famous eugenics boards , killing all the man-made and naughty, makes memes and jokes, among which are "pop them in the oven" pictures with Hitler, or commenting that girl beheaded by ISIS “got what was coming” and that “she deserved no tear from white man”.⁷⁵

Gathering *Gamergate* supporters was a perfect start that alt-right online subculture could wish for. *Gamergate* was an alt-right reaction to feminist critiques of video games and the feeling “that a ‘pure’ or ‘perfect’ gamer culture and identity must be defended from queer, non-white and feminists can be easily extended to a broader point about defending “white western civilisation” from “invading” immigrants.⁷⁶ Games are one of the quicker ways for radicalisation. Gamer PewDiePie, second most followed YouTuber, is famous among the member of this community for his controversies.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ WayBackMachine, *8ch.net*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160102165607/http://8ch.net/n/res/250135.html> Last visited 16.9.2019

⁷⁶ Khan, Rumi, *The Alt-Right as Counterculture: Memes, Video Games and Violence*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/alt-right-counterculture/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

⁷⁷ Gurwin, Gabe, *YouTube star PewDiePie in hot water over use of racial slur*, Digital Trends, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/gaming/pewdiepie-racial-slur-firewatch-developer/> Last accessed 12.9.2019

It is understandable why such websites became a haven for this fringe subculture. Going public and questioning the current system or asking question became too difficult because of



“social justice warrior” as members of this community call liberals and everyone who gets easily offended or show empathy or willingness to fight for a better world. Recruiting a new member, thus, became impossible. People could get fired for even trying to express their opinions vaguely, and they understand that need to pretend that they are fine by the

things many of them sadly were not – such as immigration, feminism, gay rights, minorities. They could not be honest on the internet too – their attitudes are most often forbidden to post comments on the social networks, from which they are most often expelled. No wonder why, when they find lookalikes, were so eager to talk and why these websites bloomed. (Picture 2) Their “oppressed” liberal surroundings produced a breeding ground for an online counterattack of mockery, and charismatic figures like Milo Yiannopolous only add fuel to the fire. It is easy to understand this appeal.

There are now a thousand nameless “anons” (short for *Anonymous*) eager to spread racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic images and screeds under the guise of edgy mocking meme culture.⁷⁸ Alt-right online subculture members will very often point that most of their conversation is just a joke and that those should not be taken literally. They are doing it only to shake the rusty oldie attitudes of older generations. Of course, some of them are probably only joking, but others are more serious. What better cover than humour or “taboo-breaking” argument? “Dangerously bright” people unafraid of taboo topics is how they describe themselves.⁷⁹

Among the online alt-right online subculture’s frequent places of getting the information is the *Breitbart*. *Breitbart* is a news portal, co-founded by Steve Branon, later the senior

⁷⁸ Hodge, Edwin, Hallgrimsdottir, Helga, *Same tune, different venue – the ideology of white supremacist terrorism*, The University of Auckland. [https://www.thebiga.org/2019/03/25/same-tune-different-venue-the-ideology-of-white-](https://www.thebiga.org/2019/03/25/same-tune-different-venue-the-ideology-of-white)

Picture 2. *What is the alt-right?* Photo credit: www.tolerance.org

⁷⁹ Young, Sally, *You can't whitewash the alt-right's bigotry*, *The Federalist*, <https://thefederalist.com/2016/04/14/you-cant-whitewash-the-alt-rights-bigotry/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

consultant and chief strategist to President Donald Trump. Although the website is not alt-right in itself, but rather a news portal, its inclinations are apparent, including the fact that the site has a manifesto of the alt-right written by Yiannopoulos and Bokhari, another two famous members of the alt-right online subculture. They both worked for *Breitbart*, and they wrote a famous piece where they strongly defended the alt-right community and explained it from their point of view.⁸⁰

Frederick Brannon, founder and former owner of the 8chan lately has said that he is sorry for ever found that kind of website. “Shut the site down. It’s not doing the world any good. It’s a complete negative to everybody except the users that are there. And you know what? It’s negative to them, too. They just don’t realize it.”⁸¹ Brennan explains that he founded it because he believes in complete freedom of speech, without any censoring - which 8chan did - an administrator could be a full libertarian when it comes to free speech on the internet. Nothing should be prohibited (unless if something is not permitted by law, like child porn, but those boundaries were often broken). 8chan was, therefore, the place where the killer from New Zealand set up his manifesto where the crowd cheered and excitedly watched his live-stream. The fact that Brenton Tarrant is praised as a star among 8chan users and that everyone there talk about “beating his score“ (meaning: the number of people he killed) and the fact that, after Tarrant, two more people have posted their “manifestos” there and then go out to carry attacks which led to a death of 23 people led to the terminating the services for this website and calling Jim Watkins, the current owner, for a hearing before Congress. The site still pops up on the dark web, but it is inactive for most of the time. 4chan still exist and, on its part where alt-right online subculture is present, there is a near-total dehumanisation of victims of terror attacks - and everyone else. They laugh at everyone, and there are no pardons or feelings for the victims. For example, no matter how many accusations of famous for something like rape turn out to be accurate, it is enough to have one that turns out to be false (or not even false – just not entirely right) to anger those people so they question the attitude of *believe the victim* discourse and mock everyone. Author of *Kill the Normies* brilliantly puts what the main factor of why this culture developed in the way it did was. “After crying wolf throughout these years, calling everyone from saccharine pop stars to Justin Trudeau, a ‘white supremacist’ and everyone who wasn’t *With Her* a sexist, the real wolf eventually arrived, in the form of the openly white nationalist alt-right who hid among an online army of ironic in-joke trolls.”⁸² Alt-right online

⁸⁰ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo, *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁸¹ Roose, Kevin, ‘*Shut the Site Down, Says the Creator of 8chan, a Megaphone for Gunmen*, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/technology/8chan-shooting-manifesto.html> Last accessed 17.9.2019

⁸² Nagle, Angela, *Kill all Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester, UK, Washington, USA, 2017, p. 50

subculture surely gives “clever parody of the inane hysteria and faux-politics of liberal Internet-culture.”⁸³ Memes and ambiguous language became the standard mode of address for a whole host of right-leaning organisations and personalities.⁸⁴

Other affiliations within far-right also started to use this “humour” method. As mentioned above, stormfront.org is different, but lately, they also started with those campaigns, seeing how successful they are. “Stormer Troll Army” was also behind several harassment campaigns. Their blog, *Daily Shoah* podcast (named after the Holocaust)—serves as an example of the alt-right’s youthful, troll humour in action.⁸⁵ Stormfront and board websites still differ – the first one has a community of people who are “being supportive of each other and building individual relationships. But on 8chan, most people don’t ever take the time to make a login and just use a random anon ID on every login.”⁸⁶ Even people outside of western countries used it – even ISIS with its joking #AllEyesOnISIS campaign, one of many that proved very successful when it comes to recruiting their prey - youth.⁸⁷

1.3. Most influential persons within alt-right

As said above, this is not a unique group of people who have leadership. The Alt-Right has not coalesced around any individual or group and probably will not do that soon. However, like any movement, it is not immune to having its own “stars” or people who are at one point influential and present. Alt-right online subculture also has plenty of them. Some of their role models do not consider themselves as alt-right members, as the current American president, the influence of the other with their theories and papers, like Curtis Yarvin with his *Dark Enlightenment* theory and the third group are the “stars” of a movement, like New Zealand killer Brenton Tarrant. One of the most interesting people within the movement is **Milo Yiannopolous**, young, edgy public speaker and commentator who worked for abovementioned *Breitbart*. He has an interesting background – he is married to an African American man, but he is against people with same-sex orientation, he has a Jewish background, but he supports this anti-Jewish community and uses comments such as “Kristal” (a reference to a Cristal Night). He

⁸³ Nagle, Angela, *Kill all Normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right*, Zero Books, Winchester, UK, Washington, USA, 2017, p. 12

⁸⁴ Woods, Suzanne Heather, Hahner, Leslie A. *Make America Meme Again: The Rhetoric of the Alt-Right (Frontiers in Political Communication)*, Peter Lang, New York, USA, 2019, p. 211

⁸⁵ Teaching Tolerance, *Toolkit for "What Is the 'Alt-Right'?" Test your knowledge of "alt-right" facts, terms and influencers*, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/toolkit-for-what-is-the-alt-right> Last accessed 15.9.2019

⁸⁶ Bevensee, Amy, *The meme politics of white supremacy: how does fascist radicalisation happen on the internet?* University of Auckland, <https://www.thebigq.org/2019/05/23/the-meme-politics-of-white-supremacy-how-does-fascist-radicalisation-happen-on-the-internet/> Last accessed: 12.9.2019

⁸⁷ Maher, Shiraz, Carter, Joseph, *Analysing the ISIS Twitter storm*, WarOnTheRock, <https://Warontherocks.Com/2014/06/Analyzing-The-Isis-Twitter-Storm/> Last accessed 12.9.2019.

became famous and one of the central figures of alt-right after he supported of *Gamergate* community. Milo mocks Islam, immigration, women, social justice and it is a big Trump supporter, calling him "My daddy" and his speech tour "Dangerous Faggots"⁸⁸. He loves attention, and his *edgy* language and political incorrectness made him a star of the young alt-right community. His hate speech got him banned on the biggest social networks- Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, as well as crowdfunding *Patreon*.⁸⁹ His vocabulary is extremely politically incorrect, and he is extremely vulgar. Milo co-authored a piece on *Breitbart*, *An Establishment conservatives guide to the alt-right*⁹⁰ in which he strongly defended the community as being "dangerously bright" and that they only provoke an official mainstream that is endlessly boring. "Generation Trump, the alt-right peoples, the people who like me, they're not anti-Semites," Milo says in that paper. "They don't care about Jews. I mean, they may have some assumptions about things, how the Jews run everything; well, we do. How the Jews run the banks; well, we do. How the Jews run the media; well, we do. They're right about all that stuff... It's a fact, this is not in debate. It's a statistical fact (...) It's just a fact. It's not anti-Semitic to point out statistics..."⁹¹ He continues how the alt-right online subculture is against political correctness - but, it is very unclear what is the difference between freedom to be politically incorrect and to be racist, as Milo is, whether he admits it or not. Banished from the big social media, Milo currently gathers his online community exists on *Telegram*, an encrypted network where he has around 20 000 followers.

Richard Spencer created the term 'alt-right' nine years ago, which is an abbreviation of the word 'alternative right'. *Alternative Right* was the title of a website magazine he founded, but he also gave meaning to the word. The idea of an alternative to conservatism that will be far more right movement started after the neo-conservative and paleoconservative critics from Paul Gottfried that mainstream conservatism is to close liberalism. Spenser took it to the far-right – traditional conservatives, not even the paleoconservatives and neo-conservatives are not that associated with white supremacy ideologies as the alt-right was⁹². The alt-right was not widespread until the 2016 elections and their connections with presidential candidate Donald

⁸⁸ Ian, Janis, *The Boy Who Calls Trump 'Daddy'*, Huffington Post, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-boy-who-calls-trump-daddy_b_5894ab95e4b02bbb1816b998 Last accessed 11.9.2019

⁸⁹ *Patreon* previously forbid 8chan's then-owner from the website, but Brennan then opened a page on *Patreon* „Making videos of Hachi the cat“ and continue to raise thousands of dollars before the account was shut. *Knowyourmeme*, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/sites/8chan>

⁹⁰ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo, *An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right*, *Breitbart* <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁹¹ The Rubin Report, *On Donald Trump, Censorship, and Free Speech | Milo Yiannopoulos | POLITICS* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiAOP9iELAA> Last accessed 2.9.2019.

⁹² Berry, Damon, *What is the alt-right*, The University of Auckland <https://www.thebigq.org/2019/04/04/what-is-the-alt-right/> Last accessed 18.9.2019

Trump. Spencer is a vocal Trump supporter, and he organises maybe the most prominent white supremacist's conferences in the world, where people shout "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory!"⁹³ He is not funny and edgy, trollish and humorous represent or of alt-right as Milo is, he is more serious, but his beliefs fully match those of alt-right online subculture.

Another prominent face of the alt-right movement is **Curtis Yarvin**. Yarvin does not consider himself as a member of alt-right; he finds himself to be identitarian⁹⁴. He held an *Unqualified Reservations* blog under the name Mencius Moldbug and created a new ideology called Reactionary Enlightenment (sometimes dark enlightenment). His ideas are, though, very similar to the alt-right ideas and they overlap significantly. "Democracy is — as most writers before the 19th century agreed — an ineffective and destructive system of government," he writes on his blog. Moldbug does not like the term "democracy" at all. He calls it "demotism" or rule of the people, of the mob, and for him, former Soviet bloc, Nazism, fascism and democratic countries are in the same basket. He even supports feudalism and slavery, and his movement is, although "edgy", somewhat more elitist than the alt-right movement. In his modern feudalism, kingdoms would instead look like corporations, with CEOs as sovereigns.⁹⁵ **Steve Bannon**, co-founder and chief executive of *Breitbart*, was in touch with Curtis Yarvin while Bannon was chief strategist for Trump⁹⁶. Bannon praised "European "forefathers" who kept Islam "out of the world." President Trump, meanwhile, has made the metaphor of immigrant invasion literal by vowing to build a wall.⁹⁷ Bannon himself called Breitbart "platform for alt-rights".⁹⁸ Other famous inspirations for alt-right movement are **Andrew Anglin**, founder of Daily Stormer magazine and "meme-lover", the user of 4chan, **Mike Cernovich**, an American celebrity, man's right activist and anti-feminist (although he doesn't consider himself to be alt-right). Alt-right inspirational figures such as **Tarrant** will be further explained in the second section of this paper).

⁹³ The Atlantic, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVeZ0_Lhazw Last accessed 12.9.2019

⁹⁴ Willison, Jason, *With links to the Christchurch attacker, what is the Identitarian Movement?* The Guardian,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/28/with-links-to-the-christchurch-attacker-what-is-the-identitarian-movement> Last accessed: 14.9.2019

⁹⁵ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo, *An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart
<https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/>
Last accessed 18.9.2019

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Williams, Thomas Chatterton, *The French origins of "You will not replace us"*
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/the-french-origins-of-you-will-not-replace-us>
Last accessed 12.9.2019.

⁹⁸ Posner, Sarah, *How Donald Trump's New Campaign Chief Created an Online Haven for White Nationalists*, Mother Jones,
<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/stephen-bannon-donald-trump-alt-right-breitbart-news/>
Last accessed 11.9.2019

1.4. Alt-right language: “shitposting”, memes, “trolling” and terminology

“These young rebels, a subset of the alt-right, aren’t drawn to it because of an intellectual awakening, or because they’re instinctively conservative. Ironically, they’re drawn to the alt-right for the same reason that young Baby Boomers were drawn to the New Left in the 1960s: because it promises a fun, transgression, and a challenge to social norms they just don’t understand.”⁹⁹

The origin of the word "meme" is very interesting. The creator of the word meme is Richard Dawkins, famous science-promoter and an evolutionary biologist who came with this term in his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene" in which he says "Most of what is unusual about a man can be summed up in one word,". "Culture."¹⁰⁰ "I think that a new kind of replicator has recently emerged on this very planet," Dawkins writes. "It is staring us in the face. It is still in its infancy, still drifting clumsily about in its primaevial "soup, but already it is achieving evolutionary change at a rate that leaves the old gene panting far behind. The new soup is the soup of human culture."¹⁰¹

Dawkins needed a word to describe what he was talking. He liked the *mimeme*, Greek word meaning imitation. He landed on a meme.¹⁰², a word that rimes with a gene. Although memes are very often made to be funny, they don't have to be. Memes can be anything – the meme is simply an image, video, piece of text – the only condition is that it is spread via the internet. When sharing, a meme can often change (exactly like Dawkins had in mind). Richard Dawkins agrees although he came up with this word even before the existence of the Internet "It is anything that goes viral."¹⁰³ The meme is *culture gene*. "They may seem basic, but from a linguistic point of view, they're surprisingly sophisticated."¹⁰⁴ The first meme ever created was a smiley emoticon.

Far-right figures became extremely skilled at using the internet to create the outrage of the mainstream media through the online practice of *trolling*. Trolling is intentional behaviour,

⁹⁹ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo, *An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right>

Last accessed 18.9.2019

¹⁰⁰ Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford, USA, 1976, p. 136

¹⁰¹ Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford, USA, 1976, p. 149

¹⁰² Mayer, Johanna, *The Origin Of The Word 'Meme': What does LOLcats have to do with evolutionary biology?* Science Friday, <https://www.sciencefriday.com/articles/the-origin-of-the-word-meme/> Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ The Conversation, *The surprising academic origins of memes*, <https://theconversation.com/the-surprising-academic-origins-of-memes-90607> Last accessed 13.9.2019

statements or action for upsetting or offending the target. It is “I am only kidding” behaviour. Yiannopolous says in *Dark Establishments’ Guide*: “1488ers¹⁰⁵ are the equivalent of the Black Lives Matter¹⁰⁶ supporters who call for the deaths of policemen, or feminists who unironically want to #KillAllMen,” he and Bokhari argue. **“For the meme brigade, it’s just about having fun. They have no real problem with race-mixing, homosexuality, or even diverse societies: it’s just fun to watch the mayhem and outrage that erupts when those secular shibboleths are openly mocked,”** highlight Bokhari and Yiannopoulos. Those people on *Stormfront* are maybe severe, but on /pol (both 4chan and 8chan boards) it is all about having fun.

Use of humour to deal with serious issues is nothing new. Humour helps with the normalisation of difficult situations and problems. Author of the book *A decade of dark humour: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire shaped post 9/11 America* explains the rise of humour after 9/11. She was shocked how people make jokes in the first days after the tragedy, including her African American friends with jokes such as “Arab is new Nigger, thank God we don’t have towels on our heads - all the attention will be put on them”¹⁰⁷ and South Park episodes. She writes about how humour works as a defence mechanism in these situations. Similar with right after 9/11, when people start, half-serious, half-joking, to talk about “inside job” and “Jews did it”, the laughing post today include posting anti-Islamic “remove kebab” or anti-Semite “Pop ’em in the Oven!” memes, “Jews control the media” conspiracy theories and Bosnian genocide songs and jokes.¹⁰⁸ The alt-right subculture language is a language of total and constant internal war. They do have community, a different kind than the rest of subcultures because they are tearing each other down all the time and find it funny. They are super self-centred and competitive. Examples of their jokes are competitiveness talking about who will “get the higher score” meme in which they encourage each other to kill more people¹⁰⁹ than Tarrant. Many of their ideas championed by these groups are similar to those propagated by the KKK of the past, but, KKK or Nazis are not *cool* in a way that alt-right is.

¹⁰⁵ 1488 is a combination of two popular white supremacist numeric symbols. The first symbol is 14, which is shorthand for the "14 Words" slogan: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." The second is 88, which stands for "Heil Hitler. Source: Anti-Defamation League’s hate symbols database <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/1488>

¹⁰⁶ Black Lives Matter is an activist movement started in African-American community in US. Find more: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

¹⁰⁷ Green, Viveca, Gournelos, Ted, *A decade of dark humour: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire shaped post 9/11 America*, University Press of Mississippi, USA, 2011, p. 48

¹⁰⁸ O’Connor, Brendon, *White Supremacy Is Bigger Than 8Chan*, The Nation, <https://www.thenation.com/article/christchurch-internet-white-supremacy/> Last accessed 8.9.2019.

¹⁰⁹ Bevenssee, Amy, *The meme politics of white supremacy: how does fascist radicalisation happen on the internet?* University of Auckland, <https://www.thebigq.org/2019/05/23/the-meme-politics-of-white-supremacy-how-does-fascist-radicalisation-happen-on-the-internet> Last accessed: 12.9.2019

Anti-Defamation League has a database of hate symbols¹¹⁰ among which they are a lot of those that alt-right members use: such as 9 (9%, as supremacist, says that there is 9% of whites in the world and that the whites are most endangered race) or OK symbol, Fourteen words or **Pepe the Frog**.



Picture 3. Screenshot of Trump’s Twitter Page on 13.10.2015

and 8chan, "which has many users who delight in creating racist memes and imagery, and a subset of Pepe memes would come into existence that centred on racist, anti-Semitic, or other bigoted topics."¹¹¹ Furie filled a couple of lawsuits against right-wingers who profited from Pepe meme and called for “bring Pepe back to "normies" after being abducted by white nationalists.” He uses word *normies* ironically. *Normies* are a derogatory term for "agreeable, mainstream members of society who have no knowingly abhorrent political views or unsavoury hobbies.”¹¹² Another “troll-created” symbol is “**OK**” sign. “OK” sign became alt-right symbol through 2017 online campaign.¹¹³ When Brenton Tarrant was arrested, he showed that symbol in front of cameras – the community understood why.

Some of their symbols became one because of the trolling. Pepe the Frog is a perfect example. Created by cartoonist Matt Furie a decade ago and popularised by the stars such as Katy Perry, Pepe was copied and spread throughout the internet as a meme adopted especially by 4chan. It is a simple photo of a green frog, with “Feels good, man!” written below. But, soon, Pepe's innocence was over when people started to share it with small variations made by alt-right and dominantly present on /pol and similar boards. When then-presidential candidate Donald Trump tweeted meme of himself as Pepe (Picture 3), that was it. Images of Pepe in Nazi uniform or as a laughing Jew watching the twins became a real hit. ADL says that, although Frog itself is not racist, on websites such as 4chan

¹¹⁰ Anti-Defamation League, *Hate symbols database*, <https://www.adl.org/hatesymbolsdatabase> Last accessed 18.9.2019

¹¹¹ Anti-Defamation League, *Hate symbols database*, <https://www.adl.org/hatesymbolsdatabase> Last accessed 18.9.2019

¹¹² Nuzzi, Olivia, *How Pepe the Frog Became a Nazi Trump Supporter and Alt-Right Symbol*, Daily Beast, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-pepe-the-frog-became-a-nazi-trump-supporter-and-alt-right-symbol> Last accessed 13.9.2019.

¹¹³ Anti-Defamation League, *How the “OK” Symbol Became a Popular Trolling Gesture*,

These obscure websites share a bunch of memes with racist jokes.¹¹⁴ Members know how to change meme's original context. One of the good examples is **NPC Wojak**. NPC Wojak was created for AI gamer, i.e. non-playable characters in video games that are controlled by computers. In September 2018, 4chan and Reddit users began creating fictional accounts, mocking liberals by referring to them as NPCs, meaning people with no critical thinking, bound by unchangeable programming, and manipulated by others and that is now the context of this meme.¹¹⁵ *“Deplorable” Satire: Alt-Right Memes, White Genocide Tweets, and Redpilling Normies* book explains **how alt-right weaponises irony to attract and radicalise potential supporters, challenge progressive ideologies and institutions, redpill normies, and create a toxic counter-public**. Yiannopoulos and Bukhari argue in the *Dark Enlightenment* guide that all of that is not that serious. “Just as the kids of the 60s shocked their parents with promiscuity, long hair and rock’n’roll, so too do the alt-right’s young meme brigades shock older generations with outrageous caricatures (..) Are they actually bigots? No more than death metal devotees in the 80s were Satanists. For them, it’s simply a means to fluster their grandparents.”¹¹⁶ But, on the contrary, what Milo and other members of the community say, it cannot be denied that in recent years, communities on 4chan and Reddit¹¹⁷ have radicalised a significant number of young, mostly white men.¹¹⁸

Every-day expression of alt-right is the word **redpill**. Redpill is a verb created from the literal term “red pill”, analogy from movie Matrix, when the main character, Neo, is offered to choose between red and blue pill. If he chooses red, he will see how World function, if he chooses blue, he will stay in delusion. Alt-righters use it as a noun, i.e. “can you redpill me on this/that”, meaning “can you explain me, tell me the truth about this/that”.

When it comes to the outsiders, besides already mentioned *normies*, very often the term is snowflakes and SJW. **Snowflakes** are young liberals, worried about social justice and equality, as well as feelings of others. Alt-right online subculture's members label them as “easily offended” and mock with every expression of emotions. A very similar term is “**SJW**” short

<https://www.adl.org/blog/how-the-ok-symbol-became-a-popular-trolling-gesture?fbclid=IwAR0q3FUm6fsCVO2VhbSWDpoY0m3uiRA5ry5y7RbSJonDO1RPi72eljyaLds> Last accessed 13.9.2019

¹¹⁴ Zannettou S, Caulfield T, Blackburn J, Cristofaro Emilliano De, Sirivianos M, Stringhini G, Suarez-Tangil G, *On the Origins of Memes by Means of Fringe Web Communities*, 2018, pp. 11-16

¹¹⁵ Knowyourmeme, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/npc-wojak> Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹¹⁶ Bokhari, Allum, Yiannopoulos, Milo *An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right*, Breitbart <https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/>

¹¹⁷ Reddit function on similar principle as imageboard websites, but it is mainstream and much stricter regarding the content it allows. <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/content-policy> Last accessed 11.9.2019

¹¹⁸ Wilkinson, Abi, *We need to talk about the online radicalisation of young, white men*, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/15/alt-right-manosphere-mainstream-politics-breitbart> Last accessed 13.9.2019.

from social justice warrior, how they label politically and socially active individuals on the liberal spectre. The derogatory word is also “cuckservatives” - insulting term for mainstream conservatives. Because of so many strange terms and difficult to understand discourse and members’ relations, *The Guardian* will be called alt-right as the world where „Big Bang Theory meets Mein Kampf”¹¹⁹ When one knows this terminology, it is easy to distinguish member of this culture from others. Additional words that alt-right online subculture uses (these words are widespread and can be used by someone who is not alt-right to, but they are very much present on 4chan and 8chan alt-right’s part) are **alphas** male who have dominance, as opposed to more subservient, weak **betas**. Often the nauseous word is **dindu (nuffin)** a mocking form “didn’t do nothing” for mocking African American Vernacular English, and those of them killed by law enforcement, questioning their innocence. As mentioned above, on the slices of 4chan and 8chan, there is a near-total “dehumanisation of victims of terror attacks - and everyone else. Alt-right activists have used this irony as both a sword and a shield - to poke their liberal enemies who take their words at face value and to deny responsibility for egging on murderers and white nationalist terrorists.”¹²⁰ **The confederate flag** is very much in use, as well as **thrash dove** (similar story as one with Pepe the Frog). To create even more chaos for outsiders, member of the community posts their long comments “for the lulz” or “shitposting”. **Shitposting** is



backfilling with a lot of content, aggressively and without any meaning, only to make that current post pointless and unusable or to distract from its intent. Doing something “**for the lulz**” means doing it only for fun, no matter how ridiculous, stupid or pointless something is. They will often use it as an argument for saying something offensive. and say how they did not mean any actual harm, but the consequences for the victims are real. The chans are places where racial slurs, violence and suicide are not an exception but form the original language by which they talk to one another. But, it seems that a sense of unity among them exists.

Picture 4. Solider from music video *Od Bihaća do Petrovca sela* and “remove kebab” meme.
Source: Screenshot of a YouTube video

Tarrant’s attack, his manifesto and complete behaviour were full of the language of alt-right online subculture. His choice of music was a very subtle way to show how familiar he is with this

¹¹⁹ Fraser Giles, *The alt right is old racism for the tech-savvy generation* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/aug/25/the-alt-right-is-old-racism-for-the-tech-savvy-generation> Last accessed 14.9.2019

¹²⁰ Wending Mike, *Christchurch shootings: The rising new threat of far-right violence*, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-47596446> Last accessed 13.9.2019.

world. Obscure 1992 song taped during the war in Bosnia and titled “*Od Bihaća to Petrovca sela*” or “*Bog je Srbin*” that is almost unknown even in Bosnia and in Serbia, is mega-popular among the members his community almost from the very beginning. This song has more than 100 variations, far most popular is the one with original music and lyrics but titled “Serbia strong” or “**remove kebab**”. The “kebab” that is “being removed” refers to the war in Yugoslavia and killing of Bosnian Muslims but has wider meaning – advocating for the extermination of Muslims in western countries or restoring Istanbul to Christian rule. The simple Music video shows four people in military uniform playing and singing. “The audience, who did not necessarily understand the words or context of this video, was fascinated by the bizarre footage of dead-eyed soldier playing an energetic music on the accordion, a contrast so brutally surreal that it more like a scene from a Cohen film than footage of war criminals, some of whom were even sentenced for genocide after the war.”¹²¹(Picture 4) Meme was originally popularised by players of *Paradox Interactive*’s video game. “This pattern of memes starting ironically is a common trend among the more sardonic corners of the internet, but by hiding behind a mask of “edgy” or “spicy” memes, content played out for good fun can hide true messaging.”¹²² From Gamergate to 4chan, it is clear that video game culture and obscure memes run through the veins of far-right discourse and organising.¹²³

Alt-right members not interested in classical religions (though they show interest in Nordic mythology) they formed their own. Their deity is **Kek**. Kek too started with games – Korean players, because of the difference in language, read LOL (famous abbreviation for Laughing out Loud) as KEK. When someone on the 4chan figured it out that Kek was also ancient Egyptian god, they seize the opportunity. They use words “Kekistan” and “kek people” and often used it with a picture of Pepe the Frog. Kek is the “god of chaos”. “In many ways, Kek is the apotheosis of the bizarre alternative reality of the alt-right: at once absurdly juvenile, transgressive, and racist, as well as reflecting a deeper, pseudo-intellectual purpose that lends it an appeal to young ideologues who fancy themselves, deep thinkers. It dwells in that murky area they often occupy, between satire, irony, mockery, and dangerous ideology; Kek can be both a big joke to pull on liberals and a reflection of the alt-right’s self-image as serious agents of chaos in modern society.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Klindžić Dora, *Kako je internet regrutirao novu generaciju fašista*, Bilten, <https://www.bilten.org/?p=27257#> Last accessed 15.9.2019

¹²² Khan, Rumi, *The Alt-Right as Counterculture: Memes, Video Games and Violence*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/alt-right-counterculture/> Last accessed 17.9.2019

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Neiwert David, *What the Kek: Explaining the Alt-Right 'Deity' Behind Their 'Meme Magic'*, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/05/08/what-kek-explaining-alt-right-deity-behind-their-meme-magic> Last accessed 14.9.2019

Islamophobic and other offensive memes are shared as jokes that are not serious. Until, for some people, they are. White supremacy online benefits largely from the ability to introduce racist material through “cloaked” websites gradually. They do that with zero risk – if someone takes them seriously, excellent, and if not – they can always take the “We are only joking, don’t be so sensitive” position. In his manifesto, New Zealand shooter said to his supporters “Create memes, post memes, and spread memes. Memes have done more for the ethno-nationalist movement than any manifesto.”¹²⁵ Memes became one of the most important persuasive channels for the contest and the political intrigue that followed.¹²⁶ Authors of the book *Make America Meme Again: The Rhetoric of the Alt-Right* says that memes have that status “predominately on the role of alt-right” who became a pernicious force during this time.

¹²⁵ *This and further citations from “The Great Replacement” manifesto were downloaded from various sites that posted parts of the manifesto or the document in whole. Since the distribution of the manifesto is prohibited and since websites that upload it work illegally, links to websites from which parts of the manifesto were taken over will not be listed in this work. The same applies for the other manifestos explored in this part of paper.*

¹²⁶ Cf. Woods, Suzanne Heather, Hahner Leslie A. *Make America Meme Again: The Rhetoric of the Alt-Right* (*Frontiers in Political Communication*), Peter Lang, New York, USA, 2019

2. Influence of the alt-right online subculture on current events

The alt-right online subculture became a significant social force in recent years, generating an incredible amount of attention. Radical European movement and established organisation, PEGIDA, for example, started online. With the online presence on Facebook, the protest organisers succeeded in effectively using social networks for the coordination, mobilisation and integration of their support.¹²⁷ Weaponized internet culture is “recruiting a range of trolls and content creators who share platforms with the alt-right to their cause, further aiding their radicalisation process by directing them to echo chambers where highly extreme views are held.”¹²⁸ Memes play a pivotal role in connection with youth.

Researchers measure the influence of social media on Trump’s victory and consider it a very important factor.¹²⁹ Hillary Clinton was not as popular as Trump on the internet. She “committed the cardinal sins of misusing teen slang and adopting youth culture for political gain”¹³⁰ “Trump was meme-able and entertaining, and something like a ban on Muslim immigration would never have been considered before him.”¹³¹

Although alt-right online subculture members view themselves as “cheeky young rebels who post racist slurs and memes just to annoy the pearl-clutching guardians of political correctness”¹³², in 2018, the *Southern Poverty Law Centre* reported that more than 100 deaths were related to the alt-right subculture.¹³³ In the deadliest attack among them, hours before a mass shooter killed 11 people inside the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, he posted

¹²⁷ Vorländer Hans, Herold Maik, Schäller Steven, *PEGIDA and new right-wing Populism in Germany*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland, 2016, p. 26

¹²⁸ Ebner Julia, Davey, Jacob: *The Fringe Insufficiency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, 2017, p.29

¹²⁹ Digital Magazine, *Trump, social media and the first Twitter-based Presidency* <https://www.digitmagazine.com/articles/Trump-Twitter-Based-Presidency> Last accessed 12.9.2019.

¹³⁰ The Conversationist, *How Donald Trump won the 2016 meme wars* <https://theconversation.com/how-donald-trump-won-the-2016-meme-wars-68580> Last accessed 11.9.2019.

¹³¹ Lee Oliver, *Understanding Trump’s Troll Army*, Vice, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bmvnq4/understanding-trumps-troll-army Last accessed 11.9.2019.

¹³² Young Cathy, *You can’t whitewash the alt-right’s bigotry*, The Federalist, <https://thefederalist.com/2016/04/14/you-cant-whitewash-the-alt-rights-bigotry/> Last accessed 14.9.2019

¹³³ Hanks Keegan, Amend Alex, *The alt-right is killing people*, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/20180205/alt-right-killing-people> Last accessed 30.8.2019

an anti-Muslim rant to his account on Gab¹³⁴. In August 2017, hundreds of far-right extremists among which alt-righter like Richard Spencer gather in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the removal of a Confederate statue from a local park under the name “Unite the Right,” the gathering was the most significant and most violent public assembly of white supremacists in decades.¹³⁵

Happenings in Christchurch shocked the whole world, as one sign of the global trend of - “broader rising tide of white nationalist violence and terrorism.”¹³⁶ Additionally, three separate terrorists (after Tarrant) organizing and referencing each other on the platform in less than six months is a pattern, not an accident that has nothing to do with that platform. After what happened in Christchurch (2.1), former owner and founder of 8chan Frederic Brennan expressed deep regrets forever founding it.¹³⁷ After El Paso and Poway (2.3. and 2.4), he gave a telephone interview in which he asked Jim Watkins, current owner, to shut it down, at least for some time, because of the likeness that such attacks happen again and that the reaction needs to be strong. Watkins gave a statement in which he said that he would not shut down this website, as it is only a “white piece of paper” for people to write.¹³⁸ This article in *Forbes* argues how saying 8chan is dangerous and full of potential terrorists “is not some liberal rag, besieged former owner or random feminist on Twitter, this is counter-terrorism experts and researchers including the FBI pointing out 8chan became a national security threat.”¹³⁹

In this part, four case studies will be analysed. They are chosen because all four are somehow connected with the alt-right subculture and they all happened in the last six months. While it cannot be known whether the alt-right online subculture entirely inspires them, the connection exists in all four cases. They are examples of copycat attacks, and their perpetrators share similar ideologies. All four of them shared messages on websites prior to the attack (three of them on 8chan and fourth, because 8chan was shut down, on *Endchan*, website very similar to

¹³⁴ Roose Kevin, *On Gab, an Extremist-Friendly Site, Pittsburgh Shooting Suspect Aired His Hatred in Full*, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/us/gab-robert-bowers-pittsburgh-synagogue-shootings.html> Last accessed 30.8.2019

¹³⁵ Anti-Defamation League, *Two Years Ago, They Marched in Charlottesville. Where Are They Now?* https://www.adl.org/blog/two-years-ago-they-marched-in-charlottesville-where-are-they-now#_edn12 Last accessed 29.8.2019

¹³⁶ Khan Rumi, *The Alt-Right as Counterculture: Memes, Video Games and Violence*, Harvard Political Review, <https://harvardpolitics.com/culture/alt-right-counterculture/>

¹³⁷ McMillan Robert, *After New Zealand Shooting, Founder of 8chan Expresses Regrets*, Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/after-new-zealand-shooting-founder-of-8chan-expresses-regrets-11553130001> Last accessed 3.9.2019

¹³⁸ Gilbert Ben, *The bizarre life of 8chan owner Jim Watkins, the middle-age veteran who decamped to the Philippines and runs a pig farm*, Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/who-owns-8chan-jim-watkins-life-2019-8#why-8chan-its-about-freedom-of-speech-sort-of-4>

¹³⁹ Eordogh Fruzsina, *Why 8chan Had To Be Deleted*, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/fruzsinaeordogh/2019/08/09/why-8chan-had-to-be-deleted/#74e270634abc> Last access 12.9.2019

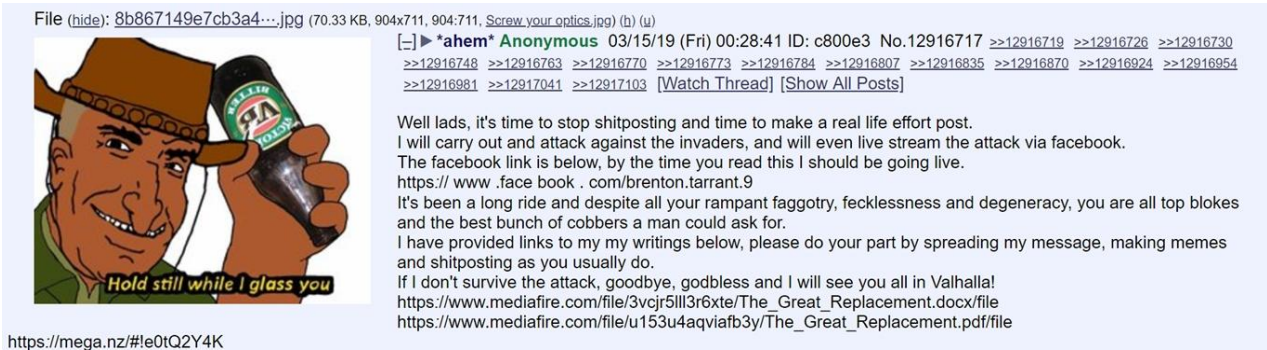
8chan, only much less visited). Three of them shared the manifesto. All four tried to live stream the attack – only one succeeded. All four are currently alive and imprisoned charged for the act of terrorism. All four share alt-right online subculture’s view, and among all four, it is clear how well they are familiar with the alt-right online subculture’s language, as well as their support for alt-right. Those four attacks are Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand, done by Brenton Tarrant, Poway synagogue attack in San Diego, USA, done by John Earnest, El Paso Walmart shooting done by Patrick Crusius, and Norway mosque shooting done by Philip Manshaus.

2.1. Christchurch mosque shootings

The first attack that will be analysed is the attack with the highest death toll - Christchurch mosque shootings. This attack, consisting of two consecutive attacks, happened on 15 March 2019 at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The attacker, **Brenton Tarrant**, a 28-year-old Australian, killed 51 people and wounded 49 in two mosques. This attack was the deadliest shooting in the history of peaceful New Zealand¹⁴⁰. He was charged for 51 murders, 41 attempted murders and for condemning the terrorist attack. Tarrant pleads not guilty on all charges.

Tarrant live-streamed his attack on *Facebook Live*. He was live for 17 minutes before Facebook shut it down – starting with driving to the first mosque, caring for the attack and driving away. More than 5000 people watched his live stream. He then drove to the second mosque, where one of the believers tried to stop his attack. Tarrant eventually left and was arrested around 5 km from the second mosque. He killed 42 at first *Al-Noor* mosque and nine at second, *Linwood Islamic Centre*. The younger victim was three years old, the oldest 77.

Before the attack, he posted a message on 8chan. (Picture 5).



Picture 5. Screenshot of Tarrant’s post on 8chan. Source: 8chan web archive

¹⁴⁰ “An attack in New Zealand would bring to attention the truth of the assault on our civilization, that nowhere in the world was safe, the invaders were in all of our lands, even in the remotest areas of the world and that there was no where left to go that was safe and free from mass immigration,” allegedly said Tarrant in his manifesto.

Tarrant's message with links for his attack and his manifesto proves that he knows the language of the alt-right online subculture excellently. How deep his ties with the far-right community were, however, is still not clear. The photo on his post, showing tanned Caucasian men holding a bottle of Victoria beer and with the title "Hold still while I glass you" was popularised by *The Dingoes*, far-right group in Australia that runs the podcast *The Convict Report*. They did not want to comment on the case. They are banished from almost all platforms, and their podcast does not exist anymore on Clearnet. In his message, Tarrant says that he will "carry out an attack against the invaders" because "it is time to stop shitposting and time to make a real-life effort post". He says that has been on the 8chan for a long time ("it has been a long ride") and that "despite your rampant faggotry, fecklessness and degeneracy, you are all top blokes and the best bunch of cobbers a man can ask for". Insulting one another (often in a funny way) are very often in this community. Tarrant also asks members of the community to continue with spreading his message and "make memes and shitposting as you usually do". His final words are "see you in Valhalla" if he does not survive the attack. Valhalla is a mythical place from Nordic mythology for those who die in combat and are chosen by Odin, Nordic god, to go with him. It is used in far-right language as white supremacists in general often flirt with Nordic mythology.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Weber Shannon, *White Supremacy's Old Gods: The Far Right and Neopaganism*, Political Research Associates, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2018/02/01/white-supremacys-old-gods-the-far-right-and-neopaganism>
Last accessed 16.8.2019.

Tarrant's manifesto that he posted is 74 pages long. The title is "The Great Replacement". That title is the inspiration from Renaud Camus, white nationalist conspiracy



Picture 6. First page of Tarrant's Manifesto.
Source: The Great Replacement

theorist and famous French journalist who uses that phrase to warn against illegal immigration which will cause the replacement of race and that no race is currently endangered like white race.¹⁴²

"The very essence of modernity is the fact that everything—and really everything—can be replaced by something else, which is absolutely monstrous," he said.¹⁴³ Camus distanced himself from Tarrant.¹⁴⁴ The first page of manifesto

(Picture 6) represent "wheel of life" - Odal rune within the "sun wheel" (also used by the white supremacist "Unite the Right" demonstrator in

Charlottesville protest¹⁴⁵) with the principles Tarrant believes in anti-imperialism, environmentalism, responsible markets, addiction-free community, law and order, ethnic autonomy, protection of heritage and culture and workers' right. Tarrant, as many members of far-right, adopts many traditionally leftist principles and beliefs and combine them with far-right views.

His manifesto continues with a poem by a famous American poet, Dylan Thomas, "Do not gentle into that good night". The poem is dedicated to Thomas' dying father and is not connected to the alt-right community. It is probable that the words of this poem "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright; Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light" were inspirational for Tarrant when he puts them in his context. Then, Tarrant writes about birth-rates, starting his manifesto with repeating three times: "it's the birthrates". – "Every day we become fewer in number, we grow older, we grow weaker. In the end, we must return to replacement fertility levels, or it will kill us." Tarrant writes about illegal immigration and links the Wikipedia pages about fertility rates in the world, and the list of countries by future population. "We are experiencing an invasion on a level never seen before in

¹⁴² Williams, Thomas Chatterton, *The French origins of "You will not replace us"*
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/the-french-origins-of-you-will-not-replace-us>
Last accessed 12.9.2019.

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ The National, *Spotlight turns to Europe after Christchurch mosque attacks*
<https://www.thenational.ae/world/oceania/spotlight-turns-to-europe-after-christchurch-mosque-attacks-1.838407>
Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁴⁵ Moses Dirk, *White Genocide" and the Ethics of Public Analysis*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, Routledge, p.1
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623528.2019.1599493>

history. Millions of people pouring across our borders legally. Invited by the state and corporate entities to replace the White people who have failed to reproduce...” Tarrant says. Immigration is worse than low fertility rates, according to Tarrant. “Mass immigration will disenfranchise us, subvert our nations, destroy our communities, destroy our ethnic binds, destroy our cultures, destroy our peoples.” He states: This is white genocide.“

In the second part of his manifesto, he is answering “possible questions” about who he is. He says that he is an ordinary white guy from an ordinary working-class low-income family, that he never had an interest in school and thus he did not attend University. He states that he works as “part-time kebab removalist”. Among the reasons for carrying out the attack Tarrant lists: to show “invaders” “that our lands will never be their lands“; to revenge “the hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by foreign invaders in European lands throughout history, for the enslavement of millions of Europeans taken from their lands by the Islamic slavers, for the thousands of European lives lost to terror attacks throughout European lands, for Ebba Akerlund¹⁴⁶ and to “directly reduce immigration rates to European lands by intimidating and physically removing the invaders themselves”; “to create atmosphere of fear”. He also wants to create conflict on the ownership of firearms in the USA, a conflict he hopes white American will win and that will stop “balkanization” of the USA and ensure the death of “melting pot pipe dream. That will also assure that situation like “the US involvement in Kosovo ever occur again(where US/NATO forces fought beside muslims and slaughtered Christian Europeans attempting to remove these Islamic occupiers from Europe).“

In part “What do you want?” he says: “We must ensure the existence of our people, and a future for white children.” This is the very famous slogan of the alt-right community and far-right in general, popularly called **14 words**. The slogan was created by David Lane, a white supremacist from a terrorist group The Order. For his activities, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He died in prison in 2007.

Tarrant explains that his “wakening” happened during his two-year-long travel across Europe and that two particular events changed his views that peaceful solutions are possible: first, previously mentioned Ebba, and second, French Elections and Macron’s victory over the Marine Le Pen. The situation with France, which is “full of immigrants” was unbearable for Tarrant. “No matter where I travelled, no matter how small or rural the community I visited, the invaders were there. The french people were often in a minority themselves, and the french that were in the streets were often alone, childless or of advanced age. Whilst the immigrants were

¹⁴⁶ Ebba was the 11-year-old girl who was one of the five people killed when 39-year-old in 2017 terrorist attack in Stockholm. The suspect is Uzbek asylum seeker Rakhmat Akilov.

young, energized and with large families and many children.” That was the point when he decided to do something. He said that no group supported his attack and that he is a lone wolf, but that he has blessings from *Knights Templar*.¹⁴⁷ There are some claims that Tarrant was more linked with the extreme right than it seemed in the beginning.¹⁴⁸

Tarrant shares the opinions with the parts of alt-right that claims that do not hate other races *per se* and that they love a variety of nations, just not mixing and “invading”. Tarrant says that he does not hate “a muslim man or woman living in their homelands” but “a muslim man or woman choosing to invade our lands live on our soil and replace our people”. He says that his attack has a racist component, and again states that he is against Islam, immigration, ethnic replacement and cultural replacement. Not ironic at all, he says that the purpose of his attack is to “ensure diverse peoples remain diverse, separate, unique, undiluted in unrestrained in cultural or ethnic expression and autonomy. To ensure that the peoples of the world remain true to their traditions and faiths and do not become watered down and corrupted by the influence of outsiders. The attack was to ensure the preservation of beauty, art and tradition. In my mind a rainbow is only beautiful due to its variety of colours, mix the colours together, and you destroy them all, and they are gone forever, and the end result is far from anything beautiful.”

Tarrant states that he is not Nazi (he admits that he is fascist and that he agrees with Oswald Mosley’s views¹⁴⁹) and the Nazis do not exist for more than 60 years. He calls himself ethno-nationalist as he values the health and well-being of his nation above anything else. Regarding religion, he is not clear whether he is Christian or not. His perfect state is the People’s Republic of China. Tarrant supports Trump, not as a policymaker and leader, but „as a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose“. In it, the author describes the conservative activist Candace Owens¹⁵⁰ as a key influence, but that his biggest inspiration is Andres Breivik. Tarrant wants to stay alive, although he knows he will go to prison until he is killed, released or

¹⁴⁷ Knights Templar are closely associated with Breivik. There are no many information about them. Source: Diggit Magazine, *Andres Breivik and the Knights Templar* <https://www.diggitmagazine.com/papers/anders-behring-breivik-knights-templar>

¹⁴⁸ He donated money twice: to the Austrian far-right group: NBC News, *New Zealand attacker linked with the Austrian far-right group officials*, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/new-zealand-attacker-linked-austrian-far-right-group-officials-n987846> Last accessed 13. 9.2019, and to the French identitarian group: NZ Herald, *Christchurch mosque shootings: Accused gunman donated \$3650 to far-right French group Generation Identity* https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12219616 Last accessed 13.9.2019. He allegedly met with the other far-right groups during his trip across Europe: Independent, *Brenton Tarrant: Suspected New Zealand attacker ‘met extreme right-wing groups’ during Europe visit, according to security sources* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/brenton-tarrant-new-zealand-attacker-far-right-europe-gunam-shooting-a8825611.html> Last accessed 13.9.2019

¹⁴⁹ Sir Oswald Mosley is famous British politician, often linked with fascist ideas. He was the leader of *Union Movement* and he believed in European nation. More information: <https://www.oswaldmosley.com/>

¹⁵⁰ Candace Owens is an American conservative commentator. She has some far-right views, supports Donald Trump and uses harsh language, but is far from being alt-right member. She distanced herself from Christchurch shooter.

“enough time passes, and the greater situation is an obvious defeat of our people. Then I will commit suicide, happy in the knowledge I did my best to prevent the death of my race.” But, in case he is released, he also expects eventual Nobel Peace prize”.¹⁵¹

Tarrant, knowing that many connect video games with alt-right and violence, ironically states in his manifesto that “Spyro the dragon 3 taught me ethno-nationalism. Fortnite trained me to be a killer and to floss on the corpses of my enemies.”

Tarrant cites one more song in his manifesto – “The Beginnings“ by Rudyard Kipling. This song is about English people and how it is sad that they transformed from naturally peacefully people to becoming filled with hate. But Tarrant replaces the word “English” with word “Saxon”¹⁵², and the context of the song is changed. Kipling's original poem is in the context of anti-German sentiment among the English public during World War I. But, altered version is perfect as an anthem for white nationalist and Neo-Nazi groups, with verses “It was not part of their blood, it came to them very late, With long arrears to make good, when the Saxon began to hate.” In the next part of his manifesto, he turns to the specific group of people and send them messages – to conservativist that conservatism is dead because nothing today is worth consuming, to Christians, calling for a Holy War (“What would Pope Urban II do?¹⁵³), to Marxist and Communists whom he hates because he is anti-Egalitarian and will never come to terms with them, to Turks¹⁵⁴ that they can live “on the east side of the Bosphorus”, but they will be destroyed if they try to take “European land”. “We are coming for Constantinople, and we will destroy every mosque and minaret in the city. The Hagia Sophia will be free of minarets and Constantinople will be rightfully christian owned once more.” In the next part of his manifesto, he uses quotes from Oswald Mosely, blames “weak European man” for what is happening and lists Wikipedia articles about the “British Rape cases” done by Muslims, as well as abuses in Germany, Finland and Australia. Tarrant is vocal against individualism and nihilism, which he considers responsible for the decay of western civilisation. Decay is visible in “higher level of divorces, lower birth rates, increased number of suicides and drug users, “paedophile politicians, paedophile priests and paedophile pop stars, demonstrating to all the true depravity of our age”, total removal of man from nature, culture and values. Tarrant calls for global war and killing of

¹⁵¹ Tarrant “compares” himself with Nelson Mandela, and says that he “do not just expected to be released, but I also expect an eventual Nobel Peace prize .As was awarded to the Terrorist Nelson Mandela once his own people achieved victory and took power. I expect to be freed in 27 years from my incarceration, the same number of years as Mandela, for the same crime.”

¹⁵² In slang, “Saxon” can mean “white person”.

¹⁵³ Pope Urban II is famous for ordering the first crusades and for “Deus volt” or “God wills it”, sentence often used by white supremacist. Source: History, *Pope Urban II orders first crusades* <https://www.history.co.uk/this-day-in-history/27-november/pope-urban-ii-orders-the-first-crusades> Last accessed: 13.9.2019

¹⁵⁴ It could perhaps also mean: to all Muslims, not just Turks.

world's leaders, especially targeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and London Mayor Sadiq Khan. He admits that he is a populist, but he says that every true movement is populist movement.

In the next part, he explains his beliefs in al-right methods of mixing humour and violence. **“Whilst we may use edgy humour and memes in the vanguard stage, and to attract a young audience, eventually we will need to show the reality of our thoughts and our more serious intents and wishes for the future. For now, we appeal to the anger and black comedic nature of the present, but eventually, we will need to show the warmth and genuine love we have for our people,”** Tarrant states. He knows that “post-truth” society phenomena we all live in, and he says: **“Stop trying to persuade the general population with statistics, charts, tables and figures. A one-point-seven percentage point difference may mean something to a few, but an ingeniously worded expression or brilliantly crafted poster will convince the many.”**

“Humans are emotional, they are driven by emotions, guided by emotions and seek emotion expressions and experiences. (...) Create memes, post memes, and spread memes. Memes have done more for the ethno-nationalist movement than any manifesto.”

Tarrant continues with his numerous advice to “soldiers” how to fight and claim back what “belongs to them”. The final poem he cites is *Invictus*, features in Section IV. *Invictus* means "unconquerable". The poem was written by William Ernest Henley, about showing might in the face of adversity and will to survive in the face of severe challenges. His final words are “Goodbye, god bless you all and I will see you in Valhalla¹⁵⁵. EUROPA RISES. The last page of his manifesto a “collage of photographs of young white mothers and small children, men in the forest and dressed as heavily armed soldiers: symbols of (white) flourishing and assertion.”¹⁵⁶



His live-stream video cannot be found on the Internet and is forbidden to possess it, but some parts are known and remembered. For example, he says in his speech: “Subscribe to PewDiePie”. This is a reference to another fringe Internet meme. PewDiePie is a famous Youtuber who had been accused of some racist and anti-Semitic statements. He is loved among gamers and alt-right online subculture's forums such as parts of 4chan, 8chan and Gab. “Subscribe to PewDiePie”

¹⁵⁶ Meeus Dirk, *White Genocide” and the Ethics of Public Analysis*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, Routledge, p.1

Picture 7. Brenton Tarrant as saint. Source: screenshot from 8chan

was an action that, although they did not start, they strongly supported. PewDiePie was the most followed YouTube account, but that status was endangered by the account of *T-series*, a famous Indian music company. *PewDiePie* followers created *#SubscribeToPewDiePie* campaign to prevent that from happening. Another reason Tarrant used these words was because of the popularity of *PewDiePie* – he knew that the famous YouTuber would need to create a video in which condemns Tarrant’s attack, which was tactic for more people to hear about what Tarrant did. The music he played while going to the church included songs like previously mentioned *Serbia Strong* (Remove Kebab), British Grenadiers’ march, and Waffen SS Choir’s song remix. In video he shows his assault rifle in which he wrote the names of his “idols” and dates and names of significant battles, for example - Battle of Vienna 1683, the farthest advance of Ottomans into Europe, when they were defeated, the Battle of Tours 732, which ended the last Arab invasion of France. Tarrant also wrote previously mentioned 14 words. Some of the famous historical figures attacker chose to display are Charles Martel, King of the Franks who won the Battle of Tours, Bajo Pivljanin, a prominent 17th-century militia commander who fought against Ottoman rule in the Balkans, Janos Hunyadi, a Hungarian general and governor and the ruler of Transylvania who defeated Ottomans two times, Miloš Oblič, famous knight from Serbian history, who has no mention in contemporary studies, but it is believed among people that he killed sultan Murad I during the Battle of Kosovo. The longevity of Tarrant’s manifesto presents his views very well but also has reminiscent of shitposting. His use of *NavySeal* cypypasta¹⁵⁷ does not have any particular point other that shows that he is familiar with the internet culture, but maybe to distract readers who are not familiar with it. Another sign to which community he belongs and another way of distracting was “OK” sign he showed when he was in front of the court for the first time, two days after the attack.

Tarrant became a saint of alt-right community and 8chan website in a way no other person from this community ever did. Picture 7 shows his meme that has been shared through the forum. His initial post was not deleted for some time and gather numerous replies, among firsts “Goodluck shitposter. Rolling many dead chinks and niggers.” When the member of the community realised that the recording was really going live, it caused even more excitement among them. One user expressed concern, with the words "delete this or this will be the end of 8pol", but they were generally amused. It was like a dystopian scene - everybody watched how one man shot civilians in *Counterstrike* manner, and they commented to give their support, not only on 8chan, but on Facebook also. On March 15, 8chan exploded with visitors because of

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Knowyourmeme, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/navy-seal-cypypasta> Lat accessed 12.9.2019

these events. Even when the initial post is deleted, new threads dedicated to Tarrant were opened daily.

A researcher from the research centre *Belingcat* analysed how extremists on the internet said they had become radicalised. In about half of the cases, their paths started with radical conspiracy theories, YouTube videos, typically anti-Semitic or Holocaust-denying. “8chan’s /pol/ board is the end of a journey of radicalisation. It’s to radicalise you into taking the next step.”¹⁵⁸

By the public, Tarrant is dismissed as a sociopath, psychopath and a loner, a product of an isolated, extremist milieu with no links to the mainstream and his attack and manifesto as “senseless.” By these assumptions, Tarrant’s ideas do not warrant serious investigation. It was the easiest way to reject even the suggestion that Tarrant could have something in common with mainstream politics.¹⁵⁹ That was a mistake done by politician and by media. Tarrant surely does not have in-depth knowledge about European culture, and his lack of formal education is very noticeable.¹⁶⁰ But, he is far from a crazy, lonely wolf. His ideas about the race laws, history and the future, are something that this fast-growing member of alt-right online subculture understand and believe in – and that academics do not. Tarrant was the inspiration for the next described attacks, and he will probably continue to be a star of the alt-right online community.

2.2. Poway synagogue attack

Poway Synagogue shooting or San Diego shooting took place on 27 April 2019 April. Alleged shooter, John Earnest, burst into the synagogue in the last day of the Shabbat Jewish holiday with an assault rifle and managed to kill one woman. Three people were injured, including a rabbi, who was left without a right index finger. Earnest has no ties to previous crimes, police said, nor is he linked to radical groups. He tried to stream the attack via Facebook but failed. He did manage to put a manifest on 8chan, which can still be found online. In it, he blames Jews for white genocide. Earnest states his role models - Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle, Martin Luther, Adolf Hitler, Ludwig van Beethoven, Moon Man¹⁶¹, and Pink Guy.¹⁶² He is a

¹⁵⁸ Wells Georgia, Lovett Ian, *So What’s His Kill Count?’: The Toxic Online World Where Mass Shooter Thrives*, The Wall Street Journal <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-the-toxic-online-world-where-mass-shooters-thrive-11567608631> last accessed 15.9.2019

¹⁵⁹ Moses Dirk, *White Genocide” and the Ethics of Public Analysis in Journal of Genocide Research*, Routledge, University of Sydney, Australia, 2019, p. 1

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 2-3

¹⁶¹ Moon Man is nickname given to online depictions of the McDonald’s mascot Mac Tonight, which is associated with a text-to-speech voice reciting racist parodies of various rap songs. The character is often depicted as a member of the Ku Klux Klan, who advocates using violence against non-white minorities. Source: *Knowyourmeme*.

Christian believer. Earnest has been charged with one count of murder and three counts of attempted murder, as well as the prevention of religious freedom and hatred. He pleaded not guilty.

Earnest begins his (alleged) manifesto with the words: “My name is John Earnest and I am a Man of European Ancestry.”. He then goes deep in explaining who his ancestors were, when they came to the US and how “pure” his blood is. “I am blessed by God for such a magnificent bloodline,” he says and states what the wonderful qualities he inherited from his ancestors are. As to an answer to the question of why he decided to attack, he wrote: "But I pose a question to you now. What value does my life have compared to the entirety of the European race? I would die a thousand times over to prevent the doomed fate that Jews have planned for my race." Earnest is explicit - every Jew is responsible for the meticulously planned genocide of the European race, and he enumerates their "endless" crimes, which show his anti-Semitic views: he blames them for the murder of Jesus Christ, the control of banks, the emergence of communism... He states that he knows he cannot kill more than a few Jews, but he hopes to inspire others to the same and wants the world to know that “there is at least one European man alive who is willing to take a stand against the injustice that the Jew has inflicted upon him.” Earnest quotes the Bible and refers to the *PewDiePie*, same as Christchurch shooter previously mentioned. *PewDiePie* this time has not commented publicly on the shooting.

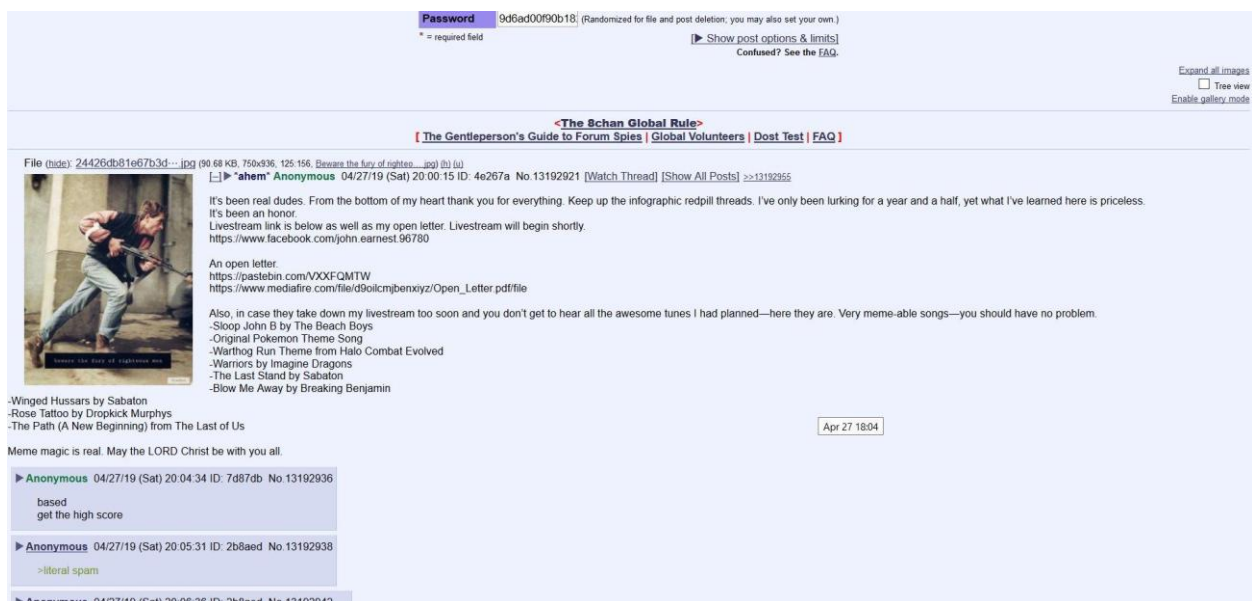
Earnest refers to Tarrant a couple of more times in his Manifesto. He says: o my brothers in blood. Make sure my sacrifice was not in vain. Spread this letter, make memes, shitpost, FIGHT BACK, REMEMBER ROBERT BOWERS¹⁶³, REMEMBER BRENTON TARRANT”. Earnest brags how he wrote Tarrant’s name in another mosque unnoticed, so his adoration is clear. “Tarrant was a catalyst for me personally. He showed me what he could do.” Earnest dislikes conservatives and says that "they don't conserve anything". “Spics¹⁶⁴ and niggers are useful puppets for the Jew in terms of replicating Whites. Of course, they are not intelligent enough to realize that the Jew is using them, and they will be enslaved if Europeans are eliminated.”

¹⁶² Character from *The Filthy Frank* show. Not usually connected with the alt-right online subculture. <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/moon-man> last accessed 13.9.2019

¹⁶³ Robert Bowers is suspect for the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Synagogue Shooting in October 2018. Eleven people died in the attack. 4chan users on the /pol board made several conspiracy theories regarding the attack – that it has been done by Jewish community to gain sympathy, but other praised him and created hashtag #HeroRobertBowers (on Gab). Very often comments were “he did nothing wrong“ and created a poll with a question “What is the best option for Jewish people?“ 35% answer genocide. Source: Politico, *Inside the online cesspool of anti-Semitism that housed Robert Bowers*, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/10/29/inside-the-online-cesspool-of-anti-semitism-that-housed-robert-bowers-221949> Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁶⁴ Slang for Spanish-speaking person from South and Central America or Caribbean, mostly Mexican.

Similar to Tarrant, he sends message to the other members of his sub-culture: “To the true anons out there (you know who you are). You are the product of / gender / —the product of unadulterated truth. You are my brothers and the best dudes out there. You are the most honourable men of this age. Despite all odds against you, you not only discovered the truth but also help to spread it. (...) Every anon reading must attack a target while doing his best to avoid getting caught. Every anon must play his part in this revolution, and no man can be pulling his punches. At this moment we may very well be the last chance that the European man has a spark a revolution,” and advice them on the ways to do so: “If your goal is strictly carnage and the highest score — it is highly recommended that you look into flamethrowers (remember kids, napalm is more effective than gasoline if you want Jews to really light up like a menorah).”



Picture 8. Screenshot of John Earnest’s post on 8chan. Source: belingcat

Earnest finishes with the words: “Despite this — not yet worried. I have complete trust and certainty that all of you after reading this will begin planning your attack on the enemy — and continue the attack again, and again, and again — until either we win, or we die. I know you will do this because it says true anons. You suggested White men. Don't worry about the whole world is against you. Not always worried because you are the greatest race that our God has created — it is our duty to keep this world from falling into darkness. White men will not let God's creation be corrupted and destroyed by the Jew without a fight. Remember your honor, White men.”

Since 8chan did not delete his post (Picture 8) immediately (they say it took them nine minutes¹⁶⁵), it has gathered comments such as: “get the high score”. When he failed, comments turned into: “No livestream? Lame as fuck. Don't mass shooters know they need to up their game now? Tarrant has changed the optics-level.”; “Go over to the synagogue and finish this retard’s work.” “>1 dead jew, >several injured, >not live-streamed, >bogus, transparently non-genuine manifesto, >shooter already in custody”; “Only 4 injuries, dude did a shit job”; and “If piano boy is 8ch's best, then 8ch is pretty benign”. Threads dedicated to the Poway shooter continue in following days, and users discussed whether the whole situation was just a “conspiracy theory” or just a failed attack. 8chan did not delete those post. Earnest was arraigned on 109 federal charges. He pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

2.3 El Paso Walmart shooting

The third attack this paper will analyse is the attack in **El Paso, Texas**, in the United States. It happened on 3rd August, and accused perpetrator, **Patrick Crusius**, who was 21 years old, took 22 lives to attack. The attack occurred at the Walmart mall, and the killer allegedly left his 10-pages manifesto on an 8chan website (Picture 9), alongside with the details what weapon he will use for the attack. Admins, now experienced, almost immediately removed the manifesto, but anonymous and followers continued to share it. It still exists on the internet and can be easily



Picture 9. Screenshot of Patrick Crusius message on 8chan. Source: bellinecat

downloaded.

¹⁶⁵ 8chan Twitter profile page, <https://twitter.com/infinitechan/status/1122494322283167745> Last accessed 12.9.2019

The manifesto “The inconvenient truth about me”. Manifesto starts with “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto. This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas,” and “Actually, the Hispanic community was not my target before I read The Great Replacement.”

After this attack, Frederic Brennan, the founder of 8chan called for at least temporarily shutting down of the website, stating that it is entirely contrary to everyone, even for its users. Brennan explains the trend of posting manifestos on 8chan: there is no moderation and highly receptive audience help in spreading the manifesto.

The manifesto says also says that he “can no longer bear the shame of inaction knowing that our founding fathers have endowed me with the rights needed to save our country from the brink of destruction,” which is the reference to the freedom to bear arms. “Our European comrades don’t have the gun rights needed to repel millions of invaders that plague their country. They have no choice but to sit by and watch their countries burn.” But he does not want to let that his race suffers cultural and ethnical replacement. The manifesto states how Indians were not careful enough, and now their culture has almost vanished. He predicts the future in which the US will become a one-party state when Democrats take over because of the anti-immigrant language of Republicans. Among economic reasons he points old, “they will take our jobs” argument. Thus, he says automatization is good because it will replace low-skilled workers, but, “even though new migrants do the dirty work, their kids typically don’t. They want to live the American Dream, which is why they get college degrees and fill higher-paying skilled positions.“

He is firmly against race-mixing, but since he is clear that he cannot defeat all non-whites, he suggests dividing the United States into Confederate territories, with one race for each territory. The best solution to this, for now, would be to divide America into a confederacy of territories with at least one territory for each race. This physical separation would be almost eliminating race mixing and improve social unity by granting each race self-determination within their territory.

Among private reasons, shooter allegedly wrote in this manifesto that his whole life he has been preparing for the future that currently does not exist. He said that he had chosen Walmart “even if other non-immigrant targets would have a greater impact”, but he cannot bring himself to kill Americans. He said that he would not surrender (he did surrender) and expect to probably be killed during the attack, which did not happen. He advises his like-minded individuals not to feel bad when choosing low-security targets because that way, they will have

higher chances for success. He finishes his manifesto with “This is just the beginning of the fight for America and Europe. I am honoured to head the fight to reclaim my country from destruction.” His “claim” cost 22 lives in the deadliest mass shooting in the US in 2019. Youngest among them had 15 years, oldest 77. Twenty-four people were injured. Crusius admitted that he was targeting Mexicans. Shortly after the attack, *Walmart* decided to stop selling handgun ammunition and "short-barrel rifle ammunition and will request from customers not to carry visible arms."¹⁶⁶

Crusius’ post on the 8chan /pol board did not gather many comments, because it was quickly deleted. He only got a couple of answers: The first is an anon claiming that 8chan /pol is a “board of peace” that does not condone violence. This phrasing is a famous joke on this website; a mocking reference to statements that Islam is a “religion of peace”. The next poster after that said “Every shabbat” – meaning that he/she hopes that mass shootings like this happen every weekend. While this original thread was removed quite quickly, other anons have continued to post copies of the shooter's post and links to his manifesto. The manifesto was rated as "shitty" "zero effort" by some anons. The act of massacring innocents has continued to be gamified - in the absence of a Crusius’ live stream, which led to “disappointment” among anons, one anon invites people (linking from a YouTube where live news coverage of the attack is) to comment and "troll" the live stream, calling Crusius "ourguy".¹⁶⁷ They continued to write about him in the following two days. Then, 8chan was finally deposed, at least for now, from the legal domain, as Cloudflare withdrew its support having in mind recent events.

2.4. Norway mosque shooting

The last case study that will be analysed in this paper is the Norway mosque shooting. Fortunately, the attacker, **Philip Manshaus** was prevented from causing casualties in the mosque because he was overpowered by an older man who was in the mosque at the time of the attack happened on **10th August** in **Norway**, Bærum, city that 20 km distance from Norway’s capital, Oslo. The shooting occurred on the eve of Eid. The attacker is accused of killing his adopted seventeen-year-old sister before heading to the *Al-Noir Islamic Centre* mosque. He carried two



Picture 10. Manshaus’ picture from the post on Endchan. Source: Endchan webarchive

shotguns during the attack, shutting his way through the closed door. Manshaus has managed to injure one person (slightly) after which he was detained until the arrival of police. Police cited the case as the "possible act of terrorism". Two days later, Manshaus appeared in front of the court, and he was seen to have bruises on his face and neck, as well as scratches. In what he allegedly told police after the attack his goal was to "intimidate Muslims in Norway".¹⁶⁸ Manshaus is described as a white Norwegian without a history of confrontation with police. He is only 21 years old.

Currently, there are no information whether Manshaus was an active user of 4chan and 8chan and other alt-right forums, but he did post his message on another not so famous board-based website, *Endchan* just before the attack. Homepage of *Endchan* had "Welcome 8ch refugees" line, and the politics page features images of swastikas and Adolf Hitler. Users of both sites often seem indistinguishable. Both sites are full of ambiguous language, with frequent use of the N-word and slurs against Jews.

He probably chose it as an alternative because 8chan was shut down a couple of days before his attack, so *Endchan* which was perhaps an alternative. (Picture 10). From his post, he intended to copy the attack of a New Zealand killer, Brenton Tarrant and intended to live stream the attack.

Picture Manshaus posted with his post is showing three-man that were described in previous case studies – Brenton Tarrant, Patrick Crusius and John Earnest. Around Tarrant he wrote messages “Anointed Saint for his sacrifice”; “Focused on removing the most universally hated group of invaders, racked up 50”; “Plays meme songs in his car before slaughtering shitskins while hundreds watch online”; “Children of invaders do not stay children”; “Kills dozens of mudslimes¹⁶⁹, prevents dozens of rapes”; “Manifesto introduced millions to the accelerationist solution”; “Addressed the muslim problem”; “this is for Ebba Akkelund”¹⁷⁰ and “Status: Helped”.

Around the drawing of John Earnest, he wrote: “First disciple of Saint Brenton, will always be remembered for it”; “First torched a mosque, then shot up a synagogue – fought on all fronts”; Whistles Fantasie Impromptu op 66 Chopin perfectly up to the last note before opening fire on a foreskin chewing Rabbi”; “Screw your live stream, I’m going in”; “Killcount is the equivalent of far over 1 million arabs according to rabbinic authorities”; “Finds clear words for



cowards and shizos in his manifesto”; “Addressed the jewish problem”; “I’d highly recommend you look into flamethrowers”; “Killed a single jew – Netanyahu calls it a blow to the heart of the jewish people”; and “Give. Them. Hell¹⁷¹”.

Finally, around Patrick Crusius he wrote: “Directly inspired to fight back by Saint Tarrant”; “Prepared for only a month, still manages to kill at least 20 spics”; “Has a cool last name that makes him sound like a Roman”; “Admits AK-47 was not the best choice, uses it anyway”; “Inaction is a choice” and “Honoured to fight to reclaim his country”. Manshaus intended to be third Tarrant’s disciple.

Photo 10. Screenshot of Manshaus’ post on Endchan.
Source: Endchan

In his message he posted alongside with the picture (Photo 10), he wrote “well cobbers (Australian slang for friends) it’s my time. I was elected by saint Tarrant after all” and “you gotta bump the race war thread irl and if you’re reading this you have been elected by me”. He posted a link to his Facebook account where he intended to live-stream the attack. “It was fun, valhall venter,” which translates to “valhalla awaits,” a reference to the hall in Nordic mythology where slain warriors would go (the very same reference that Tarrant used). On Instagram, Manshaus has three photos, two pictures of himself and a photo of Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik. Police in Oslo confirmed that Manshaus had posted extremist views online.¹⁷² They said he also expressed sympathy for Vidkun Quisling, the pro-Nazi party leader who led the Norwegian government during World War II occupation of the country. Manshaus did not say a word in his first court appearance, and he smirked at the cameras

His post was not deleted immediately. *EndChan* said its moderators had deleted a thread and its "primary domain" was taken offline after the shooting and that the shooter is not a representative of their regular user base. “We have operated since 2015 without any incidents like this.”¹⁷³ His message from Endchan was almost immediately reposted on 4chan /pol, where it spread quickly, generating comments. "God and hope he got a solid kill count on some actual shitting Islamic invaders, not women and children," wrote one anon. When it became clear that he failed, people started to mock him. “Tarrant is probably rolling in his bed.”; “Shut up Manshaus, you're the most pathetic failure in our species existence.” and “Manshaus was in court today. Even though his attack failed, he still created a lot of stir in his country and beyond. Unlike some, I will never disrespect someone for at least trying to resist the great replacement,

¹⁷¹ Reference from John Earnests’ letter

¹⁷² The Globe Post, *Norway Mosque Terror Attack Suspect Appears in Court*
<https://theglobepost.com/2019/08/12/norway-far-right-terrorist> Last accessed 18.9.2019

¹⁷³ *Endchan’s Twitter account*, <https://twitter.com/EndChanXYZ/status/1160736292843319297> last accessed 12.9.2019

the ongoing genocide of his people and race. Success is never guaranteed in anything. The person who had the shotgun on Breivik's profile says People like you who glorify mindless untermenschen like Manshaus cripple any real resistance and will be the first to get the bullet. "What an f — ing disappointment tho. no deads. no Livestream? How many times will this happen? f — ing train at least"; "what's his kill count"; "Some people made to kill. He probably freaked out. Anders Breivik was stone cold; he went out like a terminator."¹⁷⁴

Norway has issued a warning about possible terrorist attacks in the next year due to the likelihood of an attack, saying that there is a lot of danger from copycat types of attack.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Source: wayback archive of 4chan posts.

¹⁷⁵ Guardian, *Norway issues right-wing terror warning for year ahead*
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/06/norway-issues-rightwing-terror-warning-for-year-ahead>,
last accessed: 17.9.2019.

3. How well does the public know about the alt-right?

Research conducted in December 2016 in the US shows that the public is not very well educated about the alt-right.¹⁷⁶ There were no similar researches conducted after that, but analysing media coverage and politicians' speeches, it seems like the public do not know enough to distinguish alt-right from other far-right parts. It is hard because alt-right, as mentioned above, is far from being comprehensive group, but again, it seems like sometimes when liberals or social democrats comment on alt-right, they use many generalisations that are not true. "But a much more important reason why the left doesn't understand the alt-right is that the left doesn't understand much about conservatism at all. And why would they? Conservative views are so rare in mainstream media that there are few opportunities for liberals and progressives to understand it truly,"¹⁷⁷. Raising public awareness on alt-right online subculture is important because of their influence on world's politic and their recruitment of youth through seemingly innocent ways. Raising the education of youth, not just about how dangerous alt-right ideas are, but how wrong from a historical, scientific and social point of view. The fact that *trolling*, cyber abuse and racist jokes can end up hurting a lot of people and that the internet world is as real as the physical world, so every word and action has its consequences is something public, and youth especially, need to be aware of. People on the alt-right are not *edgy*, or *dangerously brilliant* – they are white supremacists and racist, and there is nothing *cool* or *edgy* about that – all this information are something that young population is not enough educated about. A toolkit created by *Teaching Tolerance* is one of the great ways of how youth can be introduced with what alt-right is.¹⁷⁸

3.1. Results of the online survey "How much do you know about alt-right?"

For this master thesis, an online survey was conducted using the *SurveyMonkey* platform. The survey was shared via social media networks (Facebook and Reddit), and it gathers 166

¹⁷⁶ Pew Research Center, *Awareness of 'alt-right' varies widely by ideology, educational attainment* https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/12/most-americans-havent-heard-of-the-alt-right/ft_16-12-12_alt-right_demographics/

¹⁷⁷ Marcus David, *Why the left cannot understand the alt-right*, *The Federalist*, <https://thefederalist.com/2019/03/29/left-cant-understand-alt-right/> Last accessed 14.9.2019

¹⁷⁸ Teaching Tolerance, *Toolkit for "What Is the 'Alt-Right'?" Test your knowledge of "alt-right" facts, terms and influencers*, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/toolkit-for-what-is-the-alt-right> Last accessed 15.9.2019

responses. It was open for everybody without any restrictions. The survey’s purpose was to analyse how well is public informed about the alt-right online subculture.

The composition of the survey’s respondents was: 30.30% male, 63.64% female and 6.06% other. Regarding their education, 6.15% of respondents had a PhD, 33.85% had MA, 41.54% BA, 13.85% high school, 1.54 ground school and 3.8% of respondents did not attend school. Regarding the age – 10.61% of respondents were under 18, 42.42% was in 18-24 category, 28.79% in 25-34 category, 4.55% in 35-44 category, 9.09% in 55-64% category and 1.52% in 65+ age category. The survey gathered 62 people from Serbia, 24 people from the USA, 20 people from the UK, 12 people from Germany and eight from Australia. Other participants either come from some other country (no more than 3 participants from the same

country) or did not answer this question properly.

Survey shows that 48.39% of people aged 18-24 do not know what term alt-right stands for. They are followed by the 25-34 group, where 38.71% do not know. (Chart 1). Far more women than men or others do not know what alt-right stands for – 83.87% of women to 0% of others and 16.13% of men. (Chart 2).

Regarding education, there are no striking differences – almost the same number of people who had a middle school, BA and MA (do not) know about alt-right. People with PhD level of education are more likely to know about alt-right.

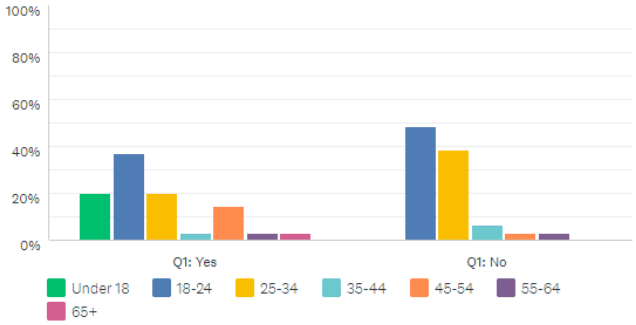


Chart 1. Answers to the question “Do you know what alt-right is?” - comparison by age

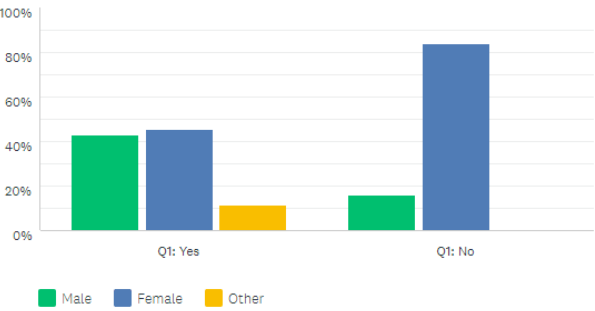


Chart 2. Answers to the question “Do you know what alt-right is?” - comparison by gender

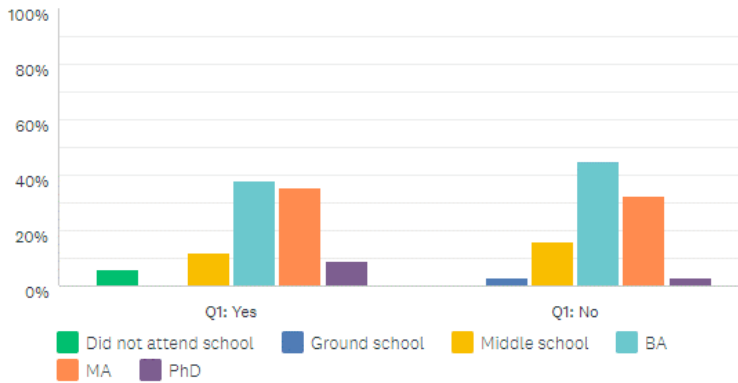


Chart 3. Answers to the question “Do you know what alt-right is?” - comparison by the level of education

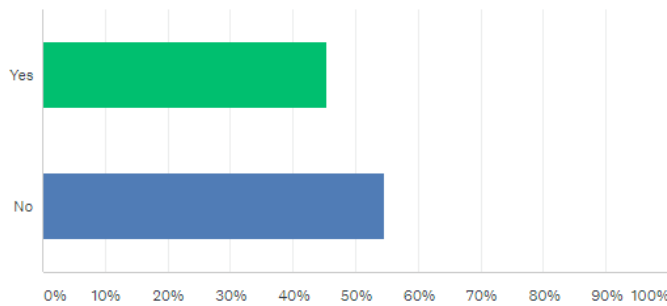


Chart 4. Answers to the question “Have you heard about 8chan website?”

Less than a half (45.45%) of the respondents did not hear about the 8chan website. (Chart 4)

Chart 5 shows that, among the users who have visited 8chan, there are only those who have visited it once or twice or those who are frequent visitors.

72.73% of participants did not hear about “remove kebab” meme (Chart 6) while, on the other hand, 65.15% know about Pepe the Frog (Chart 7).

When it comes to the question “Can you name one

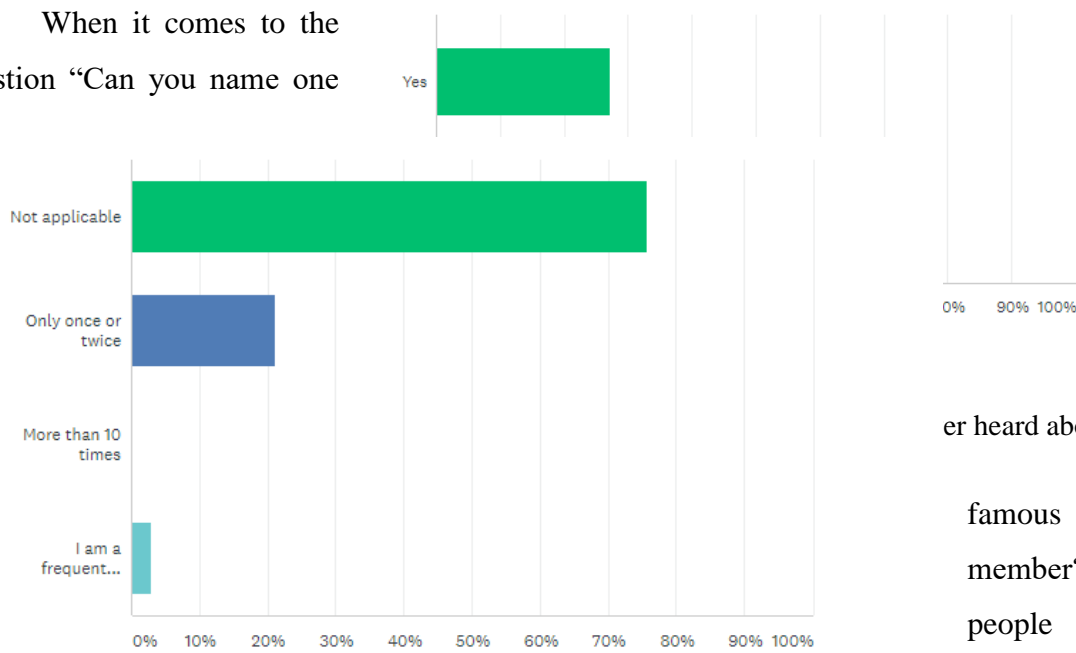


Chart 5. Answers to the question: If you heard about 8chan, how often have you visited it?

mentioned 27 times, Milo Yiannopolous was mention 24 times, and less than a five-time Millennial Woes, Alex Jones, Brazilian politician Jair Bolsonaro, PewDiePie, Trump and Steve Bannon, so it is evident that Spencer and Yiannopolous are the most recognisable persons within the alt-right. This research shows that presumption that general public is not very well educated about alt-right, as well as that does not depend on that much on the level of their education or age, although men are more familiar than women.

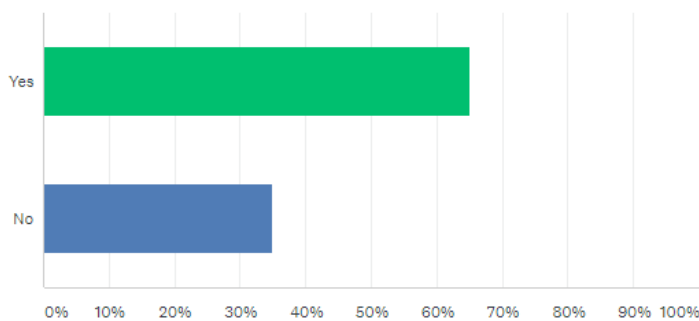


Chart 7. Answers to the question: Have you ever heard about “Pepe the frog...”?

er heard about

famous alt-right member?” from people who answered that question, Richard Spencer was

This survey is not a representative, proper statistical research, but it shows the attitude of the general public or. The purpose was to make a sketch and for seeing how to inform the general public is.

4. How social networks fight alt-right?

Social networks have been trying to regulate freedom of speech since their beginnings. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, are continually taking steps to limit and regulate free speech. For example, since the beginning of social networks, it has been evident that cyberbullying and *hate speech* are going to be big problems, so all the big platforms have worked in developing algorithms that will prevent them and make particular social media platform safe for its users. Even websites such as 4chan have their limits on tolerating hate speech - an example is Gamergate mentioned above when they banned them because of the publishing of people's private information. Another board-based website such as Reddit, one of the most popular sites on the internet, banned the sub-reddit /watchpeopledie, after the New Zealand event and after one person posted a New Zealand shooting video on it. Reddit previously banned sub-reddits such as /incel.¹⁷⁹ In light of recent developments, social networks have begun to work on this topic even more seriously. With its policy, Reddit has now more strictly defined what is allowed and what is not.

The most popular way to combat hate speech is by *deplatforming*. *Deplatforming* is removing someone's profile or channel or removing harmful (or all) existing content that the user created. The list of those *deplatformed* is vast. They even organised a conference in July to demand free speech¹⁸⁰. Milo Yiannopolous, for example, has been kicked off from every major social media site because of his offensive language and harassment. Currently, he has a *Telegram* channel that has over 18 000 subscribers. Telegram is a Russian message service that is not that strictly regulated, and it was a popular way of communication among ISIS members. Now it has become a haven from many alt-righters, including Milo. Facebook recently announced it is banning several Canadian far-right figures and groups from its platform. Facebook's policy regarding banning such individuals became stricter in light of recent events. It has become increasingly willing to issue outright bans against individuals deemed to spread hate speech – in effect cutting many “alt-right” figures off from the social networks that allowed them to gain an audience in the first place.¹⁸¹ In the blog-post Facebook published 27 March 2019, the company wrote how “while people will still be able to demonstrate pride in their ethnic heritage, but we will not tolerate praise or support for white nationalism and white separatism.”¹⁸² Those expelled from

¹⁷⁹ Incel is term for involuntarily celibate, popular among alt-right online subculture. Source: Beauchamp Zack, *Our Incel Problem*, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit> Last accessed 13.9.2019

¹⁸⁰ Avi Seik, *How deplatforming became a rallying cry for right-wing media stars*, The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/how-deplatforming-became-a-rallying-cry-for-right-wing-media-stars/2019/07/10/f2f37a72-a348-11e9-bd56-eac6bb02d01d_story.html?noredirect=on Last accessed 14.9.2019.

¹⁸¹ Standing Against Hate, Facebook Press Release, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/may/02/facebook-ban-alex-jones-milo-yiannopoulos> Last accessed 12.9.2019.

¹⁸² <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2019/03/standing-against-hate/>

Facebook, including right-wing conspiracy theorists Alex Jones, the alt-right activist Faith Goldy and the hate groups Soldiers of Odin, the Canadian Nationalist Front and the Aryan Strikeforce.¹⁸³

Twitter is currently much less eager to *deplatform*. Many alt-right accounts still operate on Twitter without a problem.¹⁸⁴ Twitter was used a lot by ISIS in the past, where the company did much more to fight against it, but it seems that it is used even more by the far-right. One study that oversaw 44 white nationalist accounts from May 2017 to April 2018 found that the accounts posted 173 426 tweets during that period. That is 3 942 annual tweets per white nationalist account — more than five times the rate of the ISIS accounts.¹⁸⁵ Their latest blog regarding the platform's update does not mention the problem with these groups of people as Facebook does.¹⁸⁶ Google and YouTube work with adjusting their algorithms – for YouTube, alt-right videos appeared in YouTube's "Up Next" recommendations far less,¹⁸⁷ and Google joined efforts with Facebook and invest “heavily in machines and people to quickly identify and remove content that violates our policies against incitement to violence and hate speech.”¹⁸⁸ Many private actors, not just companies, get involved in this fight against the alt-right. Shahak Shapira, a programmer from Germany, for example, hijacked dozens of their websites right before German elections, leaving them video message and mocking them.¹⁸⁹ Movements such as identifyeuropa work to uncover white nationalists and supremacists.¹⁹⁰

Regarding 8chan, its banishment brought to a lot of people saying that it is a “slippery slope” for forbidding freedom of speech or that 8chan did not do anything to be banned because 8chan is “blank piece of paper” as its owner called it. Problems are deeper than 8chan, people from 8chan will soon migrate to another haven, so, banishment is not a solution, argue some. Its founder of 8chan agrees that deportation is not a long-term solution. "The problems are structural and

¹⁸³ Brien Luke O' *Twitter Still Has A White Nationalist Problem*, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/starving-online-trolls-wont-stop-far-right-ideas-from-going-mainstream-115220> Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁸⁴ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/twitter-white-nationalist-problem_n_5cec4d28e4b00e036573311d

¹⁸⁵ *Twitter connections between white nationalists and Attorney General Sessions*, Susan Bourbaki Anthony, <http://www.susanbourbaki.com/> Last accessed 30.8.2019

¹⁸⁶ Hicks Donald, Gasca David, *A healthier Twitter: Progress and more to do*, Twitter blog, https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2019/health-update.html Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁸⁷ Serrels Mark, *YouTube recommendations for 'alt-right' videos have dropped dramatically, study shows*, CNet, <https://www.cnet.com/news/youtube-dramatically-reduces-alt-right-recommendations-google/> Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁸⁸ Shepardson David, *Facebook, Google defend efforts to remove hate speech before Congress*, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-congress-socialmedia/facebook-google-defend-efforts-to-remove-hate-speech-before-congress-idUSKCN1RL2E0> Last accessed 15.9.2019

¹⁸⁹ Richardson Clare, *This Israeli Artist is Masterfully Trolling the German Far-right*, Vice, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/pazxe8/this-israeli-artist-is-masterfully-trolling-the-german-far-right Last accessed 12.9.2019

¹⁹⁰ *Identify Europa's website* <https://identifyevropa.org/> Last accessed 5.9.2019

societal, but it would be a somewhat effective band-aid," Brennan said. "That plus a federal assault weapons ban might make these kinds of shootings only happen every few years, and with (probably) lower body counts. Without a ban, maybe every year. Certainly not twice in 24 hours."¹⁹¹

Author of this article in *Forbes* gives a good explanation against those who are against 8chan shutting down because they think it does not have a point. "Saying there is no point to shutting down 8chan because a new one will just pop back up is again, akin to asking, "what's the point of shutting down a child porn website when the bastards will only create a new one later?" You shut down the site because criminal activity is happening on it because the site is actively harming society."¹⁹² It is not a perfect solution, but it is better than doing nothing. Most people who want to gather together around some idea cannot be stopped, but the problem is when more than 50 000 *know* where to find harmful content they look for.¹⁹³

Conclusions

The alt-right community is currently on the rise, significantly affecting the political climate around it, and therefore needs to be monitored more closely. The language and humor of the alt-right need to be analyzed more deeply. In the first part of this paper, we explain this phenomenon - how it emerged, evolved, and how it currently exists - how the fringes have been able to expand their sphere of influence, appeal to legitimate social and societal grievances, and make efforts to manipulate the mainstream. The climate on the other hand, with liberals and socialists, is too aggressive in that it is also prone to accuse the other side of any attitude that is not in line with the mainstream, causing the other hand to slip into their communities, to feel frustrated because who cannot share his views in the public sphere for fear of condemnation. People who do not have radical views should make an effort and adapt their rhetoric because pretending that these fascists are monstrously alien, mentally ill, or somewhat deeply unintelligent are all comfort blankets even if there are ways that it seems real, in part¹⁹⁴. It must be borne in mind that

¹⁹¹ Broderick Ryan, *The 8chan is not the problem, It's American*, BuzzFeed, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/the-problem-isnt-8chan-its-americans> Last accessed 17.9.2019

¹⁹² Eordogh, Frisian, *Why 8chan had to be deleted*, Forbes <https://www.forbes.com/sites/fruzsinaeordogh/2019/08/09/why-8chan-had-to-be-deleted/#571899b4abc4> Last accessed 16.9.2019

¹⁹³ Lovet, Ian, Wells, Georgia 'So What's His Kill Count?': *The Toxic Online World Where Mass Shooters Thrive*, The Wall Street Journal <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-the-toxic-online-world-where-mass-shooters-thrive-11567608631> Last accessed 17.9.2019.

¹⁹⁴ Bevenssee, Emmi, *The meme politics of white supremacy: how does fascist radicalisation happen on the internet?*, The University of Auckland, <https://www.thebigq.org/2019/05/23/the-meme-politics-of-white-supremacy-how-does-fascist-radicalisation-happen-on-the-internet/>, last accessed 18.9.2019

this always remains a minority, that “white supremacy is a losing meme even as its claws desperately for attention. Trying to find ways for people to live together and the transcendent difference has the same edgy, nihilistic appeal, but a better way of living. You can make friends in surprising places instead of living every day in a traumatized fear of a profoundly distorted enemy,”¹⁹⁵ Society evolves all the time and social media also needs to adapt to these changes and sometimes limit free speech for the sake of a healthier and better community, because freedom should not assume the parvo of insulting and offending other people. Finally, the causes of alt-right online co-culture are certainly intense in society, and this paper is an attempt to start discussions on this topic in Serbia as well, since these subcultures are undoubtedly present here and should be examined, understood, not normalized And to keep up with the latest developments because they are there, whether we like it or not.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

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