

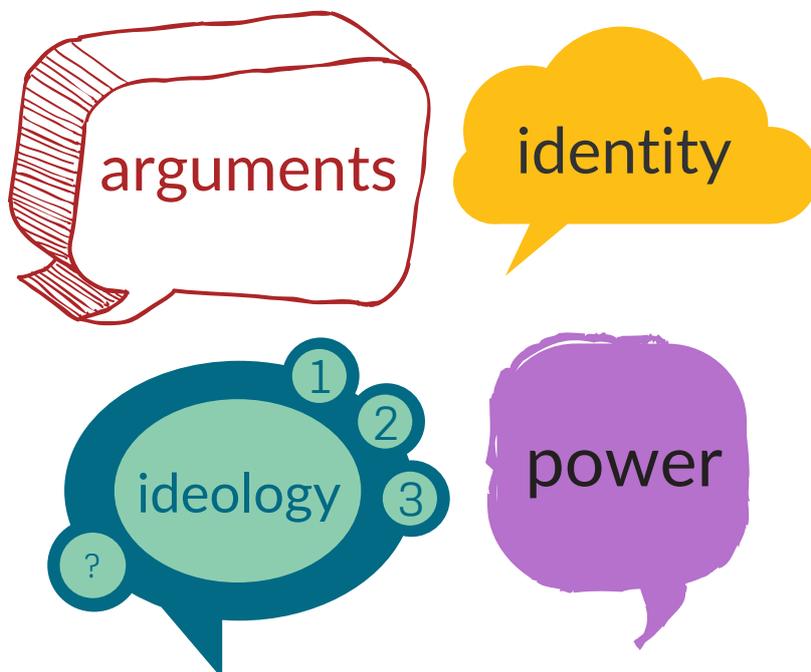


REFLECTORY

# ACROSS DIVIDES

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Training Workshops for  
Depolarizing Communication



The single biggest problem in communication  
is the illusion that it has taken place.  
- George Bernard Shaw

We live in a polarized world where politics and ideology from both the left and the right-wing spectra permeate our professional, educational and private worlds. We are left in either echo chambers, bubbles of like-minded individuals or choirs we preach to...or we are left frustrated by our inability to reason with those from the opposing side who are espousing to us unacceptable views.

Across Divides consists of multiple exercises and skill-building activities that seek to empower individuals to seek out, engage with and enter into dialogue with people whose views (radically) differ from their own. In the process we generate a deeper understanding of polarization and cut across cultural contexts to build on the core of polarized discussions - the questions of identity, belonging, discrimination, globalization, and power inequalities.

The method's theoretical background is inspired by and rooted in Narrative Therapy, Positive Youth Development, Non-Violent Communication approaches, Critical Pedagogy and Bohmian Dialogue.

# EXAMPLES OF WORKSHOPS

## Sample

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### Rhetorical Self-Defense

...is an interactive workshop that builds resiliency and the ability to respond to discriminatory remarks. Distress, heightened emotional state or plain shock can sometimes leave us tongue-tied. The rhetorical self-defense class teaches preparedness and different methods of responding, to replace the self-esteem damaging silence or the knee-jerk conflict-escalating response.

### Rhetoric of Discrimination

...teaches the basic mistakes in argumentation by using everyday examples of hate speech and discriminatory remarks. Often we know something is wrong with an argument, but have a hard time pinpointing the exact issue - this workshop raises awareness & helps identify and respond to logical fallacies.

### Talking to 'Racists'

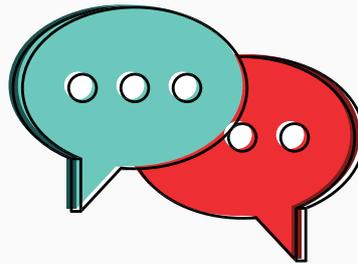
...consists of multiple exercises and skills-building activities that seek to empower the participants to engage with and enter dialogue with people whose views differ from their own.

### Fostering Self-Reflection

...consists of activities and prompts that revolve around enhancing self-awareness, sparking introspection and owning up to our own role in (protracted) conflicts and 'otherizing' of those we disagree with.

# About the Methodology

Across Divides is a collection of approaches that foster depolarization communication skills. The Across Divides methodology was developed and tested in the field through a series of workshops and dialogues with both those using discriminatory and hate speech rhetoric and with those targeted by it.



## **Different training formats**

### ***Short half-day session***

In a four-hour workshop, we will do basic problem-diagnostics, contextualized within the work of your respective organization and its mission, vision and target groups involved. This will be followed by a presentation of and discussion on key concepts, dynamics and cognitive biases that play a role in polarization.

### ***Day-long session***

Next to having a more substantial problem-diagnostics session that also involves impact analysis implications of polarization on the work of your organisation, the day-long session will also provide exercises that accompany the discussion on key concepts, dynamics and cognitive biases that drive polarization. Finally, several depolarization of communication techniques will be shared with the participants.

### ***Full two-day training***

The full two-day training involves detailed problem-diagnostics focused on the work of your organisation and the ways in which polarisation and countering it clarifies the mission, vision, key activities and projects, as well as the overall organisational Theory of Change. Discussion on key concepts, group dynamics and cognitive biases fuelling polarization is followed by multiple exercises that build participants' ability to recognize and adequately respond to these challenges. Substantial part of the training is dedicated to teaching several depolarization of communication techniques. Finally, the last section of the training is dedicated to strategic planning for implementing depolarization elements into your organisation's mission and goals, including re/definition of key target groups and devising ways of transforming communication, outreach and engagement practices.

Across Divides has been taught in various forms and settings, in cooperation with civil society and activist organizations, international organizations, universities, political parties, teachers, youth workers and informal groups, in:

Albania	Poland
Bangladesh	Qatar
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Serbia
Croatia	Slovenia
Czech Republic	South Korea
Egypt	Tunisia
Georgia	UK
Germany	USA
Hungary	
Jordan	
Kosovo	
Libya	
Mexico	
the Netherlands	



## Background

Dr. Maja Nenadovic has devised the 'Across Divides - Training for Depolarization of Communication' method through a real-life dialogue outreach social experiment. The method draws on 20 years of experience with competitive, formalized debate, public speaking and advocacy coaching, coupled with 10+ years of involvement with critical pedagogy-based human rights and civic education. The method's theoretical background is inspired by and rooted in Narrative Therapy, Positive Youth Development and Non-Violent Communication approaches.

To date, the Across Divides course (in its various formats) has been taught in more than 20 countries worldwide, easily meeting the unique needs of different cultural and professional contexts.

# About Reflectory

We are a consultancy that promotes reflective approaches in research and practice.

**In today's complex, fast-paced and increasingly polarized world** many organizations and individuals are becoming more mindful of the way they carry out their activities and what (unintended) consequences their actions have in the short and long run.

**We believe that reflection remains one of the most overlooked and underutilized resources** to improve the way we design, implement, and evaluate our work—be it research projects or practical interventions.

**Reflective practice is an intentional way of working** that acknowledges and creates awareness about systemic contexts, the positionality and wellbeing of all involved individuals, and the impact within and beyond project outcomes.

**We work with partners who seek to generate social change.** We support them in integrating reflective practices into their processes, thereby increasing the relevance and resonance of their work and augmenting their impact in society at large.

## Contact Information

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